

MOVING TO MATURITY

In Christ



Lighthouse
Church

MOVING TO MATURITY IN CHRIST

A course to help you move on and grow up in Christ

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CHAPTER 1 - Milk or Solid Food

Everything that is alive must GROW UP. If a young creature in the natural world stops developing, it is considered a serious problem and even a tragedy. It is the same in your Christian life. When you became “born again” in Jesus, you started your spiritual journey, and even if you are mature in natural years, from a spiritual point of view you are a baby in Christ until you grow and mature.

The purpose of this course is to help you move beyond infancy and into maturity. Obviously this will continue to be a lifelong process, but it is our desire and conviction to help people move out of the “baby” phase of the Christian walk as soon as possible, and so we have prepared this “roadmap” to guide you through the process.

Each week we will focus on verses that tell us how we can move to maturity. We will focus on three main components of growth:

- our knowledge of the Bible (BELIEF),
- how we live and act (BEHAVIOUR), and
- how we can interact with other people in a mature way (BELONGING).

This will change your Christian life if you cooperate and play your part. God bless you as you launch out and take your first steps.

Foundation stones

Our first lesson is in the book of Hebrews chapters 5 and 6

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised

to discern both good and evil. Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection (maturity), not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits." [Hebrews 5:12-14; 6:1-3 NKJV]

In this passage the writer is expressing some frustration as well as offering some hope to the Christians of that day. He says that they should be more mature than they are by now, and should be TEACHING others. The signs of this immaturity are that

- They still need MILK when they should be eating SOLID FOOD. We will look today at what this means.
- They have not yet understood the teaching about RIGHTEOUSNESS and GOOD vs EVIL. We will touch on this in future lessons.
- He lists the "ELEMENTARY TEACHINGS" of Christianity that they should by now have understood (but which they have not yet moved past).

The elementary or foundational principles of Christianity

The 6 foundations, or elementary principles of Christ that he lists are:

- Repentance from dead works
- Faith toward god,
- The doctrine of baptisms,
- Laying on of hands,
- Resurrection of the dead, and
- Eternal judgment.

I wonder what you would have said the elementary 6 principles of Christianity are? Would you have chosen these 6, and if so, could you

explain to someone else what these foundations are all about. Even more importantly, are these 6 principles active and effective in your Christian life?

We have written a booklet called “[THE FOUNDATIONS OF OUR FAITH - the first principles we need to grow](#)” which goes through all of these elementary principles in detail and we encourage you to read it and apply it to your life. In that booklet we show how these principles work in a person’s life and by working through that book you will be able to ensure you have laid the basic foundation of Christianity correctly.

In THIS course we do not intend to “lay again” this foundation, but will simply mention some key aspects so that we can ensure we are all on the same “page”. Our hope is that a person who is doing this “Growing Up” course has been attending Church, and/or has done an Alpha Course, and/or has read the Foundations of our faith booklet, and so is ready to progress. If you have not yet read the “Foundations” booklet please commit to do so and preferably link up with a discipleship partner who can help you through this process.

Below is a brief summary of the “Foundations” booklet:

<u><i>FOUNDATIONS BOOKLET SECTION</i></u>	<u><i>BRIEF OVERVIEW</i></u>
INTRODUCTION	The Bible mentions two other foundations which come before these 6 foundational principles: Jesus, and God’s Word.
REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS	We learn what repentance is and how it works itself out in our lives. The Bible speaks of counterfeit repentance called “worldly sorrow” and we learn the difference.

FAITH TOWARD GOD	We learn what Faith is and why it is so important? We learn that Faith is essential, Faith is opposite to natural sight (and all of our physical 5 senses), Faith can be increased, Faith is refined and tested in order to remove its impurities, Faith always results in actions, including the words we speak and “love”, and Faith is born from hearing God’s words.
THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISMS	There are three Baptisms in the New Testament, and we learn what Baptism means, what it signifies, and how we can participate in all three baptisms to ensure we are growing strong in Christ.
LAYING ON OF HANDS	The laying on of hands was a foundational part of early Christianity and we learn what it is, why it is important, and how it must be practiced.
RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD	The last two sections deal with Eternity and what happens after we die. These are essential since our time here on earth is so short and eternity is what really matters. If we can live our lives here on earth with eternity in view we will be mighty for Christ - we will be world-changers.
ETERNAL JUDGMENT	

Growing in the family of God

In the passage we have read in Hebrews, the use of the words “babies” and “milk” indicate that Christian growth happens in a family context -

just like human babies need a family, we cannot grow in Christ without a loving, committed Church family. How does this happen? The following three types of Church relationship are needed:

Sunday services

These are a good place to start. Here we worship together, bring non believers to Christ, and receive equipping to go out and do our ministries. These meetings are not enough on their own, however. For true growth and family life we need more.

Smaller groups

Lifegroups are an essential part of your Christian growth where you will get closer to other believers, use your gifts and talents in the group, discuss and ask questions together, and have closer accountability. We want you to be rooted in a group where you can be vulnerable and help others to grow in Christ, as well as participating in the larger meetings.

Lifegroups consist of five main elements:

- Family - friendship, love and fun

- Worship and prayer

- A chance to use our gifts to minister to each other and the outside world

- Word - studying and discussing God's word

- Witness - reaching out to not-yet believers together

"So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart," [Acts 2:46 NKJV]

Discipleship partners

Another great tool in working together is a discipleship partnership. This is where you pair up with another Christian and you meet for about an hour a week for prayer and discussion for between 9 and 16 weeks.

If you are a young believer, this partner disciples you and helps you grow. If you are a more mature Christian these meetings are helpful for support, accountability and prayer.

You should choose someone you trust, and who is the same gender as you, and if it is for discipleship, the elders should have identified this person as qualified to be a discipler.

You can pair up today with someone and go through the “Foundations” booklet together for nine weeks or so. It will mean meeting together for about an hour once a week and praying for each other and helping each other to grow. We suggest that you read a chapter of the booklet before meeting and then come with questions and discussion points to your meeting. You should also pray for one another’s needs, and challenge each other so that you stay strong and grow in Christ.

Milk vs solid food

"as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby," [1 Peter 2:2 NKJV]

New Christians need the simple truths of God’s word explained to the in simple ways that are easy to absorb and easy to digest. This is what “milk” in God’s word means.

Natural milk is an amazing substance. A mother's body digests all the solid food she eats and concentrates the nutrients into a liquid that is nourishing, tasty and easy for the baby to absorb.

Christian teachers and preachers do the same thing... They study and wrestle with God's word, "chewing" on difficult passages and truths and absorbing these truths into their lives over months and years. The nourishment of God's word does not just remain in their minds - it changes every aspect of their lives and character and behaviour. They then summarise and present these truths in nourishing, easy to absorb meals called sermons or articles. This is the milk of god's word, and it is vital for new born believers to receive it. Good Bible teachers can present God's milk, but they will also challenge their hearers to move beyond milk and feed on God's word for themselves:

"I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;" [1 Corinthians 3:2 NKJV]

However, a time must come when milk is not enough and we need to start eating our own solid food.

"For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe." [Hebrews 5:13 NKJV]

Solid food means the following things:

- I read the Bible for myself instead of just having it explained to me by someone else

Does this mean that I no longer need to sit under teaching? No - we all need to be receiving teaching and input for our whole lives, but as we mature we are also able to explain it to others in a correct way. "Be diligent (study) to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." [2 Timothy 2:15 NKJV]

- I feed daily - you have to eat everyday.
- I "chew" on it - I wrestle with difficult passages and truths trying to understand them and to put them into practice in my life. There are many truths in the Bible that need to be balanced and

weighed and understood together under the larger banner “how do I live righteously”.

- I want “righteousness” - living right and pleasing to God - rather than just a pleasant sermon experience that “tickles my ears”.
 “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;” [2 Timothy 4:3 NKJV]. This is the ultimate test of “deep teaching” or “solid food”. Many people say they are studying deep or mature topics, but the Bible shows that deep teaching and solid food is that which leads us to live more like Jesus, in a righteous way. This is a very important distinction.

Some people, claiming to be mature, seek interesting or unusual or new teachings, thinking these constitute “solid food”. The biblical test, however, is whether it leads to RIGHTEOUSNESS or not.

Listen to what 2 Timothy says about God’s word:

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” [2 Timothy 3:16-17 NKJV]

Notice that the purpose of Scripture from God’s perspective, is to train us in righteousness and to equip us for every “good work”.

Also, notice this prediction about the end times:

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;” [2 Timothy 4:3 NKJV]

Solid food is not what is interesting or appealing or new, but rather what leads to righteousness in our daily lives.

In our Church sermons and teachings we attempt to present a balanced diet for everyone who attends. We want the gospel to be proclaimed for those who do not know Christ yet. We also want to give pure milk for

new believers, AND we want to add some solid food for mature believers to grow strong. Mature believers will rejoice in all of these aspects of a teaching diet, especially when they realise that this is helping to get people saved and when they partner with us in teaching younger believers.

Have you reached the point of needing some solid food? Are you fed up with only milk? Let's look at how we can move on and grow up into solid food!

How do we really feed on His word?

We have prepared a video teaching with associated notes called "[Study the Bible with Blue Letter Bible](https://leadinglightsnetwork.com/home-members-2/?video_id=5117)" (it can be found at https://leadinglightsnetwork.com/home-members-2/?video_id=5117 and on our Leading Lights mobile app under the "Daily Bible Study" tab)

In this video and the attached notes you will learn how to have a daily Bible feeding time and to really wrestle with God's truth to apply it to your life. We encourage you to read the notes, watch the video and then begin a daily 30 minute Bible study time immediately.

The notes are reproduced below for your benefit:

A method for you to use in Daily Bible Study

- Find a quiet place and half an hour when you won't be disturbed.
- Keep a notepad (electronic or paper) at hand to make notes. Record the date, the passage you are reading and then below make notes as per the below guidelines. The [Blue Letter Bible](#) mobile App has a "Notes" section where you can create notes for each passage of scripture you are reading.
- Pray and prepare your heart -
 - Praise God and tell Him how great He is
 - Ask God to search you and help you and speak to you through His word - He has promised to do this - *'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'* Jer 33:3
 - *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov 9:10) so your heart attitude matters - we must humbly approach His word with a desire to know what He wants for us.*
- Open or download the ["Blue Letter Bible"](#) site or app.
 - I use the "NKJV" Bible version because each word has a reference to the original Greek or Hebrew behind it so you can find out what each word means, but you can use other versions and / or you can use 2 versions in parallel.
 - Another option in Blue Letter Bible is to set it to "paragraph" mode as opposed to "verse" mode. This will break the passage into small "chunks" that are easier to read so this is a good idea too.
 - Read one paragraph or section per day. We suggest you start in the New Testament at first.

- Choose a smaller section - 1, 2, 3 or 4 verses from that paragraph - and focus on these for study for the day

You are now ready to start. There will be 4 sections to your study time: -

1. **OVERVIEW** (getting the big picture),
2. **SWOOP IN** (zooming in on one verse or thought),
3. **PRACTICE** (Changing your life as a result and recording something that will change)
4. **PRAY** (Talking to God about what you've learned and making brief notes about what you have prayed)

Let's look at each of these 4 steps in more detail - and you will need to write notes every day under these 4 headings:

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## 1. **OVERVIEW** - ask yourself:

- What is the context of this passage (the passages before and after it)?
- What did this passage mean to those who first received it?
- Which other large themes in the rest of the Bible does this fit in with? The main themes in the Bible are:
  - Relationship with God
  - Relationships with other people (love)
  - Righteousness (being right in God's eyes and living right) versus sin
  - Grace versus judgment
  - The spirit realm versus the physical realm (Faith)
  - Warfare and extending God's kingdom over the devil's power
  - The great commission and reaching the whole world

- Worship and prayer
- The Church as God's family and how I can fit in and use my gifts
- How does this passage fit with the bigger picture of Jesus coming to save us from sin and Satan? Even Old Testament passages find their fulfilment in Jesus so it is important to refer everything back to Him, His ministry, death and victory for us. For example, an Old Testament passage about warfare is a precursor showing us how we now fight spiritual forces (no longer flesh and blood people) but Christ's victory over Satan on the cross makes us able to win)

2. **SWOOP IN** - pick one or two verses for closer study and then one or two words for even closer study. Understand verses and words using the tools in Blue Letter Bible:

- Commentaries tool. "David Guzik" and "Jamieson Fausset Brown" are the best ones to use but bear in mind that they are fallible humans and so may not always be correct. Also, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown lived before the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit (1906) and so did not know about the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit as we do now, so don't accept everything they say especially about the Holy Spirit power, gifts and infilling. They also tend to conflate all the gifts in the New Testament as being "Gifts of the Holy Spirit" where the Bible shows not all gifts are "Gifts of the Holy Spirit" as some are Gifts from the Father and some from the son. (1 Cor 12:4-7; Eph 4:8-11; Rom 12:6-8)
- Bible version comparison tool - this compares different translations for the same verse
- Dictionaries tool - to give meanings of certain words
- Interlinear tool - to give the meaning of original Greek and Hebrew words



3. **PRACTICE** - How will this affect my life and thoughts going forward?

You may say, “How do I know what God is saying to me?” A helpful guideline is that certain facts and truths never change, even though we are reading these words several thousand years later:

- Truths about God never change - What does this say about God’s character and His will and how does this apply to me today in my daily life, in my relationship with Him, and in my desire to please Him and live for Him?
- Truths about human nature never change - what human characteristics (positive and/or negative) can I see in this passage that applies to me today and how can I change my life as a result?
- Truths about the physical world and the hereafter - the Spiritual realm - never change. What truths have I believed about the world around me that need to be changed based on what God’s word says?

Ask yourself:

- What is the main thing God is TEACHING me today?
- What is the main way God is GUIDING me today?
- What is the main thing I need to DO / STOP DOING or how must I THINK differently today?

4. **PRAY** - Pray and thank God for what He has shown you, commit what you have learned to Him, and ask Him for his help. Record your prayer requests for the day

# Notes for you to use in Daily Bible Study

## MY NOTES

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ PASSAGE STUDIED: \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. **OVERVIEW**

What is the context of this passage (the passages before and after it)?

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What did this passage mean to those who first received it?

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Which other large themes in the rest of the Bible does this fit in with?

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How does this passage fit with the bigger picture of Jesus coming to save us from sin and Satan?

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2. **SWOOP IN** - Pick a verse or two to study in greater depth.

