



Search The Scriptures

VOLUME 62 & 63

"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
ISSN 0795-8994**

CONTENTS

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES VOLUME 62

LESSON		PAGE
<u>OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES</u>		
794	Amnon's Incest And Death	05
795	Absalom's Rebellion And Tragic End	13
796	David Restored To The Throne	19
797	The Gibeonites Avenged	26
798	David's Psalm Of Praise And Valiant Men	33
<u>NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES</u>		
799	Call For Intercession And Christian Modesty	41
800	Qualifications For Christian Leadership	46
801	Warning Against Apostasy	53
802	Precepts For Handling Elders And Widows	59
803	Godliness With Contentment	66
<u>SPECIAL STUDIES</u>		
804	The Holy Bible	73
805	Quiet Time And Family Devotion	78
806	Pattern Of Scriptural Godliness	84

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES VOLUME 63

OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

807	David's Sin Of Numbering Israel	92
808	Solomon Succeeds David	100
809	The Wisdom Of Solomon	108
810	Solomon Builds God's Temple	116
811	Solomon Builds His Palace	121

NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

812	Encouragement For A Dispirited Minister	128
813	Persevering In Christian Service	135
814	Maintaining Scriptural Convictions In Perilous Times	142
815	Renewed Charge To Preach The Gospel	149
816	The Good Fight Of Faith	155

SPECIAL STUDIE

817	Trinity Of The Godhead 1561	
818	One Body, Many Members	168
819	Fellowship Among The Brethren	174

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

VOLUME 62

BEGINNING OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

794 Lesson

AMNON'S INCEST AND DEATH

MEMORY VERSE: “And she answered him, Nay, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel: do not thou this folly” (2 Samuel 13:12).

TEXT: 2 Samuel 13:1-39; 14:1-33

The previous chapter recorded God’s stern pronouncement of judgment on King David for his dual iniquities of adultery and murder. He was dealt the full weight of judgment because he had given the adversaries of the Lord occasion to blaspheme His name through his acts of wickedness. **“Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; (the Lord said), because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife... Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun”** (2 Samuel 12:10,11). This chapter begins with a series of calamities that befell David in confirmation of God’s judgment designed to chastise him for his moral missteps and utter wickedness. People of God should take heed to their ways, remain righteous and holy to avoid unpleasant consequences which may happen long after the evil had been committed. As wayfaring pilgrims, they should travel this road to heaven and **“serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear”** (Hebrews 12:28).

God’s chastisement of David for his sins reveals, one, His impartiality because He is not a respecter of persons (2 Chronicles 19:7; Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11); two, He

will not allow the wicked to go scot free (Proverbs 11:21); and three, He is **“of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity”** (Habakkuk 1:13).

The two chapters under consideration reveal Amnon’s incest with her half-sister, Tamar, Absalom’s fatal revenge and flight from justice as well as his recall through Joab’s crafty counsel to a wise woman from Tekoah.

Question 1: What lessons can believers derive from God’s chastisement of David for his sins?

AMNON’S LUST AND INCEST (2 Samuel 13:1-21; Leviticus 18:9,11; 20:17; Deuteronomy 27:22; Ezekiel 22:11; Mark 6:17; 1 Corinthians 5:1; Romans 15:4)

Amnon was caught in a web of sin and bond of iniquity. His debauchery had become uncontrollable that he could not gratify his lust and base passion elsewhere except in her sister. He lost every sense of decency and self-control and sold himself to immorality. **“And it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a fair sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her”** (2 Samuel 13:1). The love, so-called here, is nothing but lust of the basest sort. Sinful as it is to lust after other women, it is utterly vile to have this kind of affection towards a blood relation. Amnon got consumed with it till he fell sick (2 Samuel 13:2). An adulterer will hunt for the precious soul and would not rest till he had taken his prey (Proverbs 6:26).

As an illegal carnal relationship between two people who are genetically or closely related, incest is squarely condemned in the Scripture and generally considered a taboo in most cultures. Under the Mosaic Law, it was one of the abominable sins that the children of Israel must abhor (Leviticus 18:9,11; 20:17; Ezekiel 22:11). In fact, a curse was placed on people who engaged in it: **“Cursed be he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen”** (Deuteronomy 27:22).

Question 2: Explain the evil of incest.

Lust is a strong source of all kinds of temptation. The Scripture warns: **“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death”** James 1:13,15). As Amnon allowed lust to overwhelm his mind, Satan quickly inspired his crafty friend, Jonadab, to help him execute his evil design.

Amnon’s fall into sin is instructive to all believers. First, he could not control his thoughts and this inflamed his passion to begin to hatch an evil plan (1 Peter 1:13). Second, he failed to resist the temptation. If he had resisted the devil like Joseph or our Lord Jesus, he would have overcome James 4:7). Third, he had a crafty and an ungodly man as his close confidant. Like Rehoboam, he surrounded himself with ungodly friends who could not give him scriptural counsel.

The evil of incest can best be understood when viewed against the shame and reproach which attended people who fell into it. Consider Lot’s daughters, how they lured their father into it and the products of the relationship (Genesis 19:33-38). Reuben had carnal knowledge of his father’s concubine and lost his birthright (Genesis 35:22; 49:3,4). Judah imperceptibly went in to Tamar, his son’s wife (Genesis 38:18-23). Other cases of incest were also recorded in the New Testament: Herod married his brother Philip’s wife (Mark 6:17), while a backslidden Corinthian brother went in to his father’s wife (1 Corinthians 5:1).

God abhors sin in all its shades and His judgment looms over unrepentant sinners. Though David frowned at Amnon’s wicked act, there was no mention of his attempt to discipline him (2 Samuel 13:21). Christian leaders should never withhold the rod of discipline from their erring members (1 Timothy 5:20). Likewise, parents are to rebuke and discipline their wayward children (Proverbs 23:13). Everything should be done to prevent this evil from happening in our homes and churches.

Question 3: Why did Amnon fall into the sin of incest and what lessons can Christians learn from it?

ABSALOM'S MURDER OF AMNON AND FLIGHT (2 Samuel 13:22-39; Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 6:23)

Absalom was deeply hurt by the misbehavior of his elder brother, Amnon; more so as there was no record of remorse or repentance from him. **“And Absalom spake unto his brother Amnon neither good nor bad: for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar”** (2 Samuel 13:22). Then, he plotted his elimination. After two full years, Absalom was to have a sheep-shearing feast and thought it to be a perfect occasion to carry out his evil plan of murder. First, he invited the king, but he declined. Then he pressurized him to release the king's children in order to lure Amnon to attend. Meanwhile, he had instructed his servants when to kill him. **“Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, Mark ye now when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon; then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you? be courageous, and be valiant”** (2 Samuel 13:28). True to his command, Absalom's servants carried out the crime. **“And the servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and every man gat him up upon his mule, and fled”** (2 Samuel 13:29). From incest, the sins in David's house progressed to murder.

Absalom's cruel murder of his brother has no justification in the Scriptures. His action was not only wrong but totally condemnable. God forbids revenge or retaliation; he ought to have left Amnon's judgment in His hands (Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19). Secondly, his action was highly suspect. Killing Amnon may not only be because of his injury from the evil of incest; he probably had his eyes on the throne since Amnon was the heir apparent to the throne, being David's eldest son. Getting rid of him would clear the way for him to be the next in line to the throne. Thirdly, the murder of Amnon was an express disregard for the law of God

(Genesis 9:6; Exodus 20:13). Fourthly, murder was punishable under the Mosaic Law. He who kills another person intentionally must also pay the supreme price (Exodus 21:14).

Believers who wish to get to heaven must avoid every form of sin, including murder, either through abortion, suicide, so-called ‘mercy killing’ or character assassination. They should abhor envy and jealousy which may lead to murder, but maintain holiness without which no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). All kinds of killing are condemned and punishable in the Scriptures.

Question 4: Why was Absalom’s murder of his brother condemnable?

However, Amnon’s untimely death has some scriptural implications. The Bible says “...**the soul that sinneth, it shall die**” (Ezekiel 18:4) and “...**the wages of sin is death...**” (Romans 6:23). To avoid both physical and spiritual death, all sinners and backsliders should repent of their sins and turn to God for mercy and pardon. “**Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin**” (Ezekiel 18:30).

Question 5: What can believers learn from Amnon’s untimely death and what must all sinners and backsliders do urgently to avoid God’s judgment?

ABSALOM’S RETURN THROUGH JOAB’S CRAFTINESS (2 Samuel 14:1-33; 13:28,29; Psalm 5:9; Revelation 21:8)

After he murdered Amnon, Absalom fled to Geshur to evade justice (2 Samuel 13:37,38). Though a prince, he became a fugitive in another land like Cain who became a vagabond and fugitive because he had killed his brother, Abel (Genesis 4:12,14). Moses was also a fugitive in Midian after he fled from the face of Pharaoh because he had murdered an Egyptian (Exodus 2:15).

This is always the portion of murderers when they attempt to evade justice.

Absalom went on self-exile for three years before Joab muted the idea of bringing him back. **“And Joab sent to Tekoah, and fetched thence a wise woman, and said unto her, I pray thee, feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on now mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil, but be as a woman that had a long time mourned for the dead”** (2 Samuel 14:2). Though the idea of brokering peace between King David and his fugitive son was commendable, the method employed by Joab was ungodly. As head of David’s army, he ought to have approached the king directly if his motive was right. The stage-managed plea to the king was highly deceptive and diplomatic. David was flattered as an angel of God (2 Samuel 14:17,20).

Believers should avoid deception in all forms; it is sinful and always comes with grievous consequences. When Jacob deceived Isaac his father to claim Esau’s birthright, he paid dearly for it. Ananias and Sapphira deceived Peter and lost their lives. The serpent deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden and received an eternal curse. The Gibeonites deceived Joshua and became perpetual slaves in Israel (Joshua 9:1-27). Christians who try to secure the favor of leadership through deception, diplomacy and flattery would incur the wrath of God. We should not use deception in getting jobs, contracts, admission, selling of goods or in contracting marriages because”...**all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death** (Revelation 21:8).

Question 6: What is the consequence of deception?

“And the king said unto Joab, behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again” (2 Samuel 14:21). So Joab arranged and brought Absalom back to Jerusalem, but he was not allowed to see the king. Rather than remain sober in Jerusalem, Absalom was in a hurry to realize his ungodly ambition to become king by all means.” Therefore

Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him: and when he sent again the second time, he would not come. **Therefore he said unto his servants, See, Joab's field is near mine, and he hath barley there; go and set it on fire. And Absalom's servants set the field on fire**" (2 Samuel 14:29,30). It is strange that Absalom could do this to a man who midwived his return from exile. Surely, every unconverted soul would betray their ungodly character. It is only repentance and conversion that can bring genuine character transformation.

The following points should be noted as this study comes to conclusion. One, David is portrayed here as a weak and an indulgent father. Aside being an innocent accessory to Tamar's defilement, he also did the same in the murder of Amnon. Nothing was heard beyond his being wroth after Amnon's incest (2 Samuel 13:21). Two, Joab and Absalom shared some traits that God-fearing saints must shun: they were both unforgiving (2 Samuel 3:30; 13:28), murderous (2 Samuel 3:27; 13:28), violent, treacherous and driven with ungodly ambition (2 Samuel 3:21,24,27; 14:30; 15:1,4 -6,10). Anyone who possesses these traits will end up in hell except they repent (Luke 13:3,5).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING		EVENING		
MON	Luke	15-16	2 Samuel	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

795 Lesson

ABSALOM'S REBELLION AND TRAGIC END

MEMORY VERSE: “And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, all is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, blessed be the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king” (2 Samuel 18:28).

TEXT: 2 Samuel 15, 16, 17 and 18

David’s sin of adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah her husband had series of calamitous consequences. The death of the child by Bathsheba and Amnon’s incest and death were followed by Absalom’s rebellion in consonance with God’s declared judgment that **“the sword shall never depart from [his] house…”** (2 Samuel 12:9-12). Though God forgave David, He did not cancel the consequences of his evil deeds; he had to reap the consequences of the evil seed he sowed in another family.

Absalom was a handsome but graceless prince. His appearance, skill and position did not make up for his lack of good character. He harbored hatred against his brother, Amnon for a long time till he got rid of him and evaded punishment by fleeing into exile (2 Samuel 13:22-29). On his return, he mindlessly set Joab’s crops ablaze to get his attention and succeeded in using him to worm himself into the heart of King David, his father.

Observe here that David neither punished Amnon for his incest nor dealt decisively with Absalom’s murder. Now, the murderer is granted pardon without repentance. Lack of discipline for these heinous crimes gave room not only for retaliation but also for impunity to reign. The scripture clearly instructs parents to **“Withhold not correction from the child”** because **“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.**

Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his [parents] to shame. He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Proverbs 23:13; 22:15; 23:14; 29:15; 13:24). Parents who indulge and over-pamper their children should heed the instruction and warning of the Scripture on child training to avoid reaping sorrow and anguish. This lesson, which furnishes us with details of Absalom’s conspiracy, rebellion and eventual end, conveys God’s warning to everyone to desist from rebelling against His word, appointed leaders and constituted authorities.

Question 1: How should Christian parents handle the unruly behavior of their children?

ABSALOM’S CONSPIRACY AND DAVID’S FLIGHT FROM JERUSALEM (2 Samuel 15:1-37; 16:1-4; 17:15-22,24-29; Deuteronomy 31:27; 1 Samuel 15:23; Proverbs 17:11; Job 34:37; Romans 16:17,18; Colossians 2:4)

Spared the rod of correction, Absalom began to plot his father’s overthrow, having nursed an ungodly ambition to occupy the same throne by hook or crook. He seemed to have been consumed by his handsomeness, boldness and eloquence without sparing some thoughts for his other brothers or the legitimacy of his action. He was ready to get rid of anything and anyone who would stand in his way to become king.

The first step in his conspiracy was to prepare chariots, horses and fifty men to run before him. This was closely followed by stealing the hearts of the people with his good looks and seeming concern for their welfare. **“So, Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel”**. After complaining of the absence of a faithful deputy who would dispense justice, he nominated himself for the job and fooled the people to switch allegiance. However, he proved to be an evil ruler. Believers who aspire to be leaders over God’s people must desist from using deception to gain leadership but seek to possess the requisite spiritual qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13;

Romans 16:17,18; Colossians 2:4).

Absalom went on in his deceitful plot by playing on the king's filial inclination and sentiment by seeking permission to **“go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron”**. Though Hebron was his hometown and David's first capital (2 Samuel 3:2,3), Absalom had an ulterior motive to be proclaimed king there. As soon as the king gave his consent, he sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel to verify the people's readiness to proclaim: **“Absalom reigneth in Hebron”**. Already, two hundred men were invited from Jerusalem to join the initial fifty. He also won Ahitophel, his father's counsellor, to his side. **“And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.”** Believers learn here that they should not be deceived by a large crowd who throng false prophets' assemblies in the name of miracles, signs and wonders but live contrary to God's word (2 Peter 3:10-19).

Question 2: Why should a believer who seeks to become a leader over God's people avoid behaving like Absalom?

When David received report of the swelling number of people with Absalom, he fled with his wives and servants. His unwillingness to confront his son and his followers was because the rebellion was widespread and would be difficult to suppress. Besides, David did not want the city of Jerusalem to be destroyed; he still cared for his son and people. **“And the king went forth, and all his household after him, and the king left ten women, which were concubines, to keep the house”** (2 Samuel 15:16).

An obvious truth here is that though Absalom's action was wicked, immoral, treacherous and against the word of God, King David was being haunted by his wicked past. He later wrote his experience in the Psalms that **“When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity”** (Psalm 39:11). To avoid a similar fate, no believer should use his privileged position or social status to oppress others

as God is able to abase the proud and high-minded persons.

Meanwhile, the kindness of men like Ittai, Zadok, Ahimaaz, Jonathan, Hushai, Ziba, Shobi, Machir and Barzillai to David at this time is commendable. They did not forsake him though he was suffering the consequences of his sins.

Question 3: Outline the reasons David fled from Jerusalem.

REJECTION OF AHITHOPHEL'S COUNSEL AND HIS DEATH (2 Samuel 15:12,31-34;16:15-23;17:1-14,23; 1 Chronicles 27:33; Psalms 41:9; Matthew 27:5)

“And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David’s counselor, from the city, even from Giloh while he offered sacrifices” (2 Samuel 15:12). It is curious that Ahithophel switched allegiance so quickly to Absalom and decided to work against his counsellor of many years. How some people could be untrustworthy and betray their confidants and friends when it mattered most! So, Ahithophel became an adviser to Absalom. Though, he was a wise, intelligent and experienced counsellor with vast knowledge of military strategies, he misused his wisdom by aligning with a rebellious son.

However, David prayed that God would overturn the counsel of Ahithophel which was contrary to the will of God. When we pray, God will frustrate the counsel of the enemy against us. Truly, **“There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD. Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?”** (Proverbs 21:30; Lamentation 3:37).

We also learn here that though David prayed and committed the entire situation to the care and will of the Lord, he acted wisely to protect himself by getting information through espionage. Two, he was willing to endure while he waited to see how God would work things out. He was more aware of his failure as a father than his dignity as a king. He perceived that Absalom’s

rebellion and Shimei's cursing were God's chastisement on him. Three, concerning Ahithophel's betrayal, it is ungodly to join affinity with evildoers against the Lord's anointed. Our natural and spiritual talents must not be used to **"strengthen also the hands of evildoers..."** (Jeremiah 23:14). Four, the invisible God who rules in the affairs of men and turns the counsel of the crafty to naught overruled the plot against David. He, who turns the heart of men whithersoever He wills, inspired Absalom and his company to listen to Hushai's counsel which was preferred.

When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not taken, he went home and committed suicide. God's promise to the believer is: **"no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn..."** (Isaiah 54:17). Like Ahithophel, Judas Iscariot in the New Testament also hanged himself when he discovered that he had betrayed his Lord. Believers must be careful not to touch or harm the Lord's anointed.

Question 4: How can we guard against misuse of our God-given talents and gifts?

ABSALOM'S MISERY AND TRAGIC DEATH (2 Samuel 18:1-33; Joshua 7:5,6,10,11,24,25; Colossians 3:5-7; Ephesians 5:3;5; 1 Samuel 15:23)

After Hushai's counsel (which Absalom and the elders of Israel did not know was designed to allow David escape far afield) was accepted, they prepared for war. We recall that Absalom was to lead the people to war against David and his servants.

Prior to the battle, David had divided his entire army into three groups under three captains: Joab, Abishai and Ittai in Mahanaim. When his plan to go with them to battle was rejected, he pleaded with Joab openly to **"Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom"** (verse 5). The battle was fought in the **"wood of Ephraim"** where 20,000 men of Israel were massacred by David's men (2 Samuel 18:6,7). They lost their lives because of the inordinate ambition of

Absalom. Thus, believers must watch their ambitions and decisions to avoid needless risk to lives and destinies of others as well as theirs.

David's weakness or plea could not prevent the tragic consequences of rebellion from catching up with Absalom. Riding furiously upon a mule under a thick bough of a great oak, his hair tangled into the twisted or forked branches of a tree until Joab killed him and dumped his corpse in a pit, raising a heap of stones on the rebellious prince. This shameful and tragic death of a rebel is a warning to all who are rebellious against God's word and His appointed leaders. Though New Testament believers do not kill by any means, we must not condone sinful practices but expose and purge them from the church of God (Colossians 3:5-8).

Rebellion is a grievous sin in the eyes of the Lord and He equates it with witchcraft (1 Samuel 15:23). Believers should be submissive and obedient to constituted authorities in the family, fellowship or secular world irrespective of the age, stature, economic status or educational background of their leaders (Hebrews 5:4). Obedience to God, His word, appointed leaders and constituted authorities will help us to escape divine judgment. We should not touch the Lord's anointed irrespective of any biological relationship that exists between us. Aside Absalom, Miriam and Judas Iscariot did it to their own hurt.

The tragedies recorded in this chapter are partly the outcomes of sin and parental failure. Truly, **"A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him"** (Proverbs 17:25).

David's touching grief for Absalom's death showed his filial love for his children. But his lamentation was too late because Absalom was bereft of the requisite righteous lifestyle that would have qualified him for a future re-union with him in heaven. He knew their separation was eternal. Inconsolably distressed, **"the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he**

said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!” (2 Samuel 18:33). As parents and believers, we should discharge our responsibilities to our children when there is still hope. Also, we should avoid going into any form of sin that would bring judgment on us and our offspring. Instead, we should be committed to living righteous and holy lives without which no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
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

796 Lesson

DAVID RESTORED TO THE THRONE

MEMORY VERSE: “And he bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man; so that they sent this word unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants” (2 Samuel 19:14).

TEXT: 2 Samuel 19:1-43; 20:1-26

The death of Absalom marked the end of his rebellious onslaught against the reign of his father, David. In the ordinary course of events, this would have been a time of celebration for the people who took sides with David but “...**the victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son**” (2 Samuel 19:2). David could not have done otherwise; he had to mourn the eternal loss of his son. It is painful to lose a near kin let alone a rebellious son who had hasted into eternal damnation.

Moreover, the Scripture admonishes us to “**rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him**” (Proverbs 24:17,18). David’s reaction to the news of Absalom’s death affected the morale of all the men that were with him; and it took the timely intervention of Joab, his chief security officer, to forestall a desertion. It is instructive that David acted wisely by not allowing his emotion to overcome common sense. Thus, he spoke comfortably to the people and restored their hope. “...**And they told unto all the people, saying, Behold, the king doth sit in the gate. And all the people came before the king: for Israel had fled every man to his tent**” (2 Samuel 19:8).

David’s return to Jerusalem to resume his rule over the nation of Israel, the strife between the men of Judah

(David's tribe) and the men from the other tribes in Israel and the rebellion instigated by Sheba form the discourse in this study.

Question 1: What should be the attitude of believers at the misfortune of their persecutors?

DAVID'S RETURN TO JERUSALEM AND THE DECLARATION OF AMNESTY FOR SHIMEI (2 Samuel 19:1-40; Psalms 75:5-7; 23:5; Proverbs 24:17, 18; Luke 1:30-33; Revelation 17:14)

Having recovered from the shock of the sudden death of his son, Absalom, David settled down to the actualization of his restoration as king of a united Israel. He could have marched into Jerusalem, but he did not. He patiently waited for God's time. Two, he would go back in peace and safety, and be sure that he should meet with no difficulty or opposition, and therefore would be satisfied that the people were well-affected to have him. He eventually became the king of Israel in spite of all odds according to the plan of God.

David's understanding that **"... promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge..."** (Psalm 75:6,7) also made him not to want to employ a 'do or die' means to return to the throne. He depended on God to restore him to the position He had raised him to occupy. God does not expect anything less from contemporary believers. Apart from praying earnestly for persecutors, we are to do everything possible to reach them with the saving gospel before they drift into perdition.

Meanwhile, Joab's counsel to David was very timely. And that David promptly heeded the advice is instructive to leaders to humble themselves and seek help where and when necessary.

Question 2: What can believers learn from David's attitude to his restoration as king?

Despite the high emotions, the people remembered their beloved King David. They recalled what God had used

him to do for them in the past and longed for his return. **“And all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, the king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom. And Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?”** (2 Samuel 19:9,10).

As the children of Israel accepted and recognized David as their king, we must allow Jesus, the King of kings, to reign in our hearts. Though He reigns now in the heart and life of everyone who is genuinely born again, rebellion and hardness of heart can make Him to depart. To enjoy the continual presence and reign of Christ in our lives and families, we must remember at all times, how He saved us from our enemies in the past, constantly seek God’s presence and do away with every form of rebellion that drives away His presence from us.

Shimei was among the men of Judah that came to Gilgal to meet David. He was no stranger to him as he was a descendant of Saul who cursed and harassed David and his men when they fled Jerusalem because of Absalom’s rebellion (2 Samuel 16:5-13). He hurled stones, dirt, accusations and insults at David. Abishai had volunteered to execute him but was restrained by David who took the incident as an act of fate, permitted by God for a purpose.

Apparently convicted of his folly and knowing that his life was in danger, Shimei sought David’s forgiveness. He brought a thousand Benjamites with him, who also expressed their submission to David as their king. Shimei confessed his sin and folly and pleaded for forgiveness. Once again, Abishai expressed his desire to execute him because he had cursed the Lord’s anointed. But David refused, reminding him that it was a day of celebration.

Though Shimei acted contrary to God’s command not to curse the ruler of their people (Exodus 22:28),

David assured him that he would not die. However, this oath was only limited to David's lifespan because he commanded Solomon, his son, not to hold him guiltless (1 Kings 2:8,9,36-46). New Testament believers cannot imitate David in this regard. It is ungodly for any Christian to seek revenge through any means (Romans 12:19-21).

AVOIDABLE RIFT BETWEEN JUDAH AND ISRAEL
(2 Samuel 19:41-43; James 3:5-10; Judges 8:1-3; 2 Samuel 16:5-8; Proverbs 15:1)

“And, behold, all the men of Israel came to the king, and said unto the king, Why have our brethren the men of Judah stolen thee away, and have brought the king, and his household, and all David's men with him, over Jordan?...And the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel” (2 Samuel 19:41-43).

The quarrel that eventually degenerated to another round of rebellion and treason would have been avoided were it not for the sharp remarks from the men of Judah. What started like a little fire almost burnt down the whole united kingdom of Israel. **“Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!”** James 3:5). As believers, we should be watchful over the use of our tongues. Little misunderstandings should not be allowed to degenerate into arguments that are capable of severing the bond of brotherhood and love amongst believers or family members.

Question 3: What practical steps should believers employ to avert quarrels and conflicts in the church?

The schism between Judah and Benjamin dated back to the moment Saul, the first king of Israel, began to appeal to tribal sentiments to get loyalty from his people (1 Samuel 22:7,8). His baseless claim led to the massacre of God's priests and thousands of people in the city of Nob (1 Samuel 22:19). After his reign, the relationship between Benjamin and Judah never remained the same.

“Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker” (2 Samuel 3:1). Christian leaders must shun every shade of ethnicity, social class, favoritism or other primitive sentiments which tend to polarize the church of Christ against one another.

The response of the people of Judah to the Benjamites was a far cry from the way Gideon answered the men of Ephraim when they confronted him for not inviting them to the battle (Judges 8:2). That Gideon’s reply doused the tension between him and the men of Ephraim proves that **“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger”** (Proverbs 15:1).

SHEBA’S REBELLION AND HIS DEATH (2 Samuel 20:1-22; Esther 2:21- 23; Numbers 16:1-4, 12-14, 20-35; 2 Samuel 15:12,31; 17:14,23; Matthew 26:14-16; 27:3-5; Hebrews 3:17)

“And there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a trumpet, and said, we have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel. So every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri...” (2 Samuel 20:1,2). The altercation between Judah and Israel was quickly hijacked by a dissenter: Sheba the son Bichri, a Benjamite. The people of Israel, in a moment of backsliding, preferred a son of Belial to a man after God’s heart. The same people who had confessed to have ten parts in David now professed that they had no part in him. This is a reflection of the unstable nature of the depraved.

Sheba’s untimely death shows that God frowns at rebellion of any kind against constituted authorities. Through a strange twist of fate, he was trapped in a fortified city and with the intervention of a wise woman of that city, he was put to death; the city was delivered and the unity of Israel was restored. Those who, like Sheba, rebel or instigate others against the Lord’s

anointed will end up in damnation unless they repent.

Rebellion against leaders, especially God-ordained ones, is counted as rebellion against God Himself (Numbers 16:1-4,12-14,20-35). The Scripture commands us to **“... be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God”** (Romans 13:1).

SCRIPTURAL PATTERN OF APPOINTING LEADERS

(2 Samuel 19:13; 20:4-13, 23-26; Acts 1:21-26; 13:1-4; 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1-13)

“And say ye to Amasa, Art thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab” (2 Samuel 19:13). David’s decision to replace Joab as the captain of his army indicated that he was obviously weary of the overbearing attitude of the sons of Zeruiah, especially Joab who was like a thorn in his flesh (2 Samuel 3:39).

Amasa’s role in Absalom’s rebellion puts a mark on his moral integrity. Secondly, he would have a difficult task in winning the confidence of King David’s faithful men of war. Thirdly, Amasa’s new role exposed his weakness as a military strategist: **“So Amasa went to assemble the men of Judah: but he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him”** (2 Samuel 20:5). Lastly, his new role would put him in direct conflict with Joab. Shortly afterward, he was murdered by Joab due to lack of watchfulness.

Question 4: How should appointment into leadership positions in the church be made today?

In the New Testament dispensation, the place of prayer in appointing workers and leaders cannot be over-emphasized. Our Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated this before the full commencement of His earthly ministry. **“... He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose**

twelve, whom also he named apostles” (Luke 6:12,13).

Christian leaders must depend on the leading of the Holy Spirit in appointing and assigning people into key positions in the church. Also, leaders in positions of authority must avoid carnal tendencies and actions that reveal their desperate effort to retain their position.

Our primary goal in life and ministry should be to maintain a spiritual state that makes us fit for heaven where we shall receive our eternal rewards.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	John	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

797 Lesson

THE GIBEONITES AVENGED

MEMORY VERSE: “Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, it is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites” (2 Samuel 21:1).

