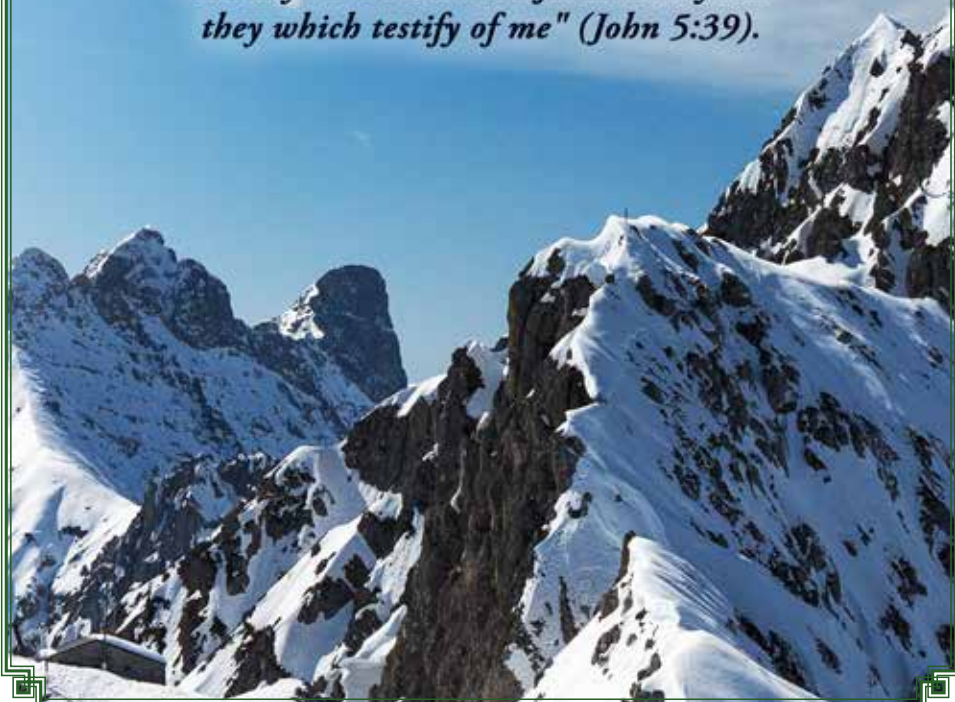


# SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

VOLUME 47

*"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).*



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_

REGION/GROUP \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_

**A Publication Of  
Deeper Christian Life Ministry  
P.O. Box 59, University of Lagos P.O.  
Akoka, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria  
© 2011**

## CONTENTS

<b>LESSON</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<b><u>OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES</u></b>	
599 ISRAEL RENEWS COVENANT WITH GOD	4
600 THE DEATH OF JOSHUA	12
601 JUDAH'S VICTORY OVER THE CANAANITES	17
602 CONSEQUENCE OF INCOMPLETE OBEDIENCE	23
603 DIVINE CHASTISEMENT FOR ISRAEL'S BACKSLIDING	30
<b><u>NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES</u></b>	
604 FOOLISHNESS OF HUMAN WISDOM	36
605 MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL REVEALED	41
606 RENDERING ACCEPTABLE SPIRITUAL SERVICE	48
607 STEWARDSHIP OF BELIEVERS	55
608 THE PURPOSE OF DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH	61
<b><u>SPECIAL STUDIES</u></b>	
609 WATER BAPTISM	69
610 QUIET TIME AND FAMILY DEVOTION	78
611 GROWTH WITH UNITY	84

## OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

# 599 Lesson

## ISRAEL RENEWS COVENANT WITH GOD

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey” (Joshua 24:24).

### **TEXT: Joshua 24:1-28**

**J**oshua had summoned all Israel with their heads, judges and officers to a valedictory meeting in chapter 23 of Joshua. As a visionary leader, he was concerned about the future of the nation now that he was very old and could pass on any time. In the meeting, he challenged them to be **“very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the Law of Moses...”** (Joshua 23:6). He also spelt out the possible consequences of sliding back from following the Lord.

Our lesson this week concludes the ministry of this great general of God wherein he calls for the same assembly and recounts God’s manifold benefits to Israel, causes them to renew their covenant relationship with Him with a commitment to serve Him. He also charges them to be steadfast in obeying His laws and statutes.

**JOSHUA RECOUNTS GOD’S GOODNESS TO ISRAEL** (Joshua 24:1-13; 23:1-3; Psalm 77:11; Exodus 14:15-28; 23:27,28; Deuteronomy 7:20; 6:10,11; Psalm 103:1-4).

**“And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God”** (Joshua 24:1).

The assembly Joshua addressed here was the same as in the previous chapter (Joshua 23:2). The meeting held in Shechem probably because it was nearer to Joshua than Shiloh or since he was ageing, he could not travel too far. Second, it was the place Abraham settled on coming to Canaan, and where God made a covenant with him

(Genesis 12:6, 7). Third, it was also near mounts Gerizim and Ebal where the people had renewed their covenant with God when they arrived Canaan (Joshua 8:30). The location provided the right atmosphere for solemnity and soberness.

Of the promises God made to their fathers, and of the ones they made to Him, this place seemed appropriate for remembrance and commitment. We learn here that our places of worship should be conducive in terms of structure, design and decoration. The environment should inspire people to want to worship God in the beauty of His holiness. It must remind worshippers of the presence of God, reinforce their convictions in the old truths and remind them of their ultimate home – heaven. Believers' gathering today should always be to the Lord with hearts prepared to worship and hear from Him.

<p><b>Question 1: Enumerate God's kindness to Israel as recounted by Joshua.</b></p>
--

Joshua began his speech to the congregation by saying: **“Thus saith the LORD God of Israel”**. He spoke the language of prophets and the sermon consists of the history of the great things God had done for His people. He began by recounting God's mercies, kindness, favors and other wonders which He bestowed on His people. He brought Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees (Joshua 24:2, 3), from an environment of idolatry. He and his ancestors had served other gods there, but God redeemed him by grace. Abraham's justification is described as an instance of God justifying the ungodly (Romans 4:5). **Two**, he reminded them of the gifts of Isaac and Esau. **Three**, he spoke of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage through Moses (Joshua 24:5-7). **Four**, God protected them in the wilderness where they travelled and travailed for a long time. **Five**, He thwarted the plot of Balak and Balaam against them (verse 9). **Six**, He brought them safely into Canaan and delivered the Canaanites into their hand (Joshua 24:11, 12), **“not with thy sword nor bow.”** It was purely the Lord's doing. **Seven**, God made them landlords of a good place which other people labored to build (Joshua 24:13).

## **JOSHUA'S CHARGE TO ISRAEL TO SERVE GOD** (Joshua 24:14, 15; Deuteronomy 6:12-18; Hosea 3:5; 1 Kings 18:21; 1 Timothy 3:4, 5)

The purpose of relating the history of God's mercies to the children of Israel was to exhort them to fear and serve God, in gratitude for His favor, so they might continue to enjoy the same. **"Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD"** (Joshua 24:14).

**Question 2: Why was Israel charged to fear and serve the Lord?**

In consideration of the great kindness and mercy God had bestowed upon them, they were enjoined to, first, **"Fear the LORD"** (Hosea 3:5). The God of heaven is to be feared because of His power, greatness, authority and majesty. He is infinite in all His attributes and cannot be compared with any other god or challenged by any. He rules the universe, space and galaxies with unquantifiable majesty. **"Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"** (Exodus 15:11). Let the inhabitants of heaven and earth hear and fear the God who can do all things. However, fearing Him is not only manifest in reverential awe but in turning away from evil. Those who profess to fear God yet continue in evil miss the truth. **"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate"** (Proverbs 8:13).

Second, Joshua admonished Israel to serve the Lord. How else can a man prove that he fears God if not by diligent service? Serving God includes doing His will and working for Him. The greatest service we can render to Him today is to make His truth known to others both by our life as well as lips. This service is to be done in sincerity and truth; that is, without pretence but with the whole heart as dealing with a God who searches the heart. Whatever is done outwardly should conform to the truth within.

Third, he said, **"put away the strange gods"**. It is the height of folly as well as insult to leave the Creator and

serve creation. All other gods are works of men's hands; they are dumb and cannot hear; blind and cannot see; dead and cannot give life; weak and powerless and cannot do anything (Deuteronomy 4:28; 2 Kings 19:18; Psalm 135:15). Though it would appear that Joshua had succeeded in stamping out any visible idols from among the congregation, some of the people might still be in private possession of others. Thus, he charged them to prefer the God of Abraham to the **“gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood”**.

**Question 3: Why did Joshua leave the choice of faith to the people to decide?**

Having recounted the wonders of God and challenged the people to serve God sincerely and thrust out strange gods, Joshua led them to decide their own fate; it was a critical moment of decision-making. Though he was their leader, he would not force anyone against their will. This shows that our faith which leads to salvation is an individual choice. The faith of the father cannot save the son, neither can the faith of the husband save the wife. Everyone must choose who they want to serve. Moreover, any decision that is not voluntary might tend to hypocrisy. Joshua told the people: **“choose you this day whom ye will serve”**. It was a moment of decision that gave no room for procrastination because tomorrow may be too late. Elijah, many centuries after, pushed the same decision to the children of Israel to choose either the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob or Baal (1 Kings 18:21).

Joshua demonstrated the seriousness of the matter and his own sincerity by publicly affirming his own decision. He said: **“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”** (Joshua 24:15).

**Question 4: What lessons do we learn from Joshua's declaration to serve God with his house?**

Whether as leaders or the led, we are to live by example; whatever we are demanding from people we should be seen to do same. We see here that Joshua did not exempt himself from the service of God. He was at the forefront of the decision to serve as well as influence his family to choose God over idols. Secondly, he made it clear that serving God was not optional for his family – wife, children and servants. As a great leader, he did not make his involvement in public affairs and leadership roles excuse for neglecting his family responsibility. Of such leaders, the Scripture says, **“One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)”** (1 Timothy 3:4, 5). Thirdly, we see in Joshua’s decision a declaration to remain with God though all earth forsake Him.

**ISRAEL RENEWS COVENANT WITH GOD** (Joshua 24:16-28; 8:31; Exodus 24:1-8; Deuteronomy 29:1; Ruth 1:16; Luke 9:62)

**“And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods”** (Joshua 24:16). The whole congregation immediately responded to Joshua’s entreaty with a decision to serve the Lord. Beyond any leadership authority from him, the people must have been influenced by his own example. This goes to underscore the saying that ‘a leader’s decision is a leading decision’. When men of power and caliber turn to righteousness, those under them, in all probability, will follow suit. Also, the children of Israel were scared at the thought of forsaking God because of the consequences which were very well known to them.

Moreover, they must have remembered God’s great kindness and mercies as ground for serving Him. Believers are continually admonished to remember Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross at Calvary and surrender their all to Him. **“And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again”** (2 Corinthians 5:15). For the children of Israel, God defeated their oppressors in Egypt, healed their diseases, led them through that horrible wilderness, fed them with angel’s food, fought



their battles and brought them into a land flowing with milk and honey (Joshua 24:17,18).

In order to ascertain the people's depth of conviction and prove their commitment to it, Joshua revealed the difficulties associated with serving the Lord. **“And Joshua said unto the people, ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good”** (Joshua 24:19, 20). This motive was not to dissuade them from serving God; he did not intend to make them feel that serving God is a herculean task. But he meant to make them realize that serving God is not without its challenges. First, the tempter is still around to do what he knows best: put stumbling blocks before God's people. Second, his agents of seduction are eager to distract God's children from the goal of making heaven. Third, life itself brings challenges from time to time and requires that God's people remain resolute in order to overcome. Fourth, we cannot serve God while at the same time carrying our idols along: one must give way for the other.

As Christians and servants of God, we must be balanced in the presentation of the gospel. A message that paints life as rose without thorns is defective. We must let our converts know that sometimes there could be difficulties along the way. Paul did exactly this, **“confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God”** (Acts 14:22). Everyone who comes to the Lord must sit down and count the cost and be ready to pay the price.

The way into the kingdom of heaven is 'strait' and narrow and we must strive to be able to enter. Whatever the challenges, our Lord promises to help us (Hebrews 13:5). Therefore, if you resolve to serve God, you must renounce all competitors with Him.

<p><b>Question 5: As believers, what challenge do we receive from Israel's firm resolution to serve the Lord?</b></p>
---

Despite Joshua disclosing the difficulties associated with serving God, the children of Israel resolved to continue in faith (verse 21). They were like Ruth who, despite her mother-in-law's dissuasion, resolved to go with the God of Israel (Ruth 1:15-18). She had the option of going back to her people in Moab but chose to brush aside fear of the unknown. She never regretted her decision.

To assure Joshua that they meant every word, the children of Israel repeated their resolution once again in verse 24: **“The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.”** Every believer is hereby challenged to uphold the same strong conviction in serving and following the Lord in the strength of divine grace. Jesus demands this form of resolution from all true believers. **“And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God”** (Luke 9:62).

**“So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem”** (Joshua 24:25).

<p><b>Question 6: Enumerate the things Joshua did to solemnize Israel's covenant with God.</b></p>
--

Now that the children of Israel had willingly entered into a covenant to serve the Lord, Joshua helped them sealed it. This he did by calling witness to it. First, he made them their own witnesses: **“Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD”** (Joshua 24:22). There is no greater witness than ourselves: our own consciences bear witness to our relationship with the Lord. Second, he documented it so that generations to come might read of it and that their commitment might remain on record. Third, he erected a stone of memorial, perhaps for the benefit of those who were not conversant with writings. He said the stone would be a witness unto them, **“for it hath heard all the words of the LORD which he (God) spake unto us”** (Joshua 24:26, 27).

Joshua’s dealing with the children of Israel in this matter leaves a lot of lessons for Christian leaders. One, we should not be slack in making people of God understand the whole counsel of God. No aspect of the gospel should be left untouched, unexplained. Two, what we preach we must practice. Three, we should be examples to the world, in word and indeed (1 Peter 5:3; 1 Timothy 4:12). Four, those making decisions to follow Christ should be let into the cost of discipleship so that they can make wise and informed decisions. Five, definite commitments should be extracted from people committing themselves to work and serve the Lord. Six, testimonies and extraordinary acts of the Lord should be documented for future generations. Seven, Joshua was a good example in consistent and wholehearted followership and service of God; so should we. What a challenge to all believers, ministers and servants of God today!

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

<b>MORNING</b>			<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	LUKE	15-16	2 SAM.	23-24
TUE	“	17-18	1 KINGS	1
WED	“	19	“	2
THUR	“	20	“	3-4
FRI	“	21	“	5-6
SAT	“	22	“	7
SUN	“	23	“	8

# 600 Lesson

## THE DEATH OF JOSHUA

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old” (Joshua 24:29).

### **TEXT: Joshua 24:29-33**

Our text concludes the book as well as the life and leadership role of Joshua. In the previous lesson, Joshua rehearsed to the representatives of the tribes of Israel the faithfulness of God to them in fulfilment of His promise to the patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Israel. Based on God’s unfailing promise, he exhorted them to fear and serve God with a sincere heart. He also challenged them to cleave to the true God. Following their avowed commitment to God and His word, Joshua led them into a renewed covenant relationship with the Lord.

**Question 1: What challenge does the life of Joshua pose to Christian leaders today?**

Our text reveals that he was able to preserve the true worship of God in his generation. **“And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua...”** The influence of Joshua on the Israelites continued long after his death. Like Joshua, God expects believers to be shining lights in their world and also influence people around them to preserve the legacy of true worship for succeeding generations. Contemporary saints like Martin Luther, John Wesley, Charles G. Finney, John G. Lake and a host of others influenced their generations for God and are now being remembered by what they have done. We must strive to live the brighter Christian life, win souls for Christ and disciple converts to be committed to God and true worship. It is obvious that we will not live on earth forever. The best of saints will one day die the same way Joshua, Joseph and Eleazar the high priest (mentioned in the text) passed on. Heaven is the home of all believers of all ages.

