

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

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL MANUAL FOR 2013

THEME: REDISCOVERING OUR BIBLICAL HERITAGE

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FOREWORD

We must thank the Lord for yet another edition of the Adult Sunday school Manual of our Diocese. It has become our practice to use the medium of the Adult manual to expand and fully spread the message of the Diocesan Discipleship/Revival Conference of the preceding year. It is our firm belief that this will help those who attended to consolidate on what they already got at the conference, while giving those who were not there the opportunity to partake in what God is offering His Church through the conference. Thus, this year, we chose to focus on *REDISCOVERING OUR BIBLICAL HERITAGE*, our 2012 conference theme.

While thanking God for the Adult Sunday school and Discipleship Ministry of our Diocese that put this together, we wish to state clearly that we have no doubt in our minds that this efficiently packaged 4th edition will take us a step further in our drive to disciple the Church of God preparatory to the appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

In commending this edition for use in our Diocese, let me draw attention to the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 5:11. *Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.* We may not be able to force anybody to sit under the Sunday school in our Churches. We may not also be able to always monitor the faithful compliance of the different Churches with our directive for a robust Sunday school every Sunday. After all, some people appear to have mastered the art of circumventing directives from constituted authority. However, may I persuade you who are holding a copy of this manual to cultivate the habit of consistent participation in our Sunday school sessions every Sunday. And seriously, it is for your own good! Our study manuals have the theological and doctrinal content and balance required to build up the people of God and make them adequately prepared for the Kingdom of God. It is with this conviction and desire for the discipleship of our people that we took the decision in 2012 to be distributing the manuals free of charge to every Church member so that everybody will be without excuse.

May the good Lord rekindle His love in our hearts and return us to our Biblical Heritage as we use this manual.

Every blessing,

+Innocent,
Evo

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the 2013 edition of the Sunday school manual. We count it a great privilege to be entrusted with this task of manning the Discipleship Ministry of our Diocese by our Bishop and father, the Rt. Rev. I. U. Ordu, JP. What you are holding in your hand is the 4th edition of the thrilling series on discipleship for four years now. This one focuses on *REDISCOVERING OUR BIBLICAL HERITAGE*.

Broken into five sections, it builds on the 2012 Discipleship/Revival Conference theme. The first section which is made up of two *notes* and three studies *introduces* what the manual theme is all about. This is followed by the second section which focuses on *Our Biblical Heritage* and it has six studies. Section three examines *some endangered biblical heritage today* and it is made up of thirteen studies. This is closely followed by a fourth section on *Challenges to our Biblical Heritage*, also made up of seven studies. The final section of five studies tackles how we may *sustain our Biblical Heritage*. In all, there are a total of thirty-three spiritually tantalizing and refreshing studies that guarantees an appreciable level of growth if used consistently, conscientiously and in the Spirit of God.

Meanwhile, like we did in the preceding manual, the 2012 edition, some of the studies in this edition are structured into two study segments meant to be taken in two separate study sessions. This is to allow for adequate and exhaustive treatment of the given topics. We counsel strongly against taking these studies in one session of study as it will affect the quality of that particular study. We have also brought back *Memory Verses* and introduced '*Examine yourself*' in place of '*For Soul Search*'. This is not just for variety but enhanced application of the lessons from the studies.

We have always endeavored to keep the charge of our leader and father, the Rt. Rev. I. U. Ordu to always strive to improve upon previous editions. Thus we worked hard to ensure that this edition surpasses the one of last year. However, let it be reiterated that we are open to comments and suggestions for improvement. If the publication did not meet your expectation, kindly let us know. If it has also met your expectation, do let us know as well. Our email address is ssdmevo@gmail.com. You may also send us your comments on 08062802590 or 08063939954 (Rev. Reginald Chinweze) – text messages only, please!

We thank His Lordship, the Bishop, Rt. Rev. I. U. Ordu, JP, for giving us the opportunity to serve in this all important unit in the Diocese that is saddled with the responsibility of working with him to disciple God's people.

Finally, with much prayers and painstaking effort, we send out this rich menu from the stable of the SSDM, Diocese of Evo. Enjoy it!

Rev. Cephas Okarefe
Editor, SSDM
January 2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We thank the Lord God Almighty for helping us to begin and conclude work on this 2013 edition of the adult Sunday school Manual.

We also thank the Bishop of our great Diocese, Rt. Rv. I. U. Ordu, JP, whose unique leadership skill is bringing out the best of this Department. As usual, he has been very supportive. The unfettered room he has given us to operate, the confidence he has reposed in us, his penchant for thoroughness, efficiency and quality and his sincere prayers are the oven for the baking this bread which you hold in your hand.

This publication would not have been possible without the effort of a cream of seasoned writers from both within and outside the Diocese. But I wish to be permitted to single out one person for mention, Dr. Mrs. Ngozi Okeke, the wife of the Retired Bishop of Diocese on the Niger, Rt. Rev. Ken Okeke who chose to create time out of her crowded schedule to offer us a thorough editorial work on the content, theology and grammar of this edition. Let me also mention Mr. K. S. Briggs, of GEM Consults, our Diocesan consultant who contributed immensely to this edition in writing some of the studies.

We also thank others, especially those from outside the Diocese like Mr. John Nwoha, the Regional Coordinator of the Scripture Union Nigeria, Port Harcourt Region, Rev. Can. Precious Amadi, Mr. Femi Odedina, and Mr. Chris Ekwedam who contributed some of the studies. Many of these precious people had to create time out of their crowded schedule to make their contributions.

We cannot fail to mention our own team of dedicated Board and Executive members whose efforts made this edition a reality. Of these, mention must be made of Mr. Azubike Obi, Mr. Tony Udoezika, Elder Solomon Nwachukwu, Mrs. Philomena Ezigbo, Mrs. Josephine Owbor, and others whose passion and commitment has been a driving force for us at the Sunday school and Discipleship Ministry since inception.

There are also some others who we like to refer to as the *back room* support team, like Dr. Ephraim Elenwo, Engr. A. Anagbogu, Ven. Alex Usifoh, the Archdeacon of Woji Archdeaconry, Ven. F.N. Akah and Mr. O. A. Okarefe. They have proved very helpful in their words of encouragement through phone calls, text messages, and other forms of support that have been a source of strength.

Finally, we like to mention Bethel Anglican Church for their show of support in making materials and other forms of support available in the course of the production of this manual.

On behalf of myself and Chaplain 2, Rev. Reginald Chinweze and the entire ExCo, we sincerely appreciate and say may the Almighty God reward all of you.

Rev. Cephas Okarefe
Chaplain 1, SSDM, Diocese of Ewo

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PART ONE: REDISCOVERING OUR BIBLICAL HERITAGE

INTRODUCTORY NOTES AND STUDIES

NOTE ONE: THE NATURE OF GOD

Important scripture: Col.1:15-20; 2:9-10

"What do you mean by God's nature? God's 'nature' means His *characteristics*, His *attributes*, His *qualities*. God *tells* us about Himself in the Bible and He *came in person* and *showed us* what He is like in the person of Jesus Christ.

What is the nature of the God we believe in as Christians? What are His characteristics, attributes, or qualities? What is He like? We need to know this particularly as we attempt to *rediscover our biblical heritage* which is the main theme of this study manual. This is because; our heritage springs from what we know about God.

In Christianity we believe God to be unique in that He alone has the following *divine* characteristics, without following any particular order.

GOD IS SUPREME: God is *the* Supreme Being. He is not merely a *different* type of being or a *superior* being but the *Supreme* Being. Paul in his description of the person of Christ noted that "He is before all things" (Col.1:17)

GOD IS UNIQUE. The description we have of Him in the Bible is *one of a kind*, that is, one who has a unique nature. The most unique aspect of God stems from what Christians describe and celebrate as *TRINITY*, consisting of three distinct "persons", FATHER, Son ("the Word of God") and the HOLY SPIRIT.

Some has suggested that we should not become frustrated on the question of "how can one be three?" issue! We are to always remember that we are *imperfect, natural* human beings with *physical* bodies trying to understand a *perfect, supernatural spiritual* being that does not have a physical body. (Christ did not always have a physical body until the incarnation when He decided to wear the created human body to save humanity. The best we can possibly hope for is just a "working definition". Trying to understand the "triune" nature of God intellectually is like trying to understand intellectually why some things smell nice and some things don't, without actually smelling anything.

GOD IS ETERNAL: He always has existed and always will exist. He had no beginning and will never cease to exist. John 1:1

GOD IS OMNISCIENT: He knows all things. Heb.4:13

GOD IS OMNIPOTENT: He is all powerful (Gen.18:14; Lk.1:37)

GOD IS OMNIPRESENT: He is everywhere at the same time (Heb.4:13)

GOD IS SELF-EXISTENT: God is the only One with no beginning, and who was not created.

GOD IS CREATOR: He created all things. Gen. 1:1

GOD IS HOLY: Holy means pure, undefiled. Lev.11:44; 1 Pe.1:15-16

GOD IS THEISTIC: The God of the Bible is *theistic*. He does *not* distance Himself from that which He has created.

GOD IS TRANSCENDENT: God transcends that which He created, i.e., He "*goes beyond*" that which He created, He is *not limited to*, He is *not bound by* that which He has created. For example, in the physical universe it is impossible for a single being to consist of three distinct persons, but God is not limited by physical laws, so *He can* be *one* God and yet consist of *three distinct persons*.

Moreover, **GOD IS A LIVING BEING.** He is also PERSONAL God with thoughts, reactions, etc., not an impersonal thing.

HE IS ALSO A SPIRIT: A spirit is a *living being* that is *incorporeal*, i.e., He does not possess a physical body. Note that Jesus *took on* a physical human body. It is not an inherent part of His nature. By comparison, our bodies are part of our human nature but we put on clothes.

GOD IS INTELLIGENT AND SENTIENT: A sentient being has *intelligence*, and also is *aware of its own existence*, and *aware that there is a 'big picture'*. For instance, cats, dogs, and horses have intelligence but probably are not sentient.

GOD IS IMMORTAL: He is a being that will live forever. It is important we note the technical difference between *eternalness* and *immortality*: God is *eternal* because He has had no beginning. He *also* is immortal because He will live forever. Humans, angels, demons, etc., are immortal because we will never cease to exist, but not eternal because we did not always exist. In practice however, *eternal* and *immortal* are often used interchangeably and the technical difference is not always maintained.

GOD IS SEPARATE: He is separate from that which He created. The universe itself is not God. (The opposite is *pantheism*. Some "nature" religions believe that the universe itself is god.)