TEXT: 2 Samuel 21:1-22

King David had reclaimed the kingdom after Absalom’s conspiracy and revolt. Afterwards, he was confronted with a grievous famine which continued for three years. This forced him to seek God’s face in prayer until the cause was revealed to him. David’s action teaches us how to confront difficult and extraordinary situations in life. The Scripture says, **“As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come”** (Proverbs 26:2). Many problems may persist longer than necessary if we fail to ask for divine intervention. Believers need guidance from the Lord at all times to overcome challenges in life, including times of hardship or economic recession.

Question 1: What should a believer do during trials?

THE REASON FOR THE SUCCESSIVE FAMINE
(2 Samuel 21:1; Joshua 9:1-3,18-27; Exodus 22:21; Genesis 20:18)

An unusual situation was at hand in Israel at this time: a deadly famine was ravaging the land. David thought that it would be over at the end of the first year; instead, it continued successively for three years. David then **“...enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, it is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites”** (2 Samuel 21:1). He had learned over the years, the importance of seeking God’s face for guidance and success. For example, though he knew that the time had come for him to assume leadership of

the nation after the death of Saul and Jonathan, he still sought divine direction. **“And it came to pass after this, that David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron”** (2 Samuel 2:1). In Hebron, he was anointed king of Judah. Also, to avoid defeat in a battle against the Philistines, **“David enquired again of God; and God said unto him, go not up after them; turn away from them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees”** (1 Chronicles 14:14). This guaranteed him a resounding victory over his enemies.

Other instances abound in the Scriptures of people who sought divine help and guidance: when Judah needed someone to lead the nation (Judges 1:1); when Israel suffered repeated defeats in the hands of the Benjamites (Judges 20:27,28); and when the nation was oppressed (Psalm 78:34). Children of God have the special privilege of seeking God’s face when there are challenges. Solutions to many of life’s troubles lie with Him. Reasons for a particularly unpleasant situation may remain hidden if we do not pray. God holds the key to closed doors of opportunity, long-term problems, confusion and inexplicable challenges. He has promised to answer His children who seek His face (Jeremiah 33:3).

Recall that the Gibeonites were inhabitants of Canaan when Joshua marched on the land to possess it (Joshua 9:1-3,18-27). But they obtained a pledge from him by subtlety not to be destroyed. Though he later discovered their craft, the oath was binding on the nation because it was made before the Lord.

The outcome of Saul’s transgression against the Gibeonites is instructive in many ways. First, it shows that the passage of time does not nullify the penalty of sin. Though Saul died many years before, the effect of his transgression was still unremitted because it had not been atoned for. The sins that are washed away are those that are confessed, forsaken and necessary

restitutions made (1 Timothy 5:24). Though Saul's sin against the Gibeonites was not mentioned in the record of his reign, God still remembered it. Second, God always ensures justice to all, irrespective of tribe, race, class or status. The Gibeonites were strangers among the Israelites, still God wanted justice for them. **“Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt”** (Exodus 22:21). Third, Saul was motivated by unholly zeal, either to receive praise from men or assert his power. The believer's zeal should be God-glorifying, selfless and according to the word of God. Fourth, we should not be covenant-breakers (Romans 1:31,32). What made Saul's action exceedingly sinful was that he did not only shed innocent blood, but he violated the solemn oath by which the nation was bound. Joshua had said, **“This we will do to them (the Gibeonites), we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we sware unto them”** (Joshua 9:20). Fifth, those who have the privilege of occupying positions of influence should be careful of the way they treat the less-privileged; God is the defender of the rights of the defenseless.

Question 2: What can we learn from the way Saul treated the Gibeonites?

REPARATION FOR SIN AND THE FAMINE (2 Samuel 21:2-14; Genesis 20:7; 2 Chronicles 7:13,14; Ezekiel, 18:2-4; Galatians 3:13; Acts 19:19)

After God revealed the reason for the famine to David, he called the Gibeonites to discuss the solution. The meeting was not to excuse Saul's sin but to ask for necessary reparation and restitution. The blood of the slain Gibeonites, like that of Abel, cried for vengeance (Genesis 4:9,10) and must be appeased. The solution: **“Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, whom the LORD did choose. And the king said, I will give them”** (2 Samuel 21:6). The Gibeonites hanged the seven sons of Saul before the Lord. However, David ensured that Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan

was not among the dead because of the oath between him and Jonathan (1 Samuel 20:14-16).

Note that the Mephibosheth in verse seven was the son of Jonathan while the one in verse eight was the direct biological son of Saul born by Rizpah, Saul's concubine. Saul had promised to give her daughter, Merab, to David to marry but later married her to Adriel (1 Samuel 18:19). Five of Saul's grandsons from Merab and Adriel were offered to the Gibeonites to be put to death. The latter part of verse eight is interpreted as **"...And the five sons of Merab which Michal the daughter of Saul brought up, which she brought forth to Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite"**. Michal did not give birth to any child (2 Samuel 6:23); she only helped to bring up Merab's sons (2 Samuel 21:8). Both Michal and Merab were daughters of Saul. Only two direct biological sons of Saul were offered while the rest were his grandsons.

Though Saul's children bore the curse of their father, God still cancels curses and removes punishments for sins when He sees genuine repentance and willingness to live right (2 Chronicles 7:13,14; Colossians 1:12,13). Through Ezekiel, God said, **"What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die"** (Ezekiel 18:2-4). True believers in Christ cannot be judged for the sins of their fathers like the sons of Saul because **"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree"** (Galatians 3:13). All curses, bondages and evil covenants have been cancelled by Christ on the cross at Calvary. This can be appropriated through genuine repentance, renunciation of evil covenants and prayer of faith based on the promises of God (Acts 19:18,19).

Question 3: How can sinners avoid the consequences of the sins of their parents and forefathers?

Rizpah mourned the death of her two sons by putting on sackcloth from the beginning of harvest until the beginning of another rainy season. She watched over their corpses day and night for months. Her disposition might have reminded the Israelites that her sons died not for their personal sins but for those of Saul. This is a warning to parents to be careful of the seeds they sow lest they bring judgment on their children. When David heard about the woman's action, he made arrangements for the bodies to be removed for proper burial. He also removed the remains of Saul and Jonathan from the place the men of Jabesh-Gilead had buried them (1 Samuel 31:12,13). When justice is done on earth, vengeance from heaven ceases.

ROUTING AND DEFEATING THE GIANT FOURSOME
(2 Samuel 21:15-22; 1 Corinthians 10:3,4; Ephesians 6:12-18; 2 Timothy 2:1-4)

“Moreover the Philistines had yet war again with Israel; and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines: and David waxed faint” (2 Samuel 21:15). Here, four giants were defeated in four battles. In the first one, Ishbi-benob wanted to slay David because he **“waxed faint”**. This was possibly due to his being war-weary or a declining age, but God raised Abishai in time and he killed the giant (2 Samuel 21:15-17). In the second battle, Sibbechai slew another son of the giant, Saph (2 Samuel 21:18). In the third battle, Elhanan slew the brother of Goliath (2 Samuel 21:19). And, in the fourth, Jonathan the nephew of David slew another son of the giants (2 Samuel 21:20,21). Thus, all of David's enemies were roundly routed.

Today, the enemies of God's people and the gospel are engaged in a war of attrition where they seek to wear out the saints. And there will never be an end to this battle till the Lord comes. Under the dispensation of grace brought by our Lord Jesus Christ, we are called to be

soldiers (2 Timothy 2:1-4) to actively engage in spiritual warfare. Our weapons are not carnal (physical) but spiritual and can pull down strongholds of the enemy (2 Corinthians 10:3,4). The Lord expects His children to experience a daily victory in the battle for souls, over sin, self, the world and Satan.

There are important lessons from the battles between Israel and the Philistines. One, the enemies do not relent in engaging Christian soldiers in spiritual warfare. Despite the defeat of Goliath, many years earlier, the Philistines still had courage to confront Israel again and again. Therefore, Christians, seek not yet repose because we are in the midst of foes. Two, in spiritual warfare, even strong saints may faint or become discouraged and in need of assistance from fellow warriors or soldiers. Three, like David, there is need for Christian leaders, to train their followers to be strong in the Lord (1 Samuel 22:1,2). Leaders need to mentor and bring up others who are equally able to confront the enemies of the church. Four, there is no retirement age in spiritual warfare once a person has been enlisted at conversion. Even at the twilight of David's life, he was still engaged in war against the enemies of God. Five, Christians should not relent until the last giant that poses a threat to their occupied territory is conquered. Six, in spiritual warfare, we need the whole armor of God: the helmet of salvation, the belt of truth, footwear of the gospel of peace, shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:10-18). As Israel conquered in the four battles against the fearsome foursome, we can win all our battles as well if we lean on the arm of the Lord.

Question 4: What can we learn on spiritual warfare from the four battles Israel fought against the Philistines in our text?

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
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

798 Lesson

DAVID'S PSALM OF PRAISE AND VALIANT MEN

MEMORY VERSE: "Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name" (2 Samuel 22:50).

TEXT: 2 Samuel 22-23

David was a man of good reminiscences. He recalled how God rescued him from "**waves of death**", "**floods of ungodly men**" and "**sorrows of hell**" (2 Samuel 22:5,6). Narrowly escaping Saul's javelin in the palace or the hot chase by his army; conquering the Syrian troops that swooped on him and the alliance of nations that connived to overrun him were all by God's benevolence. From his travails, he discovered that "**Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the LORD delivereth him out of them all**" (Psalms 34:19). In gratitude to God for the manifold mercies he enjoyed, "**David spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul**" (2 Samuel 22:1).

Songs of deliverance, victory or redemption are not new in the Scripture. After the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea, Moses, Miriam and all the Israelites sang unto the Lord. Deborah and Barak's victory over Israel's enemies in battle also evoked a sense of gratitude and rendition of songs of praise unto the Lord. Translated saints sing redemption songs unto the Lord in heaven. God deserves the praises of all because He is good to all, especially believers. Christ's disposition to the ungrateful attitude of nine of the ten lepers He healed showed that God requires praise from those on whom He had bestowed favors.

David's numerous reasons for praising God reveal that his personal efforts and those of his trained men mentioned in the texts would have been utterly insufficient without divine intervention. "**There is no**

king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength” (Psalm 33:16; Proverbs 21:31). Though Jeremiah was called to be a prophet from childhood and suffered greatly for his uncompromising stance on the truth, he learnt a pertinent lesson: **“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness”** (Lamentations 3:22,23).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF GOD’S GOODNESS AND MERCIES (2 Samuel 22:1-20; Psalms 18:1-19; 100:4,5; 145:8,9; Jeremiah 33:11; Lamentation 3:25; Nahum 1:7)

“And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence” (2 Samuel 22:2,3). Here, David acknowledged God as the Source of his entire fortification, deliverance and victory. He neither appropriated glory to himself nor ascribed it to his commanders; the glory is entirely the Lord’s. **“I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images”** (Isaiah 42:8). He saw God as the only Source of his deliverance and men as mere instruments in His hands. This inclination of thought is instructive to God’s children today.

Question 1: What challenge does David’s gratitude to God pose to contemporary believers?

David highlighted God’s attributes and titles in relation to divine benevolence. He refers to God as our Rock (of salvation), Fortress, Deliverer, High Tower or Tower of our salvation, Stay, Lamp, Lord, Strength, Power and Shelter. Though he often hid himself in a rock, he knew that was porous without divine protection. The divine benevolence he enjoyed included salvation, deliverance, security, strength, support, omnipresence and guidance. David’s reference to God as his Lord reveals that he had

a relationship with Him Who cannot be compared with other deities (verse 42). The Psalmist used present tense intermittently to establish the truth that God is alive (verses 2-4,31-33,47,51) and that His way and dealings with His children are faultless and perfect.

David praised God for specific blessings. One, he revealed that God saved him from **“violence”** (verse 3). Two, He responded to his distress calls and rescued him from deadly **“floods of ungodly men”** (verses 5,7,14,15). Three, God drew him **“out of many waters”** in which he would have drowned (verse 17). Four, God delivered him from his strong enemy (Saul) and those who hated him, Shimei and Ahitophel inclusive (verse 18). Five, he received deliverance with enlargement because God **“delighted in [him]”** (verse 20). Six, God loves righteousness and rewarded him for being righteous by delivering and preserving him (verses 21,25). Seven, as impartial, faithful and just, God saves the afflicted and brings down the haughty (verses 26-28). Eight, He illumined and guided His servant out of obscurity (verse 29). Nine, the divine presence empowered, equipped and taught him and his commanders secrets of uncommon feats and victory in battle (verses 30,33-43). Ten, God’s way is perfect and He makes that of His children perfect (verses 31,33). Eleven, as He delivered him from external foes, so did He save him from the **“strivings of [his] people”** (verse 44). Twelve, He made David the head and ruler of the heathen (verses 44-46). Thirteen, God avenged him, brought the people under him and lifted him above those who hated him and from violent men (verses 48,49).

Question 2: Give reasons why you should always praise God.

The truth highlighted in this psalm of praise is that David suffered justly and unjustly; the contemporary church has also relived the same experience (John 15:18). These great interventions in the life of David have, one way or the other, been re-enacted in the lives of all believers in Christ’s church today. The reason is, God is unchanging and will always deliver His people who call upon Him; He will put songs of testimonies in their

mouths (Psalm 50:15; 2 Corinthians 11:26; Malachi 3:6). As recipients of divine mercies, we also ought to give Him glory through praises and testimonies which is the purpose of our creation and redemption (Isaiah 43:7,21; 1 Peter 2:9; Psalm 50:23). While ingratitude to God is sin, thanksgiving to God is pleasant and acceptable.

BASIS OF THE BELIEVERS' PROTECTION, VICTORY AND BLESSEDNESS (2 Samuel 22:21-27; Psalms 18:20-26; 34:17-19; 1:1-3,6; 112:1; Deuteronomy 28:1-14)

The text reveals the basis for divine interventions which David enjoyed. The virtues of uprightness, faithfulness and obedience with which he served God attracted the blessings (2 Samuel 22:22-25). David did not refer to his self-righteousness in the text but his willingness and sincerity in doing the will of God. And whenever it dawned on him that he had broken the law of God, he sought Him wholeheartedly until he obtained forgiveness. He was unlike Saul who disobeyed divine injunctions and gave excuses for his actions without genuine repentance. But David's life was marked by honesty in following God's will. Long after his demise, the Scripture testifies about his humility, tenderness, sincerity, devotion and willingness to do God's will.

So, if God is to defend and deliver us from our enemies today, we must be willing to live holy and obedient lifestyles (2 Corinthians 10:6). **“With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt show thyself upright, with the pure thou wilt show thyself pure, and with the forward thou wilt show thyself unsavory”** (2 Samuel 22:26,27).

Question 3: What is the place of righteous living and obedience to God's word in receiving blessings from God?

GREAT REVELATION FROM DAVID'S LAST WORDS (2 Samuel 23:1-7; Genesis 49:1,33; 50:24; Deuteronomy 33:1; 2 Timothy 4:4-8)

“Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said... The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue” (2 Samuel 23:1,2). The last statements of great men are considered noteworthy because of the depth of truth and wisdom they convey. David here was described with certain phrases which are worthy of note: (i) **“The man who was raised up on high”** as one approved of God and elevated as a prince above his fellow citizens. (ii) **“The anointed of the God of Jacob”**. Anointed by God, he became useful to his people in their social, political and justice systems. (iii) **“The sweet psalmist of Israel”**. He composed songs, selected the choral group and musical instruments for the worship of God. Elevated to a privileged position, endued with anointing and endowed with talents, children of God should use their gifts for the edification of the church of Christ and expansion of His kingdom. Burying our talents will amount to ingratitude and unfaithfulness to God who has redeemed our souls from sin.

Question 4: Enumerate the dangers in burying our God-given talents.

David’s declaration that **“The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue”** (2 Samuel 23:2) affirmed the divine inspiration of his writings and the entire Scripture. He is one of the over 40 writers of the 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books in the New inspired by the Holy Ghost. **“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”** (2 Peter 1:21). God is the Author of the holy Writ. As such, we take the Bible as the final authority in all matters concerning Christian conduct and work (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Thus, no one has the right to add or subtract from it (Revelation 22:19).

David received a personal revelation that **“He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain”** (2 Samuel 23:3,4). Lack of

these key qualifications of rulers/leaders highlighted here has been the bane of religious, social, political and economic life of people in modern society. One, rulers/leaders must be just, fair, impartial and morally right in relating with or treatment of others, or mediating between disputing parties. Rulers should not enslave or ill-treat people or deny them their rights and privileges.

Two, the fear of God in the hearts of rulers/leaders will make them avoid all acts of unfairness and repression (Nehemiah 5:15; Genesis 43:18). Aside justness and reverential fear of God, physical and mental capability, truthfulness and contentment are among attributes of good leaders (Exodus 18:21; 1 Timothy 3:2-4).

While leaders who are just and fear God will be as illustrious as the light that dispels darkness, those who are unjust and oppressive promote impunity that attracts divine judgment (Leviticus 19:14; 25:17,36,43; Nehemiah 5:1-9,15; Jeremiah 2:19).

DAVID'S MIGHTY MEN OF VALOR (2 Samuel 23:8-39; 1 Chronicles 11:10-47; Proverbs 18:16; Ecclesiastes 2:9; Daniel 12:3; Luke 19:17; Revelation 3:21)

David was an accomplished warrior who trained and turned disgruntled elements into an unconquerable army. David's mighty men are split into three categories:

(i) the first three who had done the furthest feats and in so doing acquired the greatest standing were Adino, Eleazar and Shammah. The feats of these heroic three are here chronicled:

1. Adino: he slew 800 men in a single battle with his spear 2. Eleazar: he defied the Philistines. When the men of Israel had gone away, he arose and smote the Philistines. His hand was weary and yet it cleaved to his sword. 3. Shammah: he met with a troop of the Philistines and routed them. Of this exploit and the former it is said, **"...and the Lord wrought a great victory"** (2 Samuel 23:12). These fought the battles, but God wrought the victory.

The next three were prominent but did not accomplish up to the first three. Of this second three, only two were named and they are Abishai and Benaiah. When David earnestly longed for the water of the well of Bethlehem, these three broke through the camp of the Philistines and fetched water from the well of Bethlehem, without David's knowledge. We noticed here how much they treasured their leader and with what delight they could risk their lives in his service. David demonstrated affectionate regard for the lives of his soldiers when he denied himself of the water and poured it out as an offering before the Lord.

The brave actions of the two of them on other occasions: Abishai slew 300 men in a battle. Benaiah did many great things: he slew two Moabites that were lion-like men; he slew an Egyptian who was well armed. Benaiah attacked him with no other weapon than a walking staff, skillfully wrested his spear out of his hand, and slew him. Next to the second three are thirty-one officers mentioned by name: Asahel is the first who was slain by Abner in the beginning of David's reign, but lost not his place in the catalogue. Elhanan is the next, brother to Eleazar, one of the first three. To find Uriah the Hittite among these worthies brings back the memory of David's sin: that a man who did so well for his country should be so abused. Joab was not named among the mighty men of David despite his position as a general in the army (2 Samuel 8:16; 20:23).

Christ also has dedicated disciples who share in His cause and suffering for the expansion of His kingdom. They were mentioned with honor in the New Testament as these valiant men of old (Revelation 21:14). All good soldiers of Jesus Christ have their names in God's book. To serve God on earth without assurance of one's name in heaven is the greatest misery anyone should avoid. Genuine conversion and restitution would have earned Joab a place among the nobles, and will earn anyone a place in God's kingdom.

Question 5: What steps should sinners and backsliders take to have their names written in heaven?

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
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

BEGINING OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

799 Lesson

CALL FOR INTERCESSION AND CHRISTIAN MODESTY

MEMORY VERSE: “I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array” (1 Timothy 2:8,9).

TEXT: 1 Timothy 2:1-15

Paul’s exhortation to Timothy on the subject of prayer is a follow-up to the charge given in the previous chapter. The importance of prayer in spiritual warfare cannot be over-emphasized. This means of grace grants the believer access to God and serves as a great weapon against the enemy. Timothy had a herculean task before him concerning the church at Ephesus. He must refute the heretical doctrines and practices as well as watch against further spread. These he must accomplish by teaching sound doctrine, advocating godly living by both elders and members and clarifying scripturally approved church practices.

False teachers had brought disharmony rather than growth and grace. The ring leaders - Hymenaeus and Alexander who were excommunicated by Paul - had made a shipwreck of their own faith (1 Timothy 1:19,20) and were in the process of bringing the faith of many believers to ruin. Thus, the church at Ephesus must be awakened to prayers and intercessions. They were to pray not only for themselves but also **“for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty”** (1 Timothy 2:1,2). In urging Timothy to pray, Paul reminded him that God desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

Question 1: What is the place of prayers and intercessions in spiritual warfare?

CALL FOR PRAYERS AND INTERCESSIONS (1 Timothy 2:1-7; Luke 18:1; Colossians 4:2; Ephesians 6:18; Matthew 5:44; 9:38; 26:41; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; Genesis 18:22-33; Exodus 32:31,32)

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men” (1 Timothy 2:1). Here, Paul’s call for prayer and intercession is comprehensive. The church is called to make supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks for all men because God desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Sin separates man from God. But Jesus Christ, the Mediator, offered Himself as a ransom to reconcile man to God. Our prayers for sinners and backsliders will help liberate their souls from the hold of Satan.

<p>Question 2: Give reasons why believers should pray for all men and what should be the emphasis in such prayers?</p>

Christians are commanded to pray **“For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty”** (1 Timothy 2:2). This explicitly implies praying for our political leaders: the executives, the lawmakers and the judicial arm of government. The kings at the time of Paul were enemies of the Christian faith who persecuted the children of God, yet they were commanded to pray for them. The Jews at Babylon were given the directive to **“...seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace”** (Jeremiah 29:7).

Our prayer for those in authority will help them fulfil their God-given role of maintaining an orderly society which will enable us **“lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty”**. This objective is meant to serve a higher purpose - an enabling atmosphere for the expansion of God’s kingdom through the gospel. **“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”** (1 Timothy 2:3,4).

Question 3: Enumerate the reasons the church needs to pray for kings and those in authority.

CONDITIONS FOR PREVAILING PRAYER AND INTERCESSION (1 Timothy 2:8; Acts 4:24-32; Mark 11:22-26; Isaiah 59:1,2; James 1:6-8; 5:15-18; Psalms 24:3-6; 34:17)

“I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Timothy 2:8). Prayer is not to be restricted to any specific place. God expects His children to pray in their closets, solemn assemblies, when on voyage, at meals or any other circumstances. However, certain conditions must be met for our prayers to be effective and acceptable to God. One, holy and undefiled hands must be lifted up in prayers. This denotes hands made pure from the pollutions of sin through the blood of the Lamb. We are enjoined to **“draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded”** (James 4:8). Sin is a major hindrance to prayer. God is no respecter of persons. Any professing Christian who harbors iniquity in his heart is automatically alienated from God. **“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy”** (Proverbs 28:13). To be acceptable, prayer must be offered by those who are saved and living righteous lives because God will not compromise His righteous standard.

Two, we must pray without wrath, malice or anger in our hearts against anyone. In a local church setting, we must relate with one another in love for our prayers to be potent. Interpersonal harmony is a resource of incalculable value for the prayer life of the church. The need for believers who are saved to be sanctified cannot be over emphasized. No wonder Jesus took time to pray for the sanctification of His disciples (John 17:17,21). A sanctified heart is devoid of wrath, malice and unforgiving spirit which tend to undermine the strength of believers’ prayers.

Three, acceptable prayers must be offered in faith without doubting. **“But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways”** (James 1:6-8). Faith is a prerequisite for receiving answers to prayers; without it, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

Question 4: What are the conditions for a believer’s prayer to be answered?

CHARGE ON GODLY DRESSING AND CONDUCT AMONG WOMEN (1 Timothy 2:9-15; Titus 2:3-5; Isaiah 3:16-24; 1 Peter 3:3,4; 2 Timothy 3:15; 1 Timothy 5:14; Deuteronomy 22:5; Revelation 2:20)

“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works” (1 Timothy 2:9,10). Here, women who profess faith in Christ are charged to be modest in their apparel. They are to adorn themselves with ornaments of faith, charity and holiness with sobriety (verse 15). Because of women’s tendency to surpass others in their outlook, Paul the apostle admonished them to dress modestly in order to reflect the godliness which they profess. This should be accompanied by good works. As believers, our dressing should not be a source of temptation to other people. Rather, it should demonstrate the grace of God in our lives. True believers please the Lord in all things, including their dressing.

Question 5: Why should Christian women be modest in their dressing?

“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (verses 11,12). Here, Paul was concerned about orderliness

in their worship services. Apparently, the women in Ephesus were overzealous in their new-found freedom in Christ. But the Apostle firmly asserted that since God first created man before the woman and her subsequent yielding to the deception of the devil (verses 13,14), he would not permit women to usurp authority and lord it over men. Rather, they should be submissive and learn in quietness. According to the scriptures, women are weaker vessels (1 Peter 3:7). This does not suggest, however, that they are inferior. Aquila and his wife, Priscilla, expounded the way of God more perfectly unto Apollos. In spite of the prohibition, godly women ought to teach their children the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Timothy had known the holy Scriptures from childhood through his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 3:15; 1:5).

Paul concluded his admonition to women with a word of comfort and encouragement. Future, final and full salvation awaits women who are faithful in their God-appointed role, with a condition: **“if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety”** (verse 15) to the very end. These activities and attitudes constitute the “good works” with which they are to clothe themselves. Irrespective of gender, every believer’s work will be tried and rewarded. And **“if any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward”** (1 Corinthians 3:14).

DAILY BIBLE READING				
MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Acts	15	2 Kings	22
TUE	“	16	“	23
WED	“	17	“	24-25
THUR	“	18	1 Chronicles	1
FRI	“	19	“	2
SAT	“	20	“	3-4
SUN	“	21	“	5

800 Lesson

QUALIFICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

MEMORY VERSE: “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2).

TEXT: 1 Timothy 3:1-16

The strength of any organization depends so much on the quality of its leaders. As pillars, the stronger they are the more solid and sound the institution they represent. Leaders give direction and motivation to drive the wheel of progress in any establishment. It follows then that any mistakes in their appointment will be costly. When Nebuchadnezzar, a heathen Babylonian monarch, wanted to recruit some leaders to handle royal assignments in his kingdom, he specified their qualifications. He requested **“Children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king’s palace...”** (Daniel 1:4). Our God is the King of kings and deserves nothing less. Therefore, appointments of people into leadership positions in the church should be done carefully and prayerfully using the blueprint provided in the Scriptures.

Also, Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, offered him a very useful piece of advice on leadership qualifications. He said: **“Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens”** (Exodus 18:21). In the New Testament, the Apostles prayed and asked God to guide them before they chose Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:23-26).

In our text, Paul wrote to Timothy, the first bishop of the church at Ephesus, on the qualifications of persons to be appointed to the positions of bishops and deacons. The word translated 'bishop' in the King James Version of the Bible in Greek is, Episkopos, meaning overseer. This word indicates the type, nature or character of work undertaken by occupiers of that office. Likewise, the Greek word for 'deacon' is diakonuos. This is sometimes translated 'servant' or 'minister' (an old English word for servant).

Question 1: Why should appointments into leadership positions in the church be carefully done?

PASTORAL QUALITIES OF A BISHOP (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Philipians 1:1; 2:15 Titus 1:6-9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Timothy 2:24)

“This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (1 Timothy 3:1). Aspiring to lead, pastor or oversee the flock of God is a desirable ambition. The world may belittle God’s servants, hold them in sheer scorn and persecute them, but heaven appreciates their work and labor. The office of a bishop may not be attractive to some because it lacks worldly honor, but for those who are called, it is **“a good work”**. People of this world desire positions not primarily to serve but for the honor and advantage they attract. However, in God’s kingdom, **“it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant”** (Matthew 20:26,27).

Question 2: What is the difference between leadership positions in the world and in the kingdom of God?

Church leadership is held to the highest standard and measured against the highest esteem. The Apostle is unequivocal with the qualities expected from those who desire to be overseers (bishops), pastors and leaders. **“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given**

to hospitality, apt to teach" (1 Timothy 3:2). To be blameless is to be innocent, righteous and guiltless. He is to be **"...without spot, unrebukable"** (1 Timothy 6:14) in the sight of God. **Two**, he must be **"the husband of one wife"**, not a polygamist. A bishop is not someone who issues a bill of divorce to one woman, and then takes another (Matthew 19:3-9; 1 Corinthians 7:12). **Three**, he must be **"vigilant"** or watchful against Satan and his wiles so as not to fall prey (1 Peter 5:8). He must be vigilant against false doctrines, false brethren and doctrinal error. **Four**, he must be **"sober"**, serious, temperate and moderate in all his actions; not frivolous and lousy.

Five, a bishop must be **"of good behavior"**. In other words, he must be pleasant, transparent and honest. He is good to people within and outside the church (Galatians 6:10). **Six**, he must be **"given to hospitality"** (Romans 12:13; 1 Peter 4:9). He is open-handed, ready to share God's blessings with others. **Seven**, a bishop is **"apt to teach"**, that is, he is capable and willing to communicate and instruct others with the knowledge of God's word (2 Timothy 2:24). His preaching is not only clear and coherent, it impacts the lives of sinners and saints alike. He must be bold and courageous to declare the whole truth of the word of God.

