

CHURCH OF NIGERIA (ANGLICAN COMMUNION)

PROVINCE OF NIGER DELTA

DIOCESE OF EVO

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL MANUAL FOR 2010

THEME: ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD...1 Cor. 15:58

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FOREWORD

When we created the Sunday school and Discipleship ministry, followed by the appointments and subsequent inauguration, one of the mandates given to the team led by the chaplain is the preparation and production of a standard manual for both adults and children in the Diocese before the start of the New Year, 2010. Though we knew that the time frame was short, we had no doubt in the ability of the new team to deliver. They did not disappoint. What you hold in your hand is the evidence.

There are a total of forty-two studies, structured into four sections according to the four quarters in the year. All the sections were thoughtfully selected and relevantly addressed to meet our individual and corporate needs today. All the studies are meant to last for a minimum of forty-five minutes, and a maximum of one hour. But some are designed for study in two sitting sessions of the same duration, the reason we chose to make the studies to be less than the normal fifty-two weeks in a year.

Meanwhile, a section to aid further studies has been added to boost studies at individual levels as may be necessary. This is to enhance in-depth study which may sometimes be hampered at corporate study level due to constraints of time. We urge all users to take advantage of this.

For maximum benefit and effect, we have stated repeatedly that the Sunday school be held within every Sunday service in all churches in our Diocese; and should be given not less than forty-five minutes to one hour in line with our collective vision of discipling all our members in the Diocese. For the avoidance of doubt, we direct that this should be enforced by all Sunday school superintendents who are themselves clergy men in the Diocese for effectiveness.

It is further directed that no church is permitted to duplicate the content of this manual as part of their Sunday service bulletins. This is to ensure that every member of our congregations owns a personal copy of the manual.

We thank the team of writers led by the Chaplain, Rev. Cephass Okarefe, whose tireless and dedicated efforts made the timely publication of this manual possible. May God bless all of you.

We commend this manual to all clergy, lay readers, Sunday school teachers, and all people of God in the Diocese and beyond for use.

+ Innocent,

Dioceses of Edo

PREFACE

What you are holding in your hand is the maiden edition of the Adult Sunday School outline of the Diocese of Evo. It is structured into four parts based on the theme, *Abounding in the work of the Lord*, the same theme used at the Diocesan rededication service that was held on Saturday 12th September 2009 at the All Saints Cathedral, Rumuokwursi. It is put together by an array of trained writers, with a most extensive scrutiny and editorial work.

Part one has to do with some **Foundational issues** which we must deal with if we are to abound in the work of the Lord. Here, effort has been made to examine some doctrinal issues that are so crucial to our faith that we cannot afford to ignore. And as is the case with every foundation, all else rests on these issues. Part two focuses on **Employing our gifts and talents** as we seek to abound in His work. The basic assumption here is that there is no Christian in the house of God that is not endowed with one gift, talent or another. We do ourselves and the church some harm when we fail to identify and deploy these to profitable use. In part three, we took some time to examine some **Conflicts and Challenges** that come our way while we seek to abound in the service of God. The practical issues dealt with here are simply mind boggling! And finally, we zeroed in on the **Reward and Regrets** that awaits faithful or unfaithful Christians in the church, depending of course on which side of the divide one chooses to align oneself. It focuses largely on some selected bible characters from both the Old and New Testaments.

In all, we have a total of forty-two study outlines in discussion format. Each study is structured to last for about forty-five to fifty minutes, though in some few instances, a study may last more than one study session and they are so indicated. It is also envisaged that teachers meet regularly to preview the lesson for the next Sunday. It is not expected that anybody will teach any class if he or she did not attend such previews. And there are no exceptions to this rule. Whoever did not attend preview sessions should never be allowed to teach!

We send this out with fervent prayers for all who will participate in the studies, that the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ will grant to all by the Holy Spirit wisdom and illumination in the knowledge of Him, and to keep us rooted and built up in Him, abounding in all honest service to the Lord.

While thanking God for making it possible for us to come up with this maiden edition on short notice, we do have the hope that we shall improve with every edition. In the meantime, comments and constructive criticisms are welcome at ssdmevo@gmail.com or visit at the Chaplain's office, St. Andrews Anglican Church, Rumuobiokani Deanery.

Finally, except otherwise stated, all quotations are taken from the King James Version (KJV).

Rev'd Cephas Okarefe

Chaplain, Sunday school & Discipleship Ministry

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, we thank God Almighty for giving us the grace to finish the work. We thank our Lord Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Innocent U. Ordu for his fatherly guidance, counsel and offer of every necessary support in the course of this work. But more importantly, we thank him for reposing requisite confidence in us in appointing us to this task in the Sunday school and discipleship ministry.

We also express our profound appreciation to the Writers board, the Enlarged Sunday school and discipleship council, and the ExCo for responding promptly on demand.

With deep sense of gratitude, we acknowledge the following persons for their immense contributions to this edition as writers and editors; and those who offered support in one form or the other. They include Rev. Confidence Gura, Engr. Gabriel Okpechi, Rev. Cephas Okarefe, Mrs. O.A. Okarefe, Elder Solomon Nwachukwu, Felix Anieze, Rev. Can. C.E. Ogu, and Rev. Can. Charles Mordi. Others are Mrs. Josephine I.N. Owhor, Rufus Eziamara, Rev. Ebenezer Owhor, Rev. Chukwuemeka A. Okonkwo, Romanus Ossai, Rev. Can Leo Nwachukwu, Tina Wosu, Dan Akibor, Dr Mrs. Rosemary Ekechukwu, Azubike Obi, Mrs. Ebele Chukwubuikem, Reginald Tom Jaja, and Ifeoma Anaemana.

May God bless and prosper your ministries in the mighty name of Jesus.

PART A – FOUNDATIONAL ISSUES IN THE WORK OF THE LORD

STUDY ONE

TOPIC: SANCTIFICATION

TEXT: 1 Thes. 4:3-8; 2 Thes. 2:13

OBJECTIVES:

1. To help us define the word, sanctification
2. To help us discover what it means for a Christian to be sanctified
3. To explain the importance of sanctification
4. To explain how to become sanctified
5. To identify the benefits of sanctification

INTRODUCTION: Sanctification appears to have become a very irrelevant word in our society today. But it is an *irrelevant* reality that is very crucial, contemporary and relevant!

It comes from two Latin words “*santus*” which means *holy*, and “*fiacare*” which means to *make*. To sanctify therefore means to make holy. There are living images of sanctification in our world today which are more real, and more authentic than all the people put together who think sanctification is outdated. Let us delve into the details in this study.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. a. What does the word sanctification mean? Psalm 4:3. 2Cor. 6:17.
b. What does it mean for a Christian to be sanctified?: Jn.17:15-17; 1Cor.6:11; 2Cor.5:17; Eph.4:24.
2. a. Why is sanctification so important? Matt.7:19-21; 1Thess.4:3-4, 1Cor 6:9-11,
b. How can we become sanctified? Acts 15:7-9; Heb.10:10, 14-18, 22, 25, and 29.
3. What role does sanctification play in our daily lives? Eph.5:26-27; Rom 8:1, Heb. 2:11; 13: 12.

CONCLUSION: Sanctification is obedience to our commander-in chief, Jesus Christ. It is not perfection, but a growing consistency (in becoming like Christ), that occurs in our lives when we open ourselves to the power of the Holy Spirit in prayer and seek to fill our hearts with His word through diligent reading and study of the Bible.

MEMORY VERSE: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John17:17).

STUDY TWO

TOPIC: The Blood of Jesus Christ.

TEXTS: Exodus 12:3-13; Heb. 10: 1-22

OBJECTIVES:

1. To identify the functions of blood and how God applied it in His deliverance of Israel from Egypt;
2. To identify why God chose blood as a symbol of His covenant with Israel
3. To specify the effect of blood in both the Old and New Testaments
4. To help us demonstrate the application of the blood of Christ in our lives as Christians

Introduction: Right from the Old Testament era and during the time of the patriarchs, blood has been a highly revered thing. God declares that blood can speak (Gen. 4:10), and also that blood is life (Gen. 9:4). In order to deliver His people, Israel from the house of bondage God told them to sprinkle their dwelling places with blood (Exod. 12:7, 13). This was a mirror image of the total salvation or deliverance of mankind. And at the fullness of time, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ to be sacrificed as the only remedy for sins. What then is the blood of Jesus Christ? What advantage does it have over the blood of bulls? How do we appropriate its benefits for our lives today? Let us study on!

Study Questions

1. Blood in the OT.
 - a. What is the function of blood? Exod. 30:10; Lev. 8:15; 17: 11, and 14.
 - b. How did God apply the blood in the deliverance of the children of Israel from His plague in Egypt? Ex. 12: 3-13
 - c. Why did God choose the blood as a symbol of His covenant with Israel as He did in Exod. 24: 8? Lev.17:11-14; Heb. 9:19-22.
2. The effect of blood in OT & NT:
 - a. What effect did the blood of bulls produce on sins of the people in the OT? Ex.30:10 (cf. Heb.10:1-4)
 - b. What is the effect of the blood of Christ on our sins? Heb. 10:14-18; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 12:11
3. How do we take or apply the benefits of the blood of Christ for our own use today as Christians? Matt. 26:27-28; John 6:53-56; 1 Cor. 11:26-30.

Conclusion: God says, "... It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" That means that the blood of goats and bulls offered in sacrifice to God could at best, only cover (for a while), but not cleanse or wash away sins. The implication was that this covering was limited in its efficacy and that explains why it was necessary to repeat it on a continuous basis, but the blood of Jesus Christ was shed to wash away sins so that God would remember them again no more forever. It follows therefore that the power in this blood that helps it to accomplish this purpose is strong and effective. Like the Israelites in the land of Egypt, you and I must therefore run into, and be covered by this blood. And good enough, we have instituted in the Holy Communion a means of application of this blood by

faith today. If taken worthily, it would mean health and long life to us, just as the unworthy application means ill health and premature death.

Memory verse: John 6:56 *“He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him”.*

STUDY THREE

TOPIC: The Christian Message (the Gospel)

OBJECTIVE: To help us identify by the end of the study *why*, and *what* to proclaim as we serve the Lord; and to be able to explain the secret behind the success of the early church.

TEXTS: Acts 8: 26-40; 1Thess. 2: 1-10.

Introduction: There is no doubt about the urgency to share the Christian message. Paul recognized this urgency when he commanded his son Timothy to preach the word, to be instant in season and out of season. Many of us as Christians have cashed in on this urgency to be really and truly busy for the Lord. The question is not whether or not we are preaching, but rather *what* we are preaching. We believe that if we are preaching the right message, God remains faithful to His word, and many more would be converted to Christ and hell depopulated. A situation where we labour more to preach and people's lives seem to be unaffected should be of real concern to us. There is certainly need to re-visit *what* we should be preaching.

Questions for Discussion

1. Why must we preach the word of God (the gospel)? Rom. 1:16-17; Mk. 16:15; 2 Tim. 4: 1-4.
2. What should be the core of the Christian message? Acts 2:38; 3: 19-20; 5: 42; 8: 35; 17: 18, 30-31; Mark 1: 15; Luke 9: 60; 2 Cor. 4:5.
3. What was the secret behind the great success of the preaching of the apostles and early disciples? Acts 5: 42 – 6:1a; 11: 22-24; 1Cor. 2: 4-5; 2 Cor. 12: 17-18.
4. Why must Jesus be at the centre of the Christian message? Acts 4: 10-12; 13:38-39; 1 Cor.3:11.

Conclusion: We live in a time when the word of God is being merchandized by many so called preachers for selfish and personal gains. These selfish interests have given rise to the multiplicity of churches and ministries today. In the attempt to attract huge membership ministers have tried to 'water down' the word of God. The result is that we have a huge number of worshippers and adherents who are merely churchy but not Christians, worshippers without noticeable positive changes in their lives; worshippers who idolize their pastors but would not reverence God in their lives. Are you called to be a preacher of God's word? You may do well to learn from the old apostles and disciples. Paul's testimony was this, "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe" Let us follow their examples and we shall obtain similar results as they did. When we preach the right message in the right way, we will obtain the right results. What is your response?

Memory Verse: Acts 8: 35 *"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus"*.

For further studies: 1Thess. 2: 8-10; 1 Cor.1:23; 2:2; Acts 2:36; Phil. 2:5-11.

STUDY FOUR

TOPIC: The Word of God – Part 1

TEXT: John 1:1

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

1. That the word of God is the revealed will of God in the scriptures.
2. That Jesus Christ is the word (made flesh)
3. That the issues of life solely depend on good knowledge of the word of God.

INTRODUCTION: The word of God is God Himself (Jn. 1:1) and the word was with God from the very beginning, before all creation. All things that were created, visible or invisible were made through the word. At the fullness of time, the word was made manifest in human flesh for the world to see. That word is Jesus Christ in whose life is the light of men (Jn. 1:4).

