

I. PRINCIPALS FOR LEADERS IN MINISTRY

It is a great honour to be given the privilege to be a spiritual leader, to be in a position where people look up to you for guidance and direction. The Body of Christ is looking for leaders who can lead other leaders in the ways of God!

Unfortunately, not all church leaders are spiritual leaders in the true sense. A true spiritual leader must be appointed and set in the office by the Lord, not by people. If a leader is set in by Divine order, he will accomplish God's Divine purposes. But, if he is set in by man, he will only accomplish man's purposes. Here are some basic ingredients of a true spiritual leader:

A. Divine Purposes

A leader must have Divine vision to accomplish the Divine purposes of God. A spiritual leader without a clear vision of what God requires of him is a blind leader. The vision will give him strength to persevere in the face of hardships and setbacks. He will not give up even in the face of defeat, for he knows that God is able.

B. Passion for God's Work

A spiritual leader must have a passion for what he has been called to do. He must love his work. This will give inspiration to his subordinates to work with him. A leader who hates his work is in a wrong calling. He needs to step down; otherwise, he will never accomplish much.

C. Integrity

A spiritual leader must be a person of integrity; a person who is true to himself, to the Lord and to others; a leader who knows his strengths and his weaknesses. Integrity is a sign of maturity without which spiritual growth is impaired. A leader of integrity will never trim his values or principles to please others. He walks with God through thick and thin. With integrity comes trustworthiness.

D. Differences between Leaders and Managers.

In order to sharpen our leadership skills, there are several concepts that need to be brought into proper perspective regarding what leadership is. We often confuse leadership and management, thinking they are the same.

The strong qualities that make a good leader can actually hinder him from being an effective manager. For example, leaders always have their eyes on the horizon. They see the big picture. They do not want to be bothered by details because these necessities tie them down. They do not want to spend time and

energy on details. Managers are different. They want to know the details, step by step. Leaders tend to see details as hindrances to going forward; managers see them as a means of getting there.

Some managers have leadership qualities, while some leaders have managerial qualities. A wise leader will know when he needs a manager to help him handle the affairs of his ministry more efficiently. This will keep the leader from being hampered by details and cut down on mistakes. He can delegate responsibilities and move on to fulfil his mission.

God calls leaders; God calls managers. One very important point we would like to make is that God does not call His leaders to be managers. They are called to be spiritual leaders in the true sense. Leadership ability is one of the most powerful gifts ever entrusted to us. With this ability one is able to become both perceptive and effective in making great things happen.

One of the highest examples we have of leadership is Jesus and His twelve (12) disciples. Using the principle of delegating tasks and authority, Jesus, a carpenter, trained His disciples; fishermen and tax collectors. They, in turn, blazed missionary trails across the nations, leaving behind them strings of young, vibrant, well-established churches.

Today many Christian enterprises falter or fail because they have leaders who are trying to lead and manage at the same time. The Apostles discovered the difficulty of doing this early in their ministry (Ac.6:1-4).

Giving their attention to prayer and the ministry of the word, the Apostles were able to keep their vision and to lay the groundwork for affecting not only the powerful Roman Empire, but also the entire history of mankind.

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve (12) did what was needed to fix the problem. They gathered the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the Word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven (7) men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word" (Ac.6:14).

A man of God makes the following observations:

"Almost every great enterprise we know of today was founded by a leader, not a manager. But almost every enterprise that lives past its founder is then taken over by a manager. There are two (2) basic reasons for this: (1) There are so few leaders who can make it through the gauntlet of the hierarchy, and (2) Most leaders are poor managers and fail to understand the need for a partnership with managers:

therefore the enterprise will be in desperate need of a manager at the top. When the manager first takes over, profitability and efficiency will usually increase for a period of time. Progress under the manager type will eventually slow, jeopardizing future success. Advancement requires seeing beyond the present limits of our time, a realm where the true leader abides, but where the manager has difficulty. A manager looks at what is; a leader is always looking for what it will be. It takes both qualities to get the picture. Either one (1) without the other is ultimately doomed to mediocrity or failure. If the manager understood leadership, and the leader understood management, there would almost certainly be far less decline in enterprise, and both leadership and management would be more effective.

The leader's job is to give the managers direction, vision and inspiration. Regardless of how good the leader is, he will be ineffective without good managers. His degree of success or failure will be determined by the quality of managers he can recruit. Discerning the quality and ability of his people and using them properly is just as important in accomplishing goals as having the vision and other resources required for the enterprise."

God has called us into this wonderful ministry of reconciliation. He has called us to serve Him in excellence in every way possible. Most pastors are leaders and very poor managers; a few are good managers, but very poor leaders. We only have a small percentage with enough of both leadership and managerial skills to move ahead in the fullness of God's purpose and to accomplish their God-given mission. Even then, it is probably not wise for one person to try to do everything. Christian institutions and enterprises need to discover the teamwork concept.

E. Leadership - Domineering Vs. True

God is bringing back Biblical leadership to His house. United eldership brings a harmony to the Church, and a balanced leadership will not domineer or try to control God's flock. Leaders must be careful to "...maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Let us look at the balance that is to be maintained between exercise of authority and showing of mercy.

God's leader is firm and strong; however, he will not be seen domineeringly ruling over the people. It is the false leader, insecure in his relationship with God and others, that tries to compensate by dictatorship over God's people. There are New Testament warnings against a leader tyrannizing, overbearing, bullying, and controlling the flock of God.

1. We can see in the Book of Revelation this example.

The Apostle John wrote to the Churches of Pergamum and Ephesus. Through John, the Lord rebuked the leaders of the church in Pergamum for tolerating the teaching of the doctrine of the Nicolaitans (Re.2:14-15). He also commended the leaders of the church in Ephesus for rejecting the Nicolaitans (Re.2:6). The Lord also spoke to those at Pergamum in a related matter:

The church at Thyatira also had some Nicolaitans, as they had the same teaching of immorality and idolatry (Re.2:20-25). Here the name "Jezebel" is a description of a woman like the wicked wife of Ahab and any leadership that was like her.

The Nicolaitans were condemned for fornication and idolatry. But, there was more to it than that. This heretical sect was founded by a man named Nicolaus. He as a leader is hidden in history, but the name "Nicolaitan" means "victorious" or "A triumphant over the people." Thus, not only were they leading the people into fornication and idolatry, they were also raising up leaders after them who were domineering leaders, like Jezebel, over the churches in Ephesus, Pergamum and Thyatira.

2. John gives us another example in his Epistles.

This example of domineering leadership is that of Diotrephes. The Apostle John wrote that Diotrephes was an example of domineering leadership, a prideful person who desired to be exalted above his brethren.

The King James Version uses the words "...loves to have the preeminence" to speak of this pride and desire. Other translations speak of it as "...loves to have the foremost place..." and "...eager to be a leader..."

John goes on to present prideful characteristics of those who desire to dominate:

- a. They love self-exaltation and pride: "...but Diotrephes.... loves to be first among them" (3Jn:9).
- b. They reject apostolic doctrine and counsel: "...Diotrephes... does not accept what we say" (3Jn:9).
- c. They unreasonably make open accusations against leadership: "... I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words....." (3Jn:10).
- d. They cannot receive all Christian brothers: "...and not satisfied with this, neither does he himself receive the brethren" (3Jn.10).
- e. They publicly reject and attempt to dominate Christians who do receive all Christian brethren: "... and he forbids those who desire to do so, and puts them out of the church..." (3Jn10).

It began simply as pride and self exaltation, and ended in a spirit of exclusivism and unteachableness. Christian leaders are warned by this example to remain humble before the Lord and their brethren, lest they fall into the same sin.

3. Peter also gives us a warning in his writings.

Peter warns against domineering leadership by saying, "...I exhort.... feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof.... neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock" (1Pe.5:1-5).

Peter says that leadership, by example, is what is important; not "lording" one's authority over the flock. If a shepherd "lords" authority over God's flock, he can expect them to "lord" their authority over their families and anyone who is under them. When a person dictates from their position over others, they also find it nearly impossible to submit to anyone themselves. The Amplified Bible says it this way, "...Not as (arrogant, dictatorial and overbearing) domineering over those in your charge, but being examples - patterns and models of Christian living - to the flock (the congregation)".

4. We also have the example and teaching of Christ.

Jesus Christ had a right to lord His authority over people, being the King of kings and Lord of lords. However, though the disciples were worried about position, He taught them that leadership in the Kingdom of God was different. When two (2) of His disciples mother came desiring her son's promotion, He plainly explains that position is gained by service, not by self-promotion, and thus the attitude of control of others (Mt.20:20-28).

Christian leaders must not think of having great positions or of being served. On the contrary, they are to meekly guide the flock by example, being everything they want the flock to be. Serving, loving, not lording, is God's standard in His Kingdom.

5. There are attributes of true Leadership we should learn.

a. True leadership concentrates on influencing by encouraging, inspiring and motivating, without external controls through rules and regulations.

b. True leadership enjoys good relationship with the co-workers, showing respect to the individual, without a superior attitude.

c. True leadership works with co-workers toward long-range goals, with concern for the workers' development uppermost in his mind, rather than demanding immediate results.

d. True leadership shows his value of individual workers by encouragement and praise, rather than by condemnation and a low opinion of others.

e. True leadership desires power with co-workers, encourages input and feedback, and shares credit for the results, rather than taking credit for the results.

f. True leadership is always willing to discuss decisions and reasons for the decisions, unless circumstances do not allow for it. Domineering leadership will interpret questions as disloyalty.

- g. True leadership liberates the individual, encourages ideas and participation, while the domineering leader limits the individual's freedom, preferring to make all decisions.
 - h. True leadership has a heart, having a genuine concern for others. The domineering person will show little compassion for people.
 - i. True leadership is considerate of others, while the domineering person is concerned with self.
6. Leadership's motives are what are important.

Pure and spiritual motives in the heart will bring growth in the church and in people. If a leader seeks high position, we can be sure that there is something wrong. That person will use people to his own ends, rather than serving their needs.

When a leader wants to make people dependent upon his presence, which gives them a sense of power, they will never train correctly those under him who want to be used of the Lord. There is great importance concerning a leader's motives for being a leader. Wrong motives poison a leader's work. Right motives will overcome a host of difficulties.

- a. Improper motivations are exposed in the scribes, Pharisees and lawyers.

When they came to Jesus with a question, or just in their daily activities, they always had ulterior motives. Holy Spirit was constantly exposing their wrong motives to teach us about motives. Notice, "...But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men" (Mt.23:5); "...scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, even while for a pretense you make long prayers" (Mt.23:14). "And they questioned him saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?' -in order that they might accuse Him" (Mt.12:10); "...the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects, plotting against Him, to catch Him in something He might say" (Lk.11:53-54).

The scribes and Pharisees and lawyers did not have pure motives concerning the Lord Jesus. God's leaders must not think their status as servants is just a form of "paying their dues" that will get them "up the ladder" later on. A leader is to be a servant all of his life.

- b. Godly motives are what we are to demonstrate.

There are many seducing spirits in the world. The person who wants to serve God must resist the temptation to harbour improper motives. Godly motives are what God wants to see in our lives. These motives include:

- 1) It is a desire to serve others, meet their needs, and help them be successful in their callings.
- 2) It is a hunger to show the love of God to those who need it.

- 3) It is a deep commitment to be faithful to the will of God.
- 4) It is an urgency to lead others to Christ.
- 5) It is a need to unite family members under Christ's headship.
- 6) It is a drive to help the spiritually sick, poor and oppressed.

The Lord does not want leaders to allow the people to run the Church, nor does He want His leaders to consume or take advantage of them. There is a Divine balance that He desires.

F. Guidelines for Leaders.

Though becoming a spiritual leader is a very rewarding calling, it comes with a high price tag. It demands total commitment, dedication and excellence. We have listed several guidelines that may prove to be of some help to those who are serious about their commitment and service to God.

1. We must find our place in the Body of Christ.

There are all kinds of vessels in a large house, some of wood and clay, gold and silver. God will use a vessel according to His purpose for the work He chooses (2Ti.2:20-21).

It is necessary to find out what God wants us to do or what our part is in His Body and devote ourselves to holding our position. We will never be able to serve God effectively until we have found our right ministry. This could take some time for some people, but it is worth pursuing. There is no short cut in spiritual things. Sometimes we have to pay a big price to find God's purpose for our lives. The enemy will try to block our way. He will try to interfere with God's plans for our lives. We have to be determined. We have to fight for what God wants us to have and be.

2. We must be wise in our finances.

Satan has succeeded in destroying a lot of ministries in the area of finances. Some good ministries are hardly making it financially, while others do not know what to do with their finances.

It is necessary to learn the importance of money in our ministry and in our personal life. The best way to learn about finances is to become well informed. We need to read good books and talk with other ministers or people who are well versed on the subject. Whatever we do, do not be ignorant as many ministers are. Get a good financial advisor.

It is necessary to separate our personal finances from the ministry finances. We should have a personal budget, no matter how small or big the income is. Make giving to God's work a priority. This will release God's financial blessings in our ministry. One of the problems in financial matters is learning to spend the money the right way. This problem can be avoided by making a good budget.

Some people do not think saving money is Scriptural. The fact is it does not hurt to invest some of our income wisely for future use, especially if we have or are planning to have a family. It is good to read the parable of the talents in Matthew on this (Mt.25:14-30). Some of the best givers who finance God's work are those who have learned to invest their finances. It is also good to get counsel from a financial expert who may be able to give the right kind of advice.

It is necessary also to keep good records of our finances. Be a person of integrity. If people trust us to handle their money properly, they are more likely to help us in times of need.

3. We must set goals for our ministry.

Goals will help us to realize where we are going. They will also help us to know where we are coming from and whether or not we are making progress in our ministry. Our goals should be centered on God's will for our life, because God will not bless what is out of His will. Goals will help to get the right things done as opposed to merely getting things done right. A ministry that is not doing the right things is getting the wrong things done. These goals will help keep our priorities right (Php.4:13).

Goal setting helps a great deal in personal life and ministry. It helps in our prayer life. By having goals, we know what to pray for and how. We also know when we are getting behind in our work or when we are overworking ourselves. We will know when we are succeeding and when we are failing.

It is important to be care full not to set goals that are too high. This may easily discourage our performance. In the same way, do not set goals that are too low. This will affect our productivity. So we must pray for God's guidance.

Some ministers get spiritually burned out because they are overworked. Goal setting could help them eliminate some of the unnecessary burdens. Six (6) areas we may consider in setting goals are:

- a. We should set spiritual goals, such as how much time to spend in prayer and reading the Word.
- b. We should set family goals, such as how to spend time to spend with our family or to build family relationships.
- c. We should set personal goals, such as how much time to spend in exercising, hobbies, and self-improvement.
- d. We should set financial goals, such as managing our profession, or how to spend and invest our finances.
- e. We should set social goals, such as setting time for friends, fellowship, and entertaining.
- f. We should set ministry goals, such as what we would like to see happen in our ministry.

4. We must establish our priorities in life.

It is necessary to find out what God's will is for our life and make up our mind to follow His desires. We must develop our God-given talents to the best of our ability.

The power of faith must have a target before it can be released. We must know what we want before our faith can be released to grasp it.

It is wise to manage our time wisely. Time is a gift from God. Our life is too short to waste. Therefore, we should determine what things we want to accomplish each day, week or month, and set deadlines for their attainment.

This means we should avoid things or people that waste our precious time, such as unnecessary phone calls and idle chatter. It is good to make the most of every opportunity because the days are evil (Ep.5:16).

Lastly, we should not be afraid to adjust when the Lord changes the order of our goals. Be flexible. Be willing to step out by faith to meet new challenges in life. Goals are just guidelines, not rules or laws to dictate our lives. The Holy Spirit is our guide and director.

5. It is good to take care of our personal appearance.

Our appearance communicates a strong message to the people we meet or serve. As a servant of the Lord and an ambassador of God's Kingdom, we must be a good representative.

We should not lay down unnecessary rules on what and what not to wear, but we should always be presentable.

a. Be clean.

This includes teeth and hair. If we do not brush our teeth, our bad breath will affect our ministry, especially when we are praying for people. Make sure to wear good cologne or deodorant that will help us smell nice. People don't want to smell our sweat.

b. We should wear clean clothes.

The same goes for our shoes and socks. Do not let clothes hurt our ministry. Some people can be quite anointed, say as a teacher, and blessed by their teaching, yet turn people off by their appearance (Pr.31:10, 22, 25; 1Ti.2:9-10).

c. We should watch our weight.

This may take constant work. Some people have a problem because of their metabolism, but others have weight problems because they are undisciplined in their personal lives. Whatever the cause, try to deal with it this will not only help our personal appearance, but will also keep our body healthy and we will be able to serve the Lord longer.

A man of God gave the following advice to a group of Christian workers:

“In this area of concern, a worker should be on the lookout for nutrition, not for taste. He should eat more of the nutritious food and eat less, or not eat at all, the less nutritious food. We should also be careful not to overeat but we should eat from a broad range of food groups. Some brothers and sisters only eat those items which happen to fall within a narrow range of food. Such a habit is not good for the body. We should eat varieties of food that give nourishment to our body. If we eat only a few kinds of foods, we may not feel any deficiency now, but we will surely discover its effect later in life. The length of one's life is influenced, the food he takes in.

Learn to eat nutritious food. Do not let your eating be governed by taste but by our bodies need. How can we neglect our body in the face of the fact that the Lord has spent many years on us?”

We should respect our body because it is God's temple. We need to be good and sensitive to our body. Give it enough rest and sleep, and a good environment, along with the proper nutrition it deserves. It is not wise to waste our health trying to get wealth, for often we will then be glad to pay all our money to recover our health.

6. We ought to develop a good prayer life.

Jesus was our example, arising early in the morning, while it was still dark, going to a solitary place, and praying (Mk.1:35).

No one can overestimate the importance of prayer in ministry. A disciplined prayer life will transform any man or woman of God into a useful vessel of the Holy Spirit. Prayer will not only usher us into a higher spiritual realm, but also will transform us by changing our weaknesses into strengths (Ps.63:1).

Ministers of the gospel should view prayer as an important business in their personal life that has to be guarded from every interfering power.

Things will be accomplished through us by prayer and only minutely by our own efforts. A praying minister will enjoy victories of the risen Savior, while a reluctant one will experience failure and frustrations trying to serve the Lord. Prayer is important because through it: The Lord will increase our anointing. Here we will have fresh ideas from the Holy Spirit. Prayer will increase our spiritual sensitivity, and overcome our fears and intimidations. Prayer will also increase our spiritual discernment.

Some ministers know a lot about prayer but never practice it. This will no help. We must read good books on prayer and then practice it (Ps.5:3; 1Pe.4:7; Mt.26:40-41; He.11:6; Ps.55:17; 1Pe.3:12; Mk.1:35; Ac.6:4; Jude 1:20; Ro.8:26-27).

7. We should live a life of disciplined fasting.

Fasting is very important in a minister's life. It will greatly help our prayer life and discipline our flesh. All the great men and women of God who have shaped our history have been people of prayer and fasting. Fasting will help us overcome a lot of the spiritual battles which the enemy brings into our lives (Da.9:3; Ps.35:13; Mt.6:16-18; Is.58:6-11).

God's servant should learn to live a simple life-style, a life that is not too complicated and demanding. By this means we can be free to move which ever way the wind of the Spirit blows.

A man of God had great insight in this crucial area of life. He says:

“There is yet another area of character-building which a worker for the lord must consider. He must learn not to be obstinate in his life-style. A servant of God should never establish for himself an absolutely subjective standard of living; nor should he insist on having his own way. In order to serve God well, we must become all things to all men in accordance with the Biblical principle that is taught of not offending anyone.”

Paul wrote along this line in Corinthians, saying that he became all things to all men that he might see some of them saved (1Co.9:19-22). For the sake of the Gospel, Paul became all things to all men.

Whoever serves the Lord should have this character trait (Php.4:12).

Unfortunately some brothers and sisters are rather obstinate in their daily life, so that their habits have become absolutely unbreakable and unchangeable. Some must always have warm water to wash the face: others must be able to shave every day. If they go to an environment where they cannot live according to their normal way of life, they find it unbearable. Although these matters may appear to be rather insignificant, they could hinder the work of the Lord. People in such a state cannot be God's servants.

8. We must develop a discipline of studying.

One man of God made the following observations:

“The purpose of the spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, fasting, and meditating is the total transformation of the person. They aim at replacing old destructive habits of thought with new life-giving habits. Nowhere is this purpose more clearly seen than in the discipline of study. The Apostle Paul tells us that we are transformed through the renewal of the mind (Ro.12:2). The mind is renewed by applying it to those things that will transform it... The discipline of study is the primary vehicle to bring us to

"think about these things." Therefore, we should rejoice that we are not left to our own devices but have been given this means of God's grace for the changing of our inner spirit.

Many Christians remain in bondage to fears and anxieties simply because they do not avail themselves of the discipline of study. Jesus made it unmistakably clear that the knowledge of the truth will make us free (Jn.8:32). Good feelings will not free us. Ecstatic experiences will not free us. Getting "high" on Jesus will not free us. Without knowledge of the truth we will not be free. Many are hampered and confused in the spiritual walk by a simple ignorance of the truth. Worse yet, many have been brought into the cruelest bondage by false teaching.

Let us therefore apply ourselves to learning what constitutes the spiritual discipline of study, to identify its pitfall, to practice it with joy, and to experience the liberation it brings."

Paul admonished Timothy and us to be as "...one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." He went on to say we should "...avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly" (2Ti.2:15-16).

Money spent for a good book is well invested. We should make a budget on how much to spend on books, for some ministers tend to spend too much on books they never read!

Get a good study Bible, a good Bible dictionary, and a good commentary set. It doesn't have to be expensive. Also we should get a good reference book, such as the AStrong's Concordance, and some different translations of the Bible, and we are set to study (Co.1:10; Pr.24:4-5; Pr.11:9; Pr.10:14).

We should learn how to read the Bible more effectively. Consistent Bible reading can be a difficult task, but yet the most rewarding habit we can ever establish. It will help us to be knowledgeable in the things of God.

We should set up a specific time for daily Bible study, and not allow anything to steal away these moments. It is good to establish a systematic Bible study, with a notebook to take notes. It is good to also use a topical Bible to study many different subjects (Ps.119:11, 40; 2Ti.2:15).

To quote what some wise men have said: "To be conscious that you are ignorant is a great step to knowledge. "Knowledge partakes of Infinity; it widens with our capacities: the higher we mount in it, the vaster and more magnificent are the prospects it stretches out before us." A Persian philosopher, being asked by what method he had acquired so much knowledge answered, "By not being too proud to ask questions where I was ignorant." "He that knoweth not that which he ought to know is a brute beast among men; he that knoweth no more than he hath need of is a man among brute beasts; and he that knoweth all that may be known is a god amongst men."