Which verse/s have you picked and what stands out to you about them? \_\_\_\_\_

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What one or two words stand out that I can look deeper into?

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What are the Greek / Hebrew words behind these words and what other meanings do they have or what is interesting about their definitions? (Use the “Interlinear” study tool in the program to find the original words behind the English) \_\_\_\_\_

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Using the “Dictionary” tool for these words, what does the Bible Dictionary say about them? \_\_\_\_\_

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Using the “Cross references” tool, what 2 other verses in the rest of the Bible stand out and help me understand this verse better?

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Using the “Commentaries” tool, what does the David Guzik or Jamieson Fausset Brown commentary say about these verses that helps me?

### 3. **PRACTICE**

What is the main thing God is TEACHING me today?

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What is the main way God is GUIDING me today?

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What is the main thing I need to DO / STOP DOING today?

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#### 4. **PRAY**

Pray and thank God for what He has shown you, commit what you have learned to Him, and ask Him for his help.

Prayer requests prayed for today:

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### Watch the Video here

[https://leadinglightsnetwork.com/home-members-2/?video\\_id=5117](https://leadinglightsnetwork.com/home-members-2/?video_id=5117))

The video can be found on youtube, Leading Lights Network website OR our mobile app.

### Action steps

- Link up with a discipleship partner
- Ensure you have started or completed the Foundations booklet
- Watch the Bible Study video.
- Start a daily Bible study plan.

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## Small Group discussion time

### **Small groups are a place for...**

connecting >> learning >> loving >> sharing >> serving

### **The leaders' roles are to...**

>> organise >> direct >> care >>

Your bonds of love and sharing as a group will bring great joy and peace to you all.

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Gather in a small group (around 6 people), and ...

1. Get to know each other - icebreaker questions may help - for example "what is your best and worst trait?"
2. Ask each person if they have any prayer needs.
3. Ask everyone if they feel they are growing as a Christian. Does anyone feel "stuck" in the basics?
4. Ask whether people need any help connecting with a discipleship partner.
5. Ask if there are any questions from what was shared today?
6. End by asking "how can we practically change this week based on what we have said and heard?" Get some specific actions and decisions that can be followed up on next week.
7. Pray individually for each person who mentioned prayer needs.

## Some further Icebreaker questions you could use in future weeks

### Deeper questions

1. What is one goal you'd like to accomplish during your lifetime?

2. What's the ideal dream job for you?
3. Name one of your favorite things about someone in your family.
4. Tell us about a unique or quirky habit of yours.
5. Who is your hero? (a parent, a celebrity, an influential person in one's life)
6. What do you need prayer for today?
7. What was the highlight or low point of your week?
8. If you were an animal, what would you be and why?
9. If you had to describe yourself using three words, it would be...
10. If I could be anybody besides myself, I would be...
11. What was great about your childhood and what was not so great?

## Lighter questions

1. If you could have an endless supply of any food, what would you get?
2. When you were little, who was your favorite superhero and why?
3. What's your favorite thing to do in the summer?
4. If they made a movie of your life, what would it be about and which actor would you want to play you?
5. If you were an ice cream flavor, which one would you be and why?
6. What's your favorite cartoon character, and why?
7. If you could visit any place in the world, where would you choose to go and why?
8. Are you a morning or night person?
9. What are your favorite hobbies?
10. What are your pet peeves or interesting things about you that you dislike?
11. What's the weirdest thing you've ever eaten?
12. If someone made a movie of your life would it be a drama, a comedy, a romantic-comedy, action film, or science fiction?

## CHAPTER 2 - Righteousness

"For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." [Hebrews 5:13-14 NKJV]

Our maturity in Christ is not measured solely by time spent as a Christian, or by the experiences we have had, nor the miracles we have seen and done, nor even by how much head knowledge we have acquired. The passage says that it is measured by a thing quality "righteousness" which is then described as involving the discernment of good and evil.

Jesus said that the sign, or "fruit" that will mark us as being mature, is whether we live the way He wants us to live. In fact, he said many people will get to the end of their lives and think they were great Christians, and He will say "I never knew you" because they did not live as He wanted them to live:

""Therefore by their fruits you will know them. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" [Matthew 7:20-23 NKJV]

"If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him." [1 John 2:29 NKJV]

"Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous." [1 John 3:7 NKJV]



## Righteousness - What it is

Righteousness can simply be defined as “living your best life” or, “living the way God intends for you”. Imagine buying a new implement from the store, and then not reading the manufacturer’s instruction book. The chances are that you will use the implement wrongly and damage it.

In the same way, God, our creator, has a way He has designed for us to live. This will result in joy and fulfilment and a close relationship with Him. The problem is that we are born separated from God, and we have learned many wrong ways of living and thinking, so righteousness does not come naturally to us.

Jesus lived and died to show us righteousness in action AND to make it possible for us to be forgiven of past unrighteousness and to live in righteousness from now onwards.

Salvation is not just about having our sins forgiven - it is about being changed so that we can reign over sin going forwards and live the best way God designed us to live.

## What is the problem?

The problem is that we are programmed to live away from God and away from His best plans for us. We know instinctively that we make poor choices and have bad habits - but how do we stop?

Usually we try to focus on the bad habit and we use self effort to overcome it, but this rarely works. The problem is that the thing we focus on gets STRONGER, and so the answer is not to focus on overcoming sin, but rather to replace it with something better - righteousness.

Your body and mind are always ACTIVE. There is no “OFF SWITCH”. To try to avoid some action or habit, without replacing it with something

better, cannot work. If I tell you NOT to think about a purple elephant, you will definitely think about it, because you are focusing on trying NOT to think about it. But if I ask you to imagine a yellow sports car, you immediately stop thinking about a purple elephant, because the answer is to replace one thing with another.

## Decide up front

The question is “what will your body and mind be busy doing”? There are 2 options.

*"And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to SIN, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of RIGHTEOUSNESS to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" [Romans 6:13-16 NKJV]*

Notice that inactivity is not an option - it is one or the other - sin or righteousness. There are only 2 masters and options.

Notice that YOU are not your body - YOU “present the members of your body” to either sin or obedience / righteousness.

Notice also that sin wants to have “dominion over you” - almost like it has a personality... You can become a “slave” to one or the other.

SIN - leads to damage, death and misery.

RIGHTEOUSNESS - leads to life and peace.

The first step is to DECIDE which route I WANT to go down - sin or righteousness. I assume you have chosen righteousness.

## How can I be free from sin?

The next step is to find out HOW to do it, because we find that it is a fight and a struggle, even after we become Christians. *"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish."* [Galatians 5:17 NKJV]

We normally try to overcome our propensity and temptations to sin through self effort, rules and laws. These do not work... In fact we usually find that the rules make us feel more guilty and this starts a negative cycle that leads to failure which makes us feel more unworthy than ever, and so we sin even more.

Rules do not work as a tool to stop sinning because they rely on my own strength, and because they induce guilt and condemnation - and both of these are the opposite of God's way of working.

*"Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations-- "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using--according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh."* [Colossians 2:20-23 NKJV]

Paul the Apostle describes this process of trying to stop sinning through self effort and rules:

*"For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me."*

*I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.*

*But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."* [Romans 7:15-25 NKJV]

Paul's conclusion is that when he tries to avoid sin through his own effort and by imposing rules on himself, he fails and feels defeated. Is there any hope? At the end of the above passage he says: "*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!*" [Romans 7:24, 25 NKJV]. He is indicating that there is a solution, there is hope, and he is about to reveal it:

## Paul's three point solution

### 1. GRACE - freedom from condemnation

*"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."* [Romans 8:1 NKJV]

He has previously in his letter explained how Jesus' death on the cross means that we are now free from condemnation for sins and fleshly temptations. He says that grace is a key, and that it is our spirit (which has God's Spirit dwelling there) that will enable victory, NOT our flesh's strength.

### 2. A GREATER POWER AND MOTIVATION

*"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."* [Romans 8:2 NKJV]

He says a higher and stronger law (power) is at work in him and it is stronger than the law (power) of sin and death that is at work in his body tempting him to sin. This power is described in more detail below (see - "What is my born-again spirit like?"), but the main point is that we don't

focus on what we should NOT be doing and how bad we are, but rather we focus on what is already inside us AND the great things God has given us to do. It is a positive focus (what can I do that is BETTER than sin) rather than negatively focusing on the bad thing I am trying to avoid.

### 3. YOUR MIND IS THE KEY

So the big question is - "How do I live and walk according to the Spirit instead of the flesh?"

*"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."*

[Romans 8:5, 6 NKJV]

My MIND is the key. If I focus and fix my mind on my Spirit, it causes me to live and act according to the Spirit., instead of the flesh. The result is "life and peace".

The diagrams below illustrate this process:

Imagine the three parts of your being are like chairs:



Before you were saved, the spirit was dead and so you only had soul and body trying to find joy and peace. They were a tightly knit unit.



After you found Jesus, your spirit came alive, and is full of Jesus, but your soul (mind) is still used to being with your body and so it does not really listen to your spirit at all:



The result of this is that your mind is “set on” your flesh, and you don’t experience the joy and victory of God in your life.

As you renew your mind, however, and learn to focus on the spirit instead of the 5 senses of your flesh and all its desires, you find your mind is set on the spirit, and the result is life and peace.



What is my born again spirit like?

What is this power in my spirit that I should focus my mind upon?

## YOUR BORN AGAIN SPIRIT IS LIKE JESUS

2Co 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone [is] in Christ, [he is] a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

Eph 4:24 *and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*

## YOUR BORN AGAIN SPIRIT IS PURE AND FREE FROM SIN

2Co 5:21 *For He made Him who knew no sin [to be] sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

## YOUR BORN AGAIN SPIRIT IS EMPOWERED

Ephesians 1:19-20; 2:6 — *and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places... and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,*

## YOUR BORN AGAIN SPIRIT IS BLESSED

Ephesians 1:3 — *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*

## YOUR BORN AGAIN SPIRIT IS ONE WITH GOD

1Co 6:17 *But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.*

## What does this look like practically?

When you are tempted, think about something you could be doing for Him that is better.

I could be praying. I could be studying His word or reading a book. I could be witnessing to someone. I could go for a walk and enjoy His creation. I could spend time with other Christians. I could write an email to a friend.

As I imagine all these things, I am thinking of the beauty of holiness, and the joy that comes from being like Him and close to Him. I am thinking of His power flowing through me when I serve Him. I think about His great mission of extending His kingdom and how important it is. I also think about how pure and like Jesus I really am on the inside. It inspires me to do something positive for Him - to be busy for Him.

I am not overcome by guilt for the temptation that assailed me - I realise that:

- I have a flesh component and even the great apostle Paul felt the same temptations
- To be tempted is not sin - Jesus was tempted in all ways and yet was sinless
- There is no condemnation for me as I am covered by Jesus blood and I am declared completely righteous.

If I do fail and sin, I quickly repent and run back to God and start again without guilt and condemnation.



Be careful of pride. Humble yourself. Worship Him and remember grace is why you are where you are.

There is no condemnation. Repent quickly and receive full grace & forgiveness.

**SIN**  
leads to death if not repented of quickly.

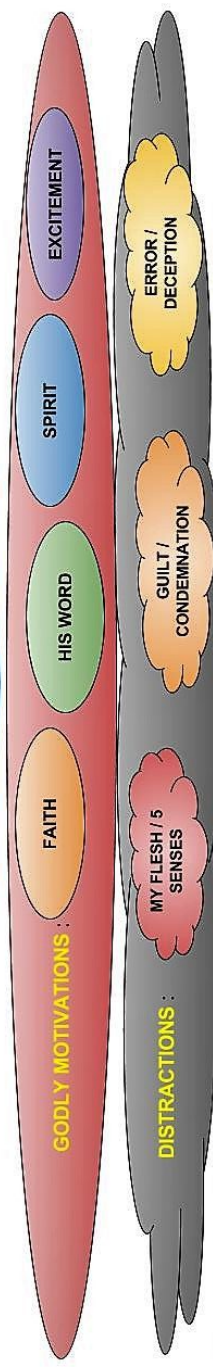
**OR**

**OBEY**  
Leads to life and peace - avoid pride and remember it's all by grace.

**QUESTIONS AND THOUGHT PROCESSES:**

What will I use my body / energy for? What will be beneficial / best for me in the long term? What would the outcome of my actions be for me / others? What is my identity in Christ / how does God see me? What can I be in Christ / what is my potential? Remember the joy and power of serving Him.

THESE DECISIONS ARE FASHIONED BY DEEPER THOUGHTS AND MOTIVATIONS...



|                 |                      |                           |                                 |                         |                      |                                             |
|-----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| FOUNDA<br>GRACE | UNDA<br>NEW CREATION | ATI<br>BEAUTY OF HOLINESS | ONAL<br>HOLY SPIRIT POWER IN ME | BE<br>HIS WAYS ARE GOOD | LIE<br>RENEW MY MIND | FS<br>GREAT WORK TO DO WITH HIM AND FOR HIM |
|-----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------------|

The foundational beliefs listed in the diagram above

Grace - free forgiveness and empowerment bought because Jesus died for you

Romans 3:23-24 — *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*  
 Titus 2:11-12 — *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,*

A New creation - your born again spirit is a brand new creation ... like Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:17 — *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

Colossians 3:10 — *and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,*

Holy Spirit power in me - you have the power of God within you and it is awesome. It is active and is working to make you want to do God's will and able to do His will.

Romans 8:11 — *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*

Ephesians 1:19-22; 2:1, 5-6 - *"and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ... even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,"*

Colossians 1:29 - *"To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily."*

Philippians 2:13 - *"for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."*

**Renewing my mind:** learning to see myself as God says I really am - as my spirit is.

Ephesians 4:22-24 — *that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*

**Beauty of holiness:** there is a beauty in holiness. We must learn to see holiness as something desirable and beautiful. *"Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness."*

[Psalm 29:2 NKJV]

Holiness is beautiful because:-

1. God is Holy and He is beautiful - *""Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?"* [Exodus 15:11 NKJV]

*"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts.""* [Isaiah 6:1-5 NKJV]

*"One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple." [Psalm 27:4 NKJV]*

2. We can be like Him - *"For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness." [1 Thessalonians 4:7 NKJV]*

*"but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."'" [1 Peter 1:15-16 NKJV]*

3. Our prayers are answered when we are holy - *"And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." [1 John 3:22 NKJV]*
4. We are protected from Satan when we are holy - *"We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him." [1 John 5:18 NKJV]*

5. We "see the Lord" and are close to Him when we are holy - *"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:" [Hebrews 12:14 NKJV]*

*"Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."'" [2 Corinthians 6:17 NKJV]*

*"Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God." [Matthew 5:8]*

Holiness is beautiful and worth pursuing.