The scriptures are inspired by God (2Tim 3:16-17). They reveal the mind of God and testify of Jesus (the WORD). The Bible is the story (His-story) of the word (Jn. 3:39). We are being urged to study the word diligently because the issues of life depend on the word of God and also contain ready answers to all of life's problems.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How do we obtain illumination from (the testimony) God's Word?
2 Tim 3:16, 17; John 5:39.
2. What do the scriptures reveal to us concerning God's word? 2 Sam 7: 28; Psalm 119:89; Prov. 30:5- 6; 33:6; Isa. 40:8; Matt. 24:35.
3. How can the word dwell in us (Col. 3:16)? Deut. 6:6-9, Joshua 1:8; 2 Tim. 2:15 (please read this from NIV); James 1:22-24.
4. In what ways does the word affect our daily lives and future?
Joshua 1:8, Deut. 30:14; Psalm 107:20; 119:103-105; John 14:23.

CONCLUSION: All of scripture is inspired (God-breathed), trustworthy and unchangeable. We obtain illumination from it as we study it diligently and handle it correctly (i.e., interpret it properly and honestly). Through diligent reading, meditation and practice, the word comes to dwell in us, and the benefits are both present and eternal. Dare any of us trifle with God's word then? We all have a choice to make!

MEMORY VERSE: Eph.6:17 *"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God".*

STUDY FIVE

TOPIC: The Word of God – Part 2

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

1. State the promised value of the scriptures
2. Identify at least three reasons for unenthusiastic attitude to the study of God's word, and suggest solutions;
3. Explain the correct attitude to God's word

TEXT: 2Chro.34:14-33

INTRODUCTION: The Bible is the word of God. It is the textbook of divine truth. It is the *guide book* to eternal life. Yet many have no regard for it (cf. Jer.36:23-24). And of course, they pay dearly for it (cf. Jer.36:29-31). However, some wise people who cherish God's truth are daily exploring God's word in the Bible. Just re-discovering God's word in the bible has led to astonishing revivals in history. For instance, the young King Josiah in 2Kings22:1-11; the Nation of Israel as led by Ezra in Neh. 8:1-8; 9:1-3, etc. This study should provoke us to do something concrete about the word of God.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The value of God's word:
 - a. Outline the symbols used to illustrate the importance of the word God to man from the following texts: Heb.4:12; Jer.23:29; 1 Pe.1:23; Ja.1:22-25; Ps.119:105; 1 Pe.2:2.
 - b. Quite often, we are unenthusiastic about God's word, even in the church despite its promised value. Practically discuss and proffer solutions.
2.
 - a. What was the response of King Josiah when the word of God was found and read in his presence? (Take special note of verses 19-21 of our text; and also 2Chro.35:15-18).
 - b. Point out what our attitude should similarly be towards bible reading as Christians from the following texts: Jos.1:8; Col.3:16; 1Tim.4:13; 2Tim3:15.
3. How do you understand John 6:27? How do we apply this to our lives as individuals?

CONCLUSION: We don't do ourselves any good by neglecting to read the bible. All the help we need to do so are available so that we don't have any excuse. The Daily Reading Notes, especially the more balanced ones make it easy. We can all get started today! And one more thing: our attitude towards the Sunday school time should change!

Memory verse: Jos.1:8 *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success"*.

STUDY SIX

TOPIC: Obedience and Faith

TEXT: John 2:1-11.

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

1. Explain the truth that when we close our hearts to God's offer of His blessings, we only end up being the losers.
2. Identify some of the steps to the revelation of the glory of God as we seek to abound in His service
3. Identify the key principle that it is only Christ that can offer the 'good wine'
4. Explain those to whom God will bestow His blessings and the miraculous in His service.

INTRODUCTION: In Luke 4:14-15 & 16-21, we learn that Jesus, full of the power of the Holy Spirit sought to launch the manifesto of His mission in Nazareth after His forty days of fasting and temptation in the desert. But unfortunately, the people of Nazareth rejected Him, and even sought to kill Him (Luke 4:28-30). This they did probably because they thought of Him as a mere human being with no messianic credentials (4:22, 24). Rejected in Nazareth, He turned to Canaan, a city in Galilee (Luke 4:31; John 2:1) leaving us with some basic principles of faith and obedience which forms the main thrust of this study.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. "The rejection of Christ by Nazareth became the gain of Canaan" (John 2:11). What salient truth does this convey to us?
2. ".....and manifested His glory..." (John 2:11). Identify some of the steps to the revelation of God's glory from the following texts: (a) John 2:2 (b) John 2:3 (c) John 2:4, 5. (d.) John 2:5 (e) John 2:6-8 (Point out the four elements in this particular step here)
3. "You have kept the good wine until now" (John 2:10). What is the crucial principle here?
4. "God prefers to entrust His blessings and the miraculous with the "servants" who will promptly, totally, unquestioningly and continually obey Him than the "disciples" and the "too-knows" who would not. Discuss (Note verses 2, 5, 9, and 11 of our text).
5. **FOR PRACTICAL ACTION:** Make a list of possible areas in your life where you are still disobeying (or partially obeying) the Lord, and come with repentance before Him.

CONCLUSION: We only hurt ourselves with our lives of unbelief. Our disobedience or partial obedience takes us nowhere. It rather brings us more heartaches and losses. The loss of Nazareth was the gain of Canaan, where Christ found acceptance, determined faith, ready hearts; and the “servants” with unquestioning, prompt, complete, and successive obedience. Christ is still searching for such men, even now! Will He find that “servant” in you?

MEMORY VERSE: John 2:5 *“His mother saith unto the servants, whatsoever he saith unto you, do it”.*

STUDY SEVEN

TOPIC: Righteousness

TEXT: Prov. 11: 4; 14:34.

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

1. Define righteousness
2. Explain how to become righteous
3. Outline God's expectation concerning those to whom He has imputed righteousness
4. Explain the dangers of living in unrighteousness

INTRODUCTION: One significant mark that differentiates the children of the Kingdom from others is righteousness. Prov. 11:4 says "righteousness delivers from death". That is great power! Righteousness is so important that it was a dominant part of the Sermon on the Mount. As we progress in this study, we pray that the Lord may grant to us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him and His will as we seek to abound in his work.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What does righteousness mean, and how can ours *'exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees'*? Rom. 8:1-4; 6:6, 14; Gal. 5:16-18; 22-23; Titus. 2:11-12.
2. How can one become righteous? Rm. 1:16-17, 3:21-26; 4:22-25; Phil. 3:9; I Cor. 1: 30.
3. Discuss God's expectation concerning those unto whom He has credited righteousness:
 - a. I Pet. 2:24a, 2Cor. 5:15.
 - b. James 2:14-17
 - c. Matt. 3:8-10; Phil. 1:10-11.
4. What are the dangers of living in unrighteousness? Rom. 1:18; 2:6-9; 1 Cor. 6:9; 2 Thess. 2:12.
5. Discuss some of the benefits of righteousness cf. Prov. 11:4; 12:28; 14:34.

CONCLUSION: Christ is our righteousness. His righteousness is imparted to us when we believe, such that even if we die at that point, we go to heaven. But as long as we live, God expects our lives to bring forth and be full of fruits of righteousness. It is an indispensable mark of those who belong to the Kingdom of God. No one should make any mistake about this. No unrighteous person will enter heaven. Great danger lies ahead for the unrighteous person!

Memory Verse: 2 Cor. 5:15 - *"And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again".*

STUDY EIGHT

TOPIC: The Place of the Cross in Christianity

TEXT: Mark 8:34-38

OBJECTIVES: By the end of the study the students are expected to

1. Explain the meaning of the cross in Christianity
2. Examine the position of scriptures on the cross of Christ, and evidences of it in some characters in scripture.
3. Explain why the cross is indispensable in Christianity
4. Outline the benefits of the cross to the child of God

INTRODUCTION: The cross which is a symbol of suffering for Christianity cannot be ruled out from our Christian faith. The cross in the Jewish culture was meant for punishing serious offences according to Bible history. Paul writes that Christ died “even the death on the cross”. So important is the cross that it has assumed an important symbol of the Christian faith. Many wear it on the neck as an ornament. In our church, bishops wear it regularly. But just what is it all about, and why is it so important? This study should enlighten us.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. a. What do the following texts suggest about the meaning of the cross in Christianity? Mk.8:34 -35; Gal. 2:20; Heb.12:2; Phil.2:8
b. What is the place of the cross in the Christian faith? 1 Cor.1:23; 2:2-8; Gal. 5:11
2. a. What is the position of the scriptures on Christian service and the cross? Lk 14:26-27, and 33; Lk12:4-7; Acts 14:22; 1 Thes. 3:4.
b. Why is the cross inevitable in Christianity? Eph.2:16; Heb.2:14; 1 Pe.2:21-24.
3. Explain the benefits of bearing the cross from the following: Heb.2: 18; Job 23:10; James 1:12; 1Pe. 1:7; 4:12-14

CONCLUSION: From this study, we have noted clearly that the cross stands for suffering, shame, rejection and death. It is the central theme of the gospel. If the cross be removed, what is left will not be the gospel; and bearing the cross as Christians is not optional. Any Christian who is therefore afraid and refuses or denies the cross is not worthy of the kingdom of God. It is only after bearing the cross that one can boldly expect the crown of glory. Any gospel that ignores the cross is therefore incomplete, fake and should be discarded.

MEMORY VERSE: 1 Cor. 2:2 *“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified”.*

FOR FURTHER STUDIES

1. You can discover the evidence of the cross in the lives of some bible characters by their service to God. Moses – Heb.11:24-27, 36; Stephen – Acts 7:54-60; James – Acts 12:1-3; the apostles of our Lord – Acts 4:1-4; 5:17-18, 40-41.
2. Matt. 10: 34-38; 16: 24-27; Luke 9:57-62; John 18:15-18, 25-27; Luke 12:4-9.

STUDY NINE

TOPIC: The Sovereignty of God

TEXT: Rom 9: 13 – 24

OBJECTIVES: To help participants by the end of the study to:

1. Define the sovereignty of God
2. Identify God's sovereignty in the day to day occurrences of life
3. Explain what the attitude of God's children should be when the seemingly unexplainable happens.

INTRODUCTION: The scripture undoubtedly teaches us that God being the owner and creator of all things both visible and invisible has the absolute power, freedom and authority to rule over the entire universe (Eph 1:11). This absolute right and power of His creation in the universe defines his sovereignty, which is the subject of this study.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How will you define the "Sovereignty of God" from our main text? See also Eph.1:9, 11; 3:11; Dan. 4:35.
2. Identify the sovereignty of God as seen from the following passages: 1 Sam 2:6-8; Matt. 5:45; Rom.8:28; Heb.6:17.
3. Comment on the Sovereign rule of God in the lives of His people in the following texts: Acts 12:1-10; Ps. 75:7.
4. In the light of what we have come to understand about God's sovereignty from above, explain what our attitude should be as children of God when some things that seem to defy solution or human explanation happen in our lives Job. 14:7-9; 19:25 – 27.

CONCLUSION: God is Sovereign, and do not need to be questioned over the affairs of life however; we don't have to fear or panic when what appears to have no human explanation happens. Rather, like Job, we should continue to keep our hopes alive, knowing that He who works all things after the counsel of His will is yet in control, and shall ultimately perfect His purpose concerning us.

MEMORY VERSE: Eph 1:11- *"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will"*.

For further study:

1. Deut. 32:39; 1Chr. 29:11-12; Col.1:15-18.

2. Someone had said, “because Jesus Christ created all things, all things are ultimately subject to Him”. Do you agree? You may wish to justify your answer by meditating on the following :

- a. He turned water into wine – Jn.2:7-9
- b. The noble man’s son healed – Jn.4:46-53
- c. The impotent man commanded to walk – Jn. 5:5-9
- d. Five thousand were fed – Jn. 6:10-12
- e. Demons obeyed Him- Mk.5:2-13
- f. Issue of blood healed – Mk.5:25-34
- g. The dead raised back to life – Mk.5:35-42
- h. Wind and sea obeyed Him – Mk.4:36-41

STUDY TEN

TOPIC: The Trinity

TEXT: 1 Cor. 12:4 – 6, Matt. 3:16 & 17

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

1. Explain what the trinity is.
2. Ascertain the position of scriptures on the trinity
3. State our belief about the trinity

INTRODUCTION: The fact that God is one and yet has revealed Himself in Three Persons – The Father, Son and Holy Spirit has confused many uninformed persons. Even some professing Christians have bluntly refused to believe in the Trinity. But the scripture is very clear on the fact that our God is three persons in one. In Matt. 28:19, God revealed himself in three distinct personalities and yet remains one God.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Explain the trinity in your own word
 - a. Identify three different forms God manifested from the following passages, Matt. 3: 16-17; John 15:26.
 - b. Explain the unity of God the father, Son and Holy Spirit from these passages: Matt. 3:16-17; Jn. 16:12-15; 1 John 5:7
 - c. Identify and discuss the simultaneous work of the Trinity from the following texts: Gen 1:26; Gen. 11:7; John 15: 26; 1 Cor. 12:3 – 5.
2. Read the statement of Jesus in John 5:17 – 18.
 - a. Why did the Jews seek the more to kill Him?
 - b. Do you share their sentiments? Explain
3. “The birth, baptism and transfiguration accounts of Jesus were all associated with heavenly revelation of the Trinity”.
 - a. Do you agree? Explain Lk. 1:35, Matt. 3:16-17; Mk.9:7.
 - b. What can hinder any man from understanding the mystery of the Trinity? 1 Cor. 2:14-16.