NOTE TWO: THE NATURE OF MAN

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. 16 If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. 17 But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. 19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. 20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me 21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. 22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (Rom 7:14-24) – NKJV

In seeking to ***Rediscover Our Biblical Heritage***, a subject which we also need to take a look at is the ***nature of man***. From the view points of Paul the theologian in Rom7:24, Man is simply a wretch! And what does that mean? It means someone who is troubled or distressed, who evokes pity in others. It also means someone who is annoying, one who causes mild irritation. It also means a despicable person or one who is viewed with contempt or disapproval. Paul also says the ***body*** of man as that of ***death***.

Indeed, if other scriptures are examined thoroughly, there will be no difficulty in coming to the same conclusion as Paul did. The Psalmist in Psalm 64:6 says the heart and the inward part of man are deep. Jeremiah 17:9 describes the heart of man as deceitful, desperately wicked and incurably

sick. Meanwhile, in Philippians 3:21 describes the human body as *lowly* (NIV) or *vile* (KJV) words which means that which has the tendency to always do what is shameful. Now look at it the nature of man this way: ***A heart which is deep, deceitful, desperately wicked, and incurably sick, and which lives in a body of death, always with a tendency to do what is shameful!*** That is the nature of the unregenerate or unsaved person!

This person described above is made up body, soul and spirit (1 Thes.5:23). Some have erroneously interpreted the above to mean that man is a spirit, has a soul, and lives in a body, with far reaching and dangerous doctrinal conclusions. And like its maker, this person described above is *immortal* (that is, he will exist forever), *but not eternal* (that is he never existed before) *and infallible* (that is prone to mistakes), *which are major points of difference with God who is immortal, invisible, eternal and infallible.*

But after one is saved, man becomes the forgiven sinner, saved by grace and in pursuit of eternal life in God's kingdom following laid down biblical principles as contained in the Holy Scriptures (Rom.8:1-2; 12:1-2; Eph.2:4-9; Phil. 3:12-13; 1 Thes.5:23-24).

Meanwhile, being human also means that death has a hold on man while still in the unregenerate body. Man can still be sick (the reason there is biblical provision for healing) and he is can still make mistakes, no matter how good!

This brief explanation and understanding of the nature of man should have a humbling effect on all of us, irrespective of stature, status social or spiritual standing.

STUDY 1

TOPIC: SIN

AIM: *To help us understand the nature of sin and how its hold on us can hinder the discovery of our biblical heritage as Christians*

TEXT: Gen. 3: 1- 24

INTRODUCTION: Sin is a topic that so many people today do not want to talk about. While some say / think it is obsolete, some others simply do not want to be confronted with the truth about their lives. But the truth is that this three letter word S-I-N has affected the whole of humanity and caused death to reign over all (Rm. 5: 12, 14). The bible maintain that from Adam's disobedience, all mankind have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rm. 3:23). It is therefore very important that every seeker of salvation understand what sin is, its effect, and God's response, with a view to cultivating the right attitude toward it.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What does the bible say sin is? 1 John 3: 4; 5:17a
2. What is the origin of sin? Gen. 2: 16, 17; 3:1-8; Rm.5: 12
3. Mention the things that sin produces in a man's life. Gal. 5:19-21; Rm.1: 28-32
4. List at least six consequences of sin from the following passages: Gen 3:7-10, 12; 16-19; 22-24;
5. Isaiah 48:22; Eze 18: 4; Rm.3:23; 5:10; 6:23; Rev.21:8; & 20:15.
6. What is God's remedy for sin? Gen. 3:15, Isaiah53:1-6; Matt.1:21; 1:29; John 3:8-16; 1 John 2:2; 4:10.
7. What does God require us to do about sin once we become saved? 1 Thess. 5:22; Eph. 5: 10-13; Prov. 28:13.
8. How does sin hinder the discovery of our biblical heritage? Eze. 18:4; Jn.8:34

CONCLUSION: None of our self righteousness can appease God. Only God has the capacity to save man from sin. And He has made the provision for us *only* in His Son. Once saved, He commands us to live for Him and flee all appearances of sin. His grace which He offers to us free of charge makes this possible.

MEMORY VERSE: *"Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin and "the soul who sins, shall die" (John 8:34; Ezek 18:4b)*

STUDY 2

TOPIC: *God's Word is Central*

AIM: *To redirect us to the centrality of God's Word in the drive to rediscover our Biblical Heritage.*

TEXT: *Ezra 7: 1-10; Nehemiah 8: 1-3, 9-12*

Many advanced nations of the world take their history and heritage very seriously; consequently, they spend vast amounts of money to document and preserve their history and historical sites. This is because coming generations will be able to read, see and appreciate their heritage and be able to take pride in who they are. God taught the Jews to do this in His dealings with them, by always taking time to recount their history and through that, show them where they have gone wrong and what they need to do in order to make things right with Him and ensure that they continue to fulfill His mandate of showing His praises to the nations. Today, as we continue our studies in Ezra, we can learn from his experience what we need to do as we seek to recover our Biblical heritage, so that we can fulfill God's mandate in our lives as the salt and light of the world.

STUDY GUIDE

1. *From what is said about Ezra in Ezra 7: 1-10 and 8: 21-23, what must we do if we want God to use us to recover our biblical heritage? (b) Why do we not see more 'Ezras' in the life of the Church today?*
2. *Why is the Word of God central to recovering our biblical heritage - Psalm 119: 9, 105; Matt.5: 18; 2 Tim. 3: 16; 1 Pet. 2: 2-3?*
3. *What happens when we make the Word of God central to our lives and activities - Neh. 8: 10; 9: 38? (b) (i) Why do we not see more of such response in our churches today? (ii) Who is to blame? **Be specific with your answer.***
4. *Why are we not more enthusiastic today about studying the Word of God - 2 Tim. 3: 1-5? (b) What steps can we take to change this? **Be practical and honest?***

CONCLUSION: We learn four significant things about Ezra from Ezra 7: 1-10: he had a godly heritage which he sought to maintain through diligent study of God's Word. Secondly, he knew the Law of God and was determined to obey it. Thirdly, he had leadership skills and was able to lead nearly 50,000 people successfully on a long, treacherous journey back to Jerusalem. Fourthly, he wholeheartedly served God with integrity and sought to develop the same spirituality in the lives of others. The Church today is in need of people who not only appreciate their spiritual heritage, but seek to nurture it through diligent study of God's Word and teach others to do the same. When leaders do this, they get the results that Ezra and Nehemiah achieved - which is, understanding of God's expectations and repentance and commitment to Him. Central to any growth and spirituality is the Word of God, because it is inspired by the Holy Spirit and convicts of sin and cleanses us. Through the study and obedience of it, we also grow and mature in our relationship with God, so that we can be effective citizens of the Kingdom of God, pointing others to Christ through our lives and example. Unfortunately today, programmes that seek to teach the importance of the Word are poorly attended, as we are more interested in attending those that promise instant breakthroughs and blessings. However, if we must recover our biblical heritage, we must re-orientate ourselves to the centrality of God's Word and seek, like Ezra and the people he lead, to study, understand and obey it.

MEMORY VERSE: *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3: 16-17)*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *How much regard do you have for the Word of God?*

STUDY 3

TOPIC: THE OLD PATH

TEXT: JEREMIAH. 6:16

AIM: *To draw our attention to the one and only true path (out of the 'several paths') that leads to a righteous and glorious life so that ultimately, we don't miss our way.*

INTRODUCTION: We live in an age, when all kinds of practices have been introduced into the church. Some of these include; homosexuality, occultism, inordinate love of money and the world. In some cases, so called preachers have criticized the Bible and faulted long standing Christian heritages like singing of hymns (Eph. 5:19), moderation in all things (Phil. 4:5), decent dressing etc. Beloved, the foregoing makes God's injunction in Jeremiah 6:16 a "must do", for every Christian who does not wish to be shipwrecked.

STUDY GUIDE

1. In what ways can Christians be misled today? (b) Why does this happen? Matt. 24:4, 11, 23-25; Gal. 1:6-10.
2. From Ps. 1:1-6; Prov. 3:1-10; John 14:5-6, Jer.6:16 identify the right way prescribed by Scripture in the midst of the fake ways. Why do we find it difficult to follow the Bible's prescribed way?
3. Read 2 Pe.2:1-22 and identify some of the false and deceitful workers that exist today and how we can know them.
4. From what Jesus said in Matt.24:5 and 11, what is the danger in being deceived by deceitful people and false prophets?

CONCLUSION: "And you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free". When Jesus spoke of "knowing the truth", he was speaking of knowing God's revelation to man. The revelation is embodied in Jesus himself the word made flesh. The truth is the word of God, which is what the Bible contains. Knowing the truth means accepting it, obeying it and regarding it above all earthly opinions.

MEMORY VERSE: *Thus says the LORD: "Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls..." (Jer. 6:16) – NKJV*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *Are you on the old path that leads to life, or on the fast and easy track that leads to destruction?*

PART TWO: OUR BIBLICAL HERITAGE IN CHRIST

STUDY 4

TOPIC: SONS OF GOD

TEXT: Rom 8:14-17; John 1: 12.

AIM: *To help us rediscover what it means to be sons and daughters of God with a view to appropriating the benefits.*

INTRODUCTION: It is evident from Scriptures that one heritage we have in Christ is that we become sons and daughters of God by adoption. This is a mystery. We did not work for it or earn it; we got it by the mercy, love and grace of God in Christ Jesus at the time of our new birth. All we did was to believe and receive the Lord Jesus and we automatically became sons and daughters of God.

STUDY GUIDE

1. What does it mean to be sons of God? John 1:12; Rom.8:1-16. How can someone become a son of God? Jn. 1: 12; 3:3, 5, 16.
2. Why do people find it difficult to respond to the Biblically prescribed steps to becoming children of God?
3. What are the benefits and privileges of sons of God? Discuss. Lk.11:9-13; Rom 8: 15- 17, 31; Eph 2: 4-6; Col 2: 13-15; 1 Jn. 2: 25
4. How can we sustain this great privilege? Jn. 15: 4-5; Rom 8: 14

CONCLUSION: It is clear that we have a heritage of being the sons of God with great benefits and privileges. We must be aware of this at all times as it will influence how we live and manage our lives.

MEMORY VERSE: '*...and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ...*' (Rom 8:17) – NKJV

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *Have you been living as a son (of God) or as slave (to sin and Satan)?*

STUDY 5

TOPIC: ETERNAL LIFE

AIM: *To bring back to the front burner of the church's priorities the all important issue of eternal life as promised by Christ to all who believe.*

TEXT: Jn. 10: 10; 3: 16

INTRODUCTION: The greatest treasure we have as believers is that singular thing which has been the desire of God for mankind from the beginning – eternal life. It is the very life of God Himself and it is characterized by love, peace, joy, longsuffering, righteousness, faith, meekness etc. It is God's promise of abundant life. Everyone who has received Christ as Lord and Saviour has this life in him. The reverse is equally true! (1 Jn. 5: 11 – 13).