Eight, a bishop must **"not be given to wine"**. In the Old Testament, priests were commanded not to drink wine whenever they went in to minister, lest they should pervert the law (Leviticus 10:8,9). In like manner, true Christians are to abstain from it because **"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise"** (Proverbs 20:1). **Nine**, a bishop is **"no striker"**, that is, he is not quarrelsome, confrontational and ready to strike back at those who displease him. Instead, he is mild, gentle and loving.

"And the servant of the Lord must not strive..." (2 Timothy 2:24). **Ten**, a bishop must **"not be greedy of filthy lucre"**. He is not in the ministry for mundane, pecuniary reasons. He is not given to base gain; neither does he use wrong methods to enrich himself (Titus 1:7).

Eleven, he is “**patient**”, meek and gentle. Like Christ, the Bishop and Shepherd of our souls was patient with His disciples, a shepherd must be patient with the sheep. Twelve, he is “**not a brawler**”; which means he is not contentious but quiet and peaceable. **Thirteen**, a bishop is “**not covetous**” or a lover of money or someone who desires to use his office for personal gain (1 Timothy 6:9,10; Hebrews 13:5). Judas Iscariot lost his “**bishoprick**” because of covetousness (Acts 1:20).

Fourteen, a bishop must be “**one that ruleth well his own house**”. His family must be a model, worthy of emulation by other families in the church, “**having his children in subjection with all gravity**”. A man that cannot take care of his family is not qualified to lead a church. **Fifteen**, a bishop is “**not a novice**”. He must not be a new convert, but mature with a deep knowledge of the word of God, “**lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil**”. **Sixteen**, a bishop must be of good reputation among the neighbors. Bad reports bring reproach to a person’s preaching and message.

Question 3: Why should a Christian leader be sober and vigilant?

PROVEN QUALIFICATIONS OF A DEACON (1 Timothy 3:8-13; Philippians 1:1; Acts 6:3,4)

“**Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre**” (1 Timothy 3:8). In the early church, deacons were to take care of the physical needs of the church. They were to support the ministers in providing for the poor and needy (Acts 6.4). “**Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business**” (Acts 6:3). Their qualifications are also stated because they are servants of God.

One, he must be “**grave**” (Titus 2:2). He must be serious and solemn in manner and able to make careful consideration. Two, he is “**not double-tongued**”. He does not say different things to different persons on

the same subject. Three, he is **“not given to much wine”**. Taking strong wine is generally condemned in the Scripture (Proverbs 20:1; Habakkuk 2:15; Proverbs 23:30,31; 31:6; Genesis 9:21,24; 19:33,34). Four, a deacon should **“not (be) greedy of filthy lucre”** (as applicable to a bishop). Five, He is able to hold **“the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience”**. He earnestly contends for the faith once delivered to the saints while ensuring a good conscience (Jude 3; Acts 24:16).

Six, a deacon must **“be proved”** (1 Timothy 3:10). He must have a proven qualification for the office. Seven, he must **“be blameless”** (1 Timothy 3:2,10). Eight, **“Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things”** (1 Timothy 3:11). These qualifications of a deacon’s wife are also applicable to all Christian women. Nine, **“Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife”**. This divine injunction on marriage is not only for deacons and bishops but for all Christians. Ten, deacons must be **“ruling their children and their own houses well.”** Philip, the evangelist, was a deacon in the early church and did mighty exploits for the God, yet he had time to bring up his children in the way of the Lord (Acts 6:5; 21:8,9).

For taking such pain and patience to elucidate the qualifications for appointments into church leadership positions, we learn, first, that leadership in the church should not be taken for granted. It is an important area that should be approached scripturally. Second, we should not be in a hurry to appoint just anyone to lead the people of God, seeing the welfare and eternity of souls are at stake (1 Timothy 5:22). Third, character counts more than charisma as it is easy to destroy our messages with our manner. Note that many of the qualifications border on holy living. Fourth, the family life of a leader cannot be divorced from his ministry. A leader may possess good character but be disqualified because of the condition of his family. Fifth, guidelines for leadership positions should be the same in all churches of God.

Question 4: Why should emphasis be placed on leadership qualifications?

PAUL'S COUNSEL TO YOUNG TIMOTHY (1 Timothy 3:14-16; 1:3,4,18; 6:20; 2 Timothy 2:16; Titus 1:14; 3:9)

The Apostle gives the reasons for his writing. **“These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”** (1 Timothy 3:14,15). While he waited for an opportunity to visit the church at Ephesus again, he would not leave Timothy in the dark on how to administer the church. The aforementioned were meant to provide him with clear guidelines and instructions for church administration and leadership.

One of Apostle Paul's methods of overseeing the churches was to write to them. Before he visited the brethren in Rome, he wrote to them (Romans 1:9-11); he did the same to the Colossians, Laodiceans and Thessalonians (Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27). Modern technology has made communication to a large number of churches and dispersed brethren easy and possible at the same time. Leaders should deploy these devices - satellite transmission, text/multimedia messages, emails, etc. - to reach the world for Christ. However, writing should not prevent travelling to visit the churches whenever there is opportunity (1 Timothy 3:14; Romans 1:10,11).

The New Testament church is the household of God, an assembly of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth. We should always be conscious of the presence of God in our assemblies, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). Conscious that God is in our midst, doctrinal truth should not be compromised. The pillar of truth should be upheld and strengthened to ensure a sustaining of old-time biblical truths.

The Apostle concludes this chapter with a revelation which he calls the “mystery of godliness”. **“And without**

controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Timothy 3:16). This revelation is not subject to debate, dispute or argument. It is a mystery because, it cannot be explained by human wisdom or understanding. God was manifest in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16; Isaiah 7:14; John 1:14); justified in the Spirit (Romans 1:3,4); seen of angels (Matthew 4:11; Acts 1:10,11); preached unto the Gentiles (Ephesians 2:11-18; 3:6); believed on in the world (Matthews 4:22-24) and received up into glory (Ephesians 1:20-22).

It is not enough to have mere knowledge of the mystery of godliness; we need to benefit from it. This requires that sinners and backsliders repent of all sins and exercise faith in Christ and believers abide gracefully in Him **“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”** (Ephesians 4:13).

DAILY BIBLE READING				
MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Acts	22	1 Chronicles	6
TUE	“	23	“	7
WED	“	24-25	“	8
THUR	“	26	“	9
FRI	“	27	“	10-11
SAT	“	28	“	12
SUN	Romans	1	“	13-14

801 *Lesson* WARNING AGAINST APOSTASY

MEMORY VERSE: “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Timothy 4:16).

TEXT: 1 Timothy 4:1-16

Apostle Paul enumerated the qualifications for enlisting workers in the sacred service of the ministry in the previous chapter. He also charged the ministers of God to be exemplary in carrying out their responsibilities in the house of God (1 Timothy 3:15). In the present chapter, he warns believers and ministers of God about the demon inspired doctrines of the apostates or false teachers that will characterize the last days. He emphasizes the need to faithfully teach the truth to combat error and silence the false teachers. He prescribes ways of preserving oneself and the flock until the coming of Christ when we shall obtain the final salvation.

SATAN-INSPIRED DOCTRINES OF THE APOSTATES IN THE LATTER DAYS (1 Timothy 4:1-5; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; Proverbs 18:22; Hebrews 13:4; Matthew 19:12; 1 Corinthians 7:7-9; Corinthians 8:8 Genesis 9:3; Leviticus 7:26,27; Acts 15:20,29).

Question 1: How do false teachers and apostates get their doctrines?

The essence of Paul’s message is to enlighten and instruct ministers and their flocks about the origin of false teachings and the danger of imbibing them. **“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils”** (1 Timothy 4:1). Apostle Paul makes it clear that false teachings do not emanate primarily from false teachers and apostates but from the devils or evil spirits. He

therefore alerted Timothy of the danger these false doctrines that will characterize the last days (1 Timothy 4:1-6; 2 Timothy 3:1-7). He hinted that believers who give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils will backslid, imbibe, embrace false doctrines and become tools for spreading them. Having lost the grace of God and become spiritually deformed, they will be **“Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth”** (verse 2,3). The Apostle specifically mentioned their errors so that believers will not imbibe them. Aside covering lies with hypocrisy, they possess hardened hearts/consciences that embolden them to teach and practice celibacy and abstinence from meats.

The Scripture affirms concerning marriage that: **“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the LORD”** and that **“Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge”** (Proverbs 18:22; Hebrews 13:4). Despite this injunction, some so-called Christians still deliberately or ignorantly misinterpret the scriptures to support error and practice of celibacy (Matthew 19:12; 1 Corinthians 7:7-9). Even among those who claim to know God and believe in marriage, erroneous teachings and practices of polygamy, divorce and same-sex marriage are strangely gaining acceptance.

These apostates also discourage people from eating meat which the Apostle said, **“God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth”**. God created and provided meats for our nourishment for which we should appreciate and praise Him. But because belief and knowledge of the truth are crucial to responding appropriately to God, seducing spirits and devils inspired that error in order to rob God of His praise for this provision. The Apostle clarifies that **“every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God**

and prayer". Note that eating or abstaining from meat does not show spirituality. **"But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse"** (1 Corinthians 8:8). It is part of His care and love that He has given us all things to enjoy, including meat. **"Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things"** (Genesis 9:3). The Scripture however condemns eating of meat with blood (Leviticus 7:26,27; Acts 15:20,29). False teachers forbid what God has allowed and approve what God forbids.

Question 2: Mention some doctrines of devils that were spreading among believers in Ephesus.

Perversion and rebellion of false teachers could be noticed in the Scriptures (Revelation 2:14). Jezebel, the whorish prophetess in the church in Thyatira misled the people of God into fornication through her false teaching. Apostle Paul also cited the examples of **"... Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some"** (2 Timothy 2:17,18). We are living in the last days in which many other damnable errors such as purgatory, annihilation, infant baptism and eternal security are freely peddled by false teachers.

Question 3: Mention some errors that apostates teach.

Having been deceived by evil spirits and departed from the faith, false teachers are actively using the doctrines of devils to subvert the faith of believers. **"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ"** (Jude 4). The ultimate aim of false teachers or apostates is to deceive, derail and lead unsuspecting saints to hell. So, believers are warned to repent of and forsake all erroneous beliefs and separate from such deceivers.

SACRED DUTIES OF FAITHFUL MINISTERS OF CHRIST IN THE LATTER DAYS (1 Timothy 4:6-11; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; John 8:32; 2 John 1,2; 2 John 10,11).

Paul the apostle acknowledged that Timothy had received a higher level of spiritual nourishment **“in the words of faith and of good doctrine”** but will only become **“a good minister of Jesus Christ”** by living up to his calling to constantly remind the **“brethren”** of the truths of the Scripture. Believers should desire higher spiritual nourishment of the Word for spiritual service. True ministers of God must not only expose the source of errors and the peddlers but also continually teach the truth wholeheartedly and convincingly to preserve the flock of God from imbibing falsehood. Secondly, a good minister of Jesus Christ must not only be able to recognize error but also reject it. The Apostle gestured our expected attitude in his instruction to Timothy to **“refuse profane and old wives’ fables...”**. This refers to superstitious and mythical stories that have no bases in the Scripture. Many preachers today only feed their congregations with tales and fables.

Thirdly, the Apostle instructs us to exercise, train or develop ourselves in godliness, though not condemning physical exercise. Every faithful minister of Christ must live a godly lifestyle and exalt godliness above fables or physical exercise. **“For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation”** (1 Timothy 4:8,9). Godliness should be emphasized as its universal acceptance and eternal value cannot be faulted. Holiness is indispensable. It attracts temporal and eternal benefits; without it, no one shall see the Lord. The genuinely converted soul must be thoroughly taught to see the need to thirst for and possess holiness which is the nature of God. The grace of God produces godliness in the life of a believer. **“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”** (Titus 2:11,12).

Question 4: What are the antidotes to the spread of false doctrines in these last days?

Fourthly, we must continue to wholeheartedly labor, win and preserve souls in the Kingdom. The Apostle reveals that the profits of godliness in **“all things”** in life and eternity were the reasons for his untiring labor for the Lord and should be the incentive that motivate us to fight doctrinal error and remain **“stedfast, 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). Fifthly, a faithful minister of Christ must be willing and ready to suffer persecution in defense of the truth. Withstanding the infiltration of falsehood will bring criticism and confrontation from brethren who have embraced error and we must not chicken out of the battle for the truth. We have a great responsibility to preserve the unadulterated truths of the Scripture and we must be faithful and dogged in doing it lest we endanger our souls (2 John 10,11). The judgment of God awaits false teachers and all who imbibe and practice error. Sixthly, ministers of God must faithfully teach the truth to their members. **“These things command and teach”** (1 Timothy 4:11). False teachings must be sternly dispelled through the systematic teaching of the whole counsel of God.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF GODLY MINISTERS IN THE LATTER DAYS: (1 Timothy 4:12-16; 2 Timothy 1:7; John 5:39; 2 Timothy 2:15; Romans 2:1; 1 Corinthians 12:31)

The reason for Christ’s sacrifice is to make sinners godly and to preserve believers in godliness. It is for this same reason God gave us His word and ministers to preach/teach it and warn us of the danger of apostasy. Since there is the possibility for the careless believer and minister to backslide and become apostate, every believer and minister has the responsibility to keep fit spiritually by exercising themselves unto godliness.

Like Timothy, all believers and ministers of Christ are required to be courageous and fearless to declare the

truth regardless of their age; **“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”** (2 Timothy 1:7). Two, they must also live by the doctrines they preach and serve as **“an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity”**. Three, they must devote themselves to reading and studying the Scriptures to be able to rightly divide the word of truth. Four, they must be diligent to preach and teach the doctrines of Christ to deliver the flock from error. Five, ministers should develop and make use of their spiritual gifts for the edification of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:31). Six, they must keep meditating on the Word and devote their entire lives to it because it is crucial to their success in life and ministry. Seven, they must pay attention to their character while continuing to believe, teach and obey the doctrines to deliver themselves and their hearers from the snares of the false teachers and obtain the final salvation.

Question 5: How are ministers of God expected to preserve themselves and the flock till the coming of Christ?

DAILY BIBLE READING				
	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Romans	2-3	1 Chronicles	15-16
TUE	“	4-5	“	17-18
WED	“	6-7	“	19-20
THUR	“	8	“	21-22
FRI	“	9-10	“	23-34
SAT	“	11-12	“	25-26
SUN	“	13-14	“	27-28

802 Lesson

PRECEPTS FOR HANDLING ELDERS AND WIDOWS

MEMORY VERSE: “Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; honor widows that are widows indeed” (1 Timothy 5:1,3).

TEXT: 1 Timothy 5:1-25

Pastoral work is an arduous task which requires careful management of physical, human and spiritual resources. Therefore, Christian shepherds and leaders must depend on scriptural guidance especially in relating with the never-dying souls under their watch. In carrying out their oversight functions as shepherds of the flock, pastors must relate with the different categories of people in the church with wisdom and tact. In doing so, they must take cognizance of the age, status and other circumstances of each person. As part of his mentoring and modelling ministry to young Timothy, Apostle Paul advises that church elders be treated as fathers, the younger men as brethren with love and meekness, the elder women as mothers and the younger women as sisters with purity (1 Timothy 5:1,2). He spells out the blueprint for handling the different categories of persons in the church of God.

PRECEPTS FOR HANDLING ELDERS (1 Timothy 5:1,2,17-19; 2 Timothy 4:2; 1 Peter 5:1-5; James 5:14; Joel 1:14; 2:16; Numbers 11:16,25; Joshua 24:1,31; Judges 2:7)

“Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren” (1 Timothy 5:1). The word “elder” is used in two senses in the Scriptures; it stands for an elderly person, that is, one advanced in age or simply one comparatively older than some other persons (Job 15:10; 32:4; Genesis 29:16; Luke 15:25; Romans 9:12).

This is the natural sense. In its ecclesiastical meaning, it stands for an officer in the church, who is also referred to as overseer, bishop, deacon or presbyter (1 Timothy 3:1,8; 4:14; 1 Peter 5:1; James 5:14). The focus of this study, however, is the ecclesiastical use of the word.

Allegations against an elder must be confirmed by two or three witnesses. This is a divine imperative (Deuteronomy 19:15). Because elders are those whose business it is to preach and correct others, persons who are displeased with their duties may choose to raise false allegations against them. Caution is therefore required in verifying the veracity of such reports. If and when an elder is found culpable, the Bible commands that he should be entreated as a father. It must be borne in mind that the goal of rebuke or reproof is not mere demonstration of authority, neither is it to belittle the offender or send him out of the church. The sacred purpose is to make the person a better servant of Jesus Christ.

In God's economy, character supersedes gifts, and anyone who seeks a leadership position in the church must esteem character above personality, academic achievement and administrative skills. Elders or officers in the church of Christ have their qualifications and responsibilities spelt out in the word of God. A leader or an elder must be one who is saved, sanctified and Spirit-filled so that he can be a role model of righteousness and true holiness, in word, actions and reactions (1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Peter 5:3). An elder must both cherish and possess humility which is an inestimable virtue. We must follow the footsteps of our Lord and Savior **“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”** (Philippians 2:6-8).

<p>Question 1: What is the scriptural prescription for handling disciplinary issues affecting elders?</p>
--

Elders are appointed in the church of God, not to merely occupy positions of authority but to carry out duties and responsibilities that make for the spiritual growth and progress of the church.

Unfortunately, in many Christian assemblies, some so-called elders and leaders have turned themselves to lords over God's heritage, and their lifestyle is anything but exemplary. Such elders give themselves to covetousness and spiritual lassitude. By their conduct, they pollute the church and impede her progress. On the contrary, true elders in Christ's church should **"Feed the flock of God... taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock"** (1 Peter 5:2,3). They must teach the sound word of God that liberates souls from sin, restores backsliders and silences peddlers of false doctrine.

Question 2: Explain the role of elders in the church and the attitude of members towards them.

In addition to teaching members the word of God, elders are required to pray for the sick and intercede for the afflicted James 5:14; Joel 1:14; 2:16). In the Old Testament dispensation, elders were instructed and expected to support key leaders like Moses (Numbers 11:16, 25) and Joshua (Joshua 24:1,31). They are not expected to do less in the New Testament era. Elders and leaders are to work in harmony with the pastor-in-charge to fulfil the divine purpose of nourishing the church of the living God (Acts 20:28).

Elders who are diligent, focused and faithful in preaching the gospel, instructing believers and living exemplary lives are to be duly rewarded. **"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, the laborer is worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses"** (1

Timothy 5:17-19). Apart from being well provided for, they are to be honored with due respect and submission (Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 5:5). This will encourage and motivate them to consecrate more of their time, talent and resources to serve Christ and the church.

PRINCIPLES FOR HELPING WIDOWS (1 Timothy 5:3-16; 2 Samuel 14:5; Psalm 146:9; Proverbs 15:25; Deuteronomy 10:18; 24:17,19,20,21; Acts 6:1).

God has special concern and care for widows. This is why He said, **“Honor widows that are widows indeed.”** Widows are women whose husbands had died (2 Samuel 14:5). Because of their helpless state, God takes great interest in them (Psalm 146:9; Proverbs 15:25). Thus, He commands that they should not be oppressed (Deuteronomy 10:18; 24:17,19,20,21). When they are neglected and maltreated, there is always an outcry by concerned persons (Acts 6:1). God’s concern for their welfare is further underscored in James 1:27: **“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”**

Question 3: What is the responsibility of the church towards widows?

Borrowing a clue from God’s premium on widows’ welfare, Apostle Paul draws our attention to this all-important duty of caring for them. Both the leadership and laity must make caring for widows a matter of priority. In doing this however, certain principles or rules must be followed. One, widows to be supported by the church must be those who are righteous and devoted.

They should not be people who live in pleasure or given to licentious lifestyle. Rather, they are those who trust in God and continue in prayer (1 Timothy 5:3,5,6; Jeremiah 49:11; Luke 2:37). Two, the church is not to be charged with the responsibility of supporting widows who have relations who are capable of taking care of them. It is the duty of children to take care of their needy parents. Three, widows who may live on the charity of the church

must be those not below sixty years old. They must have been the wife of one man, good housekeepers, reputed for hospitality, charity and good works (1 Timothy 5:9,10). Four, younger widows are not to be reckoned with because before long they may be tempted to break their engagement and commitment to Christ. For this reason, younger women should marry, bear children, take care of their homes and not give chance to Satan and his agents to denigrate the gospel and church of the living God.

From the foregoing, we learn that the church should care for needy brethren in general and widows in particular. In distributing to the necessities of the saints, care must be taken to ensure that the people who receive help are truly those that need it. God's resources should not be used to encourage those who live filthy lives and sow discord among brethren.

Finally, those who profess faith in Christ must be diligent to provide for those of their households and cater for their needy relations, including widows because “ ..**.if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel**” (1 Timothy 5:8).

PATHWAY TO HOLY LIVING (1 Timothy 5:20-25; 3:15; Titus 1:13; 2 John 10,11; Proverbs 20:1; Habakkuk 2:15; 1 John 1:9; Proverbs 28:13).

“Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality” (1 Timothy 5:20,21). Godly members and leaders are great assets to the church. So, leaders and members who commit sin must be rebuked and disciplined openly so that others will fear and be deterred from sinning (1 Timothy 3:20; Titus 1:13; Deuteronomy 13:11). In carrying out disciplinary measures, however, the pastor or leader must desist from every shade of partiality or favoritism since God is the ultimate Judge.

Question 4: How should the church handle erring members and workers?

“Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins; keep thyself pure” (1 Timothy 5:22). In appointing leaders and elders in the church, the pastor should avoid unnecessary pressure or haste. He must take time to do proper investigation and evaluation to ensure the appointees meet the spiritual and moral conditions spelt out in the Word. Those ordained to the position of leadership must be faithful to the Lord in all things. Negligence on the part of the pastor in this regard will lead to the appointment of the wrong persons. It behooves pastors, leaders and members to maintain purity in **“...the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”** (1 Timothy 3:15). God commands that His children be holy because He is holy. Holiness is a proof of our obedience, loyalty and allegiance to God. It is also a precondition for seeing God at the end of life (1 Peter 1:14-16; Hebrews 12:14).

Apostle Paul’s advice to Timothy that he should **“drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities”** (1 Timothy 5:23) was for a medical purpose. Some Bible scholars opine that Timothy’s stomach trouble was attributable to the alkaline in the water at Ephesus at that time. Paul therefore advised him to apply little wine to the water to neutralize its harmful effect. According to ancient Greek writings on medicine, wine used for the stomach was often non-alcoholic. So, people who use Paul’s advice as an excuse to indulge in alcohol go contrary to God’s command. It must be stated that the Scriptures condemn drinking of alcohol or strong drink in strong terms and pronounce a curse on anyone who offers it to others (Proverbs 20:1; Habakkuk 2:15).

“Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid” (1 Timothy 5:24, 25). These references imply that there are open sins and there are hidden sins. Open sins

are those confessed and repented of; so, they are judged already. This is the path of honour and is acceptable to God (1 John 1:9). On the contrary, some men's sins are hidden - not confessed or repented of - and these will face the wrath of God (Proverbs 28:13).

All good works done in the name of Christ will however be rewarded, whether they be open or hidden, **“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister”** (Hebrews 6:10). This should encourage believers to be faithful, fruitful and fervent in good works.

DAILY BIBLE READING				
	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Romans	15-16	1 Chronicles	29
TUE	1 Corinthians	1-2	2 Chronicles	1-2
WED	“	3-4	“	3-4
THUR	“	5-6	“	5-6
FRI	“	7	“	7-8
SAT	“	8-9	“	9-10
SUN	“	10-11	“	11-12

803 Lesson

GODLINESS WITH CONTENTMENT

MEMORY VERSE: “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out” (1 Timothy 6:6,7).

TEXT: 1 Timothy 6:1-21

In this closing chapter of Apostle Paul’s first epistle to Timothy, he instructs him to teach and exhort Christian servants to imbibe work ethics that should regulate their relationship with their masters. Timothy was also required to effectively resist false teachers and prophets and their errors, address the rich (employers/masters) on scriptural conducts expected of them and perpetuate godliness through his lifestyle and commitment to unadulterated teachings of Christ. Like Paul, true ministers need to mentor and groom young believers who will be able to lead well, prepare and preserve the church for the coming of the Lord. Young ministers should also be willing to accept responsibilities and serve the Lord wholeheartedly.

GOD’S NAME AND DOCTRINE ADORNED THROUGH GODLY SERVANTHOOD (1 Timothy 6:1,2; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22-25; Romans 12:11; 2 Corinthians 5:9; Ephesians 4:28).

In Ephesus, there were frequent conflicts between servants and their masters, between employers and employees. It was strange to the Apostle that this also occurred among believers in the church at Ephesus. This was the outcome of false teaching of liberal Christianity that made mockery of the virtues of submission to authority and contentment; teachings that reinforced greed, avarice and evil surmising between servants and their masters (Ephesians 5:6; 4:17-19,31). Believers who were either apprentices or employees in the Ephesian church were dishonoring their unbelieving masters.

Their insubordination attracted derogatory comments against God whom they claimed to serve and against His doctrine which they claimed had transformed their lives. Even servants who had fellow believers as masters despised them.

Question 1: State Apostle Paul's teaching on servant-master relationship.

Paul had to restate the teachings of Christ on master-servant relationship. He said: **“Let as many servants [apprentice or employee] as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed”** (1 Timothy 6:1). It would be blasphemous to the name of God for believers to carry placards, riot, steal or take laws into their hands while making their demands in the workplace. We are expected to honor all authorities placed over us. **“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God”** (Romans 13:1).

Servants and employees are required to obey their masters **“...according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eye service, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men...”** (Ephesians 6:5-8). While there is need to be hardworking, we must not do so just to win awards in the workplace but because we are commanded and would be rewarded by the Lord: **“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons”** (Colossians 3:23-25). Heaven-bound believers are required to apply godly principles of faithfulness, diligence, ownership spirit, fairness and resourcefulness in their work.

Question 2: In what practical ways can believers exhibit godliness in the work place?

“And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort” (1 Timothy 6:2). Christians who are privileged to have a believing employer [or employee] should not abuse the privilege. Rather, they should see it as a means to serve and honor Christ. **“Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the LORD, whether he be bond or free”** (Ephesians 6:8). God expects transformed apprentices or employees to be His epistles whose lives affirm the truth and power of the gospel, and thus bring conviction and conversion to their ungodly masters and glory to the name of Christ.

COMMITMENT TO SOUND DOCTRINE, GODLINESS AND CONTENTMENT: (1 Timothy 6:3-16; Acts 6:7; Jude 3; Matthew 7:21-23; Philippians 3:19; Romans 16:17,18).

Paul the apostle linked the unruly behavior of servants in the Ephesian church to false teachings that oppose sound doctrines of Christ which promote godliness and godly lifestyle. **“If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness ...men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself”** (1 Timothy 6:3-5). These peddlers of falsehood who deliberately **“consent not”** to Christ’s doctrine display pride, spiritual ignorance and argumentative disposition which fuel envy, strife, railings, evil surmising and perversion.

Their **“corrupt minds”** and spiritual destitution make them rely heavily on human reasoning or supposition that **“gain is godliness”**. This falsehood makes Christian servants become unruly as they seek to become rich by all means.

The Apostle further explains that prioritizing on gain or making it a synonym for godliness reveals a life that

is bereft of contentment and bedeviled with **“love of money”** which is **“the root of all evil”**. He states the consequences of a rat-race for quick wealth, greed and lack of contentment. **“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”** (verses 9,10). It is a sad commentary that the names of Achan, Balaam, Gehazi and Judas Iscariot now illustrate the danger of making a shipwreck of faith for covetous practices.

To avoid ruining one’s life and those of other believers, the Apostle prescribes commitment to sound doctrine, godliness and contentment. His instructions to Timothy, and by extension, to us are clear and practicable. One, **“teach”** sound doctrine of Christ (verse 2). Two, **“exhort”** believers to obey the word of God. Three, **“withdraw”** from and avoid false teachers/prophets and their materials (verse 5; 2 Timothy 2:15-18). Four, **“be... content”** and thankful for who you are and what you have. Five, **“flee”** covetous practices, love of money, inordinate ambition and unhealthy competition or comparison either in the church or in the world (verses 8,11; Mark 8:36,37). Six, **“follow”**, pursue, possess and practice **“righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness”** (verse 11). Seven, **“fight”** the good fight of faith by contending and watching against infiltration of error that damns the soul while wisely retaining eternal life (verse 12). Eight, **“keep”** God’s commandment with a spotless and blameless lifestyle perpetually till Christ comes, the same way He did not compromise before Pilate while He was suffering (verse 14; 2 Timothy 4:2).

Above all, we must love and exalt God above money or wealth and live in constant expectation of Christ’s return (1 Timothy 6:10, 14-16; Luke 16:13).

There is no better time to fight the good fight of faith than now. Concerted efforts must be made between church

leaders and members to ensure that new converts are followed up and taught the sound doctrines so that they can be fully integrated into the local church. Besides, adequate screening must be done during and after the process of mobilizing would-be workers to bar false teachers from sneaking into the fold to wreak havoc. Since falsehood thrives where truth is hoarded and unknown, leaders and members must join forces to preach the whole Word and maintain a lifestyle of godliness.