9. We must establish our ministry on God's standards and principles.

A wise man said:

“In the work of God, the worker is more important than the work. If God cannot find the right person, He would rather delay His work. Much time and effort will He spend in the training of a workman fit for the Master's use. Basically, the training is more in the area of character than of skill. Only a new creation can serve God. It takes being in the correct position: ‘if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation’ (2Co.5:17); experientially, old habits will have to be shed and new habits formed through the working of the cross in his life. A few principal characteristics of the life of Christ need to be incorporated in the worker before he is qualified to be a servant of God. Otherwise, God's work will suffer in his hands. It is far better for him not to plunge himself at all into the most sacred work of God.”

A ministry that is established on God's principles and standards will prosper. A ministry that is out of God's plan will not bring health and life, but destruction and frustrations. A minister of the Gospel should commit himself to becoming conformed to the character and the nature of Christ. He should not compromise his convictions, but always stand on the Word and be a person of integrity and honour (1Ti.chp.3).

As a minister of the Gospel, our personal life outweighs our ministry. What we are in character and conduct will greatly affect our effectiveness in ministry. We must always teach in accord with sound doctrine (Ti.2:1).

The wise man continues:

“The organized church today emphasizes what a person says and what a person does but pays little attention to what a person is. Many young workers earnestly desire to be able to speak with power, long for eloquence, and yearn to be able to preach brilliantly in order to move and help people. They fail to realize that this is not the vital point. The vital issue is: Who and what are you? The thing of value, the preeminently important matter is, not that you are given a gift and therefore you are able to speak, but that you know the lord and therefore you speak.”

There is an old book of interesting quotations entitled, “Wisdom of the Ages.” Some of these quotes we may find enlightening.

“It is an old saying, and one of fearful and fathomless import, that we are forming characters for eternity. Forming characters? Whose, Our own or others? The answer is both, and in that momentous fact lays the peril and responsibility of our existence.”

“Never does a man portray his own character more vividly than in his manner of portraying another.”

“Character is the product of daily and hourly actions, and words and thoughts: daily forgiveness, unselfishness, kindness, sympathies, charities, sacrifices for the good of others, struggles against

temptation, submissiveness under trial. It is these, like the blending colors in a picture, or the blending notes of music, which constitute the man.”

“A good character is, in all cases, the fruit of personal exertion. It is not inherited from parents, it is not created by external advantages, it is no necessary appendage of birth, wealth, talents, or station; but it is the result of one's own endeavours.”

“Instead of saying that man is the creature of circumstance, it would be nearer the mark to say that man is the architect of circumstance. From the same materials one man builds palaces, other hovels; one warehouse, other villas; bricks and mortar are mortar and bricks until the architect can make them something else.”

10. It is good to learn to handle criticism.

A great man of God stated that:

"Men who get ideas, and who get things done are always criticized. This goes with success. Critics always dog the trail of achievers. While some criticize, we evangelize.

But the man who succeeds learns to live with criticism. He must adopt the right attitude about criticism. If he reacts to it, he will fight back to justify himself. When he does that, he is predestined to lose. He will fail.

The man who succeeds learns that criticism is really admiration in another form. People usually only criticize the man out front, The failing man, the non-successful man, the orthodox run-of-the-mill man commands no attention. He is ordinary. He's going no place. He doesn't force men to think new. He is in a rut, so he is okay!

But as for me, I want to get a job done. I have learned that if you set high goals, ordinary men will mock you. And when you achieve those goals, the critics will likely raise uproar. Their purpose in life is to criticize. And their attention is always focused on the daring man, the revolutionary.

I have learned that it usually doesn't cost a man a single copper to criticize. His commodity is cheap and therefore plentiful, and so to be Ignored.

I have learned that there are two (2) classes of people: those with problems and those with solutions. I want to be the man with solutions. The man with solutions is the man in demand. Anybody can create problems, discuss them, analyze them, and categorize them. Only the thinker, the creator, the man of action has the solutions. A famous statesman has said: >It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, in action, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and

blood, who errs and comes short again and again, but who spends himself in a worthy cause, who knows the triumph of high achievement, but who, if he falls, at least fails while daring greatly.

Yes, criticism, and the inept men who replenish it, is cheap and plentiful! But solutions, and the rare men who beget and apply them, are valuable and scarce. “

One way we can manage to handle criticism is by having the inner strength and by believing in what we are doing. God's Word encourages us over and over again to be strong in the Lord and not to let anything shake us from our goals (Ep.6:10; Joel.3:10; Jos.1:6; 2Ti.2:1; Is.40:31; 2Co.12:9; Da.11:32).

a. We must learn to handle rejection and criticism wisely.

Otherwise, they can both paralyze and affect our self-worth. Learn to use criticism to our advantage by using it to evaluate our progress.

b. We need to learn to handle defeat and fears.

Defeat, when well handled, can be a great asset to our future development, but when allowed to overpower us it can be dangerous and hazardous to our success.

c. Do not be afraid of opposition.

God will use it to reveal to us the location of our enemy. The human heart reaches out for acceptance and approval of others. When we are rejected by others, our motivation and will-power can be destroyed. We can use criticism to amend our ways or allow it to destroy our motivation. It all depends how we receive it.

d. Opposition gives birth to new opportunities.

It can also point us to new directions and new decisions. It also forces us to evaluate what we really believe. The thing to do with criticism is to analyze its source, its purpose and then try to evaluate the solutions. We need to learn from it. Do not accept criticism without weighing it.

e. God will direct our ways.

All those who have achieved great success in life will recall that adversity unlocked the doors to their greatest achievements (Pr.13:18; 2Co.4:17; Is.54:17).

11. It is necessary to learn how to handle failure.

Failure can be discouraging, especially if we have tried so hard to succeed. Many quit their ministries because they are unable to react positively to failure.

We have to realize that the enemy's desire is to see believers fail. God can allow failure in our lives to help us grow spiritually or to prepare us for success. Most people cannot appreciate success unless they have tasted failure. All great men and women of God have had their share of failure in one way or another. The difference between losers and winners is that winners rise above their failures while losers stay down and nurture their failures, letting their problems absorb the spiritual energy of all those around them.

God's servants need to understand that making a mistake is not the end of everything. Peter who denied the Master, but he repented and moved on to become the leader of the Church for a time.

To do this, we must acknowledge our weaknesses, and then deal with them. We must know our weaknesses. We must admit our mistakes to God, then forget them, and utilize the strength of others. Humility is recognizing personal limitations and resting in the power of God to compensate (Ro.12:3).

12. We are to have a servant's spirit.

Jesus called the disciples together and said to them that even though the "...rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them..." it would not be so with them. He went on to tell them that if they would be great, they "...must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all" (Mk.10:42-45).

In order for us to be great in God's Kingdom, we have to be servants in His Kingdom. We have to serve others. This is what true greatness is all about, servant-hood to others. We have been called by the Lord, not as masters to be waited upon, but as servants.

To be a good servant, we have to learn to deal with the spirit of pride. Pride is bad because it is selfish and looks down on others, it makes one feel more important than others, and it opens the doors of self-deception and makes one feel infallible.

Not only that, it hardens one's heart, makes him independent and exalted above others. Pride truly separates us from God and from our fellow man (Is.5:15).

13. We must have God's blueprints for our ministry.

Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain (Ps.127:1).

A man of God made the following observations:

"Plans, purposes, and pursuits! It is easy to stray from God's plan. I believe many times that's the reason ministries get into dire financial trouble, they add to what God's plan was for them. They may be good things, even legitimate things, but they are additions to God's original instructions.

Remember, God knows the future better than we know the past. It pays in every way to wait before Him and get His plan. So many times we make our plans and then ask God's blessings on our plans. It is far better to get His plan, because His plan is already blessed. Get God's plan for your life and God's plan for your ministry. If you are a pastor, get God's plan for your church.”

There is nothing as good as knowing that we are in the center of God's will for our life.

a. Who will succeed us?

A good ministry that has been built on a good foundation will continue to prosper even after founder is gone. Sooner or later a pioneer is faced with the question of succession. Who will carry out the ministry after we are gone? Some leaders try to establish a dynasty through their children or family members to preserve their names while others let their ministry die with them because their visions and values were not clear enough or the foundations strong enough to be passed on to the next generation of leadership.

b. There are seasons to life.

We need to understand what our calling is and the seasons of our lives. One needs to know when his time is up, when he needs to raise up new leadership or when he needs to hand back the ministry to the Lord to appoint another leader. God may not want any member of your family to be your successor, like Eli and his sons or Samuel and his sons. However, we should look there first for the successor if that is what God is saying. We must have God's blueprint for our ministry.

14. It is necessary to recognize our limits.

No one is without limitations of any kind. One important factor that every leader should face is the fact that he cannot do all things in and of himself. There are things, though important, he should leave alone in order to concentrate on what his calling is. If a leader wants to accomplish anything significant, he must be single-minded in purpose. His plans should be simple and clear to follow. He should avoid the temptation of venturing beyond his expertise and over-extending his resources.

a. Our time has a limitation.

Time is a limited asset that all leaders have. They do not have enough time to do everything they want done. Jesus had only three and a half (3-1/2) years to establish the principles of the Kingdom on earth. He valued time. He practiced very important principles in time management that every leader should learn.

He planned how to use His limited time. He did this by planning the route of places He had to minister. He went to the right places at the right time. Planning kept Him from going to places before the right time. For example, He avoided going to Jerusalem until the right time came.

He planned His time by eliminating those things that were not important. He filled His time with prayers, teachings, building relationships and training His disciples. He planned His time by delegating responsibilities to His trained disciples.

b. Our energy has limitations.

Recognizing the limitation of physical, emotional, and spiritual strength is very important to any leader who wants to live long enough to finish his mission. Jesus told His disciples, "Come aside... and rest" (Mk.6:31). After long hours of ministry, one needs to rest to renew his vitality. This is very much so as one becomes older or more responsible.

c. Our knowledge has limitations.

A leader must recognize the fact that there is much he does not know that he can learn and the possibilities of not being able to learn all he needs to learn.

d. We have a limitation to achieve everything.

A leader must realize that sometimes it is hard to achieve everything he wants to achieve. We as believers are not immune to the tyranny of success. Sometimes we need the ability to learn from our failures so that we can become better humans who know their limits. Failure becomes failure only when we can not learn from the experiences it brings.

It is also wise to learn that what one may consider to be success may actually become one's seductive force towards destruction.

A spiritual leader should only be concerned with doing His Master's will and leave the results to the Holy Spirit; God only calls us to be faithful, not necessarily successful. Realizing and recognizing one's limitations is truly a sign of strength. Limitations are not weaknesses but safeguards.

15. We must learn to listen to what God is saying.

We are to listen to the voice of God in our hearts. We are to let Him speak to us through His Word and through His servants. A leader who is spiritually deaf is a lost leader.

We have to learn to listen to God through those who are hurting around us, being sensitive to their needs like Jesus is. To be a consistent winner, we must develop the ability to recognize the voice of God. Otherwise, how will He guide us or correct us when we are wrong? It takes time to know God. Get alone

with Him and shut out the crowd. Avoid the distracting voices and mental clutter. God treasures the seeker (Je.29:12-14; De.28:1; Jn.6:63; Ps.119:72; Pr.1:5; Pr.17:28).

16. We should have a big appetite for God.

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life, he who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away" (Jn.6:35, 37).

17. We need to believe in the fact that God wants us to prosper and succeed in our ministry.

God did not call us to ministry so that we can fail, but that we may succeed in building His Kingdom. Failure is not God's will for us and our ministry (Ps.84:11; Mt.7:11; Jos.1:7-8).

18. We should treat ourselves with respect.

God has made us special and unique in our own way, so we should not belittle ourselves in anyway. Therefore, we should give some time and attention to our own personal growth and development. Invest in books, seminars, good clothing and other things that will increase our confidence and sense of worth. The better we treat ourselves the better we will be treated by others (Mt.19:19).

19. We ought to choose our friends and companions with great care.

The people we associate with will unleash our vision or kill it. Learn to choose friends well and discern the motives behind their friendship. A friendship can be built on good mutual interests or it can be built on mutual problems. It takes wisdom to know the difference.

We should have two (2) types of friends:

- a. Those that can build us and help us to become what we were meant to be.
- b. Those that need our ministry and are willing to respond to it.

We need friends to whom we can minister, with whom we can share or who can minister to us. We do not need friends who destroy what we are or can be (Ps.119:63; 1Co.15:33; Pr.17:17).

20. We should spend time with wise people.

Learn from those who have succeeded before us and have something positive to offer us. Appreciate their success and let them help us to succeed in life.

We should learn to be comfortable with God's blessings. There are many people who do not know how to live with success. They let it go to their heads instead. Listen to the counsel of the wise and the learned. Absorb their wisdom to improve ourselves and become a better person (Pr.13:20; Pr.11:14).

21. We must be willing to grow to a higher spiritual level.

It takes work and discipline to grow to higher levels of spiritual maturity. It takes proper nurturing and caring to become what we are meant to be. It takes time to grow into full stature. There are no shortcuts in the things of the Spirit (Lk.2:52; 2Pe.3:18).

22. It is our place of service to help others to succeed.

One of the characteristics of Jesus was that He helped other people to realize their dreams. He made a success of others. He was not selfish, but a success-maker. We need to learn to do the same. We need to help and bless those who come into our lives. We need to use our material things and our expertise to help others to succeed in their dreams and pursuits.

God wants us to be involved in the needs of others. The Bible says that we should do to others what we wish done to us. Be a person of compassion, a person who brings hope and love to others.

When the widow fed the prophet, God fed her. God wants us involved in the needs of others. When we help others without wanting anything else in return, God helps us in return. He has assured us a guaranteed harvest: What we make happen for others, God will make happen for us (Ep.6:8).

23. It is necessary to discipline our tongue.

We are to learn how to use our tongue because it is one of the most powerful forces in the world. It can build or destroy, mend or tear apart, bless or curse, give life or death (Pr.18:21).

We should use our words to encourage and build confidence in others; not to slander or criticize. To control our tongue is to control our very life. It is good to ask God to set a watch over our lips (Ps.141:3). Be a person of integrity, keep other people's confidence and beware of speaking carelessly.

In all our undertakings let a reasonable assurance animate our endeavours; and remember that if we despair of success we cannot hope to succeed.

Do not terrify the soul with vain fears; neither let the heart sink because of the phantoms of imagination. Remember that as fear invites failure, so he that hopes helps himself. If we believe a thing is impossible, our despondency will make it so; but, if we persevere, we will overcome all difficulties.

In all our desires, let reason go before us, and do not set our hopes beyond the bounds of probability; so shall success attend all our undertakings, and our heart will not be vexed with disappointments.

24. Wise sayings can guide us.

Following are some wise sayings about four (4) subjects. They may help us to become all we should be.

- a. Power can be a corrupter.

Power will intoxicate the best hearts, as wine the strongest heads. No man is wise enough, or good enough to be trusted with unlimited power.

- b. Prosperity is for us.

Prosperity too often has the effect on a Christian that calm, at sea, has on a Dutch mariner, who frequently, it is said, in those circumstances, ties up the rudder, gets drunk and goes to sleep.

- c. Success is available to us.

The men who try to do something and fail are infinitely better than those who try to do nothing and succeed. To give ourselves a reasonable prospect of success, we must realize what we hope to achieve; and then make the most of our opportunities.

- d. Time must be measured correctly.

It is not so much the hours that tell, as the way we use them. Life must be measured rather by depth than by length: by thought and action, rather than by time.

G. Preparing Leaders.

God always prepares any person whom He will use in any area of ministry. For a leader to function effectively for God, he has to be willing to pay the price of being made ready for the work. God prepared leaders in the Bible before they began to do their area of ministry work for the Lord. Each was trained differently, with some requiring longer periods of preparation. God has a specific preparation for each of His leaders, tailored to the work they are to do.

Preparation is to make something ready to function properly. To prepare includes several meanings, such as: “to provide properly for, to foresee problems, to predispose a certain reaction, to rehearse ahead of time, to train for a specific task, to cultivate for fruitful reproduction, to mellow and mature the character of, to arm with the necessary weapons of warfare.”

1. There is a preparation in nature.

The wild animals instinctively prepare their food for winter by gathering food during the harvest seasons. The ground is prepared by nature and the farmer to bring forth fruit. Rains and snow and the sun help to prepare the soil for its next cycle of life and reproduction. Stones are prepared by nature in rivers. They are tossed and turned by the flowing stream until they are smooth.

God in the same way prepares us for the things that seem impossible. David was faced with the humanly impossible task of slaying the giant, Goliath (1Sa.17:35-50). When David approached Goliath, he

stopped by a stream and carefully chose out five smooth stones, one of which would find its place in the forehead of the giant. David merely used a smooth stone which nature herself had prepared, and which the anointing that was upon him powered it through the giant's helmet of metal to bring him down.

2. There is a preparation in craftsmanship.

Technical occupations require a certain level of technical training. Mechanics are trained to quickly grasp the relationships in a complicated diagram. They have to understand how the chemical, mechanical, and electronic component systems work together. These professions require education and training, and updates.

A general practitioner in the medical field spends at least eight years in university training. No person would go to a quack doctor, who was not trained well. So it is that we should have seasons and years of preparation for spiritual ministry unto the Lord and His people in the school of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

The clay and the potter illustrates the principle of preparation in craftsmanship (Ro.9:20, 21; Is.45:9, 64:8; Ep.2:10; Je.18:14; 2Ti.2:2, 21). The clay and the potter receives much preparation before there can be produced beautiful works of pottery. Clay must be: dug from the ground, washed and soaked in water, smitten or thoroughly worked by the potter's hands, investigated for air bubbles by a thin wire, centered on the wheel for shaping, stretched and pulled up and down to be molded seamlessly, set aside on the shelf to dry and harden, and undergoes firing in the kiln to develop ceramic qualities. God does these same steps to prepare each of His ministers.

3. There is a preparation in Scripture.

God demonstrates this principle of preparation in the Word. Scripture describes what must be prepared to fulfil its individual specific purpose. Following are many principles that God uses to prepare leaders for effective service.

- a. There is the preparation of a habitation for the Lord (Ex.15:2; Ps.107:36).
- b. There was a preparation of offerings for the Tabernacle of Moses (Nu.15:3-12; 23:1-2).
- c. There was a preparation of the people to pass over the Jordan (Jos.1:11).
- d. There is the preparation of a man's heart to seek God (1Sa.7:3; Ps.10:17).
- e. There was the preparation of materials for Solomon's Temple (2Ch.2:9; 1Ch.22:3-14).
- f. There is the preparation of the ant for winter (Pr.30:25).
- g. There was the preparation of the way for the Messiah (Is.40:3; 62:10; Mt.3:1-3; 11:10).

- h. There was the preparation of the Levites (2Ch.35:10-20).
- I. There is the preparation of the horse for battle (Pr.21:31).
- j. There is the preparation of an honourable vessel (2Ti.2:20-21).
- k. There was the preparation of the Messiah's natural body (He.10:5).
- l. There is the preparation of the Bride of Christ (Re.19:7, 21:2).

Here we see the importance of preparation. All that God will use must go through God's process of preparation. The Church greatly needs prepared and trained spiritual leaders. The Church does not need mainly "degreed" people, however; she needs those who have been trained and prepared by the lord. The Church needs those who have been shaped and fired to be turned into godly leaders.

- 4. There is a season to every preparation.

Paul tells us that all future leaders had to be first proven or investigated (1Ti.3:10). In the leader's salvation, the call to ministry is as a seed that is planted. In the leader's call, it is a ministry sprouted. In the leader's preparation, it is as being tested as a plant. In the leader's function, it is as a fruit bearing tree that has matured.

All leaders are at some point in these four (4) steps. There is a maturing in the Lord from salvation to physical death. Some never mature past salvation to identify or fulfill their calling in the Lord. Others identify the call, but do not prepare for their part of Jesus ministry. Others may receive their call and begin preparation for the work, but fail in the process. Also, some leaders die in the wilderness while being developed.

Isaiah gives us a picture of this preparation (Is.49:1-3). The prophet gives a word that applies to all who are the Lord's servants, and even to the Messiah. Following are five (5) points about preparation.

- a. A sense of destiny was on Isaiah, since God's calling was evident from his mother's womb.

Our purpose is determined before birth. God's leaders have been called from the womb to fulfill a purpose in the Lord. The Lord Jesus Christ was called from the womb with a specific purpose for His life (Is.7:14; 9:16; 11:1-3). We as believers are called from the womb and destined a particular task in life (Ep.1:4-5; 5:25-27; Ro.8:28-29; Ep.3:1-10). Every servant of the Lord must determine that they have heard the call of the Lord.

- b. Each of us has a ministry in the Word.

The Word of God is spoken of as a sword in the Epistle to the Ephesians (6:17). The Word cuts down to the intentions of the heart (He.4:12). A leader does not use this sword to injure the people of God. The

Lord makes the leader's mouth as a sharp sword, but it does not bring death to the Church when the leader speaks. John's vision on Patmos tells of the Lord Jesus with a two-edged sword coming forth from His mouth (Re.1:10-18). Jesus never used this Word in His earthly ministry to destroy or condemn people beyond redemption. Every leader must use God's Word for edification and not destruction (Ep.6:17; Pr.6:2; 18:21; Mt.10:34; Re.2:12; 19:13-15; Is.51:16; Ro.3:10-14).

c. There is a time of being hidden.

During the time of training, we are hidden from the eyes of the world, and even from the eyes of the Church. Moses was hidden forty years on the backside of the desert before he led his nation forth from Egypt. The Lord prepared a shepherd's heart in Moses during this time.

The leader is hidden under the shadow of the wings of the Almighty (Ps.chp.91). It is in that secret place of preparation that we must abide without a spirit of impatience or distrust. Jesus was “. . . under the shadow of the Almighty” for thirty (30) years until His unveiling at the River Jordan. Moses, David, Elisha, Jesus, Paul and many others experienced this period of overshadowing.

Some leaders chaff under this time, while others are taking advantage of it. Every servant of God should learn well during this time. All leaders must come under the hand of the Lord through governmental ministries in order to be trained properly. These ministries provide covering, protection and preparation.

d. The shaft of the arrow must be polished before its use.

The shaft is a very important component of the arrow. If is warped or misaligned, the arrow cannot hit its mark. Crooked shafts render an arrow useless. Also, an arrow has little value when hitting the mark with a dull point. Both the shaft and arrow head are of equal importance. The shaft speaks of the character of a servant of the Lord, while the head speaks of his ministry. Both the character and the ministry of a servant of God must be properly prepared.

To "polish" is “to clarify, to examine, and to purge so as to brighten.” God made Isaiah a polished shaft. He had to undergo the purging, sanding and polishing process which plays a role in producing an arrow that will hit the mark.

The steps in the preparation of a natural arrow speak of spiritual truths in the process of preparing a leader. The lord takes every leader through a stripping process before He uses him to hit the mark for which he was prepared. Every leader will experience character preparation, the straightening of the shaft, and ministerial preparation, the sharpening of the point. This can be a very painful and long process, but every leader who is going to be used to any measure will have a more demanding preparation.

e. There is a quiver experience for leaders that is usually very hard, as the leader feels they have gone totally through the progressive steps of preparation.