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. From Jn.10:10, Jn. 3: 16, Jn. 17: 3, what is eternal life, and how is it different from what some people think in their minds?
2. How can one receive this life? Jn. 3: 16, 3, 5
3. Is it possible to receive this life and not manifest its nature? Discuss. Gal.5:19-21; 1 Cor.3:
4. What is the consequence of claiming to have the life and not manifesting the nature? 1 John 4: 20; Rev. 3:1-3
5. Why is it that even though it is a very important and weighty matter, people resist the call to be born again many Churches today

CONCLUSION: God's promise is that as many will receive Jesus Christ will have eternal life. This life is in His son. Those who do not have the son do not have life. So if you have received Jesus into your life, please believe that you already have eternal life and start to manifest His nature by the help of the Holy Spirit.

MEMORY VERSE: *And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life (1 John 5:11-12) – NKJV*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *Face it: do you really have eternal life in you? Are you sure?*

STUDY 6 (TO BE TAKEN IN TWO STUDY SESSIONS)

TOPIC: DIVINE HEALING

AIM: *To help us take a critical look at the subject of divine healing as one heritage we have in Christ.*

TEXT: Is 53: 5, Lk. 4:18.

INTRODUCTION: Divine healing is one important heritage we have in Christ. The desire of God is to save us, heal us and use us for His glory. This we see in the ministry of our Lord Jesus who went about ‘doing *good*’, and ‘healing all that were oppressed of the devil’ (Acts 10:38). Once we believe the gospel and receive Christ, we are also to believe Him for divine healing because it is part of the package.

STUDY GUIDE

PART A

1. What is divine healing? Jer.30:17; 33:6; Ja.5:13-15.
2. What is the guarantee of our healing as Christians? Matt.8:14-17; 1 Pet. 2:24
3. Discuss the causes of sickness and disease from the following texts: 2 Kings 5:25-27; 2 Chro.26:19-20; Cf. Jn. 5:14; John 9:1-3; 2 Cor. 12:7-9

PART B

4. How can one receive divine healing? Ps 32: 5; Col 3: 13, Mk 9: 23,1 Cor.12:7-10; Ja.5:13-15;
5. Even when we believe all the conditions are met, are we always healed? Discuss.
6. God’s promise of healing for His children is a clear indication that sickness is to be an expected challenge in this mortal body. Discuss.

CONCLUSION: It is the will of God that we get healed if sickness comes. We need faith, while also ensuring that there is no covered up sin, un-forgiveness or an un-confessed affront on God or His servants that could provoke divine wrath in our lives. After all, as we noted in the study, God Himself could punish with disease or even death! We should not also under-rate the critical role of the prayer of faith made by the saints. So, the suggestion is, whenever sickness comes, do some thorough soul search first and foremost, before proceeding to claim your healing. However, let it also be understood that it is not always that we get healed even if all the conditions are met. God’s sovereignty must always be at the back of our minds in our faith walk.

MEMORY VERSE: *Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed (1 Peter 2:24) - NKJV*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *Whenever you are sick, do you take time to check your own life for any possible breach before proceeding and progressing in your prayer?*

STUDY 7

TOPIC: GIVING TO GOD

AIM: *To reawaken the sleeping giant in us in the area of giving to God in the Church with a view to releasing the immense blessings that goes with generous giving in support of His work.*

TEXT: Lk. 6: 38, Acts 20: 35.

INTRODUCTION: Giving is the nature of God. For God so loved the world and He gave..... We are commanded and expected to manifest this nature too. Giving to God and the needy is the correct response to God's love towards us. We are to give because we love the Lord, not for us to get more nor to pacify God nor even to be blessed. Surely, when we give, we will be blessed according to the scriptures but that should not be our motive for giving.

STUDY GUIDE:

1. What does it mean to give to God? Ex. 25:1-2; Prov. 19:17; Mal.3:8-12; 2 Cor. 8:1-5
2. List what can be given and when? Ex. 25:3 – 9; 2 Kings 4: 8-11; Hag. 1:8; 1 Jn. 3: 16 – 17;
3. Examine the following example of giving in the Bible and point out what can be learnt for our lives as children of God. Ex. 35: 4 – 29; 31: 1 – 6, 1Kings 3: 3 – 14, Lk. 8:3; Acts 11: 27 – 30.
4. What are the possible consequences of doing nothing (especially when we are in a position to do so), even when the need in the house of the Lord is glaring? Hag.1:1-11

CONCLUSION: It is indeed more blessed to give than to receive, let us make giving to God a lifestyle and not just an activity. God loves a cheerful giver, and our obedience commits Him to act on our behalf.

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *What is your attitude like, when it comes to giving to the Lord and His servants?*

STUDY 8

TOPIC: DIVINE GUIDANCE

AIM: *To help us cultivate the habit of seeking guidance from the Lord only, with a view to discouraging patronage of wrong places and people.*

TEXTS: Gen. 24: 10-27; Nu. 9:15-23

INTRODUCTION: We can be very superstitious as humans. This tends to make so many of us to always be looking for every opportunity for someone to tell us something of the supernatural, especially those that border on revelations about our future. This is the reason we often like to be prophesied to. Careful observation of this will reveal clearly that at the back of it all is a hidden desire to be guided so that we don't make mistakes. Unfortunately, this has led many to wrong places and people. But it ought not to be so. God guides His children, and the Bible is full of examples! Let's find out.

STUDY GUIDE

1. Explain divine guidance from our stated texts.
2. What condition must we fulfill before God can guide us? Cf. Gen. 24:1-9; 1 Sam 23:9-13; Ex.33:12-15; Prov.3:5-6
3. How does God guide His people? 1 Kings 19:12-13; Ps.1: 1-3; 119:105; Prov. 11:14; Acts 10:9-21; 16:6-10; 21:1-4; 10-12.
4. What is the danger in seeking guidance from the wrong people or places? 2 Kings 1:1-4, 15-17.

CONCLUSION: Divine Guidance, simply, is God leading His own who has faith in Him and depend on Him for direction. And He is faithful at it as we have seen in the study. He guides us through His word, through the counsel of His faithful people, through genuine utterance from Spirit-filled brethren (especially when there is consistency in accuracy), through trance or visions and through the gentle inner voice of the Holy Spirit. But the medium of this guidance is solely His prerogative. When we ask Him to guide us, He will, provided we are ready and willing to obey! However, important as all these means of guidance, the WORD of God remains yet the only means that is ever reliable, provided it is correctly translated and honestly interpreted. We must all do everything in our power to avoid the danger of incurring unnecessary divine wrath by seeking guidance from wrong sources.

MEMORY VERSE: *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths (Prov. 3:5-6) – NKJV*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *Am I a harlot patronizing all kinds of people and places for spiritual guidance?*

STUDY 9 *(To be taken in two separate study sessions)*

TOPIC: DIVINE SECURITY

AIM: *To examine our means of acquiring security in the light of the Scriptures and be convinced that Divine Security is found **ONLY** in **Christ**.*

TEXT: Prov. 1:32-33

INTRODUCTION: People now live in apparent fear of not knowing what will befall them from dawn to dusk. In the desperation to get quick solutions, many so called believers have returned to their ancestral shins to draw 'power' to enable them survive the times. They easily forget that Christ long before now, had foretold these current happenings and encouraged believers to stand firm. Amidst increasing insecurity in our environment, this basic truth will help us hold on steadfastly to the Salvation which Christ won for us on the Cross. In this study, we shall examine the lives of some people of old which will serve as a guide to help us check our excesses with a view to being totally convinced that Divine Security is only obtainable in Christ.

STUDY GUIDE

PART A

1. What do you understand by "Divine Security?" Prov.1:32-33
2. From these scriptures identify the persons, and explain the form of security they enjoyed: Gen. 7: 17-23; Gen. 19:10-17; Gen 39:19-21; Exod. 1:15-20; Job 1:12; Mark 4:35-41. What do we learn from all these as children of God in a world that is increasingly insecure?
3. Why should God's children feel secure in the midst of the insecurities with which we live? Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6

PART B

4. How truly secure is anyone whose trust is in the security in Christ alone? Jn. 16:33, 19:30; Col.2:15; Eph.2:6; Phil.2:9-11; Heb.2:14, 7:25
5. What is the mind of God concerning our security? Prov. 1:32-33, 18:10; Isaiah 41:10-14; 43: 1-4.
6. How may we enjoy the security of God as His children? What specific conditions must we fulfill? Suggested Scriptures: Ps 34:12-16; 91.

CONCLUSION: Although there are security challenges all around us, we are to ensure that our character and the way we seek protection/security does not cast any doubt on our profession of faith. There is no security in career, wealth, position or power except in Christ. Indeed, this is Divine security. Let us trust the Lord. He alone can secure us. As the world grows increasingly wicked, we are all advised to trust in God who alone is able to secure us no matter how critical the situation might be.

Meanwhile, let it also be known that insecurities of the day may touch us because we live in a fallen world, but Satan has no control over our lives and will not go beyond the parameters God has set. Even he realises that God has set a hedge of protection around His children! That should give us confidence as we go about our business.

MEMORY VERSE: *The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe* (Prov. 18:10) - NKJV

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *In what or who have you put your trust for your security?*

PART THREE: SOME ENDANGERED BIBLICAL HERITAGE TODAY.

STUDY 10

TOPIC: AFFLICTIONS

AIM: *To help the Christian know that becoming a Christian does not insulate one from afflictions and suffering for Christ with a view to making them to be better prepared when faced with such experiences.*

TEXT: Ps.34:19

INTRODUCTION: Affliction happens to all, the godly and the godly alike. It may be easily explained when the ungodly suffer painful experiences. But is not quite easy doing so when it comes to the godly going through some seriously painful experiences. Some even get frustrated, discouraged and even may backslide in the process.