CONCLUSION: The issue of Trinity is very unique and above human understanding. Its full understanding will continue to elude us until we see Him face-to-face. Only then can we fully understand and acknowledge that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one. What a holy mystery! Yet, it is loaded with rich meaning and blessings to us His children.

MEMORY VERSE: 1 John 5:7 – *“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one”.*

STUDY ELEVEN

TOPIC: BAPTISM

TEXT: Matt. 28:18-20; Rom. 6:1-4

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

1. Explain the meaning and importance of baptism
2. Identify the significance of baptism
3. Explain the necessity of baptism of children in the church

Introduction: The word baptism is known to be associated with a wide range of divergent opinions and understanding across Christian denominations. Number 111 of the statement on catechism on page 492 of the new BCP defined it as “the sacrament or sign of our Regeneration or New Birth wherein those baptized receive the promises of forgiveness of sin, adoption as children of God and are made members of Christ’s body, the church and inheritors of the kingdom of God”. We know that in the New Testament, Christ forbade that children be cut off from him (Mk. 10:13-15). In this study, we shall search the scriptures for the meaning of the word, baptism, its benefits and the danger of not being baptized.

Questions for Discussion

1. Our Lord Jesus gave some specific command in Matt. 28: 18-20.
 - a. Identify at least two of the commands
 - b. Explain the meaning of the command to baptize
 - c. In whose name are we commanded to baptize?
2. Is baptism necessary for salvation? Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:37-38; (See the BCP, Article 27)
3. What is the significance of baptism to Christians? Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3, 4; Col. 2:12-13; (See also the appended additional notes on baptism)
4. If baptism calls for a positive moral response:
 - a. Why was Christ Baptized: Matt. 3:13-15. (See also the appended additional notes)
 - b. Why are children baptized in our Church? Ps. 51:5-6^a; Rm.1:16-17; Matt. 19:13-15; Acts 16:31-33; 1 Cor. 1:16; 10:1-2; (See also BCP No. 115, Page 493).

Conclusion: Baptism is a command of Christ to the church, and it must not be ignored, like every other command in the scriptures. The mode was not prescribed, just as the examples we have in the scriptures *did not* state the mode, including the one of Christ by John the Baptist. There is equally no specific scripture that pointedly talks about baptism of children. But we see individuals and *households* baptized. Sanctified sense however tells us that because Christ himself commands that we bring children unto him, and all are agreed on this, we should not deter them when it comes to baptism.

As a sacrament, it is administered on persons and received by God's given faith. Even the faith of adults has to also come from God who is absolutely sovereign and who cares for both adults and children alike. Meanwhile, the significance of baptism forbids any Christian to be careless about it. Are you? Will you?

Memory Verse: Matt. 28:19 – “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”

For further studies:

1. In Acts 2:41 we are told that about 3,000 persons repented and were baptized and the same day were added to the church. How were these persons possibly baptized, bearing in mind that there is no river in Jerusalem, and technology was not as advanced as it is today as to have a kind of immersion or submersion pool?
2. In the OT, Circumcision was the rite of initiation into the covenant of God with Abraham. What is the rite of initiation in the NT?
3. Read and study carefully the additional notes at the end of the studies in this manual.

PART B – EMPLOYING OUR GIFTS AND TALENTS IN THE WORK OF THE LORD

STUDY TWELVE

TOPIC: *ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD*

TEXT: I Cor. 15:58

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

1. Define how to abound in the work of the Lord, and why
2. List practical ways in which we can abound in the work of the Lord, especially in a new Diocese as ours and
3. Identify hindrances to our abounding in the work of the Lord, and how to overcome them.

INTRODUCTION: The Church at Corinth was plagued with so many difficulties and challenges that the Apostle Paul had to tackle out of the deep love he had for the people, yet with unwavering firmness (I Cor. 4: 14-16, 21). One thorny issue he devoted much time to addressing was that of resurrection (chap. 15). Will the dead rise again indeed? He minced no words in affirming that if the dead will not rise, then of all people, we are most to be pitied (15:16-19). After a series of logical arguments, he rounded off with great joy at the victory secured over death by Christ (15:57), and therefore none should be weakened in spirit, slackened in zeal, nor be swayed by those who peddle this false teaching. Rather, the brethren should give themselves fully to the Lord, and discountenance this falsehood.

Our theme, which this study seeks to address, deals with this important piece of advice to these people of God who needed to shake off this doctrinal falsehood in the Corinthian Church.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. a. What does it mean to abound in the work of the Lord as we have it in I Cor. 15:58? (Read from preferably NIV). b. Why should we abound in the work of the Lord? John 15:8; I Cor. 15:58; Heb. 12: 25, 28.
2. In what practical ways can we abound in the work of the Lord? Rom. 12:3-8; I Cor.1:10; 4:2; 5:7-8; II Cor. 13:5; Heb. 10:23-25, 35-36; 12:1-2; 12-17; 13:2-3, 16-17.
3. a. What can hinder us from *abounding* in the work of the Lord? Rom. 8: 13; 12:3; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; Heb. 12:1; II Pe.2: 1-3. b. How do we overcome these hindrances? I Cor. 1:58; II Pet. 3:14-18; II Tim. 3:16-17; James. 5:16.

CONCLUSION: We have seen from this study that ‘abounding in the work of the Lord’ implies that we give ourselves fully to Him and His service. We have also discovered some practical ways we can abound in the work of the Lord, and what we stand to gain in doing so. However, we noted that the flesh, pride/arrogance, and perhaps, most of all, yielding to false teaching or falsehood are serious impediments, but these can be overcome by giving ourselves fully to every available means of grace in the Church in order to grow in grace and

in the knowledge of Christ, standing firm on the pure Word of God, and giving ourselves fully to the work of the Lord.

Memory Verse: *Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord (I Cor. 15:58).*

STUDY THIRTEEN

TOPIC: Christian Giving

TEXT: II Cor. 8: 1-15

OBJECTIVES: *By the end of the study, participants should be able to define Christian Giving; explain God's mind about it; outline how we should give in the church; cite practical examples and benefits from the scriptures; and identify what we may have been doing rightly or wrongly in the church.*

INTRODUCTION: As we all know, *spreading the message of the kingdom* which was our topic in the last two studies costs money and materials. Thus if we are to do it effectively, and be a caring church, we cannot avoid talking about this important subject of *Giving*. But we need to search the scriptures so that we may have clear biblical position on it since we have decided to pursue Christ's great commission with renewed determination as part of the vision of our church this year.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Christian Giving:
 - a. What is it? 2 Cor. 8: 3-7
 - b. Who should give in the church and why? Exo.35: 4-5, 21; 2Cor. 8: 4-5, 7; 13-15
2. How should we give?
 - a. Exo.35: 4-5; 1Chron. 29:3-9; Matt.6:1-4; 1cor.16:1-2; 2Cor.9:6-15; 2Cor.9:7.
 - b. Point out examples of giving that buttress the above stated position. Exo.35:20-21; Lk.21:2-4; 2 Cor.8:1-5
3. What are the benefits of giving?
 - a. Exo.36: 4- 7; Acts 20:35; 2Cor. 8:13-15; Eccl. 11:1; II Cor.9:10-15
 - b. From what has been discovered so far, point out what we may have been doing rightly/wrongly and the challenge(s) before us as a church today.

CONCLUSION: God commands giving and it is therefore part of our Christian responsibility. It should be done without eye-service, according to ability, willingly, liberally, cheerfully and proportionately. Giving brings more joy, happiness and fulfilment than receiving; and opens to the giver doors of opportunities for God's blessings. How we obey this divine command and carry out this responsible duty tells a lot about our faith in and commitment to the Lord.

MEMORY VERSE: 2 Cor. 8:7 - *"Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also".*

For further study: Num.7:2-28

STUDY FOURTEEN

TOPIC: CHRISTIAN GIVING – TITHES AND OFFERINGS

TEXTS: GEN.14:17-20; LEV.27:30-32; Mal.3:8-11

AIM: *At the end of the study students should be able to –*

1. *Tell the difference between tithes and offerings, why we should give them, and where we should pay them.*
2. *Outline the blessings of tithing and giving of offerings, and the danger of doing the contrary.*
3. *Explain clearly what it means to willingly serve the Lord with our tithes and offerings.*

INTRODUCTION: We are continuing our study on giving today with a look at tithes and offerings. What is tithe? What does scripture teach about it? Is it different from offerings? How? What should be our attitude towards it as Christians? We shall answer these questions and more in this study.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are tithes and offerings? Discuss: Gen.28:22; Lev. 27:32; Deut. 14:22-23; 26:13; Heb 7:2
 - a. What is the worth of God's work in our lives? Can this be compared with the tithe we are meant to give Him, or whatever offering we bring at any time? Discuss.
 - b. What did Christ teach concerning tithes in the NT? Mt. 23:23.
 - c. As God's children, why should we pay tithe? Gen. 28:22; Lev:27:30; Deut. 14:23; Mal.3:8-11
 - d. Where did the bible command that tithes and offerings be brought? Mal.3:10a.
2. How are our tithes and offerings supposed to be given as a matter of divine principle? Lev.1:3; Mal.1:6-8; Matt.5:23-24; Lk.6:38; 2Cor.9:6-7.
 - a. What are the blessings we receive when we pay our tithes and give our offerings? Deut. 26: 12-15; Mal.3:10-12; Luke 6:38.
 - b. Do we have the right to spend our tithes for ourselves? Lev. 27:30-33; Deut.26: 13-14.
 - c. What are the dangers of not paying our tithes and giving offering to the Lord as Christians? Mal.3:8-9.

CONCLUSION: The tithe is *all* the tenth of all the 'increase' (produce or earnings) that God gives to us. What does "increase" include? It includes everything that increases the value of earthly possessions that God places in our trust, whether it is earned income or gifts. The tithe of our increase is God's own for us to give back to Him as a matter of privilege. Tithe is a hallowed thing which must be treated in a hallowed way. To touch it at all means that we should be ready to add 20% of the original sum. It is that serious!

Offerings on the other hand are gifts brought to God beyond the tithes, whereas the tithe was always ten percent of one's increase. Obedience in these matters can potentially open the door for us to prosper, while disobedience has been known to be a curse and a source of many troubles. Let's be wise and faithful.

MEMORY VERSE: *Mal 3:8-10 – “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”.*

STUDY FIFTEEN

TOPIC: CHRISTIAN GIVING – VOWS

TEXT: GEN. 28:20-22

OBJECTIVES: By the end of the study:

1. Participants should be able to define vows
2. State the relevance of vows today
3. Make vows to God that are honest, meaningful and biblical

INTRODUCTION: Are pastors, politicians, world leaders, and everyone else, responsible for promises made? What about honesty and integrity, is there a double standard? How do you feel when someone makes a promise to you and doesn't keep it or makes excuses to get out of the promise? Maybe, that is how God feels too when we do not fulfill our vows.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is a vow? Gen.28:20-22.
 - a. Do people and should people still make vows to God? Discuss. Num.29:39.
 - b. What should be our attitude toward vows we have made by ourselves? Lev. 27:9-10; Nu.30:2; Eccl.5:4-7.
 - c. How does God view those who make credible vows? Ps. 15:1-5 (pay particular attention to v4)
2. Does vow have to do with money or resources only? 1 Sam.1:11; Psa.132:2-5; Num.6:2.
3. What possible consequences are there for one who breaks his/her vows or pledge? Deut.23:21-23; Eccl. 5: 4-6; Matt.12:36.
4. Discuss the validity of vows as follows:
 - a. The circumstances that can lead to a vow being nullified from Nu.30: 3-5; 6-8; 10-15.
 - b. The lesson this convey to us about who may make a valid vow and who may not? (Read also Nu.30:9).

CONCLUSION: Vows are a part of the normal Christian life. Vows made sincerely and honoured with integrity, can be the secret of being held in high esteem in the presence of the Lord. However, it is better not to vow than to vow and not honour it because that can be potentially dangerous, as God has clearly warned against such. Are you here today in this study, and you have made vows or pledges without honouring them? You have been enlightened. Ask God to forgive you, and go and do the right thing today!