His plans and ways are good: we must believe that His ways and plans for me are the best possible life I could ever live. Romans 12:2 NIV — *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

He has a great work for me to do with Him and for Him: I must understand the excitement and importance of the task He has for ME to do for Him. Jeremiah 29:11 NIV — *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

## What is the great work I could be doing instead of sinning?

The “new you” - the new creation on the inside of you - is described as God’s “workmanship” or “handiwork”:

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”* [Ephesians 2:10 NKJV]

Notice that He has prepared good works for you to do too. His plan for you includes great things - good works - that He has for you to do.

In fact, He wrote it all down before you were born:

*“Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”* [Psalm 139:16 NIV]

His plan involves extending His kingdom all over the world - you become one of His “troops” with Jesus as the main commander in Chief leading us into battle and extending His rule all over the world.

*“The LORD says to my lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.” The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion, saying, “Rule in the midst of your enemies!” Your troops will be willing on your*

*day of battle. Arrayed in holy splendor, your young men will come to you like dew from the morning's womb."* [Psalm 110:1-3 NIV]

The good shepherd is leading you in paths everyday - He has a path for you to walk on today - a path that is guided by Him and in His presence, beside quiet waters and in green pastures, with a banquet and His protection. A main thing I must realise, however, is that it is a path of **RIGHTEOUSNESS**.

*"He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake."* [Psalm 23:3 NKJV]

Will you walk into this plan? Instead of focusing on what you should NOT be doing, start allowing the power of His Spirit inside you to give you positive things to do, and watch how you have victory in your life.

*"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."* [Romans 8:2 NKJV]

Rather than focusing on the negative sins in my life, and trying to avoid them, focus on the good things God wants you to do. This is how we overcome sin and live in righteousness.

## The unforgivable sin and losing your salvation

The Bible speaks of the possibility of "losing one's salvation". In the verses directly after the passage we have been looking at in Hebrews 5 & 6 it says:

*"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame."* [Hebrews 6:4-6 NKJV]

How does this happen?

It is not easy to lose one's salvation

It does not happen "by accident"

"And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand." [John 10:28 NKJV]

No-one (including the devil) can snatch a person out of God's hand. You are not just in the hand of Almighty God, but you are actually a part of His hand ("Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually." [1 Corinthians 12:27 NKJV]). The only way this could, therefore happen, is if you yourself choose to leave His hand - and even then, He will move powerfully to keep you.

Being a weak Christian will not cause you to lose your salvation

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny (divorce) Himself." [2 Timothy 2:13 NKJV]

Another verse says that if a person only believes in Jesus, but then does nothing else to serve Him their whole life, they will reach heaven, but "as through fire".

"For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." [1 Corinthians 3:11-15 NKJV]

You didn't get saved by being "good" so you cannot lose your salvation by being "bad".

It can only happen by reversing your faith in Christ. By choosing to "divorce" Him.

"This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him.

If we endure, We shall also reign with Him.

If we deny (DIVORCE) Him, He also will deny us.

If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself." [2 Timothy 2:11-13 NKJV]

What would be the sign that I have done this?

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame." [Hebrews 6:4-6 NKJV]

Notice that it does not say that this person cannot be brought back to FORGIVENESS.

It says that they cannot be brought back to REPENTANCE.

The sign that you have got to this point, is that you can no longer REPENT.

If you still have remorse, and a desire to come back to God, this shows that you have not lost your salvation, because you can still repent.

How does one get to this stage?

We have already said that one does not do this by "mistake", and that it is extremely hard to do, and that God is working very strongly to keep us with Him. But the way this happens is as follows:

- When I sin - I give Satan a foothold in my life which he uses to further hurt and deceive me. (Eph 4:27)



- When I choose not to obey God's voice and promptings, I harden my heart and conscience so that I am less sensitive to Him and His voice. (Heb 4:7)
- When I sin, I can be overcome by guilt and start to hide from God. (Gen 3:10)
- When I sin and refuse to glorify or obey God, my mind is darkened and I cannot think properly anymore. (Rom 1:21, 28)
- If I persist in this apathy and self-deception, allowing Satan to influence me and resisting God's voice and His people, I can eventually "stop believing" His gospel and I could reach the "divorce" point, after which I am no longer able to (or willing to) repent.

How long this takes, or what sins are involved, cannot be quantified. All we know is:

- I should stay "on fire for God" and close to Him, and
- If I can still repent, I have not reached this point.

## ADDENDUM - Righteousness through the book of Romans

- The Gospel is summarised as being all about righteousness - "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."" [Romans 1:16-17 NKJV]
- When I live against God in unrighteousness, my life is destroyed, my mind is altered, and I put myself under God's punishment. [Romans 1:18-32]

- My own judgment of others and my conscience prove that God's judgment is correct. [Romans 2:1-3, 5-11, 15-16]
- No-one is able to be righteous in their own efforts. Every one of us sins and has sinned, and thus we are fully deserving of the penalty of death. [Romans 3:10-12, 20]
- God has executed a rescue plan to give us righteousness through Jesus: [Romans 3:21-24]
- This righteousness comes through faith, as Abraham shows us: [Romans 4:2-5, 17-25]
- The sacrifice of Jesus results in us being brought into complete peace with God, free from His anger, and able to be righteous now. [Romans 5:1-2, 6, 8-11, 18-19]
- This grace does not mean we keep sinning - it means we now have victory over sin. [Romans 6:1-2, 6-8, 11-14, 21-23]
- Paul then illustrates what it is like to try to avoid sin by laws and self effort - it results in defeat and frustration. [Romans 7:9-11, 14-20, 23-25]
- There is victory through Christ - I can live in real righteousness. [Romans 8:1-4]
- The secret is in my mind - setting my mind on the spirit within me. [Romans 8:5-14, 16]

## Action steps

- Spend some time looking through all the verses taught in this chapter, and study them over and over until you feel you have got these truths deeply embedded in your heart and mind.
- Find someone you can discuss, and pray with, and who will help you in these areas.

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## Small Group discussion time

### **Small groups are a place for...**

connecting >> learning >> loving >> sharing >> serving

### **The leaders' roles are to...**

>> organise >> direct >> care >>

Your bonds of love and sharing as a group will bring great joy and peace to you all.

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Gather in your small group and ...

1. Ask 3 people to give a testimony of how they came to Christ and what their life has been like since then.
2. Ask each person if they have any prayer needs.
3. Ask if there are any questions from what was shared today?
4. Ask "how can we practically change this week based on what we have said and heard?" Get some specific actions and decisions that can be followed up on next week.
5. Pray individually for each person who mentioned prayer needs.

## CHAPTER 3 - Overcoming the enemy

"I write to you, LITTLE CHILDREN, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.

I write to you, FATHERS, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, YOUNG MEN, Because you have overcome the wicked one.

I write to you, LITTLE CHILDREN, Because you have known the Father.

I have written to you, FATHERS, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning.

I have written to you, YOUNG MEN, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one." [1 John 2:12-14]

What are the signs of being a "little child", a "young man", and a "Father in Christ" based on the above passage? Where do you stand in this picture and what progress are you making?

We are looking this week at victory in spiritual warfare as a sign of our Christian maturity - moving from being "little children" towards being "young men", who overcome the devil, and then on to "fathers" who know Jesus intimately.

### There is an enemy

The first thing we need to realise is that we have an enemy and we are in a war.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour: resist him..." [1 Peter 5:8, 9 NKJV]

Jesus, speaking of the devil, said,

""The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

[John 10:10 NKJV]

Imagine a soldier walking around the battlefield thinking there was no enemy and no war. Unfortunately many Christians are like this. Paul speaks to the Christians in Corinth and says to them "we are not ignorant of (Satan's) devices" [2 Cor 2:11]

I wish that this were true for today's Christians, as I feel many of us ARE ignorant of Satan's devices and schemes.

We cannot grow and mature as believers unless we learn to consistently resist and defeat the enemy.

## The enemy's devices

Paul writes to the Christians, "...we are not ignorant of [the devil's] devices." [2 Cor 2:11].

A "device" is a scheme or plan designed to trick and entrap you. They involve methods and strategies played out over many years and even many generations. What are these "devices" and are we fully aware of them?

## Deception and lies

A very important way the devil attacks us is through deception, because he is called the father of all lies:

"(The devil) was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources (his native language), for he is a liar and the father of it. [John 8:44 NKJV]

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. [2 Corinthians 11:3,14 NKJV]

Satan's lies are subtle and manipulative. He seldom tells a blatant, obvious lie - he will usually disguise it in a lovely sounding partial truth. His aim is always to get us to doubt God's word and/or to doubt God's goodness.

He tempted Eve by asking "did God really say?" [Gen 3:1] and then he tried to make Eve doubt that God wanted what was best for her.

Straight after God had said to Jesus "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." [Matthew 3:17 NKJV], Satan tempted Him by saying, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." [Matthew 4:3 NKJV]

Eve, unfortunately, did not resist Satan's lies, but Jesus did. Jesus' answer was always "It is written..."[Matthew 4:4] and He quoted the truth of God's word to defeat Satan's lies.

## Sin

The reason the devil tries to deceive us is because he wants us to obey him and to sin, because he knows that when we sin we give him a foothold in our lives.

Ephesians 4:27 says, "give no place to the devil."

It is possible for us, even as Christians, to give the devil a "foothold" by which he can torment and hurt us. How do these footholds occur? The verses before and after Ephesians 4:27 show us:

"Therefore, put away lying ..." [Ephesians 4:25 NKJV]

"Be angry, and do not sin" [Ephesians 4:26 NKJV]

"Let him who stole steal no longer." [Ephesians 4:28 NKJV]

"Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth." [Ephesians 4:29 NKJV]

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God." [Ephesians 4:30 NKJV]

"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice." [Ephesians 4:31 NKJV]

"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." [Ephesians 4:32 NKJV]

We can see that when we sin (go against God's desires and plan for our lives), we allow Satan a foothold in our lives.

What is the solution?

1. Avoid sin.

We must realise that, even though Jesus has died for us so that we can be free from condemnation and God's wrath, if we sin we give Satan access to our lives. Does this mean that God loves us less? No. But even with God's full love upon us, we have opened a door to a destructive enemy who can (and will) cause as much harm as he can.

This is a big reason to avoid sin of all types. Jesus even said that it was better to suffer bodily harm, than to sin:

"If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire." [Matthew 18:8 NKJV]

I wonder if we take sin that seriously?

"You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin." [Hebrews 12:4 NKJV]

2. If you do sin, quickly confess it to God and receive His forgiveness and cleansing - 1 John 1:9.

"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." [1 John 2:1 NKJV]



"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." [1 John 1:8-9 NKJV]

Did you notice that we are not only forgiven, but also “**cleansed from all unrighteousness**”. This speaks of being set free from Satan

Run to God every time - not away from Him. Be quick to confess to God (and others) when you sin.

"For a righteous man may fall seven times And rise again, But the wicked shall fall by calamity." [Proverbs 24:16 NKJV]

## Bitterness and judgmental vows

In 2 Corinthians 2, Paul says to the Christians “we are not ignorant of (Satan’s) devices”. Here is the full verse:

“Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.” [2 Cor 2:10, 11]

Paul says that in this case unforgiveness and bitterness held against someone else would allow Satan some “advantage” over the Christians.

So the first “device” or “scheme” that he uses is to make us think that we can receive forgiveness and grace from God, and yet not pass it on to other people. Listen to some other verses about this:

"looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;" [Hebrews 12:15 NKJV]

""And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."" [Matthew 18:34-35 NKJV]

So the first trick of the devil is to try to get us to miss God's grace and forgiveness by thinking we can receive it without passing it on.

Have you forgiven everyone who has hurt you?

You may ask, "how do I do this?"

The wording of the Lord's prayer is helpful in this - Jesus equates sins with "debts" (amounts owed), and He says we should pray:

"And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one."" [Luke 11:4 NKJV]

First we think about everything that anyone has ever done against us as a debt that they owe us, for which there is an invoice and a statement of debt in our hearts and minds (and in heaven).

Next we realise that our statement of debts in heaven has been cleared completely by God because of Jesus' death on the cross.

In response I choose to cancel and tear up every statement of debt that anyone owes me, hand the torn pieces of paper to God, and say "Lord, I trust you to restore and do what is right and I will no longer hold this person in my debt - the debt is fully extinguished".

## Judgments and vows

We make vows (I will never...) or we make judgments of others (speaking against people especially leaders and authorities) that can bind us to the person and especially the sin we have judged.

The reason for this is that, in the midst of trying to do good, we have secretly also committed the following sins:

- Judgment (acting as superior and thus judging another)
- Pride (considering ourselves better than the other)
- Bitterness (not forgiving the other)

All of these come with consequences and may also provide a foothold for demonic attack and bondage.

**“Judge not, that you be not judged. “For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.”**

[Matthew 7:1, 2 NKJV]

**“looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;”**

[Hebrews 12:15 NKJV]

The results of these vows and judgments are that we often fall to the same sins we have judged or vowed to never do.

Does this mean that we should never to vow? No. We are to vow but not out of bitterness or pride but rather out of faith and humility and reliance on God. **“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward 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 NKJV]

Are we never to judge? We can judge (test the fruit of) others while realising we ourselves are frail - there should be no pride and no bitterness - We must forgive fully and hold no bitterness.

How can I be free from these things?

- Confess the sins to God.
- Forgive those you have judged.

- Break the power of the vow and ask God to remove of and cleanse you from all demonic footholds.
- Resist and expel the demonic forces that have held you.
- Thank God for freedom.

## The Occult and false religion

A subtle way that the devil tries to keep us from God is to introduce false religions and teachings that are very similar to the truth, but have demonic beings behind them.

Any “god” other than Jesus is actually a demonic force. "Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons." [1 Corinthians 10:20 NKJV]

Any “truth” or teaching that does not come from God’s word or agree with God’s word is a doctrine of demons. "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons," [1 Timothy 4:1 NKJV]

"Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." [John 14:6 NKJV]

"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus," [1 Timothy 2:5 NKJV]

""Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."" [Acts 4:12 NKJV]

Why is it impossible for any other religion to be the way to God? Because they rely on a human solution to paying for sin, and this cannot be done apart from the sacrifice of Jesus.