Question 3: How can we fight the good fight of faith?

GODLY COUNSEL TO THE RICH (1 Timothy 6:17-21; 1:19,20; 2 Timothy 2:16-18; Ephesians 4:17-19; Act 19:13,24-28,35; Deuteronomy 24:14,15)

Apostle Paul was a balanced and faithful minister who was not afraid to speak to anyone about the gospel that saves souls. He rounded off this epistle with grave exhortations to believers who were rich - obviously referring to employers in the Ephesian church. Believers there were surrounded by false preachers whose teachings favored the rich and despised the poor (Acts 19:24- 29,33,34,38). Some brethren were amassing wealth for themselves at the expense of their employees without due compensation (James 5:1- 5; Ephesians 4:17- 19; 6:9). No believer should ever use his God-given wealth, position or privileges to oppress people either in the church, at home or workplace. **“Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates: At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the LORD, and it be sin unto thee”** (Deuteronomy 24:14,15).

Question 4: How should believers who are employers treat their employees?

The command to Timothy was to **“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded,**

nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate” (1 Timothy 6:17-21). The Apostle wanted believers to know that they are: one, stewards of whatever God has given them which they will give account of (John 3: 27; James 1:17); two, to trust and love God, the Giver, not the gift. **“Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them”** (Psalm 62:10); three, to be rich in good works, willingly giving to God’s work and those in need (1 Timothy 6:18; Romans 12:7,8); and four, to set their hearts on eternal treasures by **“Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life”** (1 Timothy 6:19).

Question 5: Mention ways believers could use their God-given wealth or privileges.

“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen” (1 Timothy 6:20,21).

Timothy’s good example in keeping the word of God and preaching the total gospel would impact other believers, help them obey the mandate to live a godly and contented life and lead to a spiritually formidable church that can fight, contend and ward off wolves and false prophets with their doctrines. As we await the imminent return of the Lord, we must show godly examples in our homes, workplaces, communities and church, and remain committed to preaching the unadulterated gospel that saves, sanctifies and takes to heaven.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1 Corinthians	12-13	2 Chronicles	13-14
TUE	“	14	“	15-16
WED	“	15	“	17-18
THUR	“	16	“	19-20
FRI	2 Corinthians	1-2	“	21-22
SAT	“	3-4	“	23-24
SUN	“	5-6	“	25

END OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

BEGINNING OF SPECIAL STUDIES

804 Lesson

THE HOLY BIBLE

MEMORY VERSE: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

TEXT: 2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:16-21;
Revelation 22:18,19

The Holy Bible is the inspired word of God. It contains the mind and plan of God for all people in the entire universe. It is the final authority in all matters concerning Christian conduct and work to everyone who believes in the true God.

Question 1: Who is the Author of the Bible?

THE INSPIRATION AND UNIQUENESS OF THE BIBLE
(2 Timothy 3:15-17; Matthew 4:4; Isaiah 7:14; Ezekiel 36:19; 2 Chronicles 7:19,20; Psalm 19:7; James 1:25).

As the inspired word of God, the Bible is the only source of knowledge of the almighty God to mankind. It is the contact point between finite man and the infinite God. And its prime purpose is to give mankind the revelation of God.

The Bible is severally referred to as the Holy Scriptures, the oracles of God, the Book of the Lord, the word of God, the word of Christ and the word of life (Romans 1:2; 2 Timothy 3:15; Romans 3:2; Hebrews 5:12; Isaiah 34:16; Mark 7:13; Colossians 3:16; Philippians 2:16). It consists of 66 books, subdivided broadly into 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New. The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic while the New Testament was written in Greek language.

Over 40 writers, drawn from disparate generations spanning a period of over 1600 years, were used by God to write the Bible. Though their occupations, education and social classes were divergent, their theme was the same as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:20).

Question 2: Highlight the qualities that make the Bible unique among all other books.

The inspiration of the authors can be attested to by some peculiar characteristics of the Bible, which are not found in any other book written by man. Such characteristics include its wonderful unity despite the fact that the authors lived at different ages; its versatility as it meets the needs of all people irrespective of race and language ; its superiority to other books; the influence on individuals and nations; its preservation over the centuries; its fulfilled prophecies and its perfection (Matthew 4:4; Isaiah 7:14; Ezekiel 36:19; 2 Chronicles 7:19,20; Psalm 19:7; James 1:25).

The pre-eminence of the Bible makes it indispensable to all men today (Isaiah 8:20; Psalm 119:89). While other books have limited influence on man because they are products of finite minds, the Bible which is God's revelation to man has solution to every problem today. Therefore, no one's education is complete if they are ignorant of the provisions of the Bible. No Christian can live successfully without an adequate grasp of the Bible, and no Christian minister is really qualified for the ministry of the Church of Christ without a thorough knowledge of the Word (2 Timothy 2:15). Without a ready knowledge of the Bible, the Christian worker cannot be effective.

THE THEME AND PURPOSE OF THE BIBLE (John 20:31; Luke 24:25-27; Revelation 1:1; Psalm 119:9,11; Hebrew 4:12; Jeremiah 17:9,10; Psalms 119:105,130; Deuteronomy 8:3; John 21:17; Psalm 19:10; Matthew 4:4; Proverbs 4:20-22; Psalm 107:20; Matthew 8:8; Ephesians 6:17; Matthew 4:1-11)

The central theme of the Bible is Christ and His work of redemption. He is the Old Testament concealed, and the New Testament revealed. To fully understand the Bible and rightly interpret its messages, we must first receive Jesus Christ as Savior and have a clear and definite experience of conversion. Those who do not know Him or have wrong perceptions of Him cannot interpret the Bible appropriately because the carnal man cannot understand the things of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Question 3: What is the central theme of the Bible?

The Bible has a ministry to unbelievers as well as to believers. The goals of the Bible are to: one, bring conviction of sin which leads to repentance and faith in Christ Jesus; two, make believers perfect (Psalm 119:9,11); three, reveal the condition of the heart (Hebrew 4:12; Jeremiah 17:9,10); four, serve as light to guide the believers' feet or way of life (Psalms 119:105;130); five, nourish the soul of the believer as spiritual food (Deuteronomy 8:3; John 21:17; Psalm 19:10; Matthew 4:4); six, heal the body and soul as medicine (Proverbs 4:20- 22; Psalm 107:20; Matthew 8:8); and seven, work as the Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17; Matthew 4:1-11).

Question 4: Mention some things the Bible can do in the lives of sinners and believers.

The Word serves as a mirror to reflect our true spiritual state (James 1:23); a hammer to convict; fire to refine (Jeremiah 23:29); seed to multiply (1 Peter 1:23); water to cleanse (Ephesians 5:26; John 15:3); rain to refresh (Isaiah 55:10); gold to enrich (Psalm 19:7-10); and power to create life and faith (1 Peter 1:23; Romans 10:17).

The Bible is God's inspired revelation of the origin and destiny of all things. It is the power of God unto eternal salvation and the source of present help for the body, soul and spirit (Romans 1:16; John 15:7). It is God's will and testament to man in all ages, revealing the plan of God for man here now and in the next life. It is the record of God's dealing with men; past, present and future. It contains God's message of eternal salvation

to all who believe in Christ and of eternal damnation to those who rebel against the gospel (John 3:18,36).

The purpose of the Bible then is to reveal God to mankind, our need of God and the way to God. Humanity, by searching, cannot find God except He reveals Himself (Job 11:7). The Bible also reveals how to live, and through the fulfilment of its prophecies, all human needs are met. Through the Bible, we receive salvation, sanctification, Holy Ghost baptism, healing, deliverance, protection, etc.

PROFITING FROM THE SCRIPTURES (Matthew 13:3-6,18-21; John 5:39; Psalm 119:40,47,54,72,103; Matthew 22:37; Deuteronomy 30:6; Psalm 73:25; 42:1,2; 63:1; Proverbs 11:24-26; Romans 9:1-3; Matthew 13:44-46; 12:42; Psalm 119:60,101,106; James 1:22-25; Ezra 7:10; Psalms 119:63; 57:7; 108:1; Romans 13:14; Matthew 26:41)

To profit maximally from the study of the Bible, we must remove all hindrances to spiritual receptivity, such as a hardened heart, double mind, pride, carnality and unbelief (James 1:8; Mark 4:15-17; Deuteronomy 8:11-14; Psalm 101:5; Proverbs 18:12; 1 Corinthians 3:1-5; Matthew 13:58; Colossians 2:3).

Every believer in the church today can benefit from the hidden treasures in the Bible. But this would require sacrifices on our part. Treasures are not found except by searching or digging earnestly. Likewise, deep Bible truths need be sought. When we do, we will discover more of Christ.

Question 5: What are the requisite preparations a believer must make to profit maximally from Scriptures?

Certain spiritual preparations are required from believers in order to discover these treasures that would make them develop into the fullness of the stature of Christ. There must be: one, earnest love for the truth for its own sake (Psalm 119:40,47,54,72,103); two, supreme love for God (Matthew 22:37; Deuteronomy

30:6; Psalm 73:25); three, intense desire to know more of Him (Psalm 42:1,2; 63:1); four, strong desire to make Him known to others (Proverbs 11:24-26; Romans 9:1-3); five, willing mind to make personal sacrifice to study (Matthew 13:44-46; 12:42); six, fixed purpose to know and willingness to practice the whole truth (Psalm 119:60,101,106; James 1:22-25; Ezra 7:10; Psalms 119:63; 57:7; 108:1); and seven, prepared mind that will not be diverted to make provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14; Matthew 26:41).

Above all, we must cultivate a regular habit of prayer and resignation to promptly and fully obey the will and word of God.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	2 Corinthians	7-8	2 Chronicles	26-27
TUE	“	9-10	“	28
WED	“	11	“	29
THUR	“	12-13	“	30-31
FRI	Galatians	1-2	“	32
SAT	“	3-4	“	33
SUN	“	5-6	“	34

805 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, 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 (1 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 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. First, God wants us 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 humanity 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 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 35:14).

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

<p>Question 2: Why is the morning time best for personal or family devotion?</p>

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 the 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 and meditate on the Word of God. Though His disciples were with Him, our Lord Jesus Christ still found time to be alone to pray (Luke 9:18). We can shut off the distraction of people, events and things to concentrate on prayer and study of God's Word.

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 our past, present and future than any other book, its design is to show us 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). 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; but 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)

<p>Question 4: What are the major activities that constitute a rich quiet time?</p>
--

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. He has taken the first step in reconciling us to Himself. We need 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 because we love God. Prayer is also 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; 1 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, both 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 (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; 11:18-21)

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). Rhoda, Timothy and the daughters of Philip also had good parental tutelage.

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

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 and 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 in heaven, then, we cannot do without patterning our lives according to all that we have learnt 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

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Ephesians	1-2	2 Chronicles	35
TUE	"	3-4	"	36
WED	"	5-6	Ezra	1-2
THUR	Philippians	1-2	"	3-4
FRI	"	3-4	"	5-6
SAT	Colossians	1-2	"	7
SUN	"	3-4	"	8

806 Lesson

PATTERN OF SCRIPTURAL GODLINESS

MEMORY VERSE: “In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you” (Titus 2:7,8).

TEXT: Titus 2:7-10

Apostle Paul instructed Titus to teach different categories of people in the church the lifestyles expected of them. His message was painstaking, pungent and panoramic. Sequel to this, the great Apostle charges Titus, the pastor of the church in Crete, to set the pace and lay the example for others to follow. As a minister of the gospel, he must match his morals with his message. Else, he would pull down with one hand, what he spent years to build, with the other. Paul seems to say: “Titus, you may be a dynamic, eloquent, and persuasive preacher but, if you labor hard to teach sound doctrine without backing it up with your own life, your preaching will be ineffective. Paul himself had striven to follow this pattern all through his ministry. Reflecting on his life, he told the Philippian Christian: **“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example” (Philippians 3:17).**

Question 1: In your own opinion, why was Paul bold enough to instruct Titus on exemplary living?

EXAMPLE TO THE WORLD (Titus 2:7,8; Matthew 11:29; Acts 20:35)

Paul the apostle held the issue of Christian character and integrity in high esteem. He had little or no room for those whose lives are diametrically opposed to their profession and teaching. He lived the Christian life and saw himself as a pattern worthy of emulation. To Timothy,

he confidently testified: **“But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life...”** (2 Timothy 3:10). His manner was consistent with his message. Expectedly, he knew Titus would not make the desired impact if he did not conduct himself well before the saints. **“In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you”** (Titus 2:7,8).

On account of Titus’ position in the church, he must be ahead in practicing these things, if he expected the virtues of sobriety, temperance, charity, patience and godliness in his members. To instruct others in the specifics of their responsibilities is good and commendable, but the example of the teacher is more important. Good life must tally with good doctrine. In all things, Titus, and by extension, all believers must show themselves models of good works. Men are wont to say: “we are not perfect; therefore we cannot live holy”. This is not scriptural. Every New Testament saint is expected to be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48).

Every Christian must be a pattern of good works. Goodness, as we know it, is a manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit. Christians must be good to one another and to those outside the church. In all we do, we must have good purpose and esteem the good of others. Believers are to be beautiful specimens of the grace of goodness.

Moreover, Titus is admonished to teach the whole counsel of God while maintaining purity. Corruption of the Word, frivolity and shallowness in doctrine and teaching will not make the desired impact. Rather, sincerity, singleness of purpose and commitment to truth, must underline our ministry.

The calling of the servant of God is not secular; it is not meant to be used as a cloak to make merchandise of people but to highlight the glory and honor of God. Our speech must be sound, devoid of the fallible

human knowledge. Scriptural truths must be explained in scriptural terms and, as much as possible, in a scriptural language.

The idea of being examples to the world and the Church runs through the length and breadth of Paul's writings. In his valedictory sermon to the Ephesians, he said: **"I have shewed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive"** (Acts 20:35). And to the Thessalonians, he wrote: **"For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you"** (2 Thessalonians 3:7). Jesus Christ, the greatest Teacher and Example, also told His disciples to follow Him. **"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you"** (John 13:15).

<p>Question 2: Why must Christian leaders be at the forefront of uprightness?</p>
--

EFFECTS OF EXEMPLARY LIVING (Titus 2:5,8; Philippians 3:17; Luke 20:20,26; Roman 2:24; 2 Samuel 12:14; 2 Peter 2:2)

"To be discreet, chaste... that the word of God be not blasphemed. Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you" (Titus 2:5,8).

It is pretty good to preach the gospel, read the Bible and give out tracts and literature to others but our priority should be that we are specimens of the Bible in life and conduct. The fastest way to destroy our sermons and doctrines is to contradict them by our lives. What we spend an hour or two to preach, we live the rest of our lives. Our adversaries constantly seek occasion to find fault with us that they might hold us in derision and contempt. This was why, the Apostle, on two occasions, gave Titus reasons the believer must live righteously (verse 5,8).

David was favored as a man after God's own heart, but because he erred in a matter of morals, he gave the enemies of God opportunity to speak blasphemously: **"Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die"** (2 Samuel 12:14).

The critics of Jesus' day also kept vigil on Him to seek occasion to accuse Him: **"And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor"** (Luke 20:20). But they failed woefully (verse 26).

Our lives preach more powerfully than our precepts and sermons. Majority of the unbelievers do not have a copy of the Bible but can well read the epistles in us. If we live true to our vocation, sceptics will not have occasion to blaspheme the worthy name by which we are called. **"For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men"** (1 Peter 2:15). Finally, they will lack grounds for their evil allegations.

Question 3: What impact does a godly life make on the world?

EXHORTATIONS TO THE GODLY (Titus 2:9,10; Matthew 16:24; Ephesians 6:5-8; Hebrews 3:1; 1 Peter 2:21).

"Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things" (Titus 2:9,10).

The Apostle, here, charges all categories of servants to be obedient to their masters according to the will of God. They are to render service to their masters as unto the Lord. **"Not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God**

from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free" (Ephesians 6:6-8). They are not to steal but to elevate honesty and faithfulness which bring glory to God. This same admonition applies to every servant of Christ.

Question 4: As servants of Christ, what should be our attitude in service?

Christ calls Himself our Master: **"But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ"** (Matthew 23:8,10). He has chosen, called and commissioned us to love one another (John 13:35). Moreover, we are mandated to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). As servants of Christ, our will, time and substance must be placed at the Master's disposal and use. Servants of Christ should be obedient to Him.

In upholding and demonstrating scriptural godliness, Christ remains our perfect Example. He is the spotless Son of God, worthy of our whole-hearted imitation. **"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me"** (Matthew 16:24). In spite of difficulties, we must exalt godly living above all things. Our light must shine enough for God's name to be glorified. **"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps"** (1 Peter 2:21).

Question 5: Who is our perfect example in godly living and how can we be like Him?

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1 Thess.	1-2	Ezra	9-10
TUE	“	3-4	Nehemiah	1-2
WED	“	5	“	3-4
THUR	2 Thess	1-3	“	5-6
FRI	1 Timothy	1-2	“	7
SAT	“	3-4	“	8
SUN	“	5-6	“	9

END OF SPECIAL STUDIES

**END OF SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES
VOLUME 62**





SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

VOLUME 63

BEGINNING OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

807 Lesson

DAVID'S SIN OF NUMBERING ISRAEL

MEMORY VERSE: "And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly" (2 Samuel 24:10).

TEXT: 2 Samuel 24:1-25; 1 Chronicles 21:1-30

The account in these passages presents yet, another of King David's moral slips. Although he was a man after God's heart, there were times he faltered and fell to the devices of the enemy. Before this incident, he had been judged in the matter of his adultery with Bathsheba and the consequences still hung over his head. Also, the nation had just come off a grievous famine occasioned by Saul's wickedness against the Gibeonites. But his adversary would not give up on him: **"And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel"** (1 Chronicles 21:1). How roundly true the scriptural injunction that believers should take heed to themselves because our adversaries scheme relentlessly to destroy us (1 Peter 5:8,9). Heaven-bound pilgrims must be in constant watch over their souls, actions and intentions. We must examine our motives and intents, especially, as leaders in the household of faith. Whatever would not glorify God, but is designed to feather our nests, boost our ego and trumpet our achievements, should be jettisoned. We must constantly go on introspection and self-examination in the light of God's word to ensure we do not work against His will.

The passage opens with a connective to signal a previous incident: "And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel..." (2 Samuel 24:1). Obviously, the closest

incident in the nation was the three-year famine due to Saul's sin. It is sad that though David knew of this, he was still overtaken by Satan to sin against God and incur a fresh plague on the nation. As we read of what caused divine wrath on individuals (Cain, Esau, Judas, Herod), families (Eli, Ananias and Sapphira), cities (Sodom and Gomorrah), we should steer clear of their mistakes and pitfalls (1 Corinthians 10:1-12).

Question 1: How can believers learn from the mistakes of others?

THE PROPRIETY OF NUMBERING GOD'S PEOPLE (2 Samuel 24:1-9; 1 Chronicles 21:1-7; 27:23,24; Exodus 30:12; Numbers 1:1-4; 26:1,2)

The Scripture records that the anger of God was kindled against Israel because David numbered the people (2 Samuel 24:1). The question that quickly comes to mind is the propriety or otherwise of counting the people. Ordinarily, there is nothing wrong in taking a census of the people because there are scriptural bases for it; numbering is not strange in the Bible. The Lord Himself commanded Moses to number the people. **“And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai... saying, Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls; From twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies”** (Numbers 1:1-3). The same command was given in Numbers 26:1,2. In fact, the book of Numbers is about numbering commanded by God. In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus counted the multitude that was fed and He made reference to their number (Mark 8:19). Similarly, the early church counted the number of souls that were saved on the day of Pentecost and the Scripture gives the number including the disciples that were gathered at the Upper Room.

Why then was David's action a sin that carried grievous consequences on the people of Israel? In our search for scriptural answers, we need to remember

that the Lord is a righteous Judge who can never be caught in a miscarriage of justice (Genesis 18:25). He does not do anything but according to His righteous nature. Secondly, He searches the reins and knows the thoughts and intents of the heart, **“...for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed”** (1 Samuel 2:3). An action that appeared ordinary and harmless before human eyes may be sinful in His sight. Thirdly, He does not take lightly the misuse of one’s position, authority and power. Though Joab cautioned David against his order, he still had his way by virtue of his position and power.

Now, in each of the instances where the people were counted (Numbers 1:4; 26:1,2; Exodus 30:12), the Lord expressly commanded it. For King David to have ordered Joab to **“...Go now through all the tribes of Israel... and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people”**, without divine permission, smacks of a presumptuous action. Secondly, his action appeared to be fueled by pride that edges God out of the equation. He, as it were, set God aside and his pride blinded him though Joab protested. Obviously, God frowns at actions borne out of self or personal aggrandizement. Perhaps, he was only interested in the size of his army or of the density of the people in his kingdom. If his action was meant to massage his ego or glorify him in the eyes of surrounding kingdoms who may hear of the size of his army, the Lord would not support it.

Thirdly, the Lord had commanded that a ransom be given for every soul to the Lord **“that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them”** (Exodus 30:12). There was no account of David heeding this warning. Fourthly, and perhaps more importantly, Israel had just suffered three years’ drought as a result of Saul’s sin against the Gibeonites. It is possible therefore, that consequences of their leaders’ sins could come on them. After all, a king’s sin is a kindling sin; a leader’s sin is a leading sin; a bishop’s sin is a blasphemous sin; a pastor’s sin is a pervasive sin; a parent’s sin is a parroting sin; and a father’s sin is a festering sin.

Similar cases of a leader's sin affecting the people abound in the scriptures. The anger of God was kindled against the children of Israel and they suffered defeat in the hands of the children of Ai because Achan (a leader) took of the accursed thing (Joshua 7:1), Eli's children - Hophni and Phinehas - brought defeat by the Philistines because of their wayward lifestyle. We recall also that Saul's transgression caused three years' famine during the reign of David. As leaders, parents or Christian ministers, we should watch over our actions so as not to be chargeable in the suffering, calamity, backsliding or death of other people.

Fifthly, what is crystal clear in the account is that the devil as an adversary of the nation was behind it. **“And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel”** (1 Chronicles 21:1). He is the author of all temptations. He incited David to sin, came to Eve in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3), tempted our Lord Jesus Christ in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), caught David in the palace (2 Samuel 11), incited Peter to rebuke the Lord (Matthew 16:21-23), entered into Judas Iscariot to betray the Lord Jesus (Luke 22:3-6), and moved Ananias and Sapphira to lie to the church (Acts 5:1-5).

The consequence of yielding to Satan's temptation is grave. David yielded to his suggestion and caused the death of seventy thousand children of Israel. People of God should not be ignorant of the devices of the devil; they should watch their actions, motives, imaginations and ambitions to ensure they are in line with God's word. Every evil imagination and pride of life should be cast down and brought under subjection to the obedience of Christ.

Question 2: What can we learn from God's displeasure with David's action?

PUNISHMENT FOR PRESUMING TO NUMBER GOD'S PEOPLE (2 Samuel 24:10-17; 1 Chronicles 21:7-15; Psalm 19:13; Deuteronomy 17:12,13; 2 Thessalonians 1:8,9).

It is obvious that King David did not ask counsel of the Lord nor was he commanded by Him before he undertook to number the children of Israel. Therefore, it became a sin unto him, and his heart smote him (2 Samuel 24:10). As with every sin, whether it is committed by princes or peasants, sovereign or subjects, his action incurred the wrath of God. **“For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David’s seer, saying... Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days’ pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me”** (2 Samuel 24:11,13).

David was held to three grievous options; none of which is fair. However, faith guided him to believe that it is better to choose to fall into the hands of the living God **“...for his mercies are great...”**, than to be left in the hands of the enemy. We learn here that the Lord will not spare to punish the wicked person or sinner unless they repent. But to a penitent individual, He has promised to show mercy, though He reproveth. David confessed his folly and asked forgiveness from the Lord and was pitied. Also, he was sincere enough to plead that the Lord spare the children of Israel and punish him and his house instead. **“And David spake unto the LORD when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father’s house”** (2 Samuel 24:17). Those who hope to be forgiven by the Lord would not give excuses or pass the buck of their unrighteousness to other people; only sincere repentance attracts divine mercy.

PROPITIATION FOR SIN AND GOD’S PARDON (2 Samuel 24:18-25; 1 Chronicles 21:18-28; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 51:17; Isaiah 55:7; 1 John 1:9; Revelation 2:5).

As David turned to God in penitent prayer, convicted and broken down, the Lord responded with mercy and prescribed the necessary propitiation or atonement for

the destructive plague. He instructed him to offer a sacrifice in the threshing floor of Araunah or Oman to purge his sins so that the iniquities might be removed. **“And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the LORD in the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite”** (2 Samuel 24:18). David built an altar in the appointed place and sacrificed oxen to expiate his sins. God pardoned him and the plague was stayed.

In the Old Testament, God commanded His children to make sacrifices to atone for their sins. Depending on the gravity of the offence, they were to offer the blood of bulls, goats, rams, etc. to obtain pardon from the Lord (Exodus 29:36; Leviticus 9:7; 15:15). The consequences of sin hung on anyone who failed to obey the Lord in this regard. But this ordinance no longer subsists in the New Testament. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God from the foundation of the world has shed His blood at Calvary for the propitiation of the sins of the whole world (John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7). **“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation”** (Hebrews 9:28).

Question 3: What is the condition for obtaining pardon from the Lord?

For the living souls who desperately seek to appease God for their past evil deeds, there is only one sacrifice and one Name given among men, whereby we can be saved (Acts 4:12). Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross is the only acceptable instrument of atonement; nothing else can take away the sins of mortal men. It is amazing how God responds to broken and contrite hearts as they bend their hearts and knees in prayer for mercy. As the Lord commanded the angel of destruction: **“...it is enough: stay now thine hand”**, so He is able to put an end to every person’s lifestyle of sin, sorrow, calamity and suffering.

There is another important lesson from David’s handling of the command to make a sacrifice. Though a king in

the land of Israel where Araunah lived, **“...David said to Oman, Grant me the place of this threshing floor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people”** (1 Chronicles 21:22). He displayed the virtues of humility, equity and justice. He knew that the right of the owner of a property has to be recognized and respected. What a rebuke to those who rob others of what rightly belonged to them by virtue of their position or authority! They oppress and trample on the rights of widows, the less privileged, the ignorant and poor people. Such should remember however, that a day of reckoning beckons and God would requite them their evil ways (Jeremiah 51:56).

Question 4: What does David’s refusal to take Araunah’s offer for free teach us?

Even though Araunah willingly surrendered the threshing floor together with the instruments to David for free, he declined to have them without compensation. **“And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver”** (2 Samuel 24:24). Here, the truth of consecration is underscored. David understood the significance and benefit of sacrificial giving. He knew that the Lord cherishes what is offered to Him out of commitment and consecration. Some people offer to God what they do not need any longer or that which is worthless to them. Some come into God’s service after they had spent the better part of their lives to serve the world, the devil and their flesh. But the Lord says, **“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them”** (Ecclesiastes 12:1). For New Testament believers, we know that Christ has paid the price for all things that pertain to our life and godliness. However, to receive and keep the gospel blessings of pardon, purity, power and victory in life, God expects us to give up our lives of sin and pleasure and cleave

to Christ alone. Entire consecration is needed for the fire of entire sanctification to be experienced. And, the outpouring of power from above is for those who will lay all on the altar of sacrifice.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	2 Timothy	1-2	Nehemiah	10
TUE	“	3-4	“	11
WED	Titus	1-3	“	12
THUR	Philemon	1	“	13
FRI	Hebrews	1-3	Esther	1-2
SAT	“	4-5	“	3-4
SUN	“	6-7	“	5-6

808 Lesson

SOLOMON SUCCEEDS DAVID

MEMORY VERSE: “Furthermore David the king said unto all the congregation, Solomon my son, whom alone God hath chosen, is yet young and tender, and the work is great: for the palace is not for man, but for the LORD God” (1 Chronicles 29:1).

TEXT: 1 Kings 1:1-51; 2:1-46

The children of Israel operated theocracy - a system of government that was controlled by God. As such, succession to their kingship was determined directly by Him or indirectly by the guidelines He has given in His word. Saul, Israel’s first king, for instance, was chosen by God. Though disobedience made him lose the kingship, he thought he could pass it to his son Jonathan and not David whom God had chosen. Prophet Samuel also thought it could be by natural endowments alone without the innate qualities God saw in David who replaced Saul. Though God had given the throne of Israel by a perpetual covenant of mercy to David and his posterity, Absalom his son thought he could get it by force of ambition, human relations, diplomacy, oratory and violence.

In the present lesson, Adonijah also felt it was the right of the firstborn even when God had already chosen Solomon, his younger brother to succeed his father. Thus, believers should not scheme to occupy any leadership position in the church that God has not appointed them as He would not support it. Adonijah’s unsuccessful plot to succeed his aged father and the defection of Joab, Abiathar and other sons of David that attend the ascension of Solomon to the throne of Israel form the focus of this study.