MEMORY VERSE: Eccl 5:4 – *“When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for He hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed”.*

FOR FURTHER STUDIES:

1. On our attitude to vows made: Psalm 50:14; 66:13;

2. On when vows may be made, and the dangers of rash vows that are not well thought through: Judges 11:1-40; 1 Sam. 14:24-31

STUDY SIXTEEN

TOPIC: Serving the Lord with Our Talents

TEXT: Matt. 25:14-30

OBJECTIVES: At the end of the study the students should be able to:

1. Explain what it means to serve the Lord with our talents.
2. Identify the various talents that God has endowed us with as His children
3. State the benefits and dangers of not serving the Lord with our talents.

Introduction: Service is universal and purposeful. God created us in His own image to serve him with the talents he bestowed on each of us, and for which He will demand an account. Our talents should be invested in the service of Christ to boost His kingdom. They should be deployed in blessing others and His purpose and not to show off, hide, or commercialize. This study is to give us the right perspective on this very important aspect of deploying our gifts and talents in the service of Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

1. What does it mean to serve the Lord?
 - a. Ex.23:22-25; Eccl.12:13; Micah 6:8
 - b. Matt. 25:14-17
2. From these passages mention the different “talents” given to us by our Lord, and how we should use them:
 - a. 1 Cor. 6:15
 - b. Eph.5:15-16
 - c. Psalm 23:6; Luke 2:37 (daily living)
 - d. Acts 4:37; 1 Tim 6:17-19; Mark 10:21-22
 - e. Ex. 36:1-3; Matt 25:15
 - f. Ps.127:3; Acts 21:8-9
3. DISCUSS:
 - a. The inherent blessing in serving God with our talents - Matt 24:45-47
 - b. The disadvantages / curses of not serving God – Ex.23:25-29; Matt 24:48
51, Matt 25:30;

CONCLUSION: People serve God for various reasons – some out of love for Him, others for material benefit. Our task is to serve God for Whom He is. We must therefore make every

effort to utilize these talents and effectively too, if we must be seen to be relevant to God and to our generation. Besides, the rewards and regrets ahead should make us wise!

MEMORY VERSE: Josh 24:15 –*“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”.*

STUDY SEVENTEEN

TOPIC: *THE FAITHFUL STEWARD*

TEXT: Matt. 24:45-51

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

1. Define who a steward is
2. Outline the basic requirements of a steward
3. State some of the benefits of faithfulness, as well as identify some of the areas we are expected to demonstrate faithfulness as children of God.
4. State some of the dangers of unfaithfulness

INTRODUCTION: This week is Sunday school expansion week. And the theme is *the faithful steward* which was taken from our text. This study is therefore based on the text and the theme for the week. We want to take a closer look at these.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Who is a steward?
2. What basic requirement must stewards possess? 1 Cor.4:2; Matt. 24:45
3. What dangers of unfaithfulness are stated in the following texts?
 - a. Matt. 24:48-51;
 - b. Matt. 25: 26-30; Lk. 13:6-9
 - c. 1Ki. 20:38-42
 - d. Judges 5:23; Jer. 47:10
 - e. Nu.12:6-9
 - f. Lk. 16: 10-12
 - g. Mal. 3:8-12
 - h. Mal.1:6-10
4. What benefits of faithfulness are in the following text passages? Ps.31:23; 101:6; Prov.28:20.
5. Identify some areas of stewardship we are expected to demonstrate faithfulness from the following texts:
 - a. 1Ki. 20:38-42
 - b. Judges 5:23; Jer. 47:10
 - c. Matt. 24:45-47
 - d. Matt. 25: 14-15, 19.
 - e. Lk.16:1-2
 - f. Rm. 14:12
 - g. 1 Cor. 5:10

- h. Mal. 1: 6-8
- i. Mal. 3:8-12

CONCLUSION: Stewardship can be lost, and unfaithfulness in stewardship is punishable by the Lord who requires all stewards to be faithful. But the faithful steward has everything going for him, ranging from divine recognition to concrete unquantifiable benefits. Are you a faithful steward?

MEMORY VERSE: 1 Cor. 4:2 *“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful”*

PART C – CONFLICTS AND CHALLENGES IN THE WORK OF THE LORD

STUDY EIGHTEEN

TOPIC: Economic Challenges – Part 1

TEXT: 1 Cor. 4:11-16; Matt. 8:20;

INTRODUCTION: ‘Economic’ here may refer to the economy of a country or an area. It may also have to do with the money that a society or an individual has. It is the economic situation that determines the earning and purchasing power of any given people or person.

Challenges on the other hand refer to difficulties associated with the above (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary). Economic challenge may differ from place to place, from person to person and from church to church.

Some years back, there wasn’t much emphasis on the need for money in the service of God. Yet we all know that the church as part of the society feels the impact when the economy grows or depreciates as we have in the world today. The challenge stares all of us in the face today and hence the need to talk about it, especially from the perspective of God’s word.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Explain what you understand by ‘economic challenges’ in the service of God. 1 Cor. 4: 11-12.
2. Identify some of the causes of economic challenges. Gen 41:53-57; Prov. 29:2; 1Tim. 5:13. Are there any other you can identify apart from these scriptures?
3. Explain what practical steps we can take as individuals to tackle the present day economic challenges in the life of the church. Eph. 4: 28; 2Cor 8:6-15; James 2:14-18; 1 John 3:17; 2 Sam. 24:24; Mal. 3:8-10
4. Suggest some wise steps we can take to minimize economic downturn. Gen. 41:47-49; Prov. 16:3, Luke 5:3-6; 1 Cor. 4:12a.

CONCLUSION: Economic difficulty is a reality that we must face in the service of God, be it as individuals, families or church. This could be attributable to so many reasons. But we must understand that God is still in control of His world, and He remains our only source of hope and help, and hence we must turn to Him for direction. But we must not neglect to fulfil our part.

MEMORY VERSE: 1 Cor. 4:12a – “And (we) labour, working with our own hands...”

STUDY NINETEEN

TOPIC: Economic and work challenges – Part 2

TEXT: 2Thess. 3:6 – 15

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

1. Explain the reasons why we should engage in work and economic activities
2. Identify areas where work pose a challenge to our service in the house of God
3. Explain how we may balance effectiveness in God's work and ours.

INTRODUCTION: We eat to live; we do not live to eat. But we must do something with our hands to be able to provide food for our families. "If a man will not work, he shall not eat" (1Thess. 3:10). God hates laziness, and therefore enjoins us not to be slothful in business but fervent in spirit... (Rom. 12:11). Although work generates income (money) and money is necessary for preaching the gospel, we must not lay all our emphasis on the acquisition of money at the expense of the Lord's work. Sincere participation in this study shall help us greatly.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. From the following passages, identify why we need to engage ourselves in fruitful labour and economic activities? Gen. 2:15; Mal.3:10; Rom. 13:6 – 7; 2 Corinth. 8:13 – 14; 2Thes.3:6 – 15.
2. Read Col. 3:17; Eph. 5:8 – 13, and explain what principles should guide the type of work we should do as Christians?
3. How can work and economic activity be a challenge to our commitment to God's work? 1Kings 19:5 – 9; 2Kings 6:24 – 33
4. How can we balance our work and effectiveness in God's business? Matt. 6:19 – 21, 31; Ps. 127:1 – 2; Luke 12:15 – 21; Ex. 20:9-10

CONCLUSION

The old adage: *All play and no work makes Jack a mere toy* can be applied to us in spiritual things. So we must not play around with the work of our hands which the Lord is ready to bless. But we must also not concentrate so much in our work and forget the Lord's work. Both must be balanced. And, in working we must engage in activities that honour our God.

MEMORY VERSE: 2 Thes. 3:10 – *"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat"*

STUDY TWENTY

TOPIC: False Teachers

TEXT: II Peter 2: 1-22

Objectives: By the end of this study, participants should be able to explain:

1. Who false teachers are
2. The characteristics of false teachers
3. How to effectively guard against being deceived by false teachers

INTRODUCTION: A false teacher is one who gives wrong, false, deceitful or misleading information by distorting whole or part of the truth to his listeners or students. The bible clearly warns us against the activities of false teachers, how to recognize them and guard against being deceived by them. And if we must abound in the work of the Lord as we are determined to do in this Diocese by the theme we have chosen, then we must do something concrete about false teachers. May we all become wiser with this study.

QUESTIONS FOR QUESTION

1. Who is a false teacher according to 2Pe 2:1-2
2. Point out the warnings in these scriptures concerning false Teachers and Prophets: Matt. 24:5, 11; 1 Tim.4:1-2; 2Pe. 2:1
3. Outline the characteristics of false Teachers and Prophets from the following verses in 2Peter.
 - a. v3
 - b. v10 (3 characteristics here)
 - c. v12
 - d. v13-15
 - e. v17 ('springs without water'- having all the looks of a spring, yet with no water to refresh anyone)
 - f. v18
 - g. v19
 - h. v20
 - i. Jer.14:14
4. How can we guard against being deceived by false Teachers Prophets today? Eph.4:11-14; 1 Jn.4:1-3; 1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Tim.2:15 (note 'correct handling of God's word'); Deut.4: 9, 6: 5-9.

CONCLUSION: The warnings are clear enough in the scriptures. False teachers and Prophets are real, and indeed are already in the church! But God Almighty has prepared us ahead of time that no one should be caught unawares. But the fact remains that many are already caught unawares! That is because we respect faces and names. We easily forget that it was predicted that these teachers of doom would come in when we least expect. We all need to thoroughly examine what we have believed and who our heroes of faith are, using the characteristics outlined in the scriptures as we have studied. And may God keep His people!

Memory Verse: 2 Peter 2:1 – *“ But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction”.*

STUDY TWENTY-ONE

TOPIC: Family Challenges

TEXT: 1 Sam.2:12-25; 8:1-5

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

1. Define the family
2. Identify various challenges faced by the family
3. Explain how these challenges affect the Christian's commitment and devotion to the Lord
4. Examine tools for confronting family challenges.

INTRODUCTION: The family was the first institution to be established on earth by God. Other institutions derive their stability from here. It is the mirror that reflects the moral strength or weakness of any nation (society). The industries manufacture goods for societal use and development, but the family produces the people that build the society. The church depends on the family, because the current spiritual state of the church is a reflection of the life in the family. These are realities which the church must confront. This study is an effort in that direction.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Read Gen. 46: 26-27 (NIV).
 - a. Define/describe the word "family" in your own words
 - b. Differentiate between the family and the home, and explain the relationship between both.
2. What is the purpose of God in instituting the family? Gen. 1:26 – 30; Gen. 18:16 – 19; Eph. 5:22 – 23; Eph. 6:1 – 4
3. From our main texts and these passages: Gen.27:41-43; 34:30-31; 1 Sam1-2; 2 Sam. 15:13-14;
 - a. Identify some of the different challenges that can confront the family.
 - b. Discuss how the following institution/factors can pose as challenges to the family – society, media, education, childlessness, sex of a child
 - c. Friends, choice of career, child upbringing.

4. How may we handle the above challenges? Gen. 25:20-21; 1 Sam.1:10-11; Phil. 4:6; Prov.1:33; 3:5-6; 22:6.

CONCLUSION: The challenges faced by the family in our present time are much. And these certainly affect commitment to God's business (work). But no problem is too tough that it cannot be handled by God. We must rise up to our challenges and position our families as agents of change in a corrupt and perverse generation. The world is looking up to the church, and the church is looking up to the families. Above all we must wait on the Lord for our families so that grace may come down.

MEMORY VERSE: Gen. 18:19- *"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."*

STUDY TWENTY-TWO

TOPIC: Ignorance

TECT: Hosea 4:5 – 6; Jer. 3:15

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

1. The value of knowledge to a child of God
2. Sources of knowledge to a child of God
3. Identify the consequences of ignorance to a Christian

INTRODUCTION: We are in a world where information rules, and information (knowledge) is power. No one can advance beyond his level of knowledge in any given field. Many Christians have suffered untold hardships due to lack of knowledge. For “my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6) we need the knowledge of God at every level of our Christian growth and maturity to function appropriately. That was the heart cry of the apostle Paul (Phil. 3:10). And that should be our heart cry too, for ignorance they say, is a disease, but which fortunately is curable. Let us study on!

QUESTIONS DISCUSSION

1. Why do we need knowledge about God? Dan.9:2; 11:32; 2Tim 2:15; 4:13; Phil. 3:10 – 12
2. Is it also necessary to acquire knowledge about secular things as Christians? Why (and how)? Dan.1:17- 21; Acts 17:28 (note the poets Paul quoted to buttress his point).
3. Identify and discuss the causes and consequences of ignorance. Hos. 4:14; (cf.2Tim. 2: 7); 2Corinth. 2:9 – 11; Rom. 10:1 – 3
4. How can we overcome ignorance? Dan. 9:2; Tim.2:15; 2Tim. 3:16 – 17; 2 Tim2:7.