**JOSHUA'S DEATH AND BURIAL** (Joshua 24:29, 30; Revelation 14:13; Luke 12:15; Philippians 1:20, 23; Jude 3, 4; 2 Timothy 4:1-8)

**“And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old”** (Joshua 24:29).

**Question 2: What lesson can we learn from the death of Joshua?**

Death is an inevitable and necessary end of all men. Joshua began in a humble surrounding. Born in Egypt, he had a firsthand experience of the exodus. He first came to limelight in the Bible as a military commander. Soon after leaving Egypt, the Israelites were faced with a new enemy. Moses turned to Joshua to lead their first battle (Exodus 17:9-15). He rose to become Moses' trusted aide and served him faithfully. On the verge of entering Canaan, Moses chose him to be one of the twelve spies. Ten of them returned with evil report but Joshua and Caleb had faith that God would keep His promises to the Israelites despite the giants in the land. For his good report, hope, courage and faith, thousands of angry Israelites called for his public stoning (Numbers 14), but he stood firm, and God rewarded him. Of all the Israelites who left Egypt, only he and Caleb entered the Promised Land – not even Moses had that honor. These good qualities in the life and pilgrimage of Joshua are worth emulating by all believers.

**Question 3: In what ways was the ministry of Joshua similar to that of Moses?**

Joshua's ministry is similar to that of Moses in many respects. The miracle of crossing the Jordan River replayed Moses' crossing of the Red Sea. Moses encountered God at the burning bush; Joshua met the 'captain of the host of the Lord' and likewise took off his shoes at the encounter (Joshua 5:13-15). Both leaders pleaded with God on behalf of their people and both ended their ministry with stirring farewell speeches that reviewed history and challenged the people to consistently walk with God.

However, the Scripture did not gloss over the flaws of this great general. In one incident in the wilderness, he

was envious for Moses' sake without knowing the mind of God (Numbers 11:26-30). During the first battle of Ai and the treaty negotiation with the Gibeonites, he acted impulsively without first seeking God's counsel. **"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come"** (1 Corinthians 10:11). Apart from these few incidents, Joshua's life and ministry was marked by unusual faith, obedience and selfless service. When he divided the land, he did so with wisdom and fairness, selecting his own portion only after all others had got their portions. The Church and the world at large need such a selfless leader today.

Having accomplished God's purpose for his life, Joshua, the servant of the Lord died and was buried in the border of his inheritance in Timnathserah, which is in mount Ephraim. It should be noted that the burial of Joshua was without any ostentatious display as carnal and worldly believers would indulge in today. There was no record of excess of passion, dressing, eating or drinking by those who buried him. This is a lesson to contemporary Christians. **"Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand"** (Philippians 4:5).

**JOSHUA'S MINISTERIAL SUCCESS** (Joshua 24:31; Revelation 14:13; Luke 12:15; 2 Timothy 4:7, 8)

**Question 4: Like Joshua, how can Christian leaders positively influence their followers to serve the Lord?**

The Bible summarized his ministerial success and achievement by saying that **"Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that over lived Joshua..."** This was the greatest legacy of Joshua. His godly influence was effectively communicated to and through the whole nation. He also left competent successors behind who nurtured the children of Israel in the way of the Lord after his departure. Those who are called into leadership positions should look beyond the present; they are to labor to raise successors that will take over from them when they are called to rest from their labors and receive their rewards (Revelation 14:13).

Joshua went to rest in the bosom of the Lord. All believers should know that **“there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God”**. While alive, he never attempted to take rest till all the tribes of Israel got their possessions and settled in their inheritances. He considered nothing done while anything remained undone. A life spent in the service of God is the most pleasant life that anyone can live in this world, for the worth of the life of a man does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

The consuming passion that underpinned Apostle Paul’s great service for God was for him to be found worthy of eternal rest in the abode of Christ (Philippians 3:9; 1:20,23). After accomplishing his God-given task, he said, **“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”** (2 Timothy 4:7, 8). All Christian workers should aim at accomplishing their ministries well so as to be rewarded in heaven. It is not the beginning that matters but the end.

**CERTAINTY OF DEATH FOR ALL MEN** (Joshua 24:32, 33; Revelation 14:13; Jude 3, 4)

Everyone will die at one time or the other because it is appointed unto men once to die (Hebrews 9:27). Joseph died in Egypt and gave instruction that his bones should be carried to the Promised Land. Though he lived in Egypt, he had absolute faith in God that He would fulfil His promise by taking the Israelites to Canaan. We also read of the death and burial of Eleazar, the chief priest. These and many others died at their appointed time. The question is: how prepared are you for this inevitable appointment?

The most useful men, having served their generation, according to the will of God, one after another, fell asleep. It is undeniable that Joshua served his generation; he approved himself a faithful servant of God who diligently preserved true worship and caused Israel to serve God all his days.

<p><b>Question 5: How can sinners and believers adequately prepare for death?</b></p>
---

Everyone will surely bid this world farewell one day, only to be remembered by what they have done. Joshua’s life began with his relationship with God which he maintained consistently until death. It could be recalled that as a man of unshakable conviction, he declared that he and his house would serve the Lord. And He did not renege on this vow. To live and serve God like he did, one needs to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, watching, praying and laboring till He comes.

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

<b>MORNING</b>			<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	LUKE	24	1 KINGS	9-10
TUE	JOHN	1	“	11
WED	“	2-3	“	12
THUR	“	4	“	13
FRI	“	5	“	14
SAT	“	6	“	15
SUN	“	7	“	16



# 601 Lesson

## JUDAH'S VICTORY OVER THE CANAANITES

**TEXT: Judges 1:1-20**

**MEMORY VERSE: "And Judah went up; and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men" (Judges 1:4).**

**O**ur text is drawn from the opening chapter of the book of Judges. The Judges were special deliverers raised by God to rescue the children of Israel from their oppressors, especially whenever they sincerely repented of their state of backsliding. The Judges were also raised to revive the spiritual state of the nation and to administer justice to the people according to the Law of Moses.

After the death of Joshua, the elders that outlived him obviously carried on with his prayerful lifestyle by seeking the face of God before proceeding to battle. **"And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel"** (Joshua 24:31).

Our lesson focuses on the military exploits of the tribes of Israel, chiefly, Judah, assisted by Simeon. Contemporary believers who are regularly engaged in spiritual battles have several lessons to learn from the strategies adopted by the tribe of Judah. First, the place of prayer cannot be over-emphasized since the battle is not ours but the Lord's. Second, unity among brethren is indispensable for victory over the forces of darkness. God's presence is promised whenever two or three are gathered in His name (Matthew 18:20). Third, believers should shun all divisive tendencies since **"Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand"** (Matthew 12:25).

**Question 1: What lessons do we learn from the children of Judah in fighting spiritual battles?**

## **CONDITIONS FOR VICTORY OVER THE CANAANITES** (Judges 1:1-8; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Matthew 7:7-11; 18:19; 1 John 5:14,15)

**“Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?”** (Judges 1:1). It is instructive to note that after the death of Joshua, the children of Israel continued his military exploits. They did not allow enemy nations to exploit the absence of their leader. They sought the face of God for fresh direction in the battle ahead. They did not simply apply the previous strategies employed by Joshua in his successful outings. Here, we see the place and priority of prayers in the battles of life. Notwithstanding the promises of God to the children of Israel that He would give the land of the Canaanites unto them, there were conditions to fulfil.

**Question 2: What conditions are necessary for spiritual victory today?**

The children of Israel were not promised the land of Canaan on a platter of gold. They were to engage the Canaanites in a battle for possession of the land. Under the New Testament dispensation, we must understand that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. As believers, we are constantly engaged in spiritual battles. And just like the children of Judah sought the Lord, we must seek the face of God in prayer since it remains the key to spiritual victory. We need to pray for sustaining grace to remain on the narrow path in these last days. Also, we need prayer for spiritual strength to fulfil the great commission.

The children of Israel sought for wisdom in the impending battle. They did not lean on their understanding; neither did they trust in the strength of their number. Instead, they sought the face of God who is the Source of all victories. **“And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand”** (Judges 1:2). In response to their prayer, the Lord chose the tribe of Judah among other tribes.

The name, ‘Judah’ means praise. And the importance of praise in prevailing prayer cannot be over-emphasized.

There is power in praise. No wonder, in response to the request of His disciples to teach them how to pray, Christ **“said unto them, when ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name...”** (Luke 11:2). In this prayer, Jesus emphasized the need to praise God before making our requests. Praise puts us in the right frame of mind to tell God about our needs. The power of praise was demonstrated in the victory of the children of Judah under King Jehoshaphat. Also, in the New Testament, prison doors were opened after Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God.

Subsequent to the Lord’s response, **“Judah said unto Simeon his brother, come up with me into my lot that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him”** (verse 3). The response of Simeon to Judah’s request demonstrates the importance of unity and team work. Though the tribe of Judah was selected by the Lord, it did not exclude the role of other tribes in the execution of their military campaign.

“Together Everyone Achieves More” is a popular acronym for the word TEAM. The work in the Lord’s vineyard is not restricted to individuals but to collective effort. Just like individual organs of the human body contributes to its overall growth and development, so also every genuinely converted member of the church is essential for the victory and eventual growth of the kingdom of God.

The *Discipling A Whole Nation* (DAWN) project should not be left in the hands of a few individuals if it must be accomplished within record time. We must quickly cooperate with the church leadership and other genuinely born again Christians to get the task done. As we engage in the Lord’s service, we must strive to shun every form of pride. **“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith”** (Romans 12:3).

**CONQUEST AND CARNALITY OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH**  
(Judges 1:9-19; Galatians 5:7, 8; Luke 13:1-5; Matthew 14:25-31; Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9)

**“And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called Hormah”** (Judges 1:17). The tribes of Judah and Simeon went into the battle, full of faith in the God of their fathers. They conquered the Canaanites, Perizzites and the inhabitants of Bezek. They captured Adoni-bezek, the lord of Bezek. Adoni-bezek was a self-confessed ruthless king who was tortured to death by Judah and Simeon, the same way he had killed seventy other kings. The calamity that befell him was in fulfilment of the Scripture that **“... whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”** (Galatians 6:7).

The children of Judah continued in their military campaign and fought the inhabitants of the land even in difficult terrains because they went in the strength of the Lord. Being full of faith, they captured notable strongholds of the enemies like Jerusalem, Kirjath-arba (which was renamed Hebron), Gaza and Askelon.

**Question 3: What are the steps to genuine salvation from sin?**

God is not partial; all people are eligible for His gracious forgiveness as well as for His firm justice. Except sinners repent, they will face God’s fierce judgment like Adoni-bezek. But God, in His love, is calling all sinners everywhere to repent. If any sinner will acknowledge his or her sins, sincerely confess, forsake them and trust in the atoning blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, he or she will be saved. God is faithful and willing to forgive and cleanse the sinner from all unrighteousness. Hence, no degree or weight of sin is too heavy to be taken away because Christ shed His blood on the cross for this purpose.

**Question 4: What pitfalls should believers avoid when faced with difficult situations in life?**

**“And the LORD was with Judah; and he drove out *the inhabitants of the mountain*; but could not drive out *the inhabitants of the valley*, because they had chariots of iron”** (Judges 1:19). It is disheartening that the children of Judah marred their testimony because of carnal

considerations; they were unable to defeat the enemies in the valley because, according to them, they had chariots of iron. Their negative confession portrayed their ignorance of the strength of their God. Today, many contemporary believers suffer defeat, not because of the power of Satan but due to their ignorance of the power in the name and unchanging word of the Lord. Total victory is guaranteed when believers walk by faith, fully attired in God's spiritual armor. By faith, the promises and power of God re-echoes in the hearts of faithful saints.

The children of Judah had soon forgotten the power of God that drowned the enemies at the Red Sea after they had successfully crossed the parted sea as dry land. For us to overcome daily challenges and life's battles that come our way, we must develop our faith and trust in God who will surely fulfil His promises to His children.

**THE COURAGE AND COMMENDATION OF CALEB**  
(Judges 1:12-16,20; Numbers 13:6,30; 14:6-9,37,38; Joshua 14:10-14; 15:13-19)

**“And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak”** (Judges 1:20). Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, of the tribe of Judah, was one of the twelve spies sent to search the land of Canaan. Although Caleb saw the giants, the sons of Anak, he emphasized the goodness of the Promised Land and described it as a land which floweth with milk and honey. He courageously **“...stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it”** (Numbers 13:30). He demonstrated great faith in the promise of God. He did not allow the opinion of the majority to alter his conviction neither did he serve the Lord halfheartedly. In return for his wholehearted devotion, God spared his life and promised him and his seed the land for their possession. The faithful Lord kept him alive and strong until he possessed his portion.

**Question 5: What lessons do we learn from the courage of Caleb?**

At the age of eighty five, Caleb was given the land of Kirjath-arba, a land originally inhabited by the giants which he renamed Hebron. In fulfilment of God's promise, his seed

also possessed the land. We can rightly possess the spoil of the strong man when we manifest faith in God’s promises and power, and serve Him wholeheartedly, like Caleb. Faith in the living God is indispensable if we must obtain a good report and fulfil our ultimate destiny.

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

<b>MORNING</b>			<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	JOHN 8	8	1 KINGS	17-18
TUE	“	9	“	19
WED	“	10	“	20
THUR	“	11	“	21
FRI	“	12	“	22
SAT	“	13-14	2 KINGS	1-2
SUN	“	15-16	“	3

# 602 Lesson

## CONSEQUENCE OF INCOMPLETE OBEDIENCE

**MEMORY VERSE:** “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it” (Isaiah 1:19, 20).

**TEXT:** Judges 1:21-36; 2:1-10

**T**he book of Judges begins with a series of victories and defeats that took place after the death of Joshua. Joshua’s triumph in the military campaigns against the Canaanites could not be sustained for a long time after his demise. The new generation of Israelites did not obey the Lord fully. They left some of the entrenched inhabitants of the land contrary to the command of God. Instead of exterminating the enemies as commanded by Him, they opted for compromise: a deal of putting them into forced labor at the expense of their covenant promise.

The sad effect was that seven tribes – Benjamin, Ephraim, Manasseh, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali and Dan – failed in taking full possession of their inheritance. Although the Israelites owned Canaan land by divine promise, they could not avail themselves of full possession and enjoyment of the land flowing with milk and honey. What an example of the consequence of unbelief in the life of God’s people!

**Question 1:** Why did the children of Israel fail to expel the Canaanites and what does that teach believers today?

Israel’s inability to conquer and completely expel the Canaanites was not because God was no longer able to ensure their victory in the face of the military prowess and superior weapons of the enemy nations. It is because something was wrong with them (Isaiah 59:1, 2). They had refused to obey God’s command to completely destroy the enemy nations (Deuteronomy 7:1-5; 12:1-3; 20:16-18). God expects His children to get rid of all previous accessories to sin – pictures, occult regalia, talisman, rings – and whatever had been instrumental in the hand of their enemies to tempt or defeat them.

## **ISRAEL'S UNEQUAL YOKE WITH THE CANAANITES** (Judges 1:21-36; Psalm 106:15; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 1 John 2:15-17)

**“And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day”** (Judges 1:21).

God had warned Israel since the days of Moses not to spare the inhabitants of Canaan because of the grave consequences it portends. He knew that Israel might not be able to completely resist the temptation of imitating their manner of life and worship. So He said: **“But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee”** (Deuteronomy 20:16, 17).

The children of Israel changed or substituted God's command of total extermination of the heathen for a deal of conscription. Our text states that seven tribes – Benjamin, Ephraim, Manasseh, Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali and Dan – opted for this deal and could not take full possession of their inheritance (Judges 1:21-36). They fell into the trap of compromise which the word of God opposes. Their cohabitation with the heathen resulted into copying their sinful lifestyle and worship pattern. This is always the case for people who bend, change or substitute God's truth to suit their selfish purposes.