But the bible has answers for this, like any other issues of life, especially as Christians. Great Saints in the Bible like Abraham, Joseph, David, the three Hebrew children in the land of Babylon, Daniel, Hannah, Anna the Prophetess, Paul, and even Christ suffered great afflictions at one point or the other. In fact, Christ learnt obedience by the things he suffered (Heb 5:8). But all of these remained steadfast irrespective of what they suffered. The biblical record we have is that we should serve and maintain our worship of God irrespective of the circumstances or experience of life. Let's find out more from the study.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Identify the truth revealed in the following passages regarding afflictions: Jn. 16:33; 2 Tim.3:12; Ps. 34:19; Is. 48:10
2. Identify and explain the commands in the following texts: Rev. 2: 10; 2 Tim2:3; 4:5; Heb. 10:23, 35-36.
3. Read 2 Cor. 11:22-29, and list the afflictions Paul suffered. Did he remain faithful? 2 Tim.4:6-8
4. State some practical challenges that Christians are facing in the world today. Are the pressures brought about by these experiences real?
5. What should be our attitude and response to these painful experiences? See Matt. 5: 11-12; 12:1-3; Ja.1:12; 4: 7-10; 1 Pe. 5: 7- 10.

CONCLUSION: Trials, persecutions, afflictions and sufferings are an inevitable part of our Christian heritage. They are refining instruments in God's plans for the holiness and final abode of His people. They should therefore be embraced with patience and joyful obedience through prayer.

MEMORY VERSE: "These things have I spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16: 33).

STUDY 11

TOPIC: THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

AIM: *To alert the new believer to the fact that as Christians, we are pilgrims here on earth, with heavenly citizenship; and to the soon coming again of Christ, so as to be better prepared.*

TEXT: II Pe. 3:1-14

INTRODUCTION: When work was on to produce the discipleship manual of our Diocese, we did not consider a topic like this one important at new converts' level, even though there has been advice to that effect. But we had to change our minds after the Executive session of Friday 17th July 2010 where members were unanimous in opinion that it was necessary to include it, especially now that the subject is fast becoming *extinct* (or so it seems) in the church. All new comers, it was reasoned, need introduction to the fact that this earth is not the final home of the believer. We are only Pilgrims here on earth, with an important hope to look forward to: *the second coming of Christ* otherwise known as the *Second Advent*. But now, it has become obvious that not only is the study relevant for beginners, but indeed for all Christians, as one of the endangered biblical heritage today.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What do Christians mean when they speak of the second coming of Christ? John 14: 3; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Cor.15:19
2. What do the following texts say about the believer and the second coming? Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thes.5:1-3; 2: 1-2; 1 Jn. 3:2; Rev.21:5-8; 22: 6-7;10-14
3. Identify a key mix-up that has been predicted in the final time leading up to the second coming of Christ? II Pe. 3: 2-4
4. What are some of the key events to expect as we await the coming of Christ? 1 Thes. 4:13-18; 2 Thes. 2:1-4
5. What is meant by *rapture* (1 Thes.4: 17) and how is it different from *the second coming* (Zec. 14:3-4)?
6. How should we prepare for this major end-time event as those having this hope? I Pe.2:11-12; II Pe. 3:11-14; 1 Jn. 3:2-3; Rev.16:15

CONCLUSION: The second coming of Christ has to do with His bodily appearance on earth again. The scriptures clearly state that Christians should not be ignorant of it. But because God does not see as man sees, one key mix up in the time leading up to His actual coming again is interpreting His seeming delay in coming as slackness by God concerning His promise, urged on by scoffers. Meanwhile, we have identified three key events that Christians should expect in the days leading up to Christ's return in this study. These are the *rapture* (or the mysterious caught up experience); the *great falling away* (the great or massive apostasy), and *the revelation of the man of sin* (or Anti-Christ). It should be noted however that at the *rapture* Christ's feet will not touch ground, the saints will be *caught up to meet the Lord in the air*; whereas in *the second coming*, *the Lord's feet shall touch the ground on Mount Olives in Jerusalem*. We also examined how we may be adequately prepared for this great event of history. Remaining undefiled remains the only key.

MEMORY VERSE: 1 Jn.3:3 "*And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself just as He is pure*"

STUDY 12

TOPIC: Honesty in life and service

AIM: *To help us imbibe the virtue of honesty in our lives and service in the Church or elsewhere always.*

TEXT: Jer. 9:4 – 9.

INTRODUCTION: To be honest is to always tell the truth and never steal or cheat. It also has to do with the quality of never hiding the truth about something. This study is therefore intended to examine the Christian virtue of telling the truth, being known for not lying but upholding honesty in life and service.

STUDY GUIDE

1. Identify from the following passages, some of the ways and reasons falsehood and dishonesty are been practised even among Christians today. Gen.317:31-35; 2 Sam 1:1-10 (compare with 1 Sam.31:3-6); 1 Kings 13:11-19; 2 Kings 5:20-25; Ps.55:12-14, 21; Acts 5:1-6; Gal. 2:4-5.
2. Why is it necessary for believers to be honest always? (Psa.15:1, 2; Prov.16:13; 1 Tim3:15).
3. What can enable us to be honest in life and service? (Jn. 1:12; 2 Tim.3:15-17; Heb.12:1, 2).

CONCLUSION: God is truth. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. He, who truly dwells in Him, reflects this attribute of honesty. We can refuse to succumb to our flesh and environment in this matter.

MEMORY VERSE: *LORD, who may abide in your tabernacle? Who may dwell in your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart (Ps 15:1-2) – NKJV*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *Are you honest in your personal life and service to God?*

STUDY 13

TOPIC: *Integrity in life and service.*

AIM: *To inculcate the priceless virtue of integrity where it is lacking, strengthen it where it already exists, and rediscover it where it is already endangered.*

TEXT: Job 2:1 – 10; 27:5.

INTRODUCTION: Integrity is the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles. It refers to strength and firmness of character or principle; having a disposition that can be trusted. A person of integrity is one who has formed the habit/character or developed the firm principle of honesty in word and practice. It connotes a resolve to abide by the truth and not move away from it no matter the cost or consequence. This study therefore promises to strengthen the immediate past and to show uprightness as an aspect of integrity.

STUDY GUIDE

1. Identify some areas of life in which integrity is expected to be demonstrated today. See also Job 2:3, 9-10; 27:5; Psa.26:1, 11; 2 Cor.7:2
2. Give example of some of the areas of service people fail integrity test today from the following texts (Gen. 39:7-10; 1 Kings 13:11-18; 1 Sam. 2:12-16, 17, and 22)?
3. Mention and discuss some of the factors that make believers to compromise integrity. Gen. 20:1-2, 11; Ruth 1: 1-2; Prov.24:10
4. What is the position of the Lord on the Christian's integrity? Gen. 17:1; Eccl. 5:4-6.

CONCLUSION: It is not easy to build and maintain integrity in the world, especially when under pressure. But God demands it all the same. He demanded it of Abraham when he was asked to be blameless (a person of integrity) in his walk with God. Even the world, though they don't have to offer, yet happy to enjoy it wherever it can be found. Let's always remember that lack of integrity can get us into trouble with God. And it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Little wonder the Preacher gave us the counsel in our study. So what are you going to do about this?

MEMORY VERSE: *When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless (Gen 17:1) – NKJV*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *Can God vouch for my integrity as he did in Job's case? And why not if no?*

STUDY 14

TOPIC: Transparency and Accountability in service.

AIM: *To help us rediscover the now endangered value of transparency and accountability in service, especially in the Church*

TEXT: John 3:19 – 21.

INTRODUCTION: To be accountable is to be able to take responsibility for your decisions or actions with a readiness to explain them when asked to. The accountable Christian is therefore one who accepts and discharges assigned tasks as directed, being aware that he would be called to question and would not want to be found wanting then. When our service can be understood easily because we leave no one in doubt, then we can be branded transparent. When our service is clear, certain with no skeletons in any cupboard, we are transparent.

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STUDY GUIDE

1. What can we learn from Mt. 25:14-19; Luke 16: 2; 2 Cor.8:13-22 about accountability and transparency?
2. What human deficiencies make Christians not to be transparent and accountable? See John 3:19 – 21.
3. Identify and discuss some of the areas in the church where transparency and accountability are a serious challenge.
4. Why is it imperative that we should be transparent and accountable? Psa. 11:4; 1 Cor. 4:5; I Tim. 5:24-25; Heb. 4:13.

CONCLUSION: It is good to be honest, but we have to ensure our honesty is obvious. This will help eschew suspicions that often arise and ruin relationships. We should be accountable. And we have to be transparent, at every level of service, be it in the Church or circular service. It is not pride to be transparent. If Paul, a servant of the Lord went the extra mile for this purpose, then none of us has any reason not to.

MEMORY VERSE: *And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account (Heb 4:13) – NKJV*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *How truly transparent and accountable am I in my life and service? Am I living any room for some skeleton in the cupboard?*

STUDY 15

TOPIC: Sacrifice in life and service.

AIM: *To help us rediscover the priceless virtue of sacrificial service in the Church with a view to discouraging the now more common trend of reward driven service.*

TEXT: 2 Sam. 24:18 – 25.

INTRODUCTION: This study is not about the sacrifice of animals. It focuses on what we are willing to give up in serving God acceptably. It also includes sacrificial giving both to God and to men. We have the example of God Himself who gave His one and only Son to die for us (John 3:16). He expects us to follow in His steps (I Peter 2:21).

STUDY GUIDE

1. Explain from our text what it means to make sacrifice, and some of the areas the Christian is required to make sacrifice today. Gen. 22:1 – 11; 2 Sam. 24:18 – 25; Rom.12:1-2
2. Explain when giving of our resources or service can be said to be sacrificial? Mk. 12:42-44; II Cor.8:1 – 7; Phil.2:25-30.
3. What things war against our making sacrifice in life and service today? Luke 9:57 – 62.

CONCLUSION:

It is always more blessed to give than to receive, be it in terms of our physical or material resources or diligent service to God (as we serve others). The liberal soul, we must always remember, shall be fat while he that withholds becomes poor. Service to God and others, especially when rendered sacrificially attracts divine blessings. No man can out-give God.

MEMORY VERSE: *For I bear witness that according to their ability; yes, and beyond their ability, the Macedonian Christians were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God (2 Cor. 8:3-5).*
NKJV

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *What have you sacrificed because of the Lord since becoming a child of God? How much is your sacrifice worth?*

STUDY 16

TOPIC: *Serving for the honour and glory of the Lord.*

AIM: *To help us rediscover the priceless virtue of serving in the Church for the honour and glory of the Lord as against the now more common trend of serving for selfish gain.*

TEXT: Phil.1:12 – 18.

INTRODUCTION: Service unto God should be for His honour and glory. Now when we see noticeable personal interests and carnal desires in the service of the Lord, it is an indication that something has gone amiss.