This is especially hard for ones who have endured bitter experiences successfully. This is a time of learning patience. The quiver is a place of preparation as the sanding block, and is an important part. God has a perfect timing when, as an arrow; he is shot forth to hit the mark that God has ordained. Jesus was shot forth "in the fullness of time" (Ga.4:4). He came to earth in the perfect moment of history. He had been waiting for at least four thousand (4,000) years to be sent to the earth. He waited patiently for the moment at which He would be revealed in human space and time.

So it was with Moses. He tried to release early, and killed the Egyptian. It was not the perfect time for him to be revealed as Israel's great spiritual leader, so he had to be in the desert another forty years.

David was destined to be king of Israel, anointed for the job at the age of seventeen (17), yet did not receive the throne until he was thirty. Several times David could have killed Saul to gain the throne by natural means, but the Lord gave him the grace to know that it was not yet time.

God has a special season of hiding His leaders in the quiver and revealing them at His timing. Pressures come to every leader urging him to go ahead of God's timing. There is no detailed, set pattern for every leader to follow in his release into ministry. The timing and manner of release is different for every leader.

5. The preparation for all of us never ends.

We should be relieved to know that we do not have to reach complete maturity in a moment, or in a short time. If we think we are nearly prepared or even fully prepared to be a leader, we need to be challenged by the lives of Joshua and Samuel. They continued growing into their ministries. So it will be with every one of God's leaders.

WHAT MAKES MINISTERS FALL INTO SIN?

Sometimes, in spite of the sureness of the call of God and in spite of the best intentions or of the person, one in ministry may fail. Not all ministries that have fallen have done so for the same reasons, but there is a common trend. It seems as if the enemy has an established pattern that he is using against God's servants.

The three (3) major weapons that the enemy uses to bring about their downfall are power, sex, and money. We can see this in the love of women in Samson, David, and Solomon who were victims of this. We see this in the love of money, whereby Judas sold Jesus for money. And, we can see it in the thirst for power and fame, of which King Saul was a victim.

These three (3) areas open the door for destruction.

We are warned, "*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world*" (1Jn.2:15-16).

Unfortunately, none of us is immune to these three (3) destructive forces. God may have a special calling upon us, but unfortunately God's anointing does not make us immune to temptations. One has to exercise self-discipline to resist the enemy.

A. What is Lust?

Lust occurs when one focuses an obsessive passion on a particular object such as food, alcohol, money, entertainment, power, or clothes. The object itself may not be evil but the strong obsessive drive makes the object a tool of lust. It is not the intensity of the desire that makes lust evil. One may have a strong desire to serve the Lord or help others.

Lust is not evil because it is sexually oriented. One can have a healthy sex drive towards his mate. Sexual desires and lust are two (2) completely different things. Lust occurs when one entertains sexual drives or thoughts that violate God's Word.

Lust is evil because it is obsessive and controlling. It makes one become preoccupied with thoughts or activities that are not wholesome. Lust never satisfies. It keeps on wanting more and more, leading to frustration and selfish acts. It enslaves the victim, making him continually wanting more and never being satisfied (Php.3:19).

B. Sexual Sins

When one becomes a Christian, one of the requirements in his daily walk with the Savior is to observe Christian morals as recorded in the Scripture. Sexual immorality is one of these requirements. When a believer endorses any act that encourages sexual immorality, he directly attacks God's holy character.

Sexual immorality is one of the fruits of paganism and demonic religions. When allowed and tolerated in the holy Body of Christ, it becomes a contradiction of what the church is all about. We, as Christians, need to raise the standards of the church according to God's standard in order to effectively impact our world for Jesus. We need to be careful what we allow into the church. Anything that is a contradiction to God's Word should not be entertained. By no means should we allow our own lusts to lower God's standards (Pr.6:27-29; Pr.6:32-33; Ep.5:3-5)

A man of God categorizes ministers into five (5) categories concerning this subject:

1. There are ministers who rarely, if ever, experience a strong pull into illicit sexual relationships.
2. There are those preachers who experience this great temptation but manage to struggle and succeed against it.

Some of the greatest men of God who have ever walked the face of the earth have lived in constant battle with a raging imagination on fire toward sexual sin, like an impatient volcano straining to erupt. Some mistakenly believe that God's presence prevents you from ever having these desires.

3. There are those who struggle, but lose their battle continuously.

These men will weep, sob, and cry over their sin. They over-schedule themselves, fast and pray, but for some undiscovered reason they continue falling periodically into sexual sin. Yes, they seem to love God. They love the ministry. So what is wrong? Most likely there is imbalance in their life and they need private and personal counseling. They likely need to seek professional help. There's more to it than just "praying through."

4. There are those who do not struggle, but willingly and foolishly abuse the extended mercies of God.

They say that Aeverybody has a weakness. This just happens to be mine. God understands, and He will forgive me." They mistake His mercy and anointing for approval, but God is always going to be Judge (Mt.7:19-21).

5. There are those preachers who honour holy living but secretly fear the possibility of yielding to temptation in a moment of weakness.

A host of preachers are in this category. God will not let us fall if we continuously build spiritual habits such as reading the Word, intercessory prayer, continuous praise, and keeping our conversations clean. We will always move in the direction of our strongest emotion or thought. We must stay broken before the Lord, for He is our source of strength and He will be our Keeper.

Few Christians set out wilfully to commit a sexual sin. In fact, many of our Christian leaders are stunned to find that sexual sins over which they thought they had power and control could so quickly bring them down!

Sexual drives can overpower anyone regardless of whether they are believers and/or are Spirit-filled. All normal human beings, regardless of their sex, occupation, or religious beliefs, are subject to the same carnal desires in different ways. Christians have the same make-up, thus face the same temptations as others. In addition, Satan works extra hard to tempt strong believers. He knows that their downfall will affect more people and give him more publicity.

Unfortunately many Christians are woefully ignorant about their sexuality. They are not aware about their sexual make-up and how to handle themselves in these matters. They become easy prey to situations that they could otherwise escape if they knew how (Ho.4:6).

C. Spiritual Adultery

One man of God wrote that: "I believe that the first and greatest cause of sexual adultery among well-meaning Christians is spiritual adultery...Spiritual adultery can be defined as any time married persons share with someone else what ought to have been shared first or only with their own spouses."

Here is a good outline on the common symptoms of spiritual adultery:

1. This is the tendency to share private, intimate matters with friends, or a certain friend, before having talked it out with the spouse.

2. It is spending inordinate amounts of time with one member of the opposite sex, i.e., catching yourself inventing unnecessary reasons to work alongside that partner in the Gospel.
3. It is finding more delight in being with some other person than with your spouse.
4. It is beginning to think that some friend understands you better than your spouse; therefore you want to talk with that one, but cannot communicate as well at home.
5. It is an unwillingness to hear the warnings of others. You stubbornly maintain that this is a platonic relationship and are wounded that others cannot see that; they seem unwilling or incapable of trusting you.
6. It is feeling youthful or “high” around one particular person who is not your spouse.
7. It is being led into divisiveness. Your heart, once engaged in spiritual adultery, will find reasons to disqualify your wise friends' warnings, and to listen to the unsound advice of fools. You will begin to alienate yourself from your longtime friends and find new ones who may seem better to you but are actually "yes people" who will let you go down the drain.
8. Here are some important points to ponder.

- a. We have to realize that ministers of the Gospel are human beings just like everybody else.

They have sexual drives like other people. The big difference is that other people may acknowledge their desires and lusts and either fulfil them or receive counseling. The minister, in most cases, is afraid to seek help. He is afraid of being misunderstood or talked about. He suffers a slow spiritual death with nobody to turn to.

Lacking understanding about their biological make-up, some ministers are so naive that they blame their sexual desires on the devil. They really never deal with their problems directly and realistically.

- b. We have to understand that not all sexual sins are initially rooted in lust.

Some lust develops out of normal relationships. For example, a pastor may start counseling a "sister in the Lord," who may be having some marital problems or going through hard times. He spends time listening to her problems. He takes time to give her comfort or to show her compassion, and gradually all these lead to emotional bonding which can eventually lead to an illicit sexual affair. What started as a good ministry turns to be a sour nightmare.

- c. Some spiritual leaders fall for lack of accountability.

Everyone around them looks unto them for leadership, yet they, in turn, have no one to answer to. No one questions what they do. They become their own law and, soon enough, they become victims of their own success. They justify their desires in one way or another. They adjust God's Word to suit their life-style and rationalize their infidelity. It is very dangerous for any leader to surround himself with Ayes men." Such a leader is blind and on the road to destruction.

- d. There is a moral crisis in ministry.

One man of God made the observation that, “without question, we are experiencing a moral crisis in the ministry, but moral failure need not be inevitable. Victory, however, does not lie in denying our humanity. Repression does not work. Our sexual drives, our belonging needs, and even our ambitions are an intrinsic part of who we are. Destroy them and we destroy a part of ourselves. Repress them and they will eventually manifest themselves, usually, in inappropriate and unacceptable ways. Our only hope is to surrender our humanity to God, allow Him to redeem it; that is, channel it into appropriate areas of fulfillment. We can live a victorious life, but in order to do so we must accept the Lordship of Jesus Christ, live and minister under accountability, and establish appropriate guidelines before we have become so emotionally involved that rational thinking has been replaced by passionate rationalization.”

e. The more respectable and successful a leader is, the harder it is for him to confess his sins to the public.

There is too much at stake; his reputation, his self-respect, his success and his ministry. Deep inside, he knows he has failed God and that he is not being truthful to others, but how can he confess the truth and disappoint all those who hold him in high esteem, so, he fights a losing battle, because he is fighting alone. He spends nights and days in prayer hoping that somehow things will change for him one day. He continues to serve the Lord because that is what is expected of him, but deep inside, he is a failure, a lonely man who is desperately crying for help.

f. A healthy marriage can greatly help to minimize the impact of the many temptations that a minister of the Gospel encounters.

When his spiritual and emotional needs are met in his relationship with the Lord, his wife and family, he can minister effectively without becoming an easy prey to those who want to seduce him. When a minister has his needs well met, he will not be easily tempted to use his ministry for selfish gain. He may be tempted but he will have all the more reason to resist the enemy. When a minister has recognized his propensity for failure, he can protect himself more effectively than one who is ignorant of his limitations and shortcomings. It is a fact that any minister is capable of falling into sexual sin, given the right circumstances. Those who deny their sexuality and humanity set themselves up as easy prey for the enemy. If not careful, they will fall hard over and over again (1Co.10:12).

g. Avoid pornographic materials.

Pornography is like alcohol, it is addictive. If we are involved, admit the problem and seek some professional help. Keep in mind that sometimes sexual compulsions can have roots in the powers of darkness. In such cases, deliverance is necessary.

h. Some sexual sins and dysfunctions can be inherited.

Many who come to us caught in addictive and compulsive sexual behaviour were found to have parents and grandparents who also suffered sexual dysfunctions, sinful behaviours, and detrimental attitudes and theologies. Sexual problems are inherited in the same three (3) ways other problems are:

- 1) Through the genes, physically, by inheritance of propensities to think and feel and act
- 2) By modelling
- 3) By the law of sowing and reaping (Ga.6:7).

The three (3) are usually aggravated by the presence of familiar spirits, appointed by Satan to watch over families to impel them into whatever weaknesses may present opportunities. Counselors should routinely check histories when ministering to sexually entrapped people.

i. Many factors contribute to sin.

We have to realize that many factors our lifestyle, our self-image, our relationship with spouses, or our work habits, can contribute to adultery or similar sins. One should not blame the devil or biological makeup but take a serious look in his own personal life, both and spiritually.

j. A minister should be very careful about what kind of television programs he watches.

This would also include what he reads, what kinds of friends he keeps and what kind of places he goes to for recreation. All these can contribute something vital to either his success or failure.

k. Why do the prayers of such men and women fail?

Why are they unable to find easy release from sexual drives through talking it out with God? What causes them and so many times some of us as well, to fall back under the Law? The rule is that where major malformed roots in childhood have been healed, Christians can normally take improper desires and impulses restfully to the cross. All of us are occasionally subject to sinful impulses. We can usually easily "reckon" such things as dead (Ro.6:11). But the corollary rule is that whenever unhealed roots of sufficient corruption lie beneath the surface, perfunctory normal prayers and reckoning cannot successfully bring sinful sexual urges to death on the cross.

Unhealed factors in the heart continually and insistently resurrect sinful passions and practices, which then demand expression. So the Christian prays harder, trying to control his mysteriously mounting urges. But that is like trying during a rainstorm to dry up a river with a teaspoon! His prayers won't stop his passions.

The battle seems to be all his own, without the help of the Holy Spirit. Satan takes advantage and adds to his struggle. Increasingly frequent failures and consequent stresses then throw him into a frenzy of fleshly striving to control himself. Grace is there, but to him it is gone. He is now caught in a dynamic of ever-accelerating suppression and expression under the Law, leading to eventual explosion!

l. Sexual temptations flourish best when they are kept in darkness and in secrecy.

No one can ever have victory or help as long as he denies or refuses to acknowledge his spiritual problems.

Some leaders will feel that confession would be too much of a risk to take, especially if they are married and have children. They are afraid of the effect it could have on their marriage or their church. Instead, they choose to suffer a slow spiritual death struggle with their guilt and shame.

It is almost impossible to overcome sexual sins without the support of a spiritual brother or sister. This is especially so when dealing with private and personal sins such as pornography or masturbation. Unless

they admit, confess and seek some spiritual counseling, they will never have victory. They will remain in bondage (Ja.5:16).

D. Desire for Wealth (Covetousness)

Covetousness is sin (1Ti.6:4-5; 1Ti.6:10-11). Usually covetousness is a result of insecurity and lack of trusting in God's provision. The only cure for this problem is learning to give to God and His work (Lk.6:38). This subject will be dealt with extensively in the chapter on finances.

E. Ambition, Power, and Pride

Many ministries are ruined by the power of their own success. History is filled with examples of brilliant men and women, even godly people, who were corrupted by the deceitfulness of power. It has been said, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

We remember that God did not want the children of Israel to have a king. God was concerned with their well-being. A king usually has absolute power with no one to answer to. No human being is capable of handling absolute power. History is filled with examples of bloodshed and human injustice caused by kings and rulers who had absolute power without accountability. Following are Scriptures that address positions and how they are to be approached (Ti.1:6-7; Php.2:3; Pr.27:2; Ro.12:3; Ezk.28:17; Pr.16:18; Ps.35:13).

F. Spiritual Immaturity

Younger ministers would do well to be especially wary of these traps. Satan is eager to ensnare those who are idealistic and inexperienced. Paul's admonition to Timothy speaks clearly to them (1Ti.4:12, 15-16).

G. What Ministry is All About

We need to have a new perspective of what ministry is all about. Ministry is not necessarily what we do for God, but how we live for Him. It is based on our character and not on our accomplishments. Some ministers are so concerned with their productivity that they overlook working on themselves. We live in a world that cares more about the products than the producers.

Our major goals as God's servants should be inner purity, walking in obedience and faithfulness to God's Word. God's desire is for us to portray His love and holiness to the world and not just preach religious messages.

If indeed we want to succeed in our ministry and see the glory of God manifested through us, we must surround ourselves with good brothers and sisters with whom we can have intimate fellowship and who will hold each other in accountability; people who can correct us if we go astray or encourage us when we grow weary; who can provide guidance as well as social, emotional and spiritual support (1Ti.1:12-17).

H. Characteristics of False Ministries

1. They may come to us disguised as angels of light.

They may claim to have special, deep revelations from the Lord. Usually the so-called Adeep revelations" are a result of twisting and misquoting Scriptures (2Co.11:13).

2. They attack and even falsely accuse other ministers who do not agree with them.

They especially speak against the local pastors (He.13:17; 2Ti.3:6-7). They usually have an unteachable spirit. They have little or no respect for spiritual authority, and will have a rebellious spirit (1Sa.15:23).

3. They will claim to have been sent by the Lord to bring a special message.

They will expect you to support their ministries and meet their needs. They are always on the move, going to new areas where people do not know them. They also may have signs and wonders, but will be without the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Mt.7:15-20; Ga.5:22-23; Ex.7:10-12).

4. False ministers usually have no commitment or affiliation with any local church.

These people will drift from one congregation to another 1Jn.4:1)

III. CHURCH DISCIPLINE

A. The Meaning of Discipline

The word "discipline" means "to correct, to mold, to train, to punish, to inflict pain or a penalty."

Without question, the New Testament teaches discipline. Discipleship is impossible without it. It ranges from self-discipline to Church discipline, from exhortation to excommunication. There are seven (7) points about church discipline that we should notice:

1. The Word tells us that we are our brother's keeper (Ga.6:1-2).
2. The Word says that "*...none of us liveth unto himself...*" (Ro.14:8). Sometimes people will tell us to mind our own business and not meddle in theirs, but the fact is that our brother is our business as a member of God's family.
3. God is holy.

Scripture plainly says that God is holy and sin is not an insignificant thing. The early Church had purity and power, while the Church today basically lacks it.

4. Scripture teaches that sin is contagious.

Discipline is not to divide between the good and the bad, but it is to quarantine contagious sin in order to keep others from "catching it." We are sufficiently alike to make us all susceptible to the same evils, so discipline is restorative rather than punitive.

5. Discipline manifests the fact that a Christian life is a corporate life.

We are all baptized into one body, and when one member suffers, we all suffer. Individualism is the sin of division (1Co.12:12, 23).

6. It shows the mind of spiritual membership that existed in the New Testament.

People became a part of the New Testament Church or they could never have been put out of it (Mt.18:17). People who are merely "members-at-large" of the mystical, invisible, universal Church can never fulfill the pattern found in Scripture. This does not refer to "having a card", rather to "membership" as a hand is a member of the body.

7. It proves the sovereignty of the local Church.

Disciplined people in Matthew 18:17-18 find in the local Church a supreme court on earth. There is no superstructure of ecclesiasticism, district leaders, superintendents, bishops, or popes to which they might appeal. The local Church has its Head in heaven.

B. Discipline is Necessary in the Body of Christ

Discipline is to bring order and harmony in the Body of Christ. Where there is no discipline, there is a lawlessness and confusion (Jg.18:1; 19:1; 21:25). It is to encourage commitment and submission to the will of God and to proper leadership.

Discipline is to discourage selfish acts that harm others. It is to establish security and understanding among the congregation. It is to uphold the moral standards of God in the church. It is to guide to maturity those who are still immature or weak and as a teaching experience.

The main purpose of discipline is to correct and to restore the offender to the faith through repentance. To do this, two (2) important ingredients are necessary: unconditional love, and total repentance by both parties. Unconditional love is not dependent on merits but on acceptance. We are to accept the offender without accepting his offense (Ga.6:1; Re.3:19; Ja.5:19-20; 1Jn.5:16; Pr.10:12).

Discipline can also lead to condemnation or excommunication, but even these extremes lead to restoration eventually if the offender repents (1Co.11:29-32; 2Co.2:6-8, 11).

C. Examples of Discipline

1. In the Old Testament we see examples of discipline.

Adam and Eve were dismissed from the Garden of Eden (Ge.chp.3), Abraham was punished for lying to Pharaoh (Ge.chp.20), Miriam got leprosy for criticizing Moses (Nu.chp.12), Korah and his followers were killed for rebelling against God's chosen leadership (Nu.chp.16), King Uzziah was condemned with leprosy for pride (2Ch.chp.26), and Ahab was rebuked by Elijah for his evils (1Kg.18:18).

2. In the New Testament we see examples of discipline.

Paul reproved Alexander and Hymenaeus for teaching wrong doctrine (2Ti.2:17-26), and the man who was committing incest in Corinth was turned over to the tormenters so that his soul could be saved (1Co.5:5). Paul also condemned those who taught false doctrine and brought about division in the Church (Ro.16:217-18; 1Ti.6:3-5).

D. Offenses That Need to Be Dealt With

Since the Body of Christ is a family, every unscriptural behaviour not only affects an individual but also the whole Body. Any life-style that does not glorify the Lord is an offense to the whole Body and has to be addressed.

When an error is not dealt with by the leadership in a congregation, it affects the spiritual health of that Body because sin is like leaven; it spreads and it is contagious.

Some believers need to be shunned and others sent out of the fellowship. Others need to be charged not to teach, while others need to be delivered to Satan (1Ti.1:20).

1. Those that practice immorality of any kind should be disciplined (1Co.5:1-2, 5).

This includes fornication, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, and moral perversions. The ones who practice the above should be dealt with. If they do not repent, they should be excommunicated and avoided by other believers (Mt.19:5; 5:32; 1Co.5:1-5; 2Co.12:20-21).

2. Those that are given to strong drink and are drunkards should be disciplined.

Paul told the Corinthians to not “...associate with anyone who calls himself a brother and is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat” (1Co.5:11; Ga.5:19; Ro.13:13; 1Th.5:7; Pr.20:1; De.21:20-21).

3. Those with unforgiving spirits should be corrected.

We are told to agree with our adversary who is taking us to court, lest we be turned over to the judge who may have us thrown into prison (Mt.5:25; Lk.12:58).

4. Those that are covetous or greedy should be disciplined.

Peter told us that teachers will try to “...exploit you with stories they have made up” (2Pe.2:3). This is an apparently widespread situation, as many Scriptures deal with it (2Kg.5:20-27; Ac.8:18-23; 1Pe.5:2; Ep.5:3; Ro.1:29; 1Th.2:5; He.13:5).

5. The sorcerer should be disciplined (Ac.13:6-12).
6. Those that bring divisions in the church should be disciplined (Ac.20:28-32; Ro.16:16-18).
7. Those that are disorderly in conduct should be disciplined (2Th.3:6-15; Mt.18:17).
8. Those who abuse authority should be disciplined (1Co.5:11; 1Co.6:10; Mt.23:25; Ps.109:11).
9. Those who speak evil, use abusive language, or are argumentative and scornful should be disciplined (1Co.5:11; 1Pe.3:9; Pr.26:4; Co.3:8; Ep.4:31; 1Ti.6:4).

E. Administering Discipline

1. The offender should be approached in private

First and foremost, the privacy and dignity of the brother or sister should be respected. They should be approached in private (Mt.18:15-20; Mt.5:24; Lk.17:3-4; Le.19:17).

As we, the wronged brother or sister, concerned friend, or pastor, talk with them, remember to do it in love, mercy and sincerity. Accept them as a person and avoid any judgmental attitudes. Be willing to listen to what they have to say. Be honest with them and share with them the truth from God's Word.

2. If there is no reconciliation, then step two (2) should be taken.

If there is no reconciliation after the first step, then we need to take two (2) or three (3) witnesses (Mt.18:16). These could be their personal friends that they have confidence in or they could be other spiritual leaders. In any case, they should be people of integrity and discernment.

The whole idea in step two (2) is to show the brother the seriousness of the matter. The presence and the contributions of these witnesses may influence him to make the right decision (Ga.6:1; Co.3:16; Pr.25:9-12; 1Co.4:14; Ro.15:14).