THE DESPERATION OF ADONIJAH TO BE KING (1 King 1:1-10; Psalm 75:6,7; Ephesians 6:2,3; Proverbs 23:22; 22:6,15; 1 Chronicles 22:9; Job 9:4; 1 John 2:2; Psalm 146:10)

The text opens with a fact of life that **“King David was old and stricken in years ...”** He had become frail and bed-ridden on account of age, and a resident nurse had to be sought to take care of him. The once valiant soldier who killed Goliath grew so feeble that he was nearly killed in a battle but for his lieutenant who defended him. Besides, Abishag, employed to lie in his bosom to warm him, remained a virgin till his death. There comes a time in the twilight of life when human strength wanes and feelings of taste and pleasure fade; a time when the mundane becomes meaningless and focus is redirected to the afterlife. The transience of youthful vigor calls us to wholeheartedly concentrate our affection and wisely expend time, money, talent and other resources on the all-important soul-winning task before the approaching night of extreme old age and death (John 9:4). Christ’s message on the need to prioritize on feeding the lambs and sheep (John 21:15-17) was anchored on the brevity of life. **“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not”** (John 21:18). Though aged, David was however, accomplished (Acts 13:38).

Question 1: In view of the brevity of life, what should be the priority of believers today?

Meanwhile, Adonijah had only been contemplating how to take advantage of the situation to seize the throne, not minding the propriety or otherwise of such a venture. **“Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying I will be king; and he prepared him chariots and horsemen and fifty men to run before him”** (verse 5). Adonijah’s ambition for the throne of David was not driven by any altruistic intention such as promoting the revealed will of God or to serve the interest of Israel better. Rather, he was selfish and self centered; he **“exalted himself”**. Self-exaltation is condemned in Scripture because it is suicidal. It led to the expulsion of Lucifer from heaven. Much as God does not forbid our advancement to places of honor legitimately, we

need to know that **“God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another”** (Psalm 75:6,7). Thus, we must never allow the prospects of temporal gains to override the higher spiritual values of obedience and submission to God’s word in all our aspirations.

Adonijah’s inordinate ambition subsumed the natural affection he had for his ailing father. Filial love for parents ought to grow tender especially when old age, ill-health or disability set in. In such cases, children, irrespective of educational and social attainments, should use the opportunity to demonstrate selfless love to soothe their parents’ toils and sacrifices rather than take undue advantage of them to foment trouble about succession or inheritance (Proverbs 23:22).

Question 2: What should be the attitude of believers to their aging parents?

From our text, it can be inferred that David’s failure in child training bore fruit in Adonijah’s heartless adventure. Concerning Adonijah, **“his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, why hast thou done so? ...”** (verse 6). It was not possible that Adonijah had not done anything wrong from his infancy through his youth to adulthood, but David chose to withhold the rod of correction and discipline from him. Since the Scripture affirms that **“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him”** (Proverbs 22:15), any parent who **“spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes”** (Proverbs 13:24). While neglect of purposeful child training contradicts the divine command to **“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old; he will not depart from it”** (Proverbs 22:6), it will always bear bitter fruits and rob children of the requisite virtues for progress and success in life (1 Samuel 2:29).

Adonijah **“conferred with Joab the son of Zeruah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah helped him”**. He threw his pre- coronation party at Enrogel where all the king’s sons and servants

from the tribe of Judah were in attendance. Zadok the priest, Benaiah, Shimei, Rei, the mighty men of David, Nathan the prophet and Solomon his brother were not invited to the occasion.

Question 3: What are the causes of Adonijah's rebellion?

Meanwhile, David had hinted based on God's revelation to him, that Solomon would succeed him. **"Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days"** (1 Chronicles 22:9). Adonijah was aware of this but decided to seize the crown by the force of arms and right of a first born, being the eldest son of David at the time. His rebellion was destined to fail from inception because it was against God's will. **"He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?"** Ooh 9:4). Joab and Abiathar's disaffection for David and defection to join forces with Adonijah re-echo the admonition of the Scripture to **"Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man in whom there is no help"** (Psalm 146:3). Like those opposed the installation of Solomon as king, there are many today who oppose the kingdom of Christ, saying by word and action that, **"we will not have this man (Christ) to reign over us"** (Luke 19:14). They continue to live in sin and reject the Saviour who God has appointed to save mankind.

Question 4: Explain why it is suicidal to reject God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ.

SOLOMON'S ASCENSION TO THE THRONE (1 Kings 1:11-53; 2:12; 2 Timothy 3:8; Isaiah 33:14).

The plot against David was revealed to Bathsheba by Prophet Nathan. **"Now therefore come, let me, I pray thee, give thee counsel, that thou mayest save thine own life, and the life of thy son Solomon"** (1 Kings 1:12). This urgent and life-saving message from Nathan was indeed critical to the lives of Bathsheba and Solomon. Her tact, understanding and prompt

presentation of the information on Adonijah's rebellion to David was commendable. She reminded the king of his oath to her that Solomon would surely succeed him and the danger posed to them should Adonijah's rebellion be allowed to succeed. Also commendable was David's immediate action aimed at foiling Adonijah's rebellion before it took root. Delay in dealing with rebellion in the church of God will make evil spread. David reaffirmed his earlier promise that Solomon would be his successor; he instructed that Solomon be made to ride on his own mule and caused all his loyal servants, guards and household to proclaim him king. Nathan and Zadok were also directed to anoint Solomon followed by the sounding of trumpets and the shouts of rejoicing. Believers should be zealous and prompt in doing God's will to avoid the consequences of delay, especially where such actions will keep evil at bay.

Question 5: Why should believers not delay in dealing with rebellion in God's house?

While guests were still merry-hearted, eating and drinking before proclaiming Adonijah king, they heard the trumpets and the shouts of rejoicing among the people who did David's bidding by enthroning Solomon. Jonathan ran to tell Adonijah that **"Verily our lord king David hath made Solomon king"** (verse 43). He related to them the solemnity with which Solomon was anointed king. This news compelled everyone to disperse for their own safety and spelt an abrupt end to Adonijah's ambition and rebellion. Truly, **"the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment"** Job 20:5). Adonijah, for fear of Solomon, later **"arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar ...saying, Let king Solomon swear unto me today that he will not slay his servant with the sword"** (verse 51). Solomon released Adonijah on condition of good conduct thenceforth. Similarly, Christ pardons and extends mercy to the rebellious if they come to Him in penitence and forsake past sins. Continued life of righteousness is the condition for escaping eternal burnings (Isaiah 33:4).

DAVID'S CHARGE TO SOLOMON AND DEATH (1 Kings 2:1-46; Deuteronomy 31:6; Hebrews 8:12; Proverbs 11:21).

“Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth...” (verses 1,2). David spoke of his imminent death without fear or apprehension. For believers, death is a transition to glory; for sinners, it is a fearsome descent into endless torment and excruciating pain.

David's parting charge to Solomon in the text can be divided into two. First, it relates to his relationship with God, His word and work. Concerning this he said, **“be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes... that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel”** (verses 2-4). He presented obedience to the word of God as a recipe for success in life, leadership and ministry. The secret of success in spiritual service lies in courage and strength of character to promptly and wholeheartedly obey Him. This charge is similar to the counsel of Moses to Joshua (Deuteronomy 31:6).

The second part of David's charge relates to specific individuals to show kindness or administer justice. He recalled Joab's brutal and cold-blooded murder of Abner and Amasa and instructs his son not to let **“his hoar head go down to the grave in peace”** (verse 6). Time does not wear away the guilt and consequence of sin if not repented of and forgiven. To be free from one's past sins, one must take advantage of the blood which Christ shed for our salvation. The kindness of Barzillai to David in the day of his trouble was not to be forgotten but returned to his children by making them **“be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came**

to me when I fled from Absalom thy brother”. David remembered also the insults and curses which Shimei heaped on him in the day he (David) went to Mahanaim to escape from Absalom; **“but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I swore to him by the LORD, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword”** (verse 8). The Son of David, the Judge of the world will execute judgment on sinners and reward his faithful saints on the last day.

After his dying charge to Solomon, **“David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David. And the days that David reigned over Israel were forty years: seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem”** (1 Kings 2:10,11; 1 Chronicles 29:26-30).

<p>Question 6: What can believers learn from David’s charge to Solomon about good and evil deeds of people around him?</p>

Sin can never go unpunished; it will either be visited on the sinner or on his representative. It does not matter how long the sin was committed or that it was not immediately visited. Believers have had their sins visited on Christ when He suffered and died on the cross. Those who reject Him now have the judgment of their sins awaiting them on the last day, unless they take advantage of Christ’s death by receiving Him as Savior. Unlike David with Shimei, God does not call back any sin He has forgiven (Hebrews 8:12).

Adonijah betrayed himself to Solomon’s justice when he breached the condition of his pardon by his treasonable request to marry Abishag, king David’s nurse. Solomon perceived the incestuous suggestion as a renewal of Adonijah’s attempt at the throne; and reasoning that Joab and Abiathar must be his accomplices in this latest provocation, he executed Adonijah and Joab and demoted and banished Abiathar from the priesthood. Shimei’s reckoning day came three years later when he broke the bound imposed on him by crossing the brook Kidron into the land of the Philistines in search of his servant and was consequently executed. Thus,

the reckoning day of the Lord will come for everyone; for saints, it will be a promotion to their Lord’s table at the marriage supper of the Lamb, but for the rebellious who fails to repent, it will be eternal agony and sorrow in hell.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Hebrews	8-9	Esther	7-8
TUE	“	10	“	9-10
WED	“	11	Job	1-2
THUR	“	12-13	“	3-4
FRI	James	1-2	“	5-6
SAT	“	3-5	“	7-8
SUN	1 Peter	1-2	“	9-10

809 Lesson

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

MEMORY VERSE: “Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee” (1 Kings 3:12).

TEXT: 1 Kings 3:1-28; 4:1-34; 2 Chronicles 1:1-17.

The previous chapter gives an account of how Solomon began to reign over Israel and Judah. After dealing with threats from Adonijah, Joab and their fellow conspirators, he appointed new heads for the army and the priesthood. This study reveals how Solomon loved and sought after God at the beginning of his reign and was divinely endowed with wisdom and wealth so that his reign over a united kingdom of Israel and Judah was the most productive, peaceful and prosperous one. Throughout his reign, there was no record of any serious military engagement. Instead, **“Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon”** (1 Kings 4:25). Truly, **“When a man’s ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him”** (Proverbs 16:7). Besides, God is unchanging; believers who wholeheartedly seek Him for wisdom will receive and prosper to the glory of God.

SOLOMON’S ALLIANCE, PRAYER AND GOD’S ANSWER (1 Kings 3:1-15; Chronicles 1:13; Exodus 34:15,16; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17; Deuteronomy 7:3-6; Leviticus 17:3,4; Deuteronomy 12:13,14; Matthew 7:7-10).

“And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh’s daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the LORD, and the wall of Jerusalem round about.”

Question 1: Why is a believer's alliance with an unbeliever unacceptable to God?

The Lord had expressly forbidden the Israelites against unequal yoke with other nations as it could make them compromise and backslide. Unequal yoke in worship, marriage, business and other areas is not acceptable to God. He calls everyone involved in such to **“come out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you”**. Sin often starts in a subtle way and increases gradually until the victim loses conviction and grip of life. Solomon's insatiable lust after women and desire to form political alliance made him marry Pharaoh's daughter. This was a weak point in his life which eventually led to his downfall.

Besides, Solomon allowed the practice of making sacrifices in high places (hill-tops and elevated grounds) where heathen nations carried out their idolatrous worship. God specifically told the children of Israel to destroy those places (Numbers 33:51,52; Deuteronomy 12:1-6). In this regard, Solomon did not heed the counsel of his father, David, to keep the commandments of God. He later did the right thing by going to **“Gibeon to sacrifice there”**. Obedience brings blessings.

Question 2: What are the reasons for our gratitude to God and how can we express such?

Solomon was appreciative of God's goodness to him. Among David's children, he was divinely chosen to inherit his father's throne. His speech showed he was grateful and expressed this by making generous sacrifices to God. The divine expectation of gratitude for His manifold goodness upon us is revealed by Christ's surprise that only one of the ten lepers He cleansed returned to show appreciation (Luke 17:17,18). We learn from the foregoing that believers can show appreciation to God by offering praises, sharing testimonies, giving offerings for God's work, serving Him, etc.

At Gibeon, the Lord appeared to Solomon and asked him to request anything he wanted. All believers also have this privilege to **“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you”** (Matthew 7:7; John 15:7). To those who refuse to ask, Apostle James says: **“Ye have not, because ye ask not”** James 4:2). While some ask amiss to fulfil their lusts James 4:3), others ask with unbelief and wavering faith James 1:6-8). But Solomon asked aright, for wisdom. His request showed he had a deep spiritual discernment, godly priority, sincere humility, and unwillingness to rely on his own natural wisdom.

Solomon’s request is a pattern for modern-day believers. A cursory look at his prayer reveals: one, appreciation to God for the goodness shown to his father and his own selection as king. Two, great humility as he called himself a servant and a little child. Three, selfless request to be effective in ruling his people by asking for an understanding heart to judge and discern. Four, a recognition of the greatness of the task of ruling Israel, especially in the room of David who was considered a hero by the people. Many believers are feeble in prayer because they do not recognize the enormity of their spiritual assignment and the insufficiency of their natural ability. Five, an understanding that wisdom is better than strength, riches and every mundane thing that people run after (Ecclesiastes 9:16; Proverbs 8:11; 16:16). So, he did not request for the temporal things of this world such as long life, riches and destruction of his enemies. Jesus said: **“seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”** (Matthew 6:33).

God-centered requests will always please Him. The Lord commended Solomon and granted more than he asked. He said: **“Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honor: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days”** (1 Kings 3:12,13).

Question 3: What can believers learn from Solomon's request for wisdom and God's answer?

Though the prayer of Solomon was granted, God demanded he walk in obedience to His commandments all his days. This is an indication that God's endowment of wisdom is not a license for disobedience to His word. Unfortunately, Solomon failed to fulfil this condition later in life and lost the favor of God which culminated into the division of the kingdom.

SOLOMON'S WISE ACTIONS AND REGAL SPLENDOUR
(1 Kings 3:16-28; 4:1-28; Deuteronomy 23:17; 1 Corinthians 6:4; 12:8,28,31; Jeremiah 31:20; Proverbs 4:7; Isaiah 49:15; 2 Chronicles 1:13-17)

“Then came there two women, that were harlots, unto the king, and stood before him” (1 Kings 3:16). Here was the first test of Solomon's wisdom. Two women that were harlots came to him with a case of child swapping, one a living child and the other a dead one. The Lord had explicitly instructed that no Israelite woman should be a harlot. So, these women were not in God's will for being harlots and their ungodly lifestyle must not be emulated. But the fact that they had access to the king is very instructive. Here, we see an indication that God's gift in the life of Solomon and his exaltation did not alienate him from the common people in society. Leaders should be available and accessible to those under their leadership.

Question 4: Why is godly wisdom indispensable in the life and ministry of a believer?

Here was a hard case for a natural man to resolve, and medical solution was not available then. But Solomon showed the wisdom of God in the dispensation of justice; he gave order that the two babies be divided into two and each mother be given one half. In his God given wisdom, he appealed to the natural instinct of a mother. He knew that a true mother would make any sacrifice to preserve her child's life and that it is uncommon for a woman to **“forget her sucking child,**

that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb” (Isaiah 49:15). The right mother promptly rejected the idea of killing the baby while the other woman insisted he should be cut in two as the king had directed. Recognizing the true mother, the king handed over the child to her. What a sentence of wisdom! Unless God gives our judges understanding hearts, there will be miscarriage of justice in certain cases.

Christian leaders, parents or secular administrators can learn from this sound judgment. One, leaders are to make themselves available to the led for prompt justice administration. Two, judgment should not be based on mere outward expressions or report of the people. We must probe beyond superficial observations or hearsay. Three, righteous judgments should be the goal and rule at all times. Four, accepting inducements to influence judgment is ungodly. Five, prayers and gifts of the Spirit are inevitable for proper judgment. Six, leaders and those in positions of authority need prayers for proper administration of justice. Seven, when a sound judgment is given, ungodly reactions such as grudge and violence should be avoided. Eight, God is the great Judge and will judge all the secrets of men at the end of life. This should serve as warning to both believers and unbelievers. The effect of Solomon’s good judgment was that the people feared the king for they saw that divine wisdom was bestowed on him to do judgment.

Another aspect of Solomon’s wisdom was in the organization and structure of his kingdom. His civil administration and appointment of princes depicted great wisdom. The princes were in charge of spiritual, general and military affairs. There were some peculiarities in the appointments also. One, he prioritized on spiritual things. Two, he appointed children of some of David’s loyalists. It is good to reward faithfulness and loyalty to God and His cause. Three, he also included the sons of Prophet Nathan. Thus, appointments to leadership positions, particularly in the house of God, is a solemn responsibility. To select the most suitable among many who are qualified would require divine guidance and freedom from carnal sentiments. Material gain, tribal/

family/ friendship ties or other considerations must not be allowed to influence our choice.

Apart from the princes, he also chose twelve officers that provided victuals for the king and his household, each serving for a month. This arrangement provided for a sharing of the burden such that no section was overloaded and still there was sufficient provision throughout the year. This principle of shared responsibility is behind the appointment of various cadres of leaders in the church. The idea is that no single person can do God's work alone. There is need to discover, select, train, appoint and develop leaders to man the various sections of ministry in the church and put in place various leadership positions. This will ensure order, stability and progress in God's kingdom.

Solomon had regal splendor. He was made great by the God of Israel. He had great daily provisions, dominion and peace; his possession was much and there was safety and security throughout the land. Obviously, the list of his daily provisions was not intended to encourage ostentatious lifestyle; it was recorded to indicate how much God blessed him.

However, we can also discern the dangers of riches and success if they are mismanaged. They tend to materialism and pampering of the flesh. Therefore, believers who succeeded in showing restraint and self-control through prudent management of scarce resources in time of want should be wise in time of wealth to manage their resources, and grow in generosity. The Lord has promised untold blessings for His children. These include not only mundane things of life but also eternal bliss. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things and I will be His God and he shall be my son" (Revelation 21:7).

SOLOMON'S SUNDRY ACTIONS OF WISDOM (1 Kings 4:29-34; James 1:5; Nehemiah 13:26; Job 32:9; Colossians 1:17; 1 Corinthians 1:30)

“And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.” The concluding verses of 1 Kings 4 provide the source and summary of the manifestation of Solomon’s wisdom. Believers can also receive from Him if only they ask in prayer. **“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him”** James 1:5). Two other things that accompanied his wisdom were understanding and largeness of heart.

The wisdom of Solomon was greater than that of all mortals at that time. There were people and nations reputed for wisdom but Solomon excelled them all. He spoke proverbs and songs; spoke of trees, beasts, fowls, creeping things and fishes. In his Songs and Proverbs, he spoke of morality, philosophy and poetry. This attracted people from all kingdoms of the earth to hear him. He was applauded by Hiram who saw him as a gift from God to Israel (1 Kings 5:7) and Queen of Sheba who was overwhelmed by his wisdom and gave Solomon great gifts.

But Solomon’s great failure was that he did not apply this wisdom to govern his personal life. Though he wrote songs against the evil of immorality, he fell flat before outlandish women who caused him to sin and turned his heart from God (Nehemiah 13:26). He abandoned the very qualities that predisposed him to God’s visitation at Gibeon, lost the passion, commitment and love for Him and fixed focus to pursue His honor. Indeed, great men are not always wise (Job 32:9).

Question 5: Explain the greatness of Solomon’s wisdom in relation to the Person of Christ?

Christ is infinitely superior to Solomon though He acknowledged the latter's glory and wisdom. The reign of Solomon was considered the golden age of Israel as a nation but the reign of Christ will by far outshine his kingdom in terms of splendor, peace and prosperity.

Christ, as the Source of all wisdom, possesses excellent glory. He is the Wisdom of God; He is Wisdom personified. To benefit from His wisdom, a sinner needs to acknowledge, confess and forsake sins and accept Him as Lord and Savior. Wisdom is the principal thing that everyone needs to succeed in life, family, ministry, business, workplace, etc. Everyone who asks from God will receive. Above all, the gift of wisdom is available for those who are Spirit-filled.

DAILY BIBLE READING				
	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	1 Peter	3-5	Job	11-13
TUE	2 Peter	1-2	"	14-15
WED	"	3	"	16-17
THUR	1 John	1-2	"	18-19
FRI	"	3-4	"	20-21
SAT	"	3	"	22-23
SUN	2 John	& 3 John	"	24-25

810 Lesson

SOLOMON BUILDS GOD'S TEMPLE

MEMORY VERSE: “Concerning this house which thou art in building, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father” (1 Kings 6:12).

TEXT: 1 Kings 5:1-18; 6:1-38; 2 Chronicles 2:1-18; 3:1-17; 4:1-22

The building of God's temple by King Solomon who succeeded his father was a long-awaited dream that eventually came true. Although it was conceived by King David, God restrained him from going ahead through Prophet Nathan. **“The word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying, Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the Lord, shalt thou build me an house...? I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels... He shall build an house for my name...”** (2 Samuel 7:4,5,12,13). This prophetic statement came to pass during the reign of Solomon.

This study focuses on the reasons for building the temple, the provisions made for the building of the temple and the clarion call for all believers to be committed to building God's spiritual temple.

THE PURPOSE FOR BUILDING GOD'S TEMPLE (1 Kings 5:5; 2 Chronicles 2:1; 2 Samuel 7:1,2; 1 Kings 6:1).

“And, behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spake unto David my father saying, thy son whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name” (1 Kings 5:5).

The Jewish temple was a place for the worship of Yahweh. The temple is severally referred to in Scriptures as The Holy Temple (Psalm 79:1); the House of God (1 Chronicles

6:48; 29:2); the Sanctuary, Tent or Tabernacle of God (Exodus 25:8,9; 1 Chronicles 17:5). Prior to the building, the children of Israel worshipped in tabernacles during their wilderness wandering.

The temple constructed by Solomon consisted of three sections: the porch through which they entered; the holy place, which contained the golden lampstands, two tables of shewbread and an incense altar (1 Kings 7:48,49); and the holy of holies, containing two wooden cherubim overlaid with gold and the ark of the covenant, with its lid called the mercy seat (Leviticus 16: 14,15). Everything about this temple was a pointer to God.

Question 1: Highlight some of the reasons Solomon built God's Temple.

The temple that Solomon built served various purposes. One, it was to establish a place suitable for worship and devotion to God. Two, the temple was a dwelling place of the Lord. It brought God's presence among His people (1 Kings 6:13,14). Three, it directed the minds of the people towards God. Four, it was a symbol of spiritual things, and by that, God was revered. Five, it was to serve as a place where the sinner could find God and peace. Six, it was where the people of God poured out their hearts and made their petitions unto God (Exodus 33:7). Today's temple or place of worship cannot be anything less than what God expected of the Old Testament temple. While Christ was on earth, He took vehement steps to cleanse the temple. He said, **"It is written, my house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves"** (

Matthew 21:12-14; Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45,46).

Question 2: What impression does Christ's action give us about today's temple or place of worship?

The temple should be a place of refuge where the spiritual atmosphere drives God's consciousness into the worshippers. **"For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up**

thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee” (Deuteronomy 23:14). Today’s temple should be a place of succor for all: the wretched, rich and poor, young and old, educated or illiterate; the discouraged and sin-laden. As there is room for everyone at the Cross, so there is in God’s temple.

The children of Israel understood the relevance of building God’s temple where the ark of covenant (symbolic of His majesty’s presence) dwelt. And they rose up to the call to provide for the building.

THE PROVISION FOR BUILDING GOD’S TEMPLE (1 Kings 5:1-18; 6:1-38; 2 Chronicles 2:1-18; 1 Chronicles 29:19; Exodus 35:4-11; 36:1-7)

Although David had prepared gold and silver in abundance for the building of the temple, Solomon his son still needed to make preparations to get timber and stones ready for the work. Therefore, he **“sent to Hiram, saying, ...I purpose to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God... Now therefore command thou that they hew me cedar trees out of Lebanon; and my servants shall be with thy servants: and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants according to all that thou shalt appoint”** (1 Kings 5:2,5,6). The response of King Hiram to Solomon’s request is a proof that God’s work will never lack resources. Even in the wilderness, the children of Israel gave sacrificially before the commencement of the building project until **“Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much”** (Exodus 36:6,7). The people were indeed generous and committed to giving. They kept donating the materials needed for the construction work until their liberality exceeded the necessity. Meanwhile, having entered into treaty with Solomon, King Hiram supplied him with cedar and pinewood from Lebanon as well as skilled artisans.

Question 3: Comment on the attitude of the children of Israel towards giving for the building of the tabernacle?

It is worthy of note that though David was not allowed to build a magnificent temple unto God (1 Kings 5:3; 1 Chronicles 28:2,3), the Lord commended the thought of honoring Him with such a project. **“Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart”** (2 Chronicles 6:8). It is also instructive that David did not frustrate or discourage Solomon from carrying out this divine assignment. Rather, he made provisions for the work.

Like King David, believers ought to be deeply concerned for the church of God, “the pillar and ground of the truth.” Again, he was not jealous that his son was God’s preferred choice to build the temple. Therefore, he made some provisions for him. How this contrasts with so-called Christians who would both frustrate the grace of God and noble efforts of other believers in the development of God’s church.

Solomon’s greatest achievement was the construction of the temple. Started in the fourth year of his reign, he completed it in the eleventh year. As believers, we should be ready to give continually in support of God’s work until the task is finished. Giving of our substance to God is an integral part of our worship and devotion to Him. **“Honor the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine”** (Proverbs 3:9,10). God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s resources.

Question 4: Why should believers give sacrificially to support God’s work?

PURPOSEFUL COMMITMENT TO BUILDING GOD’S SPIRITUAL TEMPLE: (2 Chronicles 3:1-17; 4:1-22; 1 Corinthians 3:16,17; 6:15-20).

“And he garnished the house with precious stones for beauty: and the gold was gold of Parvaim.” The

Old Testament temple was built with gold, a symbol of quality and purity. Such was the sacredness of the temple built with hands and dedicated to God. As temples indwelt by God, believers ought to be holy unto Him. We must flee adultery, fornication and every sin that defiles the temple of the living God. The true church of Christ is not the physical building but the believers who fellowship therein. That is why they are likened to the temple of God. If a man-made temple and all its utensils were holy, separated from all common and unholy uses and dedicated alone to the service of God, the bodies of true believers are holy and all their members should be employed for the service of God alone.

Believers have no right over their lives as they are bound to the Lord and also accountable to Him. As a slave purchased by his master is the sole property of the master, so are believers God’s property because they are bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. We must therefore employ our spirit, soul and body in the service of our Lord and promote, by all means, the honor and glory of our God.

Question 5: What must the believer do to keep his spiritual temple habitable for Christ?

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Jude	1	Job	27-28
TUE	Revelation	1-2	“	29-30
WED	“	3-4	“	31-32
THUR	“	5-6	“	33-34
FRI	“	7-8	“	35-36
SAT	“	9-10	“	37-38
SUN	“	11-12	“	39-40

811 Lesson

SOLOMON BUILDS HIS PALACE

MEMORY VERSE: “But Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house” (1 Kings 7:1).

TEXT: 1 Kings 7:1-51; 2 Chronicles 8:1-18

While David recorded so many conquests and successes in his expansionary campaigns, Solomon was renowned for massive constructions and consolidation of the kingdom. These texts feature the construction of his palace, decoration and beautification of the temple and the fortification of the kingdom. That he first built a befitting temple in honor of the Almighty God on whom the nation’s character, strength and wellbeing so much depended, challenges contemporary believers to always accord pre-eminence to matters of true spirituality above personal or mundane considerations. One who puts God first will not come last (Matthew 6:33). To do otherwise is to court divine displeasure and reproof (Haggai 1:4-6). Having gone so far in the erection of the temple in a previous study, Solomon embarked on the construction of his own royal palace. This study reveals the significance of the palace, shows his progress in other endeavors and offers valuable lessons from reflections on his personal life.

Question 1: Identify the lessons inherent in Solomon’s disposition in our text?

THE CONSTRUCTION AND COMPLETION OF THE PALACE (1 Kings 7:1-12; 2 Chronicles 8:1; Isaiah 44:26; Ephesians 2:15-22; Colossians 2:7; Hebrews 3:6,14; 1 Peter 2:5,6)

“But Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house” (1 Kings 7:1). The palace was a massive complex of several units with multifarious functions. It was a well-lit, airy and

harmonious design. It served as accommodation for the king's household, depicts his personal fancies and was used for official state functions. Basically, it consisted of a spacious reception hall, the throne-room with the judgment hall, the king's personal dwelling house, and a residence for his Egyptian wife. All these were joined together by a large courtyard set off by walls and porches (verandas) like those at the temple (1 Kings 9:1,10,15).

All the materials used for the foundation, the walls and its partitions up to the coupling (topmost level) were of the best of great stones hewn out. Each stone was in all respects, finely wrought and very costly. **“All these were of costly stones... And the foundation was of costly stones... And above were costly stones...”** (1 Kings 7:9 -11). Also, the building was extensively garnished with cedar beams, pillars and coverings, making it very attractive. Though the allotment of the apartments agrees with the prevalent practice of the time, its magnificence surpassed any similar structure in neighboring kingdoms. It eminently showcased the splendor of the nation and the glory of its God (1 Kings 7:9-11; 10:20,21,23).