""I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."" [Galatians 2:21 NKJV]

Examples of occultic practices are:

- False religions
- Eastern mysticism
- Tarot, spiritists, mediums etc
- Astrology and witchcraft
- Eastern religion disguised as exercise and / or medicine
- Freemasonry and other secret societies

## Bruising and wounds

Satan loves to hurt and wound people. God said in the garden "He (Jesus) shall bruise(or crush) your head, And you shall bruise His heel.""

[Genesis 3:15 NKJV]

Often Satan causes children to be wounded and hurt when they are very young and then he uses that pain and vulnerability to keep them far from God for their whole lives.

God can heal you of these past hurts. "But He (Jesus) was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed." [Isaiah 53:5 NKJV]

In John 21, the apostle Peter felt guilty and wounded due to what had been done to Jesus (crucifixion) and Peter's denial of Jesus 3 times, even though he had promised to Jesus that he would die with him rather than deny him.

Jesus gently reminded him of the scene of his failure by making a small coal fire just like the one where Peter had denied Christ (John 18:18 & John 21:9).

Jesus asked Peter 3 times whether he truly loved Him more than all the other disciples to mirror the 3 times Peter had denied Him.

Then Jesus reinstated Peter and told him to “feed my lambs”.

Peter was so healed and forgiven from this experience that he could boldly stand and preach to thousands a few days later and say " you denied the Holy One" [Acts 3:14 NKJV]

Jesus can heal your wounds and failures if you will talk to Him about them, allow Him to take you back in your memories to where the hurt happened, and let His healing and forgiveness flow through you - not only for your own sins, but also to help you forgive those who have sinned against you.

## Parental and family influences

Unfortunately sometimes parents allow the devil to have a foothold in their children's lives by believing the devil's lie of the occult and, because they have authority over their children's lives, they open a door of occultic influence in their children's lives by their own involvement in these evil practices.

Before Jesus' death, there was no cure for these family sins that were passed down to people.

"you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me," [Exodus 20:5 NKJV]

But after Jesus' death, we can be free from these generational sins, by confessing and repenting of them and rebuking the enemy in those areas:

""But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge. "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-- "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in

the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."" [Jeremiah 31:30-34 NKJV]

## Pride

Ezekiel 28:11-19 and Isaiah 14:12-17 tell us about Satan's origins and fall. It says he was beautiful and even had musical instruments built into his body, but it was his pride that caused his downfall.

Pride blinds us and makes us do stupid things. It stops us from seeing things as they really are, and unfortunately usually others can see our pride but we are blissfully ignorant of it.

This is why we are told not to promote new believers to positions of authority in the Church -

"not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil." [1 Timothy 3:6 NKJV]

The solution to pride is to "humble ourselves". When we are proud we cut ourselves off from God's grace, but when we humble ourselves we receive His grace.

"Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist

him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world." [1 Peter 5:5-9 NKJV]

"But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." [James 4:6-7 NKJV]

Did you notice how in both of the above passages the discussion of pride is linked to the devil's attacks?

How do I humble myself?

- Worship - tell God how great He is.
- Actively avoid glory for myself and push others forward and upward rather than myself.
- Tell God you want to see yourself as you truly are and not in a prideful way. He will show you from His word your true place and importance and this will kill pride.

"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward 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 NKJV]

## Jesus' death has made all the difference

The devil no longer has the power he used to have. In the Old Testament, before Jesus' death, Satan could roam into God's presence and demand to test and hurt God's servants (Job 1:6-11). There was also no effective and lasting power for people to be set free from Satan's grip in the Old Testament times, because Jesus had not yet defeated him on the cross.

But when He died on the cross, Jesus disarmed and deposed Satan as the "ruler of this world" (John 12:31), and so his power is vastly diminished.



"Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it (the cross)." [Colossians 2:15 NKJV]

The only strength the devil has now is to lie to us and deceive us into fearing him, or obeying him.

For this reason it is so important for us to know the truth, and to counteract his lies with truth.

Let's look at some of our weapons against Satan, and you will see how the truth of God's word is so crucial to all of them:

## Our weapons

"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "Your word is truth." [John 8:32; 17:17 NKJV]

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," [2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NKJV]

Notice that our weapons pull down arguments and thoughts - lies of Satan - and make them obedient to Christ. We need to fight for truth in our thoughts, and we must actively take every thought captive if it does not line up with the truth of God's word.

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth,

having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints--" [Ephesians 6:11-18 NKJV]

The armour of God consists of:

- Belt of TRUTH - truth is found in God's word - John 17:17
- Breastplate of RIGHTEOUSNESS - we only know what righteousness is from His word
- Shoes are the readiness to share the GOSPEL - the Gospel is His word
- Shield of FAITH - faith comes from hearing His word - Rom 10:17
- Helmet of SALVATION - The scriptures make us wise for salvation - 2 Tim 3:15
- Sword of the Spirit which is the WORD of God
- PRAYING in the Spirit

We must be regularly hearing and reading His word and choosing to let it make a deep root in our lives - then we will be able to overcome the evil one.

## Summary - How do we “resist” the devil?

The process of defeating Satan is always the same:

- Identify a foothold that the devil may have in my life due to:
  - A lie I have believed
  - A person or event I have not forgiven
  - A sin I have committed
  - An occultic bondage in my life caused by my own sin or that of my family
- Repent - this means to say sorry to God, and to receive His forgiveness and cleansing

- Resist / rebuke Satan. Tell him he no longer has power or a foothold because of Jesus' death and forgiveness.
- Expel the evil forces - the evil forces have personalities and so you need to speak to them and say something like "evil force associated with [sin], I now expel you from my life in Jesus' name"

Thank Jesus for setting you free and ask Him to fill you with His peace and power to live for Him from now on.

"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." [James 4:7 NKJV]

We recommend you buy the book "[The Bondage Breaker](#)" by Neil T Anderson for further study and help in this area.

## Action steps

- Read this material again on your own.
- Pray with your discipleship partner and discuss any issues or questions you may have.
- Buy and read book "[The Bondage Breaker](#)" by Neil T Anderson
- Ensure you know who you are in Christ, the victory Jesus has won, and then go through the steps in the above section "How do we resist the devil?"

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## Small Group discussion time

### **Small groups are a place for...**

connecting >> learning >> loving >> sharing >> serving

### **The leaders' roles are to...**

>> organise >> direct >> care >>

Your bonds of love and sharing as a group will bring great joy and peace to you all.

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Gather in your small group and ...

1. Ask 3 people (different to last week's people) to give a testimony of how they came to Christ and what their life has been like since then.
2. Ask each person if they have any prayer needs.
3. Ask if there are any questions from what was shared today?
4. Ask "how can we practically change this week based on what we have said and heard?" Get some specific actions and decisions that can be followed up on next week.
5. Pray individually for each person who mentioned prayer needs.

## CHAPTER 4 - Growing up in a family

We are now going to look at our place as believers in a body or family of other believers. Human beings need families to grow, and so do Christians. The following passage describes this beautiful family - a local Church - and how it works to bring us to maturity:

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--

from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." [Ephesians 4:11-16 NKJV]

Read slowly through this passage and notice what it says about these topics:

- God wants us to GROW
- We are a BODY and cannot do it on our own
- We are all different and have DIFFERENT GIFTS
- The importance of UNITY

## The marks of maturity

We can summarise the marks of maturity in a Christian's life, based on this passage, by saying, "A maturing Christian is..."

- joined to and influenced by a Church family. This includes unity, commitment, love and the ability to resolve conflicts by "speaking the truth in love"
- joined to the ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers
- being equipped for ministry and actively using their gifts to bless others
- equipped to avoid the deceptions of false teachers and false teachings

## Being joined to leadership giftings

The passage says that Jesus has given 5 categories of gifting (gifted people) to the Church.

"When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men." ... And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," [Ephesians 4:8, 11-12 NKJV]

The function of these people is to develop the Church as a whole, and the individual believers in the following ways:

- Do the work of ministry
- Be united and mature
- Have knowledge of Jesus
- Avoid false teachings

Who are these people and how does this work in the everyday life of the Church?

## The 5 fold giftings are recognised not appointed

All of these gifted people were appointed by God, not human beings, in the Bible. Their gifting was then RECOGNISED by other people, but humans do not ordain or appoint apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors or teachers.

"Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)," [Galatians 1:1 NKJV]

"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry," [1 Timothy 1:12 NKJV]

We can see that God empowers, appoints and calls these people - they do not need a human to appoint them. However, if they are genuine, they will be recognised by other people and the fruit of their ministry will be what makes it obvious that they are called.

"As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away." [Acts 13:2-3 NKJV]

"Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart." [2 Corinthians 3:1-3 NKJV]

Not everyone will recognise their calling and gifting, yet they do not insist on their "title", or try to convince anyone else of their calling - they are supremely humble, and simply want to serve Jesus:

"If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord." [1 Corinthians 9:2 NKJV]

## Who do we ordain then?

There are only two positions or titles of authority that people in the Bible were ordained or appointed to by other men:

- Elders (also called "Overseers / Bishops" and "Shepherds" - **Acts 20:28, 1 Pe 5:1-3**)
- Deacons (or servants / ministers - a level below Elders)

These are the only "official" titles or positions that are recognised in the New Testament, and the qualities required of them are listed in **1 Tim 3**, and **Titus 1**.

The difference between a POSITION and a GIFTING is as follows:

| POSITION (Elder / Deacon)                                                                                                                          | GIFTING (Apostle, Prophet etc)                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Is an organisational <b>title</b> to show authority within an organisational hierarchy.                                                            | Is a <b>function</b> (a "doing word") that can only be recognised by the fruit it produces in others.                             |
| Appointed by <b>humans</b> through an ordination ceremony.                                                                                         | Appointed by <b>God</b> alone (but gifting will always be recognised by some other people)                                        |
| An official title that can be understood by the non-believing world around - similar to "Director" or "Manager" in a company.                      | Can only really be understood and received Spiritually by other believers who benefit from the gift.                              |
| Must be obeyed and honoured (if you belong to that Church), simply on account of their position<br><b>Heb 13:7, 17; 1 Tim 5:17; 1 Thes 5:12-13</b> | No-one can force you to recognise a person's gifting - it is a subjective experience. Some will receive it while others will not. |



Usually the 5 - fold gifts coincide with the Eldership in a local Church, but this is not always the case. Sometimes a 5 - fold gifted person (Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor or Teacher) is not on the eldership for various reasons, and yet they still exercise their ministry in full submission to the eldership in that place.

The only 5-fold giftings an Elder MUST have are teaching and shepherding (Pastoring).

"A bishop (overseer / elder) then must be ... able to TEACH;" [1 Timothy 3:2 NKJV]

"The elders who are among you I exhort, ...SHEPHERD (PASTOR) the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers" [1 Peter 5:1-2 NKJV]

A brilliant picture of leadership throughout the Bible is that of being "Shepherds".

Leaders of God's people throughout the Old Testament are called "shepherds" (Nu 27:17; 2 Sam 5:2; 2 Sam 24:17; 1 Chron 17:6; Ps 78:71; Is 44:28)

In the New Testament, as we have already seen, the Elders who lead and govern the Church, are called overseers (Bishops), and Shepherds (Pastors).

## Duties of Shepherds

The main functions of a Shepherd are to:

- LEAD - The shepherds go ahead of their sheep and lead the way. The sheep follow their voice. (Ps 23:3 ; John 10:3-5)
- FEED - They lead them to good grazing, which in spiritual terms is talking about God's word being taught. ( Ps 23:1-2)

- GUARD - They protect them from “wolves” - false teachers - who would harm them. (Ps 23:4-5 ; John 10:5 8. 10, 12)

Jesus is the “Chief Shepherd” [1 Pe 5:4], and we as elders are “undershepherds”, representing and serving Him. Some further instructions for shepherds are:

- Shepherds are to “lay down their lives” for the sheep,  
 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”  
 [John 10:11 NKJV]
- they are to “represent God” to the people ,  
 “Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.”” [Numbers 20:12 NKJV]
- and they must “give an account” to the “chief shepherd” (Jesus) for how they have served Him in leading the sheep (Heb 13:17).  
 “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” [Hebrews 13:17 NKJV]

## Duties of Sheep

Sheep are to

- “follow their shepherd’s leading” ,  
 “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” [John 10:27 NKJV]
- not “butt and bite each other”,  
 “And as for you, O My flock, thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats. ... “Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns, and scattered them abroad,” [Ezekiel 34:17, 21 NKJV]
- and submit and honour their leaders  
 “And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves.” [1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 NKJV]

"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you." [Hebrews 13:17 NKJV]

We believe this method of leadership honours God, and allows us to focus on what God has called us to do, rather than on internal politics.

## The signs that a person has a 5-fold gifting:

- They equip other Christians to do the work of the ministry -  
"for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" [Ephesians 4:12]
- They are humble -  
"To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ," [Ephesians 3:8]
- There is supernatural FRUIT (results) in others' lives -  
"Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds." [2 Corinthians 12:12],  
"Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart." [2 Corinthians 3:1-3]
- There is the Fruit of Jesus' Character in their own life -  
""Therefore by their fruits you will know them. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." [Matthew 7:20-21]  
"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. ... Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom... But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good

fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." [James 3:1, 13-18]

In summary, these gifts are not to be claimed or fought for. Serve Jesus humbly and He will lead others to your gift, if that is what He has for you.

## How do we ensure we are properly joined to these giftings?

We believe this happens in a local Church. The elders of this Church strive to ensure the Church is receiving input from the 5 fold gifting in the Church, through visiting speakers who we are linked to, and through resources on the Leading Lights Network website. It must be about relationship and trust, however. The passage in Ephesians 4 shows that this all happens in context of loving, committed and honest relationships and so the benefit flows from having strong connections of openness, love and trust between us.

## Finding and using our gifts

We are a BODY and each of us is vital and has something to give.

"But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer

with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually." [1 Corinthians 12:18-27 NKJV]

There are gifts and callings that God has put in you that are unique. However, it is only in unity and together with the other members of the body of Christ (your local Church) that these gifts can find their full expression as God intended.