3. If there is no reconciliation, then step three (3) is to be taken.

The final step, if there has not been any reconciliation, is to take the offender before the congregation. The whole process is directed toward bringing the offender to reconciliation, not to judgment (Mt.18:17; Jn.20:23; 1Ti.5:20; 1Co.5:13). If the offender does not repent, then he has to be rebuked and cut off from the congregation. This is a painful thing to do, but it must be done (1Ti.5:19-21)

In Moses experience, excommunication can actually lead to repentance (Ex.12:15-19). We should also note that sometimes God, in His sovereign power, can administer discipline to the offender (He.12:5; Ja.5:14-16; 1Jn.5:16-17).

F. Who Should Discipline the Pastor or Leadership?

This is a crucial issue because when sin in leadership is not dealt with, it will eventually affect the whole congregation. One thing we need to realize is that leaders are as human as we are. They can fail or fall into sin. However, the difference is, if a leader falls, he can cause more harm or even destroy all the work that he or other ministries have built. His fall can cause a lot of insecurities, mistrust, and hindrance to spiritual growth.

If a leader falls into sin, the issue should, if possible, be handled and settled in the congregation. The congregation should not judge or badly treat their minister. That is God's work (1Sa.26:9-11; 1Ti.5:1, 19-21; Je.23:1-3).

Sometimes God used ministries to deal with ministries. For example:

1. Nathan reproved David for his sin (2Sa.12:7).
2. Samuel, a prophet, reproved Saul, a king, for his sin (1Sa.13:13).
3. The Man of God reproved Eli, the priest (1Sa.1:27).
4. Paul reproved Peter, the Apostle (Ga.2:11-14).
5. Peter, the Apostle, speaks to the Eldership (1Pe.5:1-5).
6. Moses reproved Korah and company (Nu.chp.16).
7. The apostles and elders discussed the doctrinal matters of Jew and Gentile (Ac.chp.15).
8. Prophets were sent to reprove and rebuke kings for their evils in the Old Testament times
9. John, the Apostle, dealt with Diotrephes (3Jn.9-10).
10. Undoubtedly the Eldership tested out the false apostles (Re.2:2).
11. Elders are to discipline other elders when they fall and need rebuke (1Ti.5:19-21).

Eldership comes under great attack, criticism, complaints etc. But if there is a violation of the qualifications of First Timothy chapter three (3) and Titus chapter one (1), then there should be proper investigation by the authority and it should be dealt with. Otherwise, there is loss of respect and authority in the Church. An elder should be rebuked before elders. If it is a public failure, then it should be clarified in the Church. Military leaders experience the great and terrible shame of being "defrocked" in front of their regiment. Elders are to be respected, loved and obeyed, for they are responsible and accountable for the flock of God (He.13:7, 17, 24).

In the New Testament church government, there was always a team of elders who worked together with one elder as the leader, or as we know then, senior pastor. This provided stability, balance, and a proper government in the local church. In this setting, when a particular elder is disciplined, the other elders could fill in. In the case where the senior pastor was set in by an apostle or prophet, then the disciplinary action should be conducted with the help of that apostle or prophet. Denominational churches have their own set pattern of dealing with church discipline.

G. Corrective Discipline of Church Leaders

Corrective discipline protects and heals the Church when a moral breakdown occurs in church leadership.

Paul writes to us in Timothy and Titus about Scriptural standards for leadership which should be the governing policy in discipline of Church leaders (1Ti.3:1-7; 5:17-25; Ti.1:5-9). This is to deal specifically with immorality which defiles the sanctity of the marriage bed. In all of the wiles of the enemy, this probably causes the most serious failure which destroys ministries in the Church. By proper restoration, however; resurrected, and the Church can move back into proper health.

1. There are adverse effects when there is moral breakdown in a leader's life and ministry.

Marital infidelity affects a person, and more especially the ministry, in several areas:

- a. There is a moral effect.

A minister disqualifies himself from ministry and a wife can also disqualify her husband by immoral conduct.

- b. There is a domestic effect.

Elders and ministers are to have their own house in order, lest they fail in ruling the house of God. This involves all family relationships. This is especially true in the husband-wife relationship, which must be rebuilt and restored for family healing to take place.

- c. There is mental and emotional effect.

Deep mental and emotional wounds come from damaged relationships that only God can heal. It takes cooperation with God to bring healing, as in genuine repentance, confession, and reception of cleansing and renewal. There can be no rationalization for sin, as excuses make healing impossible and open the leader to even greater deception and sin.

- d. There are ethical effects.

A leader who has had a moral failure should sit down from public ministry for a period of time. Returning to Scriptural ethics visibly aids in the healing process. This time period of sitting out of ministry will allow for a time of discipline, bringing healing to all involved.

- e. There is a spiritual effect.

Moral breakdown wreaks damage to a public ministry where the leader is held up as an example of a godly lifestyle. Spiritual restoration should be sought out for the good of all concerned.

- f. There is an ecclesiastical effect.

Scriptural discipline must be upheld because the ministry functions before the “called out ones,” demonstrating how to live and has a great influence. We cannot live to ourselves. We affect others, especially true Christian leaders. If we fail to uphold Scriptural discipline at the leadership level, we set a precedent for many moral breakdowns in the body, and the suffering of the Church is magnified. The leader who sins should be openly rebuked so that others may fear. Dealing with these failures scripturally and decisively will cause gossiping and imaginations to cease.

H. Guidelines for Discipline of Leaders

Circumstances and individuals involved are different from case to case. Because of this, the Bible does not give specific and detailed disciplinary measures. However, there are Scriptural, general guidelines. This process must not be pursued legalistically or pharisaical, with a "holier-than-thou" attitude. God forgives completely. God restores, and it is a true restoration. The goal of the Church must be to restore the fallen leader with a “spirit of meekness” (Ga.6:1). It is not good to throw rocks, for we all live in a glass house.

- 1. There must be confession and repentance.

The guilty party must genuinely repent and confess. They must make this confession to all appropriate parties, based on whom the sin affected, and the level of private or public knowledge of the sin.

- 2. There must be forgiveness.

After true repentance, the parties must offer forgiveness to each other. This will involve those directly affected by the sin, as well as any who may suffer reproach as a result of the sin. This could include, obviously, the Lord Himself, family, other church leadership, and the church.

- 3. There should be a time of probation.

The forgiven party should step down from public ministry for a period of probation. This allows for some "rebuilding the walls" that were broken down through immorality. The rebuilding of the marriage relationship will usually take more time than the probation period, usually a half to a whole year. This is God's order for healing, forgiveness, probation and restoration.

- 4. There should be counseling.

The leader on probation should have an effect, ongoing counseling relationship with a counselor who can minister in a restorative manner.

5. There is to be restoration.

The ministry shall be restored to the leadership after a suitable period of probation. There should be evidence of a sound restoration process. There are times when a sinning leader cannot be restored to a ministry office, as in several failures or an extreme depth of deception that was involved. When genuine repentance occurs, restoration of the individual is always Biblical, but this does not always mean the restoration to an individual's ministry. This is an area which requires great sensitivity and discernment of a church leader.

Though the process of discipline may be painful, it is worth pursuing wisely and well. It offers hope to the Church at times when no other process can. God's leaders must use discipline wisely and firmly to guide the Church and help her grow "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." The Church must not lose her salt and light to this world.

As God restores New Testament leadership, we must keep our hearts open to the Lord. God must change our thinking as well as our hearts as He brings us back to Scriptural patterns. God tells us as leaders to allow the Holy Spirit to prepare our inner attitudes, motivations, and thoughts so that we will be prepared for the next great move of His Spirit. God prepares us through tests and trials so He may use us in specific functions. He requires us to obey the Word and be living examples of it, rather than just studying or hearing it.

The issue in preparing Church leadership is not the ability of the leaders, but the ability of the One Who prepares them. If we are called by God to a governmental ministry, we can have confidence in the outcome of the process. We must avoid any digressions and cooperate with the anointing of the Holy Spirit. If we do these things, we will experience the full release of your gifts and ministry; and we will help bring other believers into the same release.

I. Suggestions

A pastor should always have someone he can talk to in times of spiritual crisis. It is important for him to have a body of elders or spiritual peers within the local church that he can be accountable to. He should be surrounded by spiritual men and women that are well respected and spiritually sound. These are the people that would help him make a come back during the time of spiritual crisis. Though it is important to submit to a bishop, overseer, or superintendent, one should always realize that nothing can ever replace a good spiritual friendship or team members.

If a ministry has fallen into sin there are certain steps to take.

1. There should be proper repentance and genuine forgiveness for the parties involved.

2. Proper disciplinary measures should be taken, such as stepping down from public ministry for a while. This time of probation should be looked upon as the time of rebuilding the broken walls and a time for healing, not a period of condemnation or self-pity.
3. There should be appropriate counseling (1Ti.3:1-7; Ti.1:5-9; 1Ti.5:17-25).

Before reading the chapter(s) for this week please click the next button at the bottom right of the page to find the homework sheet for the assigned reading. The homework will aid you in taking the quizzes, mid-term, and final. Complete the homework as you read the reading assignment below.

IV. SPIRITUAL BURNOUT

Some ministries, though they may not actually fail or fall, may find themselves losing momentum, caught in a rut, and seeming going nowhere. Spiritual burnout is one of the top reasons why many ministries are folding up. In a survey among ministers, more than sixty five percent (65%) showed that they were experiencing spiritual burnout.

In our rapidly changing, high pressure society, many people are looking for ways to succeed, to achieve both personally and professionally. Unfortunately, not many of them know how to deal with stress, especially when things do not turn out the way they expected. It is Important for the minister of the Gospel to know how to keep himself healthy and maximize his efforts in order to serve better

A. What is Spiritual Burnout?

A ministry can drain a person physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Unless there is a constant renewal of the ministers being, tragic consequences such as emotional burnout can occur. Our romance with ministry will then wane, and our vision and dreams can dull or die.

Burnout seems to be the fatigue and frustration brought about by dedication to a job, a cause, a way of life, or even a relationship that is not bringing the expected reward. When we do not get what we want or expect, or feel trapped by obligation or economic circumstances, a common response is a withdrawal of energy characterized as burnout.

It is when a person feels as if he has lost God's perspective in life. God's will becomes something in the distance. One somehow begins to be swallowed and overcome by the pressures around him.

It is when one loses the burning fire of his vision for God's work that he loses perspective, becomes frustrated, unfulfilled, and anxious. This is when a person gives up to failure. He becomes discouraged.

Instead of looking to God where his help comes from, he looks to self and to others for approval and reward.

B. Spiritual Explanation

One man of God, speaking about burnout, says:

“We run the risk of experiencing burnout when we try to face the pressures of life without relying on God's grace and power. All of us face problems in life all of the time. The difference lies in how we respond to those problems. If we respond with a self-centered rather than a God-centered attitude, we will end up being that pressure alone and may find that we are unable to stand under it. When we focus all of our attention on the unpleasant situations or the seemingly irresolvable problems we are facing, they will begin to consume our minds, and we will lose the eternal perspective, and we will eventually begin to crumble under the weight of them.”

Just making changes will not solve the problem. You can change jobs, change the town you are living in, change anything and everything, but as long as your centre is wrong, you will just burn out again, only in a new situation.

One of the most common causes of burnout is tunnel vision. You know you have tunnel vision when you get so involved in what you as an individual are doing that you lose sight of the big picture, losing sight of the purposes of God in your life. God has a special plan for your life, but that plan must be seen within the overall purposes of God. If you get tunnel vision, if all you see is your job, your role, your worth, you will soon lose the correct focus and centre of your life and work. You will run out of motivation and energy, and you will be a candidate for burnout. Whatever assignment the Lord has given you in life must be seen from God's eternal perspective. You must see that you are part of a great visitation of God that is covering the earth. The government of God has come and you are His royal representative, and everything you do must be seen in that light.

God wants you to be able to see all of life from His perspective. God has given you an eternal destiny in His Kingdom and if you will put His Kingdom and the rightness of His rule first, you will be able to stay on course; you will know the grace and power of the Lord; you will be guided by the Word of God; the joy of the Lord will fill and strengthen your soul; and you will never burn out. Every day will be a fresh opportunity to serve the Lord and to make a difference in your generation.

C. Physiological Explanation

Stress is the everyday wear and tear on our body. Our body is made to protect, defend, or adapt to any event that might be hostile or threatening. How does it work? The moment we receive threats or we are under pressure, our adrenalin and cortisone begin to pump and our blood sugar begins to rise. Instantly, our body is in a "red alert" position, prepared for action.

Sometimes, as a result of overworking our body physically, emotionally, and spiritually, our body undergoes changes in response to the stress, but the effects are not discharged. They remain in the body. The hormonal imbalances, the abnormal level of blood sugar, the high blood pressure, and the muscular

tension all linger on with undesirable consequences for our health. These symptoms reduce productivity and create a build-up of distress, thus leading towards burnout.

D. Symptoms of Spiritual Burnout

A man of God lists the spiritual symptoms of burnout:

1. First, there is a running out of spiritual resources.

All our formulas for living a successful Christian life and building a successful ministry have failed us and we are left stranded.

2. It is a state of being emotionally and mentally drained.

It is the frustration of not being able to make contact with spiritual energy.

3. There are feelings of being let down by authority figures.

This is when ministry has not turned out as promised, and our experience of the Christian life has not turned out as expected.

4. There are feelings of isolation and loneliness.

These feelings come and we do not dare to share with anyone else our doubts and fears within. These feelings are projected to God as well as fellow believers. The passage dealing with the exhaustion of the "selected young men" is prefaced by a person not able to find God and injustice following them (Is.40:27).

5. There is growing anger toward others.

There comes cynicism, anger, and hostility towards the spiritual condition of other believers, and the backbiting, lack of love and divisions within the Church. There is a despising of those who seem to have a meaningful Christian life.

6. A fall into sin frequently occurs.

Whatever is causing the spiritual exhaustion leaves the believer helpless in the face of temptation from the world, flesh (his own souliness), and the devil.

7. Bored with the present experience of Christianity, the believer turns to some expression of sin to fill the emptiness.

8. There also emerges a belief system that produces masked living.

The only love burned out believers can understand both from God and man is the love which is earned. They dare not be themselves for fear of being rejected. They live by performance both for God and man.

9. There is often rejection.

This will be accompanied by harshness shown toward the burned out believer. One reason for this is that many of the believers who are condemning are themselves in the process of burning out and are facing their own emptiness without answers.

E. Psychological and Social Symptoms

1. The following is a list of psychological symptoms:

- a. Many will feel low self-esteem, feeling that they are useless and no good.
- b. They may lose interest in many things including spiritual things.
- c. They may feel incapable of making decisions on their own.
- d. They may experience some suicidal thoughts.
- e. They experience less concentration or spontaneity.

2. The following are some physical symptoms:

- a. They may experience either sleeplessness or oversleeping.
- b. They may experience loss of appetite and weight loss or sometimes compulsive over-eating and weight gain.
- c. They may experience physical tension, headaches and pains.
- d. They may experience fatigue and increased sickness.

F. Causes of Spiritual Burnout

1. Having wrong beliefs can cause spiritual burnout.

Sometimes Christians can have a belief that God is going to do something in their life or ministry, but when things do not happen the way they thought they would, they get discouraged. High expectations can be detrimental in our faith. This is very much so with the young ministers who enter into ministry with big dreams but have things turn out quite the opposite. We should never be involved in ministry without considering the possibility of set-backs.

2. Building our faith on our works instead of Christ can cause spiritual burnout.

When the results of our ministry are not what we expected, discouragement and a sense of defeat can arise if our self-worth and faith is derived from the success of our performance rather than from Christ.

3. Having our faith in man-made formulas and doctrines rather than in Christ the Saviour will cause burnout.

4. Turning God's grace into law will cause burnout. This can lead to not forgiving ourselves for our mistakes or not being able to accept God's forgiveness.

5. Not having a balanced walk with the Lord will cause burnout.

Sometimes it is possible to "rest in the Lord" so much that we forget that life is also a battleground (2Ti.4:7).

6. Working too hard without rest will tend to cause burnout.

Sometimes we can get so involved with the "battleground" that we forget to rest in the Lord (Mt.9:36; Mt.11:28).

7. Not spending enough time with God to renew our spiritual vitality will bring about burnout.

Sometimes we are more concerned with God's work than our fellowship with Him. Spending time with Him will greatly enhance our spiritual strength.

8. Giving out more than our input will tend to cause burnout.

It is not advisable to give more than we receive spiritually. When we go out to minister to others, we must make sure that we ourselves are spiritually fed also.

9. Spending time with the wrong company will tend to burnout.

Spending time with those who hinder our spiritual growth can be detrimental to our spiritual well being. We should seek to fellowship with those who build our spiritual stamina.

10. Not having adequate fellowship will tend to bring on burnout.

G. Spiritual Recovery

First of all, we must realize that we are God's child (Ro.8:15-17). Because we are His children, we are to accept His unconditional blessing of pardon and peace. We have to realize that we are in covenant (Je.31:33-35).

There is an abundance of God's grace towards us (Ro.5:17; Ro.8:3-4). We have to realize that He is our High Priest (He.4:15), who sympathizes with our weaknesses.

H. Some Practical Counsel

1. Team ministry is a great safeguard against spiritual burnout.

A pastor who works alone is prone to be spiritually exhausted much quicker than one who works with a team of elders.

2. When we are experiencing spiritual burnout, we need to realize that our body needs physical rest.

It is very hard to stand against the enemy when we are experiencing fatigue.

Another way of fortifying ourselves against the effects of stress is through adequate exercise and proper nutrition. Exercise that involves the whole body in a sustained way over time gets the major muscles moving, and blood and oxygen flowing to our body. Besides the physical benefits of more strength, endurance, and energy, exercise benefits the emotions as well. Recent evidence indicates that exercise stimulates the productions of endorphin which act as a natural opiate and alleviates the effects of stress. For best results, we should try to get in three (3) to four (4) sessions a week of continuous movement, brisk walking, swimming, cycling, or gentle jogging. Each activity should be at least fifteen (15) minutes long and should be preceded by stretching and followed by a cool-down.

3. We should seek counsel from experienced ministers.

Do not let your pride hinder from getting help when help is needed.

4. Repent and seek some spiritual help if you have committed a sin of any kind.

5. Be careful how many people are involved in this

Do not involve a number of people in the problem unless God leads you to them or you are sure they can be of some help. Sometimes sharing our problems with people can hurt us and them, too.

6. We should remind ourselves of the special benefits that we have in Christ, as Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus (Ep.1:3-9, 13, 18; 2:6).

BIBLICAL COUNSELING

The Christian counselor seeks to bring people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and to help them find forgiveness and relief from the crippling effects of sin and guilt. Counseling attempts to provide encouragement and guidance for those who are facing losses, decisions, or disappointments. Counseling can stimulate personality growth and development; help people cope more effectively with the problems of living with inner conflict and crippling emotions; assist individuals, family members, and married couples in resolving interpersonal tensions or relating effectively to one another; and assist persons whose life patterns are self-defeating and causing unhappiness. Ultimately, the Christian counselor hopes to help people become disciples of Christ and disciples of others.

A. Counselor/Counselee

Counseling basically is two people, the counselor and the counselee. The counselor must draw from his own training, experiences, and available resources as he seeks to help the counselee deal with his problem.

Too often in secular counseling the counselor is not a Christian. He does not rely on the best resources available in counseling, the Bible and the help of the Holy Spirit. Although the problems that arise in our modern society are not new, they are multiplied. The need for dedicated Christian counselors is great and getting greater.

Some would ask the question, "Why should I become involved in Biblical counseling?" According to the Bible, Christians are to teach all that Christ commanded and taught us. This not only includes instruction in doctrine, but also helping people to get along better with God, with others, and with themselves.

Helping people is not presented as an option in the Bible, but rather as a requirement for every believer. In this sense, any caring, trusted, listening friend may fill the role of counselor for someone needing help with a problem.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "*Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ*" (Ga.6:2). Those who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength, rather than striving merely to please themselves. Paul's compassionate concern extended to those experiencing almost every problem that might be encountered today.

At the core of Christian counseling is the influence of the Holy Spirit. He is described as a Comforter or Helper Who teaches all things, reminds us of Christ's sayings, convicts people of sin, and guides us in all truth (Jn.14:16, 26;15:7-14).

Through prayer, meditation on the Scriptures, and deliberate daily commitment to Christ, the counselor makes himself available as an instrument through whom the Holy Spirit may work in the life of the counselee. This should be the goal of every believer, pastor, counselor, or layman, to be used of the Holy Spirit to touch lives, to change them, and to bring them toward spiritual and psychological maturity.

B. Four Things to Keep in Focus

1. We must focus on the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit should be allowed to work in His own ways without any hindrance. He should not be rushed or limited.

2. We should focus on the power of forgiveness.

The counselee should be made to understand the importance of forgiveness and how they can receive forgiveness of sin through Christ. They must learn how they can forgive themselves and how they can forgive others. Forgiveness is one of the most important spiritual truths, but often ignored.

3. There must be a focus on prayer.

Prayer helps both the counselor and counselee to depend on God. It makes them aware of their helpless need and of God's Divine provisions available to those who seek Him. Prayer makes people more open to God.

4. There must be a focus on God's Word.

Scriptures should be used to bring hope and encouragement, not condemnation. They should be used to reveal God's love, care, and power. Scriptures such as Psalm chapter twenty three (23), Romans 12:2, Philippians 4:6-7, or Matthew 11:29-30 may be appropriate.

C. The Redemptive Names of Christ

The counselor may help the counselee understand that God, as revealed in His names, is concerned with his needs. Following are explanations of the redemptive names of Christ.

1. Jehovah-Shammah

It means "Jehovah (Yahweh) is there" (Ezk.48:30-35). We see the context; especially verse thirty five (35), in which this name appears. The returning captives would find Jehovah there in the city they would build. Whenever we move out in accordance with God's revealed will for us, we find that He Is present and always leading, blessing, waiting for us at the destination we seek to reach.

2. Jehovah-Jireh

It means "Jehovah will see" as in Genesis 22:1-19, and especially verse fourteen (14). This passage and its circumstances, together with the name, is very familiar. Yet, that makes it even more precious, especially for the counselee who is afraid to move ahead in directions that seem too questionable, too threatening, or too difficult for them to do. The God Who provided the lamb for Abraham, Who provided the lamb on Calvary for them, will provide for their needs in this too.

3. El-Roi

It means "the God that seeth" as in Genesis 16:13. The encouraging story that accompanies this name is to bring hope to modern day "Hagar's," wandering alone. This single parent needed help as many today do, being in the lonely places, where danger and uncertainty lurk on every side. God's children are not really alone. God overlooks none; He sees them all.

4. El-Tsur

This means “the Rock” as in Deuteronomy 32:1-43, especially verse four (4). It is to be firm, enduring, protecting as the mountains are around us, all that, and much more is God, the Rock. Time and turmoil cannot change Him as He towers majestically above, often silent, but always strong, He remains the protection and refuge of His own; that's what every counselee needs, a Rock. If he knows Christ the Savior, he has one!