Israel's failure to displace the Canaanites was a glaring reflection of disobedience and lack of faith in the Almighty God. Secondly, it depicted the cowardice and slothfulness of the sluggard who says, **“There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets”** (Proverbs 26:13). Thirdly, the Israelites' greed and materialistic attitude made them to prize the gains of conscripting the Canaanites as slaves above keeping the terms of their covenant relationship with God. Likewise, many so-called Christians today quickly sacrifice the benefits of their salvation and personal relationship



with God at the altar of transient, mundane things of life. Fourthly, Israel must have erroneously sensed no danger in cohabiting with these idolatrous nations. They forgot that **“a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump”**. Unequal yoke is deadly (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

The first misstep of the generation after the death of Joshua toward failure was their neglect of God’s word. Many generations ever since have been victims of the same mistake. Is it any wonder that many believers today seldom experience victory over sin, self, Satan and all his cohorts as preachers choose and pick what to preach from God’s word to satisfy the quest of their audience?

**Question 2: Explain God’s justice in His command to destroy the heathen nations.**

It was in the infinite wisdom of God that He demanded that the Canaanites should be completely driven out. It was neither an act of cruelty nor injustice that He commanded a total extermination of the pagan communities in the land. First, those nations had sufficient warnings and ample opportunities to turn from their idolatrous religions and embrace the true God (Joshua 2:8-13). Instead, in their impudent hearts, they refused to learn from the divine judgments against Egypt and the two kings of the Amorites. Inevitably, those who sin against the flood of light by rejecting God’s truth cannot but face the wrath of God.

Second, God’s command to drive out the Canaanites was also aimed at preserving the society and the religion of Israel from being influenced and contaminated by the filth of idolatry. Third, God perpetually abhors sin and is ever at war against it. Fourth, immorality is associated with the worship of Baal and Ashtaroth by the people of the land. The worship of these deities demanded mating with temple prostitutes to ensure fruitful orchards, vineyards, flocks and herds. God knew that relating agriculture with idolatry and immorality would present a great temptation for Israel (Numbers 33:51-55; Deuteronomy 1:1-5).

Steps toward backsliding start with seemingly harmless friendship with the world (James 4:4). It then grows to a

point of being spotted by the world (James 1:27); bends towards affection for or love of the world (1 John 2:15-17); later transforms into conforming with the world (Romans 12:2); until it eventually ends at being condemned with the world (2 Corinthians 11:32).

**Question 3: What should be the Christian's attitude toward unbelievers in a plural society?**

New Testament believers do not wield the sword. They have no scriptural authority to eliminate people of other faiths or those who do not adhere to sound teaching of God's word. They must not however confuse the tolerance demanded in our society made up of different cultures, lifestyles, opposing beliefs and values with approval. The attitude expected of every Bible-believing Christian today is to maintain a distinct and unique walk with God (like Enoch) in all purity, comportment, adornment, conversation and worship.

Moreover, they must endeavor, through fervent intercession, personal evangelism and loving persuasions win the lost to Christ. True believers must never fight or kill unbelievers as a way of perpetuating Christian influence in their communities or nations.

**ISRAEL REBUKED FOR THEIR DISOBEDIENCE** (Judges 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 5:20; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13)

The compromising attitude which the children of Israel assumed toward the heathen's lifestyle made God to send an Angel to pronounce divine punishment for their breach of His covenant. **"And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swear unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?"** (Judges 2:1, 2).

This **"angel of the LORD"** was not an ordinary angel. It was one of the Old Testament appearances of Christ, the second person in the Godhead. Moses, Joshua, Gideon

and a host of other Old Testament saints had the Lord appearing to them in a similar way (Exodus 3:2-5; Numbers 22:3-5; Joshua 5:13-15; Judges 6:11-24). This Angel of the Lord should not be misunderstood for an earthly being or a prophet from Gilgal. He was a divine personality that had the same essence with Jehovah.

**Question 4: Highlight the significance of the Angel of the Lord coming from Gilgal?**

The Angel coming from Gilgal is significant. It was at Gilgal that the Israelites celebrated the Passover for the first time since they left Egypt 40 years earlier. The tabernacle was also originally located in Gilgal (Joshua 5:14-20). At Gilgal all Israelites were circumcised to roll away the reproach of Egypt (Joshua 5:2-9). At Gilgal the Lord appeared to Joshua to assure him of victory as he was to begin his campaign against Canaan. The memory of the religious engagement which the angel of the Lord from Gilgal signaled helped to enforce his rebuke on Israel's apostasy.

To Christians, Gilgal represents that position from where the believer goes forth in obedience and faith to subdue all spiritual foes. The Lord, in His mercy, visited the people at Bochim to remind Israel of its commitment to God at Gilgal.

The message of the Angel attested to God's past faithfulness, mercies and salvation for Israel. **"I made you to go up out of Egypt and brought you unto the land which I swore to your fathers."** The new generation of Israelites were therefore reminded that they owed God loyalty and unreserved obedience. Those who have tasted of the grace of God at salvation should not forget His demand for sobriety and righteous living in this present world (Titus 2:11).

One would have expected prompt obedience from the children of Israel considering the faithfulness of God to them. But they did not; hence, the Lord said, **"ye have not obeyed my voice"**. How many Christians are guilty of the same charge today! God has been faithful to them in every circumstance of life but they have been consistently unfaithful in keeping His words. When the church

habitually neglects to observe and do any of the Lord's commandments or breaks one of the least commandments, and teaches men so, she incurs God's wrath. **"Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you"** (Judges 2:3).

God leaves people deliberately to suffer when they veer from His commandments. Such are open to His stern rebuke (1 Timothy 5:20; 2 Timothy 4:2). The nations that Israel refused to destroy according to the commandments of the Lord became snares and instruments of torture to them. How wise to obey the Lord fully!

**ISRAEL'S RESPONSE TO THE LORD'S REPROOF**  
(Judges 2:4-10; 2 Kings 17:32, 33; Matthew 27:3-5; 2 Corinthians 7:7-11)

The children of Israel wept at hearing the divine judgment on their sins. **"And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept"** (Judges 2:4). The place was called, **"Bochim"** meaning, 'weepers'. The congregation wept because they realized that they had lost the golden opportunity of God's divine presence. Sin brings us into disfavor with God. No matter our past relationship with Him, sin will estrange us from God's fellowship. The doctrine of unconditional security of believers is a fallacy. Israelites were now to reap the bitter fruits of their disobedience in the days ahead except they repented. It is unfortunate that some Christians allow undue relationship with unbelievers or Achans in the camp to dissuade them from going unto perfection.

**Question 5: What major lessons do we learn from the Bochim experience?**

Someone has said, 'A grain of faith is better than gallons of tears, just as a drop of genuine repentance is more precious than torrents of weeping'. The people wept but showed no evidence of repentance. Shedding crocodile tears for the consequences of sin is not equal to repentance. The weeping at Bochim was nothing but momentary outburst of feeling accompanied with hasty sacrifices

without any amendment in their lifestyle. They wept but failed to make right their way before God (2 Kings 17:32, 33).

The fact that God did not withdraw His chastisement from this generation of Israelites meant that their weeping was not the same as genuine repentance. If they were truly penitent, God would have taken away their chastisement. Sorrow is not sobriety.

## DAILY BIBLE READING

<b>MORNING</b>			<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	JOHN	17	2 KINGS	4
TUE	“	18	“	5
WED	“	19	“	6
THUR	“	20-21	“	7-8
FRI	ACTS	1-2	“	9
SAT	“	3-4	“	10
SUN	“	5-6	“	11-12

# 603 Lesson

## DIVINE CHASTISEMENT FOR ISRAEL'S BACKSLIDING

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger” (Judges 2:12).

**TEXT: Judges 2:11-23**

God chose the Israelites to be a holy nation and peculiar people above all the nations of the earth (Deuteronomy 14:2). To preserve their peculiarity, He raised prophets, teachers and shepherds to lead them in the path of righteousness and obedience to His word. This distinct lifestyle of righteousness and obedience they were required to live was the condition of the covenant He made with them. God gave them commandments and laws to keep so that His presence will be with them as a shield from their enemies.

Unfortunately, the Israelites repeatedly broke the terms of their covenant relationship with God. After the demise of Joshua, there arose another generation that knew not the Lord and the works which He had done for Israel. The preceding verses to our text show how an angel of the Lord came to rebuke them for making league with the heathen nations around them. Though they wept, they seemed to have shed crocodile tears; they subsequently forsook God as our text today records. Consequently, the divine presence departed and **“they could not any longer stand before their enemies”** (Judges 12:14). God cannot walk with people who live in sinful compromise.

In spite of this, God manifested unfailing love, mercy and goodness towards them. Whenever they called upon Him, He would raise judges to deliver them from their enemies. Some believers today seem to be toeing this path of repeated backsliding and inconsistency in their walk with God. But as we shall see in this lesson, avoidable negative consequences always attend compromise and backsliding.

**REPEATED BACKSLIDING OF ISRAEL AFTER JOSHUA** (Judges 2:11-13, Joshua 24:15-31, Jeremiah 3:8-22; 8:4-15; 31:22; 49:4, Hosea 4:16; 11:5-7; Romans 11:7-10,17-25; 1 Corinthians 5:1-7; 2 Timothy 4:10; Revelation 2:1-4, 14-16; 19-25; 3:1-4,14-19).

**Question 1: What is backsliding?**

Backsliding, according to the Easton's Bible Dictionary is, 'to draw back or apostatize in matters of religion' (Acts 21:21; 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 1 Timothy 4:1). This may be partial or complete (Proverbs 14:14; Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:38, 39). To backslide is to turn back from good and approved standard of God. It is to retrogress from lofty ideals, to diminish in value and virtue; to become cold or lukewarm in love for God and to redirect one's affection from pleasing God only to self and other person(s) and objects. It is also to disregard God's messages, methods and mentors. The Israelites lost their bearing, spiritual steam and were simply backslidden. **"And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim."** God is omniscient. Anywhere, anyhow and anytime sin is committed, in the secret or public, God sees it. It is in His sight because nothing can be hid from Him.

The Scripture declare that no one can serve two masters. Therefore, to serve idol contrary to the provision of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-5), the Israelites forsook God. **"And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger."** They had forgotten that God who brought them out of the land of Egypt was the only One they should serve throughout their existence on earth.

Recall that it was because of the sin of the inhabitants that God brought Israel as a nation to take over their land. It would be a great injustice on the side of God to drive out the people of the land for their evil deed and bring other people who are guilty of the same evil and sustain them in the land with the resources of heaven.

**Question 2: Why were the Israelites given to backsliding?**

Incomplete obedience always prepares a slippery ground for certain future fall. The failure of Israel to drive out all the inhabitants of the land as divinely instructed led to their frequent compromise with them. Cohabiting with idol worshippers became a constant source of temptation into which they fell. Believers today live in a similar evil world that is full of temptation. Given that increase of sinful activities in the world will make the love of many believers to wax cold, we need to heed the warning of scripture to keep our hearts with all diligence. This requires graceful efforts in watching over the gates that leads to the heart: the eyes, ears, tongue, etc. We also need to watch against evil imaginations the devil tries to infiltrate the mind with. Though sinners paint evil with attractive and alluring colors in our offices, compounds, streets, markets, schools and campuses; though they try to intimidate whoever chooses to live an uncompromising lifestyle, we must resist sin.

When evil is tolerated and accommodated, the heart of the righteous no longer repulses it with the vehemence required. Gradually, the heart begins to drift, deviate and draw away from its holy conviction and becomes unclean. Outright evil deeds begin to manifest. This was what happened to the Israelites.

Israel forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashtaroth. Baal was the male sun god worshipped in Western Asia among the heathen nations as their chief deity. Ashtaroth was set up in the temples and worshipped with the most repulsive forms of sexual perversion, surrendering all virtues and decency under the guise of religious worship.

This kind of worship still goes on in many so-called Christian assemblies today.

**THE RISE AND REIGN OF JUDGES IN ISRAEL** (Judges 2:16-19; John 1:1-3,11,12,29; 10:11-15; 3:34; 8:29-31,46; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 4:46; Daniel 2:44; 7:13,14; Luke 1:32,33)

**Question 3: Mention some of the prophets God raised to deliver Israel.**

The Judges were men (including one woman) whom God raised from among the children of Israel to serve as leaders, reformers and deliverers. They were specially qualified, endowed and empowered by God to function in civil



administration, legal matters and military defense of the people. These were Othniel (Judges 3:9), Ehud (Judges 3:15), Shamgar (Judges 3:31), Deborah (Judges 4:5), Gideon (Judges 6:36), Abimelech (Judges 9:1), Tola (Judges 10:1), Jair (Judges 10:3), Jephthah (Judges 11:11), Ibzan (Judges 12:8), Elon (Judges 12:11), Abdon (Judges 12:13), Samson (Judges 16:30), Eli (1 Samuel 4:18), Samuel (1 Samuel 7:15).

Israel's suffering, distress, groaning and oppression touched the heart of God, even though they were the architects of their misfortune. God, out of His abundant mercy for the people, proffered solutions by raising Judges. Their decision to worship Baalim could not help them. It earned them sorrow, oppression, defeat and suffering but God's choice brought solutions. It is important for us to observe that the decision of who would be a judge was not left to the people but to God only.

**Question 4: What are the similarities and differences between the Judges and Jesus Christ?**

There are some similarities between the Judges and our Lord Jesus Christ. One, the Judges delivered the people from the hands of those who spoiled them and Jesus Christ came to set the captives free. Two, Israel would not hearken to their Judges as Christ came to His own people but they received Him not. Three, God was with the Judges for the work they were called to do just as He was with Christ who always pleased Him. Four, the Lord delivered His suffering people through the Judges as Christ also did.

Despite the similarities between the Judges and Jesus Christ, there are numerous differences between them. Christ was the incarnate Son of God, while they were servants raised by grace. Christ is sinless while they were not. Christ was endued with power of the Holy Spirit without measure but they had a measure of the Spirit of God. Christ was born by a virgin, but they were not. Christ has eternal ministry, while their ministries were temporal. They were called to deliver Israel in their time, but Christ is the Savior of the world for all time. Christ laid down His life for His people, but the Judges did not.

**Question 5: What can believers learn from the success of the Judges  
God raised to rescue Israel?**

As God raised judges to rescue Israel, He is still raising Christian servants to rescue perishing souls today. Workers and leaders in the church should therefore make frantic efforts to win souls into the Kingdom while there is still hope. This is the revealed will of God that every believer should seek to carry out every day. The unchanging commission is, **“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”** (Mark 16:15).

The success of the judges was based on God’s presence with them; hence, they were required to live holy lives so that they could secure God’s partnership in their ministry. Similarly, all workers and leaders working for God must be free from the corruption, pollution and evil in the world. Ministerial power is only guaranteed through God’s presence.

The work of the judges was made difficult because the people did not listen to them. Similarly, the work of leaders in the church today is made difficult when people do not believe in them and disregard God’s message through them. In spite of this, the judges were steadfast till death. It was only when they died that the enemies regained their hold over the people. We, too, should be steadfast in our call, commitment and consecration to God.

**REPERCUSSION OF ISRAEL’S BACKSLIDING** (Judges 2:14,15,20-23; Psalm 89:27-33; Leviticus 26:3-45; Deuteronomy 28:1-68)

Backsliding always attract God’s wrath and indignation. He chastises His children in love as a means of bringing them back to Himself (Hebrews 12:5-11).

The portion of God’s people in this life is the Lord. When they kept God’s commandments, it was well with them and their enemies could not stand before them. The Lord fought for them anywhere they went. Whatsoever they laid their hands to do, God prospered and they were like the watered garden. Anyone who touched them, touched the apple of God’s eyes. God’s hand was heavy against their enemies and no enemy could face them in battle. They were a terror to their enemies.