There are 3 categories of spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament:  
 "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. - Gifts of the Holy Spirit  
 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. - Gifts of Jesus  
 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all."  
 - Gifts of God the Father  
 [1 Corinthians 12:4-6 NKJV]

Gifts of the Holy Spirit are supernatural Gifts given after we have been Baptised in the Holy Spirit and these are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 -  
 "the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healings, working of miracles, discerning of spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues."  
 We are told to "earnestly desire" these and the Laying on of Hands by other Christians is the main way these are imparted.

Gifts of Jesus are ministry gifts listed in Ephesians 4:8-11 - "Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men. He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers"

We should align ourselves with these gifted people to help us find and use our gifts because their job is "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," [Ephesians 4:12 NKJV]  
 No-one should claim the "title" of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor or teacher since these are not titles but rather functions - they are "doing words" rather than "positions". Others recognise the gifting in you rather than you recognising it in yourself.

Gifts of the Father are also called motivational gifts since these are character traits that motivate the way you live and serve God. There are seven of them listed in Romans 12:6-8 "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if PROPHECY, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or MINISTRY, let us use it in our ministering; he who TEACHES, in teaching; he who EXHORTS, in exhortation; he who GIVES, with liberality; he who LEADS, with diligence; he who shows MERCY, with cheerfulness."

We list these gifts below with some explanation:

**Prophecy** - Believers with the motivational gift of prophecy are the "conscience" of the body, and often act like watch dogs or convancers in the church. They warn of sin or reveal sin. They are usually very verbal and may come across as judgmental and impersonal; they are serious, dedicated, and loyal to truth even over friendship. They see things often in "black and white", "right and wrong" and are good at convincing and arguing issues.

**Ministering/Serving/Helps** - Those with the motivational gift of serving are the "hands" of the body. They are concerned with meeting needs; they are highly motivated, doers. They may tend to over commit, but find joy in serving and meeting short-term goals.

**Teaching** - Those with the motivational gift of teaching are the "mind" of the body. They realize their gift is foundational; they emphasize accuracy of words and love to study; they delight in research to validate truth.

**Exhortation/Encouragement** - Those with the motivational gift of encouragement are the "mouth" of the body. Like cheerleaders, they encourage other believers and are motivated by a desire to see people grow and mature in the Lord. They are practical and positive and they seek positive responses.

**Giving** - Those with the motivational gift of giving are the "arms" of the body. They truly enjoy reaching out in giving. They are excited by the prospect of blessing others; they desire to give quietly, in secret, but will also

motivate others to give. They are alert to people's needs; they give cheerfully and always give the best that they can.

**Administration/Leadership** - Those with the motivational gift of leadership are the "head" of the body. They have the ability to see the overall picture and set long-term goals; they are good organisers and find efficient ways of getting work done. Although they may not seek leadership, they will assume it when no leader is available. They receive fulfilment when others come together to complete a task.

**Mercy** - Those with the motivational gift of mercy are the "heart" of the body. They easily sense the joy or distress in other people and are sensitive to feelings and needs. They are attracted to and patient with people in need, motivated by a desire to see people healed of hurts. They are truly meek in nature and avoid firmness.

It is amazing how God places giftings in the body of Christ. We will find that there is just the right mix of people with just the right gifts to be able to do what God has called us as a Church to do.

## MOTIVATIONAL GIFTS TEST:

Let's look now at how we find and use our spiritual gifts. Using the Motivational Gifts Questionnaire below, fill in your answers in the grid below using the following values:

0 = "not at all"

1 = "a little"

2 = "considerably"

3 = "very strongly"

|   | QUESTION NUMBER |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | TOTAL SCORE |
|---|-----------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-------------|
| A | 1               | 8  | 15 | 22 | 29 | 36 | 43 | 50 | 57 | 64 | A=          |
| B | 2               | 9  | 16 | 23 | 30 | 37 | 44 | 51 | 58 | 65 | B=          |
| C | 3               | 10 | 17 | 24 | 31 | 38 | 45 | 52 | 59 | 66 | C=          |
| D | 4               | 11 | 18 | 25 | 32 | 39 | 46 | 53 | 60 | 67 | D=          |
| E | 5               | 12 | 19 | 26 | 33 | 40 | 47 | 54 | 61 | 68 | E=          |
| F | 6               | 13 | 20 | 27 | 34 | 41 | 48 | 55 | 62 | 69 | F=          |
| G | 7               | 14 | 21 | 28 | 35 | 42 | 49 | 56 | 63 | 70 | G=          |

Answer each question with a score from 0 to 3 - 0 = "not at all" - 3 = "very strongly". Write the score for each question in the small score box for that question in a downward direction in the table above. Add up your scores across each row when you have finished.

1. People often say I have good spiritual discernment.
2. I enjoy motivating others to various tasks and works of service.
3. I find great fulfilment in studying the Bible to answer issues and questions.
4. I find that people often approach me for help or advice on their emotional or personal problems.
5. I would rather give money to help than perform manual task.
6. I often sense the direction in which the Body of Christ should go.



7. I enjoy visiting and helping those who are sick, disabled or in hospital.
8. I am often able to distinguish between right and wrong in complex spiritual matters that others may not be able to see.
9. I normally feel little inconvenience when asked to do a particular task that is particular in nature. (i.e. I enjoy doing a task that is practical).
10. People have often remarked that I have an ability to explain difficult Bible questions, giving them biblical reason for what I believe.
11. I find great joy in encouraging people with problems because afterwards they inevitably find peace and an ability to trust the Lord.
12. When I hear of someone in need, I immediately think of sending money.
13. I find that I enjoy setting goals and objectives and budgets for projects for myself and others to complete.
14. I find it easy to be compassionate, and desire to bring some comfort or joy to those who are suffering.
15. I will always speak up for truth and principle, even when it means not being popular.
16. I enjoy doing things that must be done, no matter how small or trivial the task.
17. People seem to appreciate the way I explain things from the Bible.
18. I prefer to hear others share their personal problems rather than being able to share my own.
19. I find myself looking for opportunities to give money without needing to hear appeals.

20. I find that I prefer to show someone how to do a task than do it myself.
21. hospital, prison and home visitation to those who are suffering physically is a ministry I would enjoy.
22. I feel a need to speak messages from the Bible or God so that people will know what God expects from them.
23. I usually like to be actively involved in practical tasks which need to be done, rather simply planning or discussing them.
24. I usually like spending time on a biblical thought, analysing and organizing it in a systematic way.
25. When in a group, I tend to recognize and approach those who are sitting or standing alone.
26. I see the giving of money as a tremendously spiritual ministry and one that God has given to me.
27. I often find myself taking the initiative in organizing groups of people to achieve a goal by planning and organizing what must be done.
28. I find it easy to speak to those who have pain and suffering. I think of ways to try and help them.
29. When situations are not right, I feel a need to speak out in order to correct them.
30. I get satisfaction out of practical service without wanting a "job description".
31. I enjoy researching and then sharing or teaching a particular subject.

32. I enjoy being with people who are discouraged, because I am often able to encourage them.
33. I enjoy giving money to those in financial need.
34. I am very organised and self-disciplined personally in my habits, and in making goals and plans. I almost always see these tasks through to completion.
35. Visiting and helping people who suffer physically or circumstantially brings me joy rather than depresses me.
36. I enjoy and find fulfilment in presenting God's truth in an inspired and enthusiastic way.
37. I have an ability to notice practical things that must be done, and like to get the job done myself.
38. I enjoy studying difficult questions about God's Word, and I am able to find answers more easily and more quickly than others.
39. I enjoy meeting new people and introducing them to others in the group.
40. I usually feel excited about someone asking me to help financially in a worthwhile project.
41. I find it easy to delegate significant responsibilities to others in a group.
42. I feel for those who are hurting and lonely and I like to spend time with them and cheer them up.
43. I am conscious of being persuasive in my speech when challenging people to examine their motives.

44. I am very dependable in getting things done, and don't need much praise, thanks and motivation to do so.
45. When a question arise from a difficult Bible passage, I am motivated to research the answer.
46. I find people will tell me personal things hey will not tell others, and often say I am easy to speak to.
47. I am eager to spend time, money and resources in order to help those who are suffering physically.
48. I am comfortable making important decisions, even under pressure.
49. I am often happy to overlook my own personal comfort in order to help others.
50. I am able to share God's Word with others with clarity and conviction.
51. I get a sense of fulfilment in physical labour, or in working with my hands to help others.
52. I am concerned that truth should be presented in a clear fashion with proper attention to facts, details and the meaning of words.
53. I am able to verbally encourage those who waver or are spiritually troubled.
54. I enjoy giving money to the church well above my tithe.
55. I am able to effectively supervise the activities of others.
56. I easily sympathize with the misfortunes of others.

57. I am acutely aware of things that are holding people back their spiritual development, and long to speak into the situation.
58. I am happy to do practical things without needing to be appointed to a leadership position
59. I am diligent in my search and Bible study, giving special attention to details I may glean from study aids.
60. I have a deep concern to encourage people towards spiritual growth.
61. I have a deep urge to make money for the work of God.
62. I am deeply sensitive to the need of a smooth running administration, so that every phase of activity is carried out with order and purpose.
63. I work happily with those people that most others would overlook.
64. I have learned the art of how to win an argument.
65. I enjoy taking the load off “key people” so that they can put more effort into their own particular tasks.
66. I am able to explain well how the Bible hangs together.
67. I find it easy to relate emotionally to others and I am quick to help when I am
68. When I give money to someone, I don't expect anything in return and prefer remain anonymous.
69. I know where I am going and I am able to take others with me.
70. I am at my best when working with those who have been wounded.

## SCORING KEY

|   | TOTAL<br>SCORE | GIFT                      | COMMENTS FROM OTHERS &<br>HOW I CAN USE THIS GIFT MORE |
|---|----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| A |                | Prophecy                  |                                                        |
| B |                | Ministering/Serving/Helps |                                                        |
| C |                | Teaching                  |                                                        |
| D |                | Exhortation/Encouragement |                                                        |
| E |                | Giving                    |                                                        |
| F |                | Leading                   |                                                        |
| G |                | Mercy                     |                                                        |

## Action Steps

- Complete the questionnaire
- Pray and ask the Lord to guide you into how you can use your gifts for Him.
- Get together with a small group of others who know you and ask them if they agree with your gift results and how they think you can use your gifts more effectively.
- Compare gifts and rejoice together in how God has placed the various gifts and personalities together in His body to serve and glorify Him.

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## Small Group discussion time

### **Small groups are a place for...**

connecting >> learning >> loving >> sharing >> serving

### **The leaders' roles are to...**

>> organise >> direct >> care >>

Your bonds of love and sharing as a group will bring great joy and peace to you all.

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Gather in your small group and ...

1. Discuss the gifts questionnaire and let each person share what their gift mix is. Let others in the group comment on the gifts and whether they see these gifts in your life.
2. Ask each person if they have any prayer needs.
3. Pray individually for each person who mentioned prayer needs.

# CHAPTER 5 - Growing up in a family (Part 2)

"from (Jesus) the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." [Ephesians 4:16 NKJV]

## What does being "joined and knit together" mean?

The language used of being "joined and knit together" speaks of intimacy, teamwork and commitment. There is a level of trust born from knowing that we are committed to each other and to what Jesus is doing in this Church. A human body cannot work if it is not "knit together". It follows, too, that I, as an individual, cannot grow or fulfil God's purpose for me without being tightly knit in a local Church family.

## Commitment

Every important human relationship involves commitment, and this applies to our Christian relationships too. Our relationship with God starts when we commit to love and serve Him forever. Our relationship with our brothers and sisters in the Church also requires a commitment to honour and prioritise this relationship, even if disagreements or difficulties arise. This is where our Church involvement moves from being a show or service I attend and consume, and becomes a real family that I belong to.

One of the best signs of our Christian maturity, is in the way we relate to other Christians and the Church in general:

"And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are



still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" [1 Corinthians 3:1-3 NKJV]

## The importance of unity

God speaks of unity as it is a source of great blessing:

At the last supper Jesus prayed: "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. [John 17:20]

1 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,

2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, [being] of one accord, of one mind. [ONE PURPOSE]

3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, [Phl 2:1-5]

Therefore, as [the] elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also [must do].

14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. [Col 3:12 - 15]

1 Behold, how good and how pleasant [it is] For brethren to dwell together in unity!

2 [It is] like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments.

3 [It is] like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing--Life forevermore. [Psalm 133:1-3]

And the LORD said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them." [Genesis 11:6 NKJV]

The phrase "one accord" occurs several times in the Bible and whenever it appears, miracles happened:

Act 1:14 & Act 2:1 - the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost

Act 2:46 & Act 4:24 - power released, many saved, and many miracles done

Act 5:12 - "through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch."

Act 8:6 - "And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did."

The Greek word for "one accord" is "*Humothumadon*" which means literally "rushing along together".

So important is this issue that we are told to "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." [Ephesians 4:3 NIV]

What would it look like to make "every effort" to keep unity? What would we do? What would we stop doing? What would we be willing to sacrifice?

"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." [1 Corinthians 1:10]

Division (the opposite of unity) is a serious issue that God warns us about:

"Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them." [Romans 16:17 NKJV]

“Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition,” [Tit 3:10 NKJV]

“These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: ... A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

[Proverbs 6:16, 19]

“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Do all things without murmurings and disputings” [Philippians 2:3, 14]

## Mature relationships

Maturity is not measured in the length of time you’ve been alive. A mature person is one who can make the right decisions for their lives without being cajoled or controlled. The process of maturity from young babies to adult is one of learning to manage your own life and make your own decisions without being controlled, supervised or told what to do.

There are three types of human relationship:

- Child to Child - these relationships are immature and selfish. They are characterised by selfishness and deception - children care only about their own needs, and there is manipulation and dishonesty involved in them trying to get their needs met.
- Child to Adult - these relationships involve control and domination - one person telling the other person how to behave or respond. This can be necessary when a person is too young or immature to know what is right or beneficial, or how to reign in their selfish desires.
- Adult to Adult - this involves two people who acknowledge and respect each other’s ability to make decisions and so they do not try to force or dominate each other but treat each other as equals. There is mutual respect and each person makes a

conscious choice to work together and to love the other. There may be a “boss” or “head” in these relationships, but this is based on voluntary submission and mutual respect, rather than forcing or manipulating a person’s behaviour. There is discussion, openness, and peace.

In this Church we long to treat each other with respect and love - to have Adult to Adult relationships - rather than allowing selfishness, manipulation or domination or childishness to define our relationships.

This means that we respect each other highly and honour the other person’s right to choose.

If a person is in a position of authority they are humble - they do not consider themselves better than any other, but they exercise the responsibility and position to serve God as best they can.