5. Jehovah-Nissi

This means "Jehovah our Banner" as in Exodus chapter seventeen (17), especially verse fifteen (15). Victory is what the counselee needs, victory over their enemies, trials, and temptations. How can they win the battle? One way means to meet the foe when, where, and how God says; using only those weapons that He commands. God marches where His banner flies; His banner flies wherever His command is obeyed.

These names of God, expressing some of the many aspects of His nature, are finally summed up and fulfilled in the name of Jesus, Immanuel, "God with us." Our God, who is a Mighty Provider, gives us His name through which we can face the enemy and rescue the oppressed. This is a powerful truth of spiritual warfare that may be used either directly with the counselee or privately in the prayer closet on behalf of the counselee, as the Holy Spirit directs.

II. Counseling and Prayer

Prayer is one of the most important cornerstones in Christian counseling. Both the counselor and the counselee should spend some time in prayer and be open to the leading and counsel of the Holy Spirit. He will release the transforming power of God to begin working in the counselee.

A counselor can have all the knowledge and wisdom but it is God's Spirit that brings a permanent change and positive transformation into people's lives. Prayer helps the counselor to draw his strength from God. This also releases into operation the gifts of the Word of Knowledge and the Word of Wisdom.

Human counseling is based on human philosophy, techniques, and ways, but Christian counseling is based on God's Word and God's principles, which can only flow through the counselor who has taken on the spirit of humility and prayer.

As the counselor prays, he should expect God to work in the life of the counselee through his counsel. God's work is not limited to our counsel. God is sovereign and He can do whatever He wills without us or our prayers, but it is important that we will seek His ways and seek His counsel. It is encouraging to know that the Holy Spirit can work through us to help someone else.

III. Counseling and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Christ gave us the Holy Spirit to teach and guide us into all truth. Above all, the Holy Spirit is our helper. The counselor should work in partnership with the Holy Spirit because He understands the hearts of men more than we do. He should especially pray for certain gifts to come forth in counseling.

A. Gift of the Word of Knowledge

This is the supernatural ability to receive revelations or facts about a situation or person without the help of the natural mind (1Co.12:8). A Word of Knowledge is only given for a particular situation. For example, one may be counseling and, in a moment, God may reveal the hidden secrets of the guilty party. In many cases the Word of Knowledge will uncover the problems, and the Word of Wisdom provides the solution.

B. Gift of the Word of Wisdom

The Word of Wisdom is special insight given by the Holy Spirit on how to respond to a particular situation or need (1Co.12:8). This gift is supernaturally given by God in a specific situation. It is not something that one can acquire through reading or studying but through the power of the Holy Spirit. After receiving it, one must walk intimately with Christ, allowing the Holy Spirit to take full control so that one can develop spiritual ears to hear what God is saying. This kind of wisdom exceeds man's intellect. It is superior to all the natural wisdom man may possess.

Through the Word of Wisdom a counselor can be more effective.

1. He can receive wisdom on how to speak wisely in a given situation (Lk.21:15).
2. This is to know how to approach a particular situation wisely.

This will help us to redeem ourselves or others from trouble. Sometimes we may be faced with a hard situation for which there seems to be no answers. In such cases, a Word of Wisdom would help (1Kg.3:17-28).

3. This is to understand how to pray or minister to someone, especially in hard situations.

Some people are hard to pray for. We need the wisdom of God to know how to pray and minister to them: otherwise, ministry to them will be of no avail.

4. This is to speak spiritual wisdom beyond natural understanding and limitations to minister to the person being counseled.

C. Discerning of Spirits

This gift is used to distinguish or to give insight into the realm of the spirits (1Co.12:10). It can detect or expose a spirit behind particular activities. It detects the counterfeiting work of the enemy or the interference of the human spirit in spiritual matters. It can also help in discerning the presence or the activities of the Holy Spirit.

This gift of discernment is not a psychic or extrasensory knowledge of the natural mind as some may think. Like every other gift of the Holy Spirit, It is a supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit. With the gift of Discerning of spirits, a counselor can be more effective.

1. We can know how the enemy is operating and his strategy of warfare.

With this gift the counselor can know the enemy's mind, capability and ingenuity, and how to confront him.

2. With this gift, we can detect the spiritual realm.

It is a spiritual “diagnostic tool” that will help the counselor to know when something is wrong spiritually.

3. It will help discern the spiritual condition of an individual, and expose a spirit of falsehood in a person (1Ti.4:1; 1Jn.4:1-3).

4. It can discern afflicting, tormenting, or oppressing spirits.

Can Psychology Help?

Human beings are very complex creatures. There can, therefore, be no guarantee of change even through the intervention of the most skilled counselors. The Christian counselor has an obligation to be familiar with many resources, including psychological research.

During the past century God has permitted psychologists to develop careful research tools for studying human behavior and to publish professional journals to share their findings. Such studies may be helpful

There is a warning that should be considered, however. Although psychological research findings are basically reliable, one must realize that counsel given without regard to Scriptural principles will inevitably fail. A counselor certainly needs a true foundation. Psychology, the study of the psyche, is void without a Biblical foundation.

V. Goals of Counseling

A. Two Goals of Jesus

Jesus had two (2) goals for individuals: abundant life on earth and eternal life in heaven. The Christian counselor has these same ultimate goals. Remember that there are Christians who have eternal life in heaven, but do not have abundant life on earth. We should think of this need while counseling.

B. First Step of Healing

Understanding oneself is often a first step in healing. Therefore, one of the basic goals in the counseling process is to help the counselee gain this understanding.

C. Communication

Certainly a key goal in counseling is communication. In fact, unless there is communication between the counselor and the counselee, there can be little, if any real counseling. Many marriage problems relate to a breakdown in the husband/wife communication process.

D. Support and Encouragemen

Support and encouragement are also essential goals in counseling. When a counselee is going through temporary periods of stress, grief, or crisis, he will benefit from the counselor's support and encouragement.

E. Learning and Behaviour change

Learning and behavior change are components of counseling. Counseling involves helping the counselee unlearn ineffective behavior and learn more effective ways of doing things. Such learning comes from instruction, imitation of a counselor or other model, and the experience of trial and error.

F. Spiritual Wholeness

Spiritual wholeness is to be complete in Christ. It is the developing of one's greatest potential through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Christian counselor guides spiritual growth, helps counsees deal with spiritual struggles, and enables them to find meaningful beliefs and values.

G. Bringing New Hope

Counseling should bring new hope to the counselee, for that is the one thing they are devoid of. Without the replacement of hope that things will be better, there is no hope of the counseling doing any good for the counselee.

VI. Characteristics of Effective Counselors

Counselors who counsel effectively have a personality which is characterized by warmth, sensitivity, understanding, concern, and a willingness to confront people in an attitude of love

Genuineness and empathy are also important. The counselor needs to be a person who is open and sincere, avoiding phoniness. Empathy is an essential characteristic for the effective counselor. This means the ability to "feel" with the counselee. It is an ability to put oneself in the counselee's place and, as a result, understand him better.

The effective Christian counselor loves. This is basic. Along with loving the counselee is the techniques used in counseling. The effective Christian counselor seeks to become proficient in the knowledge and use of basic counseling techniques.

The perfect model one should look to as he desires to counsel effectively is Jesus Christ. While on earth, Christ displayed a beautiful balance of the characteristics attributed to a good counselor. Jesus used discernment, which is essential in considering which approach is appropriate for an individual during a counseling session.

We, as counselors, need to seek wisdom and guidance constantly from our Teacher, the Holy Spirit, as we strive to minister to those in need. Christians may not counsel apart from the Holy Spirit and His Word without grievously sinning against Him and the counselee.

VII. Basic Counseling Technique

Counseling is primarily a relationship in which one person, the counselor, seeks to assist another person, the counselee, with their problems. This process should be characterized by a clear purpose.

Jesus used a variety of counseling techniques, depending on the situation, the nature of the counselee, and the specific problem.

At times He listened to people carefully, but on other occasions He taught decisively. At times He encouraged and supported, but He also confronted and challenged. At times He accepted people who were sinful and needy, but He also demanded repentance, obedience, and action.

A. Giving Undivided Attention

A basic technique is attending or giving undivided attention to the counselee. The counselor can show close attention to the counselee by eye contact, by posture and by gestures that are natural.

B. Listening is required

Listening is a technique which must always be employed. It is one way of letting a counselee know we care. The counselor must hear not only what the counselee says, but also what he is trying to say and what is left unsaid.

It is important for the counselor to wait patiently through periods of silence or tears until the counselee gets enough courage to talk about painful things or until they have time to collect their thoughts.

The counselor must guard against excessive talking and advice giving which prevent the counselee from expressing hurts, clarifying a problem, or sharing all the details of an issue.

C. Responding

A necessary technique in every counseling session is responding. Jesus was a good listener, but His helping included specific verbal responses and actions.

D. Direct the Conversation

Leading is a skill by which the counselor responds in a way that redirects the conversation. We should use brief questions to direct the discussion into a productive course. For example, the question might be, "What did you mean by...?" This is to ask questions that are open-ended, that prompt answers longer than a word or a phrase. Instead of asking, "Did you do the right thing?" ask, "What other ways could you have reacted in that situation?"

E. Reflecting

Reflecting is another way of responding to let the counselee know that you are with him and can understand his feelings. A brief summary of what has been going on can be a way of reflecting. A

summary of feelings or of the general content of the session may help the counselee to better understand what has been accomplished up to that point and establish the fact that we are listening well.

F. Confrontational

A wise counselor is also confrontational. If Second Corinthians 5:17 is true, and it is, we know that we, as Christians, are new creatures, and therefore need to positively act upon this newness by putting off the old man and putting on the new man. If a counselor limits their style of counseling so that they are predominantly reassuring and comforting, they only reinforce the counselee's present behavior. Change is essential and should be a basic goal of counseling. It goes without saying that counseling that does not produce change is ineffective.

The Holy Spirit prompts the counselor on when to listen, when to encourage, and when to confront. Through the skillful art of questioning, one can be confrontational without being too offensive to the counselee through aggressiveness.

G. Ask Questions

Questions require the counselee to explain his thoughts. This requires an expression of feelings and actions without his feeling that he must defend himself. The best questions are those which require at least a sentence or two (2) from the counselee. As an example, "Atell me about your marriage." Avoid questions beginning with "Why," since these tend to sound judgmental. It has been said, "Questions convict the conscience, while accusations harden the will."

H. Informing

Informing involves giving facts to the counselee and is an essential part of counseling. The counselee often lacks the information necessary to work through a crisis or to make wise plans future.

I. Interpretation

Counselors should give an interpretation of what has been said, which is a good response to the counselee. This lets them know our interpretation of what they have said. Keep the terms simple and always present our interpretation as tentative. Always allow time for the counselee to respond. If we see some possible explanation for the counselee's problems, we should ask ourselves if the counselee is emotionally and intellectually ready to handle such an insight.

J. Support and Encouragement

Support and encouragement are important to the counselee. This is especially true at the onset of the counseling process. Support includes guiding the counselee to look at his own spiritual and psychological resources.

All of these techniques are really specialized forms of psychological education in which the counselor is the teacher/instructor. The counselor teaches by instruction, by example, and by guiding the counselee in decision-making as he or she learns to cope with problems.

VIII. Problems Counselors Face Personally

A. Hastiness

Some counselors are hasty instead of deliberate. Counseling cannot be rushed. A relaxed, easy pace makes the counselee feel that there is undivided attention and sincere interest on the part of the counselor.

B. Respectfulness

Some counselors are disrespectful instead of sympathetic. The counselor who does not listen sympathetically and respectfully is unlikely to counsel effectively. Categorizing people and giving a hurried evaluation is not helpful.

C. Being Judgmental

Some counselors are judgmental instead of unbiased. Preaching and condemning do not have a place in the counselor's office. These are not the same as confrontation. Jesus never winked at sin, but he understood sinners and always showed kindness and respect to them. An example of this is the story of the woman at the well (Jn.4:7-26).

D. Directive

Some counselors are directive instead of interpretive. When the counselor feels the need to tell the counselee what to do, the motivation may be the counselor's need to dominate. Such advice given by the counselor may not necessarily be what God would have the counselee to do, thereby confusing the counselee. The goal is for the counselee to mature spiritually and emotionally to the point where he/she can make decisions without the help of a counselor.

F. Becoming Emotionally Involved

Some counselors become emotionally involved instead of remaining objective. There is a fine line between caring and becoming too involved. Emotional involvement can cause the counselor to lose objectivity and this, in turn, reduces effectiveness. Setting limitations on the length and number of appointments can help one avoid this tendency.

G. Defensiveness

Some counselors are defensive instead of empathetic. A counselor may feel threatened at times, and, as a result he may not be able to empathize properly with the counselee. When empathy goes, so does much of our counseling effectiveness. The counselor needs to learn to deal with threats and criticism effectively.

In general, the counselor may avoid many of these pitfalls, as well as others, by carefully attending to the maintenance of his own mental and spiritual health. For the Christian, this is primarily accomplished by relinquishing to the work of the Holy Spirit any attitudes or practices in our personal life that could hinder effective counseling.

The most important concept to keep in mind is that Christ is really the Counselor; we are His agents, representing Him. The Holy Spirit is our Comforter and Guide and will lead us to deliver those whom He has brought to us for help.

H. The Counselor's Vulnerability

Counseling can be very gratifying work, but it is also emotionally draining and hard work. It requires intensity, concentration, and at times, brings feelings of pain. It is always difficult to work with counselees who have a desire to manipulate or frustrate the counselor.

Counselees who attempt to manipulate the counselor have often made manipulation a way of life. Counselors must ask, "Am I going beyond my responsibilities as a counselor? What does this counselee really want?" Manipulated counselors are rarely helpful counselors. Some counselees are masters at getting their own way by controlling others. A counselor must use wisdom to regain control to make sure that the counseling sessions are not misused.

I. The Counselor's Sexuality

Sexual attraction between counselor and counselee has been a problem that almost all counselors have encountered at one time or another. The potential for immorality can be even greater if the counselee is attractive and/or tends to be seductive, is not having emotional and sexual needs met elsewhere, indicates that he or she really needs the counselor, and the counseling involves detailed discussions of sexually arousing material.

1. Spiritual protection is a necessity.

Reliance on the Holy Spirit, prayer, and meditation on the Word of God are crucially important for spiritual protection. The wise counselor makes a practice of not dwelling on lustful thoughts but focusing instead on that which is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and good. Remember, he who thinks he stands should take heed lest he fall.

There is also value in finding another believer with whom we can regularly fellowship or talk about our work and other issues. This role can best be met by the counselor's spouse. This can have a powerful impact on our own behavior. Also, we should never assume that we are not vulnerable to temptation.

2. We must be aware of the danger signals.

We should be aware of clues that can indicate a potential shift from counseling professionalism to a dangerous intimacy. There will be subtle messages of intimate quality from the counselee or internal danger signs that arise within the counselor.

3. External danger signals include several things.

a. Counselees becoming increasingly dependent on the counselor.

In this they are constantly asking for more time and attention than is necessary. The counselee begins to make up excuses and to "cook up" nonexistent problems in order to see the counselor.

b. The counselee is continually and making frequent expressions of appreciation for the counselor.

- c. There are complaints about loneliness by the counselee.

These statements are sometimes accompanied by talk about the counselor's compassion or desires to help ease the pain.

- d. The counselee develops an unusually high opinion of the counselor.

This will be demonstrated in making statements such as "God must have brought you into my life at just the right time. You understand and care for me more than anyone else I know."

- e. The giving of gifts is a sure danger signal.

These often indicate increasing emotional involvement and sometimes create a subtle sense of obligation. The counselor is usually unwise to accept a gift from a counselee.

- f. There should be basically no physical contact between the counselor and the counselee.

This contact often starts with brief touches but moves to more and more physical involvement. The counselee will exhibit typical signs of infatuation, such as longing looks, "innocent" touches, and "unintended" double-meaning words.

- g. There will be other seductive behavior.

This will include such behavior as the type of dress, perfume, way of smiling, and suggestive speech. This should alert the counselor that he is being pulled into a trap. He should seek the means to put it to an end.

- 4. There can be Internal danger signs arising in the counselor.

- a. The counselor thinks about the counselee often between sessions and wants to be with her or him.
- b. The counselor compares the counselee with his spouse, especially in the areas where the spouse is weak.

There may be breakdowns in communication, prayers, and sex life at home which can lead to this.

- c. The counselor may desire to spend more time in counseling sessions than is needed.

The counselor is then using counseling as an excuse to be with the counselee. Sometimes he may even want to be with the counselee in social activities.

- d. The counselor may want to share his own personal problems with the counselee, feeling that the counselee will understand better than his spouse.
- e. The counselor seeking a more convenient place with more privacy is a danger signal.

He begins to make this case more special, and he becomes touchy and sensitive when people begin to make remarks about the counselee. He even begins to isolate himself from his friends and family members to spend some extra time with the counselee.

f. The counselor begins to have strong emotional feelings toward the counselee.

These feelings can easily be mistaken for love towards the counselee. He begins to fantasize about the counselee. He becomes romantically involved in his dreams.

g. It is a danger signal when the counselor becomes insensitive to the warnings and concerns given to him by his friends and family members. He becomes defensive and protective.

h. It is a danger signal when the counselor is fantasizing and daydreaming.

He finds himself calling or writing notes to the counselee. He gets strong urges of wanting to talk with her more and more.

All of these are even more dangerous if the counselor's own marriage has already grown cold or unstable prior to the counseling relationship.

J. Limit Setting

By setting and maintaining clear limits, we can avoid some of the sexual dangers in counseling. The counselor should clearly decide on the frequency and length of counseling sessions, then stick with these limits, refusing to engage in long telephone conversations, being careful to avoid physical contact, and meeting in a place and set themselves in a way that discourages wandering eyes or an opportunity for personal intimacies. It is also important to discourage lengthy, detailed discussions of sexual topics. Avoid every appearance of evil and take care to avoid falling into temptation.

1. When counseling, be pastoral and keep it on the professional level. Be especially careful when dealing with sexual matters.

2. The counselor should free themselves from all improper attachments.

Keep spiritual, emotional, and intellectual distance from the counselee. It may help to get rid of some things that remind us of them, such as gifts they may have given to us. Also try to limit our prayers for the counselee because sometimes this can reinforce our feelings and concern towards that person.

3. Prayer alone may not be an answer to our problem.

We must use wisdom to make proper decisions to protect ourselves from further harm.

4. It is good to work with another counselor to help us with the case.

Stop counseling the counselee alone. In a potentially dangerous situation, team with a member of the counselee's sex. This person may help counsel or just be a witness.

5. It is good to limit our dealings with the counselee to the professional level.

Do not spend more time with them than we ought, especially outside the office.

6. It is good to talk with our spouse.

This would all that can be discretely talked about without breaking confidentiality. We should avoid mentioning names unless the spouse already knows that the person is being counseled by us. Assure her that everything is fine, perhaps hear her thoughts on the case, and spend some time together in prayer for the individual.

7. Put everything in the right perspective.

Do not let one particular case ruin our lives. Reduce its importance and spend more time doing other things. It is good to spend more time with other friends in recreation and do not be afraid to talk things out.

8. The counselor must know when the job is completed.

Do not continue any longer than necessary.

9. The counselor needs someone with authority to submit to.

That someone with more authority than us to whom we can submit to is our pastor. This person should be someone we respect who is available when we need some advice or counseling.

K. Examining Attitudes

Sexual feelings are common but clearly controllable. Remember the social consequences of what might happen. Yielding to sexual temptation can ruin one's reputation, marriage, and counseling effectiveness.

It is also good to remember the theological truth. Sexual involvement outside of marriage is sin and must be avoided. Present circumstances or past influences may make us more vulnerable to temptation, but this does not remove responsibility. Each of us is responsible for our own behavior.

L. Support Group Protection

Effective coping involves honestly admitting the sexual attraction. There can also be value in discussing this with one or two (2) trusted confidants, such as friends or other counselors.

The counselor may discuss the issue with his or her mate. Such a discussion can lead to in-depth marital communication, support, and reassurance if the counselor's spouse is not given to insecurity and unhealthy jealousy. On occasion, the sexual attraction could be discussed with the counselee although this could cause worse problems, especially if the counselee is immature.

M. The Counselor's Ethics

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to God's Word "... *I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you*" (Ps.119:9, 11).

As Christian counselors we accept the Scripture as the ultimate standard against which all ethical decisions are tested. The Christian counselor respects each individual as a person of worth, created by God in the Divine image, marred by mankind's fall into sin, but loved by God and the object of Divine redemption. Each person has feelings, thoughts, a will, and freedom to behave as he or she chooses.

The counselor is to seek what is best for the counselee's welfare and does not attempt to manipulate or meddle in the counselee's life. Many ethical problems arise for counselors concerning issues of confidentiality, such as when a counselee reveals that he/she has broken the law or intends to harm another person, or when a young unmarried daughter reveals that she is pregnant and is planning to have an abortion.

A counselor may also be faced with a confession that a young unmarried man is having sex with several different girls, or when a minister reveals that he is a practicing homosexual.

These situations have no easy answers. While a counselor is to be committed to keeping information confidential, what does one do when the welfare of the counselee or some other person is at stake?

In such cases, the counselee should be encouraged to share information directly with the people involved such as the police, employers, parents, or others. As a general rule, information should not be shared by the counselor without the counselee's knowledge.

A counselor should not attempt to give advice, especially in the areas of medicine or law, which he/she is not qualified to give. Instead, the counselee should be referred to the appropriate professionals for help.

When difficult decisions must be made, it may be wise to discuss the situation in confidence with one or two (2) other Christian counselors and/or with a lawyer, physician, or pastor who can help in the case. These consultations can be done without revealing the identity of the person. It is recommended that one seek the permission of the counselee before taking this step unless the counselee is not in a position to make a decision.

N. The Counselor's Burnout

Counseling is hard work, and constant involvement with the problems and miseries of others is psychologically, physically, and sometimes spiritually draining. Often burnout is accompanied by feelings of futility, powerlessness, fatigue, cynicism, apathy, irritability, and frustration. There are strategies to be followed to avoid this burnout.

1. We need the spiritual strength that comes through regular periods of prayer and meditation of the Scriptures.
2. We need support from a few others who accept us for who we are rather than for what we do.

Each of us needs at least one loving and understanding person with whom we can cry; one person who knows our weaknesses but can be trusted not to use this knowledge against us.

3. Each of us must constantly evaluate the underlying drive to achieve.

We need to remind ourselves that personal worth comes from God and not from the ability to achieve and produce.

4. We need to take time off, regular periods away from demanding people and work schedules.

Jesus did this and so must His followers if we are to remain efficient and capable helpers.