**Question 6: What is the consequence of forsaking God?**

When people forsake God, He leaves them at the mercy of their enemies to oppress them. God does that not because He approves of the sin of their enemies but to make His people to retrace their steps from their evil ways. In Leviticus chapter 26 and Deuteronomy chapter 28, God took time to impress on the people the consequences of breaking His covenant.

Our text reveals that the children of Israel were hardened. Even when God had mercy on them and raised judges for them, they would not hearken to their judges. They went awhoring after other gods. When the judges died, things became worse, as they returned and corrupted themselves more than their fathers. Consequently, God left the enemy nations to afflict and oppress them. People who are inconsistent in their walk with God rarely enjoy the unceasing flow of God's grace. They always have stories of affliction and oppression to tell. With genuine repentance, faith in God's love, prayerful dependence on His sufficient and sustaining grace, unbroken fellowship with Him and His people, you can consistently abide in the Lord.

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

	<b>MORNING</b>		<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	ACTS	7	2 KINGS	13-14
TUE	"	8	"	15
WED	"	9	"	16
THUR	"	10	"	17
FRI	"	11-12	"	18
SAT	"	13	"	19
SUN	"	14	"	20-21

**END OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES**

## NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

# 604 Lesson

## FOOLISHNESS OF HUMAN WISDOM

**MEMORY VERSE:** “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty” (1 Corinthians 1:27).

**TEXT: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31**

**T**he message of the cross as opposed to the wisdom of the world forms the nucleus of this study. The word of God refers to human wisdom as “**foolishness**” and “**vain**” (1 Corinthians 3:19, 20). “**For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God**” (1 Corinthians 1:18). In the wisdom of God, the cross of Christ was designed to bring salvation to sinners, healing for the sick, deliverance for the demonized and redemption to all men. This, however, is foolishness to the finite mind which cannot comprehend divine plans and spiritual realities (Matthew 22:29; Isaiah 55:9).

**Question 1: Why is the message of the Cross foolishness to the natural man?**

**CHRIST: THE WISDOM AND POWER OF GOD** (1 Corinthians 1:18-25; Romans 1:1-4; Isaiah 8:14; Colossians 2:2, 3; Luke 2:34, 35; John 6:52-60)

“**But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God**” (1 Corinthians 1:23,24). The preaching of the cross had different effects on different people. To the Jews, it was a stumbling block; to the Greeks, it was foolishness; but to those who are called, both the Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

**Question 2: Why was the message of crucifixion a stumbling block to the Jews?**

The message of crucifixion made the Jews to stumble because they could not comprehend it. They had thought their expected Messiah was to be a great temporal prince, and therefore, would never accept one so mean in appearance. They despised Christ and looked upon Him as repulsive because He was hanged on a tree and did not gratify them with a sign. The Jews had always been used to miracles in confirmation of the mission of the prophets sent to them, and therefore insisted on a sign that would prove Jesus to be the true Messiah. Except signs and wonders were wrought, they would not believe. Although miracles were wrought in great numbers by Christ such as was not done by any mortal, they remained incredulous and persistent in demanding a sign from heaven. But Jesus told them that no other sign would be given them but that of Prophet Jonah, signifying the death and resurrection of Christ from the dead.

**Question 3: What made the Greeks consider the message of the cross as foolishness?**

The Greeks on their own part scorned at the story of a crucified Savior and despised the apostles' way of proclaiming the story. They were men of wit and learning; men who cultivated arts and sciences; men, who had for ages been seeking and dispensing knowledge. There was nothing in the plain doctrine of the cross to gratify their curiosity. They, therefore, treated the story with contempt. How possible was it to be saved by one who could not save himself or trust in one who was condemned and crucified as a malefactor, a man of mean birth and poor condition, cut off by so vile and shameful death? This was what human reasoning and learning could not relish. The Greeks thought it would amount to stupidity to receive such a doctrine. They were therefore left to perish in their pride and ignorance (Romans 1:18-32; 11:22; Proverbs 1:24-32).

Today, some people consider it unreasonable that the Son of God should be crucified; that riches should come

through His poverty and men brought to the kingdom and glory through someone so mean and wretched; that there should be life for men in His death and salvation through His crucifixion on the cross. Such men doubt the possibility of any blessings coming through His being made a curse; they wonder how His death would expiate for the sins of humanity; and how justification could come by one who was condemned. To them, it is unthinkable that peace and pardon should come by His blood and that He should be raised again from the dead. These things are the subject of their ridicule; and, in their opinion deserve to be laughed at than credited. People who fall into such category should be pitied because they despise the riches of God's goodness and forbearance; and after their hardness and impenitent hearts, treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God (Romans 2:4,5).

The message of the cross supersedes human wisdom, **“For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”** (1 Corinthians 1:19, 20). All the valued learning of this world was confounded, baffled and eclipsed by the revelation and glorious triumph of the cross. The heathen politicians and philosophers, the Jewish rabbis and doctors, the curious searchers into the secrets of nature were all bewildered.

In spite of all their wisdom, iniquity still abounded. They were puffed up by their imaginary knowledge and that further alienated them from God. When Paul said, **“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness”**, he was saying in essence that the message of the cross was foolishness in the eyes of worldly-wise men. Our living through One who died, our being blessed by Him who was made a curse, our being justified by One who was condemned, was all folly to men who are blinded by self-conceit, prejudices and inventions of their reasoning and philosophy.

Also, the manner of preaching the gospel was foolishness to them too. None of the famous men known for wisdom

or eloquence was employed to plant a church or propagate the gospel. A few fishermen were called out and sent on this errand. These were commissioned to disciple the nations. These vessels were chosen to convey the treasure of saving knowledge to the world. Humanly speaking, there was nothing in them that looked grand or spectacular but God used them to bring the message of hope to mankind. It is interesting to note that the Lord is still using men and women who yield themselves as willing vessels, irrespective of age and status.

**THE CALLING OF CHRISTIANS** (1 Corinthians 1:26-29; Psalm 8:2; 2 Timothy 1:9; James 2:5)

**“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called”** (1 Corinthians 1:26). In God’s service, not many men of learning, authority or honorable extraction are called. God did not choose philosophers, or orators, or statesmen, or men of wealth and power in the world to publish the gospel of grace and peace. He has chosen the foolish things of the world – the weak, the base and despicable; men of mean birth, low rank, of no liberal education – to be the preachers of the gospel. As omniscient Creator, He knows best what instruments will serve His purpose and glory.

**Question 4: What does God require from a sinner who wishes to be saved?**

No one is qualified to be called into God’s service except that individual is saved. All that God demands from those who wish to be part of His service is repentance from sin through faith in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. We can spend a lifetime accumulating human wisdom and yet never learn how to have a personal relationship with God. We must come to the crucified and risen Christ to receive eternal life and the joy of a personal relationship with our Savior.

The gospel of Christ still sounds foolish to many today, especially in a society where majority of the people worship power, influence and wealth. Christ came as a humble, poor servant, and offers His kingdom to those who have

faith, not to those who labor to earn the commendation of the Master by their good deeds. Indeed, personal knowledge of Christ is the greatest wisdom anyone could have.

**CHRIST: OUR WISDOM, RIGHTEOUSNESS, SANCTIFICATION AND REDEMPTION** (1 Corinthians 1:30, 31; Jeremiah 23:5; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9; John 17:19; Ephesians 1:7)

**“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption”** (1 Corinthians 1:30). Our union and identification with Christ result in our having God’s wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3); right standing with God (2 Corinthians 5:21); being holy (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7); and having the penalty for our sins paid by Christ (Mark 10:45).

**Question 5: What are the believer’s benefits in the death of Christ?**

Christ is the Source of our redemption, righteousness, sanctification and wisdom. Through His death on the cross, God offered to trade His righteousness for our sin – something of immeasurable worth for something completely worthless. As the perfect and final sacrifice, the death of Christ gave us complete freedom from slavery to sin. And knowing full well that salvation is only through Christ, we should stop boasting about our personal achievements, and glory only in the Lord.

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

<b>MORNING</b>		<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	ACTS	15	2 KINGS 22
TUE	“	16	“ 23
WED	“	17	“ 24-25
THUR	“	18	1 CHRON. 1
FRI	“	19	“ 2
SAT	“	20	“ 3-4
SUN	“	21	“ 5



# 605 Lesson

## MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL REVEALED

**MEMORY VERSE:** “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10).

**TEXT: 1 Corinthians 2:1-16**

**A**postle Paul had argued in the previous chapter that God chose the things and persons which the world calls foolish, weak and base to confute the world’s wisdom and power. In the present study, he pursues the same argument to show that the gospel does not depend on human wisdom and philosophy but on the power of God. This he illustrates by his own example of demonstrating the gospel through the power of the Holy Ghost.

The gospel is a mystery that had been hidden from the foundation of the world, but now revealed and made known to the saints by the Spirit of God. This is the mystery: “**That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel**” (Ephesians 3:6).

In the text, the apostle describes the process by which God has revealed this mystery through His Spirit and thereafter contrasts the difference between the “natural man” who depends on human wisdom and the “spiritual man”, led by the Spirit of God, who has the mind of Christ. We find here Paul’s declaration of the gospel message by the power of the Holy Ghost, the discovery of the mystery of the gospel through the Spirit’s power and the privilege of discerning God’s mind exclusively by the saints.

**Question 1:** In your own word, briefly explain why the gospel is a mystery.

**DECLARING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE THROUGH THE SPIRIT’S POWER** (1 Corinthians 2:1-5; 1:17-21; Acts 18:1-4; Romans 16:18; 2 Corinthians 10:10; 11:6)

**“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with Excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God”** (1 Corinthians 2:1). Paul was a brilliant scholar who expressed deep things of God in Scripture. Yet, he did not use lofty language to elevate himself. Here, he reminds the Corinthian Christians that he avoided the use of high-sounding speech or intellectual argument to proclaim the gospel of Christ to them. He knew that the effectiveness of the gospel does not lie in eloquence or oratory but in the demonstration of the Spirit’s power. This teaches us that as we endeavor to preach the gospel, we should guard against mere intellectual display or worldly knowledge. We should, instead depend on the Spirit to energize and order our words. Our message must be centered and focused on Christ who was crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2; John 17:3).

**Question 2: What should be the focus of a sound gospel message?**

The Holy Spirit is the great Converter of souls. Charles Spurgeon said: “The power that is in the gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher; otherwise men would be the converters of souls; nor does it lie in the preacher’s learning; otherwise it would consist in the wisdom of men. We might preach until our tongues rotted, till we would exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless the Holy Spirit be with the Word of God to give it the power to convert the soul.” We must avoid the temptation of trimming and chiseling Christ’s teaching into a gospel more artificial and more congenial with the depraved tastes of fallen nature. Such means rather than improve the gospel, pollutes it, until it becomes another gospel and not the true gospel of Christ. Using human wisdom to alter and amend the Lord’s own Word are defilements and pollutions, “**...for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it**” (Exodus 20:25).

It must be noted, however, that the Apostle’s submission here does not exclude diligent preparation, clear articulation and persuasive presentation of the gospel message. Rather, it warns against any method that leads people to be carried away by mere grammar or vocabulary than point people to the Savior. Those who minister the Word must prepare and

use every gift God has given them but they must not put their confidence in the gift but in the Giver of the gift.

**Question 3: List some self-help methods adopted in preaching the gospel today, and why they fail in winning souls.**

The Apostle further explains that the human mind, no matter how intelligent cannot comprehend spiritual truths. **“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”** (Isaiah 55:9). God’s wisdom differs from human wisdom because the wisdom of this world is transient: it belongs to the present age, and will come to naught whereas the wisdom of God is eternal and incorruptible. It originates in God’s eternal will and finds its consummation in His eternal glory (1 Corinthians 2:5-7).

Secondly, worldly wisdom is preoccupied with observation. 1 Corinthisan 2:9 mention the three main fields of human knowledge: things that the eye sees, things that the ear hears and things that enter into the heart of man. Divine wisdom, however, is the opposite: it embraces things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man which God has prepared for those who love Him. That which man was unable to observe with the eye or the ear, or to grasp with his finite mind, God has prepared for His beloved.

The wisdom of God is higher and far exceeds human wisdom because it grants the new man in Christ a place in God’s glory. God has prepared this wisdom for those who love Him. He has laid out the mysteries of His wisdom for those who have been brought into a special relationship with Him through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In summary, we learn that (1) human wisdom is irrelevant to the proclamation of the gospel message; (2) Christ’s crucifixion is the centrality of the gospel message; (3) human weakness should not be an obstacle to the preaching of the gospel; (4) the Holy Ghost is He who empowers the gospel message; (5) the Christian faith should be anchored on God’s power and not man’s wisdom.

**DISCOVERING THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE SPIRIT** (1 Corinthians 2:6-10; Isaiah 48:6, 7; Matthew 11:25; Romans 16:25, 26; Ephesians 1:4; 3:4-9; Colossians 1:26, 27; 1 Peter 1:11; Isaiah 64:4; 65:17)

**“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory”** (1 Corinthians 2:7). The message of Christ’s crucifixion embodies the wisdom of God. This message was veiled before Christ came. The Cross was ordained of God before the world and had been a mystery relatively hidden from the Old Testament prophets. This fact notwithstanding, it was announced by the prophets and prefigured in the law. **“The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant”** (Psalm 25:14). Apostle Paul asserted that this hidden secret is made plain and revealed through the Spirit of God to the prophets and apostles. **“Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory”** (Colossians 1:26). According to Isaiah 61:5, 6, the Gentiles are pictured as being the servants and Israel as the priests of God. While it is true that the Gentiles were promised blessings in the future millennial kingdom, they are never given equality with the Jews in the Old Testament. This equality is the point of the mystery discovered by the apostles through God’s Spirit in the New Testament dispensation. **“Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel”** (Ephesians 3:5,6).

What are the components of this mystery? **“That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs”** with the Jews. Thus, every promise of eternal inheritance would apply equally to both the Gentiles and Jews. Secondly, that the Gentiles should be members of the same body; hence, all would be equal in the body of Christ. Thirdly, that the Gentiles should be partakers of the same promises in the gospel of

Christ which implies that every promise of forgiveness, joy, and peace would apply equally to both Jews and Gentiles.

The implication of this New Testament revelation is that, one, the middle wall of partition between the Jews and the Gentiles is removed (Ephesians 2:14). Two, the Gentiles, like the Jews, are both accepted in Christ (Ephesians 1:6). Three, the grace which the gospel offers is without distinction to one above the other, but in the same way and on the same terms. The terms of pardon are repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **DISCERNING GOD'S MIND: THE SAINTS' PRIVILEGE**

(1 Corinthians 2:11-16; John 16:13; Amos 3:7; Romans 11:33, 34; Romans 8:26, 27; Ephesians 3:18, 19)

**“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God”** (1 Corinthians 2:12). Knowing the mind of God is a special privilege reserved for God's children. God's Spirit knows the divine secrets, and only God can disclose Himself to us. Apostle Paul states that since we have received the Spirit of God we are able to know the mind of God. True knowledge of the Cross does not come through intellectual research or laboratory experiment; it comes through God's self-revelation through His Spirit.

The Spirit received by Christians is not the spirit of the world, but the Holy Spirit which Christ promised to be a Guide into all truth. **“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come”** (John 16:13). Thus, the spiritual man judges all things by the Spirit. His understanding of the Scripture, his interpretation and application of it are influenced by the Spirit, and may appear unintelligible to someone who does not possess the Spirit.