Those submitting to authority are not “less”, and they are valued and respected. They give submission willingly and gladly as a service to God.

No-one tries to manipulate anyone else to do anything - they ask them to do what is right but respectfully give them the choice to do otherwise, often explaining upfront what the various consequences would be of different behaviours. There is no threat of a withdrawal of love or respect, even if we think or behave differently.

This characterises adult to adult relationships, and we believe it honours God to act this way.

## Games people play

In everyday human interactions, often people will avoid adult to adult relationships by playing games or disguising immature relationships in some other form. These games are always a way to avoid mature adult to adult relationships, so they are a sign of immaturity.

The games people play seek to bypass honesty (they always involve some sort of manipulation, deception or pretense), and they always involve control by one person over another, rather than adult respect for the other person's free will. Some examples of games people play are:

*“Guess what I mean”* - sometimes people will not be straightforward or tell the truth. They prefer to disguise or withhold the truth, or speak and act in a hidden and tricky way. This is often to avoid honest communication, confrontation or in an effort to manipulate others. This childish communication method can never result in true open relationships and is a barrier to maturity and growth. It is also the devil's playground since he always works in the realm of deception.

*“You be the Boss”* - some people want to be bossed around and told what to do, but they want the other person to feel they are bossing them around, and they don't want to take responsibility for their own actions and decisions. This childish method of relating hinders growth and is dishonest. Sometimes Christians play a version of this game when they avoid growing up in their faith. They only feel “spiritual” when they are being chided and told how bad they are, or being bossed around, rather than maturing and making Godly decisions without being forced to do so.

*“Now you talk about me”* - some people are completely selfish in their relationships and, while they may not admit it openly, they only want others to bless and compliment and benefit them and never think of the wellbeing of others. This is a very childish attribute, and is unfortunately

very common, and it leads people into making decisions that favour themselves, and affects all their relationships because it drives everything they do. They can be controlling, manipulative and / or deceptive to serve this need, and their actions and words will seem strange until this motivation is understood. They are drawn to people who play the following game:

*“I’ll be Mom / Dad”* - these people long to treat others like children, but they are also sacrificial and so may seem very loving. Unfortunately they are not treating others as adults, and are not respecting others pr allowing them to grow up, and so it is unhealthy.

*“I’m a victim”* - These people do not want to be well and stable, because they get their identity and joy from being a weak victim, and they want others to feel sorry for them and to “parent” them. These people must be encouraged to grow up and be strong. We must encourage them to make their own decisions and take responsibility for the consequences of those decisions.

*“You cannot decide”* - sometimes a person can only relate to others who see them as the “adult” and act as a “child”. They want people to listen to them and their opinions without question. They do not respect the other person’s right or ability to think or decide for themselves, and they cannot respect or submit to others. This is an unhealthy relationship and is not adult to adult.

*“Secret agent”* - some people want to control and direct others (adult to child) but they do not want to be open and honest about it. They may be rejected or lose control if they simply ask someone to choose to do something, so they employ deception, manipulation, and hidden tactics. They may use lies and deception, or withholding parts of the truth. They may seek to influence others through gossip or rumours, or they may use manipulation or peer pressure to get their way. All of these games

may seem harmless, but they are unhealthy relationships because they are not “adult to adult” - they do not respect other people as adults and they rely on deception rather than open, honest truth.

In our Church family we want to play no games and to learn to “walk in the light” with one another; speaking honestly and treating everyone as an adult - worthy of respect.

## Resolving conflicts

Jesus promised that offenses and conflicts are inevitable.

""Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!" [Matthew 18:7 NKJV]

We must learn to deal with disagreements and conflicts in a Godly way, rather than expecting there to be no disagreements.

The Godly way to resolve conflicts is described a little later in this same chapter of Matthew:

""Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother." [Matthew 18:15 NKJV]

The first step is to go ALONE to the person who has offended you. The main thing to note here is that we go alone and we do not involve anyone else. If I tell anyone else I am gossiping and I may be falsely accusing our brother since he hasn't had a chance to clarify or respond yet. I am also putting the third party in an impossible situation and tempting them to harbour unforgiveness and bitterness about something that ...

- ❑ Wasn't even done against them
- ❑ May not even be true
- ❑ They cannot get resolution for, since even if I achieve reconciliation with the brother who hurt me, they can still harbour bitterness and have no way of resolving it.

We are putting this third person in an impossible position which God never intended them to be in, and we are dividing and harming the body of Christ.

So, we must go ALONE to the one who we think has sinned against us, and we must avoid gossip and adopting other people's offenses at all costs. If someone tells US about an offense committed against them we should:

- ❑ Assume it isn't all true and that we don't know all the facts
- ❑ Tell the person we don't want to be involved and that they should go to the person involved alone, as per Matthew 18

**""But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'"** [Matthew 18:16 NKJV]

If I do not get resolution I can take one other person with me. They can then hear both sides of the story and can hear any apologies that occur so they can get resolution in this situation.

**""And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector." [Matthew 18:17 NKJV]**

## Speaking the truth in love

God doesn't just tell us to watch out for division, He also tells us how to achieve unity - In every situation of conflict, we must "speak the truth in love"... **"but, speaking the truth in love, (you) may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--"** [Ephesians 4:15 NKJV]

- SPEAK - it is not enough to just stay silent when there is a disagreement or misunderstanding. We must go and tell him what we are offended by, rather than just hope he realises it on his own.



- THE TRUTH - What we communicate is very important. We must seek the truth at all costs, and we must be willing to be humble if we have misunderstood the truth OR if we have done something wrong. The only reliable source of truth is God's word, and so all issues must use the Bible as our standard for what is right and wrong - not people's offended and wounded feelings. God's truth brings healing and freedom every time it is applied to any situation or disagreement.
- IN LOVE - The truth expressed without love can be like a hammer that can hurt more than it heals. We must never avoid the truth, but we must always EXPRESS it in LOVE. what does this mean? Using 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 we can see what this looks like:
  - Love is patient and kind. I will give them time and be patient with them, and I will give them grace, kindness and the benefit of any doubt;
  - Love does not envy, does not boast, and is not proud. The conversation will not be about me or for my own gratification - it is for the sake of love, unity, and God's truth. I will be humble.
  - Love does not dishonor others (is not rude), and is not self-seeking, I will treat them with honour and dignity and never insult them or be rude.
  - Love is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. I will not get angry easily, and I will not bring up past offenses that have already been resolved.
  - Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. The truth is what we are seeking - not just to "pretend" to be fine with each other.
  - Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. I will always protect the other person and never speak about them to others. I will always trust what

they say to be true. I will always choose to hope the BEST rather than the worst for them and give them the benefit of any doubt, and I will always be willing to restore the relationship.

I hope you can see that this method of conflict resolution will result in unified body that grows into maturity and does not give Satan any foothold to cause division and damage.

What if I disagree with someone?

The Bible speaks of “Disputable matters” and differences of opinion - **"Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters."** [Romans 14:1 NIV]

The disputable matters listed in this chapter include the eating of certain foods, and the keeping of certain sacred days and festivals. The conclusion is that we should bear with one another, and not judge one another over disputable matters.

**"You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. ... So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister."** [Romans 14:10, 12-13 NIV]

A main consideration is unity and love - and we should be careful not to cause our brother to stumble. We are even taught to curb our own freedoms simply to prefer our brother and to be careful not to cause him to stumble:

**"We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves."** [Romans 15:1 NKJV]

**"Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble."** [1 Corinthians 8:13 NKJV]

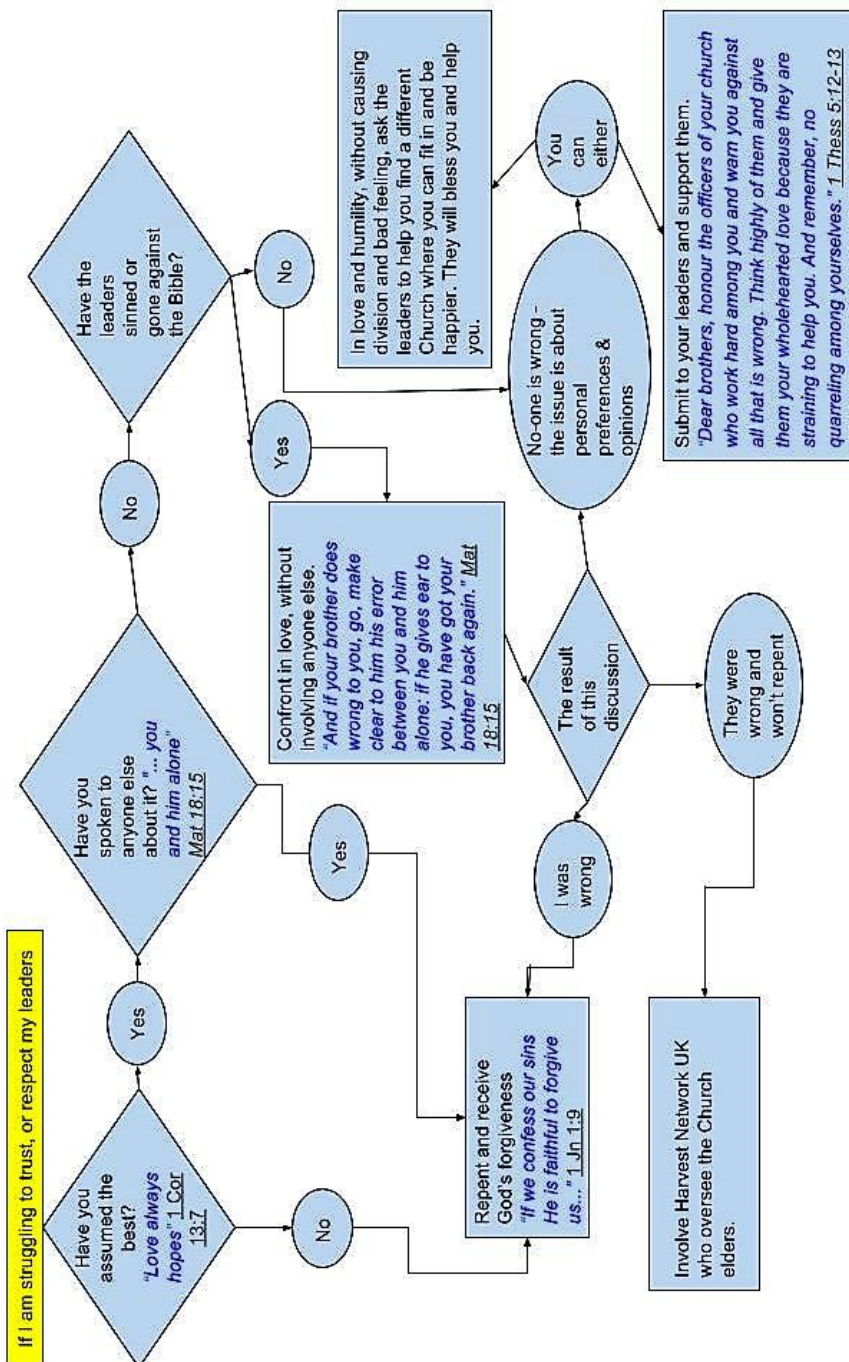
What if I disagree or have a different opinion with Church leaders?

For every decision made by Church leaders, there will be at least one person who thinks a different decision should have been made.

What do we do in these cases? The wrong responses are:

- Political maneuvering - trying to garner popular support for your opinion to “outvote” the leaders.
- Manipulation - trying to get your own way through deception or undue influence.
- Bitterness - harbouring a grudge
- Rebellion - disobeying and disrespecting the leaders and inciting others to do the same
- Leaving the Church in anger

The correct response is shown below:



## Not swayed by false teachings

The last element of this passage's instruction about maturity is that we will be kept safe from false teachers and false teachings if we are under the protection of the family of God.

It is important to listen to the guidance of the Church leaders about these matters. They instruct us in true doctrine so that we can recognise false teaching, AND they watch out for false teaching and warn us about it.

Warnings about false teaching are a major theme in the New Testament and we must be very careful to heed these warnings.

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." [Mt 7:15]

"Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many." [Mt 24:11]

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons," [1Ti 4:1]

"... there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, And many will follow their destructive ways" [2Pe 2:1, 2]

"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." [Ac 20:28-30]

## Conclusion - The four types of supply that come from God

We have seen that this passage in Ephesians 4 describes how a local Church family works and matures. It is a beautiful picture. The conclusion and summary of this passage can best be viewed by looking at the 5 sources of “supply” that God brings to us in a local Church family.

1. SUPPLY COMES FROM GOD HIMSELF - *“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.” Eph 4:7*
2. SUPPLY COMES THROUGH GIFTED LEADERS - Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. They *“equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” Eph 4:11.*
3. SUPPLY COMES WHEN I AND OTHER CHRISTIANS EXERCISE OUR GIFTS - *“according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” Eph 4:16*
4. SUPPLY COMES FROM MY COMMITMENT TO THE OTHERS - FROM THE “JOINTS” BETWEEN US - Eph 4:16 speaks of *“what every **joint** supplies...”*. Another verse that says a similar thing is Colossians 2:19 - *‘From Jesus the whole body, **nourished** and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.’*

There is a supply (a strength, nourishment and empowerment) that comes from the JOINTS I have with other members in the local Church. It is the joint itself that produces the supply, not the individual members or their gifts.

A table can have a beautiful and strong top, and lovely legs, but if the JOINTS between the legs and the top are weak, the whole table is weak. A rugby team can have great individual players who are very skilful and strong, but if they do not work well together, the team is weak. Christians can be very capable and gifted but if they are not JOINED to a local body they will never serve their full purpose in God or receive the full supply He has for them.

If we stay joined and committed and unified within the protective body of Christ we will not only be safe, but we will thrive and grow and mature.

## Action Steps

- Ask yourself whether you “play games” in your dealings with other people, and whether you relate “adult to adult” to others.
- Ask yourself about bitterness and grudges you may have against others.
- Ask yourself about how you resolve conflicts and what you need to do now that you have learned God’s words on this.
- Take whatever steps are needed to put things right and to move forward in God’s best for your relationships.

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## Small Group discussion time

### Small groups are a place for...

connecting >> learning >> loving >> sharing >> serving

### The leaders' roles are to...

>> organise >> direct >> care >>

Your bonds of love and sharing as a group will bring great joy and peace to you all.

---

Gather in your small group and ...