5. We need to improve our ministry skills by learning to manage conflict, to counsel better and to say "No" tactfully.

6. We can share the load by encouraging other believers to be sensitive lay counselors and burden bearers.

The counselor needs to find balance in his or her activities, a time for rest or play, and an opportunity to laugh. Otherwise, life becomes boring, routine and lackluster. Such a life is not pleasant for the counselor, and It certainly does nothing to improve the ability to help counselees cope with the stresses of life.

O. The Counselor's Counselors

The Bible describes Jesus Christ as the Wonderful Counselor. He is the counselor's counselor, ever available to encourage, direct, and give wisdom to human people-helpers. The truly effective Christian counselor is basically a skilled and available instrument through whom the Holy Spirit works to change lives. When the counselor's work brings anxieties and confusion, these can be cast on God Himself, Who has promised to sustain and help. Daily prayer and Bible reading keep us in active communication with the One who is our own adviser and helper.

Throughout the Bible, we see that God also works through other human beings. God helps us, through other people with whom we can share, to maintain perspective, to relax, pray, and sometimes cry. Without the support, encouragement, and viewpoint of a trusted Christian friend, the counselor's work is likely to be more difficult and less effective.

One reason we have many Christians with unsolved problems is because they do not get the right counsel. When they ask for help, many times we only pray for them without making ourselves available to talk and listen and see them through their problem.

I. STEWARDSHIP

One of the major responsibilities that God gave to man after creation was stewardship. Man will be held accountable to God for all that has been placed under his care. God has given to us a life to preserve, time and talents to use wisely, and material wealth to use in serving and worshipping Him

God has placed under our trusteeship material possessions. God owns it all, but by grace has put man in charge. Man is to be responsible and accountable to God. Man is to use material possessions in a wise manner for God's glory, not to abuse it. Man needs to acknowledge the fact that God is the owner of all things and that man is directly dependent on Him.

A. Money

The subject of money is sensitive, but interesting and very important. Our Lord Jesus taught about money more than any other single subject. When we read Matthew, Mark, and Luke we may be surprised to find out that one in every four (4) verses deals with finance in one form or another. In the whole New Testament, one verse out of every six (6) deals with the subject! Almost half of the parables given by Jesus dealt with money in its diverse facets.

Considering all these facts, every Christian should take the subject of finances very seriously. We must study it in the light of what the Bible has to say about it. We must put down our pre-conceived ideas and have an open mind. We will be surprised what we can learn about money.

B. Money is Not a Curse

Many have been taught to believe that money is evil. They need to be taught what money really is and that by itself money is not evil (1Ti.6:10).

It is the love of money that is evil, not the money itself. To the contrary, money is intended to be a blessing.

God blesses His people with finances. His desire is to see His people happy. He also blesses His people with an abundance of wealth so that they can accomplish His purposes in the earth.

There are two (2) things to watch out for: traditional teachings which have greatly robbed believers and left them in rags and poverty: and extreme prosperity messages that have made believers money-hungry. We need a balance. God wants His children to have abundant finances to do His work, but not to accumulate or hoard them. We should watch out for the demon of greed.

As an example, God gave the children of Israel silver and gold from Egypt, but they also willingly gave it back to God to build the multi-million dollar Tabernacle in the wilderness (Ps.105:37).

Abraham was a wealthy man. He used his wealth to serve God. His wealth did not affect his fellowship with God. He was even willing to give his son's to God.

Job was wealthy. Job loved God when he had much and when everything was taken away from him also. His riches never came between him and his Creator (Job.1:3)

David was rich. He was a man after God's own heart. He gave his riches to his son to build God's house. Solomon was rich also. Unfortunately, Solomon, even with all his wisdom, allowed materialism to affect his walk with the Lord.

C. Use of Money

There are the primary purposes for which money should be used, namely:

1. Money is to provide for our needs, such as food, clothing and shelter (Mt.6:26-30).
2. Money is to be used in serving God (1Ti.6:6-8).

Without finances there is little that we can do in the modern world. Finances give us the ability to build hospitals, schools, churches, and many other things. We need money to accomplish our goals.

Giving to God's work and supporting those who labor in the mission field is a tremendous eternal investment opportunity for families and local churches. There are many worthwhile opportunities that families and local churches can be involved in to help fulfill the Great Commission. As believers, we are to share our resources and give our finances to meet the many spiritual and physical needs we have globally.

There are a multitude of Christian organizations that are involved in many different activities such as missions, hunger relief, schools, and orphanages, to name a few. These provide channels through which we can invest our finances and can be a part of what God is doing at home and abroad. If we cannot give our finances to God's work, then something is wrong with us.

We should not be ashamed to acknowledge financial needs for God's work if they are genuine needs. Whatever it takes, God's work must be done.

3. Money is to be used in helping others.

One of the responsibilities that Christians have is to help the poor.

Giving to the poor and caring for the helpless is one of the Christian's basic duties. A Christian who does not feel concerned for those in need around him is not considered to be a true Christian or a good witness for the Gospel. Indeed, our Lord Himself said that if we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, invite in the stranger, give clothes to the needy, care for the sick, and visit the persecuted, we are doing those things to him. There is a wonderful result to being obedient in this (Mt.25:34-35).

When we fail to practice these basic principles, then we are failing the Lord. To those who did not help the poor and needy Christ says, *"Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in."*

4. We are to learn how to spend our money wisely

We are to be a good steward. A good budget will help a great deal. We are not to spend money on things we do not need. It is wise to stay within our means, and not buy or charge things we can not afford.

5. We are to learn how to pray for finances.

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us whatever we ask, we know that we have what we asked of Him (1Jn.5:14-15).

6. We are to avoid ill-gotten gains. We must be a person of integrity (Pr.28:19).

7. Do not be a slothful person.

Work hard and God will reward us. Remember, faith without works is dead (Pr.6:10-11; Pr.20:4, 13, 24; Pr.24:30-31; Pr.18:9; Pr.6:6; 2Th.3:10).

II. HOW TO GIVE TO THE LORD

A wise man once said:

“Charity-giving to the poor is an essential part of Christian morality. No one can settle how much we ought to give. The only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, worries, amusements, etc., is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them.”

The first thing that God requires is our hearts. If our lives are not given to Him, our giving is in vain. Our material giving is an expression of our love towards God, but first, room must be made for Him in our lives (2Co.8:51). We should give freely, lovingly and with a thankful heart.

Another man of God said:

“We need not be afraid of extravagance if to the Lord we are pouring out our lives and our resources. Some people are so afraid of going to extremes that from the outset of their Christian life they can reckon to a nicety how far they should go in the matter of giving. If in the first flush of our love for the Savior we can be so calculating, where shall we be when the glow of our early fire has passed?”

We have freely received, so we are to freely give (Mt.10:8). The proof of our love is in our giving (2Co.8:24)

A. Give Freely

The Scriptures are full of instances of giving (2Co8:3, 12; Ex.25:2; 2Co.9:7; 2Ch.24:10; Mk.14:3-9; Ex.36:3, 7; 2Co.8:2; 2Co.9:13). We must not limit our giving only to ten percent (10%) of our income. We need to give more than ten percent (10%) as a generous giver.

B. Give Regularly

Paul prompted the Corinthian church to have a regular opportunity for the people to give (1Co.16:1, 2).

C. Give Worshipfully

And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us In keeping with God's will (2Co.8:5; Mt.25:40; Ac.10:1-4). Giving is a form of worship.

D. Give Sacrificial

For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability, entirely on their own (2Co.8:3).

We give sacrificially when we give our necessities and not just our luxuries. It means giving our very best and not just what we don't need.

King David understood this, as he replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing" (2Sa.24:24). It is giving to God what we would rather keep for ourselves.

E. Keep It Quiet

We should not broadcast our giving to receive praise. Jesus counseled us to "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven." He went on to tell us to "...give to the needy", and to not "...*announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men*". He tells us that "...*they have received their reward In full,*" but when we do it in secret, we will be rewarded by our Father (Mt.6:1-4).

F. More Than Money

Our giving can also include other things, such as our time, skill, or properties (Pr.3:9-10).

III. TITHING

The tithe is the first ten percent (10%) of our income, which according to the Scriptures, belongs to God. Some teach that tithing was part of the laws that were done away with. This is not true. Notice the following facts.

A. Important Facts about Tithing and Offerings

All believers should tithe on what they are making. They should not wait until they are financially free to tithe (Mt.6:33). We are to be cheerful when we tithe, having a willing heart (2Co.9:6). If we fail to tithe, the Lord will not rebuke the devourer from our finances (Ma.3:8-11).

1. Tithing was instituted in the Old Testament (Ge.14:20)
2. **Tithing was reaffirmed by Jesus in the New Testament (Mt.23:23).**

He commended the Pharisees for tithing and reprimanded them for omitting other important matters. He also corrected them for their hypocritical attitude (Mt.23:23).

3. Tithing was instituted to support God's work and to promote the positive fear of the Lord (De.14:22-23).
4. **Paul taught tithing and giving of offerings (1Co.9:1-14; 1Co.16:1-4).**
5. The tithe has a purpose.

The tithe money should be used in the local church to carry Out God's work. This should include caring for the needy and spreading the Gospel, as well as taking care of God's ministers (Ma.3:10-11).

B. Seven Reasons for Tithing

1. We tithe because the tithe belongs to God (Le.27:30).
2. We tithe because the Word of God commands us to do so (Ma.3:10).
3. We tithe to express our love to God and break the power of a haughty spirit (2Co.8:7.8).
4. We tithe to acknowledge the fact that God owns everything we have, including our money (Ma.3:9).
5. We tithe to break the power of the lust of money in our lives (1Ti.6:10).
6. We tithe to support God's work in the church, putting meat in His House (Ma.3:10).
7. We tithe to enter into partnership with God (Ma.3:10).

IV. FINANCES IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Anyone who receives instruction in the Word is to share all good things with his instructor (Ga.6:6). In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the Gospel should receive their living from the Gospel (1Co.9:14; 1Ti.5:17-18).

The local church is God's treasury. The tithes help support God's work as well as to meet the needs of the people (De.12:1-2; 2Ch.chp.31: Pr.3:9; Ma.3:8-10; Lk.10:3-11).

One of the reasons that some local churches are poor is because they have not been taught the importance of giving. The local church should regularly teach its members the principles of giving and encourage them to give regularly (1Co.16:2). Giving should start in the local church because that is where the spiritual needs of the believers are met.

Some churches don't teach their members to give because their members are supposedly poor. Nothing could be more tragic, as well as not the truth. God has provided all things for us, we just have to give and release His power to bring it to us. Such congregations will keep their members in poverty and ignorance. Giving to advance God's Kingdom helps to break the chains of poverty. Giving is also an important act of worship (Mt.2:11).

A. Practical Suggestions

1. A local church should stay out of debt as much as possible.

It should pay its bills promptly to be a good witness to the world (Ezra.3:7; Ro.13:8).

2. The church should not be begging for money.

A local church should teach the people how to give and then give them that opportunity. The money given should be used wisely to serve God.

3. Every local church should have a qualified person to handle the finances.

The books should always be kept up-to-date and open to leadership of the church. There should be more than one person signing the checks and checking on the outflow of the finances.

4. The local church should build the trust of its people.

It is important to give the people no reason to suspect or doubt the credibility of those handling the finances. There should be no misuse of funds, and any dishonesty should be dealt with openly and wisely.

5. All the members should be taught to be good givers, beginning with the leadership.

The church leadership should set the best example on how to handle personal finances.

B. Staying Out of Debt

A minister of the Gospel should stay out of debt as much as possible. He should spend his money wisely, be a good giver and not a bad spender.

A man of God makes a very interesting observation:

“What a contrast Peter is to Judas! Judas was treasurer for the Twelve, and as he administered the funds he appropriated part of the money for his personal use. Peter might well have improved his own condition in a day when numbers of people were being saved and were selling their possessions for the common good of the believers. But note what he says to the crippled man at the temple gate, *‘Silver and gold have I none; but what I have that give I thee, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk’* (Acts 3:5-6). Let us honestly engage in some secular pursuit if we want to study our personal advantage; but if we want to serve the lord, let us have it settled forever that our concern is the furtherance of the Gospel, not our own advancement.

C. Provision for the Minister

Some congregations underpay their ministers, while others do not pay them at all. It is shameful to see God's servants and their families struggle to make ends meet from month to month, while they have rich members in their churches.

A congregation should make it a priority to pay well those who serve among them, especially their minister. If a minister is poorly paid, his performance will be affected. If he has a family with unmet needs, he will tend to spend more time thinking about them and less time in ministry.

Low pay can cause a minister to have low self-esteem. Low pay can cause a minister to have other jobs aside, thus having less time to do what he is supposed to do. Sometimes low pay can cause the spouse to look for a job elsewhere to bring more income in the family. This can cause stress and dissatisfaction. Thus, low pay can cause a minister to quit the ministry to supply for his family.

If a congregation can afford it, they should do several things for the minister.

1. They should have an appropriate pension plan for their minister.
2. They should reimburse all professional expenses such as using his car for ministry, books, and subscriptions to professional journals and so on.
3. They should have a complete health and disability insurance plan.
4. They should help the minister to improve his professional skills through continuing education.
5. They should give him an ample vacation to renew his spiritual strength.
6. They should give him an adequate housing allowance
7. They should give him a sufficient salary.

In return, the minister should use these privileges wisely as an example to his congregation. He should not live above his means, but prudently. He should stay away from unnecessary debts, have good financial records, and have a good financial advisor.

D. Giving to Other Ministries and Organizations

As a good steward of God's money, one should be careful where he puts his finances. He must not give blindly, but intelligently. It is important for us to do our homework and deliberately decide to what ministries to give.

Here is a checklist that can help us to evaluate the ministry we want to support financially.

1. Are the leaders of the ministry committed to the Lordship of Christ? Are they born-again believers?
2. Are they committed to the teachings of the Word of God? Are they under the authority of Scripture?
3. Does the ministry have a strong sense of God's calling? Has God specifically called them to do what they are doing?
4. How do they raise their funds? Are they dependent on God or are they depending on human strategies and techniques?
5. Is the ministry led by men and women of maturity and integrity? Are they sons and daughters who are led by the Holy Spirit and who are Christ-centered?
6. What is the life-style of the leaders? Are they extravagant? Do they spend wisely the money God has given them? Can they be trusted?

7. Do they use the money for the purpose it was given?
8. Is the ministry man-centered or God-centered?
9. Does the ministry meet the needs of people? Does it express the love of Christ for humanity?
10. Is the ministry dependable? What structure do they follow to ensure accountability?
11. Is the ministry fruitful? What is their track record of spiritual fruit?
12. What kind of relationship does the ministry have with other ministries?
13. Is this ministry really needed or is it a duplicate of another well-established ministry?

E. Managing Finances

The guidelines discussed in this section can be applied to personal money matters or to those of a church.

1. It is important to stay out of debt.

A credit is a grant that one receives now to be paid later at an agreed time and terms. The person borrowing may have to pay the creditor a fee called interest.

When one incurs a debt, he actually obtains money or an asset that he has not earned. In a way, he is mortgaging his future earnings and time for what he is receiving at the moment. He is hoping that everything will work out according to his plans. It is a state of being in bondage to another person until they are paid back.

Many people go into debt hoping that it will help them to get things straight financially, but in most cases it really does not. Instead, it usually brings with it more problems and financial bondage. If all Christians could stay out of debt, we would have billions of dollars available for God's work, and we would also have stronger families and fewer divorces.

Debt is a form of bondage and God's Word speaks against it (Pr.22:7). A believer should do everything in his power to get out of debt. In fact, most of the debts that people have are unnecessary.

2. Debts can cause great problems in a marriage and home.

It can cause unhappiness, anxiety and stress, make one dishonest, which could lead to stealing, and rob us of opportunities to let God provide for our needs.

F. Things That Lure Us into Debt

1. Borrowing will take us into debt.

Many Christians feel that it is not wrong to take out a loan for major purchases, such as to build a home, get into business, go to college, or buy a car or furniture. If we feel we must do this, at the least we

should seek out several wise financial counselors before making our decision. This could save us a lot of headaches. Many good ministers of the Gospel have quit the ministry because of financial bondage. They simply accumulated too many bad debts.

If we must borrow to buy a home, make sure to get a home on which we can afford to make the payments. Otherwise, we may end up losing our home and our whole investment. It is not wise to buy a hundred thousand dollar (\$100,000) home if all we can afford is a fifty thousand dollar (\$50,000) home.

2. Using charge cards or local credit availability can take us into debt.

While credit cards can be a good convenience. They can also lead us into financial bondage. One is prone to spend more money if he has a credit card than if he does not. It is not necessarily wrong to use a credit card, but discipline and restraint must be exercised. As a general rule, we should not charge a purchase to our credit card unless we will have the money to pay off the bill in full the first time we receive it. It is also good to make sure we subtract the amount charged from our budget.

G. Practical Suggestions

1. It is impossible to get out of debt without establishing a realistic budget and following it.
2. Learn to discern all non-essentials in the budget
3. Sell depreciating items that we are not using.
4. Avoid any get-rich-quick schemes; they can hurt us financially (Pr.28:22).
5. Do not buy things on faith, use cash.
6. Make as large a cash down payment as possible towards the purchase of depreciating items such as cars.
7. Do not let insecurity and the cares of this world pressure us into financial bondage.
8. Do not co-sign unless we are prepared for the responsibilities involved.
9. Do not loan money for non-essential goods.
10. Do not buy things on impulse. Do not let sales people pressure us into buying things we had no plans for in our budget.
11. Be a good giver to God's work, tithe the income.

H. Saving and Investing

Saving is setting aside some money for future purposes. It involves making sacrifices in the present to make resources available at a later time.

Saving is Scriptural as the wisest man of his time tells us (Pr.21:20). There are samples of this wisdom in the Bible (Pr.6:6-8; Ge.41:25-57).

There are times when we face unanticipated expenses: for example, we may meet a needy family or have our car break down. If we have some savings, we are able to meet these needs easily.

Many Christians could save themselves from the bondage of debt if they disciplined themselves to save at least a small amount every month. After allocating for our tithes and offerings, savings should be considered along with the other family expenditures; a good budget can help.

A Christian should be careful, however, not to save with wrong motives. Some people save because they love money and do not like giving and helping others. Others save because of their insecurities. They do not trust God to meet their needs (Lk.12:18-21; Pr.11:28)

It is wise to not accumulate wealth for ourselves. We should share our blessings wisely with others, and God will reward us richly and meet our every need.

I. Practical Ways of Saving

1. Set aside some amount of money every month in a sound investment program.

Avoid get rich-schemes. If we keep investing small amounts regularly, we will be amazed at the good return.

2. We should adjust our spending habits.

Make it a point not to spend money on things that we do not need. Discipline our spending habits. Do not waste money; use it wisely and for good uses.

3. We should establish a workable budget.

Unless it is an emergency case, determine how we will spend our money before we spend it. Stick with the budget. The budget gives us control over our money. It also helps us to learn to live within our income (Php.4:12).

4. We should set priorities in our lives.

We should know what we want, what our goals are, and what we want to accomplish. After establishing our priorities, we should adjust our lifestyle and make some sacrifices to get what we want

5. We should avoid the credit trap as much as possible. Impulse spending can lead us into the credit trap.

6. We must learn to yield our personal rights to God

We should dedicate our money to Him and let Him direct us on how to spend and invest It.

7. We are to raise our moral standards.

This will help us to reject sensual temptations that lead to spending money

J. Watch Out! Money can be Dangerous

Judas sold Jesus for money. Judas loved money (Jn.12:4-8). Judas sold Jesus for thirty (30) pieces of silver (Mt.26:14-16). How many believers today have sold their faith for less than Judas? How many have betrayed Jesus or even left their calling for the love of money?

Ananias and Sapphira had the same kind of problem as Judas (Ac.5:1-10). They were deceptive. They sold their property to give to God's work, but when they had the money in their hands, they changed their minds about how much they would give and the ending was tragic.

Though God's Word is not against riches, it openly rebukes the love of them which is covetousness (Mt.6:19-24). Jesus is making three (3) points in this passage of Scripture.

1. There is no security in the earthly treasure

Earthly treasure is uncertain. It changes its value often, and one can easily love it. It can be stolen or lost in various ways. However, the heavenly treasure is more valuable and stable. We can count on it. It loses no value and no thief can steal it.

2. How we spend our finances is an indication of our values and our affection.

It shows whether we are self-centered and selfish or generous and giving. Our love for God and His work can be expressed through our continuous giving. Withholding our finances from God and His work clearly shows how uncommitted we are.

3. This scripture points out the fact that no one can love and serve money and God at the same time.

Either God is number one in our lives, or not at all. If we love money and allow it to control our lives, it will definitely change the direction of our life. It will lead and control us.

K. The Dangers of Materialism

1. It can destroy one's spiritual life if caution is not taken (Re.3:17-18).
2. It can bring anxiety and sorrow into one's life (Mt.6:25-34).
3. It can make one proud and unthankful (Pr.30:8-9; 2Ch.26:6-16; Hos.13:4-6; Ps.49:6).
4. It can lead to exploitation and social injustice (Amos.5:11.24; Je.2:7-28; Mic.6:12).
5. It can destroy a family.

6. It can steal our vision (Mt.13:7, 22).

We must always remember what we set our heart on will determine how we spend our lives. We are not to use our ministry for personal gain, like Balaam (Nu.chps.22-24; Jude.chp.11; Re.2:14).

We must not compromise our values for financial gains like lot (Ge.12:14-19). It is necessary to trust God to meet our needs. We should be sure to not be like Jacob; he cheated and destroyed relationships for money (Ge.chps.27-34). This means that it is critical to not violate God's command for the sake of money. This could cost us our lives and that of our family. Achan learned this lesson too late (Jos.chp.7).

We must not use other people's ministries or work for our personal gain, like Gehazi (2Kg.chp.5). We cannot serve Christ and money. The rich young ruler thought he could, but Jesus knew he could not (Lk.18:18-30).

We should not use money to buy praise and respect from people. Ananias and Sapphira tried (Ac.chp.5). We cannot buy spiritual gifts. True spirituality is a free gift from God. Simon the sorcerer tried and it did not work well (Ac.8:9-24).

We must learn to keep our heart from all defilement. God, who understands our needs, will bless us (Php.3:7-8; He.11:26).

We are to seek wisdom and understanding, and God will bless us with riches (1Kg.3:9-14; Pr.16:16; Co.3:1). So then, we are to set our minds on things above, not on earthly things. We are to allow God to own all our possessions. This will free us from having a possessive and anxious spirit.

L. A Word to Leadership

Everything that has been discussed in this chapter so far is important for any and all Christians. However, those in leadership positions have a particular responsibility for keeping their attitudes toward material things in line with God's Word and God's will.

The Lord's servants must be free of such entanglements. To hear the call clearly, we should listen to the advice of a man of God.

“Any Christian worker who has not settled the financial issue is bound to come under the sway of mammon. When he has to decide where he will work he is sure to be influenced by financial considerations. If he has no guaranteed support in a certain place he will go elsewhere. Being a Christian worker, he will, of course, seek guidance as to where he should go, but his guidance is almost sure to be to the place where support is assured. When we pray for guidance the treachery of our natural life is apt to guide us to settle down in places where there is no financial shortage, and to pay scant attention to poor districts and poor people.