The body of Christ constitutes a spiritual house for God, built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief corner stone. Her essence is to ceaselessly serve God's comprehensive purposes, project His divine glory, offer spiritual sacrifices, and shine for Him (1 Peter 2:5; Ephesians 2:20; Philippians 2:15). Though **“... Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house”**, the process of building God's spiritual habitation is still on-going. But it, too, will soon be completed (Luke 21:24). However, anyone can still choose to be part of it on condition of urgent decisive separation unto God through repentance from sin and faith in our Savior Jesus Christ (Mark 1:14,15; 2 Corinthians 6:17,18).

Question 2: How can one become a part of God's building?

As each of the hewn stones had to be sawn to size, and the timbers planed to taste before they could be used in

their respective places in Solomon's palace, so must every believer be minded to endure every necessary character trimming in order to fit into God's eternal design (1 Peter 1:7-10; Revelation 2:10). Secondly, as the fixing of each stone in any location depended on the decision of the builders, so must every Christian serve with contentment in whatever capacity appointed in the body. There should be no lobbying, bickering or position-seeking in the fold (1 Corinthians 12:18,25-30). Thirdly, the characteristic bonding among the stones in the building challenges believers to work in unity towards achieving divine objectives. This calls for understanding, forbearance, love, and unity (Psalm 133:1-3).

CO-OPERATION AND COMMITMENT ON THE PROJECTS (1 Kings 7:13-50; 2 Chronicles 8:2-10; Exodus 35:30-35; 1 Timothy 1:12-17; 1 Peter 4:10,11).

“And king Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre” (1 Kings 7:13). The king knew he needed assistance to achieve the best. So, he sent to Tyre to fetch a skilled workman of dual nationality (half Israel and half Tyre). Hiram, the sculptor was engaged for further beautification of the temple as well as the fabrication of brazen vessels for its services. He was a ready reminiscence of Bezaleel and Aholiab during the wilderness tabernacle era (Exodus 31:1-6). Among others, he used bright brass to make the two pillars, two bowls of the chapiters (the upper parts of the pillars), two networks, four hundred pomegranates, ten bases, ten lavers, one sea, twelve oxen bearing the sea; pots, shovels, and basons. He was a godly workman whose faith in Israel's God aptly manifests in the names he gave to the temple porch pillars. **“And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar, and called the name thereof Jachin: and he set up the left pillar, and he called the name thereof Boaz,”** meaning “God establishes” and “in God is strength” respectively (1 Kings 7:21). The lessons are, one, ministers should rest assured that God's work will not lack capable, willing and ready skillful hands even if such have to be sought beyond one's immediate vicinity. Two, those who are privileged to

involve in God's work must, as a matter of necessity, be God-related, otherwise their lives may contradict their manifest talents or corrupt their usefulness. Three, the commitment of Hiram justifies Solomon's choice of him. Like him, Christians should fully use their talents for the advancement of things pertaining to God.

Question 3: What can God's ministers and people learn from Hiram's engagement in the work?

As Hiram was committed to his charge, so was Solomon diligent in the art of governance. Each of them reinforced the New Testament injunction, **"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, ...let us wait on our ministering ...he that ruleth, with diligence ...Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord"** (Romans 12:6-8,11). Solomon was not only concerned with building worship or administrative edifices, but also in securing the nation. **"And Solomon went to Hamath-zobah, and prevailed against it"** (2 Chronicles 8:3). Since Zobah had been subjugated before now, Solomon's battle was obviously necessary to suppress one of its insurrections to regain sovereignty from Israel (2 Samuel 8:3-10; 1 Chronicles 18:4-10).

As a wise statesman, Solomon realized that the level of a nation's well-being largely depends on the level of its security, therefore he fortified the kingdom. Economically, he built store cities in the regions of Baalath in the tribe of Dan, and Tadmor (about 250 kilometers north east of Damascus). Militarily, he fenced the cities of upper Beth-horon and lower Beth-horon about 10 kilometers northwest of Jerusalem; built cities for his chariots and horses, aside the house of the forest of Lebanon which also served as an armory. These efforts were meant to stabilize the economy, subdue rebellious tributaries, consolidate the nation's territorial integrity and checkmate incursion from neighboring enemy nations.

Christians are to guard against the loss of any spiritual experience or virtue by watching their hearts with all

diligence. Two, we are to pray for sustaining grace for daily victories. Three, we are to make good use of available grace avenues to escape sinful or damning allurements. Four, leaders are to quickly correct any leaky area of any of the member's life through counselling and prayer sessions with a view to getting such back on victory side. Five, like Solomon aptly depicted, the Christian must realize that one good way of securing peace is to be always prepared for war. Each must be strong, put on the whole armor of God in readiness to combat any onslaught against our spiritual heritage (1 Corinthians 16:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:15).

Question 4: How can we secure our spiritual gains?

As an astute public administrator, Solomon realized he needed finance for his heavy projects. This he got through tributes from vassal states, forced labor from non-Israeli residents, taxation, foreign loans, and revenue from both inland and maritime mercantile enterprises with the co-operation of Tyrian experts. As the world runs to a close, God's projects on earth must of necessity increase. God's people must therefore be poised to meet the financial challenges within the confines of scripturally acceptable avenues like freewill offerings, pledges, vows, etc.

COMPLIANCE AND CONTRAVENTION OF THE PENTATEUCH (1 Kings 7:51; 9:11-13; 11:1- 10; 2 Chronicles 8:11-16; Exodus 23:14-19; Matthew 28:20).

The life of a person is usually best evaluated by their compliance with the word of God. An x-ray of Solomon in the light of available Scripture at his time indicates a mixture of good and bad traits. One good trait is his transparent handling of treasures dedicated to God. **“... And Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated; even the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, did he put among the treasures of the house of the LORD”** (1 Kings 7:51). Though he did not use most of what his father dedicated for the temple work because of the magnitude of his own input, he faithfully left the rest for its upkeep and exigencies.

New Testament believers must constantly avoid the temptation to divert dedicated funds or items for other uses.

Two, he observed the daily and annual religious rites. **“Then Solomon offered burnt offerings unto the LORD... according to the commandment of Moses...”** (2 Chronicles 8:12). While the morning and evening sacrifices remind Christians of our corresponding daily devotions, the annual feasts of Passover typify the commemoration of deliverance from sin through the substitutionary death of Christ; the feast of Weeks signifies the believer’s eagerness for the Holy Ghost infilling; and the feast of Tabernacles foreshadows the imminent rapture and its subsequent separation of believers gathering unto Him (Exodus 23:14-19; Deuteronomy 16:1-17; Acts 2:1). Three, he was faithful to the priestly order instituted by David (2 Chronicles 8:14). This challenges each Christian to personally value the vicarious death of Christ, seek His Spirit for the fulfilment of His mandate, live in constant expectation of reunion with Him and accord finality to the totality of Christ’s word in all situations.

However, the study also exposes some areas of weakness that later produced bitter results in the case of King Solomon. **“And Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that he had built for her: for he said, my wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the LORD hath come”** (2 Chronicles 8:11). His marriage to pagans clearly shows that he valued diplomatic alliances above scriptural imperatives and eventually dragged him away from the God he initially loved so well. Two, there was no record that he encouraged the use of opportunities afforded by the business outreach to foreign lands to witness for God among their pagan customers and contacts. Three, he later became more concerned with the splendor of the kingdom than the good of the people and the glory of the Lord. People protested this in the later days of his reign and after his death. Four, though Hiram rejected the twenty cities he gave, Solomon was

wrong to have even considered ceding any part of the nation to anyone on any grounds in the first place (Leviticus 25:23; Numbers 36:4-9).

Question 5: Evaluate the life of King Solomon.

The seemingly little leaven of disobedience in Solomon’s life eventually corrupted him completely. Half obedience is tantamount to total disobedience (Deuteronomy 30:15-20). Unfortunately, despite all that went into it and its grandeur, Solomon’s palace was later pillaged and pulled down.

As the study concludes, we are challenged to take stock of our priorities in life: profit or purity? How does your obedience rank: nil, part or full? What legacy are you leaving behind: treasure or scripture? Solomon built a magnificent structure in the nation, but they are no more. Only a godly character will transcend life and transport into heaven. **“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”** (Mark 8:36).

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Revelation	13-14	Job	41-42
TUE	“	15-16	Psalms	1-5
WED	“	17-8	“	6-8
THUR	“	19-20	“	9-11
FRI	“	21-22	“	12-16
SAT	Genesis	1-2	“	17-18
SUN	“	3-4	“	19-21

END OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

BEGINNING OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

812 Lesson

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR A DISPIRITED MINISTER

MEMORY VERSE: “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7).

TEXT: 2 Timothy 1:1-18

This second epistle of Paul the apostle was a follow-up to the first one. In the first epistle, he exhorted Timothy about his personal life, ministry and church administration. This second epistle was written to encourage him in view of his youthfulness and timid nature. He is to be courageous in the face of unrelenting oppositions to the gospel and sustain the fight against false teachers within and outside the church.

The epistle contains instructions on the uncompromising stand of believers in the face of daunting challenges of the latter days. Ministers and believers are to endure hardship, serve God, avoid backsliding and remain rapture-ready. No one should faint or falter in faith and ministry simply because of increasing opposition and persecution against Christians. Jesus had told us it would be so. He said: **“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”** (John 16:33). This epistle was the last the Apostle wrote when he was in prison in Rome awaiting martyrdom.

Question 1: What are the lessons for ministers and believers from the second epistle to Timothy?

COMPLIMENTS TO A DISMAYED MINISTER (2 Timothy 2:1 -5; John 10:28; 1 Timothy 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; Ephesians 6:4; Titus 2:7)

In the epistle, Paul the apostle introduced himself and his ministry as originating from God. Notice that despite his many years of service to God, Paul did not arrogate to himself a flamboyant title as is common with many ministers of the gospel. He also did not fail to reveal the goal of God and expected pursuit of believers which is **“the promise of life which is Christ Jesus”**.

Jesus promised eternal life to as many as receive Him. In fact, this is the central focus of the gospel message. **“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believed in him should not perish but have everlasting life”**. Christ is alive for evermore and so shall all blood-washed saints live eternally with Him. The key to this eternal life is salvation.

Question 2: How can a sinner have eternal life?

Note that the affection between Paul and Timothy was a growing one. He was initially referred to as a **“certain disciple in Lystra”** (Acts 16:1), then **“my own son in the faith”** (1 Timothy 1:2) and later **“my dearly beloved son”** (2 Timothy 2:2). Timothy was a loyal follower of Paul despite the wide age gap between them. Their relationship is a good example of true Christian love that knows no age barrier. Timothy was not only a follower but also a co-laborer with Paul. It is expected that passage of time, growth in grace and ministry should not separate believers from their mentors.

Paul’s prayer for Timothy features grace, mercy, peace and thanksgiving. All believers need grace in their lives in view of the various challenges that face them. God’s mercy draws a person into fellowship and preserves the believer in the fold. It is of the Lord’s mercy that we are not consumed. Having reconciled and made peace with God through repentance and faith in Christ, the believer lives in peace with others despite oppositions, persecutions and vicissitudes of life. Paul obviously had reasons to thank God for Timothy in view of his growth, love for God, commitment and consistency. The great affection between them was evident in Paul **“greatly**

desiring to see thee being mindful of thy tears that I may be filled with joy”.

Good parental example and mentoring is here brought to the fore through a glimpse into Timothy’s family background. Lois and Eunice, Timothy’s grandmother and mother respectively were examples of faith and fidelity worthy of emulation. While Timothy’s father was a Greek, these two Jewish heroines of faith did their best to impart unfeigned faith into him. Parents should commit themselves to the upbringing of their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Those whose children are not following the Christian path should examine their lives and commit their causes to God who is able **“of these stones to raise up children”** (Matthew 3:9).

COUNSELS FOR A DISPIRITED MINISTER (2 Timothy 1:6-14; Romans 1:16; Acts 9:15; Proverbs 22:28).

In view of the mutual affection for each other, Paul’s prayer, godly parental examples to follow and the need to forge ahead despite all odds, the Apostle calls Timothy to remembrance of pertinent issues for spiritual survival. He exhorted him to **“stir up the gift of God”, “be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner”, “be . . . partakers of the afflictions of the gospel”, “hold fast” and “keep by the Holy Ghost”** that good thing committed unto him (verses 6,8,13,14). The gifts of God need to be stirred up and cultivated to avoid being dormant as an unused part of the body can become atrophied. The Holy Spirit and His gifts are still available for sanctified, thirsty and prayerful believers to receive. Christ promises and assures that believers **“shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”** (Acts 1:8). The Spirit infilling dispels fear and emboldens the believer for soul-winning.

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”. Paul’s

incarceration, possible intimidation by both church members and unbelievers and weakness of character in Timothy were potential causes of fear that necessitated this exhortation. God's repeated instruction to His children is **"fear not"** (Exodus 14:13; Psalm 27:3; Isaiah 35:4; 41:10). His power, presence and promised support are antidotes to fear.

Furthermore, Timothy was charged not to be ashamed of Christ nor of Paul. The Apostle once declared that: **"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ"**. Preaching the gospel will surely attract opposition and persecution. Thus, we should not to be ashamed of the claim of Christ among despisers; neither should we shun identification with the suffering and down-trodden brethren.

The reasons Christians are not to be ashamed of Christ and the gospel are enumerated by Paul and these include **"our salvation"** which is obtained through Christ's precious blood; His **"holy call"**; His abolishing death (all that truly believe shall never die eternally); and bringing life and immortality. These reasons when pondered upon should actually make believers cleave to Christ and proudly confess their attachment to Him. Christ is also able to keep believers to the last day.

Sound words are to be kept. We are to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, and give **"the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip"**. We are to keep God's word regardless of the persecution and prevalent backslidings among believers today. The doctrines of the Bible as being preached in the church should be studied and comprehended by all without modifying, mutilating or removing the old landmarks.

Paul also encouraged Timothy to keep the good thing which was committed to him by the power of God. In his efforts to keep God's blessing, Timothy should not forget the enablement by the Holy Ghost.

<p>Question 3: What are the duties of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life and how can one recover the gift?</p>

Paul, the foremost leader of the Church in the Gentile world, being imprisoned, would likely be a cause for shame among his followers. But he encouraged Timothy not to be ashamed of either the gospel or its preachers. Preaching the true gospel brings affliction. **“Yea and all that will live godly in Christ shall suffer persecution”**. Paul suffered for the gospel and encouraged Timothy not to shrink from suffering. It is through much tribulations that we shall enter the kingdom of God. Believers’ suffering can be the outcome of their righteous and uncompromising lives. As light, darkness will definitely be negative to the heaven-bound saints. We are to willingly but not foolishly suffer. **“If any suffer as a Christian, he should not be ashamed but glorify God in this behalf”**.

Without the Holy Spirit, all humans are the same. It is the Spirit of God that adopts believers as children of God. His ministry comforts, guides, empowers, enlightens and supports, among others. Paul magnified his ministry and said he was a preacher, apostle and a teacher of the Gentiles. This was to encourage Timothy who was also saddled with the same responsibility of ministering and he was expected to continue after Paul’s exemplary pattern. It is our ability to stand true to our calling as ministers that we shall be able to save ourselves and those that hear us.

CHALLENGE OF DESERTING ASSOCIATES (2 Timothy 1:15- 18; 4:10; Acts 19:10; 1 Timothy 4:1; Philemon 7; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Corinthians 1:5; 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14; Philippians 1:6,10; 2:16)

“This thou knowest that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hamogenes” (2 Timothy 1:15). Timothy was reminded of people in Asia who had turned away from Paul. Despite his effective outreach in Asia, when persecution arose, many who professed to have believed the gospel deserted him and the faith.

Question 4: What are the causes of backsliding?

Christ had predicted that many shall **“be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another”** (Matthew 24:10). His apostles also reiterated this truth in their writings. In his first epistle to Timothy, Paul expressly said **“some shall depart from the faith”**. Professing believers desert Christ and the assembly of believers because of loss of first love, greed, fear, love of the world, persecution and difficulties, among others. Many disciples of Christ (John 6:66) and some of Paul’s associates like Phygellus, Hermogenes and Demas backslid. The lesson here is that backsliding is real and we need to guard against it.

Though some backslide, there are believers who are unwavering in their commitment to the cause of Christ. Onesiphorus was a good example for present-day believers. He showed genuine love and **“oft refreshed”** the Apostle. This was a great source of encouragement to Paul. Philemon was also noted for refreshing the bowels of the saints. Besides, he was **“not ashamed of my chain”** or the Apostle’s incarceration but **“he sought me out very diligently and found me”** and ministered to him in many things. What a son of consolation! We should spend and be spent for the cause of the gospel to obtain temporal and eternal dividends. Less wonder, Paul prayed for divine mercy upon his household while on earth and mercy on the last day.

The ultimate gain and goal of every believer is to qualify for the Lord **“in that day”**. Paul referred to the coming of the Lord at rapture which will mark the last day of saints on earth. All saints joyfully anticipate the day of the Lord when all their efforts shall be rewarded and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Believers need to be steadfast while sinners and backsliders should repent and return to the Lord to escape divine judgment.

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Genesis	5-6	Psalms	22-24
TUE	“	7-8	“	22-27
WED	“	9-10	“	28-31
THUR	“	11-12	“	32-34
FRI	“	13-14	“	35-36
SAT	“	15-16	“	37
SUN	“	17-18	“	38-40

813 Lesson

PERSEVERING IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE

MEMORY VERSE: “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:3).

TEXT: 2 Timothy 2:1-26

Apostle Paul had exhorted Timothy, his beloved son whose unfeigned faith he acknowledged, to be bold in upholding sound doctrine. As a sincere spiritual father and mentor, he reminded him of his own persecution in Asia, indicating that it was an integral part of the Christian service and also shared a comforting testimony of the profound hospitality bestowed on him by the house of Onesiphorus, thereby encouraging him that Christian service is not all about persecution.

In the present text, the Apostle aroused Timothy’s consciousness to his identity as a good soldier of Christ who must demonstrate courage, perseverance and unalloyed loyalty to his Master, like himself (2 Corinthians 12:9,10; 2 Timothy 2:9,10). Paul proceeded further to highlight prospective gospel antagonism and prescribed antidotes to ensuring victory and fruitfulness in Christian service. Our success in Christian service is largely a function of our understanding of our identity as Christ’s soldiers and the requisite effort needed to meet the demand of this unique identity.

Question 1: Who is a good soldier of Christ?

PATERNAL EXHORTATION ON PERSEVERING AS A CHRISTIAN SOLDIER: (2 Timothy 2:1-8; 3:10-12; Acts 13:50; 14:22; 1 Thessalonians 3:3; Romans 12:3,6; Matthew 6:24; 24:13; 10:38; Luke 9:23).

Perseverance is a requisite virtue in Christianity and Christian service. No one can go very far, serve the Lord in season and out of season, overcome temptations,

oppositions, persecutions and obtain the final salvation without a will to persevere. Challenges will naturally come; our adversaries will tempt, taunt and try our resolve to serve the Lord, but we must determine to hold our head high and persevere to the end. Apostle Paul had his fair share of persecutions, oppositions and hardship, but he endured as a good soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ, hence he exhorted young Timothy to follow his examples (2 Timothy 3:10,11).

No believer can persevere except he or she is spiritually strong, hence Apostle Paul's exhortation: **"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"** (2 Timothy 2:1). This strength can be found only in the grace of God. Without it, we can neither amount to anything nor achieve something for the Lord. Paul's own testimony is that: **"But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me"** (1 Corinthians 15:10). This divine ability is defined by a Christian writer as **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**. The Apostle's epistles are replete with the primacy of God's grace in service.

Continuity is paramount to the survival of the church. **"And the things that thou has heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also"** (2 Timothy 2:2). Unless believers who have received the Word labor to bear spiritual fruits and reproduce disciples, the Church is at the risk of dying. Those who have heard, accepted the faith and are transformed by the Word should pass on the experience by committing it to faithful men and women who can teach others. Not only was Apostle Paul sure that he had reproduced himself in Timothy in terms of Christian virtues and commitment, he was confident that Timothy would be able to impact others with the legacy he has received under his tutelage. Contemporary church leaders should follow the example of Paul and engage in self reproduction as a veritable tool for the survival of the church. They must eschew ignoble display of ego in

doctrinal teachings and interpersonal relationships as a pathway of ensuring consistent church growth (Acts 20:20,27).

Question 2: Identify the place of grace in Christian service.

“Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier”

(2 Timothy 2:3,4). Leveraging on his earlier exhortation on the unending grace in Christ, Apostle Paul further exhorted Timothy to endure hardness; that is, to demonstrate stability, steadfastness, toughness and absolute loyalty to the Lord in order to please Him as a good soldier. Every Christian worthy of calling needs these qualities in the face of challenges. His exhortation affirmed Christ’s teachings that we must bear our individual cross and serve Him daily, if we must please Him. Only those who persevere till the end shall be saved (Matthew 24:13). A Christian soldier must be ready to: one, endure hardness and hardship if and when they come; two, disentangle from worldliness and worldly amusements (1 John 2:15 -17; 2 Corinthians 6:17,18); three, be disciplined in spiritual warfare (2 Timothy 2:5) without resorting to unscriptural means such as consulting familiar spirits or devilish sources to acquire power; four, be partakers of the experiences of salvation, sanctification and Holy Ghost baptism before ministering the same to others. These will place them at a vantage position to wage war against the enemy without being guilty of hypocrisy.

Our success in life and ministry takes its bearing from our self recognition, constant consciousness and appreciation of our unique identity and calling as soldiers in Christ. This will enable us maintain our unique spiritual dress code (Ephesians 6:13-18), duty (1 Timothy 6:12), unfeigned devotion (2 Timothy 2:3,4), and reward (2 Timothy 2:11-13; 4:7,8).

Paul was pungent in his admonition that Timothy must first take care of his own soul by practicing the

sound doctrines received from him, before imparting them to others (1 Timothy 4:16). He himself was always in safeguard of his own soul, irrespective of his tight schedule (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). The priority of holiness of God's servants over their service to Him is confirmed by the uniform testimonies of the scriptures (Genesis 17:1; Leviticus 20:7,8; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15,16). Therefore, no matter the prevailing circumstances at any point in our Christian service, we must exhibit transparent holiness and perseverance in our private and public life before God can accept our service (Romans 12:1,2).

PAUL'S ENCOURAGING PERSEVERANCE AS CHRIST'S SERVANT: (2 Timothy 2:9-13; 2 Corinthians 7:5; 11:25,26; Acts 14:19; 16:22; Romans 8:18; Matthew 10:25; John 13:12-15; Hebrews 2:18; 4:15).

“Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Timothy 2:9,10). Apostle Paul was never ashamed of his suffering for the sake of the gospel; he always testified about it at every opportunity (2 Timothy 1:12; Romans 1:16).

Therefore, he admonished Timothy to emulate his delight in suffering for the sake of the gospel (2 Timothy 1:8).

The restatement of Paul's ministerial ordeal and perseverance was a deliberate effort at fortifying Timothy's mind with the certainty of persecution as an integral part of our calling in Christ (Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 3:12). His testimonies also amplify his profound piety and flawless leadership by example, in consonance with the teaching and practice of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 13:12-15). Paul suffered sordid and sundry persecutions as a preacher of the gospel without compromise or any kind of hypocrisy. He faced persecution with absolute confidence in God as reflected in his testimony of readiness to depart for

glory (2 Timothy 4:7,8). This testimony of Paul should propel every believer into an untiring Christian service.

“It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself” (2 Timothy 2:11-13). God is not unrighteous to forget our labor of love rendered in His name (Hebrews 6:10). Therefore, Paul emphasized the faithfulness of God in rewarding those who persevere till the end. Christ assures His servants of earthly and heavenly rewards for faithful service (Mark 10:28-30; Matthew 19:29).

As the Apostle looked forward to the challenges of ministry which Timothy was certainly to face, he equipped him with practical nuggets of wisdom that will make him soar in ministry.

<p>Question 3: What can we learn from Paul’s leadership style as reflected in his relationship with Timothy?</p>

PRACTICAL EXPOSITION ON PURITY, CHARITY AND SERVICE: (2 Timothy 2:14-26; Isaiah 52:11; Titus 2:11,12; Ephesians 1:4; Colossians 1:22; 1 Timothy 1:5).

Apostle Paul was a dynamic leader whose admonitions were often practical in addressing specific, physical, spiritual, ministerial and other challenges. Having strengthened Timothy’s faith with the fact that perseverance overcomes persecution, he proceeded to instruct him with expositions crucial to daily victorious Christian life and ministerial success. First, he charged him not to neglect his duty of constantly reminding his congregation to avoid unnecessary arguments and debates (verse 14; James 3:14). Second, being an astute scholar himself, he encouraged Timothy on the primacy of studying to acquire scripture knowledge to enable him prove his ministerial mettle (verse 15). Third, he believed that this exhortation would help Timothy to combat profanity and antics of false preachers such as

Hymenaeus and Philetus who were guilty of spreading false doctrine (2 Timothy 2:16-18). As Christians and leaders, a regular study of the Bible is inevitable for our success in life and ministry (John 5:39; Acts 17:10,11). Fourth, he pointed out the grievous consequences of false doctrine on believers as it is capable of destroying their faith completely. Fifth, affirming the omniscience and knowledge of God of His own children, Paul admonished Timothy to shun sin in all its ramifications. **“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity”** (2 Timothy 2:19). Purity is indispensable to a successful Christian and ministerial life. As God cannot lose sight of His own true children amidst a multitude of worshippers in the church, believers and ministers must purge themselves of all sinful and social vices through the experience of sanctification. This second work of grace enables a believer to receive an inner cleansing that enables them to live victoriously.

Unfortunately, not everyone who claims to be a servant of God understands the centrality of purity of life. Anyone who does not value and live a holy life is unsuitable for the Master’s use and cannot bring honor to Him. **“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor”** (2 Timothy 2:20). This calls the attention of every heaven-minded believer to ask these vital questions: What type of vessel am I? Am I a vessel of honor or dishonor, gold or silver, wood, earth, hay or stubble? A builder or a destroyer? On the day of reckoning, every work shall be made manifest (1 Corinthians 3:13; Matthew 7:21-23).

Sixth, Paul also exhorted Timothy to **“Flee also youthful lusts”**, but embrace the virtues of righteousness, faith, charity and peace, **“out of a pure heart”** (2 Timothy 2:22). This apostolic exhortation highlights the necessity of consistent watchfulness over our passion with a view to avoiding the temptation of immorality. Our perseverance in Christian service is irrefutably tied

to our perpetual saintliness (John 8:31; Isaiah 52:11). Therefore, we are enjoined to match our message with our manner of life, since a slight contradiction is capable of plunging us into the cauldron of reproach and hypocrisy.

Question 4: From Paul's admonitions to Timothy, what are the demands of our Christian profession?

Rounding off this chapter of his epistle, Paul exhorted Timothy to avoid foolish and unlearned questions which only gender strife. And, it is incongruous for the servant of the Lord to engage in conflicts, contention, controversies and chaos. Instead, they are to meekly instruct the antagonists of the gospel to plead for mercy and salvation of their souls (2 Timothy 2:23-26). As we avoid matters that engender intra or inter religious conflicts, we must pray for the salvation of critics and false preachers as well as restoration of backsliders. This task, inevitably, requires our perseverance, prayerfulness, persistence and passion.

DAILY BIBLE READING				
	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Genesis	19	Psalms	41-44
TUE	"	20-21	"	45-48
WED	"	22-23	"	49-51
THUR	"	24	"	52-56
FRI	"	25	"	57-61
SAT	"	26	"	62-66
SUN	"	27	"	67-68

814 Lesson

MAINTAINING SCRIPTURAL CONVICTIONS IN PERILOUS TIMES

MEMORY VERSE: “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them” (2 Timothy 3:14).

TEXT: 2 Timothy 3:1-17

Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about the evils that will increase in the “**last days**”. The gospel age or period preceding the rapture and end of the world is referred to as the last days (Acts 2:17; Hebrews 1:2). Paul highlighted those evils to enlighten as well as warn Timothy and all believers of the danger they pose to their convictions to avoid being ensnared. If, with the passage of time, men have become more sophisticated in sin as predicted, the Church in this generation need to pray and watch against those perils that were the concern of the Apostle in the first century. He also pointed to religious pretense and semblance of piety or “**having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof...**” (verse 5) as a major feature of the last days and prescribes unwavering continuance in sound doctrines of the Scripture as taught and exemplified by true ministers and believers as the antidote to these subtle soul-damning perils.

Question 1: Explain the term “last days” and why Paul warns against the attendant perils?

THE PERILS AND SEDUCERS IN THE LAST DAYS (2 Timothy 3:1-9,13; 1 Timothy 6:10; Philippians 2:3; Isaiah 5:20; John 3:20; Romans 16:17,18; Acts 17:21).