CONCLUSION

Ignorance is a disease, and all those who are afflicted by it (though some may not know due to the blindness of their hearts) need cure. Correct exposure to the word of God and developing a teachable spirit, with prayers to the Lord will bring about a cure. We must take seriously what we studied about the word of God in the first quarter.

MEMORY VERSE: Hos. 4:6 “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...”

STUDY TWENTY-THREE

TOPIC: Opposition and slander

TEXT: Num. 12:1-16, Nehemiah 4:1-4

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

1. Give the literal meaning of the terms “opposition and slander”
2. State the consequences of opposition and slander
3. Identify the effects of opposition and slander on the church as a body if not properly managed
4. Explain what our conduct should be when confronted with opposition and slander
5. List out possible ways to tackle opposition and slander when they arise.

INTRODUCTION: Jesus Christ in his life time was faced with lots of oppositions and slander from within (his immediate family) and from people of high reputation within and outside (Jewish religious leaders). But he never gave up accomplishing the work of salvation which was his primary mission. Similarly, in our walk with Jesus, it should not be strange when opposition and slander arise. The opposition and slander may come from persons who are determined to oppose anything about Christ or from fellow brethren who simply misunderstand us. It can also be a way to test our patience and faith in God; and a means through which God prunes us for greater exploits. May this study build us up to be strong in faith in the days of oppositions and slander in Jesus name!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are ‘oppositions’ and ‘slander’?
 - a. Should opposition and slander be expected while in God’s service? If yes, why? Num. 12:1-2; Neh. 4:1-3; Mk. 3:20-22; Act 13:45; Phil 1:28-30.
 - b. What are the possible consequences of opposition and slander and its effect on the church as a body? Num. 12:10-12; 16:28-35.
2. What should be our conduct when confronted with opposition and slander? Neh. 4:4-6; 1Cor. 4:10-13; Heb.10:35, 36; 1Pe. 4:19; 5:8.
3. Is there any benefit if we endure opposition and slander? James 1:12; Heb. 12:5-13; 10:35,36; Mt.5:11,12.

CONCLUSION: Opposition and slander has been and will continue to be one of the experiences in any genuine service for the Lord. For through these, the Lord equips and moulds us for better and greater service for Him. Therefore, if we must abound in His work as the scriptures enjoin us, when confronted with opposition and slander, we should give ourselves to prayer, rejoice in the Lord, and patiently continue to do His work. Quitting should not be on the agenda, unless God specifically instructs us to that effect. However, we must caution ourselves against any act capable of breeding hatred, division and strife

among the brethren, as we can only know when a crisis begins but not how it will end. Soberness, watchfulness, and prayerfulness with all humility are called for.

MEMORY VERSE: Matt 5:11-12 – *“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven”.*

For Further studies:

1. On how we should we handle opposition and slander, especially when they originate within the church: Prov. 3:5-6; 11:14; Act 6:1-4; Col.3:12-14.
2. Further readings: Act 5:27, 28; Nu.16:1-3; James 1:4-5; Matt. 5:44; Act 7:59-60; Lk. 21:19; 23:34.
3. How Paul managed his: Phil.1:12-30

STUDY TWENTY-FOUR

Topic: Self

Text: Phil. 2:3-8

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

1. Define or describe 'self'
2. Identify the harm that self can cause one who has the trait
3. Explain how to overcome it

INTRODUCTION: "I am the best candidate for the job". "Why I was not considered first". "I can't wait for this long queue. I need attention now". These or similar expressions should be common to many of us. It is the language of the good old 'self'. We all condemn any selfish attitude wherever it is found, except when we are involved. Someone has rightly observed that "self dies hard". It is an essential nature of sin. Today we want to look at this ugly subject. It is too important to ignore.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. From our text passage, how would you define or describe 'self'?
2. Read Matt. 20:20-24:
 - a. What was wrong about the request of James, John and their mother? (cf. Phil. 2:3)
 - b. Read Matt.20:24 again, and point out the likely danger of selfish attitude in the house of God, and amongst brethren.
3. Read Matt.20:25-28:
 - a. From this response of Christ, identify the root causes of the self-attitude (cf. also Phil. 2:3)
 - b. What is the solution to selfish attitude in us as children of God? See also Matt. 26:38-44; Rom.8:13; Gal.5:16-17
 - c. What example did Christ leave for us as His children? (Phil. 2:5-8)
 - d. How was He rewarded? Phil. 2:9-11.

CONCLUSION: Self is a difficult subject that is as old as the original sin itself. Wherever and in whatever form it exists, it inflicts pains, causes disharmony and generates bad blood. Much of the underdevelopment in our society today is traceable to this monster. Mark wherever there is any lingering quarrel, misunderstanding or conflict, you will most likely see this same monster, unless you did not investigate well. Wherever there is any act of injustice, oppressive tendency or cheating, just look well, you will see 'self'! But thank God it can be tamed, yet only by the Spirit of God, and not by any self effort. In the place of prayer the effect of self is subdued. But the glory of victory over self is a great incentive. It is worth the try!

Memory Verse: Rom 8:13 *“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live”.*

STUDY TWENTY-FIVE

TOPIC: Spiritual Warfare

TEXTS: 2 Kings 6: 8-16; 2Cor. 10: 1-6; Eph. 6: 10-18

OBJECTIVES: *By the end of the study, participants should be able to explain the existence and nature of the spiritual battles that Christians face and be able to demonstrate how to overcome them in our daily spiritual walk and witness.*

INTRODUCTION: The spiritual life is that of constant warfare. Every child of God is an enlisted soldier in Christ's army who must *fight the good fight of faith* and prevail (1 Tim. 6:12, 2 Tim. 2: 3-4). We must fight to succeed in our Christian life and witness, and as we match on to *take hold on eternal life* (1 Tim. 6: 12b). But what exactly is all these about, and how do we go about it? We intend to find out in this study.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain spiritual warfare from the text passages (cf. also Jos. 5: 13-15)
 - a. What do enemies intend to achieve? Discuss (cf. John 10:10; Mat. 13:24-28).
2. Enumerate the enemies of the Christian? Mat.5: 44; Rom.8:13a; 12:20.1 Cor.15:26; James 4:4; 1 Peter 5: 8, 9;
 - a. Discuss the biblical strategies for combating these enemies from these stated texts. Mk. 3: 14-15; 6:7,12-13;11:25-26; Lk.10:19; Rom.8:13, 12:20
3. Enumerate the weapons of the Christian as listed in Eph.6:10-18; 2Cor.10:4-6.

CONCLUSION: Spiritual warfare which has to do with our constant fight against the devil and his hosts of demons and schemes is indeed real. But equally real is the presence of the Lord, who is Himself the commander of His host of armies! We can rest assured that victory is sure as we deploy all the weapons God has put at our disposal to effective use.

MEMORY VERSE: 2 Kings 6: 16, *"Don't be afraid,"... "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them"*

For further studies:

1. Gal.5: 19-21; 1John 2: 15-17
2. On the strategies of the enemy: What are the devices of the enemies? 2Cor.2:11; 10: 4-6; Gen. 3: 1- 5; 2; Tim.2:22-26.
3. On how to overcome the enemy and these devices? 1Pe. 5:8; 1 John 4:4; Rom 8:15; 1 Tim. 5:14; 2 Tim 1; 7; Lk.10:19; Mat. 28: 20
4. Practically examine how we may deploy the weapons enumerated in question 3 above to effective use in our daily Christian lives and witness.

STUDY TWENTY-SIX

TOPIC: Temptations and Trials

TEXT: Heb. 12:1-11; I Peter 1:6-12

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

1. Define trials and temptations
2. Outline the difference between trials and temptations
3. Explain the sources of trials and temptations and how to overcome them.

INTRODUCTION: The joy we derive from the knowledge and assurance of our *glorious inheritance* is often disturbed by the spirit of heaviness caused by temptations and trials. Temptations refer to attraction, persuasion, allurements or urge to do evil or something sinful while Trial means a test of faith and obedience to the Lord by circumstances or situation. In this study, we want to consider the sources, the value and the victory over temptation.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSIONS

1. Define trials and temptations in your own word
 - a. Do you think there is any difference between temptations and trials?
 - b. If there is, point out the difference. Lk. 22:31-32; Matt. 4:1 & 2; Deut. 8:2-3; James 1:12-13 (Read from different versions)
 - c. 'Every difficult condition is either a temptation or trial'. Discuss.
2. From the following passages list the sources of temptations: Matt. 4:1; James 1:13-14; I Jn. 2:16.
 - a. Why does God allow temptations and trials in the life of a Christian? Job 23:10; I Pet. 1:6-7.
3. Give three examples of temptations that you have had and how you overcame them? Consider Matt. 26:41; Ps. 119:11; I Cor. 15:33; 1 Pe.4:8-10

CONCLUSION: It is not a sin to be tempted, but it is a sin to fall or yield. Trials or even temptations reveal our strengths and capabilities and should produce character in us. We must uphold our identity to the end if we are to share in the promised glorious inheritance of the Lord. He who overcomes shall wear the crown. But it must be added that grace is an invaluable resource in the battle against trials and temptations. We can't ask for too much of this!

MEMORY VERSE: *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it".*

For further studies: On provisions and or examples we have for comfort and victory over trials and temptations? Job 42:10-13; I Cor. 10:13; II Cor. 12:7-9a; Heb. 12:1-11; James 1:2-4; 4: 7-8, 10; 1 Pe.5: 6-10

STUDY TWENTY-SEVEN

TOPIC: Worldliness

TEXT: 1John 2:15 – 17; James 4:4 – 6

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

1. Define worldliness
2. Identify areas where worldliness is prevalent in our lives
3. Point out the dangers of worldliness
4. Explain what needs to be done.

INTRODUCTION: The lifestyles of the people who are living in disobedience to the word of God, are in contrast to what is obtainable in God's kingdom. And when the people of God who should be examples to them adopt their lifestyles and behave like them, they are termed by the Bible to be worldly. Worldliness attracts the anger of God and alienates us from his kingdom, because from His point of view, we are like rebels to his kingdom. Let us find out more from the study.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Read Matt. 6:31 – 32; 1Cor. 3:1-4; James 4:4 –6; 1John 2:15 – 17;
 - a. What do you understand by “worldliness”?
 - b. Identify some of the key areas where we exhibit worldliness in our lives - Deut. 22:5; 1 Cor.3:1-4; 1Tim.6:6-10;
2. Explain why we should not be worldly as children of God? Matt. 5:13- 16; Rom. 12:1 –2; 1John 2:15 - 17; James 4:4 – 6
3. Someone read Matt. 6:33 and commented thus: “One major cause of worldliness is wrong priority”. Do you agree?
 - a. Explain
 - b. What command do we have in these passages? Heb.13:5; 1Tim. 2:9 – 10

CONCLUSION: When we begin to exhibit worldliness, we prove to God that we do not love Him, and we attract his anger instead of his favour. There is the need to look deep into our lives, and identify those traits of worldliness and deal with them outright for they are strangers to the kingdom business.

MEMORY VERSE: 1 John 2:15-17 *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him”.*

STUDY TWENTY-EIGHT

Topic: Criticism and Offences.

Bible Texts: Numbers 12:1-3; 16: 1-3; Matthew 12:22-37

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

1. Define criticism and offences.
2. Give at least two examples from the Bible, where God's chosen people were criticised and offended.
3. State clearly what the Christians' attitude to criticisms and offences should be; and the consequences of unhealthy criticisms.

Introduction: In our service to the Lord as Christians, we sometimes come across people who have opposing views to our views and dispositions. Criticism may be offensive, destructive or constructive. The Pharisees in Matthew 12:24 once criticised Jesus Christ as offering His service to God by the power of darkness (BEELZEBUB). Also, in Daniel 6:4-12, the Babylonian administrators worked very hard to accuse Daniel to the point of even plotting how to destroy him! And it was no small offence he endured. Today the situation is very much the same, if not worse!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Criticism and offences:
 - a. With reference to Matthew 12:24-28, explain the phrase.
 - b. Mention three examples of persons that were negatively criticised in scripture from our main texts and Neh. 4:1-3, Jn.8:48-50; Num. 12:1-2.
 - c. Mention one example of positive criticism from Ex. 18:13-24
 - d. What will make the "WORLD" to criticise or offend someone in God's service? Dan. 6:3-5; Jn. 3:19; Gen. 37:5, 8; Matt.18:7 (cf.Lk.17:1).
2. From 1Pe. 2:23, state what should be the Christian's attitude to unhealthy criticisms and offences. Acts. 7:60; Matt. 5:23-24.
3. Discuss the consequences on a person who brings unhealthy criticisms (condemnation) and offences against the elect of God. Matt. 18:7; Lk. 17:1; Num. 12: 5-10; 16:1-3, 25-34.