An elderly Christian once remarked; “How many of the Lord's servants are swayed by financial considerations! Take note how many poor districts have no resident Christian worker while the more flourishing areas have no lack of them.” Those remarks were crude, but they were sadly true. Alas! Many Christian workers walk in the way of Balaam. Their footsteps are set in the direction of gain rather than the will of God, so when they have gone through the accepted form of seeking His confirmation for the way of their choice, He says, 'Go!'

Every true servant of God must be completely free from the bondage of money. 'No man can serve two masters... Ye cannot serve God and mammon' (Mt.6:24). This matter of seeking guidance of God when in fact we are guided by gain is a despicable thing. If the God we serve is the living God, can we not confidently go anywhere at His bidding? If He is not the living God, why not give up all attempts to serve Him? Oh, the shame of it, that any Christian, under the guise of serving Christ, can serve his own interests!"

It is necessary to respond to the call single-mindedly. Listen to this advice:

"To be an effective preacher of the Gospel requires a passion that rules out every other interest. A true preacher of the glad tidings has no anxiety about the journey and no anxiety about his reception at the journey's end, for with his commission he has received clear instructions regarding both. For the journey his orders are >Take nothing for your journey' and when he arrives at the destination he has equally explicit orders *'Into whatsoever house ye shall enter, first say, peace be to this house' (Lk.10:5)*. How beautiful! Every Christian worker should be a messenger of peace, and every Christian worker should magnify his office.

We may be poor, but we should never lose the dignity of our high calling. But what if the people to whom we come refuse to receive us? The Lord has anticipated our question and answered it in Luke 9:5, "as many as receive you not, when ye depart from that city, shake off the dust from your feet for a testimony against them.' Do you see the dignity of the Lord's servants? There is no self-pity on account of the treatment meted out to them; there is no introspection, no questioning of their guidance: there is nothing negative or weak. They are strong and dignified because all their issues are clear."

To give freely as well as to receive freely, we hear this challenge to leadership:

"Full-time Christian workers are in danger of becoming so obsessed by how much they have given up that they always hope to receive, and they are apt to lose all thought of the responsibility and privilege of giving. This attitude is fatal to the spiritual progress of the worker, for every Christian, no matter how small his income, should always be a giver. Only to receive, without giving will inevitably lead to stagnation and death. And if we bear no financial responsibility for others, God will entrust little to us. In his second Corinthian letter, Paul uses this phrase "...as poor, yet making many rich" (6:10). Oh this man knew his God! No matter how deep his own need might be, he was always concerned about the enrichment of other lives, and the amazing thing was that he was always in a position to enrich them.

If in any place the character of the ministry entrusted to you is called in question, then for the honor of the ministry you dare not accept support. You must make your position perfectly plain, and when you have refused support you must still remember your obligation to others. If you hope to increase your income, then increase your output. The experience of many of the Lord's children confirms His own word *"...Give, and it shall be given unto you"* (Lk.6:38). This is a Divine law and we violate it to our own hurt. The Christian manages his affairs on a basis diametrically opposed to that of the non-Christian; the latter saves in order to increase; the former increases by giving. The Christian may not increase his bank balance by giving, but he is able thereby in ever increasing measure to share Paul's experience, *"...as poor, yet, making many rich"*

I. THE WINNING LIFE

As believers, God has called us through Christ Jesus into a life of victory. Many believers are living and serving God in defeat. They do not realize that they can truly be over comers and live the way God has intended for them.

This life in Christ Jesus is not attained, but obtained. It is not what we can work to achieve through our own strength, but that we can receive it freely from the Master Himself.

The life which God gives and we receive at the time we believe in His Son Jesus Christ is a victorious life. It is a life that overcomes sin, provides intimate communion with God, and is full of satisfaction and power. It is already in us, waiting to be explored by us. The secret of experiencing its power is to let go of ourselves and let Christ live instead of us (Ga.2:20). This requires childlike faith. Then shall we more than conquer through Him who loves us.

A. Failures among Christians

1. Sins of the spirit are among our failures.

Pride, jealousy, unbelief, fault-finding, a lack of prayer and an inability to commit oneself to God are all sins of the spirit. Some Christians are spiritually victorious, while others find themselves defeated in these areas.

The problem many times is that they do not live before God and maintain communion with Him. They live carelessly, spending days on end without prayer and Bible reading. They try to exist a week at a time without being in fellowship with God. Day after day, they live without the fear of the Lord. They have no spiritual life, and have not learned to deal with self.

This kind of person is revealed in the small things. Hudson Taylor would travel here and there to preach the Gospel, and the worst room and bed would seemingly always be his. Yet he never murmured or complained. a person's reaction to small matters reveals what kind of life one lives before God.

2. Sins of the flesh are in our failures.

These sins of the flesh include adultery, unrestrained eyes, and unnatural relationships. Many fall in these because they do not control their eyes or they maintain improper friendships.

3. Sins of the mind are in our failures.

For full victory, these sins also must be dealt with. Some have thoughts that go in all directions. Some have thoughts that are unclean or too imaginative or full of doubt or curiosity. They want to know everything.

Imagination and doubt brings down many Christians. They think they discern things that are not so. Also an inordinate desire to know and analyze everything can keep one from trusting God.

4. Sins of the body are in our failures.

Paying excessive attention to eating, sleeping, hygiene, adornment or life itself can be sinful in God's sight. Lack of self-control in the matter of eating or being unpleasant because of lack of sleep can also be sin.

All of this can be seen as loving our own life so much that we cannot bear the slightest suffering or come too near the sick. This is bondage to our body (1Co.9:27).

5. Sins of disposition are in our failures.

Everyone has a different disposition. The Lord comes to save us from our disposition as well as from our sins. Though saved, we may be very sharp, strict, and tight in relation to every matter. We may be mean or overly talkative, while others are lazy or timid and fearful. We may be quick-tempered or always need to be the center of attention.

If we desire to be overcomers, we must allow the Lord to deal with us on these matters of personal character or disposition. All these faults in disposition and temperament are sins. Every Christian must live victoriously above these things.

6. No heart to keep God's Word is in our failures.

How many of God's commands have we read and obeyed? The only Scripture we believe is the one we obey. How many Christians know that worry is sin, or that failure to give thanks in all things is also? All who overcome have the strength to keep God's commandments. Only those who do not overcome cannot keep His will.

7. Failure to render to God His due is in our failures.

God demands that we present ourselves, our whole life, wholly to Him. It seems, however, that Christians try to retain something for themselves. Although under the Old Covenant the people had to offer one-tenth (1/10th) to God, the New Covenant offering is ten-tenths (10/10ths). We are to offer our houses, fields, wife, children, and our very selves altogether to the Lord.

The consecrated one alone has power. He places his business and wealth in God's hand. He puts his parents, wife, and children in His hand also. The consecrated one can never take what the Lord has given and deposit it in the world. He simply offers himself and all that he has to God. Whoever is afraid to lay all, including people, things, and affairs before God in consecration cannot be an overcomer. The more we offer to the Lord, the greater will be our power. Consecration makes life powerful as well as joyful. He who is unwilling to offer to God is powerless, joyless, and sinful.

8. Unrepentant of sins that require confession is in our failures.

Some have dealt with other matters except to confess with their heart that there are sins in their lives (Ps.66:18). There is a secret love in the heart for this or that sin and an unwillingness to confess it. Many times sin is a matter of inward desire. Whoever regards iniquity in his heart needs victory!

Many love sin in their hearts and they also have sins, which remain unconfessed. How often do we sin against a brother and think about it and acknowledge to ourselves that we have offended him? Then, we try to change our outward attitude towards him by being especially kind to Him. But changing our attitude is our best way, not God's way. God expects for us to confess our sin (Mt.18:15).

B. Victory Is Necessary and Possible

If we have any of the sins outlined above, we need victory for sure. God will allow these sins, be they one or many, to entangle us. Whatever sin it may be, it is under our feet. There is no sin so strong that we have to yield to it. No temptation is too great to overcome.

The life that the Lord has ordained for us is one of continuous communion with Him, of doing His will, and of total detachment from all contrary things. Every Christian is able to overcome the sins of the mind, body, flesh, and spirit, our contrary disposition, unbelief, and even the love of sin. It is all based in our decisions to walk away from these things. This is a totally practical way of living which we all may experience.

II. THE ORDAINED CHRISTIAN LIFE

A. Free From Sin

The Christian is to live a life free from sin. Jesus came to bring salvation, a liberty from sin (Mt.1:21). Salvation from sin is ordained by God and accomplished by Jesus. The question after salvation is: are we still living in sin or have we come out of them?

The salvation of our Lord is not like a life jacket, which keeps us from sinking, but does not get us out of the water. A life jacket keeps a person from drowning but not from death. Salvation is like a lifeboat that can draw the fallen person out of the water. The Lord will not allow us to remain in a state of "neither living nor dying." He will save us from our sin because He did not leave us in our sin. Hence the salvation spoken of in the Bible saves us from sin.

B. Life of Communion

The Christian is to live a life that holds intimate communion with God (Lk.1:69, 74-75). Jesus is the "horn of salvation" that God has raised up for us. He has delivered us from our enemies so that we can serve Him without fear. Jesus has made it possible for us to come to God in holiness and righteousness and have intimate communion with Him.

C. Being Wholly Satisfied

The Christian is to live a life that is wholly satisfied with the Lord (Jn.4:14). It is not a special Christian who will receive from Him special grace to have a well of water springing up to eternal life, but a "whosoever." This was spoken to a Samaritan woman, a complete stranger.

To thirst is to be unsatisfied. Yet when we drink the water offered by Christ, we will never thirst again. We may know contentment and eternal satisfaction.

Having Him is enough, but we too often say having Him is still not enough; we want still other things to satisfy us. Something new happens when we come to Jesus; we now have a new desire and a new satisfaction.

D. Full of Influence

We are to live a life that is full of influence (Jn.7:37-38). The rivers of living water that is to flow out of us will cause people who come in contact with us to find satisfaction and be thirsty no more. This should be a common experience for all Christians.

Some people will leave us so dry. Do people see us that way, once they have had contact with us? Or do they feel satisfied, no longer thirsty after they have been with us? If, when people say their life is

miserable, sad, and undone, we respond in that same way, it shows we are not rivers of living water. We have become but barren deserts which dry up the moisture that is available to all.

E. Power to Overcome

We are to live a life that is free from the power of sin (Ac.3:26). Jesus came to deliver and turn us away from sin. The least experience of a Christian is to be freed from sin. Whatever we know to be sin must be overcome, even what has entangled us for years (Ro.6:1-4; 14).

We need to walk in newness of life, having been set free from sin. Sin is not our lord, but Jesus is. He gives us the victory (Ro.8:1-2). Every Christian is set free from the law of sin and death.

F. Victory over Our Environment

We are to live a life that overcomes our environment (Ro.8:35-39). Victory is to be our normal experience. Defeat is abnormal, for according to God's will, every Christian is to be more than a conqueror, no matter the environment. Increases in difficulty in what we face will make no difference (2Co.2:14). The Christian life is one which always triumphs (2Co.2:14).

G. Practice Good

We are to live a life that practices goodness. God saves us all that we may all do good works (Ep.2:10). Every Christian should do goodness with their hearts full of joy, not being stingy or selfish, but with a willingness to pour out our lives for other people. We are not to complain or compare our works with other Christians but rejoice that we have the privilege to work for Jesus.

H. Full of Light

We are to live a life that is full of light. God has ordained for all Christians to walk in the light of life. A Christian with no light is not a normal Christian (Jn.8:12).

I. Wholly Sanctified

We are to live a life that is wholly sanctified. It is possible for us to be thoroughly sanctified. God is able to sanctify us completely and to preserve us blameless (1Th.5:23). The victory of Christ is to destroy sin completely in our lives.

III. THE NATURE OF THE LIFE THAT WINS

There is no winning without a test, without a battle over what we will do and how we will react in situations. God has examples of testing that we can see in the Scriptures. We may assume that from the frequency of such examples, God appears to be a God of testing. When Scripture says that our God is a “consuming fire,” it is saying that He tries the attitudes and motives of each of the people that He uses (He.12:29). This is so we will turn to the Lord for our help.

God proves His vessels of leadership, for He already knows our inner weaknesses, but He does so that we might be healed.

God tests and tries a leader to purify them. God will use pure leaders whose motive for ministry is the glory of God and the salvation of souls. It is through trials and tough circumstances that God removes impure attitudes, such as bitterness, selfishness, and covetousness, from a leader’s heart, replacing them with motives of love.

God tests to produce fruitful men and women. Those who can keep believing and trusting in God while going through problems and difficulties will develop true fruitfulness to God and His Word.

God also tests His leaders to sort out those who are not truly called by Him. It is only through the anointing and calling of God that a person can stand the pressures of fulfilling a governmental ministry. God puts leaders into desperate situations so that those who do not have a true call of the Spirit upon their lives drop out of the preparation process. This is best for them and the Church. God's people need to have a shepherd who has been divinely appointed to the task. It is the leader who has successfully overcome trials and tests himself that can help the people.

A. Special Preparation Period

Preparation time is when God tests His people for ministry, to prepare each for their various ministries. We will look at several tests that are deep valley experiences that all leaders must face.

1. There is a time test.

This test gives the appearance of God not fulfilling His Word to a leader in the past. It therefore tests a leader’s patience, forcing him to trust God to fulfill his call and ministry in His own time and way.

The purpose of this test is to give the leader opportunity to grow in faith. Because leaders must lead people to trust God for every detail of life, they need more faith with which to strengthen the people. This test also purifies the leader's motives and attitudes. It is here that a leader can see his/her own impure, selfish, or proud motives and attitudes that tend to cloud his desires before the Lord. It is here that the Lord proves Himself to be the miracle-working God of the Bible. God delights in using the weaknesses of men to give Him all of the glory (1Co.1:26-31). As God performs the miracle, He demonstrates His faithfulness to His leaders. Abraham is the example of a time test, waiting over twenty four (24) years to receive the "son of promise."

2. There is a Word test.

Here the leader experiences circumstances that seem to contradict the living Word of God. Too many feel that they should never experience darkness or confusion because they have been called and filled with God's Spirit.

The Word test is no accident. God purposely allows contrary situations to come into a leader's life and ministry. During the Word test, God is accomplishing certain purposes that are as yet unknown to the leader. When the leader endures with patience, trust, and obedience, he will eventually find himself rejoicing in the Lord's wisdom and skill in the planning and use of these seemingly antagonistic experiences.

God uses the Word test to cause us to reject our own resources and to rely on God's strength to bring God's Word to pass. This is difficult for the leader that has many strengths and abilities.

Joseph is a Biblical illustration of this test. Joseph was one of twelve sons and was Jacob's favorite son (Ge.37:3). At seventeen (17) years of age, Joseph received a Word from the Lord in two (2) dreams. The two (2) dreams represented Joseph's eventual reign over his parents and his brothers and caused him to become an object of jealousy. His brothers sold him to an Ishmaelite caravan which carried him down into Egypt (Ge.37:25-28), where he was sold into slavery (Ge.37:29-36).

Though Joseph was wrongly accused of trying to seduce Potiphar's wife, and banished to prison, he still had a hope of the king knowing about his imprisonment when the king's chief cupbearer should have told the king about Joseph after he himself was released from prison (Ge.40:23). These contradictory circumstances tested God's Word to Joseph. How could he ever rule over his brethren as an Egyptian slave, or in from a prison cell? However, the Word God gave Joseph "...came to pass..." and "...the Word of the Lord tested (refined) him" (Ps.105:17-19). It took fourteen (14) years for the fulfillment of God's Word to him. Patience prevailed in Joseph until God brought him out through a command of the king (Ps.105:20-21). God developed character, wisdom and humility in Joseph's life through this test.

3. There is a character test.

The leader is faced with ungodliness that tries to pull him down. He/she is tempted to sin in the three areas of all sin, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes or the pride of life. God places His leaders in these fiery places so they may develop the Godly traits of love, joy, peace, patience, self-control, faithfulness, etc.

Revelation of the leaders weak areas in his own personality are the reason for the test. Every leader has hidden character deficiencies which he does not know about until confronted with a situation that requires a Godly response.

This test also motivates the leader to stand strong against the powers of darkness around him. Far too many leaders are afraid to proclaim the truth, waiting until they are attacked before taking the initiative of preaching the Gospel. This confrontation by evil gives impetus to stand up boldly for the name of the Lord and His righteousness.

Samuel is a good biblical illustration for this test. Although he was the son of righteous parents, Samuel was born into a corrupt situation

Eli had grown physically and spiritually dull. The light in the Tabernacle had almost extinguished (1Sa.2:27-36, 3:1-3). Eli did not discipline his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who committed fornication with women at the very door of the Tabernacle. Due to this moral corruption, God overthrew Eli's succession and introduced Samuel as the leader of Israel's spiritual and secular affairs.

Samuel worshipped God and kept himself from this sin. He could have fallen into sin like Eli's sons. Leaders do not have to be corrupted by their environments, as Samuel illustrated by keeping himself pure in the midst of sin and immorality.

4. There is a motivation test.

This is a test in which God exposes to the leader what inner and outer forces influence his decision-making processes. God arranges situations to reveal a leader's true inner intentions, thoughts, values, and priorities which cause certain choices or actions.

The reason for this test is to disclose inner drives and purify them into desires for the glory of God, the salvation of souls, and the edification of the Church. Some leaders serve God for what they can get, rather than how they can give to God and His people. God puts leaders through motivation tests to expose unrighteous drives, and to replace them with motives of His Spirit and a pure heart.

We can see this test with Balaam (Nu.chps.22-24). Balak feared destruction of his nation as others had been so he offered to pay Balak, a prophet, to curse the Israelites and put an end to their victories (Nu.22:7). Balaam told Balak that the Lord had told him not to go with the elders of Moab to curse the people of Israel. Balak repeatedly tried to influence Balaam, sending numerous and distinguished ambassadors to him. The Lord finally told Balaam to go with the elders of Moab and Midian, but to speak only the Word the Lord gave him to speak (22:20). Each time Balaam inquired of the Lord, the Lord told him to bless Israel

God was testing Balaam's motivation. Would he sell out, or would he be faithful to God's Word? The elders tempted the prophet's motivation continually, the size of the bribe growing each time. Unfortunately, Balaam's motivation did not stay pure, though he initially tried to remain faithful to speak only the Word of the Lord. He failed this motivational test from the Lord (2Pe.2:15; Jude:11; Re.2:14)

5. There is a servant test.

When a man is asked to do menial tasks that seem below his high calling in God, he is undergoing the servant test. God tests a leader to see if he is willing to "wait on tables."

The reason for the servant test is to see whether a ministry desires to be in the public eye, or if he desires to really serve. God may have authorities over a ministry use this test to discern the person's commitment to service. Is it beneath their dignity to sweep the floor or clean the toilets?

This test is also good for it reveals to God's called governmental ministries what it feels like to do different jobs in the local church. Many pastors do not appreciate the effort it takes to clean the church without experiencing it themselves.

The Biblical illustration is this test is Elisha. When Elijah found Elisha, the one appointed to be his prophetic heir, Elisha was plowing in the field. This was probably a humbling position, following oxen and the dust that would doubtless be thick in the air. It was tough work for the future prophet of Israel.

After Elisha burned his farming equipment, he set out to follow Elijah and minister to him. Though he would be a prophet, Elisha became the servant of Elijah first. In one place in the Scriptures, it says that Elisha "...poured water on the hands of Elijah" (2Kg.3:11). His larger ministry began with "menial" service, preparing him to serve even more people in an even greater capacity.

6. There is a wilderness test.

This test guides a leader or future leader into a materially and/or spiritually dry and desolate place. God does it. There is no fruit coming from his life or ministry in this test. Here the leader begins to question

whether there really was a call from God upon his life, as he does not appear to have any direct involvement in the true, living work of the Kingdom of God.

The reason for this test is to increase the leader's appreciation for the good things that God has already put in his life. This test brings to light whether the Lord sustains his spiritual life, or if he draws from his ministry activity to sustain his relationship with God. Does prayer, the Word, and evangelism activities drop off when he is not in "full-time" Christian work? Our activities are not to be sustaining our walk with God, but our personal relationship with the Lord.

This test will strip the leader of all the wisdom of the world and teach him the ways of His Spirit. God's ways are different from our own and we must learn that. Dry and desert experiences will teach us that.

This test also causes a leader to cultivate his life in prayer and the Word. Some leaders need a dry place to exhaust their reservoir of sheer nervous energy so that they will draw from the Lord.

Our Biblical illustration is Moses. He killed an Egyptian who was beating an Israelite, which became known to Pharaoh. He fled to Midian for safety, marrying Zipporah, the daughter of the Midianite shepherd-priest Jethro.

Forty (40) years passed before God called Moses to deliver His people from Egyptian slavery (Ex.3:1). It is likely that it took forty (40) years to strip Moses of his Egyptian learning and to prepare him for his work (Ac.7:22). When Moses had learned God's ways on the back side of the desert was when he was ready to be the deliver and law giver.

It is unlikely that Moses learned much about the ways of God's Spirit in Egypt, but those forty (40) years in the desert, tending sheep, caused Moses to learn what he needed to know to lead God's people out of Egypt. God will use a seeming wasteland to teach us valuable spiritual truths. Each wilderness test is a special class in the school of God's Spirit, from which we can derive much spiritual benefit.

7. There is a misunderstanding test.

This test comes about when those hearing a leader do not receive (or reject) the correct meaning of what he is communicating. They misinterpret or mistake the true significance of his actions, words, attitudes, or motives.

The reason for this test is to cause a leader to look for new or better ways of bringing across his feelings. It also causes him to examine his basic attitudes and motivations in communication. People can misunderstand what we are saying just because we have an attitude that is too hard, harsh, or angry when we say it.

In discovering major misunderstandings, the leader is motivated to trust totally in God and not in his own skills as a communicator. God was the one who opened the hearts of different people to believe the Gospel message in the Book of Acts. So it is that we must trust the Holy Spirit to quicken the truth of what we are communicating. God desires every leader to trust that His Word, through the Holy Spirit, will accomplish the task of building His kingdom.

Anyone who preaches the Word will be misinterpreted at times. We need to be sure to keep our hearts free from anger and resentment, allowing the Lord to turn the situation into good.

Jesus is our Biblical illustration in this test. Jesus suffered through the test of intentional and unintentional misunderstanding. The Jewish people in general, and especially the Jewish religious rulers, and even by His close followers often misunderstood Him. One instance was when Jesus said, "...eat my flesh and drink my blood..." (Jn.6:60). Some close disciples misunderstood and left Him. Rejection by one's own disciples over a misunderstanding is hard to take. Jesus' own people rejected Him because they did not correctly understand how He fulfilled Bible prophecy.