The perils were already prevalent in the Apostle’s day. He therefore admonished Timothy to turn away from such corrupt people (verse 5). These perils have the potential to spread like leaven and ruin sincere but careless members of the church. The Apostle reveals specifically

that these perils reside in those who are: one, **“lovers of their own selves”**; while true love is out-going to God and fellow men, self-love is obsessed with selfish interests. Two, **“covetous”**; covetousness most often manifest in the love of money and what money can buy. The covetous are only concerned about what they stand to get at the expense of others (1 Timothy 6:10). Three, **“Boasters, proud, blasphemers”** - pride results in spiting others and vainglorious self-exaltation, that many times is at the root of speaking impiously about God and sacred institutions. We are admonished to **“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Philippians 2:3)**. Four, **“disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy”**. Ingratitude is sure to be followed by disobedience. Children who are not grateful for parental love, care and sacrifice will likely be vile and rebellious to authority in the church and society. In the same vein, those who are not thankful to God for all His mercies are bound to become unholy and without godly fear. Thus, ingratitude and impiety go together. Five, **“without natural affection, trucebreakers”**. It is a dangerous time when men will neither manifest that natural affection which God implanted in them for the sanity and survival of human society nor be affected by them. Expectedly, those who cannot be held by the bond of natural affection may not be held by the most solemn covenant vow or promise. They become truce breakers.

Six, **“false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good”**. It is dangerous when men have no regard for the good name of others; when they are not capable of governing their appetites and passions to the extent they become fierce and inhuman to others because they are incapable of ruling their own spirits. They also look down on people who are good and invariably hail those who are evil (Isaiah 5:20). Seven, **“traitors, heady, high minded”** people who can betray others who trust them into the hand of an enemy, as Judas did to Christ. Others are harsh in their responses, willful and haughty in their manners. Eight, **“lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God”**. Love of pleasure destroys the love for God in the heart. And this is increasingly prevalent among believers today.

Question 2: Mention some of the vices in the church and society that make our day perilous.

“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (verse 5).

The perils of these last days consist of the existence of the vices enumerated above in persons who still wear the cloak of piety and a smooth superficial semblance of godliness. Such religious pretenders may deny that the power of true godliness that is usually defined by holy conduct and selflessness is impossible in this present life. Their religion is only a regimen of outward activities devoid of inward transformation and renewal. The Apostle’s counsel is to avoid their contaminating influence by marking them and turning away from them. In the divine economy, true godliness is evidenced by a transformed life and conduct.

Question 3: Explain what is meant by having a form of godliness but denying the power.

The subversive activities of seducers in the last days add to the perils of the time. **“For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”** Apostle Paul’s purpose in alerting and warning Timothy was for him to both protect himself and his congregation from their activities. He exposed their method of operation: one, they do not come openly in the congregation to corrupt people, but go privately to their would-be victims in consonance with the warning of Christ: **“For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light lest his deeds should be reproved.”** Two, they worm themselves into the affection of their victims, especially women, with feigned words. **“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple”** (Romans 16:17,18). Three, they usually

identify and target the vulnerable - the simple-hearted and immature members of the congregation who have limited understanding of Bible doctrines.

The easiest way to identify falsehood is to be conversant with the truth. Knowledge of the truth comes from diligent study of the Bible. This will fortify us 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”** (Ephesians 4:14).

Question 4: How do false teachers ensnare their victims and how should believers fortify themselves against their activities?

People become more prone to religious deception when they have undue penchant for novelty like the people of Athens who **“spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing”** (Act 17:21). Lukewarm lifestyle, closeness to the world and its fads, paying more attention to outward religious duties to the detriment of spiritual growth and maturity and loss of real meditation on the word of God are other reasons believers lose their godly conviction. The Scripture, however, admonishes believers to **“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein”** (Hebrews 13:9).

Question 5: Mention some character-traits that predispose believers to deception of false teachers.

False teachers resist the truth so they can continue to peddle their heresies. But Apostle Paul gives assurance that their activities will eventually meet with failure the same way their Old Testament counterparts failed to resist the divine mandate given to Moses to deliver Israel out of bondage in Egypt. **“Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also**

was” (verse 9). Though these **“evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived”**, they shall be judged by God.

POWER OF EXEMPLARY LIFE AND MINISTRY (2 Timothy 3:10-12; 1 Samuel 12:3; 1 Thessalonians 2:10; 1 Timothy 4:12)

To counter threats to spiritual stability in the last days, Apostle Paul presented his own exemplary godly lifestyle to Timothy for x-ray the same way Prophet Samuel did. The Apostle knew the power of practical example of a godly lifestyle in ministry will inspire younger believers and strengthen their convictions. So, those who truly live for Christ demonstrate the power of godliness before others. **“But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me”** (verses 10,11). The Apostle called the attention of Timothy to different aspects of his life and ministry which he was already in the know. His doctrine which originated from Christ was pure and unadulterated; his manner of life he also called the Thessalonians to remember was how **“holily and justly”** he lived among them; his singular purpose was to live to serve Christ on earth and be with Him in heaven forever. He lived a life of faith, longsuffering, charity and patience transparently while serving the Lord with Timothy. These virtues glaringly manifested during numerous persecutions and afflictions/buffeting he suffered and endured. His private life, away from the public glare, gave sufficient and undeniable proof of his faith in Christ and conviction about eternity. Believers need to emulate challenging examples of true leaders and faithful brethren.

Timothy could testify concerning the Apostle’s patience with men and situation, and his courage and composure under fiery persecution. While we do not deliberately stir up persecution, we must expect it one way or another; **“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus**

shall suffer persecution". Apostle Paul did not fail to mention that **"out of them all the Lord delivered me"** to encourage us to rest assured that a true believer will not be consumed by the flames of fiery persecution. Herein lies the remarkable contrast between a form or a semblance of godliness and the real power that Christ gives over sin and circumstances. The Apostle's private and public life was in perfect consonance with his doctrine and preaching. He did not destroy by his life, the things which he built by his preaching (Galatians 2:18).

STEADFASTNESS THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF INSPIRED SCRIPTURE: (2 Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 4:2; Galatians 2:17; Acts 17:11; Isaiah 8:20; Joshua 1:8; Psalms 1:1-3; 119:11).

Though seducers will increasingly become degenerate and grow worse in evil in the last days, the Apostle exhorts Timothy to steadfastness in the truth. **"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them."** The greatest defense against the onslaught of false teachers and their religious lies is the knowledge of the truth in the holy Scriptures. False doctrine cannot survive long where the Bible is freely read, studied and taught. All manners of error and falsehood abound where the truths of Scripture are withheld from the congregation. Paul exhorts Timothy to continue in those things which he had learnt from the Scripture and those God used to teach him.

Like the Bereans, we must personally verify what we are taught against the benchmark of the Holy Writ. The Bereans not only **"received the word with all readiness of mind"** but **"searched the scriptures daily, whether those things (they were taught) were so"** (Acts 17:11) Those who would secure their scriptural convictions from the wind of false doctrine must anchor their faith on the word of God, the divinely-inspired Truth. For us to profit from the Word, we must study it with a humble, sincere and prayerful disposition and willingness to receive and obey its instructions,

corrections and reproofs. We must believe in its divine authorship, infallibility and purpose which are to lead us to salvation in Christ. **“And from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”** (verse 15). We all need correction, reproof and instruction in righteousness, to the end that we **“may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good work.”** So, to be enriched by the Scripture, we must read, study, meditate upon and obey it daily.

Question 6: How can present-day believers maintain their scriptural convictions in these last days?

DAILY BIBLE READING				
	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Genesis	28-29	Psalms	69
TUE	“	30	“	70-72
WED	“	31	“	73-74
THUR	“	32	“	75-77
FRI	“	33-34	“	78
SAT	“	35	“	79-81
SUN	“	36	“	82-85

815 Lesson

RENEWED CHARGE TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

MEMORY VERSE: “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2).

TEXT: 2 Timothy 4:1-6

Having admonished Timothy on personal comportment and continuance in the faith in the previous chapter, Paul now charged him on commitment to the Great Commission. **“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word...”** (2 Timothy 4:1,2). Like a military command, the charge is not negotiable. Though it did not originate from Paul, he passed it on to his son in the faith. Visionary Christian leaders should ensure their faithful and supportive ministers catch the evangelism vision. To drive his point home, Apostle Paul anchored it on inviolable authorities, impending judgment and his imminent departure. The consciousness of these should fuel godly passion, inflame the guts and prevent eternal regrets. Therefore, believers should be poised to dare oppositions, endure difficulties, faithfully declare God’s word and deliver Satan’s captives.

Question 1: Why should believers be committed to preaching the gospel?

WEIGHTY WITNESSES OF THE GOSPEL CHARGE
(2 Timothy 4:1; Ephesians 4:1,2; 1 Chronicles 29:11; Daniel 4:25; Psalm 24:1; Matthew 16:27; Acts 10:42; 2 Corinthians 5:9,10)

“I charge thee therefore before God...” (2 Timothy 4:1). This was to remind Timothy that God was witness to the charge. Though the charge is compelling and daunting, it is as well comforting that the almighty

God was aware of his involvement in the Commission. Surely, God is not a passive spectator but an active personality who is wholly involved in the work. As it was reassuring for Timothy that he was not alone, so should every willing minister be assured of the full backing of the almighty God.

As we consider the credentials of the witnesses, we should be confident that as Creator, God knows the natural level of strength of each individual and knows how to polish them to achieve His purpose. Two, as owner of the whole universe, He has ultimate control over every locality or nationality where any of his servant ministers. Therefore, regardless of the volume or weight of legal or regal opposition, a Christian can preach the saving gospel to His perishing creatures. Three, as Omniscient, He is conversant with the prevailing conditions of any field of ministry and has the solution to every inhibiting influence. Four, as Omnipresent, His promise of divine partnership can be enjoyed anywhere. Five, as Omnipotent Warrior, He will continue His victory run over every adversity through His faithful ministers. As Savior who does not desire that any should perish, He enhances proper receptivity of the Word in the lives of gospel targets (Psalm 24:1; Matthew 28:20; Acts 16:14). Experiences down the ages have proved that God has always been a winner in the gospel endeavor.

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ...” (2 Timothy 4:1). The word “and” emphasizes the distinctiveness of the personalities in reference, reinforcing the Bible doctrine of Trinity. The redemptive work of Christ on the cross and the fact that He is the original Source of the Great Commission prove His interminable interest in the salvation of souls. That He possesses all the essential attributes of His Father gives a double fold confidence to gospel preachers. That the Holy Spirit would never contradict Christ should further embolden and enable a committed minister. The implication of the foregoing is that sufficient grace is made available for the willing minister to succeed in any location in the evangelism ministry.

Question 2: Comment on God being witness to the gospel charge.

On the other hand, if any one carelessly wastes the manifold grace of God, Christ will “...**judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom**”. The fact of Christ’s judgment should deliver us from the fear of man and encourage us to dare any difficulty. The Lord will not be partial in His judgment as He will give to everyone “**according as his work shall be** (Revelation 22:12). The prospect of eternal shame and sorrow resulting from failure and unfaithfulness should engender sufficient commitment to this noble cause. Therefore, complacency, apathy or indolence should not characterize the life of any child of God (2 Corinthians 5:9-11).

WINNING THE WAR AGAINST COLLABORATIVE COMPROMISERS (2 Timothy 4:2-5; John 4:6-10,32-34; Acts 16:31-33; 28:30,31; Romans 2:8,9; Colossians 1:28; 2 Thessalonians 2:11,12; 2 Timothy 2:1-5; Hebrews 12:2,3)

Paul prophetically hinted at a very pathetic situation which is common in contemporary times. “**For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables**” (2 Timothy 4:3,4). Among others, error grows where there is a speaking gift or preaching passion without an adequate corresponding grasp of core gospel elements (1 Timothy 1:5-7). Two, it thrives where the ministry is established or organized for profit motive (Philippians 3:18,19). Three, it flourishes where a preacher dissents and separates from a truly called and anointed minister. That spirit of contention will lead to a compromise of basic gospel essentials in order to stay afloat, have a grip on the crowd and remain ‘relevant’ (Philippians 1:15,16). Four, error succeeds where a minister is inspired by Satan (Revelation 2:9; 3:9). Five, error can stream in when the leader is engrossed with the mundane or associates with politicians who either

openly or secretly snubs the gospel of grace (2 Timothy 4:10).

However, the spread of error requires both the speaking lip as well as listening ears. That people have a longing for error is a testimony of intense depravity (Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11; Ezekiel 13:10,16; Luke 6:26). Unfortunately, people who have itching ears find it easy to get those with lying tongues. Sweet talk, business nuggets, success tips, and prosperity preaching are major regular features that tickle such congregations rather than sound doctrine which emphasizes restitution, righteousness, holiness and commitment (Romans 2:8,9; 1 Timothy 1:4; 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 1:13; Titus 1:9,13; 2:7,8).

Like Timothy, a true minister of God must **“Preach the word...”**. The **“word”** is the totality of Christ’s teaching (2 Timothy 4:2). Like a messenger, the preacher has no right to mutilate or modify the King’s message. The declaration must be clear and comprehensible for the audience to make a reasonable decision. Besides, he must **“be instant in season, out of season...”** (2 Timothy 4:2). This implies that preaching must be done not only when the preacher feels like, but when the need arises: whenever a sinner is in sight. Two, it must be done not only where there is a regular or ready congregation, but anywhere someone Christ died for exists. Three, knowing that the value of one soul exceeds all the wealth of the world, recession or economic downturn must not interrupt the declaration of the gospel of salvation. Four, since Satan does not spare any time or chance to tempt or destroy lives, believers should not waste any opportunity of reaching souls with the saving gospel, whether it is convenient or not.

Question 3: Briefly describe the comporment of the church in the warfare against the true gospel.

It must be stressed, however, that the essence of preaching is to get the sinner and backslider to acknowledge guilt for their sin before God, and to appropriate His infinite mercy for salvation upon repentance and faith in

Christ. The word of God has universal relevance and is profitable for every aspect of the human life. So, it must be the same gospel for the whole of humanity. **“For the scripture saith, whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him”** (Romans 10:11,12). Benefitting from God’s word starts with reconciliation with Him at salvation (Matthew 6:33; 11:28).

Apostle Paul also charged Timothy to **“reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”** (2 Timothy 4:2). God’s representatives must be patient even when faithful and concentrated efforts do not yield immediate results. Some seed take quite a long time to germinate not to talk of being ready for harvest. While it may not be practicable to dwell on the whole gamut of doctrine at once, each preaching contact must stress relevant doctrinal aspects appropriately. Gospel ministers must be careful to emphasize Christ’s teaching rather than personal fancies. The inspired word takes precedence over every private, communal or political notion. As the standard bearer therefore, it is the most potent tool of correcting errors and rebuking sinners. The soul-winner must therefore preach with authority and gravity so that the audience may perceive the terror of the Lord and penitently seek His face for forgiveness (Acts 17:30,31).

Question 4: Why is it important for the gospel worker to exalt the word of God?

“But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions ...” (2 Timothy 4:5). If suffering comes in the way of duty, Christ’s soldiers must not be afraid or ashamed. Rather, we should rejoice for being counted worthy to suffer for His cause. Meanwhile, Timothy was also asked to **“do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry”** (2 Timothy 4:5). Although Timothy had been preaching the gospel before this time, he needed to intensify effort. We must use every opportunity to prove our loyalty to God in this matter. Each Christian must justify the grace bestowed on them so that Christ will not have any cause to regret our choice.

WORTHY FAREWELL FROM A GOSPEL ICON
 (2 Timothy 4:6; Isaiah 57:1,2; Romans 8:35-39; 2 Corinthians 5:1; Philippians 1:20-23; 2 Peter 1:14,15)

In this verse, Paul intimated Timothy of his imminent departure. **“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand”** (2 Timothy 4:6). Though Paul knew assuredly that he would suffer martyrdom during this second imprisonment at Rome, he did not show any sign of sorrow. Instead, what bothered him was the continuity of the gospel work. The charge he gave to Timothy was to embolden him to brace up for the challenges of the impending realities of his departure. That he would no longer be available to counsel, correct, encourage or guide him should not diminish his success in the ministry.

Question 5: What challenge can we receive from Paul’s disposition to death?

Apostle Paul thus lived up to the truth that for every true believer in Christ, death is merely a transition. Such only relocates from planet earth to a better world.

DAILY BIBLE READING				
	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Genesis	37	Psalms	86-88
TUE	“	38	“	89
WED	“	39-40	“	90-92
THUR	“	41	“	93-96
FRI	“	42	“	97-101
SAT				
SUN				

816

Lesson

THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH

TEXT: 2 Timothy 4:7-22

MEMORY VERSE: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

After exhorting Timothy to be committed to the cause of the great commission in the preceding verses, Apostle Paul now charge him, and by extension contemporary believers, to fight the good fight of faith. His admonition can rightly be regarded as the words of a dying veteran soldier of the cross and a true defender of the Christian faith. Indeed, Paul was a militant servant of God who, amidst persecutions, forged ahead in the good fight of faith. When he came to the Lord, the devil did all he could to pull him back. In fact, at a point, the Holy Spirit through other people said it was going to be tough and rough for him (Acts 20:22,23). Yet, he was undeterred. Rather, he said: **"none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God"** (Acts 20:24). The faith which Christ died for on the cross at Calvary is worth dying for. Until we fully understand this, we will be **"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"** (Ephesians 4:14). The life of Apostle Paul shows that it takes tough-minded believers to run the Christian race successfully to the end.

Meanwhile, the study focuses on Apostle Paul's charge to fight the good fight of faith, the courage to forge ahead amidst adversity and acknowledgment of fellow companions who were defenders of the faith with him.

Question 1: What should be our attitude to trials and temptations as we run the Christian race?

THE CHARGE TO FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH (2 Timothy 4:7, 8; 1 Timothy 4:16; 6:11-14; Jude 3; Philippians 2:12-16; Luke 13:24; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

“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.” Here, Paul alluded to the contests at the Grecian Games which required courage, discipline and perseverance to win the prize. As contestants were expected to diligently observe and keep to the rules of the game, the Apostle had also kept the rules of the spiritual conflict and race. Experiences of trouble, difficulties and challenges are real. And they come in forms of persecution, trials and tribulations. But we must remain resolute in our conviction. According to a Bible commentator, “fighting the good fight of faith means that we stand firmly anchored on the Word in the power of the Spirit, reckoning ourselves dead to our feelings and our human reasoning, not letting sin rule in our mortal body by obeying its lusts.” Apostle Paul lived up to this bidding, judging from his personal experience. Thus, he was confident in charging believers to fight the good fight of faith. Indeed, the Christian life is likened to a conflict or warfare with sin, Satan, the world, the flesh, false prophets and teachers. And it will take doggedness and faith in Christ to overcome.

Question 2: What personal challenge does Apostle Paul’s lifestyle pose to you as a contemporary Christian?

Timothy, like every believer today, was expected to contend with earnestness as a Christian and a minister in the holy service in which he was engaged, and endeavor to secure the victory. As a true soldier of Christ, he was not expected to permit false doctrine in the church of God.

Having contended faithfully and lawfully for the faith, the Apostle now hoped to receive **“a crown of**

righteousness” as his reward. Though he had labored tirelessly and suffered much for the gospel’s sake, he did not suppose that he was the only one qualified for the crown. Believers, who are committed to holy living in this corrupt world and labor tirelessly to win souls for the Lord, will not lose their reward in heaven. The good fight of faith is not a struggle between competitors. Unlike the Grecian game in which only the winner is expected to receive the prize, every successful contender for the faith will surely receive their crown of life from the Lord.

Question 3: Compare between earthly contest and the Christian race.

THE COURAGE TO FORGE AHEAD AMIDST ADVERSITY (2 Timothy 4:9-18; 3:10-14; 1 Timothy 1:18-20; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; 4:8-14; Hebrews 10:35-39; 12:1-4; Titus 1:4,5,9-16).

“For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world... Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil... At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me ... Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me... And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom... Amen.” Apostle Paul’s life and ministry were threatened by deprivations, difficulties, discouragements, misunderstandings, persecutions, trials and temptations. But he did not allow any of these to dampen his spirit and faith in God. His life challenges contemporary Christians to forge ahead in spite of inconveniences of life.

When we are falsely accused or there are threats in the place of work for not cooperating with bribe-taking and giving, forging documents or sleeping with the boss for promotion and favor, we must summon the courage to **“obey God rather than men”** (Acts 5:29). True believers should not be afraid to lose their lives or jobs for righteousness’ sake because it is better to die righteous and enter into glory than compromise and go to hell.

Question 4: What consolation does a child of God have in living and dying for the faith once delivered unto the saints?

Believers who go through trying times in life should draw inspiration from the Lord Jesus Christ who, immediately after He was baptized in water, and the Holy Spirit descended on Him, was led into the wilderness to be tried by the devil. Soon after we become born again and the Spirit of God begins to bear witness with our spirit that we are God's children, the devil comes with persecution and temptation to test our confidence and faith in God. This continues even when we receive new spiritual experiences from the Lord. These tests vary from one Christian to the other. It could be delay in answer to prayer, loss of good health, delay in marriage or child-bearing, business failure or disappointments. Irrespective of whatever situation we may be going through, we should be committed to the work the Lord has given us and firmly stand on His unfailing promises.

Courage and faithfulness to the whole counsel of God is the basis of our continuous abiding in the faith. As believers, we are called to **“earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”** (Jude 3). We must defend the doctrines of the Bible by words and deeds that conform to the entire truth. Since we derive strength from God's word to fight the good fight of faith (Romans 10:17), we should hide it in our hearts and meditate on it day and night to keep our victory. We are not to meditate on our needs or problems but on the word of God.

Question 5: What are the secrets of the believer's continuous abiding in the faith?

If Paul had concentrated on the attitude of backslidden Demas, Alexander the coppersmith and a host of evil men who stood against his ministry, his hands would have been weakened to fight on. But he was constant in prayers and preached the gospel in season and out of

season. His courage and resilience advanced the course of the Kingdom on earth. Believers who hope to join in the good fight of faith should take a cue from this great Apostle.

Knowing full well that the Lord has deposited a great treasure into our lives, we must keep our bodies, appetites and desires under the control of the Spirit and word of God. To receive the crown of glory like Paul, there must be purpose, decision and determination to stand firm to the end in spite of the fact that those we respect are compromising their faith.

PAUL’S COMPANIONS IN THE DEFENSE OF THE FAITH (2 Timothy 4:19-22,10-13; Romans 16:1-15; 1 Corinthians 10:11-13; Ephesians 6:10-19).

“Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.” As his usual practice, Apostle Paul acknowledged those who had labored with him in the defense of the faith. These were people who had always stood by him in the ministry. They were faithful brethren who supported him and his ministry. Fighting the good fight of faith demands that we are not lone-rangers. **“For two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor...”** (Ecclesiastes 4:9,10). The fight that began when we became born again will continue to rage until we are called home. But if we walk with other pilgrims and put on the whole armor of God, we will be victorious. We must at all times keep close to the Author and Finisher of our faith and also resist the devil and every negative thought (2 Corinthians 10:3-6). No matter how fierce the battle rages, God has promised to make us more than conquerors.

Like other epistles, the Apostle ended with an apostolic benediction. **“The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you.”** This stresses the importance of divine grace in the life of a believer. Every child of God is saved, sanctified, Spirit-filled and sustained by the grace of God. And he can only serve the Lord acceptably and secure his eternal inheritance by grace (Hebrews 12:28).

Question 6: Why is the grace of God vital in the believer's walk with the Lord?

DAILY BIBLE READING

	MORNING		EVENING	
MON	Genesis	45	Psalms	106
TUE	"	46	"	107
WED	"	47	"	108-110
THUR	"	48-49	"	111-115
FRI	"	50	"	116-118
SAT	Exodus	1-2	"	119
SUN	"	3-4	"	120-126

END OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

BEGINNING OF SPECIAL STUDIES

817 TRINITY OF THE GODHEAD

Lesson

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

TEXT: Matthew 3:16,17; 28:19; John 10:30; 15:26; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2

The Godhead and its Trinity is one of the deep mysteries of the Kingdom of God revealed to us in Scripture. It is one of the greatest tenets of the Christian faith that is better believed than mentally understood because it is anchored on the nature and person of God. The subject has, through the ages, confounded the wise and prudent but conferred on the faithful, trusting believer, the blessings of simplicity of faith. Through reasoning, man can never attain the Trinitarian conception of the Almighty God, neither can he by research or logical inquiry understand the nature of God. The error many people have fallen into is an obsessive desire to rationalize this teaching.

Some contend that the word ‘Trinity’ is not in the Bible; and this has hindered their acceptance and belief of it. They have forgotten that the word, ‘Bible’ is not in the Bible, yet they use the term without reservation. They also fail to note that the word, ‘Rapture’ is not in the Scripture. But, shall we disbelieve the scriptural teaching on the Rapture because the word is not directly written in the Bible?

Another reason some find it difficult to comprehend this Scriptural teaching is that they try to compare the human structure with the divine. They reason that it is incomprehensible to talk about one and only God, yet with a Son and Spirit that are co-equal with Him. They have forgotten that it is not possible to know everything

about God, else He would cease to be God. Yet, we make bold to say that there is enough evidence in the Scripture to give us all the profitable knowledge we need to have about the nature and attributes of God. He has sufficiently revealed Himself in His Word so that every sincere seeker may come to the knowledge of His will.

Believers must therefore be on their guard not to fall into the same temptations but come with open minds into the sanctuary of God so that He might reveal His will to us. Let us, once and for all, lay up this truth in our hearts and be free from being **“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”** (Ephesians 4:14).

Question 1: What should be our attitude to the doctrine of Trinity?

May we, therefore, categorically state that just as we have believed the facts of atomic or nuclear energy, solar energy or the computer, even before we understood their nature, we must, likewise, accept the fact of the Trinity as a teaching revealed in God’s word, and that it is doctrinally sound. Every believer must accept the gospel truth of the Trinity by faith, recognizing that God remains the eternal repository of all mysteries (Deuteronomy 29:29).

CONCEPT OF THE DOCTRINE OF TRINITY (Genesis 1:1; 1:26; 3:22; 11:6,7; Matthew 28:19; John 10:30; 14:26)

Question 2: What is our basis for teaching and believing the doctrine of Trinity?

The doctrine of Trinity is a revealed teaching, that is to say, it embodies a truth that cannot be discovered by human natural reason but through divine revelation and understanding. With all his search, man has not been able to discover for himself the deep things of God. In fact, we cannot fully grasp the pearls of God’s Word except through the revelation of His Spirit.

The notion or concept of the Trinity of the Godhead is embedded in the Word of God. The word which is translated 'God' in Genesis 1:1 is Elohim, the plural of El ('The Strong One'). Elohim therefore, means, 'The Strong Ones'. This uni-plural noun appears more than 2,700 times in the Old Testament.

It is interesting to note that God Himself, from the beginning, used plural nouns to explain the work of creation. **“And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth”** (Genesis 1:26). The use of the pronouns, “us” and “our” implies the involvement of more than one personality in the creation of man. Similar application continues in other references. For example, at the excommunication of man from the Garden of Eden, God said, **“Behold, the man is become as one of us...”** (Genesis 3:22). And, on the threshold of God’s perfect desire to curb the foolish excesses of man, by wisely confounding him with diverse languages, the same pronoun is used (Genesis 11:7).

Question 3: Explain the word 'Trinity'.

Trinity therefore emphasizes the unity of three Persons in one God. The word, “Trinity” is a coinage from Three-in-Unity or Tri-unity to underscore the perfect, pure relationship between the Personalities in the Godhead. Doctrinally, it expresses that there is only one God, one divine nature who is tri-personal and also involves the distinctions of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These three are joint partakers of the same divine and majesty of God. There is one only and true God but in the unity of the Godhead there are three co-eternal and co-equal Persons; and they are the same in substance but distinct in subsistence.

CLEAR TEACHINGS OF SCRIPTURE ON THE TRINITY
(John 15:26; 1 Peter 1:2; Psalm 89:26; 45:6,7; Acts 5:3,4; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2,3)

The Scripture clearly teaches that the Godhead consists of three separate, distinct, and recognizable Personalities and qualities, perfectly united together. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are different Persons in the Godhead, not merely three names for one Person. The Father is called God (1 Corinthians 8:6; Psalm 89:26; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Isaiah 63:16; Matthew 6:9); the Son, Jesus Christ, is called God (Psalm 45:6,7; Isaiah 9:6,7; John 20:28); and the Holy Spirit is called God (Acts 5:3,4; 1 Corinthians 3:16,17; 6:19,20; Hebrews 3:7-9; 10:15,16).

From the foregoing references, it is clear that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct Persons, co-eternal and co-existent in power and divine attributes.

Question 4: Why do we believe that God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are co-equal and co-eternal in nature? Support your answer with at least one Scripture reference.

The Trinity is foreshadowed in Daniel 2:47 as three personalities united in one God. The Personalities are God, the Lord and the Revealer of secrets or the Holy Spirit (also Romans 8:26,27; 1 Corinthians 2:10). These three Personalities are the uncreated Beings. They have always been and will continue to be. And they are united in every sense. There is no possibility of disagreement between them because they are one in mind, character and purpose. In every action, the Three are equally active. The Father is the Creator (Genesis 1:1,2; Psalm 100:3; John 1:3), yet the works of creation are ascribed to the Son and the Spirit (Job 26:13; 33:4; Colossians 1:12-16; Hebrews 1:2,3). The work of regeneration and redemption is ascribed to the three Personalities: the Father in Matthew 3:17; The Son in John 5:19-21 and the Spirit in John 15:26. The Spirit sanctifies, yet the Father and the Son are present and active in the work of sanctification. The Father judges but by the Son, Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31; John 5:22). The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit receive honor (John 5:23; Matthew 12:32).