STUDY GUIDE

1. Consider the service of the persons mentioned in these bible passages and discuss how it is different in our churches today: Ne.4:22-23; 5:14-19; Matt.26:7-7; 2 Cor. 12:14-18.
2. Why has this virtue become an endangered one? (Phil.1:15, 16; 3:19). What is the danger of that? Mal. 1:6 – 8; Matt. 24:12.
3. Give examples of some of the selfish motives that drive the service of many in the church today. Consider these texts: Matt. 23:5; 1 Tim.6:5; Tit.1:11
4. What does it mean to do all things to the glory of God? How can we practically put that into effect in our service today? 1 Cor. 10:31-33

CONCLUSION: God delights in His creatures serving Him but He does not accept every form of service. Those who serve Him must follow Him so they can serve Him acceptably and be rewarded.

MEMORY VERSE: *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God' (1 Cor. 10:31) – NKJV*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *For what purpose do you do what you do in the House of the Lord?*

STUDY 17

TOPIC: Servanthood in service.

AIM: *To inculcate and encourage servant leadership quality in us as we serve as Christians, especially in the Church*

TEXT: John 13:1 – 17.

INTRODUCTION: Leadership deficiency is common in our day, be it in the circular or religious circles. This is so because there is a fundamental principle in leadership without which one will do anything but a leader. That fundamental principle is called servanthood. Very few are willing to be servants. The vast majority always want to be “*in charge*”, even though it is not wrong to be in charge. It is therefore not surprising that leadership is in crises today. We certainly need to study what the bible says about servanthood.

STUDY GUIDE

1. Why was Peter so troubled in verse 6 of our text? (See v. 13).
2. How can we cultivate servant attitude in our service to God? Jn. 13:14; Heb.12:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:21; (cf. Phil. 2:7, 8); and what vital virtue do we need in order to cultivate this servant attitude? Acts 10:24 – 26; Ja.4:10
3. What are the rewards/benefits of taking on the attitude of a servant in service? (Matt. 23:12; Phil. 2:9 – 11).

CONCLUSION: Peter rightly saw Jesus as his Lord and master, and therefore felt it was improper for him, the servant, to receive such esteemed service from Him. His view then is not different from the worldview of the average person. But Christ’s revolutionary teaching is that this should not be so. We must be servants. And servants serve. Indeed, the major way to cultivate servanthood, is by serving others, who we may even consider “lower” than us. That was what our Lord Jesus did. And that is how we are expected to serve in the Church. There should be no job or duty in the church that any child of God should consider too belittling for him/her. This is the truth!

Meanwhile, some of us must understand that God looks beyond our work and service to our hearts and attitudes. They determine the nature of the reward we get for our service in His name. But the vital virtue of humility is imperative, if this is ever going to be the norm in our lives.

MEMORY VERSE: *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.*

NKJV (Phil 2:5-7) – NKJV

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *Are you a servant or a boss in your service in the Church?*

STUDY 18

TOPIC: Hospitality.

AIM: *To provoke us to hospitality in the Church*

TEXT: II Kings 4:8-17.

INTRODUCTION: Hospitality means someone's expression of goodness and kindness. It can be seen as demonstration of "love, kindness, and empathy towards those in need". In a restricted sense, it is "friendly and generous behaviour towards guests". God expects us to be pleased to welcome guests. In particular, hospitality requires that we invite ministers, widows, strangers and orphans home for a good treat either once or more. The rich woman in our text grew in her hospitality as she graduated from one level to another, even arranging a decent always-available- and ready accommodation for the servant of God, prompting a corresponding divine response, much to the benefit of the w=man!

STUDY GUIDE

1. What is God's mind about hospitality? Rom.12:13; I Tim.3:2; Titus 1:7-8; I Peter 4:9.
2. How would you describe hospitality from the acts of the characters in these Bible passages? 2 Kings 4:8-11; Gen. 18:2-8 (cf.Heb.13:2).
3. Identify the persons who benefitted from the acts of hospitality in question 2 above and those who can benefit from our hospitality today.
4. What are the benefits and rewards of hospitality? Heb. 13:2; Matt.25:35; 2 Kings 4:12-17.
5. What are the forces/factors that work against it today? (Lk.10:30-35; 2 Cor. 11:26).
6. How can we overcome these factors above that work against hospitality? 1Thes.4:11; Dan. 1:8

CONCLUSION: Hospitality has contributed much to both numerical growth of the church and spiritual growth of the members. Although certain factors could work against hospitality, with divine wisdom, discernment, selflessness and a mind already made up on the matter before hand as a principle of life, we can still show hospitality today, and we should. If for nothing else, God's mind about it, and the benefits attached should motivate us.

MEMORY VERSE: *Distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality (Rom. 12:13) – NKJV.*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *Have you been exposed to any kind of shock treatment on account of your hospitality that has probably made you to "block" your mind to future acts of hospitality? Then, UNBLOCK YOUR MIND TODAY! And if you have not been hospitable, you need to also do something about it.*

STUDY 19

TOPIC: Justice.

AIM: *To help us bring back this divine virtue in the Church, that is, where it is already endangered; inculcate it, where it is non-existent, and strengthen it where it is in effect.*

TEXT: Luke 18:1 – 5.

INTRODUCTION: Justice is “that essential perfection in God, whereby He is infinitely righteous and just in His nature and works”. Generally, it is the correct treatment given to people: the person who is wrong is punished; the person who is right is rewarded. Fairness is the quality of treating people equally or in a way that is reasonable and without any form of prejudice.

STUDY GUIDE

1. What is God’s mind about justice and fairness in His Church? Amos 5:24; Mic.6:8; Isa. 1:17
2. Read Rom. 3:21 – 26; 2 Pe.2:4-9:
 - a. How would you describe God’s justice?
 - b. In what practical ways do we sin in the ‘weightier matters’ (Matt. 23:23) in the Church today? Cf. Rom.13:3-4
 - c. Discuss practically some acts of injustice that are *in mask* in the church today.
3. Why would the judge in Lk.18:1-5 allow himself to be worn out before giving this woman justice and *in what ways* and *why* do we similarly delay justice for others today? See also Acts 24:24- -26
4. What are some of the ungodly factors and circumstances that take away justice? Luke 18:4; Mark 10:5; I Sam. 8:3; Ex 23:2.
5. What happens when justice is not in place? Eccl. 8:11.

CONCLUSION: Justice comes from love. It is ordained by God to bring about peace and joy in human relationships. We are being called to pursue them. God Himself hates injustice. He is just and fair in all He does, and He demands same from us, especially those who lead. But unfortunately, so many times, we fail the test of justice for some reasons that bother on selfish interest, lack of fear of God, hardness of heart, and the multitude effect. And so many times, acts of injustice are disguised in masks in the church. The warning of the evil effect of injustice as we have in Eccl.8:11 should propel us to enforce justice wherever we find ourselves.

MEMORY VERSE: *He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (Mic. 6:8) – NKJV*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *In what ways have you probably been masking your injustice at home, in your Church and perhaps, in your leadership? You may need to take some action, NOW!*

STUDY 20

TOPIC: God's love and severity (in punishing sin).

AIM: *To help us bring back in our lives and practice, the delicate balance between God's love, and His severity in punishing sin.*

TEXT: Ezek.3:16 – 19; Rom. 11:22.

INTRODUCTION: The greatness of God's love makes some people to doubt His severity. On the other hand, some who have experienced His severity lose sight of His love. The truth/balance can be found in Rom. 11:22. Whom He loves He rebukes when the fellow sins. And his anger is for a season not forever, as long as there is heartfelt repentance. As we go on in this study, seek to harmonize John 3:16, Rom. 5:8 and Heb. 10:31.

STUDY GUIDE

1. What do you understand by God's love and His severity? John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; Heb. 10:31. How can we marry them?
2. How do the following show God's severity (in punishing sin) and love? Gen.6:5-21; 19:12-26; Rom.11:11-24. (Note: all are advised to read these scriptures before coming to teach the class. It will make the study faster if just one text read, and the others explained to the class)
3. Why must we preach His love? And His severity in punishing sin? Heb.10:26, 27, 31; Ezek.3:16 – 19.

CONCLUSION: Many people need to know and appreciate God's love to be saved. Quite a number of others need to know the severity of God in order to turn away from their evil ways. God has ordained believers as His instruments to preach and persuade men to respond positively to both. Emphasizing one at the expense of the other is *not sound* gospel. He is the God of love. But He has also demonstrated the capacity and will to severely punish sin. Understanding of this truth is relevant to a robust Christian experience.

MEMORY VERSE: *Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off* (Rom 11:22) – NKJV

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *Could you in any way be taking God's loving kindness for granted, unmindful of His severity in dealing with sin, stubbornness and rebellion?*

STUDY 21

TOPIC: Good Record keeping.

AIM: *Good record keeping is a major challenge in many sections of the Church today. This study is to help us correct what is wrong*

TEXT: 2 Chro.1:6; 29:32-33; 1 Cor. 10:11.

INTRODUCTION: Record keeping is something God does and that for our good. The book of Numbers is all records. The history books of the Bible – Joshua to II Chronicles, Acts of the Apostles, Pentateuch (the first five books of the bible) and the entire Bible are records kept for generations of believers. And we benefit from them greatly. Imagine Christianity without the Bible! What do we keep as records? How do we keep the records? Why must our generation keep records at home, in church, office, etc. This study will aid our insight on the subject.

STUDY GUIDE

1. Why was record-keeping important in God's relationship with the people of Israel?
2. What records are we to keep? 1 Chro.29:1-5, 21, 2 Chro.1:6; 29:32-33; Hab.2:2; Rev.1:11; 2:1. (Add to this list – birthdays, important family and church events etc).
3. How are we to keep these records especially for easy retrieval? I Cor. 4:40; Dan.12:4 (Orderly; electronic – in computers, handsets, paper files, etc).
4. What are the challenges in record keeping? Hos. 4:6; Prov. 10:4; Eccl. 10:18; Prov. 24:33, 34.
5. Why does God want Christians to keep records today? Dan. 9:1 – 3; Rev. 1:11.
6. Read Ezra 2: 61-63 and point out (literally) some of the dangers of improper, inappropriate, inadequate or no record keeping?

CONCLUSION: At office, home, church and everywhere possible, we are to endeavour to do good record keeping. It will save us or some other. God practiced it and expects same of us.

This study is an indication that it may not after all be out of place to actually have clear tithe payment records or other financial details.

Similarly, we can imply from this study that *good reporting at the end of any given event should be backed up with appropriate statistical details.*

MEMORY VERSE: *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come (1 Cor. 10:11) - NKJV*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *What is your record keeping habit like?*

STUDY 22

TOPIC: Divine sovereignty and supremacy in human affairs.