1. Play the following games for 30 minutes:

Three Truths and a Lie - Give every player for four sheets of paper. On each sheet, have them write one lie and three truths, so that each piece of paper has one thing written on it. Please note these should be believable lies and the mood should stay professional.

Once everyone has their list, ask each member to read their truths and lies out loud in a random order. The other participants must try to guess which of the four statements is the lie, and why.

In common and different - Your group must find as many things they can that they all have in common in 5 minutes.

Life Timeline - Have participants close their eyes and think of their first and fondest memories. Give them a few moments to think, then ask



them which memory they would want to relive if they had thirty seconds left to live. Then, ask everyone to share what their choice was, and why.

2. Ask each person if they have any prayer needs.
3. Ask if there are any questions from what was shared today?
4. Ask “how can we practically change this week based on what we have said and heard?” Get some specific actions and decisions that can be followed up on next week.
5. Pray individually for each person who mentioned prayer needs.

# CHAPTER 6 - THIS Body

## Lampstands

The book of Revelation begins with a scene of Jesus walking among several “lampstands” which represent different Churches in a small geographical area of Asia Minor. Each Church or “Lampstand” has its own leadership, its own mission or task to achieve for God, and its own message - instructions and words from Jesus.

While they are all Jesus’ Churches, they are each unique and He sees each one as an individual lampstand - or a Lighthouse.

## What about our relationships with other Churches?

We honour and love all the Christian Churches around us, but we have our own mission and identity in Christ, and we are different to the other Churches in our area in several ways.

We don’t speak badly of other Churches or Christians. We pray for them and bless them and help them where we can. There are times where we do things together, but we don’t try to pull people from other Churches to our Church, and we don’t sacrifice our own Church’s programs or work to be involved in another Church’s events unless God tells us to do so. God wants several different Lampstands in an area to provide a way for many people to find Him, and to give a varied expression of Christ in an area.

We don’t try to get people from other Churches to come to our Church or our groups, and if they do come, we lovingly encourage them to find their feeding and relationships in their own Church.

We don’t speak badly about other Churches or Christians, but rather we value and boast about them.

We aim to win non-believers to Christ and to our Church, rather than trying to encourage Christians to move Church.

We are busy trying to obey Jesus' instructions to US and focusing on what He has given us to do, rather than looking around at all the things He is doing elsewhere, because He will ask us one day to give an account for how we have obeyed His instructions and calling to us.

True inter-Church unity is not uniformity or everyone meeting together. It occurs where many different Lampstands obey Christ fully, but love and honour each other greatly. This grows His kingdom and honours His name the best.

When a Christian jumps around between Churches, they are like a kidney trying to fulfil its job in more than one human body...the bodies suffer and so does the kidney.

## What makes us different?

### Our history

We started in 2009 when God birthed a brand new expression of Christianity in Jersey, starting with 4 people on a bench on a Sunday morning. We have moved venue numerous times, and grown beyond recognition, but we have never lost the pioneering momentum of those first months, and we are still extremely excited about helping other brand new Churches get started from scratch all over the world.

**Our values** - These are the things we hold dear and treasure:

## OUR VALUES

### *Grace*

Grace means a “free gift” as opposed to something earned or deserved. Because we realise we have been forgiven freely, not because we are “good”, it makes us “Gracious” to others.

### *Relationships*

God is all about relationships, and we get a thrill out of getting to know Him better, and getting to know each other better. We really do consider ourselves to be a family from many diverse backgrounds, and places.

### *All Involved*

There are no spectators here. We are a team and every single one of us has a vital and beautiful part to play in the mission God has given us to do.

### *Charismatic*

Miracles did not die out 2,000 years ago. We expect (and see) miraculous power and answers to prayer everyday, and we are not ashamed of being passionate and demonstrative in worship.

### *Evangelistic*

This simply means that this gift is too good for us to keep it to ourselves. We have to keep sharing it and spreading it around, and we will do anything and spend anything to help more people hear about God’s amazing love and forgiveness. In fact, this is our mission.

## Our leadership

Unlike some other Churches, we do not use a democratic system of leadership. This means that:

- Our leaders (“elders”) are appointed (not voted in / out) with the help of an external Apostolic network called Harvest Network UK, who also oversee and discipline our leaders if necessary.
- We don’t have votes on decisions. The leaders seek people’s *perspective* on issues ... but not their *permission*. They *serve* people ... but they don’t *obey* people, they seek to only obey God.
- Our leaders are like “Shepherds”. Shepherds LEAD their sheep, they LOVE their sheep, they FEED their sheep, and they GUARD their sheep (*Ps 23 and John 10*). The Bible has a lot of guidance for shepherds and for sheep. Shepherds are to “lay down their lives” for the sheep (*Jn 10:11*), they are to “represent God” to them (*Nu 20:12*), and they must “give an account” to the “chief shepherd” (Jesus) for how they have served Him in leading the sheep (*Heb 13:17*).

Sheep are to “follow their shepherd’s leading” (*Jn 10:4*), not “butt and bite each other” (*Ez 34:21*), and submit and honour their leaders (*1 Thes 5:12, 13; Heb 13:17*).

We believe this method of leadership honours God, and allows us to focus on what God has called us to do, rather than on internal politics.

## Our ministry

We do not believe in “clergy” and “laity”. In some Churches the “clergy” do the ministry (they are called the “Ministers” or “Priests”), while the “laity” do not do ministry - they *receive* ministry.

In our Church everyone is a “minister”, and so we all play our part - every single member in God’s family has a ministry to exercise. Rather than calling the “pastor” when something needs to be done, it may be YOU who is the one to do the ministry in a situation! Our leaders organise and make directional

decisions, and equip people in how to exercise their ministries, but it is the members who actively exercise their ministries in support of the bigger mission of the Church, while submitting to God and to the leaders' decisions.

## Our meetings

Sundays are not the main or the only meeting of our Church. Small groups meeting in the week around the Island are a vital part of our Church life. In these meetings people get to learn and grow, they use their gifts and talents for God, and they are "Pastored" or cared for. Sundays AND small groups make up our Church structure. They are both important and helpful, but they serve very different functions:

- **Sundays** are a time for large group worship and teaching, and for equipping the members of the Church to be able to do their ministry;
- **Lifegroups** small groups are a time for everyone to use their gifts and ministries within the family of God.

## Our mission

We have a very definite sense of mission - God has called us to DO something for Him.

Jesus' last words on earth before he went back to heaven were: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen."* [Matthew 28:19-20 NKJV]

We feel compelled and excited to be able to participate in this mission, and it is not just a nice idea for us - we really want to be active in doing it.

We reach out wherever we are, and whenever we meet, to bring the "good news" of Jesus to others.

We also actively reach out into the world using prayer, travel, the internet and TV broadcasts. Our aim is to see new Churches started around the world so

that those in all nations who do not yet know Jesus can become *“disciples ... baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ... taught to observe all things that Jesus has commanded us”*.

This impacts our Church and personal lives in many ways:

- We do not exist to make ourselves happy, or to fulfil our own personal desires. We exist for OTHERS.
- We do not exist to try to fulfil all of the hundreds of “good” causes that exist on the earth or to be an answer for all the desperate needs and injustices around us. Our primary purpose is Jesus’ Great Commission, because we know that when His kingdom is extended, and Churches are planted here and around the world, then all the other problems will be addressed as well. We are FOCUSED.
- We are sacrificial and generous till it hurts, because we know that our time here on earth is short and there are millions who need to know Jesus. We are PASSIONATE.

While we love all the many other parts of Church life - prayer, worship, teaching, discipleship and fellowship - these are done in support of, and subordinate to, the main mission of reaching the world for Christ. Everything we do, and the motive for all our activities, is filtered through this main mission - to reach a lost world with God’s love and message.

## Our ethos

All of the above have made us into a family with a unique ethos / feeling:



Does this resonate with you? Does this describe your Church involvement and activity?

## Our membership

We do not have a “membership” register here, but we do believe in Biblical membership of Jesus’ body.

Everyone is welcome at our meetings, no matter what you believe, but not everyone who attends our meetings is a “member” of the body of Christ, or a member of this particular Church.

## The process of getting more involved

We call this process the “road from community to core”...



# The Road From Community to Core

## CONGREGATION

When people start attending our meetings they become part of our congregation. Some are investigating Jesus, some come for healing or help. All are welcome.

## CONTRIBUTORS

Once a person is a Christian, their level of contribution steps up because generosity and service are signs that we are becoming more like God - the ultimate "giver".

## CORE

Our goal is to bring everyone to their maximum potential in God - a Core of brothers and sisters who are fiercely loyal and passionate to God, to each other, and to the mission that He has called us to.

## COMMUNITY

We love our community and we want to be an active part of it. We interact with our city and shine His light to the world around us.

## COMMITTED

A point comes where a person is ready to commit to:

1) this FAMILY relationship - Being part of a family involves a commitment to work through difficulties and hardships. This is a sign of maturity and belonging.

2) this VISION and VALUES - Buying into what God has called us to do and the way we do them. You line up your calling and ministry with those of this body.

3) this LEADERSHIP - A sure sign that a person is one of this Church's "sheep", is that they are following this Church's "shepherds". This is how we know who God has given us, by looking for those who are following.

## Can people “check out”?

Some people may want to “check out” and leave at one of the stages above, or just stay for part of the journey. This is OK. As this is Jesus’ Church, not ours, we are not offended if someone does not want to get more committed or wants to leave. We will bless you, love you and help you in whatever way we can, as long as you are honest and respectful with us in the process. Don’t damage this family if you leave, because the larger body of Christ (all the Churches in our area) grows stronger when we show the world that we act with honour, love and respect.

## When people get “stuck”

Sometimes a person may get “stuck” at one of the above levels - they have stagnated. This is not helpful to you or to the Church, and so we will (gently at first) encourage you to move on and grow in your relationship with Jesus. It has been said that “God loves you just the way you are, but He loves you too much to let you stay the way you are.” We follow this principle, and we believe that the most loving thing we can do for you is to tell you the truth, and help you develop, even if it makes you feel uncomfortable at times.

## Action Steps

- Get stuck in to a Church fully and watch how you grow. Resolve any issues or grudges you have with others on the Church or leadership so you and the Church can grow strong
- Ensure you understand the values and mission and distinctives of the Church you are in. If you disagree with any of these, decide whether this is an important enough issue to cause you to move to another Church, or whether you can fit in and support the Church’s mission and methods and become a “pusher” rather than a “passenger” in the mission.

## Some practical questions regarding Lighthouse

- How can we better demonstrate these **values** at our meetings?
- How can we better fulfill our **mission**; - see also [www.Leadinglightsnetwork.com](http://www.Leadinglightsnetwork.com) , [www.Harvestnetwork.co.uk](http://www.Harvestnetwork.co.uk)
- How can we personally develop on the road from community to core?
- How can we better design our meetings and processes to achieve these goals?
- How can we help new people find their way from community to core?

## The Church's position on various ethical issues

- Human sexuality, dating, marriage and divorce
- Public sin and error by leaders
- Church discipline given our “all welcome” policy
- Discipline of elders in sin
- New elders ordination
- Use of finances and reporting of financial information

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## Small Group discussion time

### **Small groups are a place for...**

connecting >> learning >> loving >> sharing >> serving

### **The leaders' roles are to...**

>> organise >> direct >> care >>

Your bonds of love and sharing as a group will bring great joy and peace to you all.

---

Gather in your small group and ...

1. Ask each person to describe the 3 values that they hold most dear in their lives and that describe them as a person. Ask them to name an animal that best describes them and why.
2. Ask each person if they have any prayer needs.
3. Ask if there are any questions from what was shared today?  
Discuss how we as a Church can unify our values and demonstrate them better.
4. Ask "how can we practically change this week based on what we have said and heard?" Get some specific actions and decisions that can be followed up on next week.
5. Pray individually for each person who mentioned prayer needs.

# CHAPTER 7 - Leadership essentials

## God's idea of leadership is different

Leadership in the body of Christ is very important, and it is also very different to leadership in the world.

"But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. "Yet it shall not be so among you" [Matthew 20:25-28 NKJV]

## What leadership means

In the world's system, leadership usually means:

- A sign of being superior to others or a badge of achievement and promotion
- A way to benefit at someone else's expense
- A way to control other people or gain glory and fame

God's idea of leadership is primarily one of **serving** - serving God first, and then obeying Him by serving people and representing Him to them.

"... whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave-- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." [Matthew 20:25-28 NKJV]

The purpose of leadership and authority in God's kingdom is to institute and facilitate **God's will** and His good plans in a group of people.

It can be authority in a family : "For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him." [Genesis 18:19 NIV]

It can be authority in civil government : "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. ... For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil." [Romans 13:1, 4 NKJV]

And it can be authority in the Church : "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you." [Hebrews 13:17 NKJV]

It is not about glory, self advancement, or a sign of being better than anyone else, and it often includes suffering and pain... Yet it is completely worthwhile and you should seek leadership.

"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever." [Daniel 12:2-3 NKJV]

## How leadership is gained and maintained

Leadership in the world is either by force, manipulation or by democracy. All of these are prone to evil influences and none is God's way of appointing or maintaining leadership.

Force is not God's way as He doesn't force us to serve Him - He wants us to choose willingly to obey Him. In God's kingdom "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."" [Mark 9:35 NKJV]

Manipulation depends on deceit and untruth, and thus is not God's way. In the world people promote themselves by being popular and seek promotion to leadership as a sign of their importance or to gain glory and profile. In God's kingdom, "whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." [Matthew 23:12 NKJV]

Democracy relies on the opinion of the crowd being right, but in the Church God usually speaks to a smaller group who bring the message to the whole family. In a Church that welcomes all types of people, the majority may not even be Christians. God's method is more like a family - leaders who are loving like fathers and mothers, and who raise up new leaders who are like sons and daughters to them - it is not by force, self promotion or democracy, but by love, service, and God's calling.

## Sons and fathers in the Kingdom

**"You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit (entrust) these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."** [2 Tim 2:1-2]

Paul delegated leadership to Timothy, and then told him to delegate it to others in the same way. Notice the three elements that were involved in the delegating of leadership:

**Relationship** → He calls Timothy his "son". He says that Timothy had "heard" and learned things from Paul by being with Paul and watching him and picking up what he was saying. He says Timothy must "commit" or entrust these things to others and it is obvious that Paul entrusted them to Timothy. There is primarily a need for relationship when leadership is being delegated. This is counter-cultural. In our world, when appointing leaders, we often look for gifting and crowd appeal first, so that a person must be popular and talented to be a leader. Paul looked for a son that he knew well and that he trusted first.