<p><b>Questions 4: Explain why the gospel mystery can only be discovered through the Spirit's power.</b></p>
--

Apostle Paul divides men into three classes: the natural man, who is unconverted and a stranger to God's Spirit; the spiritual man, that is, the renewed man who is Spirit-filled; and the carnal man or immature Christian who is sensual and walk after the flesh (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). The natural man may be learned, gentle, eloquent, fascinating, but the spiritual content of Scripture is hidden from him. The carnal Christian is able to comprehend only its simplest truths. While the things of the gospel, which the Spirit reveals, cannot be known and received by the natural man, because he cannot discern or value such revelations. The natural man is the unregenerate, who has the spirit of the world and is not converted.

**Question 5: With Bible references, list various ways God reveals His mind to believers.**

God reveals His mind to believers through His Spirit. This can come through impartation (1 Thessalonians 2:8), illumination (2 Corinthians 4:6), inspiration (Job 32:8), interpretation (Acts 8:30, 31), instruction (Isaiah 28:26) and intercession (Jeremiah 33:3).

God reveals His mind to His saints (1) that “**...we might know the things that are freely given to us of God**” (1 Corinthians 2:12). (2) To obey His commandments (Deuteronomy 29:29). (3) To believe in Christ as the Savior and have eternal life through His name (John 20:31). (4) For doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). (5) To know God's plan and Program for the saints here and hereafter (1 Corinthians 2:9, 10). (6) To teach our children the mind of God (Deuteronomy 4:9). Thus, it is a great privilege for Christians to have the mind of Christ revealed to them by His Spirit.

## DAILY BIBLE READING

<b>MORNING</b>			<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	ACTS	22	1 CHRON	6
TUE	"	23	"	7
WED	"	24-25	"	8
THUR	"	26	"	9
FRI	"	27	"	10-11
SAT	"	28	"	12
SUN	ROM.	1	"	13-14

# 606 Lesson

## RENDERING ACCEPTABLE SPIRITUAL SERVICE

**MEMORY VERSE:** "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

### **TEXT: 1 Corinthians 3:1-23**

In the previous chapter, Paul the apostle rehearses to the Corinthian church how he preached the gospel with absolute reliance on the Spirit and the wisdom of God. We learn from this that for the word of God to have positive impact on hearers, it must not be preached with the wisdom of this world or with the motivational, enticing words of man's wisdom that obtains in many modern-day churches. Our dependence on God in rendering spiritual service that will impact souls of men is acceptable to Him. This is because such service will be devoid of carnal reasoning and practices that He hates.

It is however discipline in the church that helps us maintain the requisite spiritual quality devoid of carnality in life and service for God. Our lesson today dwells on discipline in the Corinthian church arising from display of carnality there. We shall also see how carnality also affects believers' service and renders it valueless and unacceptable to God when He makes final evaluation of what we have done in His name. It then becomes necessary to examine the conditions for rendering acceptable service to God.

**Question 1: How can a believer's service be acceptable to God?**

The essence of our redemption is to serve. We are saved to serve God, saints and sinners in the world. But our spiritual service will not be acceptable to God if it is not rendered in holiness and righteousness. **"That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life"** (Luke 1:74,75).



Faithfulness is another virtue that is required in God's service which many servants of God have exemplified in every generation. Moses and Daniel are good examples of faithful saints in Scripture. **"And Moses verily was faithful in his entire house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after. Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him"** (Hebrews 3:5; Daniel 6:4).

But there cannot be holiness and faithfulness where carnality reigns. That is why Paul frowns and condemns carnality in the Corinthian church where he and other ministers like Apollos and Cephas had labored so much. He compares carnality to a little leaven that leaveneth a whole lump. Carnality, if it goes on unchecked, can lead to disunity and breed all kinds of sins. The consequence is that, service rendered by such carnal believers will be unacceptable to God. But **"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for master's use, and prepared unto every good work"** (2 Timothy 2:21).

**CONTRAST OF SPIRITUAL AND CARNAL SERVICE** (1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Romans 8: 6-8; Ephesians 4:13-15; Hebrews 5:12; John 6:60, 66)

<b>Question 2: What is carnality?</b>
---------------------------------------

Apostle Paul noticed a flagrant display of carnality among believers at Corinth. **"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ"** (1 Corinthians 3:1). Carnality in our context can be best interpreted as an act of sensuality, childishness, immaturity and indulgence in Christian service. The Bible declares that **"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace"** (Romans 8:6). Also, **"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God"** (Romans 8:7, 8). A carnal

believer is walking in the flesh while the spiritual believer walks in the Spirit. While the carnal believers still live under the influence of the old nature, spiritual believers in Christ are controlled by the Spirit of God.

Despite the rare opportunity these Corinthian believers had to have listened to the fiery teaching of the whole counsel of God under Apostle Paul and other ministers of God, they still remained childish, carnal and immature in their understanding and conduct at a time they ought to be spiritually matured. **“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat”** (Hebrews 5:12). Though they were born again, they remain immature and carnal in their understanding, commitment, conversation, comportment and contribution to spiritual discussions. As spiritual dwarfs, they do not have the spiritual capability to handle spiritual matters or service that reflects the level of investment of grace in their lives. Such believers, still being spoon-fed with milk or elementary basics of the word of God, cannot take in the meat, that is, the sound teachings of Christ (John 6:60, 66).

**Question 3: How can we differentiate a spiritual believer from a carnal one?**

God expects new babes in Christ to grow into maturity in all areas of Christian living. He expects that, **“we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ”** (Ephesians 4:13-15).

**CONSEQUENCES OF CARNALITY IN THE CHURCH** (1 Corinthians 3:3-7; Numbers 12:1-15; 14:1-4, 11, 12, 21-24)

**“For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul;**

**and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord”** (1 Corinthians 3:3-5). Unity among brethren creates the right atmosphere for the awesome presence of God and His readiness to confirm His word with signs and wonders in the church (Acts 2:1-4; 6:24-33). But unity in the Corinthian church was threatened by the manifestation of carnality among the brethren. Obviously, carnality generates disunity among brethren. And spiritual services rendered with a carnal mind and the arm of flesh destroy the growth of the church.

Carnality still harms present-day churches like it did in the Corinthian church. It leads to debate, murmuring, strife and divisions in the church and even polarize it along social, ethnic and demographic lines. Believers in such churches will begin to express their preferences for ministers. Spiritual Programs like evangelism, retreat, crusade that can bring souls into God’s kingdom can be affected as a result of carnality. Brethren in the Corinthian church began to fight themselves instead of fighting sin and Satan. In fact, Satan through the cracks in the Corinthian church gained inroad to their families to afflict them.

**Question 4: What are the effects of carnality in the church today?**

Carnality is as old as the church in the wilderness. Because of it, Miriam was inflicted with leprosy and caused delay in the journey of the children of Israel to the Promised Land (Numbers 12:1-15). A whole generation of the children of Israel except Joshua and Caleb missed the Promised Land because of carnality (Numbers 14:1-4, 11, 12, 21-24).

Carnal traits can also be noticed in many assemblies today where brethren struggle for positions, opportunities and privileges instead of rendering selfless and sacrificial service unto the Lord. Worldliness is not far from a church where carnality is in vogue. The nearer believers are to the world, the more unqualified they become in spiritual service. We are called out of the world, cleansed by the blood of the Lamb and controlled by the Spirit of God. Paul noticed these traits of unsanctified life in the Corinthian church and rebuked them sharply. True servants of God

in any assembly today, like Apostle Paul, must be vigilant, bold and courageous to preach against sin in whatever form, sparing no one.

**Question 5: Why does God give different gifts to believers in the church?**

Paul did not fail to exhort on unity and fruitful service. From his exhortation, we learn that whatever gifts or talents God has given us according to His own will should be used to perfect the Church of Christ. Believers should consider themselves as jointly employed by Christ for the salvation of the world. Our God-endowed talents and gifts are given to achieve this singular purpose. It should be our interest and priority to serve God and be faithful to His calling. Many ministers today make merchandize of their gifts. For many others, their hearts have been lifted up in pride. We need the assistance of God for a fruitful and successful service. **“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase”** (1 Corinthians 3:6, 7; John 16:7, 8). The need for selflessness and humility in service is underscored here.

**CHRIST’S JUDGMENT OF BELIEVERS’ SERVICE** (1 Corinthians 3:8-15; Numbers 12:7; Isaiah 2: 35; Nehemiah 7:2; Matthew 25:21; Luke 16:10-17)

**“Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building”** (1 Corinthians 3:8, 9). The use of the expression ‘according to his own labor’ by the Holy Spirit is instructive here. Biblical records show that the reward for believers’ service will not be based on personality (for God is not a respecter of persons) or according to the magnitude of labor. God will only reward our services in His vineyard based on our faithfulness and obedience to His revealed will in the Scriptures (Genesis 39:1-7; Numbers 12:7; Isaiah 2:35; Nehemiah 7:2; Matthew 25:21; Luke 16:10-17; Revelation 22:18, 19).

Much as it is good to be engaged in spiritual service, **“let**

**every man take heed how he buildeth...**" (1 Corinthians 3:10) on the foundation of Christ. We need to be wise builders like Paul and resist errors and enforce godliness in the church because there will be critical evaluation of the service rendered by the omniscient God. **"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire"** (1 Corinthians 3:13-15).

It is certain that God will reward our service as co-laborers with Him. So, we need to be faithful by living out and upholding the doctrines of Christ; we need to build according to pattern; and we need to remain steadfast in His service. **"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord"** (1 Corinthians 15:58).

**Question 6: What will be the yardstick for reward for our service?**

**CONDITIONS FOR RENDERING ACCEPTABLE SERVICE**  
(1 Corinthians 3:16-23; Luke 1:74, 75; 2 Timothy 2:19; Titus 2:12; Romans 12:1; Ephesians 6:19; Acts 1:8; Colossians 2:8; James 1:5; Hebrews 11:28)

**"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are"** (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17).

Many people now believe that Christianity is a religion of the heart; that it does not matter what people do with their bodies. Yet, the Bible declares the body of every believer as the sacred temple of the Holy Spirit. To claim to be saved in heart while you yield members of your body to sin is a contradiction!

**Question 7: What are the conditions for acceptable and rewardable service?**

Genuine conversion experience that makes our service acceptable to God is always followed by concrete outward proofs or fruits of repentance (Matthew 3:8; 7:20). Therefore, people who wish to serve God acceptably must have genuine salvation experience. They must also live a holy life without which they will not see God. Service rendered is only acceptable and rewardable after one is able to see God in heaven. Carnality crept into the Corinthian church as a result of loss of the holiness experience. Cleansing in the shed blood of Christ is the only hope for those who seek or have lost this experience so they can become vessels of honor for the master's use and prepared unto every good work (2 Timothy 2:21). Other conditions for acceptable spiritual service include sobriety and humility, fervency and zeal in service, prayerfulness and watchfulness and of course, being filled with the Holy Spirit (Titus 2:12; Romans 12:11; Ephesians 6:19; Acts 1:8).

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

<b>MORNING</b>			<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	ROM.	2-3	1 CHRON.	15-16
TUE	“	4-5	“	17-18
WED	“	6-7	“	19-20
THUR	“	8	“	21-22
FRI	“	9-10	“	23-24
SAT	“	11-12	“	25-26
SUN	“	13-14	“	27-28

# 607 Lesson

## STEWARDSHIP OF BELIEVERS

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

**TEXT: 1 Corinthians 4:1-21**

In this chapter, Paul addressed the challenges facing the brethren at Corinth because of their background. The church at Corinth consisted mostly of Gentiles and a few Jews. Corinth was a chief city of ancient Greece, prominent for moral corruption, intellectual arrogance and materialism, similar to cities of the world today.

**Question 1: Why are believers regarded as stewards of God?**

Since God is the Source of life and the Creator of the heavens and earth, all men belong to Him, especially, believers having been purchased by the precious blood of Jesus. God, who has placed man on earth, requires from him the diligent use of his material and spiritual resources. Paul warned the Corinthian brethren against rash judgment, pride and despising their spiritual father as he endeavored to assert his apostolic authority.

**BELIEVERS AS STEWARDS OF GOD** (1 Corinthians 4:1-7; Luke 19:13; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Romans 14:8, 12; 1 Peter 4:4, 5; Exodus 19:5)

**“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God”.** Divine ownership is the uniform teaching of the Scripture. According to Microsoft Encarta Dictionary, a steward is somebody who manages somebody else’s property, finances or household. This being the case, it means we are accountable to God who has placed in our care various works in His vineyard. God is the Owner of the material world because **“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”** (Genesis 1:1). He is also the Possessor of the resources of the world. Paul, as a minister, counted

himself a steward of God. Just like every believer, he was a manager of the mysteries or secret things of God. God has revealed His plan for the salvation of mankind through our Lord Jesus. And it is our duty as stewards to reveal the mind of God to sinners through the help of the Holy Spirit.

As faithful stewards, the Lord expects that we serve Him with our talents, time, earthly possessions, etc. As stewards of the mysteries of the gospel, the Holy Spirit has enlightened us to know that through one man, the first Adam, sin entered into the world and through the second Adam, all shall be saved from sin. This is indeed a mystery to sinners who lack the grace of God in their lives. It remains a mystery to the natural man that God rules in the affairs of men and that the invisible Creator is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent.

**Question 2: In what ways can believers be faithful stewards of the mysteries of God?**

The Lord has committed unto all believers, the mysteries of the gospel so that they can fulfil their ministry as ambassadors of Christ in this world, reconciling sinful men unto God. God requires faithfulness from all saints, if the gospel is to be preached to every creature. The importance of implicit obedience in carrying out the great commission cannot be over-emphasized. Faithfulness also entails that we emphasize repentance and faith in the atoning blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Reliability is an essential part of stewardship. A faithful steward is always conscious of the day of accountability to his master. Paul the apostle was both a faithful and reliable steward who knew that he would give account to the Lord, not the Corinthian brethren. He was also convinced that his final state would not be determined by his own personal judgment. **“For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord”** (1 Corinthians 4:4).

God never intends man to judge his neighbor since He reserves to Himself absolute knowledge of the most secret actions, principles and intentions of every heart. Paul



therefore rightly counselled that believers should judge nothing before the time. He reminded the Corinthian brethren that no matter how gifted ministers are, they remain stewards of God and have nothing to boast of because He is the One who bestows gifts and grace on His ministers to function in His vineyard.

**BELIEVERS' CALL TO SUFFER FOR CHRIST** (1 Corinthians 4:8-13; 1 Peter 2:20, 21; 3:18; Acts 5:40, 41; Romans 8:17; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Matthew 5:11, 12)

**“Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; And labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off scourging of all things unto this day”** (1 Corinthians 4:11-13). The call to follow Christ is a call to suffer for the purpose of the gospel. Believers' opposition to all forms of ungodliness will attract the wrath of Satan and his agents. Interestingly, as gold is purified by fire so is the Christian purified by fiery trials and persecutions. God uses suffering to make and mold His ministers. Opposition and persecution are part of a normal Christian life. No wonder, in his charge to Timothy, apostle Paul said, **“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”** (2 Timothy 3:12). We should not be surprised when people misunderstand, criticize, and even try to hurt us because of our faith in Christ Jesus. We must live to please God who has called us into His service, challenges and threats notwithstanding.

The persecution of the apostles was as if **“...God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death”** (1 Corinthians 4:9). Paul, here, was making allusion to the cruel ancient Roman custom of setting persons against themselves or with wild beasts to fight till they were killed. Such circumstances made the apostles 'weak' and the Corinthians who were without such pressing trials, 'strong'. Although, all believers are called to suffer for Christ, the degree of our trials differs.

**Question 3: What should be the attitude of believers in times of trials?**

The degree of our trials depends on the ministry God has prepared for us. For Paul the apostle, Christ said, **“For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake”** (Acts 9:16). Believers should not think it strange when buffeted by many trials. Times of trials are not periods for murmuring, despair or running helter-skelter seeking for deliverance; rather, it should be a time for sincere self-examination, watchfulness and prayerfulness for sustaining grace and direction. The way of the cross leads home. There is no crown without a cross. Whatever challenge we may be facing today, the faithful Lord who sustained the saints of old will surely sustain us as we trust Him.