AIM: *To help us rediscover the power that is inherent in our proper understanding of divine sovereignty with a view to solving some of the challenges confronting us in the Church today.*

TEXT: Dan.3:1-30; Acts 12:1-12

INTRODUCTION: When we make Jesus Lord of our lives, it really means allowing God to exercise supremacy in our affairs. God can then exercise His sovereign will over us. Supremacy is God having and exercising more powers in a matter than anyone else. God's sovereignty is His exercise of supreme authority in over-ruling in the affairs of men. God has such unquestionable, undeniable power that He exercises as He pleases sometimes. He cannot be queried.

STUDY GUIDE

1. How will you describe God's sovereignty? Eph.1:11; and why do men resist God's act of sovereignty? Gen.3:6, 7; I Sam.15:7 – 9; Dan 5:18 – 24; Ezek. 2:4, 5.
2. Discuss these examples of God's supremacy and sovereignty in life: Dan 4:33 - 37; 3:19 – 28; cf. Acts 7:57 – 60; 12:1-11.
3. Some marriages have broken up because of either delay in child bearing or gender issues (male or female sexes). Also, it is common now to attribute virtually every bad thing that happens to us to demons, and the often proffered solution is deliverance or breaking of curses (even though these are not bad), How can our knowledge of God's sovereignty help in dealing with such, and related challenges, in the Church today?
4. What (a) comfort and (b) challenge can we draw from a proper understanding of God's sovereignty in our lives?

CONCLUSION: God is omniscient and omnipotent. So we would be at advantage if we surrender completely to His will, and allow Him to have His way in our lives. He knows the end from the beginning and He makes all things beautiful at the appropriate time. His ways are always the best no matter how we feel about it.

MEMORY VERSE: *Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker* (Ps 95:6) – NKJV

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *Here is a test of submission to God's sovereignty: do you exhibit loyalty to God only when it is convenient, and things appear to be going on well for you?*

PART FOUR: CHALLENGES TO OUR BIBLICAL HERITAGE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Challenges are normal for champions. You cannot be a victor without a fight. You can only be celebrated when you triumph over the prevailing circumstances that pose themselves as challenges to your course of action. This is true in both the religious and secular circles. The Church Fathers and earlier pioneers of our faith contended for their Biblical heritage and won the battle over falsehood, heresy and apostasy. What was the secret of their success? How did they deal with unwholesome teachings that threatened the common faith? Apostles Peter, John, Paul, Jude and the early Church Fathers wrote about them. See 2 Peter 2:3, 1 John 2:18-24; 4:1-6, Jude 3-13 and Col. 1:6-9.

In this section, we shall deal with the challenges under the following topics:

1. Identity crisis
2. Unwholesome teaching
3. The love of money
4. The love of the world
5. Selfishness
6. Bad leadership examples in the church
7. Compromise

STUDY 23

TOPIC: *Identity Crisis*

AIM: *To expose the identity issues we face in the Church so that we correct it, possibly*

TEXT: *Ezra 2: 59-63; Matthew 13: 3-9*

INTRODUCTION: Have you ever wondered why the Old Testament is full of genealogies? Apart from the fact that it shows us that God is a God of history and each of us in our time is an important part of His work in the world, only those who could prove their descent from Abraham were considered *true* Jews. After Cyrus made the proclamation calling on willing Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and re-establish the worship of God there, many responded, and according to *Ezra 2: 64-65*, exactly 49, 897 people travelled with Ezra and the leaders, to face the challenge of reconstruction and re-establishment of the worship of God in their own land. Today, the Gospel is being proclaimed in every nook and cranny of our nation, and in many parts of our land, our churches are filling up with enthusiastic people. But how many of these are true Christians?

STUDY GUIDE

1. *What was the consequence for those priests who could not prove their genealogy – Ezra 2: 62-63? (b) What is the modern day equivalent of these priests – Matt. 7: 21-23? (See also Matt. 13: 3-9 which you read).*
2. *What is the warning for us as members of churches - Rom. 8: 14, 16; Rev. 20: 12-13, 15? (b) How can we make sure that this does not happen to us - John 3: 3; 1: 12?*
3. *How did the certainty of their identity shown in Ezra 5: 11-12 help the Jews to hold on to their spiritual calling - Ezra 4: 4-5; 5: 5? How can making sure of our identity help us (i) in different life situations (Rom 8: 31, 38-39; Acts 19:15) and (ii) in recovering our biblical heritage - 1 Tim. 6: 12; 2 Tim. 2: 3-5?*
4. *What steps do we need to take to ensure that no one in our churches finds himself / herself in the situation of those priests in Ezra 2: 62-63 - Rom. 10: 14-17; 2 Tim. 4: 2-5?*

CONCLUSION: We praise God that the Gospel is now being actively preached in our nation and as people respond, our churches grow. However, today's study should be a wake-up call for all of us. Not everyone who attends our churches and our programmes, or even go out witnessing, is a child of God. The priests in today's study could not find their names in the book of genealogy which is the authentic record of who is a true Jew. Equally, many in our churches today may find that on the judgment day when the Book of life is opened, their names would be missing, because though they were in church and participated, they had not truly given their lives to Christ. Service for God must begin with giving ourselves to Him in recognition of our sinfulness in the face of His holiness. This is why Jesus said that we must be born-again. It is only when we truly know Christ and are certain of our identity, can we go out in confidence to work for Him, knowing that He will take responsibility for us in every situation in which we may find ourselves. This confidence in our identity will also help us to be diligent in our pursuit of holiness in our personal lives and in helping others to do the same. We will fight to maintain the purity of the Gospel, so that we can hand it unadulterated to the generations after us. We will also challenge customs and traditions which seek to keep people in bondage and which, if left unchallenged, would damage our Christian witness and the integrity of the Gospel we preach.

MEMORY VERSE: *“And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?”(Acts 19:15) – NKJV*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *Do you have identity mix up? Check up your life in the light of this study*

STUDY 24 (To be taken in three separate study sessions)

TOPIC: UNWHOLESOME TEACHING

AIMS: *To expose us to what constitutes unwholesome teaching, learn how to combat it, and arm ourselves with the word of God as a potent weapon to challenge it.*

TEXT: 2 Peter 2:1-22

INTRODUCTION: Unwholesome teachings are not new to the Christian faith. It has been and will continue until Satan, the master of falsehood and leader of “half-truths” is taken out of the world. In the Old Testament, there were traces of unwholesome teachings among the prophets and teachers then. In the New Testament, unwholesome teachings were noticed and the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ spent time to deal with it. In our time, half truths – unwholesome teaching is a big threat to Christianity. We must be on guard.

STUDY GUIDE

PART A

1. What do you understand by unwholesome teaching? 2 Tim. 4:3-4
2. Point out some modern examples of unwholesome teachings in the Church today?
3. What could be the probable motives of unwholesome teachers? 1 Tim. 6:3-5, 2 Peter 2:3, 12-16, Jude 8-12

PART B

4. What are the dangers of imbibing or accommodating unwholesome teaching in our lives and churches? 1 Cor. 5:6; Rev.3:12-16
5. How do we identify unwholesome teachings and their propagators? 2 Jn. 9; 1 Jn. 4:3; 2 Pe.2:10, 12, 13, 14,15a17, 18,19, 20-21, 3:1-8

PART C

6. How can we effectively deal with unwholesome teachings in the church? Read Joshua 1:8, Lk. 4:3-13; Col. 3:16; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Tim. 4:1-2.
7. Read Eph. 4:11-14 and discuss the place of gifted Pastors/teachers in nurturing people to maturity in faith and in ultimately dealing with unwholesome teaching.

CONCLUSION: Unwholesome teaching is any teaching that is not biblically sound. And we have so many of such now in the church. Propagators are often driven by greed. They have consistent trademarks down the ages. They could even have been ‘once saved’ but ‘entangled again’ as Peter pointed out in 2 Pet.2:20. They are proud, arrogant and high sounding without any concrete message of salvation. They are lustful, and quite often take advantage of unsuspecting and sin loaded women. To accommodate unwholesome teaching in our lives is to expose ourselves to blemish and risk of divine condemnation. Competent handling of the word of God, and taking a very firm stand against any trace of it (as Paul did with the Galatians’ Church) remains yet the surest way to effectively tackle this menace. Be wise, save yourself.

MEMORY VERSE: *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed (Gal 1:8-9) – NKJV*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *Are you sound in your teaching or belief? Have you possibly been contaminated?*

STUDY 25 (To be taken in two separate study sessions)

TOPIC: LOVE OF MONEY

AIMS: *To help us understand what love of money means, discover consequences of loving money and reset our priorities.*

TEXT: Numbers 22:7-20, 2 Kings 5:20-27

INTRODUCTION: Many Christians think that money is evil and as such makes no sincere effort to get money. The Bible never teaches that money is evil but on the contrary, that money answers all things (Eccl. 10:19). What then is bad about money? It is the *love* of it, the obsession and “get it by all means and at all cost mentality” (1 Tim. 6:10) that is evil. This is the focus of this study.

STUDY GUIDE

PART A

1. Read carefully, Numbers 22:7-20 & 2 Kings 5:20-27 and point out the motivating factor of Balaam and Gehazi’s actions.
2. What can you say is meant by love of money from the actions of Balaam and Gehazi above?
3. How does this show in the way we conduct our business, Ministry etc.
4. Give practical examples of what love of money can lead people to do.
5. How does love of money affect our attitude to giving to the work of God and helping one another?

PART B

6. Read 2 Kings 4:27-31; Num. 22:31-34. Discuss the consequences of love of money. See also 1 Timothy 6:10.
7. Mention some of the ills the love of money has led people into and how they have been pierced with many sorrows.
8. How can Phil. 4: 11-13 & Heb. 13: 5-6 help us to run away from love of money.
9. Read 1 Tim. 6:6-12 and Matt.6:33; and explain how godly pursuit can help us to set our priorities right
10. Are Love of money and materialism the same with prosperity? Can a Christian be prosperous without being materialistic? Discuss!

CONCLUSION: God commanded us to love Him with all our hearts, and with all our soul, and with all our might (Deut. 6:5) but man has decided to love money with all his heart, soul and might. This is idolatry and indeed what love of money means. Let us be warned and repent from this evil.

MEMORY VERSE: *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (Matt 6:24) – NKJV*

STUDY 26

TOPIC: THE LOVE OF THE WORLD

TEXT: 1 JOHN 2:15-17,

AIM: *To help us understand what love of the world means, how it makes one an enemy of God, and the things that makes us worldly so that we are better positioned to resist it more effectively.*

INTRODUCTION: Since the fall, man has increasingly become defiant and rebellious. Man will love what God hates and hate what God loves. What an aberration? By loving the world, man has made himself an enemy of God and thereby fighting God. God's clear command is "Love not the world" (1 Jn. 2:15). But what is the reality on ground in our churches?