Conclusion: In our service to God as Christians, we may face criticisms/offences from the World or even our fellow Christians. In most cases, these criticisms/offences are born out of jealousy and envy. As we face criticisms and offences from the World, or even from within our constituency, the church, our attitude, if we must abound in His service, should be that of lovingly instructing the critics/offenders in the way of truth, praying for them; and asking that the Lord should show them light; bearing in mind that our Lord has said that these must certainly come.

Memory Verse: Luke 17:1: *"Then said he unto the disciples, it is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!"*

STUDY TWENTY-NINE

TOPIC: Customs and Traditions

TEXT: Leviticus 18:24 – 30; Jeremiah 10:1 –2

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

1. Identify customs and traditions practiced by our people today
2. Compare and contrast these with the standard set forth by the Lord in His word, and explain if there is harmony or conflict
3. Explain customs and traditions that are practiced by our founding fathers, and be able to demonstrate only that which is bible based.

INTRODUCTION: Customs is a way of life of any people, while Tradition is the practice which was handed down from generation to generation. The two cannot be separated because it is the practice of the people that is transferred to their children. But in some culture, the customs and traditions are contrary to the will of God and are centred or rooted in Idolatry.

The bible is not against our customs and traditions because it is a way of identifying a people. But they must be practiced in line with God's standard. Such Customs and Traditions that agree with God's standards are the ones to adhere to. May we as a church be able to demonstrate sufficient will to do away with whatever is offensive to God's word and live as Christians indeed.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. From Lev. 18:1-30;
 - a. List at least ten instructions that God handed down to His people as to what their way of life should look like
 - b. Why did God discourage the Israelites from the traditions of the Egyptians and the Canaanites? Lev. 18:24 – 30
2. Read Jer. 10:1-2; Mk.7:8-9; Col: 8-9; 3: 17; 2Thess. 2:15, and:
 - c. Point out specific instructions given by God to His people.
 - d. Mention and discuss some customs and traditions practiced by your people (persons from different cultural backgrounds should share with the class at this point), and explain any point of harmony or conflict?
3. What biblical traditions and customs should the church adhere to and why? Acts 2:42 – 47; 2 Thess. 3:6 – 12; 1 Cor. 15:1-8,11

CONCLUSION: Customs and Traditions not based on the scriptures attract God's punishment. This may explain why many of our communities are backward today. We as agents of change must uproot all negative customs and traditions in whatever form they appear and no matter how attractive they are presented. That is the only way the blessings of God can be guaranteed for our people.

MEMORY VERSE: Lev. 18:24: *"Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you".*

For further reading: Lev.18:1-30

STUDY THIRTY

TOPIC: CHRISTIAN DEATH AND BURIAL [to be studied in two sessions of study]

TEXT: 1 Thes. 4:13-18; LK. 16:19-31.

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

1. Define Christian death and burial in the context of the bible.
2. Explain from the scriptures, why Christians should not sorrow excessively at the loss by death of a dear one.
3. State with reasons why Christians must live a life of uprightness and blamelessness
4. Explain how and how not to bury a Christian.

INTRODUCTION: Death is what all must experience as we all know. But how we should conduct ourselves during death and burial of a dear one is the subject of this study. The scriptures made us to understand that as Christians, we should not sorrow for those who fall asleep in the Lord (Christ) like the rest of men who has no hope (1 Thes. 4:13). We have seen cases where people go borrowing to do burials just to show off or impress. This study should help us to understand God's perspective on this important subject.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. "...In obedience to the commandment" (Lk.23:56).
 - a. What principle is here to guide us in the event of the death of the Christian?
 - b. Explain why Christians should not grieve (like those who have no hope) for those who die in the Lord? LK. 16:22; 1 Thes. 4:13-18.
 - c. State the reasons why we should live an upright and blameless life while we are still alive on Earth. Ps. 9:17; Lk. 16:25; Rev. 20:11-15
2. What principles should guide the burial rites of a Christian when he/she dies? Gen. 23:4-5; 25:8-10; Josh. 24:29-30; Lk. 23:50-53; Acts 8:2 (Take note of the simplicity and those involved in the burials).
3. From the following scriptures, discuss the principles that should guide *how not* to bury a Christian: Deut. 5:32-33; Exodus 20: 4; Eph. 5:9-18
4. "...let the dead bury their own dead..." (Lk 9:60).
 - a. How do you understand what the Lord is saying here, and what principle can we derive from it?
 - b. Can a Christian be prayed into heaven after his death? Heb. 9:27

CONCLUSION: Christian burial should not be an occasion to show off, get drunk or act without restraint. Rather, it should be with soberness and reflection on where the soul of the dead will have its final rest after burial. Neither should it be an occasion to engage in

display of affluence. And of course whatever has the semblance of idolatry or that which breaks divine principles must be avoided.

Meanwhile, as Christians, we need not grieve for our brethren who died in the Lord like hopeless people. This is because they have gone to be with the Lord and to reign with Him in glory. And for us to be assured of eternal rest with the Lord, we must live our lives in obedience and in conformity to His word. This is the foundation we need to enter into His glorious reign. And we have to prepare now as we do not have any guarantee of any passage into heaven through the prayers of the saints once death has occurred.

MEMORY VERSE: 1 Thes. 4:14: *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him”*

STUDY THIRTY-ONE

Topic: THE CHALLENGE OF RELATIONSHIP

Text: Matt. 18:15-20;

OBJECTIVES: By the end of the study the students should be able to:

1. Identify the need for proper relationship between one another.
2. State the importance of mutual relationship among brethren
3. Differentiate between good and bad relationships
4. Explain things to avoid in our relationships with Christians and non-Christians

INTRODUCTION: The challenge of relationship has to do with points of tension in our relationship with both believers and unbelievers in our daily walk with God. And it is a true saying that Christianity is practiced within the context of relationships. Severally scriptures enjoin us to 'pursue', 'seek', 'follow' or 'make every effort' with regard to peace with all people.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by the word 'relationship'?
2. How does God want us to relate with fellow Christians and all people? Ps.34:14; Matt. 5:23-24; 18: 15-17; Rm.12:9-10; 13; 15-18; 14:19; Heb.12:14
3. What factors obstruct cordial relationship among brethren? Prov.10:12; Acts 15:36-40; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; Ja. 4:1-2, 11a; Acts 6:1
4. Discuss how we can improve on our relationship with one another, especially as Christians (clergy to clergy, clergy to laity, laity to laity, and laity to clergy, and even within our own families)? Rm.12: 9-21; 1 Pe.3:8-9

CONCLUSION: It is the duty of every child of God to maintain good relationship with other believers and outsiders. Bad relationship causes distraction and impediments to fruitful service. This is why Jesus emphasized on cordial relationship and love among Christians. An atmosphere of conflicts, rancour and bitterness does not give room for a rewarding service to God.

MEMORY VERSE: 1Corin 1:10 *"... But all of you agree and that there be no dissension among you but that you be united in the same mind and same judgment"*.

FOR FURTHER STUDIES:

1. On what we should practice to foster good relationship - 2Corinthians 6:14-18; Eph.6:1-9; Matt.6:12; Mk.11:25
2. On what we must not do in relationship - 1 Samuel 1:4-6; James 4:1-5
3. On the beauty of good relationship in the Church. 1 Cor. 12:14-26

PART D – REWARDS AND REGRETS IN THE WORK OF THE LORD

STUDY THIRTY-TWO

TOPIC: *Fruitfulness in God's service*

Text: Mk.11:12-14, 20-21; Lk.13:6-8

Aim: *To explore and examine the biblical demand on Christians to bear fruit in order to challenge us to a life of fruitfulness in our Kingdom service.*

Introduction: God's plan from creation has always been that man be fruitful (Gen 1:28). The cry of John the Baptist was *bring forth fruit worthy of repentance!* And Christ Himself was later to make this a cardinal point in His teaching with a promise of answered prayers when He declared, 'you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that *you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain...*' (John.15:16). Col.1:10 specifically demand that Christians be fruitful in every good work. Christ cursed the fig tree because there was no fruit on it. And one thing we cannot avoid if we are abounding in the work of the Lord is fruitfulness. Are we being fruitful? If not, why not?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What does it mean to be fruitful from the following texts? Mt. 13:8; Lk. 3:7-9; 13:6-9;
 - a. What kind of fruit are we expected to bear? John 15: 16; Rm.7:4.
 - b. 'In God's service, we receive answers to our prayers to the extent that we are fruitful, and we may not lay claim to being Christ's disciples if we are not bearing fruits'. From John 15:8 and 16, do you agree?
 - c. 'Fruit bearing is God's basis for evaluation and judgment of our lives'. Discuss. Matt. (7:16; Lk. 13:6-9; John 15:2).
 - d. Mention one major area we are required to be fruitful as Christians? Mt. 28: 19.
2. What factors reduce or hinder our fruitfulness as Christians? 1 Kings 20:39-40a; Matt. 6: 25, 28, 31-32; Lk. 10:40-41.
3. What possible dangers do we face if we are proven to be unfruitful by the Lord? 1 Kings 20: 41-42; Mk. 11:12-14; Lk. 3:9; John 15:2.

CONCLUSION: Certainly fruitfulness is one of the surest signs that life is still in us. If as we examine ourselves in the light of this study we find that there is the slightest chance that we are not bearing fruit or we are reducing in fruit bearing, the right thing to do is reorder our lives, re-set our priorities, and get into the task of the Kingdom. And one thing we do not have in our favour is time!

Memory Verse: *"And even now the axe is laid to the root of the tree. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."(Lk. 3:9)*

STUDY THIRTY-THREE

Topic: Rewards in God's service - Enoch

Text: Gen 5:18-24, Heb 11:5

Objectives: By the end of this study, the people of God should be able to:

- 1) Explain the person of Enoch
- 2) Describe his relationship with God as it applies to us today.
- 3) Mention the benefits/rewards Enoch enjoyed in his service in the Lord.
- 4) State some of the benefits, the present believer shall enjoy if they walk with God.

Introduction: Enoch was the father of the long-lived Methuselah and the great grandfather of Noah. That means he was a married man, and he had children, just like any one of us today. It was said of him, that he "walked with God" (repeated twice for emphasis). After the birth of Methuselah, he lived three hundred years. That was a long time for any man to support a holy life and communion with God without any relapse. He had such a faithful walk with God that he was taken directly to heaven without his tasting the pains of death (Gen 5:22-24, Heb 11:5).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Who was Enoch from the text we read? (Gen 5:18-24 – take note of v21,22,24)
2. Why was his relationship with God such an extraordinary one? Gen 5:22-24; Heb.11:5-6
3. What reward did Enoch get from his walk with God? Gen 5:22-24, 4).
 - a. Who else had a similar experience from 2 Kings 2:12?
 - b. Who else will have similar experience from predictions in scripture? 1Cor.15:52; 1Thes.4:16-17.
 - c. What does the walk of Enoch teach us about those who will enjoy similar experience in the future as predicted above?
4. State some of the steps a believer can adopt to reap the above benefits. Mark13:33; 1Cor15:58; Col 4:2; Heb 10:25, Heb 10:35-36; James 5: 7-9,

Conclusion: We have had many impressive characters in history. Some shine in all the brilliance of material achievements, and are renowned for their conquest of kingdoms, and perhaps even lived long life like Methuselah, yet with no word about their relationship with God. A blameless walk of faith was what endeared Enoch to God, and he was handsomely rewarded by direct translation to heaven. Only Elijah tasted similar 'caught up' in scripture. But the good news is that faithful Christians will one day taste a similar experience of what is known as rapture. But we have to also walk with God! Are we ready?

Memory verse: Gen 5:24 *"Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him"*

STUDY THIRTY-FOUR

TOPIC: REWARDS IN GOD'S SERVICE - JOSEPH

Texts: Gen 37: 1 – 28; 39: 1-12, 19-20; 41: 41-44

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

1. Identify the challenges, conflicts, weaknesses, temptations and afflictions that Joseph faced in his life.
2. Identify what enabled him to remain steadfast in the service of the Lord and how he handled the challenges and temptations that came his way.
3. Outline the rewards he obtained and demonstrate a sufficient challenge from his example.

INTRODUCTION: As a young man Joseph was loved by his father Jacob, hated by his other ten older brothers, thrown into a pit, sold into slavery, and unjustly incarcerated in prison. Looking at his life story as it unfolded, the picture of a man who is written off in life is what we see. But this same man God ultimately lifted to become the number two citizen in a foreign country! In this study we shall be looking at those qualities that enabled Joseph to abound in the service of the Lord and made him what he eventually became.