**BELIEVERS AS SPIRITUAL MODELS** (1 Corinthians 4:14-21; 11:1; 13:1-8; Ephesians 4:15; Matthew 5:13-16; Philippians 2:19-23; 2 Corinthians 12:18)

**“Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me”** (1 Corinthians 4:16). Paul enjoined the Corinthian brethren to be **“followers of [him]”** because he walked close with God, spent time in prayer and God’s word, and was aware of God’s presence in his life at all times. Through his life and conduct, Paul was indeed a model to the Corinthian brethren. As a faithful steward, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. The saints in the church at Corinth were fruits of his evangelistic outreach. Hence, he admonished them with prudence and love. As their spiritual father, his words were motivated by love and care.

**Question 4: What lessons do we learn from Paul’s admonitions for the saints at Corinth?**

Contemporary believers have several lessons to learn from the approach of Paul the Apostle. First, in the course of preaching the word, there should be a clear demarcation between the sinners and their sins. Second, the truth of the gospel is better communicated with love. A song writer aptly puts it this way: “Love opened wide the gates of light to heaven’s domain, where in eternal power and might, Jesus shall reign”. Third, our lives are better teachers of the message than our lips. Fourth, every believer should be a model in his family, neighborhood and place of work; and lastly, believers with vibrant Christian lives should

not be ashamed to challenge new converts to imitate them in faith and practice as they are followers of Christ, our perfect example.

**Question 5: Mention several ways of follow-up adopted by Paul the apostle.**

Apostle Paul followed-up the brethren by sending Timothy, a trusted and faithful minister whom he described as a beloved son to the church at Corinth. Timothy was a faithful steward and model for all saints. No wonder Paul the apostle did not hesitate in sending him to the Corinthian brethren on his behalf. **“But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state”** (Philippians 2:19, 20). If we must be successful in ministry, we must engage faithful believers who share the same vision with us.

Paul’s absence was never a hindrance to the work of God. Whenever he could not personally attend to the needs of the people, he delegated his responsibility to faithful ministers. Sometimes, Paul communicated his thoughts in epistles. **“And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea”** (Colossians 4:16). It is also instructive to note that he constantly committed the saints and the ministry to God in prayer: **“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding”** (Colossians 1:9).

**Question 6: List the possible outcomes of a Spirit-backed sermon.**

By divine illumination, Paul the apostle knew the thoughts of some of the Corinthian brethren. **“Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you”** (1 Corinthians 4:18). With fatherly authority, he told them that he would come to Corinth if the Lord permitted. At his coming, he would want the arrogant brethren to show evidence of their divine approval by power and not with empty

speeches. The gospel is always effectual when it is empowered by the Holy Spirit. An empowered message will quicken dead sinners, convicting them of their sins; it will deliver the oppressed from the bondage of sin and Satan while comforting, strengthening and establishing the saints. Paul, in this epistle, demonstrated a balanced mix of the spirit of love, meekness and spiritual authority over the flock of God. He was indeed a true follower of Christ and a model for believers today.

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

	<b>MORNING</b>		<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	ROM.	15-16	1 CHRON	29
TUE	1 COR.	1-2	2 CHRON	1-2
WED	“	3-4	“	3-4
THUR	“	5-6	“	5-6
FRI	“	7	“	7-8
SAT	“	8-9	“	9-10
SUN	“	10-11	“	11-2

# 608 Lesson

## THE PURPOSE OF DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH

**MEMORY VERSE:** “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 5:4,5).

### **TEXT: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13**

**A**s a faithful steward, Paul the apostle’s exemplary affection and care for saints that showed in his vigilance over the church have been the subjects of previous lessons. He had earlier addressed the problem of carnality which generated strife, murmuring and division in the Corinthian church, challenging them as his spiritual children to follow his exemplary life (1 Corinthians 4:15, 16).

In this lesson, we shall see how Paul promptly acted on the report of fornication and incest that became a common practice in the Corinthian church. The bold and intimidating disposition of backsliders involved did not silence him. That is why today’s lesson is indispensable to any church that seeks to remain at the center of the will of God. It is instructive to note that a church may start on the platform and conviction of holiness, lose steam and gradually descend into impurity like the Corinthian church. Unfortunately, uncleanness and impurity have eaten deep into the fabrics of many present-day churches unrestrained that many unsuspecting, sincere souls have been trapped and those who were once resistant to evil are also giving in. No matter what attractive color sin is painted, God’s attitude to it will never change.

**Question 1: What is Christ’s attitude to sin in His church?**

The question is, what is Christ’s attitude to fornication and other sins in His Church? After introducing Himself as “**the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass**”, Christ revealed

divine displeasure with the church in Thyatira: **“I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols”**. For spurning the opportunity and privilege of repentance granted her, Christ declared that she and those who committed sexual immorality with her would suffer divine affliction and her children would die (Revelation 2:18-23). Since Christ hates sin, all believers who have experienced redemption through the Cross must hate sin with utter revulsion.

With Christ-like passion, Paul had been intolerant of sin in all the churches he superintended. He handled serious and scandalous cases not only with prompt, drastic and commensurate punishment primarily to keep the church pure but also to serve as deterrent to others. It was therefore out of his personal experience in ministry that he instructs all Christian servants to **“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood”** (Acts 20:28).

<p><b>Question 2: What should be the attitude of a true minister of God to sin in his congregation?</b></p>
---

**REPORT AND CONDEMNATION OF SINS IN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH** (1 Corinthians 5:1, 2; Habakkuk 1:13; Hebrews 1:9; Ephesians 5:25-27; 1 Corinthians 6:18, 19)

Added to the initial problems of carnality and division in the Corinthian church is the discovery of fornication and incest that became rampant. **“It was reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife”** (1 Corinthians 5:1). Comparatively, the moral standard of this church was below what obtained among the Gentiles who did not know God. This church was fast losing the savor of its salt.

God detests sin in any form. It is for the purpose of freeing

the whole world from sins that He sent His only begotten Son to the world (Isaiah 53:5; Matthew 1:21). The sins that took Christ to the Cross were the same that have now been tolerated and allowed to spread. Rather than mournfully repent of their wicked acts, the fornicators in the Corinthian church were even bold and proud like their licentious counterparts in many Christian assemblies today.

Irrespective of the personalities involved in sin in the church, Paul the apostle ordered that they must be disciplined. People who commit sin and show impenitent disposition should be excommunicated and **“be taken away from among you”** (verses 2, 13) and delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that their spirits can be saved. He instructed that this should be done in the name and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. Discipline in the church is therefore scriptural. And every minister of God that is worth his salt must not gloss over sin in the church. He must be courageous to preach against sin and place discipline on erring members in the church.

In any church where sin is condoned, God’s presence will depart. For He is **“of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity”** (Habakkuk 1:13). The need to live and maintain a holy life is the main subject of scripture and condition for divine dealings with man across generations. Moses captured this divine essence in his exhortation to the children of Israel when he said, **“The Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee... therefore shall thy camp be holy: that He sees no unclean thing in thee”** (Deuteronomy 23:14). It was the singular purpose of saving sinners, purifying the church and preserving it in righteousness and holiness that Christ died. **“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”** (Ephesians 5:25-27). A polluted church will not only lose the presence and power of God on earth but also lose its place in the abode of God. Aware

of the consequences of gross immorality, Paul sharply rebuked the Corinthian church for their tolerance of sin.

**Question 3: What lessons can we learn from the report of sin by some believers in the Corinthian church and the quick response of Paul?**

Few people maintained their holy conviction in that church, however. The attitude of these uncompromising and God-fearing brethren in the Corinthian church is worth emulating. Rather than maintain indifference and allow evils to thrive, they reported to the leadership. The church today needs such vanguards of holiness and righteousness that would **“earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”** (Jude 3). Brethren should not keep mute at sins. Workers of iniquities still exist in the church today. Irrespective of the status of evil doers in the church, we need to correct them with Christ-like love and report to the leadership so that we can jointly keep the church of God pure. It is our responsibility.

**REASONS FOR DISCIPLINING THE SINFUL IN THE CHURCH** (1 Corinthians 5: 3-8; 2 Samuel 12:7-12; 1 Timothy 5:20; 1 Samuel 2:12,17, 22-25; 4:17,18; Acts 5:5-11; Revelation 3:19; Proverbs 22:28)

**“For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”** ( 1 Corinthians 5:3-5).

From Paul’s prompt response to the acts of sins in the Corinthian church, we learn that he knew about God’s demand for holiness in all generations of men. The Bible says that **“God is angry with the wicked everyday”** (Psalm 7:11). True ministers of God do not condone sins in any form in their congregation so as to retain the presence of God with His people. Two, the prompt intervention of Paul is commendable since sin like a little leaven, if allowed to be practiced unchecked, will spread and corrupt the



entire congregation. To prevent escalation of sins in the church, sins uncovered must be quickly sanctioned and the culprits brought to book. Three, the backslidden believers might die in their sins and condemned to hell if not corrected through appropriate discipline. **“God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”** (2 Peter 3:9). A laboring minister of God will not want his labor to be in vain. Four, fornication is an infectious and heinous sin that calls for mourning and sanction (1 Corinthians 5:2). Believers are commanded to **“Flee fornication”**. For the Christian’s **“body is the temple of the Holy Ghost”** (1 Corinthians 6:18, 19). Besides, sin weakens the church and robs it of the grace and power to accomplish its purpose of winning souls into the kingdom.

**Question 4: Mention different types of discipline in the church.**

Discipline is indispensable in the church of Christ. As a matter of fact, it is part and parcel of the gospel. Discipline is like a whip in the hands of a loving and caring shepherd to lead the erring sheep back to the path of safety. Depending on the gravity of sins, discipline in the church can take the form of rebuke, denial of privilege, withdrawal from spiritual service, divine chastisement (like that of David) or curse on posterity (as that of Eli and his sons) and instant death (Ananias and Sapphira) (2 Samuel 12:7-12; 1 Timothy 5:20; 1 Samuel 42:12,17,22-25; 4:17,18; Acts 5:5-11 ). Apostle Paul here exerted his ministerial and apostolic authority to enforce discipline on the sinning believers in the Corinthian church.

**Question 5: Why must the erring ones be disciplined in a Bible-believing church?**

Discipline of erring believers pleases God. That is why the Trinity is always involved (Numbers 12:9, 10; 2 Samuel 12:7-12; Acts 5:5-11). Two, it is commanded in the Scriptures that the believers that commit sins should be rebuked before all for others to fear (1 Timothy 5:20; Acts 5:11). Three, it is part of love for others and Christ-like living. The Lord Jesus says, **“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent”** (Revelation 3:19). Four, discipline is a means of bringing

back the erring ones to the Lord. During discipline, backsliders usually take inventory of their lives and pray through to restoration (1 Corinthians 5:5; 7:9, 10).

Five, discipline of erring believers in the church serves as a deterrent to others. If Ananias and Sapphira had gone unpunished, the couple would have been hardened to go further into other heinous sins; so also others would be encouraged and emboldened to commit similar and more serious evils. Six, to maintain standard and keep the ancient landmarks in a living church, discipline must be enforced on backsliders. This will serve as a good precedent for the generations to come and rebuke for other compromising assemblies (Proverbs 22:28). Like a leaven, sins must be purged to prevent their spread in the congregation as Christ is coming for a pure and stainless church (1 Corinthians 5:7; Ephesians 5:27).

Where scriptural discipline is observed and maintained, the fear of God will be instilled in members of the church. Righteousness will also flourish, giving room for mighty manifestation of the power of God among the saints. It will serve as an enduring legacy in a Bible-believing church. If Christ tarries, generations to come will be able to maintain the set standard after the present generation of God-fearing believers might have gone to glory.

**RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DISCIPLINED FOLKS IN THE CHURCH** (1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Proverbs 14:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:14, 16; Titus 3:10, 11; 2 John 9-11; Jude 22, 23; Hebrews 12:5-11)

**“I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators.... But now I have written unto you not to company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat”** (1 Corinthians 5:9, 11).

If the yardsticks set by the word of God are strictly followed and obeyed, the primary purpose of placing discipline on backsliders, that is, the restoration of their souls **“that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”** will be achieved. John the beloved and Jude affirm this scriptural position (2 John 9-11; Jude 22-23).

**Question 6: How should believers relate with those who are placed on discipline?**

Though saints should not relent in praying for the restoration of the disciplined brethren, we are not to encourage them in their sins. Since “**the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways**” (Proverbs 14:14a), the possibility of contaminating or corrupting the innocent brethren is real. Another reason is to allow the disciplined backsliders have ample time to mourn for their sins in prayer and to have godly sorrow that will lead them to genuine repentance and restoration. But we must refrain from those who claim to be members of the body of Christ but are agents of corruption.

Besides, the spiritual leaders in the church need to observe disciplined believers to ascertain whether they have remorse and godly sorrow for their sins. True repentance will be accompanied with necessary fruits. When these are seen in the disciplined brethren, they should be restored. Leaders and mature members of the church owe it a duty to pray for, visit and encourage brethren placed on discipline for quick restoration.

In all, God wants sin to be purged from our lives as well as His church so that we can be partakers of His holiness. If you are presently under discipline, “**despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; ... for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby**” (Hebrews 12:5-7, 10, 11).

## DAILY BIBLE READING

	<b>MORNING</b>		<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	1 COR.	12-13	2 CHRON.	13-14
TUE	"	14	"	15-16
WED	"	15	"	17-18
THUR	"	16	"	19-20
FRI	2 COR.	1-2	"	21-22
SAT	"	3-4	"	23-24
SUN	"	5-6	"	25

**END OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES**

## **SPECIAL STUDIES**

# 609 Lesson

## **WATER BAPTISM**

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19, 20).

**TEXT:** Matthew 3:1-17; Acts 8:26-40

**W**ater baptism is an ordinance instituted by the Lord and made binding on all believers in Christ. It is an essential part of the full gospel that the Lord has given unto us. A study of the gospel will show that water baptism comes along with the salvation message and with the Great Commission. It is binding on the believer as much as the gospel of repentance is binding on the sinner. It is as urgent and compelling as the Great Commission for the Church. Along with the Great Commission comes the command to baptize and both are unavoidable obligations and duties for a living, Bible-believing church.

**Question 1: What other ordinance was instituted by the Lord, apart from water baptism?**

Apart from water baptism, Christ also instituted the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper (Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). He gave the command on the Lord’s Supper before His death and that on water baptism after His resurrection from the dead.

**MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF WATER BAPTISM** (Matthew 3:13-16; Acts 2:41; 8:36-38; 9:17, 18; 16:30-34; John 13:17; Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:27)

Water baptism is one of the cardinal doctrines of the Lord Jesus Christ, yet one of the most misunderstood teachings

by contemporary teachers and preachers. At one extreme are those who believe that it is not necessary. To them, repentance from sin and faith toward Jesus Christ is all that matters. They point to the thief on the cross to support their argument. At the other extreme are those who believe that without water baptism one cannot be saved. In the middle of the two groups are those who believe that though it is necessary, it must be administered in the name of Jesus only.

All these are wrong. The Scripture shows that the ordinance was commanded by Christ and it is a necessity for all believers. There may be circumstances that will make water baptism impossible for a convert/believer such as we see in the case of the thief on the cross. His case shows that salvation or the new birth experience is not conditioned on water baptism. But it is a necessity for all born again Christians. Jesus commanded it to be done in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; not in the name of Jesus only.

**Question 2: Mention some erroneous views people hold on water baptism and say why they are wrong.**

The word 'baptize' is derived from a Greek word '*baptiso*' which means to immerse or dip inside liquid. This shows that the proper form of baptism should be by immersion in water. The immersion signifies identification with Christ's death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12). In baptism, the believer shows his faith that Christ died for his sins and rose again for his justification: that if he dies he will be raised again in the resurrection; and that he dies to his old life and rises to walk in the new life in Christ.