**Character** → He says that Timothy must find "faithful" people to delegate leadership to. Faithful means that the person has character and integrity and this is an essential element in leadership. In 1 Timothy and Titus, Paul lists the qualities of elders and deacons, and they are all

character related except one - the ability to teach. He says that they must have strong family values and happy families, they must be good at looking after something belonging to someone else, they must be humble, self controlled and not violent tempered among other things.

Psalm 15 describes this aspect of “character” well:

"He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart; He who does not backbite with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend; In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the LORD; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change; He who does not put out his money at usury, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved." [Psalm 15:2-5 NKJV]

Gifting → Lastly he says that they must be “able” to teach others. This speaks of gifting and talents that are anointed by God, but it also shows that the process of delegation must continue - to more and more “sons in the faith”. Just as Paul has delegated to Timothy, this onward delegation, based on relationship, character and then gifting, must continue.

## Titus as an example

Paul had a “son in the faith” called Titus. In the book of 2 Corinthians, we can see a lot about this leadership development/delegation relationship and the qualities that made Titus a good leader:

## Comfort and joy

“I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia.” “Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus,”

“Therefore we have been comforted in your comfort. And we rejoiced exceedingly more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.” [2 Corinthians 2:13, 7:6, 7:13 NKJV]



Titus was a positive person who brought great joy and comfort to Paul's heart.

A person who is a drain on their mentor, or who is always negative, or who allows bitterness and offenses to make them bitter, will not progress to God's potential for them, because they will not be a source of comfort and joy to their leaders.

## Completer

**"So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well."** [2 Corinthians 8:6 NKJV]

Titus completed tasks that Paul asked him to do. He could be relied upon to what he was asked. This is an essential element in becoming a leader - do you do what is asked of you and go above and beyond what is expected, or do you need to be chased because you are reluctant or unreliable?

## Common heart

**"But thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus.**

**If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren are inquired about, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.**

**I urged Titus, and sent our brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same steps?"** [2 Corinthians 8:16, 8:23, 12:18 NKJV]

Titus had the same love and care that Paul had for the people they led. This care for the precious sheep in their flock is a good sign of a good leader.

Also, it is important to note that Titus and Paul had the same heart - they were completely unified and Titus was just like Paul.

## Qualifications of elders and deacons

Below is a table summarising the Biblical qualifications for leaders. Note that all Christians should have all of these qualities, so they are not a particularly high standard to aspire to. They do, however, primarily allow us to identify people who should NOT be a leader.

Please note that these are almost all CHARACTER requirements rather than giftings.

## Qualifications of teachers

James Chapter 3 tells us that teachers in God's Church shall receive a stricter judgment than others. It then goes on to describe the character traits of teachers of God's word so we can "test their fruit".:

- James 3:2 - 12 - their **words and speech** will be Godly.
- James 3:13 - 18 - their **behaviour and actions** will be good, meek, and free of bitterness and self-seeking.
- James 3:17 - they will exhibit "**wisdom that is from above**" which is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.
- James 3:18 - they are **peaceful** people who make peace, not strife.

|                                   |              |                            |                                         |                         |                                    |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Self-controlled                   | <b>ELDER</b> | I Ti 3:2; Tit 1:8          | Above reproach<br>(blameless)           | <b>ELDER<br/>DEACON</b> | I Ti 3:2; Tit 1:6<br>/ Ti 3:9      |
| Hospitable                        | <b>ELDER</b> | I Ti 3:2; Tit 1:8          | Faithful in marriage; not<br>polygamous | <b>ELDER<br/>DEACON</b> | I Ti 3:2; Tit 1:6<br>/ Ti 3:12     |
| Able to Teach                     | <b>ELDER</b> | I Ti 3:2; 5:17; Tit<br>1:9 | Temperate                               | <b>ELDER<br/>DEACON</b> | I Ti 3:2; Tit 1:7<br>/ Ti 3:8, / / |
| Not violent but gentle            | <b>ELDER</b> | I Ti 3:3 Tit 1:7           | Respectable                             | <b>ELDER<br/>DEACON</b> | I Ti 3:2<br>/ Ti 3:8, / /          |
| Not quarrelsome                   | <b>ELDER</b> | I Ti 3:3                   | Not Given to Drunkenness                | <b>ELDER<br/>DEACON</b> | I Ti 3:3; Tit 1:7<br>/ Ti 3:8      |
| No love of money                  | <b>ELDER</b> | I Ti 3:3                   | Manages own family<br>well              | <b>ELDER<br/>DEACON</b> | I Ti 3:4<br>/ Ti 3:12              |
| Not a recent convert              | <b>ELDER</b> | I Ti 3:6                   | Own children are<br>obedient            | <b>ELDER<br/>DEACON</b> | I Ti 3:4-5; Tit 1:6<br>/ Ti 3:12   |
| Good reputation with<br>outsiders | <b>ELDER</b> | I Ti 3:7                   | Doesn't pursue<br>dishonest gain        | <b>ELDER<br/>DEACON</b> | Tit 1:7<br>/ Ti 3:8                |
| Not overbearing                   | <b>ELDER</b> | Tit 1:7                    | Holds to the Truth;<br>trustworthy      | <b>ELDER<br/>DEACON</b> | Tit 1:9<br>/ Ti 3:9, / /           |
| Not quick-tempered                | <b>ELDER</b> | Tit 1:7                    | Sincere                                 | <b>DEACON</b>           | I Ti 3:8                           |
| Loves what is good                | <b>ELDER</b> | Tit 1:8                    | Tested                                  | <b>DEACON</b>           | I Ti 3:10                          |
| Upright, holy                     | <b>ELDER</b> | Tit 1:8                    | Not "double tongued"<br>or a "gossip"   | <b>DEACON</b>           | I Ti 3:8, / /                      |
| Disciplined                       | <b>ELDER</b> | Tit 1:8                    |                                         |                         |                                    |

## Timothy and Apollos as examples

In his letters Paul tells the Christians that Timothy and Titus are his “fellow workers” (and must be respected as if they are representing Paul himself), but Apollos, while he is loved and respected, is not in Paul’s team but leads his own team and is doing a different thing.

“But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.” [Philippians 2:19 - 22]

“For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” [1 Corinthians 4:17 ]

“And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do.

Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to come to you with the brethren, but he was quite unwilling to come at this time; however, he will come when he has a convenient time.” [1 Corinthians 16:10-12]

## Leaders at Lighthouse

At Lighthouse we seek to follow the Biblical model as closely as possible. We look for relationship first, then character and lastly gifting. We bear in mind all the requirements and guidelines listed above. We then use the following leadership structure:

1. Our Church is led and shepherded by **Elders**, of which there are 4 at present, with the lead Elder at the helm. We believe this is the biblical model of Church leadership. Elders are pastors and administrative leaders, and their main roles are to “equip the saints for the work of the ministry” (Eph 4:12), to “rule well” (1 Tim

5:17), to “Shepherd the flock” (Acts 20:28; 1 Pe 5:2), and to give an account to God for the souls under our care (Heb 13:17). We take this responsibility very seriously.

The Elders are also in close relationship with, and guided by, external **Apostolic** input from Harvest Network UK ([www.harvestnetwork.co.uk](http://www.harvestnetwork.co.uk)) and submit to those leaders if there is need for discipline within the Eldership.

2. We also release and recommend certain people to be **disciplers** in discipleship partnerships. These people have a grasp of the basics of the faith and can help others to grow in their faith in Christ.
3. We also encourage and release people to be **hosts / coordinators** of various groups in the Church. They coordinate and lead small groups like
  - Special interest groups (walking group, movie group etc)
  - Various serving teams in the Church (set up teams etc)
  - Courses (marriage course etc)
  - Projects (street evangelism etc)
 They lead and organise, but they do not teach or pastor like lifegroup leaders. This is an extremely important task and those who serve well can be considered to become lifegroup leaders.
4. We rely on **Lifegroup leaders** a great deal. These leaders are pastors of smaller groups of people, and they care for these people, teach them, coordinate the groups and watch out for those under their charge. They bear a lot of the load of the Church and represent the Church and the Elders in a very real and important way. Although we don’t have a formal ordination service for these people, and we don’t give them the title of

deacon, these people fulfil the role of biblical deacons in many ways. The roles and the people leading lifegroups change from time to time as new leaders take up responsibilities and others take a break.

Because this Lifegroup leadership role is so important, we have some requirements and guidelines for these leaders:

## What Lifegroup leaders are LIKE

As well as the Relationship, Character and Gifting attributes mentioned above, Lifegroup leaders are:

Committed to our **Beliefs**

Committed to our **Values** and **Vision**

Committed to live a **Lifestyle** that honours God and does not bring disrepute to God or the Church and that sets an example to younger believers

Committed to this Church's **Ministry** above all other ministries.

Committed to respect and support this Church's **Leadership**, being loyal, open, honest and teachable.

## What Lifegroup leaders DO

**Come** - showing up is so important. Your presence sets an example for others and allows you to influence others for God. We need you to come to meetings, and if you can't come, please let us know.

**Contribute** - leaders are givers, of their time, treasure and talents. We can tell who is with us because they give till it hurts.

**Communicate** - please don't stay quiet or think your opinion or question or problem is unimportant. We rely on you to communicate

anything on your heart, any problems you're having, and any questions or opinions you have.

**Care** - the heart of leadership is caring for the precious souls God has given to us to shepherd. A genuine heart love for the people is essential. Good leaders keep track of who is attending Church and group, and follow them up if they aren't there. They also follow up and organise care and practical help if a person or family in their group is in need.

**Carry** - we invite you to carry some of the load AND some of the ability to influence the way this Church moves forward. See yourself as carrying part of the leadership, not just receiving a service or doing a duty.

**Champion** - stand up for and represent the Church, its message, and its leaders against those who would tear them down.

**Catch** - identifying new people at Church and making them feel welcome is part of the leader's role. Acts 2:47 says that people were not only saved, they were "added" to the Church. Will you help us "capture" people and become a fisher of men?

**Co-opt** - identifying new leaders and raising them up is part of a leader's role.

**Coordinate** - there is an administrative and organisational part to leadership and we need leaders to organise their lives and their groups in concert with what the rest of the Church is doing. This will involve keeping lists of names and contact details, keeping calendar records and scheduling appointments well.

**Catalyse** - a catalyst is added to other chemicals and it causes them to react more strongly or more quickly. We need you to have an influence on those around you and to make them worship more strongly, to live more purposefully and passionately, to serve more enthusiastically and to become more committed to God and His purposes in this place. A leader is one who influences his group - not the other way around. Are they being changed by your ministry and presence? How you worship,

and how you respond to messages in Church, influence others and you can be a catalyst for them to do great things for God.

## The AUTHORITY of a Lifegroup Leader

Lifegroup leaders can:

- Organise and lead their groups as they see fit - having socials or prayer times or different types of meetings and study plans. We would only ask that you communicate with the elders often so we know what is going on.
- Have communion in the groups as often as they like.
- Pray for people in whatever way they feel appropriate.
- Discipline and/or expel a person from the group for good cause after checking with the elders.
- Give people in the group freedom to develop and grow in their ministries, watching over them and coordinating all the time.
- Help with prayer ministry after Church services on a Sunday.
- The Lifegroup Leaders form what we call the “Joshua group”, which is a group of people whose opinions the elders value, and share the elders’ ideas with the Church and represent the elders’ to the rest of the Church. We only ask two main things of this Joshua group:
  - Be **honest** with us about your opinions, concerns and questions when we share thoughts and plans with you.
  - Be **loyal** to the elders when speaking to other people - support the leader’s plans before the people and never go against them. Since we have given the Joshua group access and an open door, they can ask us anything in private, but then in public they must be with us.

Lifegroup leaders cannot:

- Teach something in the group that disagrees with the Church’s beliefs or that the elders are not happy about



- Cancel their group without asking the elders
- Appoint a new leader, hand over to someone else, or multiply the group without getting the elders' approval
- Encourage or allow disunity, division or rebellion in the group.
- Speak to the press on behalf of the Church, or publish messages on social media that are contrary to the Church's beliefs or message.
- Get involved or promote another ministry or Church's event without checking with the elders first.

"Those who are planted in the house of the LORD Shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing," [Psalm 92:13-14 NKJV]

"For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." [1 Timothy 3:13 NKJV]

## Action steps

- Ensure you understand how leadership in the body of Christ is different to that in the world
- Check your heart regarding your relationship with leadership and your desires for leadership - are your motives pure and Godly? Make whatever changes are needed and take the steps of reconciliation that may be required.
- Make a decision to be the best leader you can be for God.
- What changes do you need to make now regarding the way you are expressing and fulfilling the leadership role you already have?

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## Small Group discussion time

### **Small groups are a place for...**

connecting >> learning >> loving >> sharing >> serving

### **The leaders' roles are to...**

>> organise >> direct >> care >>

Your bonds of love and sharing as a group will bring great joy and peace to you all.

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Gather in your small group and ...

1. Discuss how this small group can be better going forward.
2. Discuss how you can reach the lost around you better.
3. Ask each person to name at least one person they are praying for to be saved and pray for each one.
4. Ask each person if they have any personal prayer needs.
5. Ask if there are any questions from what was shared today?
6. Ask "how can we practically change this week based on what we have said and heard?" Get some specific actions and decisions that can be followed up on next week.
7. Pray individually for each person who mentioned prayer needs.

## CONCLUSION and summary

We have been on a journey that started with the words: "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food... Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to maturity..." [Hebrews 5:12- 6:3 NKJV]

We have learned about leadership and ministry, maturity and the family of God, among many other things.

It is important that we realise that these are not meant to be intellectual lessons, but rather they are extremely practical and are to be lived out daily in our lives, in our relationship with God and with other people, both in and outside of God's family. "If you don't use it you lose it" is very apt in this situation, and so we encourage you to

- Keep going with habits and practices you have begun and relationships you have formed;
- Keep studying and reminding yourself of these principles;
- Keep growing and stretching yourself with new ventures and challenges.

God has promised to be with you, to never leave you, and to help you to grow and develop. Consider this awesome promise:

"being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;" [Philippians 1:6 NKJV]

God is with you, the family of God is all around you, and He has great plans for you. Let's go on to more and more maturity in Him.

[www.lighthousejersey.com](http://www.lighthousejersey.com)

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