Questions for Discussion

1. From the following passages identify the challenges, afflictions and temptations that Joseph faced in his service to the Lord. Gen 37: 3-4, 11; 22-24, 28; Gen 39:1-3, 7, 11-12; 20a.
 - a) What can we learn from these about serving the Lord in righteousness? 2 Tim.3:12; James 1: 2, 3
2. Can you point out what enabled Joseph to remain steadfast in God's service notwithstanding the numerous temptations that he passed through? Gen. 39: 2, 8-10, 21, 23; Gen. 41:16.
3. Outline the rewards that Joseph obtained in his service of the Lord, also point out the peculiarity in some of these rewards. Gen 39: 1-3, 20 -23; Gen 41: 38-44; 45:8.
4. From the above, discuss the challenges we get from the life of Joseph as Christians.

Conclusion: In some Christian circles, afflictions and challenges in the life of a man are viewed as a sign that God is not with such a man. Challenges, afflictions and temptations however are normal in the life of a believer, as God uses them to develop character in the lives His children. From the life of Joseph we see how God uses challenges, conflicts, and temptations as moulding blocks to build up his children. We also learn from his life how to face these challenges and overcome them.

Memory Verse: Genesis 45:7 - *"But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance".*

STUDY THIRTY-FIVE

Topic: Rewards in God's service - Ruth

Text: Ruth 1:8-18, 22.

Objective: By the end of the study, the student should be able to:

1. Explain what it means to be steadfast as Christians
2. Outline the benefits of being steadfast as Christians.

Introduction: The word steadfastness means to be firm, not changing or to hold on. You hold on to only things that are your treasures or valuables. Steadfastness is a way of expressing our faith in something. In Ruth we see an example of steadfastness from the way she doggedly clung to Naomi not minding the fact that the situation at the time was unfavourable.

Questions for Discussion

1. What do you understand by steadfastness from the example of Ruth? Ruth 1:16-18
2. In what areas of our lives should we demonstrate steadfastness? Psalm 78:37, 1 Cor. 15:58, Heb 3:12-14
3. Discuss the circumstances that could discourage us from being steadfast in our daily lives? Ruth 1:3-18.
4. Why should we be steadfast as Christians? Ruth 2:11-12, 4:13, 16-17, 22; Matt.1:5; Matt 10:22.

Conclusion: Being steadfast in our love for Christ is a virtue every Christian who has value for his/her faith must possess. Steadfastness will help us withstand pressures that will come to separate us from the love of God. And ultimately, the steadfast Christian will be richly rewarded, just as Ruth was rewarded, and she became one of the ancestors to our Lord.

Memory Verse: Ruth 1:16-17 *"And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me".*

STUDY THIRTY-SIX

Topic: Rewards in God's service – The Widow of Zarephath and the Shunammite Woman.

Text: 1 Kings 17:7-24, 2 Kings 4:8-37

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

1. Identify the essential characters or qualities of these women.
2. Compare and contrast the characters or qualities of the two women
3. Outline what good examples we learn from their lives
4. Demonstrate sufficient challenges from their lives.

Introduction: Giving involves our lives, resources, time, knowledge, etc. Everybody that has breath has something to offer to another. God has made man in such a way that no man is completely independent. It is only when people recognize your attitude of reaching out to others that they will be willing to stretch a hand of help to you in your time of need. These qualities were exemplified by these two women. Let's get inside the study for the details.

Questions for Discussion

1. From our text passage, identify character or qualities of these women – 1 Kings 17:8-9; 2 Kings 4:8-9
2. Analyze the difference between the Woman of Zarephath and the Shunammite woman – 1Kings 17:9-10a; 10b-12; 17; 18; 22-24; (2 Kings 4:8,-9, 10; 14b; 16-17; 18-20; 22-28, 30, 36-37.
3. What secrets do we learn about abounding in hospitality and giving to proven men of God from the above? Read also Prov.11:24-25; Acts 9:36-41.

Conclusion: The wise Christian never sees any word in scripture as mere coincidences. What we have studied in the lesson today are certainly not mere coincidences. God Almighty is teaching us tested truths. It is in His plan for us to be hospitable, homely and generous, especially to those of the household of faith, particularly, proven servants of God and the needy. Moreover, it should be noted that this practice of hospitality and liberality is not limited to the rich alone. Even the poor widow with the last food in her house had something to offer! "Give from what you have" is a proven divine principle! When we do, we store up for ourselves a rich treasure that will one day provoke supernatural intervention in our lives. May God give us grace to abound in the practice of giving.

Memory Verse: 1 Kings 17:14 – *"For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail".*

STUDY THIRTY-SEVEN

Topic: Reward - Daniel and the Three Hebrew children

Text: Daniel 1:1-21, 3:1-30

OBJECTIVE: By the end of the study, participants should be able to explain who these children were, and why it is important to be obedient to God even when we are far away from church or home.

Introduction: Daniel and his friends were chosen to serve in the palace of the king of Babylon while they were in exile. Even when this seemed to be an opportunity for them for advancement of selfish interests, obedience to the Lord and His word was far more important to them. They knew that even in this faraway land, and regardless of how discouraging things seemed at the time; God was yet in control. For these outstanding boys, their destiny was not for sale! They gave themselves fully to the Lord, and were handsomely rewarded, even though they went through tough times.

Questions for Discussion

1. Who were these Hebrew children? Dan. 1:4-7
 - a. What major challenges did they face? 1:8, 2:1-6, 13; 3:1-6; 6:7-9
 - b. How did they overcome these challenges? Dan.1:8; 2: 16-19; 3:10-18, 23-26; 6:10, 22.
2. Outline and discuss similar challenges Christians face today and how we can similarly overcome them.
3. How was their steadfastness rewarded? Dan 1:15, 18-20; 2:46-49; 3:28-30; 6:24-28.

CONCLUSION: Most times, the enemy tends to feed us with the mistaken notion that if we choose to compromise our values we can gain favour more quickly and rapidly. But from the lives of these young Hebrew children, we learn that the contrary is the case. They were a shining example of steadfastness in upright living and loyalty to the Lord. In a far away foreign land they bore witness to the greatness of God's power and glory. They were able to influence men and kings. Their lives show us clearly that we can influence and reform others unconsciously when we walk uprightly. But more than that, from them we learn that promotion and true living comes only as we stoop, and are willing to deny ourselves and be sacrificed for His name.

Memory Verse: *Dan 1:8 – "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself"*

STUDY THIRTY-EIGHT

Topic: Rewards of faithful service - Jesus

Text: Phil 2:5-11, Heb 12:1-3

Objectives: By the end of the study the students should be able

1. Identify some characteristics of our Lord Jesus from the text.
2. Examine His faithfulness while He was in the flesh in the world
3. Explain some of the benefits we derive from His example of faithfulness

Introduction: The Christian race is purpose oriented. Achievement of the purpose requires faithfulness and commitment. Christ was faithful to the purpose of His manifestation. He endured hardship and discouragement, and was obedient unto death, even the type of death reserved for only criminals. Certainly, there are great lessons for us from His example and we intend to discover them in this study.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Identify the qualities exhibited by Christ in these passages: Phil 2:5-8, Jon.4:31-25; 9:4.
2. How was He rewarded? Phil 2:9-11, Rev. 5:11-13
3. Outline some of the attitudes exhibited by Christ that we are called upon to practice as Christians in Phil 2:5? (Consider these texts: Lk.23:34; Phil.2:6-8; Heb.12:2; 1 Pe. 2:21-23).

Conclusion: Whatever a man sows that he will reap. Faithful service attracts blessings to us both in this life and in the world to come. Our Lord Jesus Christ was Himself faithful to His commission, and without blemish in attitude. The result of that is what we still enjoy today as Christians. Now He calls on us to follow His example. Are we doing so?

Memory Verse: Phil 2:9 *“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

STUDY THIRTY-NINE

Topic: Regrets in God's service - Esau

Text: Gen 25:27-34, Gen 27:30-40

Objectives: By the end of the study participants should be able to identify who Esau was, what happened to his birth right, and be able to explain the regrets that go with irresponsible actions like those of his.

INTRODUCTION: A 'birthright' is a basic right that somebody, usually the first born son, is believed to be entitled to from birth. Esau, the first born of Jacob sold his (Gen.25:32-34). He even exaggerated his hunger! Hear him: "...Behold, I am at the point to die" (Gen. 25:32). This thought made his unfortunate choice regrettably easier, as the pressure of the moment distorted his sane or sensible perspective.

Questions for Discussion

1. Who was Esau? Gen 25:24-26
2. How did he trade out the lasting benefits of his birth right? Gen 25:30-33; Heb.12:16-17.
3. "At the time of succumbing to sexual pressure, a marriage vow or the honour of virginity may seem unimportant and inconsequential, but afterward comes tears of sorrow".
 - a. Do you agree? Prov. 20:17; Prov. 16:25; Heb.12:16-17
 - b. Mention some other common pressures that we face in our daily walk with God, and discuss the regrets that may come with them if we fail to overcome like Esau.

Conclusion: Esau traded the lasting benefits of his birthright for the immediate pleasure of satisfying his appetite. He acted on impulse, satisfying his immediate desires without pausing to consider the long range consequence of what he was about to do. We can avoid making Esau's mistake by always weighing the after effects or future consequences of our actions.

Memory Verse: Heb 12:16-17 – *"Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have*

inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears”.

STUDY FORTY

Topic: Regrets in God's service - Reuben

Text: Gen 35:21-22, 37:18-32

Objectives: By the end of the study participants should be able to:

1. Identify the person of Reuben and his mistakes
2. Explain the consequences of those mistakes to him
3. Outline some useful lessons for our lives from his mistakes and the consequences he suffered.

Introduction: Reuben was the first son of Jacob, a position of great honour, authority and responsibility. However, he proved to be unstable, and irresponsible and unrepentant, even though he had so much opportunity to have repented of his irresponsible actions. And the consequences were grave, just too grave! By the end of the study, it is our prayer that none of us will go the same way he went.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Who was Reuben? Gen.29:32;35:23
2. Read: Gen 35:22; 37:20-33; 49:3-4.
 - a. What manner of person was he, and in what ways was he considered a negative character?
 - b. Read Gen.35:22 again and note the expression, "and Israel heard it." How is it that the father heard it, and yet, he did nothing? Any suggestions?
 - c. What was the consequence of this action in which the father seemed to be uninterested in taking any action when it happened? Gen. 49:3-4; Deut.27:20
 - d. The father did nothing, yet, at the point of his death, he took drastic measures to revisit the issue thought to have been long forgotten. How is this similar to the nature of God? 2Pe.3:9.
3. What do we learn from his mistakes, and how can we avoid them?

Conclusion: Sin is a terrible thing. Reuben was destined to excel in life with great honour and dignity. But all that glorious destiny ended the very day he climbed up to his father's bed and committed incest. How one only wishes he had been remorseful and repentant. But he was not. Probably he mistook the silence of the father for compromise of standard, until the day the awful judgement fell, "you will be first no longer" (NIV). Meanwhile, he did not stand his ground against the evil plan of his brothers against Joseph. He went along with

them while hoping to counteract the evil in private. He gave in easily to group pressure. Is there any sin or guilt in the past you have been making every effort to cover up? Let Reuben be a lesson to all of us.

Memory Verve: Gen. 49:3-4 *“Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power, unstable as water, thou shalt not excel”.*

STUDY FORTY-ONE

TOPIC: REGRET IN GOD'S SERVICE – SAUL

Text: 1 Samuel 9:1-3, 14-10:7; 1 Sam 15: 1-3, 10-11

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

1. Give a brief outline of the life of Saul and Identify opportunities that he had at the start of his service for the Lord.
2. Identify and discuss possible character issues in his life that led to his failure and state the ultimate price he had to pay due to these issues
3. Outline and explain what these teach us today

INTRODUCTION: Ecclesiastes 7:8 declares that the end of a thing is better than the beginning. In the life of Saul, we see a man who started very well, and naturally speaking, had all a man needed to make him successful in his God-given assignment, and yet ended up a failure in God's service. What actually went wrong? Let's find out in this study.

Questions for Discussion

1. Which Saul are we talking about? 1 Sam.9:1-2
2. From the following passages identify advantages that Saul could count on as he started his service? 1 Sam 9: 1-2, 15-17; 10: 1, 9,20-24
3. From the following passages, discuss character issues that affected Saul in his service? 1 Sam 13: 7b-14; 14:24-30; 15: 1-3, 9, 13-15; 16-27.
4. Read:1 Sam 15:28; 16:1, 13-14; 31: 1-13.
 - a. From these, what would you say was the price Saul had to pay due to the issues in his life?
 - b. Outline some of the lessons for us from his life as we desire to abound in the work of the Lord.