It was not John who searched out Jesus to baptize Him, neither did he try to pester Jesus to be baptized in water. Rather, it was Jesus Himself who came to John the Baptist to be baptized. If you have been born again, you are the one to tell the leadership of your local church to baptize you in water. Water baptism is more important than other ceremonies of the Church. The Church must, therefore, not allow any program or project to hinder it from carrying out the duty of baptizing all who have repented of their

sins and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ **“for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.”** The baptizer and the baptized fulfil all righteousness when they obey the commandments of the Lord on water baptism. To delay the baptism of new converts is to fail to fulfil all righteousness.

**Question 3: Mention some erroneous practices in water baptism. What is the proper order of water baptism?**

The erroneous practices include three immersions, sprinkling of water, making people to squat in water, infant baptism, baptism of the dead, making the sign of the cross with water on the participant’s face or pouring water on the participant, and, baptizing in the name of Jesus only.

Water baptism is by immersion, by submerging an individual into the water, by dipping him inside the water to symbolize the death of the Lord Jesus and bringing him up again to symbolize His resurrection. Water baptism is to be done in accordance with the commandment of Jesus: **“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”** The immersion is done only once and not three times. Jesus Christ was dipped inside River Jordan only once (Matthew 3:16); the Eunuch of Ethiopia was immersed in water once (Acts 8:38). Submission to water baptism serves as public acknowledgment of our faith in Christ. It is a public ceremony which testifies to the fact that we have put off the old man and his deeds and have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27). Delay in water baptism for a long time is not in accordance with the Word of God.

**THE COMMAND TO BAPTIZE** (Matthew 28:19; 3:13-15; Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:37, 38; John 14:15).

The command to **“go ye ... and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”** is part of the very last words Jesus left for the Church. The Church has, therefore, no choice than to baptize converts and believers. If the Church, in obedience to the Lord’s command, preaches the gospel, then it must baptize those who believe in the preaching, in obedience also to the commandment of the Lord. The

Lord Himself, at the beginning of His earthly ministry, laid down an example when He submitted to water baptism. He was righteous and holy. He had no sin. He never did nor said anything wrong, yet He submitted to water baptism. If He did, we also need to, no matter how holy or righteous we think we are.

**Question 4: What lessons do we learn from the Lord's submission to water baptism?**

Obviously, Jesus was more spiritual than John the Baptist, yet He asked to be baptized by Him. You may think you are more spiritual than the people who have the responsibility to baptize you, all the same, you need to submit yourself to be baptized in water by them. Even though the Lord was righteous and holy, He needed to submit to water baptism to fulfil all righteousness. You may have been justified by faith in, and cleansed by the blood of Christ, but you have not fulfilled all righteousness until you are baptized in water.

**Question 5: Of what significance is water baptism to the believer?**

The Lord expects you to be baptized in water after you have heard the message, repented of your sins and believed the gospel. If you have not been baptized in water, you ought to. Repentance is an act of obedience to the Word of God, so is water baptism. We cannot separate the two. Water baptism is a visible, eloquent testimony of the sign of the believer's death, burial and resurrection with Christ. It is his public identification with Christ in His humiliation, burial and resurrection. The believer who is baptized in water is publicly testifying to the world around that he has renounced the things of the world and accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior. The Apostles kept this command by baptizing believers; the disciples also obeyed the command by submitting themselves to the ordinance of water baptism. If you are a believer, you have no choice than to obey so that you too can receive the blessings of obedience.



**THE CONDITION FOR WATER BAPTISM** (Luke 24:47; Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15,16; Acts 8:12; Mark 1:14,15; John 3:3; Acts 2:38; 10:44-48; 19:18,19; 20:21; Matthew 3:7,8)

Repentance from sin is the condition for water baptism. In other words, water baptism follows a very definite experience of repentance and faith in Christ. **“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”** A sinner needs to hear the gospel and believe before water baptism can take place. He needs not understand all the doctrines of the Bible, interpret and explain all the difficult verses of the Bible before he is baptized in water. Once someone has shown a very definite assurance of salvation from sin and faith in the atoning blood of Jesus, he is to be baptized in water. The message of the Kingdom is summarized in this timeless admonition: **“repent ye, and believe the gospel.”** The natural, unregenerated man cannot enter into the kingdom of God. A sinner cannot merit by his power or strength the grace to live the kingdom life. The appropriate response of a sinner who wants to enter into the kingdom of God is to repent and believe the gospel. True repentance leads the sinner to break from every connection he might have had with idol worship, occultism, secret society and evil fraternity. The one and only condition that candidates for water baptism need to meet before they are baptized, is true and full repentance from sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

**Question 6: Why is infant baptism wrong and, what are the conditions for water baptism?**

An infant is innocent and has not practiced sin to repent of. Therefore, he cannot be baptized in water. Likewise a nominal Christian or a church-goer who has not been born again, who has not shown proof of repentance from sin, and who has not been justified by personal faith in the atoning blood of Jesus cannot be baptized in water. Water baptism follows a definite experience and assurance of salvation from sin.

Jesus commanded that sinners be preached to and as they repent and believe the gospel, they should be baptized. This confirms that water baptism is for those who have

fully repented of their sins (Acts 2:38). This also confirms that only adults who can exercise faith to believe can be baptized (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; 20:21; Mark 1:14, 15). As it is being practiced by some churches, it is fundamentally wrong to baptize infants who have not reached the age of accountability.

The pages of the New Testament are filled with references on water baptism. In Matthew 3:13-17, Jesus Christ submitted Himself to John the Baptist for water baptism. This was followed by the testimony of God the Father to the ministry of His Son, through the descent of the Holy Ghost on Him as He came out of the water. Christ's command in Matthew 28:19 was re-echoed in Mark 16:16. The Apostles also continued to baptize believers in obedience to the command of Christ. Among those baptized were the converts of the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37-42, 47); Eunuch of Ethiopia (Acts 8:36, 37), Samaritan converts (Acts 8:12, 13), Cornelius and his kinsmen (Acts 10:47, 48); the Philippian Jailor (Acts 16:30-33); and the Ephesian disciples (Acts 19:5).

**BELIEVER'S BAPTISMS** (Hebrews 5:12 - 6:2; Mark 1:1-5; Luke 7:24-30; John 3:22-34; Matthew 20:20-23; Acts 1:5, 8; 2:1-12)

The Bible, especially the New Testament, has a lot to say about baptism. There are various kinds of baptism. There was John's Baptism (Matthew 21:23-27; Mark 1:1-5; Luke 7:24-30; Acts 10:34-37; 13:24, 25; 18:24-26; 19:1-6) as there is Christ's baptism (John 3:22-34). There was the disciples' baptism (the baptism that the disciples did for people who believed on Christ while He was here on earth - John 4:1-4) and, there is water baptism (commanded by Jesus before He went away, and in which if you believe, then you are baptized - Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15,16). There is the baptism of suffering (which the believer goes through as he suffers persecution, deprivations because of his conviction and faith in Christ - Matthew 20:20-23) and there is the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5, 8; 2:1-12). Hence the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews uses the expression, "doctrine of baptisms" (Hebrews 6:2). That the word "baptisms" is in the plural shows that there are various kinds of baptism. But it is unfortunate that in the

Christian fold, there is ignorance on this basic teaching of the Word of God.

It is instructive that the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews first mentioned **“repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God”** before mentioning **“the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands.”** In many Pentecostal/Charismatic assemblies the cart is put before the horse; they leave out the all-important issue of repentance from sin and faith in the Lord and concentrate on the baptism in the Holy Spirit. In many a prayer and breakfast fellowship, worshippers are interested only in laying of hands and baptism in the Holy Spirit. Conspicuously missing is the clear and unambiguous teaching on repentance from sin and faith in the atoning Blood of the Lord Jesus. But a careful and diligent study of the Word of God shows no reason for such a rearrangement or trade-off.

In the proper order of doing things, **“laying on of hands”** is preceded by repentance from sin; not the other way round. Repentance and salvation from sin are in turn followed by water baptism before the laying on of hands. Repentance makes God to forgive the sinner all the sin he ever committed — as though he never sinned. Not only does He forgive, He also changes and gives the repentant and returning soul the ability to live a morally upright and victorious life. Through God’s grace and power at work in the born again Christian, he is empowered to live a morally pure life. The use of the word “brethren” earlier in the epistle (Hebrews 3:1) shows that the writer of the epistle was writing to people who had received the gospel and are born again.

**Question 7: What is the danger one faces for seeking ‘anointing’ without genuine experience of the new birth?**

Jesus has laid down the standard for water baptism and it is to be carried out in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19). Every believer, in obedience to Christ’s command, should therefore submit to the ordinance of water baptism.

However, salvation does not come through water baptism but by grace through faith in the atoning blood of Jesus

Christ (Ephesians 1:7; 2:8, 9; 1 John 1:7, 9; Hebrews 9:22; Matthew 26:28; John 1:12; 3:16, 17; 1 Peter 3:21). The Scripture records a catalogue of those who got saved without water baptism being a precondition: the sick of palsy healed by Jesus Christ (Matthew 9:1-7); the woman who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and cleansed them with her hair (Luke 7:36-50); Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10); the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43) the Eunuch of Ethiopia (Acts 8:30-37) and believers at Antioch (Acts 11:20,21). In fact, Saul of Tarsus was addressed as Brother Saul by Ananias before he submitted himself for water baptism (Acts 9:17).

The opinion of men cannot contradict the stand of the Scripture (Matthew 28:19). Once a person repents of his sin, it is mandatory that he submits himself to water baptism as provided for in the scriptures (Romans 6:3, 4). The practice was upheld in the early church. Converts were baptized in water soon after their salvation experience (Acts 2:41; 8:37, 38; 16:30, 31, 33). Every convert is therefore enjoined to yield to this important injunction. Peter encouraged his hearers to **“repent and be baptized every one of you.”** Pastors must do their best to encourage their flocks to attach great importance to this practice.

Obedience to this divine injunction attracts great blessings. It gladdens the heart of God to see the believer identifying with Christ in His death and resurrection. Submission for water baptism places the believer on the pedestal to enjoy divine favor and showers blessings from God as Christ did when He was baptized. **“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased** (Matthew 3:16,17). For God to be well-pleased with you, obey Him as Christ did.

## DAILY BIBLE READING

	<b>MORNING</b>		<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	2 COR.	7-8	2 CHRON.	26-27
TUE	“	9-10	“	28
WED	“	11	“	29
THUR	“	12-14	“	30-31
FRI	GAL.	1-2	“	32
SAT	“	3-4	“	33
SUN	“	5-6	“	34

# 610 Lesson

## QUIET TIME AND FAMILY DEVOTION

**MEMORY VERSE:** “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mark 1:35).

**TEXT:** Genesis 19:27-29; 28:18-22; Exodus 34:2-10

As soon as a child is born into the world, his need of breath becomes evident. Shortly afterwards, he cries, expressing his desire for water and, later, for food. His need of love is taken care of by the welcome attitude of the mother, father and other members of the family. The same goes for the newly saved believer who, on receiving the initial assurance of salvation, discovers his need for developing a regular “observance” of a time of prayer and reading the Word of God for growth and personal spiritual upkeep (I Peter 2:2). Not only that, the need to observe such a time with other members of the family also becomes apparent. He later learns that such times of personal study of the word of God and prayer are referred to, by believers, as quiet time. The issue of quiet time today, must be taken seriously by individual Christians and families who want to maintain a victorious Christian life in this wicked world and also function effectively in their service for God.

**THE PRIORITY OF QUIET TIME** (Genesis 19:27; 28:18-22; Exodus 34:2; Jeremiah 33:3)

**Question 1:** Give two reasons believers need to observe Quiet Time and family devotion.

The need for the practice of individual quiet time and family devotion cannot be over-emphasized. Two reasons stand out (among many) for this. First, God wants man to be in fellowship with Him. As a loving Father, He wants to have communion with His children on a daily basis so as to reveal more of himself to them and also direct their path. Sin made man to lose this privilege but Christ came

to restore it (John 14:6). God calls us to meet with Him every day. We should in, reciprocal gratitude, respond positively and not be like the children of Israel of whom He said, **“I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me”** (Jeremiah 35:14b).

Secondly, regular study of God’s Word and communion with Him in prayer enhance rapid Christian growth (1 Peter 2:2). A Christian cannot grow spiritually without spiritual food as he cannot grow physically without physical food. Like a garden of flowers, God’s friendship needs careful cultivation and this demands consistency. We must maintain a continuous link with God through personal devotional prayer.

**THE PLACE AND PERIOD OF QUIET TIME** (Exodus 16:21; Psalm 55:17; 88:13; Mark 1:35; Matthew 6:6)

**Question 2: When and where should a believer observe his quiet time?**

A thorough study of the Scriptures shows that the best times are early in the morning and late in the evening before going to bed. This means we should observe our fellowship with the Lord daily. In Exodus 16:21, manna was gathered morning by morning and our ‘manna’ today is **“every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”** (Matthew 4:4). The Levites (Old Testament type of New Testament believers) offered a daily sacrifice. David performed his vows and cried unto God on daily basis (Psalm 86:3). Paul prayed and was renewed in the inner man (obviously by meditative study of the Word) daily (2 Timothy 1:3; 2 Corinthians 4:16). So did the Berean Christians of his time (Acts 17:11). The examples of our Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 1:35), David (Psalm 55:17) and Daniel (Daniel 6:10) together with that of numerous Christians down the ages teach us the necessity of starting the day with God because the mind is always fresh in the morning. Rising early helps immeasurably in getting the best from study of God’s Word and prayer (Genesis 28:18; Exodus 29:39,42; 30:7; Psalm 5:3; 59:16; 63:1). Also, to have the best from this gracious exercise, one needs a place that is free from distraction and characterized by seclusion and quietness. We get all these from our present places of abode by rising early to read, meditate on the

Word of God and then record. His disciples were with Him, yet “he was alone praying” (Luke 9:18). We can shut off the distraction of people, events and things to concentrate on prayer and study of God’s Word.

**THE CENTRALITY OF THE WORD DURING QUIET TIME AND FAMILY DEVOTION** (Luke 4:4; Job 23:12; Colossians 3:16 Proverbs 13:13)

In order to benefit maximally from personal Bible study, we need to know the purpose and focus of the Holy Writ. Though a revelation of God, and containing more information about man’s past, present and future than any other book, its design is to show man the salvation of God, obtainable through Christ Jesus (Psalm 27:1a; John 20:31; 2 Timothy 3:15; Acts 20:32). The Bible has a practical purpose of guiding us into the experience of salvation and spiritual maturity. Since this salvation is exclusively through Christ, the focus of the entire Bible is centered on the Savior (John 5:39, 46; Luke 24:25-27, 44). Christ is made and kept real to us as we study the Word “day by day”. For times of meditative study of the divine book, our prayer should be:

*Break thou the bread of life  
Dear Lord to me,  
As Thou didst break the loaves  
Beside the sea  
Beyond the sacred page  
I need Thee Lord;  
My spirit pants for Thee,  
O Living Word.*

**Question 3: With what attitude should we study the Bible?**

To understand God’s revelation in the Scriptures, we must come with open minds, surrendered wills, and faith to believe. It is wisdom for the ignorant to acknowledge his situation before God and only such will be made wiser (Luke 10:21). Individuals who are wise “in their own conceits” languish in continued blindness and spiritual impoverishment (John 9:41). Then, we must approach God’s Word with a willingness to comply with whatever he is asking us to do. We must, like Christ, be willing to say,



**“Not my will but thine be done”** and in this prove our love for Him (John 14:21). Thirdly, those parts we cannot, with the intellect, comprehend, we must, with faith, believe. We must deliberately choose to believe the Word as we read it, accounting that God is faithful to all His promises. We must commence the walk of faith (and grow in the same) by hearing (and reading) the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

We should constantly study the Bible with the aim of having our lives transformed into the likeness of Christ (John 8:31; 2 Corinthians 3:18). We should be primarily preoccupied with what God has to say to us. Helpful questions while studying the Bible should include: what does the passage say? What does it mean? And how does it apply to me? We should not seek far-fetched interpretations for simple, easily comprehensible passages. We should be careful not to constantly search the scriptures during our quiet time for sermons to preach to others rather, for personal application. We must seek out from study passages, examples to follow, commands to obey, errors to avoid, imperfections to forsake and promises to claim. Other aids to fruitful study include the use of helpful books such as balanced commentaries, Bible atlas and concordance. It also helps to keep records of lessons in notebooks and memorize scriptures on regular basis. Character, books and topical studies have their places and advantages but in all, we must seek to have God speak to us as individuals.