STUDY GUIDE

1. Explain clearly, what you understand by 'Love of the world' as we have in our text (1 Jn.2:15-17)
2. How does the love of the world manifest in our desires/ambitions, pursuit of wealth, education, marriage, money etc.
3. What are the things that characterize the love of the world? 1 Jn. 2:16-17, Romans 13:14, Prov. 23:29-33, 1 Pt. 2:11-12
4. How can we overcome the problem of worldliness? Rom.12:1-2; Gal. 5:16.

CONCLUSION: It has often been said that the church has gone worldly and the world churchy. This state of affairs must be of serious concern to God? We must return to the culture of true Christianity, namely that we are not of this world but citizens of heaven. We are Pilgrims here on earth, and so we cannot and should not love the world more than heaven.

MEMORY VERSE: *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him (1 John 2:15) – NKJV*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *What is your present attitude to the world?*

STUDY 27

TOPIC: SELFISHNESS (TO BE TAKEN IN TWO STUDY SESSIONS).

AIM:

- 1) *To help us understand what selfishness means, what makes one selfish, and the danger of being selfish with a view to provoking us to purposeful and positive action.*

TEXT: Luke 12:15-21

INTRODUCTION: Selfishness is a style of life that centers on “Me”, “Mine”, “myself”, and “I”. The selfish person only knows self, think only about self, plan only for self and live only for self. A selfish person is greedy and sees the best as good for him alone. Let’s learn more in the study.

STUDY GUIDE

PART A

1. Explain what you understand by the word, selfishness (James 25:6-11)
2. Discuss what you think is the root cause of selfishness (2 Tim. 3:2, Luke 12:15)
3. Can a Christian live a selfish life? Give reason/s for your yes or no answer please.
4. From the parable told by Jesus in Luke 12:16-20:
 - a. What was wrong in the rich man’s approach to increase and expansion?
 - b. Is it wrong for a Christian to plan for expansion of his business or any of his ventures?
 - c. What should be the right attitude when our business booms?

PART B

5. Read Luke 12:20-21 and discuss the danger of business or life expansion without *kingdom* perspective.
6. Discuss practically how we can overcome selfishness? Gal. 2:20, Eccl. 11:1-2, Prov. 11:24-28
7. Read Gal. 5:16 and discuss how life in the Spirit can help to deal with selfishness.

CONCLUSION: If Christ was selfish, He would not have left His glory to die on the cruel cross of Calvary. If those who brought Christianity to us were selfish, we would have remained in the dark, perhaps, up till now! Selfishness hinders the spread of the gospel and love of Christ among brethren. We must repent of it in the Church.

MEMORY VERSE: *But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy...*” (2 Tim 3:2) – NKJV

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *Face it: are you selfish?*

STUDY 28 *(To be taken in two separate study sessions)*

TOPIC: BAD LEADERSHIP EXAMPLES IN THE CHURCH

AIMS: *To help us understand what bad leadership examples mean, know the negative effects of bad leadership examples in the Church, and to encourage participants to seek godly ways of tackling bad leadership examples.*

TEXTS: Ex.32:1-6, 19-25

INTRODUCTION: We are possibly familiar with the bad example of the ten spies and what it cost the children of Israel. People who were at the edge of their inheritance, were told to turn away from it. Consequently, they had to wander around the wilderness for forty years. Bad leadership causes problems, not just for the leader but also for those they lead. Therefore, it is the responsibility of all to do whatever is necessary to ensure that we have good leadership. This study is an effort at helping to solve the problem.

STUDY GUIDE

PART A

1. How does God view bad leadership? Eze.34:1-4; and what was the effect of the bad leadership of these shepherds who were berated in Ezekiel? Eze. 34:5-6
2. How would you describe Aaron's leadership example in the bible text?
3. Discuss the causes of bad leadership in the Church (selection, election and appointment processes, etc).
4. From Ex.32: 25-28, Matt.9:35-36, discuss the consequences of bad leadership *then*, and *now*, in our Churches today.

PART B

5. How does bad leadership example affect the growth of the Church numerically and spiritually? Discuss with practical illustrations
6. Read Numbers 16:1-3: Is this Korah's example an option where there is bad leadership in the Church? (Note: Korah's rebellion was not because of bad leadership).
7. Read 3 John 9-10; Rom.15:1-2; Gal. 6:2; Eph. 6:18-19 and Phil. 2:3-6, and discuss biblical ways of tackling bad leadership in the Church, where it exists.
8. Why do often keep quiet even when we know leaders are bad?

CONCLUSION: Bad leadership has serious consequences. In extreme cases, it can lead to the death of innocent persons as in the case of Aaron. Even David's action in taking the wife of Uriah and numbering of the people of Israel carried severe consequences. Today, bad leadership is still a serious problem, causing major setback to the numerical and spiritual growth of the Church. We must fight on our knees; speak out in humility as the opportunity comes, and trust the Lord to rescue the situation in His wisdom. Our warfare is not a carnal one, so we cannot use carnal weapons like the foolish style of Korah and his group of rebels. We need to fight the battle, but we must employ spiritual strategy.

MEMORY VERSE: *"...be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. 13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Tim 4:12-13) – NKJV*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *Are you a bad leadership influence in your Church?*

STUDY 29

TOPIC: COMPROMISE

AIM: *To help us take a critical look at the subject of compromise in the Church today, with a view to coming to terms with its consequences in order to provoke us to repentance.*

TEXT: *Read Ezra 9: 1-15; Nehemiah 13: 23-27*

By the time Ezra led the second wave of returnees from exile back to Jerusalem, those who returned after Cyrus' proclamation of freedom had already completed and dedicated the temple, and resumed regular worship of God in it (*Ezra 6: 13-23*). From the book of Nehemiah 8-12, we discover that spiritual renewal had also taken place as people repented of their sins when they heard and understood God's Word, and made a covenant to be faithful to God. In spite of the outward devotion to God, things were not going well spiritually as we shall see in today's study. It is important for us to note this, because we often mistake numbers in our churches and the numerous programmes we mount as evidence of spirituality.

1. Why was it particularly bad that some of the Jews who returned from exile had married foreign women - Ezra 9: 6-10? (b) Neh. 13: 23-24 says that children from these marriages spoke the language of Ashdod, but not the language of Judah. Why was this a big tragedy?
2. Think about your local church and the Church in general. In what ways do we compromise our faith today and by so doing, jeopardize the faith of our children? (b) Why do you think this happens - Gal. 3: 1, 3; 5: 9, 17?
3. What are the consequences of compromise for us as individuals (ii); our children; (iii) the Church's witness; and (iv) the wider society? See 2 Sam. 12: 14; Matt. 5: 13; Rom. 2: 24 (b) Who is to blame? Give reason for your answer.
4. In the light of our desire to recover our Biblical heritage, what **practical steps** should we take to avoid the mistakes of those Jews in today's study - 2 Cor. 6: 14; Eph. 5: 8, 11-13; 6: 11; Phil. 4: 9; 2 Tim. 2: 4 ?

CONCLUSION: The people of Ashdod were pagans and since the Jewish religion was tied up with their language, any Jew who could not speak the language was cut off from the worship of the true God. The big tragedy, therefore was, that in marrying pagans, the Jews unwittingly cut their children off from the worship of the true God through their compromise. This sin was one of the reasons why God sent them into exile; yet after their punishment and merciful restoration, the Jews fell into this sin again! We fall into the sin of compromise because we do not nurture our relationship with God. We come to faith and often think that is all we need to do; however, relationships are meant to be nurtured and matured, just as a new-born baby is meant to be fed and cared for so that it can grow into a healthy adult. When we come to God for only the blessings we can receive, we make ourselves vulnerable to the attacks of the devil who knows that we are not strong enough in our faith to withstand temptation. The consequences of compromising our faith are grave as we not only damage our witness, but also make unbelievers speak ill of God and our faith (something that God views as disastrous - 2 Sam. 12: 14). We also damage the faith of our children by setting them the wrong example and fail to make an impact on the society to which Jesus calls us to be salt and light. If we are serious about recovering our biblical heritage, we must each determine to straighten out our relationship with the Lord, study to grow in our faith so that we can withstand the temptation to compromise our Christian testimony, as well as rely on the Holy Spirit daily to guide us. We must also learn that obedience to God must precede our demand for His blessing.

MEMORY VERSE: *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12: 1-2).*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *Have you compromised your faith in any way?*

PART FIVE: SUSTAINING OUR BIBLICAL HERITAGE

STUDY 30

TOPIC: PASSION FOR CHRIST

AIM: *To help us understand what genuine passion for Christ means with a view to stirring it up in us.*

TEXT: Acts 21:1-13

INTRODUCTION: Passion means a strong and barely controllable emotion for something or somebody which often attracts sacrifices. The Christian's passion for Christ goes beyond our mere working for Him as seen in many of our Christian services. Rather, passion for Christ involves intelligent and purposeful services that are propelled by unquenchable and insuppressible love for Him. Such a passion and devotion to Him is the basic qualification for our acceptable Christian services. Usually, people with passion are very difficult to stop. No service can over-burden them, no trial can overwhelm them and no sacrifice is too great to make, including even death (Act 21:13)!

STUDY GUIDE:

1. From our given bible text, what does genuine passion for Christ reveal? See also Acts 4:1-13, 18-20, 23-30; 5:17-21a, 26-33, 40-42; 1 Cor.16:22
2. So many times, many Christians are unconsciously passionate about wrong priorities in the course of their Christian service. Identify some of these from the following bible texts: Matt. 18:1-3; Lk. 18:18-24; Jn. 6:25-27; Acts 7: 54-59; 8:1, 3; 9:1-2
3. Read Jn. 21: 15-17. What is the implication of these questions to us as we serve Christ today? See also Deut.6:5, Jn.6:22-27.
4. From the forgoing, discuss how a Christian can develop and sustain passion for Christ.

CONCLUSION: Real passion for Christ will trigger unrivalled dedication and commitment to His service. Our attitude towards His service today is a measure of how passionate we are for Him. The early Church even rejoiced for suffering for His name. Paul was not only willing to be bound but also to die for the name. Their passion for the Lord is today a rebuke to our shamefully *fireless* service. We must begin at genuine love for Jesus. Little wonder Paul placed curse on any who do not love our Lord Jesus in sincerity! Something must truly be wrong. And we must rediscover it: **PASSION FOR CHRIST!** And truly, passion for Christ is one urgent need of the Church today if we are ever going to rediscover our biblical heritage.