The testimony of Scripture on the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ reveals the perfect unity of the Godhead. **“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him”** (Acts 10:38). Second, Jesus taught that He is God and also emphasized the truth of God’s oneness (John 5:17,18). The testimony of Jesus can neither be rejected nor refused.

Christ’s assertion of unity in the Trinity is of sufficient strength to prove to every man that there are three distinct Personalities in the Godhead and the three are united. A fourth century Christian creed puts it this way: “We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity... for the Person of the Father is one, of the Son another and the Holy Ghost another. But of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost there is one divinity, equal glory and co-eternal majesty... the Father eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet there are not three eternal but one eternal... Thus, the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet there are not three Gods, but one God... Therefore, there is one Father not three Fathers; one Son not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity, there is nothing first or last, nothing greater or less. But all the three co-eternal Persons are co-equal among themselves so that through all... Trinity in unity is to be worshipped.”

Further proof of the truth about the Godhead became clear at the baptism of Jesus Christ when the Father sent the Holy Ghost in bodily form as a dove upon Christ, and God Almighty Himself made a public proclamation of Jesus as His beloved Son (Matthew 3:16,17).

Even at the outset of His ministry, Jesus affirmed the companionship of God the Father and the Holy Spirit with Him. It was only by their combined workings that He was to fulfil His multi pronged ministry of preaching the gospel, healing the sick, and delivering the captives (Luke 4:18). In addition, the work of redemption which Jesus Christ completed on the Cross was a joint venture with the Father and the Holy Ghost (Hebrews 9:14).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF TRINITY (John 14:9; 1:14; 1 Corinthians 2:12; John 16:12-15).

The doctrine of the Trinity, as have been established, is pre eminently given to the Church by revelation. And while it brings before us one of the greatest mysteries or revelation and transcends finite comprehension, it is essential to the understanding of the Scripture. And as we shall see, it has its great value and uses.

The doctrine of the Trinity and unity of the Godhead has been called “a bulwark of Christian-theism.” It gives us a glimpse into the wonderful but complex being of God, while at the same time it constantly proclaims the impossibility of comprehending God. While it is a stumbling block to rationalism, it is for those who accept it a safeguard against all tendencies towards rationalism or intellectual pride.

Question 5: What are the benefits of believing the doctrine of the Trinity of the Godhead?

In the teaching of the Trinity, we behold, first, not only a God who is exalted far above us, but also Christ who is with us and the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. Second, the doctrine of the Trinity is essential to God’s revelation of truth. **“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, and the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth”** (John 1:14). Christ is the revelation of the Father and the express image of His person. **“Jesus saith unto him... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?”** (John 14:9). Now if there is no Trinity, then Christ is not God and cannot perfectly know or reveal God.

Christianity is the only true religion because Christ is the only true revelation of God; but if Christ be not God then we cannot be sure of His revelation of God, and Christianity will be just another religion like all other religions having its portions of truth and portions of error. Christ is God; the Bible declares that He is. And Christianity is the absolute revelation of God’s will for mankind.

The same is true of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said to His disciples: **“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 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. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you”** (John 16:12-15). The Holy Spirit is the One who guides us into all truth. How can He do that unless Christ and the Holy Spirit are as God the Father?

Third, the legitimacy, validity and veracity of the gospel depend upon this truth; for Christ is most clearly seen to be God’s unspeakable gift, the bringer of eternal salvation when we recognize His essential oneness with the Father. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is thus seen to be, in His relation to a sinful world, and the Church as well as to individual believers, the infinite Source of hope and a new, holy life.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING		EVENING		
MON	Exodus	5-6	Psalms	127-133
TUE	“	7-8	“	134-136
WED	“	9	“	137-139
THUR	“	10-11	“	140-144
FRI	“	12	“	145-146
SAT	“	13	“	147-148
SUN	“	14	“	149-150

818 Lesson

ONE BODY, MANY MEMBERS

MEMORY VERSE: “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:12).

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Paul, the apostle, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote to the Corinthian church on the need for unity of believers in Christ. And this subject of unity has become more relevant in view of the prevailing divisions and strife among believers predicted to be signs of the last days. The background of the Corinthian church needs be placed in its proper perspective if we must thoroughly understand the Apostle’s message here. He arrived Corinth with his team when the gospel, in its full-blown measure, was yet to permeate the city. **“After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth”** (Acts 18:1) . He preached and many of the Corinthians turned to the Lord. **“And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized”** (Acts 18:8).

Before long, the impact and influence of Apostle Paul’s message caused a stir in the city and there was persecution. The Lord appeared to Paul and encouraged him. **“Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace”** (Acts 18:9). So, he stayed with the people for eighteen months and established them in the fullness of the truth taught and expounded in the first century church. **“And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them”** (Acts 18:11).

He later left Corinth and visited other mission posts. There, he heard reports of the goings-on in Corinth. He then began to discover the church was not what he left

behind. Evidences of these are seen in the early verse of the epistle to the Corinthians. **“For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you”** (1 Corinthians 1:11).

Questions 1: What was the background of the problems in the Corinthian church?

The unity Paul left in the Corinthian church appears to have been threatened. Some contentions had come in probably due to the demographic distribution of the church - the mighty, the wise, the strong, the foolish, the base, the weak, the despised, the philosophical and highly educated - which compares with that of large churches today (1 Corinthians 1:26-28). But Paul's focus was the truth of the word of God. Today, every true Bible church too will be interested in seeing the truth of the word of God blossom and having spiritual power and impact on the hearers (1 Corinthians 2:1- 5).

Question 2: What was the consequence of division in the Corinthian church?

The problem that came into the church brought along with it debate, carnality, strife and division (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). The brethren there struggled over positions and privileges, preachers and preaching. And in whichever Christian assembly this is found, sin is right on the fringes. Such problems turn people away from fighting sin.

Their eyes were turned away from Christ to key personalities in the church - Paul, Cephas and Apollos. This is a carnal, unsanctified trait which must not be found in the church. Today, when there is preference for a leader or pastor, then carnality has crept in. When we begin to struggle for position, privileges, places, power and personality in the church sin will reign and become rife. The Corinthian church glided from this carnality to fornication. Sin was spared in the church. In Corinth, the hearts and motives of the brethren were affected. They stopped fighting against sin and Satan. Next, they started taking one another to court (1 Corinthians 6:1-7).

Their marriages, homes and lives became muddled up (1 Corinthians 7). They began to rationalize idolatry and shirk their responsibility of Christian giving and tithing. And then their conviction on Christian dressing was shaky. The division made them center their attention on non-essentials and forget the necessity of upholding righteousness and holiness.

It is against this background that the Apostle addresses in the twelfth chapter, the subjects of the unity of the body, the sovereignty of God, the diversity of gifts and the harmony amongst the children of God. The Apostle here underscores the truth that the Church should still be one body. And if all Bible churches do not address and rectify the problem in the church, if any, the unity, growth and ministry of that local church will be baseless. This is because it is impossible to remain united, allow the Spirit of God, the diversity of gifts to operate and function while the body remains in disharmony.

THE CHURCH AND THE BODY: A COMPARISON (1 Corinthians 12:12-14)

Paul likens the Church to the body having many members which must function together in a proper and coordinated way. He expounds this as the will and working of God. Just as God has constituted the body in the same vein, the local church has been constituted by God. Just as the body gets along in fulfilling its several functions with many bones, hands, legs, eyes, ears and fingers, in the same way, the local church gets on in unity with many different sections, members, functions and ministries in that single church. **“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him”** (1 Corinthians 12:18).

Question 3: How does the Church compare with the body?

God has so organized and arranged the Church and her several members as it **“hath pleased him”**. This is to say that the Church is not designed for the end or pleasure of anyone: the wise Greeks or the conservative Jews, the dynamic women or the pro-establishment

men. Therefore, every member of the body of Christ - the mighty, the wise, the noble, the base, the weak, the foolish or the despised - should submit to the absolute will of God and learn to say, **“Not my will, thy will be done.”**

God wants people who will fulfil all His will. This was why He preferred David to Saul (Acts 13:22). God sought out David, a young, but inexperienced little shepherd-boy according to His will. Strangely, Saul did not like this (1 Samuel 20:30,31). But God was not working as it would please Saul, and later turned His back on him.

Question 4: What must be the attitude of members and leaders in the church to decisions taken?

In the church, all the members must learn to uphold and enhance the will of God, agree with the decision of the church and lend their weight to the decisions of the leadership. Pastors or any other leader picked by the church should be seen as the will and counsel of God. Rebellious, self-willed and demanding attitudes get people into the company of demons and unrighteous people.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD (1 Corinthians 12:11,18,28-30; Ephesians 4:11,12)

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?” (1 Corinthians 12:28-30).

God’s sovereignty is reflected in the body of Christ. He distributes the gifts, talents and resources of the Church just as He wills.

Question 5: What relationship should exist among the various work areas of the church?

The departments and multifarious ministries in the church are all set by God and meant to interrelate as one body. **“And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron”** (Hebrews 5:4). God makes the choice, places the people in the ministry and looks forward to the church to support them. Aaron was called of God and was given the honor by Him. This is the sovereignty of God.

But, some say, if it is God’s exclusive privilege to call into the ministry, they do not have to get into personal training or development. This is false. Though God calls, we need to fit ourselves for the calling with appropriate training exposure and discipline. Choristers in the church must train their voices and ears; instrumentalists must train their fingers. Ministers in the Word must develop through much prayer, study, meditation and challenges. Certainly, God makes the choice and the church does the training so that each of us can function at their best. Ultimately, our desires and aspirations in the ministry must be in line with God’s plans and purposes.

HARMONY IN DIVERSITY (1 Corinthians 12:15-26)

Members in the church, though very many and diverse, are organically related and interdependent. The men cannot say to the women, **“we have no need of you.”** The women, also, cannot pull out of the body and go to form an all women church. None can say to the other, “I have no need of thee”. The pastor cannot tell the church workers that he has no need of them.

Question 6: What are the duties of the members of the body of Christ towards one another?

Each member must support, complement and lift up the other member. That means, we cannot disregard or neglect one another. Whatever we do in the church (preaching, teaching, ushering or singing) and whoever we are, we should follow charity (love), pray for one another and constantly provoke one another unto love and good works. In honor, prefer one another. There

must be no schism among the workers and members in the church. Tribalism must not be allowed. The church must keep united, marching on in the strength of the Lord. The young and old, the men and women – all the various facets of the church - must be bound together with the cord of love, peace and fellowship. The Church must remain one body, yet many members; with different and diverse gifts, yet one Church. We should keep on in harmony, lifting up one another.

DAILY BIBLE READING

MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Exodus	15	Proverbs	1-2
TUE	“	16	“	3-4
WED	“	17-18	“	5-6
THUR	“	19-20	“	7-8
FRI	“	21	“	9-10
SAT	“	22	“	11-12
SUN	“	23	“	13-14

819 Lesson

FELLOWSHIP AMONG THE BRETHREN

MEMORY VERSE: “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

TEXT: 1 John 1:1-7; Psalm 133:1-3

The Scripture accords fellowship among brethren a prominent treatment. God expects true, holy, sincere, vibrant and fruitful fellowship among His children as a united family full of love and good works. The beauty of the Christian life and the joy it promotes manifest when fellowship is devoid of hypocrisy, duplicity and carnality. Man continually craves affection and friendship. No individual enjoys solitude or loneliness for a long time, no matter how well-gifted or endowed. Isolation limits and destroys our potentials. A lone ranger soon burns out for lack of companionship and care. Togetherness is therefore the key to victory and preservation of the Church.

METAPHORS AND ELEMENTS OF FELLOWSHIP
(Romans 12:4,5; 1 Corinthians 10:17; John 15:2,5; Acts 2:44; Ephesians 4:4-6; Acts 10:28; Romans 12:13; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 1 Timothy 6:18; Hebrews 13:16; Romans 15:26,27)

The Scripture uses a number of metaphors to describe the Church. One, she is likened to the human body. The natural body is composed of related and interdependent members. Each member's role is vital to the general well-being of the body. The same applies to the body of Christ. If the members are not united, they will not fulfil the purpose for which they are placed in the body and will not realize their greatest potentials. Two, the Church is likened to the branches in a vine. Attachment and fellowship of the branches with the vine leads to fruitfulness. Three, as a building of God, cohesiveness

of the blocks keeps the building in shape and prevents disintegration. Four, as a household, love, forgiveness and fellowship strengthen the household and ensure it does not break apart.

The term 'fellowship' or its cognates is translated from the Greek word 'koinonia' and denotes communion, association, partnership, mutual communication, friendship, sharing a common interest or ideal and being united together by the same cause. The Scripture designates the acts of fellowship among the early Christians as those expressed in an atmosphere of oneness, sincerity and love. "And all that believed were together, and had all things common" (Acts 2:44).

Question 1: Describe the nature of the relationship God expects from His children.

The nature of fellowship lies in unity. Writing to the believers in Corinth, Apostle Paul enjoins them to **"speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"** (1 Corinthians 1:10). Fellowship finds expression and essence in a united group of people. Without oneness in purpose, faith and pursuit, fellowship would be practically impossible. Christians are to live together as a family bound by love and brotherhood.

Question 2: What are the elements of fellowship?

Fellowship is about communion. There is a community (of believers) and in that community there is communion. This community comprises people of the same (religious) beliefs. They mind the same things, believe the same doctrines based on the whole counsel of God, submit to the same Lord, confess the same faith and are controlled by the same Spirit (Ephesians 4:4-6). Second, fellowship is about companionship, friendship and partnership. A companion is one that stays by, spends time with and shares in the joy or sadness of another (Acts 10:28).

Third, it is about communication or distribution to the saints (Romans 12:13). It is about ministering to the

needs of one another (2 Corinthians 8:4; 1 Timothy 6:18; Hebrews 13:16). Fourth, fellowship is about contribution. Sometimes, it becomes necessary to contribute to meet the needs of the saints. To this collection, Paul attached so much importance as a witness to the spirit of fellowship which the gospel inspires in all hearts alike (Romans 15:26,27). Fifth, fellowship is about cooperation. The work of the Kingdom requires cooperation. Service to the body of Christ demands enormous efforts and none can do it alone. Power lies in our unity and cooperating together (compare 1 Corinthians 1:10 with chapter 3:1-9).

THE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP (1 John 1:1-3; Acts 2:41,42; John 8:12; Galatians 2:7-9)

Fellowship does not occur in a vacuum. It is an act that engages the believer's spirit, soul and body. Some people think that who you are, where you go and what you believe does not matter in fellowship: that you can always remain in fellowship with God and His children. Paul said: **“But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils”** (1 Corinthians 10:20,21). The believer is called to a holy, healthy and heavenly convocation.

Christian fellowship is based on our relationship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. When relationship is established with God, it leads to fellowship with one another. Salvation is the basic experience that brings us into fellowship with God. It is the gateway into God's presence. We cannot fellowship with Him except we are redeemed and adopted into His Kingdom (Acts 2:41,42).

Question 3: What is the condition of fellowship between God and man?

There cannot be true fellowship without Christ and the Spirit of Christ in His children. As darkness and

light cannot co-exist, no more can saints and sinners fellowship together. Works of darkness include **“fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting... For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God”** (Ephesians 5:3-5). Demonism, syncretism and worldliness are also works of darkness. The believer is to **“have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them”** (Ephesians. 5:11). The result of walking in the light is conformity with Christ. **“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”** (John 8:12).

BARRIERS TO CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP (1 John 1:4-6; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 5:1-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17; Romans 12:16; 14:19; 1 Peter 5:5).

Sin destroys true fellowship. It severed Adam’s fellowship and communion with God and altered the course of nature. A congregation that permits sin risks God’s frown instead of fellowship. They will be denied the favor of His presence. Sin will erect a huge barrier between them and their blessing, weaken their bond of love in Christ and open the door for the enemy and his agents. Believers in Christ must be careful who their soul-mates are and those they associate with (2 Corinthians 6:14,15).

<p>Question 4: Enumerate the things that constitute hindrances to fellowship?</p>
--

Apart from sin, another barrier is self. Anyone, conscious of his personality, beauty, ego or family background cannot fit freely into the congregation of believers (Luke 22:24). Third, status or position. God, in His wisdom, has put us on different pedestals in the society and in the church. He placed some in positions of authority and power and others to do lesser assignments. This

arrangement is not meant to divide us or drive a wedge of discrimination in our relationship in the church (3 John 9,10). Fourth, suspicion and lack of confidence. Where trust and confidence are constantly betrayed, it will affect us.

Fifth, tribal differences. When people are conscious of tribal superiority or inferiority, there is problem. We should remember that we are created by the same God, redeemed and ransomed by the same blood. **“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”** (Galatians 3:28).

Sixth, pride. This is that undue self -esteem which has no room or respect for others. It is a state of high opinion of oneself or one’s achievement and a feeling of one’s worth. Seventh, discord and disharmony. When the seed of discord is sown among a people, it affects their relationship in a negative way. Other barriers are: idolatry and witchcraft, hypocrisy and deceit, false accusation and fault-finding, envy and jealousy, backbiting and gossip. We must deal with these barriers to pave way for God’s ever-blessed visitation.

Question 5: How can we overcome the barriers that affect our fellowship with God and man?

BENEFITS OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP AND ONENESS (1 John 1:7; Psalm 133:1-3; John 17:21; Revelation 3:20)

There will be an overflowing blessedness in Christendom when we pull down the middle wall of partition and all man-made fences. Our unity has the tendency to produce an important influence on the world around us (John 17:21). Where brethren **“dwell together in unity... there the LORD [command] the blessing, even life for evermore”** (Psalm 133:1-3).

Question 6: Mention the benefits of fellowship.

Fellowship is good; it is for our comfort and delight. Good works proceed from the life and conduct of

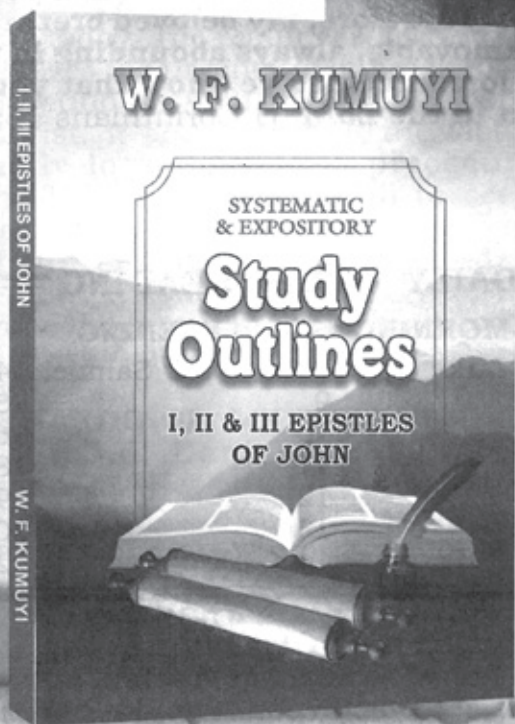
people indwelt by the Lord. They engage in deeds of love and kindness. Goodness, as a fruit of the Spirit, is actively manifest as a proof of their union with Christ. Fellowship is also pleasant like ointment. The psalmist used it to illustrate how divine blessings overflow and circulate from the head to all parts of the body. The anointing flows from Christ, the Head of the Church, to all members in a united Christian fellowship. It renews and refreshes like drops of dew on crops in dry season. The persecuted and afflicted are cushioned, refreshed and reassured in loving fellowship among brethren.

Where there is true Christian fellowship, the Lord will always shower blessing upon His people. The eternal life and power of the Triune God, who are perfectly united in fellowship, will be enjoyed by His people.

DAILY BIBLE READING				
MORNING			EVENING	
MON	Exodus	24-25	Proverbs	15-16
TUE	“	26	“	17-18
WED	“	27-28	“	19-20
THUR	“	29	“	21-22
FRI	“	30	“	23-24
SAT	“	31-32	“	25-26
SUN	“	33	“	27-28

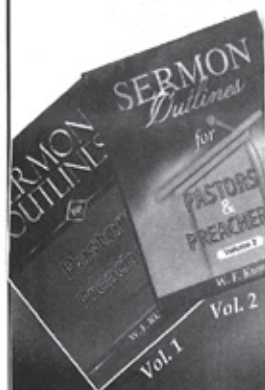
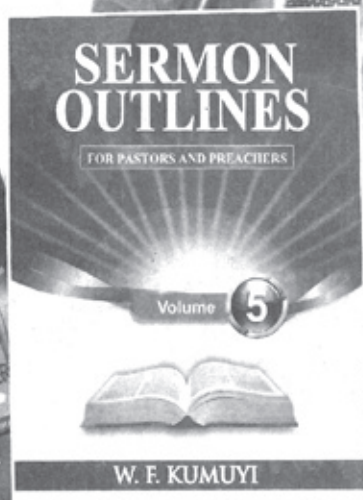
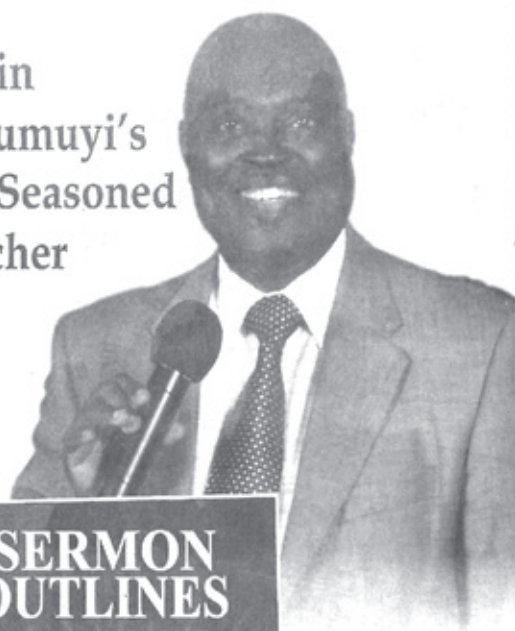
THE END OF THE STUDIES, BUT BE ADVISED THE WORD OF GOD IS TIMELESS (DOES NOT BECOME OBSOLETE AT ANY TIME). THEREFORE, ENDEAVOR TO KEEP THIS BOOK HANDY.

Enrich Your Life
and
Ministry
with



Copies Available at
Life Press Bookstores Nationwide
e-mail: lifepress.hq@deeperlifeonline.org

**SHARE in
Pastor W. F. Kumuyi's
Experience as a Seasoned
Bible Teacher
with...**



Vol. 5

...and

Give Your Ministry a Lift!

*Copies available at Life Press Sales outlet or
Contact: 08158190068, 08158190073, 08158190075*

What
VALUE
do you place
on **Life?**



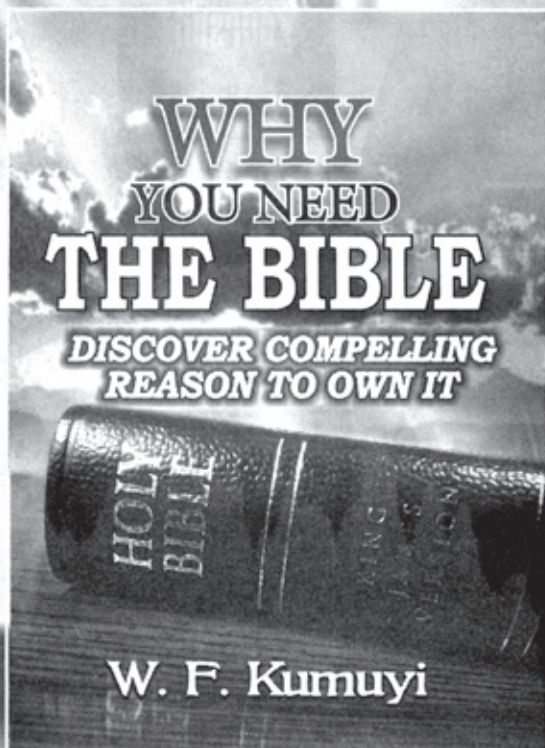
It's
Priceless

Read *Life*, Invest in your Life!

Copies Available at
Life Press Bookstores
Nationwide

e-mail: lifepress.hq@deeperlifeonline.org

Discover!

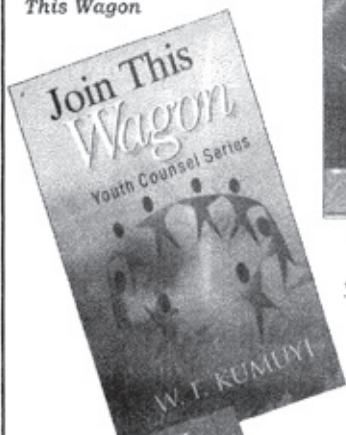


**Copies Available at
Life Press Bookstores
Nationwide**

e-mail: lifepress.hq@deeperlifeonline.org

MOVE the Youth UP the Ladder of Greatness with...

The quality of association a youth keeps is indispensable to the attainment of his life's goals. Discover how in *Join This Wagon*

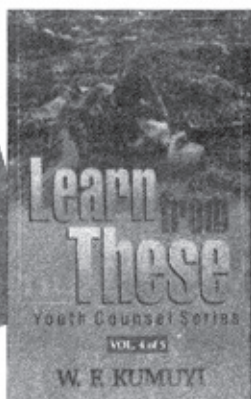


Self-discovery is a necessity for any youth who aspires to be great in life. Discover how in *Know Yourself*.

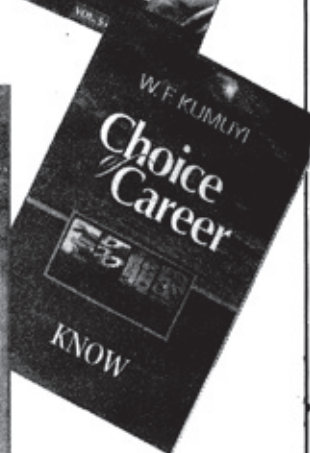
Life is only lived to the fullest when it is lived to fulfil the purpose of God. Discover the secrets in *Live for Christ*.



The youth world is plagued with dangerous signs. *Watch these signs* will help young minds escape such dangers.



Learning from the mistakes of others is what distinguishes wise youths from others. *Learn from These*.

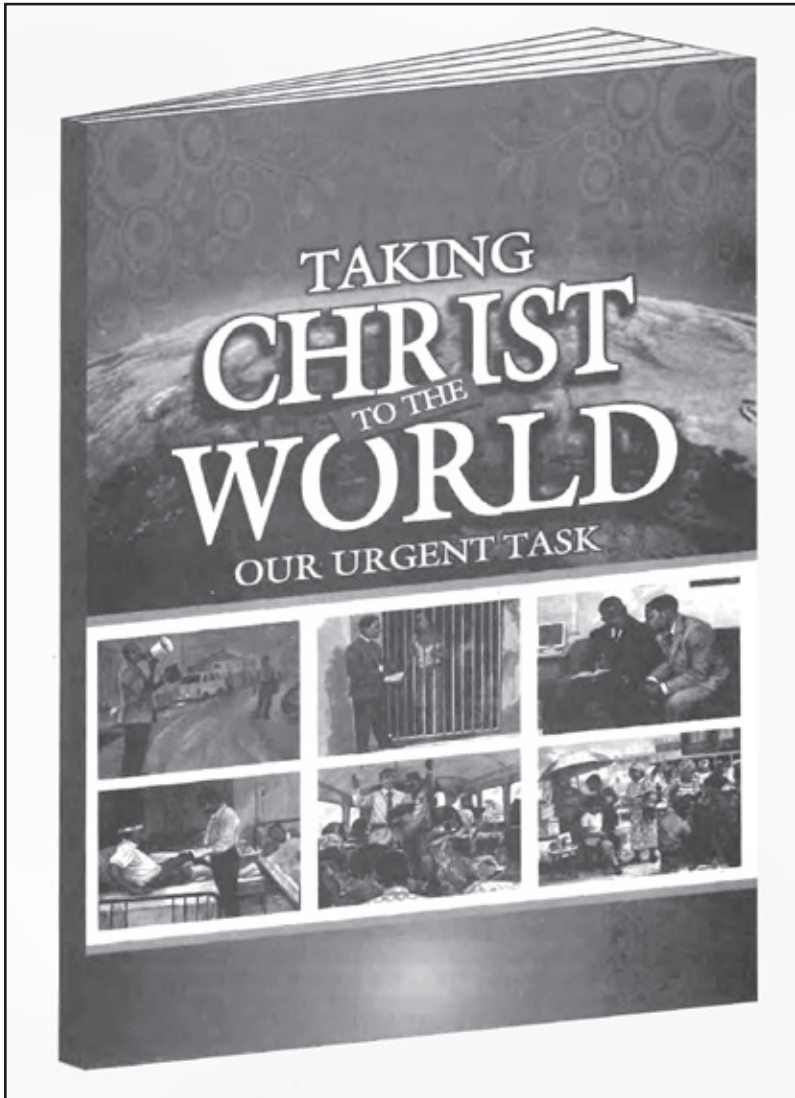


People who excel in their career get proper advice and guidance. To achieve excellence, read *Choice of Career*.

Copies Available at Life Press Bookstores Nationwide
e-mail: lifepress.hq@deeperlifeonline.org

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**





DEEPER CHRISTIAN LIFE MINISTRY, USA

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