**PRIMACY OF PRAYER DURING QUIET TIME AND FAMILY DEVOTION** (Daniel 6:10; Psalm 55:17; Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 6:12)

**Question 4: What are the major activities that constitute a rich quiet time?**

Prayer is complementary to Bible study in the practice of quiet time. For our Bible study to be meaningful and effective, our prayer should be conditioned and molded by God’s self-revelation in the Bible. God has taken the first step in reconciling man to Himself. Man needs to reciprocate this love of God (1 John 4:19). Approaching the throne of the King of kings is a privilege specially reserved for God’s children by virtue of Christ’s death on the cross. God’s manifold blessings upon sinners are for the purpose of

drawing them to repentance (Romans 2:4). We pray also because we love God. Prayer is one of our offensive weapons against the enemy. It is the believer's spiritual breath. We "pray in" what we have gained from the Word of God, expressing our response to what He has said to us. Daily prayer should include the following: worship, thanksgiving, intercession, supplication and commitment. We worship and adore the Lord for Who He is.

We should express our gratitude for all God's past mercies received even when we still have some that are yet to be met (Luke 17:12-19; I Thessalonians 5:18; Romans 8:28). We should confess our frailties and imperfections to Him and solicit His enabling grace. We should also pray earnestly for other people and present their needs to God as Abraham did for Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:23-33), Jesus for us (John 17:9, 11) and Epaphras for the Colossians (Colossians 4:12). Then we should supplicate for our personal needs, great and small. Finally, we should commit all our activities for the day unto Him, asking Him to be "Lord of all". This is the secret of joy in His presence every day.

**FAMILY DEVOTION** (Genesis 18:19; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15)

Every believer should know that it is his responsibility to lead the entire family in the way of righteousness. Abraham did and had God's commendation (Genesis 18:19), Samuel's parents did and had one of the prophets. Hezekiah led the whole city of Jerusalem to seek the Lord in his time (2 Chronicles 29:20).

**Question 5: Why is family devotion essential in the family?**

To accomplish God's purpose for the family, there is a need to worship together, study together and pray together. The father, as the spiritual head of the home (Ephesians 5:23) takes the lead. A regular time of family altar is ensured when the members have time to sing songs/choruses of worship, the father (or his appointed representative) leads in reading and explaining scripture passages and time is given for heart-lifting praises, intercession, supplication and commitment. This is preferably fixed before the activities of the day are embarked upon. Both parents may

prefer to have their individual Quiet Time before waking the other family members for corporate worship or choose to have it after. There is no hard and fast rule. It is also helpful for the family to pray together before going to bed. All these will help the spiritual growth of the young family members and their understanding of scriptural truths.

If we must become men and women who have authority over heaven, then, we cannot do without patterning our lives according to all that we have learnt today with respect to communion with God.

**Question 6: What should be our aim as we constantly study our Bible during Quiet Time?**

**DAILY BIBLE READING**

<b>MORNING</b>			<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	EPH.	1-2	2 CHRON.	35
TUE	“	3-4	“	36
WED	“	5-6	EZRA	1-2
THUR	PHIL.	1-2	“	3-4
FRI	“	3-4	“	5-6
SAT	COL.	1-2	“	7
SUN	“	3-4	“	8

# 611 Lesson

## GROWTH WITH UNITY

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).

### **TEXT: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27**

**T**he focus of the Apostle in our text is the Church, the body of Christ, and members in particular. The Church here is not a building, an organization, a club, society, community of people with common interest or a system. It is basically an assembly of people who, individually, are born again and thus have the life of Christ in them.

**Question 1: What is the difference between the visible and the invisible church?**

There is a universal church, the assembly or collection of all blood-washed souls all over the world. They are called the assembly or the Church of the first born, the redeemed of the Lord, and the saints in Christ, disciples or followers of Christ. This is the invisible Church.

Besides, there is the visible body of Christ that comes together for worship, fellowship and study. This is the local church.

**THE MANIFOLD NEEDS OF A GROWING CHURCH** (Acts 1:6; 2:37-47; I Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18)

This visible church, in God’s economy, is designed to grow and keep together in unity. Having sent the Lord to shed His blood for the redemption of all, He desires that no one will perish but that all would come to repentance. If that desire is fulfilled, the church will grow. Christ Himself said: **“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved”** (John 3:17).

The Spirit of God is always working towards the growth of the Church: **“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And whosoever will let him take the water of life freely”** (Revelation 22:17). And if all those on whom the Holy Ghost beckons to come all over the world respond, the Church will surely grow. If the Church universal is to grow, every local church will have to grow.

The leadership of the visible church also desires to see the church grow. This is because workers, preachers, teachers and ministers in the church have the mind of Christ which is the growth of the church. Second, since the workers are servants of God and God wants His church to grow, then the servants have the same burning desire. Also, the indwelling Spirit in every minister eagerly looks forward to the growth of the church and so the minister himself is driven by the same persuasion of the Spirit who indwells him. So in uniformity and conformity to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit the leadership will also want the Church to grow.

The Bible gives several pictures of the Christian worker and likens him to some common vocation so as to effectively communicate the expectation of heaven. Workers in the kingdom are likened to fishermen. **“And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men”** (Matthew 4:19). And just as every fisherman wants his net to be full of fishes, so should every leader and worker desire his spiritual net, the local church, to grow and be full of people.

Leaders in the church are likened to husbandmen, wise master builders who take care of the vineyard of the Lord. In the natural sense, farmers want their vineyard to bear much fruit. So also spiritual leaders in the church must bear much fruit and make the church to grow. The Lord said: **“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples”**

(John 15:2, 5, 8). Again, the leaders in the church are also called shepherds (Acts 20:28). Certainly, all shepherds want their flock to increase. And if we are true spiritual shepherds with the heart and mind of Christ, we will want the church to grow.

Men show concern when their families do not grow - total, holistic family growth. The church is also a family; Christ the head of the family wants the church to grow. Again, the church is likened to a nation. **“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praise of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”** (1 Peter 2:9). In the natural sense, presidents, governors, senators and other officers of the nation endeavor to strengthen the nation so that there will be growth in all the various areas of national life. In the same vein, church leaders who are the equivalents of presidents, governors and other leaders in the nation, must not only desire but also work hard so that the church will grow numerically and spiritually.

A local church in her hundreds or thousands has a congregation whose needs are varied and various. The different social and educational background of her members would require different approaches in meeting their needs spiritually and materially. But with the various, varied and variegated needs, the church must still be kept united.

<p><b>Question 2: What are the consideration that enhance the growth and unity of the church?</b></p>
---

There will be unity when every member of the body sees the necessity and the responsibility that lies on him or her to endeavor to make the church united. To sit on an armchair, and opine that the work of the unity of the church is strictly the business of the Holy Spirit is to sound simplistic. It does not work that way. A small nuclear family of five or six still have to endeavor to make the family united not to talk of hundred, thousands or tens of thousands of people.

If the church must grow and be united, every member, worker and minister must see that the church is unique in outreach, ministry and mission to the body of Christ in

particular and the world in general. If this basic truth is glossed over, you are not likely to remain in the body or work for her unity. You will, in the style of a butterfly, nose every nectar in every flower. This will be done at the cost of growth and unity.

If the church must grow and be united, you must have a sense of belonging. This makes for commitment to the doctrine, life, relationship and unity of the church. A sense of belonging gives you a deep desire, or unending longing to always be with other members of the church in fellowship. Real, genuine sense of belonging gives an attachment (spiritually, mentally, and emotionally) loyalty, fellow feeling, and an integration with the church. A sense of belonging makes you feel incomplete and unsatisfied when you are inevitably missing from the church or cut off from fellowship with other members by reason of a journey or relocation.

Again, a sense of belonging will drive or compel you to seize every opportunity to be involved in the ministry and mission of the church. Those who stay aloof cannot have a sense of belonging. Those who pop in to lick the sweet nectar of the word of God with a detached noncommittal stance do not have a sense of belonging and they cannot work for the growth and unity of the church. Therefore, for the unity of the church, every member needs to participate, contribute his life to the advancement of the church and must also realize that his contribution is required, recognized, appreciated and needed.

**MEMBERS' ROLE IN CHURCH UNITY** (I Corinthians 12:21-27; Acts 2:44; John 17:17, 21; I Peter 1:22; 3:8-10; I John 3:16)

**Question 3: In what ways can the members help in the unity of the church?**

The members of the church have the duty to ensure they are *genuinely saved*. They must also be *sanctified*. This second definite work of grace does a lot within the heart of the believer. It fills his heart with love and brings him into unity with the body of Christ. The sanctified heart hates anything that divides the church and fellowship of the

brethren. He cannot criticize others, gossip, or backbite. He has a natural inclination to keep the unity of the body of Christ as it ought to be. He is committed to continue in the saints' fellowship with a strong desire to be part of the body of Christ. He is enthusiastic about his membership with the family of God and he cannot trade off that privilege with anything.

Furthermore, the true member of the church wants to love and forgive. He recognizes the possibility of offences, (perhaps inadvertently or even advertently), but he commits himself to the principle of Christian forgiveness and non-retaliation. This brings about unity in the church. But when grudges, malice, ill-feeling are the order of the day, there will be no unity. If members in the small group or House Caring Fellowship will not forgive, love and overlook offences, there will be no unity in that House Caring Fellowship, much more in the choir or in the whole assembly.

Again, all members who want to work for and enhance unity in the church recognize that there are minor differences which are best described as non-essentials. We must not allow such non-essential differences to affect our love and relationship. There must also be humility among members if we must keep united. Where pride – of possession, family background, natural endowment or educational attainments – comes in, it will not be possible to be united. But if in honor we prefer one another, appreciate one another and recognize the contributions of other people more than ours, then there will be unity in the church.

**Question 4: What are the blessings that we can derive by living in unity?**

For unity, every member needs to realize the blessedness of respect and obedience to leadership. This singular virtue, when it is in all the members of the church, makes the church united. When all the workers and members of the church duly respect and obey leadership, the devil will be shut out of the life of the church and all of us would speak, act and minister in cooperation, not in competition with other people. This is the ideal of the church. This is the model. This is the Bible standard. And this is what we must be. **“From whom the whole body fitly joined**



**together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love”** (Ephesians 4:16).

**MINISTERS’ ROLE IN CHURCH UNITY** (1 Corinthians 12:28, 29; Ephesians 4:11, 12; Romans 14:19)

**“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”** (Ephesians 4:11, 12).

**Question 5: How can the ministers work for the unity of the church?**

If the church must be united together, the ministry of the ministers in the church must be edifying and challenging. It must be able to move the church forward. All those who minister in word and doctrine, in prayer and faith, in music and orderliness, must do it in love and charity and build up the church thereby. At the House Caring Fellowship, everything must be done in love and faith. These ministers and their ministries in the church must also be positive and Christlike in lifestyle so that unity will be promoted.

In addition, to make for unity, our ministries must be complementary, not contentious. In other words, our service must have the elements that make the total ministry of the church complete. Our service must be supplying something to the total life and ministry of the church. In this vein, every believer must shun criticism, complain, quarrel or cutting down of anyone indirectly or directly. Leaders or local pastors will not compete one with another or contradict one another. A section of the church must not seek to outshine the other. Rather, they should complement one another. This should exclude pride, contention and competition. It demands that all members and workers will pray for every area of the work even when they are not involved in those areas of work. Besides, it implies that workers will desire the growth and development of the other area of the work just as they desire the growth of the areas they are involved in too.

A pastor who wants to work for the unity of the church should not emphasize an area of the work while he de-

emphasizes another area. All the workers and areas of work must be equally appreciated and recognized. Youth ministry must not be exalted while regular adult ministries are eclipsed. Again, the youth must not be swallowed up by the adult ministries in the church. The women ministry also must enjoy as much attention and recognition in the church just as the men's.

Ethnicism, tribalism, partiality and favoritism must be kept out of the church lest the unity be threatened. The pastor's heart needs be broadened to accommodate all people from all walks of life. Besides, to ensure unity in the church, there must be harmony of all the various facets of the church life. When there is harmony amongst leaders, there will be unity in the church.

Again, there must be constant motivation to identify with the central mission and there must be commitment to the same goal. If personal, petty, selfish interest superimposes itself over the central, larger goal, our unity will be threatened. Ministers in the church must also manifest love, forgiveness, compassion and purity of life to enhance unity and growth in the church.

### **DAILY BIBLE READING**

<b>MORNING</b>			<b>EVENING</b>	
MON	1 THESS.	1-2	EZRA	9-10
TUE	“	3-4	NEH	1-2
WED	“	5	“	3-4
THUR	2 THESS.	1-3	“	5-6
FRI	1 TIM.	1-2	“	7
SAT	“	3-4	“	8
SUN	“	5-6	“	9

**THE END OF THE STUDIES, BUT BE ADVISED THE WORD OF GOD IS TIMELESS (DOES NOT BECOME OBSOLETE AT ANY TIME). THEREFORE, ENDEAVOR TO KEEP THIS BOOK HANDY.**

# DISTRICT CHURCHES DIRECTORY

1. Bronx: 213 E. 144th Street (718) 292-7883
2. Brooklyn: 140 Saratoga Avenue (718) 919-1166
3. Queens: 188-21 Suffolk Drive, St. Albans, NY 11412 (347) 200-3301
4. New Jersey: 23-39 South 20 Street, Irvington (973) 202-3989
5. Staten Island: 144-146 Morningstar Road, Staten Island, NY 10303 (917) 238-2258
6. Spring Valley: 95 North Main street, Suite 1 (845) 709-6058

**Kick-start**  
your Day  
with a  
**Diet of**



It's **Rich**  
It's **Robust**  
It's **Refreshing!**

**GET YOUR COPY TODAY!**



## **DEEPER CHRISTIAN LIFE MINISTRY, USA**

[www.dclm.org](http://www.dclm.org)

### **DEEPER LIFE BIBLE CHURCH WEEKLY FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES**

#### **SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE**

New Jersey	9:00 AM
Bronx/Brooklyn/Queens/Staten Island	9:00 AM
Rockland County	10:30 AM

#### **MONDAY BIBLE STUDY**

Rockland County	7:00 PM
-----------------	---------

#### **TUESDAY BIBLE STUDY**

Bronx/Queens/New Jersey/Co-op City and Staten Island	7:00 PM
---	---------

#### **WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY**

Brooklyn	7:00 PM
----------	---------

#### **THURSDAY (REVIVAL SERVICE) FAITH CLINIC**

Rockland County	7:00 PM
-----------------	---------

#### **FRIDAY (REVIVAL SERVICE) FAITH CLINIC**

All the Church Locations except Rockland County	7:00 PM
---	---------

#### **ALL NIGHT PRAYER VIGILS**

Bronx – First Friday of Every Month	7:00 PM
Brooklyn – Last Friday of Every Month	11:00 PM
Queens – First Friday & Third Friday of Every Month	11:00 PM
New Jersey – Third Friday of Every Month	11:00 PM

**Pastor W.F. Kumuyi – General Superintendent**  
**Your Spiritual Welfare is our Concern**