Moreover, this passion is lacking, superficial service is inevitable. McClung called it apostolic passion. Hear him: *“if you have apostolic passion, you are one of the most dangerous people on earth. The world no longer rules your heart. You are no longer seduced by getting and gaining but devoted to spreading and proclaiming the glory of God in the nations...you are sold out to God, and live for the Lamb. Satan fears you and angels applaud you”*. (Mc Clung. 1999.187.). May this study stir up this passion in us.

MEMORY VERSE: *If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed* (1 Cor. 16:22) – NKJV

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *Are you passionate in your service for Christ? Do you truly Love the LORD Jesus?*

STUDY 31

TOPIC: A RESOLVE TO LIVE BY ONLY WHAT GOD SAYS IN HIS WORD

TEXT: Dan 1:1 -15, Matt 7: 24 - 26

AIM: *To encourage us to take a firm stand for God the challenges notwithstanding.*

INTRODUCTION: In life, we make choices every day. But the fact is that behind every choice we make, there is a consequence. To resolve means to firmly decide on a course of action based on well thought out conviction. A reverse from such resolve will usually be very difficult. All of us must be aware that there will always be one form of contention or another for every God-given heritage at our disposal. And except there is a pre-determined resolve in our hearts to stand firm for God, the enemy of our soul will most certainly influence us from the pathway of perfect obedience. This study is to equip us to be better prepared to stand to be counted for God.

STUDY GUIDE

1. What are the causes of unfaithfulness in our walk with God as Christians? Matt.13:18-23, 1 Cor.15:33; 2Tim.3:5-9.
2. How can we cultivate a lifestyle that abides only by what God has said in His Word? Matt.13:23; Acts 3:19; Eph.4:11-15; 2 Tim.1:5
3. Point out some of the reasons behind the following people's resolve to maintain their position about God despite adversity and its outcome.
 - a. The Hebrew youth not worshipping Babylonian gods Dan 1:8, Dan 6:7-11, Dan 3:14- 18
 - b. Jesus going to the cross Lk. 9:51, Phil 2:8- 11
 - c. Paul's refusal to bow to an impending Jerusalem travail as revealed by trustworthy sources Acts 21:10:14
4. What makes it difficult for us to take firm decisions for Christ in our lives, like the Hebrew children, Paul or even Christ?

CONCLUSION: It is one thing to take a resolve and quite another to stand by it irrespective of the circumstances. But if we get it right from the beginning through genuine repentance, sound teaching with corresponding understanding of God's word, though challenges may still come, but such will be insufficient to uproot our already settled convictions.

MEMORY VERSE: *But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies (Dan 1:8) – NKJV*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *How deeply resolved are you to truly live by genuine Christian convictions?*

STUDY 32

TOPIC: RAISING SOUND CHRISTIAN FAMILIES

AIM: *To discover what a sound Christian family means; God's ordained tools for the raising of such a family and its benefit in the programme of God.*

TEXT: Dan 1:1 -15, Matt 7: 24 - 26

INTRODUCTION: God established the family as the most basic unit of the church / society. When it is dedicated to God it becomes a Christian family. To achieve this requires the godly training and disciplining of all the members by the head / parent. This means that it takes a godly parent to raise a sound godly family. The purpose of this training and disciplining is to dedicate the whole family to God. The end result is the cultivation of a taste and hunger to seek God for oneself and as such enjoy genuine spiritual experience that will never be forgotten wherever one finds himself. Only at this point is a sound Christian family said to have been raised.

The biblical tool for this is spiritual warfare deployed through the word of God and biblical prayer.

STUDY GUIDE

1. From your own view point, how would you explain a sound Christian family? Deut.6:6-15
2. Read Col.3:18-22 and mention some of the challenges facing our present society in achieving such a family.
3. Read Prov.30:11-14 and point out the consequences of bad parenting, and what danger awaits those who neglect to raise godly families? (1 Sam2:12-17, 22; 4:10, 16-22)
- 4.
5. Discuss practically how we can apply the following tools to raise sound Christian families:
 - a. The Word of God (Deut: 6:6 – 15)
 - b. Godly parental role modelling (Prov. 22:6)
 - c. Loving godly discipline (Prov. 29:15, 17)
 - d. Biblical intercession and spiritual warfare (Job 1:5)
 - e. Active participation in available means of grace in the church (1Sam 1:21, Heb.10:25)

CONCLUSION: A sound Christian family is not born and it is not automatic. It is a result of Spirit guided training and disciplining by the family head who had earlier on received same from God. Deut. 6: 6-15 is not just about teaching the children the Word of God. If you look at it, it presupposes that they spend a lot of time with them going out, standing, sitting etc. It is not enough to have a family altar morning and evening, important as it is. Spending quality time with children rather than leaving their upbringing to house-helpers and teachers is the key. Most parents hardly see or know their children because they are pursuing careers and businesses. That is the problem!

For Eli, he lost both his children on the same day, and the glory of the Lord left, not just the family, but an entire nation! We need to be wise today so that there won't be worries tomorrow.

MEMORY VERSE: *For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice; that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him." (Gen 18:19) – NKJV*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *Be honest with yourself: Do you have a godly family? Is your family a source of pride or disgrace to you? Be wise, take action NOW!*

STUDY 33

TOPIC: ENFORCEMENT OF GODLY DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH

AIM: *The study will reveal God's purpose for godly discipline in the church and its role in the sustenance of our biblical heritage.*

TEXT: MATT18:15-18; 16:18, I COR 5: 1-8

INTRODUCTION: The church is the body of Christ here on earth with delegated human authority. This authority is biblically empowered to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom, bind the demonic, loose the captive, rebuke, reproof and carry out godly discipline among erring members where necessary. And if the offender is repentant and demonstrates sufficient remorse, such is forgiven and comforted in the spirit of love. It is this discipline that helps to guard the moral purity and doctrinal integrity of the church and helps to prevent her decay (Acts 5:9-12, I Cor. 5:6-7); and maintain her purity here on earth. Ultimately, the influence of the church will be greatly felt in the world as it then will be able to bequeath to her higher moral standard as light of the world indeed (Matt 5:14).

Meanwhile, it needs to be mentioned that this practice of discipline is meant to operate, not only in cases of immorality, but also in cases of doctrinal heresy and unfaithfulness to the fundamentals of faith (Jude 3). It equally needs to be mentioned that the whole essence of disciplining erring members of the Church is spiritual restoration and moral reformation. That is why whatever punishment we mete out should not be so harsh as to dim the hope of divine mercy and re-entry into the fellowship (2 Cor. 2: 5-7, Gal 6:1-2).

Unfortunately however, the church has not fared well in this important area. In some segments of the Church, godly discipline has been abandoned. Sin is tolerated, and 'unconditional forgiveness' (cheap grace) is advocated. Consequently, sin is allowed to take deep root, and the fear of God is given the boot!

However, in some segments as well, discipline is meted out without grace so it is harsh and unloving, thus damaging the ones we are supposed to salvage. Balance is greatly needed.

In this study we hope to gain sufficient exposure in this all important area so as to help us retrace our steps.

STUDY GUIDE

1. Mention and review the godly disciplines enforced in your church within the past one year, if any.
2. If there has not been any, why do think this is?
3. Discuss the procedures and steps to adopt in dealing with erring offenders from the following:
 - a. Brother trespassing against fellow brothers. Mat 18:15 – 18
 - b. Grave sins such as immorality. I Cor. 5: 1-5, 2 Cor. 2: 6-11
 - c. Sins of Elders / leaders. Gal 2:11 – 18, I Tim 5:5, 19 – 21
 - d. Sin of falsehood / heresy (Titus 1:10-13; 2 John 9-11).
4. How can you describe the state of a church without godly discipline? Judges 17:5-6, I Sam 2:12 -17, 2 Tim 4:2-4
5. Discuss the benefits of godly discipline by the church and its role in the sustenance of our heritage. Dan 4:30-37, Acts 5:9-12, Jude 22-23.

CONCLUSION: When the church refuses to discipline the Church, among other things, will increasingly lose its purity, and may be unfit for her Bridegroom, Christ, at His appearing. In the

meantime, we will lose the godly heritage as bequeathed to us, much to the detriment of future generations. Will that be alright?

MEMORY VERSE: *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted (Gal 6:1) – NKJV*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *Are you one of those who are not disciplined, and condone indiscipline in the Church?*

STUDY 34

TOPIC: ELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF SOUND CHRISTIAN LEADERS IN THE CHURCH

AIM: *To help us discover biblical principles in the appointment of Christian leaders, their roles in our church and the dangers of their failure.*

TEXT: Titus 1: 5 – 11, 1 Pe. 5: 1- 4

INTRODUCTION: Leadership in the house of God occupies a great position before God as the wellbeing of God's people depends on it. No church can function without dedicated designated leaders. Their major role include to provide of sound exemplary leadership (1Tim 4:12), ensure orderliness in the church (Act 6: 1-3), teach sound doctrine and guard against falsehood among God's people (Tit 1:9-11) and also protect the church integrity through loving discipline or correction. In the Old Testament, there were leaders in the form of Judges, Kings, Priests, Prophets, etc.

In the New Testaments, the appointment or election of leaders is done by seeking God's will through prayer (and fasting where necessary), (Lk 6:12 – 13; Act 1:21 -26); and by examining the character, spiritual gifts, and the testimony of the person (Act 6:3- 5). Whichever method is used, leaders should be men who are above reproach as well as servants of God. And we need to take a critical look at this subject because success or failure in the system depends on it.

STUDY GUIDE

1. How would you assess the last PCC election of your Church as well as the performance of the elected officers?
2. Discuss the scriptural qualification and methods of appointing leaders as in 1 Tim 3:1- 12, Act 1:21- 26, Act 6: 3 -5, and compare with your church's vestry meeting as discussed above, and point out any observed lapses (if any).
3. How may we do the appointment of leaders in the Church based on the gifting of the Holy Spirit? Rom 12:4-8?
4. How can we ensure the election of faithful leaders that will not merely be occupying space in our Churches? Lk. 6:12 -13, Act 1:21 – 22, Act 6:3 – 5, 1 Tim 3: 4- 6
5. Point out some of the consequences of not having leaders, or of electing leaders that cannot deliver appropriately from 1 Sam 12:12 -14, Act 6:1

CONCLUSION: Leaders are meant to bear the burden of the church and not to create more burdens for the church. Bulk of the problems in our churches will be reduced if we prayerfully elect godly leaders in our vestry elections. Note that they are there because we elected / appointed them. A lot of good will be done if we could become more diligent in our vestry elections.

MEMORY VERSE: *Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business (Acts 6:3) – NKJV*

EXAMINE YOURSELF: *How did you become the leader you now? How are leaders raised in your Church?*