Conclusion: Saul had all that by man's estimate, would lead to a successful life. He however lacked the most important thing of all – character. Because of this lack, he lost virtually all – the kingdom, the anointing and the presence of God, and ultimately died a miserable death with his children on the same day in the hands of the enemies of God! As we conclude, we all need to examine our lives if there are any character issue to sort out, because anointing without character is invitation to disaster! We can still retrace any mistaken steps now.

Memory Verse: 1 Sam 15: 22b *“And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams”.*

FOR FURTHER STUDIES: 1 Sam Chapters 9, 10 & 15; Mat 3:17; 2Cor 5:9

STUDY FORTY-TWO

TOPIC: Regrets in God's service – Judas

TEXTS: Mat 10: 1-4; Mar 3:14-19; Acts 1: 15-21

OBJECTIVES: By the end of this study, the student will be able to

1. Identify who Judas was, and the advantages and opportunities that he had in his life that could have made him a man of great honour, dignity and impeccable character.
2. Discuss Judas's status among the other disciples
3. Identify useful lessons from his life, especially those that has to do with money matters.

INTRODUCTION: Judas was among the twelve chief disciples chosen by our Lord Jesus Christ during when He was here on earth. He was therefore one of the eye witnesses of His majesty. He heard all the teachings and saw all the astounding miracles of Christ and in most cases was himself a partaker in setting men free from bondage as well as bringing the message of the kingdom of God to the lost while Christ was yet in the flesh on earth. Notwithstanding all these, Judas remained a thief, and ultimately betrayed the Lord Jesus. Key lessons exist for us as believers from his life that we would do well to lay hold upon, so as to avoid ending the way he did.

Questions for Discussion

1. From the following passages, identify who Judas was and the advantages he had that would have enabled him to abound in God's service? Mk. 3: 14-19, Mat 10:4-7; Jn.12:4
2. What major character flaw was in him, even as a disciple of the Lord and how did he end up? Jn.12: 3-6; Mk.14:10-11; Matt. 27:1-5
3. "The love of money is the root of all evil". Discuss this statement with particular reference to issues of money handling in the church, and how we may help ourselves who are entrusted with money. See also Jn.8:31; 1 Cor. 14:40; 2 Cor.8:16-23.

Conclusion: Actually one should weep for Judas. He pretended for three years as a disciple of our Lord Jesus. He went through all the outward activities of being a disciple of the Lord. But his heart was only on what he could get for himself. May we not be like him! May we be genuine disciples who will not only hear God's word, but also continue in the practice of His it.

Memory verse: John 12:6 – *"This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein".*

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON BAPTISM

Introduction: Baptism is a fundamental doctrine of the church that usually evokes a lot of interest, and sometimes unending emotional debates which are quite often along denominational lines or streams of thought. However divergent opinions may seem, there is a common ground for consensus which we must discover and emphasize.

The Meaning of Baptism

In Christianity, baptism (from Greek *baptizo*: "immersing", "performing ablutions", i.e., "washing") is the ritual act, with the use of water, by which one is admitted to membership of the Christian Church and, in the view of some, as a member of the particular Church in which the baptism is administered.

The Greek-English Lexicon of Liddell and Scott explains the word *βαπτίζω* from which the English word *baptism* is derived to primarily mean to *dip, plunge, immerse or perform ablutions*, i.e., washing as in Luke 11:38 where the Pharisees accused Jesus that he did not first wash (*ἐβαπτίσθη*, aorist passive of *βαπτίζω*—literally, "be baptized") before dinner. The Disciples of Christ were accused of similar offence in Matt.15:1-2. Here it is recorded thus: "Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash (*νίπτω - nipto*) not their hands when they eat bread." Mk.7:3-4 also has the record, that "the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash (*νίπτω*, the ordinary word for washing) their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash (literally, "baptize themselves"—*βαπτίσωνται*, passive or middle voice of *βαπτίζω*)", they eat not..."

Scholars of various denominational backgrounds are of the view that these passages show that invited guests, or people returning from market, would not be expected to immerse themselves ("baptize themselves") totally in water but only to practise the partial immersion of dipping their hands in water or to pour water over them, as is the only form admitted by present Jewish custom. These people understood the meaning of *βαπτίζω* to be the same as *βάπτω*, to dip or immerse, a word used of the partial dipping of a morsel held in the hand into wine or of a finger into spilled blood.

Baptism of Jesus

At the start of his ministry, Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. Many of the earliest followers of Jesus were other people who, like him, were baptized in the Jordan by John the Baptist.

Scholars broadly agree that the baptism of Jesus is one of the most authentic, or historically likely, events in the life of the historical Jesus. Jesus and his earliest disciples accepted the validity of John's baptism, though Jesus himself detached the notion of repentance from

baptism and promoted purity ethic in tension with rituals. Early Christianity practiced a baptism of repentance which conferred the remission of sins. Christian baptism has its origin in the baptism of Jesus, in both a direct and historical sense.

The event raised the issue of Jesus' potential submission to John the Baptist and seemed contradictory to the Christian belief in the sinless nature of Jesus Christ. John's baptism did not remit sin. It was only for repentance and to prepare the way for Christ. Remission of sins is only by baptism into Jesus which was commanded by Christ Himself after the resurrection).

Early explanations for Jesus' baptism that have remained popular include Ignatius of Antioch's assertion that Jesus was baptized to purify the waters of baptism and Justin Martyr's explanation that Jesus was baptized in his role as the ideal example for everyone.

For Paul, baptism effects and represents the believer's union with Christ, Christ's death, and his resurrection; cleanses one of sin; incorporates one into the Body of Christ, and makes one "drink of the Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:13).

Acts of the Apostles

It is stated in the book of Acts of the Apostles, written c. 85–90, that about 3,000 people in Jerusalem were baptized in one day on Pentecost (2:41). It further relates baptisms of men and women in Samaria (8:12-13); of an Ethiopian eunuch (8:36-40); of Saul of Tarsus (9:18; 22:16); of the household of Cornelius (10:47-48); of Lydia's household (16:15); of the Philippi jailer's household (16:33); of many Corinthians; and of certain Corinthians baptized by Paul personally, (1 Cor. 1:14-16).

In Acts, the prerequisites of baptism are faith and repentance, and here baptism is associated with receiving the Spirit, but the exact connection is not always the same.

Also in Acts, twelve individuals who had undergone John's baptism, and who consequently had yet to receive the Holy Spirit, were directed by Paul to be re-baptized, whereupon they received the Holy Spirit (19:1-7).

Acts 2:38, Acts 10:48 and Acts 19:5 speak of baptism "in the name of Jesus" or "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ", but whether this was a formula that was used has been debated.

Baptism during the apostolic era

During the Apostolic era, a period from Jesus' life to the death of the last, the primary sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist were established.

The *Didache* or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, an anonymous book of 16 short chapters, is probably the earliest known written instructions, outside of the Bible, for administering baptism. The first edition was written c. 60–80 AD. The second, with insertions and additions, was written c. 100–150 AD. This work, rediscovered in the 19th century, provides

a unique look at Christianity in the Apostolic Age. In particular, it describes the two foundational sacraments of Christianity: the Eucharist and baptism. It indicates a preference for baptizing by immersion in "living water" (i.e., running water seen as symbolic of life) or, if that is unavailable, in still water, preferably at its natural temperature, but considers that, when there is not enough water for immersion, it is sufficient to pour water on the head.

In Matthew's Great Commission statement, Christians are to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Baptism has been in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit since at least the end of the 1st century. In Acts of the Apostles, Christians baptized "in the name of Jesus, though whether that meant a spoken formula has been a subject of doubt.

Early Christian beliefs regarding baptism were variable. In the most usual form of early Christian baptism, the candidate stood in water and water was poured over the upper body. Baptism of the sick or dying usually used means other than even partial immersion and was still considered valid. The theology of baptism attained precision in the 3rd and 4th centuries

While instruction was at first given after baptism, believers were given increasingly specific instructions before being baptized, especially in the face of heresies in the fourth century. By then, postponement of baptism had become general, and a large proportion of believers were merely catechumens (i.e., those who have undergone preparatory lessons and are awaiting baptism). It is said that Constantine was not baptized until he was dying. But as baptisms of the children of Christians, using an adaptation of the rite intended for adults became more common than baptisms of adult converts, the number of catechumens decreased.

Mode and manner of baptism

Christians traditions dispute the mode of baptism, mainly due to variations in the interpretation of the word, *baptism* (refer to our introductory paragraphs).

However, generally speaking, Christian baptism has been known to be administered in one of the following forms, performing the action either once or thrice: Aspersion or the *sprinkling* of water on the head; Affusion or the *pouring* of water over the head; Immersion where part of the candidate's body was *submerged* in the baptismal water which was poured over the remainder. The term is occasionally loosely used to include submersion, from which it is strictly to be distinguished. Submersion (sometimes referred to as "immersion", but more strictly as *full* immersion or *total* immersion) on the other hand is the form of baptism in which the water completely covers the candidate's body. Submersion is practiced in the Orthodox and several other Eastern Churches.

Recognition of baptism by other denominations

In the Anglican Church, baptized persons from the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches are usually accepted as validly baptized upon making a profession of faith as confessed in the Anglican Church in a properly organized admission service. And if they have not yet validly been confirmed, they may now be properly admitted to confirmation.

In some cases it can be difficult to decide if the original baptism was in fact valid; and where there is doubt, the constitution stipulates that conditional baptism administered, in which case the lines, "If you are not yet baptized, I baptize you....may be added.

Who may administer Baptism?

There is debate among Christian churches as to who can administer baptism. The examples given in the New Testament only show apostles and deacons administering baptism. Traditionally, this has been interpreted as indicating that baptism should be performed by the clergy except *in extremis*, i.e., when the one being baptized is in immediate danger of death.

Infant Baptism

In the 16th century, Martin Luther considered baptism to be a sacrament. For the Lutherans, baptism is a "means of grace" through which God creates and strengthens "saving faith" as the "washing of regeneration" (Tit.3:5) in which infants and adults are reborn (Jn.3:3-7). Since the creation of faith is exclusively God's work, it does not depend on the actions of the one baptized, whether infant or adult. Even though baptized infants cannot articulate that faith, Lutherans believe that it is present all the same. Because it is faith alone that receives these divine gifts, Lutherans confess that baptism "works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare." In the special section on infant baptism in his Large Catechism, Luther argues that infant baptism is God-pleasing because persons so baptized were reborn and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Swiss Reformer Huldrych Zwingli differed with the Lutherans by denying sacramental status of baptism. Zwingli identified baptism and the Lord's Supper as sacraments, but in the sense of an initiatory ceremony. His understanding of these sacraments as symbolic differentiated him from Luther.

A word on Anglican perspective on Baptism:

In Article 27 of the BCP (2007), pp. 505-506 it is stated clearly that *"Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian people are discerned from others that be not christened, but it is also a sign of Regeneration or New Birth , whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the church; the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of adoption to be the children of God by the Holy Spirit, are visibly signed and sealed; Faith is confirmed, and Grace increased by virtue of prayer unto*

God. The baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ”.

From the above statement, we get the following regarding the position of the Anglican Church on Baptism:

1. Baptism is a sign or symbol of profession of faith
2. It marks out Christians from non-Christians
3. It is a sign of regeneration
4. Recipients are grafted into the church. The church here is best understood to mean the local church denomination, and by extension the Anglican Communion and the universal church.
5. God’s promises of forgiveness of sin, adoption to be the children of God by the Spirit are **visibly** signed and sealed. This of course implies that these cannot be guaranteed where the rite is denied.
6. By it faith is confirmed
7. Brings with it increase of grace;
8. And recognizes the rite for young children.
9. It stresses that it be administered **rightly**. This implies that the sacrament be administered correctly, usually by an ordained clergy man and as prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer. Where doubt exists as to the rightness or otherwise, the Diocesan gives the final ruling.

Conclusion: Today, most Christians, irrespective of denominational affiliation admit that baptism is a necessary initiatory rite of the church, symbolizing the cleansing (remission) of sins and the union of the believer so baptized with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. Most Christian groups are also agreed on the use of water in baptism and agree that it is important and indispensable. Where the division lies is in some aspects of the rite like mode or method, recipients, meaning and effects. However, these disagreements need not divide us in the body of Christ. What needs to be made clear is the fact that every denomination has a practice based on convictions which have root in traditional heritage and unwavering understanding and interpretation of some New Testament texts on the subject. It is our considered view that all Christians should discover what the practice of their denomination is and stick with it, provided there is no fundamental variance of weighty eternal consequence.

What would not be acceptable to most denominations is a situation where an individual is unable to share the same beliefs on the subject, and yet fails to exercise his/her rights to

move on to another group that share similar beliefs, in which case such would be interpreted to mean rebellion against authority and doctrine which could attract sanctions. It is our considered view that all should study the scriptures intelligently and without prejudice and do the right thing, even if it means shifting ground from long held convictions.