8. There is a patience test.

This comes about when a leader's expectations in the Lord are not fulfilled on schedule. Patience is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Ga.5:22). This word comes from a Latin word, meaning "to suffer." Here God challenges us to wait patiently, enduring some tribulation without complaint. It is to bear pain or trouble without losing self-control or becoming a disturbance to others. It is the refusal to be provoked by a situation.

The reason for a patience test is to teach us to completely yield our rights to Jesus Christ. In not attempting to "play God" in our lives, a humble leader will yield to the Lord even the very good and appropriate goals. This is a yielding of rights to the Lord constantly.

Our Biblical example is Noah. He was five hundred (500) years old when his wife bore their first son (Ge.5:32), and six hundred (600) years old at the time of the Flood (Ge.7:11). He was probably four hundred eighty (480) years old when God informed him of His plan to destroy the earth with water. While Noah built the ark and preached, some one hundred twenty (120) years passed by. No one repented of their sins or turned to God for mercy during this long time of preaching without any results. This long endurance required much patience from Noah. Noah's patience paid off for him and his family in the end. Patience will pay for the leader who leaves the results and details of their ministry in the hands of the lord.

9. There is a frustration test.

This test comes when we feel our life or ministry goals cannot be achieved. People or circumstances may prevent him from gaining his conscious or unconscious desires and goals. This is especially true when he finds no reason why his efforts are failing.

The reason for the test is to cause the leader to re-examine his spiritual priorities. Is their enough time being given to prayer and the Word? What about the family? This could prove that there needs to be a readjustment in priorities.

This test will cause the leader to put more effort into his primary spiritual battle against opposition to the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ. With a spiritual priority adjustment, God will release them from the test of frustration.

Our Biblical illustration comes from Paul. He was frustrated when he spoke to the Corinthian church. There were those who had questioned Paul's commitment and his call to the ministry as an Apostle. He categorized his many qualifications and sufferings for the Gospel. He went on to tell of suffering as none of the ones who were questioning him had suffered, and even of his narrow escape at the city of Damascus. However, his answer to this frustration was simply a trust in the power of the Spirit over the natural conditions.

10. There is a discouragement test.

This is when a leader allows circumstances or people to dishearten him and deprive him of courage in the Lord. Discouraged leaders are hindered from undertaking what he believes is God's will. With this taking place, a leader may lose his confidence or hope in God, His provision, His promises, or His calling.

The purpose of this test is to cause him/her to go to God in prayer; especially through the Psalms. The Psalms express most of the difficult conditions of heart that people experience during their lifetime. The Psalm(s) will best express the mood of the soul in this condition, and then they can pray through it to God sincerely.

Times of stress and trial are not wrong, but how we receive them can be. The attitude we take toward such circumstances can be wrong if we persist in self-pity or feelings of discouragement. We must learn that our joy comes from delighting ourselves in the Lord, not in happy circumstances or positive responses from people.

This test also recalls the hidden, bad attitudes in a leader. Many can rejoice in the Lord when everything is the way they think it should be. Yet, how many allow themselves to complain and murmur when things go unexpectedly the other way? The Lord allows us to uncover poor attitudes in ourselves, for which we must ask God's forgiveness. Repentance is quite necessary of these wrong attitudes. We become responsible to do what God has shown us to do and failure to obey judges and condemns us.

Our Biblical illustration is Elijah. He became discouraged upon learning that Israel had forsaken the Lord, and that Queen Jezebel planned to kill him, so much so that he fled from Jezebel. Upon God questioning him about what he was doing, his response to God was that, there were A...seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Discouragement often comes to a leader when he feels that he is the only one who is working for God.

God has an answer to this condition. It includes eating and confessing the Word to bring encouragement, seeking His face in prayer, learning to press on to the clear Word from God, not hiding the discouragement from God, not running from the Lord but to Him, and hearing the clear direction so that in taking up the activity, he may get his mind off of his problems and back onto doing the work of the Lord (1Kg.19:5-16).

11. There is a warfare test.

The warfare test comes when a leader encounters violent spiritual opposition to his progress in the Spirit, or in his extending of God's Kingdom. This opposition will usually find some natural expressions in conflicts with people, a lack of response to ones ministry, or struggles of various types, including the feeling of not being able to overcome the temptation to sin. Yes, some people think that anointed leaders cannot be tempted like other people. Not true! Even Jesus "...was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (He.4:15). The call of God to lead does not remove human susceptibility to temptation. It is by walking "...in the Spirit..." that we shall not "...fulfill the lusts of the flesh" (Ga.5:16).

The reason for this test is that spiritual warfare forces the leader to grow stronger in the Spirit. The spiritual realm is like the natural realm, in that a muscle becomes stronger only through exercise and resistance. So it is with the exercise described in Hebrews, whereby we are able to "...discern both good and evil" (He.5:14). Training and exercising our spiritual senses is a must to win in this war. Through spiritual warfare, we learn how to use effectively our spiritual weapons, including the Word, prayer, praise, and the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Biblical illustration is Timothy. He was exhorted by the Apostle to give everything he could to succeeding in the tests of spiritual warfare. Three (3) factors were against him, his youth, the Greek nationality of his mother, and the heresies of the day. He was a natural target for spiritual attack. Paul counseled him to "...fight the good fight..." (1Ti.1:18). This is the good fight of faith that every leader must fight. Jesus Christ has won the battle for His people through His death and resurrection, but His victory must still be outworked into the full experience of the Church and the world.

The spiritual warfare of a pastor or teacher is to preach the Word of God. The battle consists also of the leader strongly holding on to his faith in Jesus Christ until the end. The enemy will try every available

means of defeating the proclamation of the Gospel and the growth of the Church. However, every Christian leader, as he uses the spiritual weapons that God has given him, will win the battle.

12. There is a self-will test.

This is when a leader realizes God is asking him to do something that counters his own plans or desires. God will break the self-will or personal ambition of every person He uses, lest He not be able to trust that person to do what He requires in His kingdom.

God sometimes requests a man to do something for Him with no logical explanation or reason for it. He is simply developing a child-like faith and obedience in their hearts. God will even ask His leaders to sacrifice to Him what they know to be His will. We see that in Abraham's life, when God asked him to sacrifice Isaac, the promised seed (Ge.22:1).

Every desire, thought, feeling, and plan must be put into subjection to God's will. This is what true Christianity is all about. God does not necessarily prefer painful sacrifices from His leaders, but when there is something He speaks that is contrary to our desire, we must quickly respond to the Word.

The reason for this test is to find whether we will submit our will to His Word. It is why God uses the foolish, despised, unexpected, and even hateful things of this world for His kingdom, so that He will receive all of the glory for what is done (1Co.1:26-31). Our sinful nature pits our natural will against the spiritual will of God. God must therefore crucify our desires, on occasion, so that He can accomplish His desire in His own way (Is.55:6-9).

Our Biblical illustration is the Lord Jesus Christ and His struggle with self-will in the Garden (Mt.26:36-48). Jesus crucified His own will to the Father's there in the Garden. His words "...O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will but as thou wilt" described the death blow to self-will. In His human self, Jesus did not desire to suffer the experience of the Cross. His Divine self, though, desired the Cross as the will of the Father Who sent Him. Only when we lay down our fleshly ambitions can God use us as a vessel for His glory.

13. There is a vision test.

This test comes about when contrary people and circumstances besiege a leader's spiritual insight into the purposes of God. A leader of God's people must have spiritual eyes of faith to see God's will and desire for His people. There are two (2) questions asked here: "Can you see the spiritual needs and answers of the people of God?" and, "Can you resist opposition and adversity; and tenaciously hold the vision that God has given you as a leader?"

The reason for the vision test is to show a leader how shallow his spiritual insight really is. Every leader feels he has a measure of insight into God and His people, otherwise he could not serve the Lord in a

ministry capacity. Leaders are tempted to think that their current education, insight, knowledge, and wisdom is sufficient to meet the challenges of Church life.

No leader receives full training for ministry in a Seminary or a Bible College. God wants His leaders constantly dependent on Him and His Spirit alone. This test unfortunately proves that many who are called to a ministry fail due to refusal to be so humbled! Others have told them, "You are such a great minister. You will really be able to do a lot for God because of so many talents and abilities!" Textbooks told them, to "run a service" this way, "preach a sermon" this way, "this is how to get souls saved", and "this is the way to cause the church to grow". However, everything from formal education does not depend on the criteria that some may think. Textbooks and friends do not always know the mind of God. Many drop out, while some desperately call on God.

This test also ensures that God gets the glory for any success. God receives much glory when a vision is fulfilled supernaturally and in God's way.

A Biblical illustration is Nehemiah. Nehemiah passed this test because he had spiritual eyes of faith to see the needs and answers of God's people in Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity (Ne.1:1-2:6), and his commitment to his spiritual vision did not fail under adverse conditions (Ne.4:6-10).

Nehemiah knew that the walls of the city and the Temple had to be rebuilt to successfully worship God there. He wanted God to use him to restore the worship of God. He recognized that the people had sinned against God's law (Ne.1:7-9) and had incurred God's judgment. Every leader must have this kind of spiritual vision. They must be able to see where the Church has sinned against God, and then help them to regain God's blessing through repentance and ultimately obedience to His Word.

In a time of opposition, Nehemiah gave himself to prayer. So it is that every leader must not allow negative people or circumstances to cause him to lose the vision that God has given him for the Church.

14. There is a usage test.

This test in a leaders life or ministry preparation is when they cannot find the need, demand, opportunity, invitation, results or expected occasion to exercise their ministry. This is like being put on the shelf.

God may do this for several reasons. It may be His desire to show the leader that he is depending on his actual service or activity, rather than upon the Lord for joy and spiritual fulfillment. This may stimulate the leader to develop his personal prayer life and time in the Word far more than ministry success would.

God may desire to humble the leader. There is a tendency for a leader who is greatly used of God to become proud and self-sufficient. Losing part or his entire public ministry will cause him to see that his own power or ability is not the true cause of his accomplishments in the Kingdom. God uses a man's weaknesses for His glory, not his strengths.

This test also gives God an opportunity to purify the motives of His leaders. Many times a leader's motivation will turn from pure ministry service to building a personal Kingdom. Getting people saved and edifying the Church may take a back seat to highlighting the leader's ministry and reputation. God will set this kind of leader on the shelf to purify his motives. Otherwise, spiritual destruction will come upon him.

This test can also deepen the message of the leader. Many leaders live on past sermons without getting fresh words or experiences from God. Some are so busy that they do not take time to deepen their messages. When the Church is constantly fed from the same "pasture" of sermons, they will grow thin and hungry for more. God has put ministries out of public commission for a period of time so that the leader will be motivated to deepen his understanding of the Word of God.

Our Biblical illustration for this is John the Baptist. He was raised and called to the prophetic ministry in the wilderness of Judea (Lk.1:80, 3:2). He was the forerunner of the Messiah, and last and greatest of the prophets before the Kingdom of God was proclaimed. For a man whom Jesus Himself highly honored, he had a very humble attitude.

John's attitude was demonstrated by the words he spoke to Christ when He came to him for baptism: "*I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?*" (Mt.3:14). This attitude was also demonstrated when he preached about Christ, saying that he was "*...not even fit to stoop down and untie the thongs of His sandals*" (Mk.1:7). John though holding an important place in God's economy, knew his purpose was to lead men to Jesus Christ (Jn.1:35-37).

John accepted a longer time of preparation than his actual period of ministry. His time in the desert was probably much longer than the duration of his active ministry, a definite part of the usage test.

Many leaders would complain if they had to spend thirty (30) years in preparation for a three and a half (3-1/2) year ministry, as our Lord did? Many leaders think it best to spend only three and a half (3-1/2) years in preparation for a thirty (30) year ministry! The length of preparation is different for every leader, depending upon God's call on his life, his cooperation with the dealings of God, and the future extent of his ministry.

John was willing to be used of God only as long as God sovereignty intended to use him. He condemned Herod the tetrarch for many evil things, including marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife. Herod had John imprisoned and beheaded over that, an inglorious death for one of the greatest eschatological prophets of all time. John was totally submitted to the will of God and to God's usage test.

We must have a light "grip" on the gift and ministry God gives us. We must allow God to remove these at any time without complaining, doubting, or grumbling. May all leaders keep their hearts so humble and dependent upon the Lord that He may approve their total patience and trust in Him, even through the usage test.

B. Exchange

Our life is to be one of exchange. Victory is not that we have changed, but rather that we have been exchanged. It is no longer our lives, for it has nothing to do with me (Ga.2:20).

God never demands that we overcome. The way of God is to exchange our life for another life that has nothing to do with us. Jesus has already won the victory, and all He asks us to do is exchange our life for His. We cannot make it alone. It is a matter of Christ. There is no problem, for He overcomes for us.

In the Old Testament times we find that God's way was exchange, not repair or change. In Isaiah He said, *...and provide for those who grieve in Zion-to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendor*" (Is.61:3). To substitute is God's way. He gives a garland for ashes, the oil of gladness for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of despair.

We cannot change ourselves. Yet, God will exchange us. This is holiness, perfection, victory, and this is the life of God's Son. Christ's gentleness is our gentleness: His holiness is our holiness: His prayer life is our prayer life: the communion of Christ with God is now our communion with God.

C. Winning is a Gift

The principle of the winning life is a gift, not a reward (1Co.15:57). Victory is a gift, not a reward. Victory is what God has prepared to give to us. This victory is obtained freely, not through self-effort.

We are not saved by works, so we do not overcome by works. God has declared that we are unable to do good. Christ has died for us on the cross, and He is now living for us within. God has freely given to us the holiness, patience, perfection, love, and the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus. He freely gives to everyone who desires it. God gives to us intimate communion with Himself and holy living in Christ. This is all a gift.

D. Obtained

The way of this life is obtained, not attained. The life that wins is to be obtained. It is obtained simply as gaining possession of a thing. To attain implies we have a long way to go and that we will proceed slowly without the assurance of arriving at the goal someday (Ro.5:17).

God declares that the victory is a gift for us to accept, without work of our own. It is an instantaneous gift, not a slow wait.

E. Miracle Possession

Possessing this life is a miracle. It is God who moves within us to be holy. It is not because we have exercised any strength on our own, but because God works in us. He is well able to overcome every sin. There is no need to struggle, exert strength or even desire to overcome.

Unless there is a miracle, none will come into victory. There are problems we cannot solve and sin we cannot overcome, but Jesus can perform a miracle for us immediately, no matter what our sin is. He can consecrate us and cause us to be patient.

F. Expressed Life

The consequence of this is an expressed life, not a suppressed one. Our so-called victories, ones in which we labor, are always done through suppression. In these cases, the problem remains inside though it is not outwardly expressed. True victory is a deliverance that is an expressed life, not a suppressed one. An expressed life shows forth what has already been obtained. We need to express the victory of Christ in us (Php.2:12-13).

Many people are ready to be clean outside but not to be clean inside. Whatever is suppressed is not victory. Only when we go out and Christ comes in do we have victory. Victory means a pure heart.

A follower of Confucius attempts to improve himself by works of endurance and self-control, such as reducing a big problem to a small matter and reducing a small matter to no matter at all. Some Christians try to get victory this way, but it is neither Christ's way nor His victory. We need to let go of ourselves and allow Him to live through us, without suppression or defeat. As with salvation, victory has a certain date. It is a threshold we must cross over into the overcoming life.

G. Obtaining Christ as Our Victory

Paul gives us the first condition to entering into this life: "I have been crucified with Christ." The second condition is: *A...and that life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God."*

1. It requires a yielding, as in "I have been crucified with Christ."

Are we in the faith? Do we realize that Christ Jesus is in us, unless, of course, we fail the test (2Co.13:5)? Christ living in us is a sure fact: however, we live in us too. In order to have Christ as our life that wins, we ourselves must yield to Him. To yield, we must admit:

- a. I cannot overcome sin.

Paul tells us that we, as Christians have died, and yet are still not dead (Ro.7:14-25). This unveils a hidden flaw in us: that we continue to practice sin: which is to say that we do not approve of what God has done and we do not accept His verdict upon us. God says we are absolutely useless and hopeless, that we are beyond repair. He says that apart from our being crucified, there is really neither any use nor hope for us. The cross is God's evaluation of us, we are worthy of death alone. If we accept this, we realize we are totally useless and without any good. We must say with God, that except we die, we are utterly without hope. This frees us from trying to please Him by good works.

The Cross proves that God can neither repair nor improve us: He can only crucify us. Why then do we continue to make resolutions, promising we will be better but always failing? God wants us to accept the evaluation of the cross for He knows that by accepting its evaluation, we shall be willing at last to accept Christ as our holiness, perfection, and victory.

2. I will not overcome sin.

After acknowledging God's evaluation of us, we must even cease to think of victory because we have given up all hope. To say with conviction that "I have been crucified with Christ" means that hereafter we do not care about victory or defeat because we lay everything in the hands of Christ. We cease to care about overcoming. We have to tell God that we commit ourselves to Him and that victory is His business and not ours.

What we bring to God of ourselves, when we come to Him, we must leave with Him. He who knows how to cast off to God and leave it there will be delivered. Once we give up on trying doing anything on our own, we have freed God to move on our behalf.

2. It is necessary for us to believe that "*...the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.*"

- a. We have to believe what God says is true.

The Scriptures say that Christ is our head. He is the head and we are members of His body. This is faith (Ep.1:22; 4:15).

Paul tells us that He is the “...*head of the Body, the Church*” and that in “...*everything He might have the supremacy*” (Co.1:18).

The Word of God reveals to us that Christ is the Vine and we are the branches (Jn.15:5). We are to bear fruit as He does. We are to be filled with virtues as He is. He has given His “sap”, that is to say, His life and fruit-producing power to us. He is presently supplying to us His life with His perfection and holiness and all other virtues.

God assures us that we are joined to Christ. Christ is our Head, our Trunk and our Food. We do not need to ask God to give us power so that we can live as Christ lived, because He has given His Son to us to be our power of life, to care and live for us. He has given His Son to us that the perfection, communion, joy, and riches of His Son may live through us. We must believe He is our life and that whenever and whatever our need is, He will supply it (Jn.6:51, 56)

We receive victory by accepting it. As we believe God's Word, we receive His gift by faith. The Holy Spirit then takes our faith to be the starting point for God's miracle to be done in us.

2. We are to believe that we have received and we shall have it.

If we believe the result will follow. If we wait for the result, we will never have the victory. If we are waiting for the result before we dare to say we have the life that wins, then in reality what we believe is our own experience, not the Word of God. As soon as we believe in God's Word, then the experiences, feeling, and victory will follow. Paul did not say, "I feel I have overcome." What he declared was that "*...that life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.*"

As we believe, we shall see the Son of God fighting on your behalf. He will gain the victory for us. He will take away our bad temper, hardness, pride, and jealousy.

We must fulfill these basic conditions. On one hand we must yield and on the other we must believe in the Son of God. We must believe in God's fact of Christ living in us. This is victory.

H. Boiling It Down

God wants us to live a winning life, but we must learn to yield control of our inner life to the power of the Holy Spirit. We must deal with destructive attitudes, such as arrogance, a critical spirit, jealousy, pride, and competition. We must develop good attitudes that are a result of God's work in our life. These attitudes will include certain attributes.

1. Humility will be an attitude we have (Ro.12:10; Pr.15:33).

2. We will be teachable (Pr.1:5)

3. We will have compassion for others (Mk.1:41).
4. We will have patience (Is.40:31; La.3:25; Ja.1:2-4).
5. We will display generosity (Lk.6:38; 2Co.9:6)
6. We will be diligent (Pr.10:4; 12:24; 13:4; 21:5; 22:29).
7. We will serve with enthusiasm.

We should let our attitude toward God be wholesome. Do not question God's ways even when we think He should be questioned. We are to respect God, fear Him, Love Him and serve Him with our whole heart

When adversities come knocking at our door of faith, do not be frightened. Stand courageously because we are serving the Lord of Lords (1Pe.5:8-10). We are to keep our faith glowing and our fire burning.

When people criticize us, we can retaliate, ignore them or use the criticism for our benefit. We should choose to use it for our benefit by scrutinizing it and checking to see whether there is any truth in it. Maybe it is the Lord Who is speaking to us about changing our lifestyle. Maybe it is the enemy attacking us, or maybe it is empty noise.

We are to not neglect our talents, though small, but to use them. Our attitude towards God's Word should be high. Read it, believe it and act on it. God's Word is our teacher, friend, guide, and cherished treasure.

IV. INTIMATELY

LEARNING TO KNOW GOD

In the Scriptures we find that one of God's greatest desires is for us to get to know Him personally and intimately. This kind of knowing is more than head knowledge or mere awareness of His existence. He wants us to know Him and walk with Him. He also desires to be involved in our ministry. He wants us to be in partnership with Him. It is through this personal relationship that we are able to walk in His power.

A. Know God in Our spirit

This is what the Lord says: *"Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands*

and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord (Je.9:23-24).

We can read and be taught about God, but if we do not know Him in our heart, all the head knowledge is useless. It is the relationship between us and Him that makes our religion real.

B. Personal Revelation of Jesus

Jesus answered, *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (Jn.14:6). God spoke to our forefathers *"...through the prophets..."* but in these last days *"...He has spoken to us by His Son"* (He.1:1-2). Many are always learning but not *"coming to the truth"* (2Ti.3:7). It is Christ Who reveals the Father to us. We cannot truly know God unless it is through His Son. One reason God used Moses mightily was because he knew God as a personal friend and understood God's ways. Unfortunately, the children of Israel kept on conflicting with God because all they knew was His great miracles. They did not understand His ways like Moses did (Ps.103:7; He.3:10).

God wants all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth (1Ti.2:4). We must learn to know God's ways, His thoughts and desires for our lives. We should not let our emotions stand in between. We must allow Him to be God and Lord over us.

Knowing God is not a one time experience, but a lifetime process. It is gradual and progressive. Knowing God is a paradox. The more we know, the more we realize how little we know of Him (Hos.6:3; Ep.1:17; Co.1:9-10; 2Pe.3:18).

God, through His grace, has given us the ability to know Him (1Jn.5:20; Je.24:7). As human beings our capacity to know God is limited, but God in His grace has revealed Himself to us through His Son so that we may know Him and love Him. Otherwise, He is beyond our understanding. Our minds are too limited to absorb His being. Only by faith can we truly believe in Him.

C. Freedom in Knowledge

Lacking the knowledge of God can lead people to bondage and captivity. However, knowing Him brings joy and freedom (Hos.6:6; Is.5:13; Hos.4:1, 6; Hos.5:4). Knowing God intimately brings life into our mortal bodies (Jn.17:3; 1Jn.5:20). The greatest reason for our calling is that we may know Him and be His witnesses to the rest of the world (Is.43:10).

D. Does God Know We Exist?

Certainly He does, for He tells us that He knows His "sheep" (Jn.10:14). This is not just knowledge of us after we were born (Ro.8:28). God knows us fully (1Co.13:9,12). God wants to know us by name: In other words, He wants to know us intimately like He did Moses, Abraham and David (Ex.33:17; Is.43:1; 45:3, 4).

E. Our Hearts Should Cry Out

Listen to the heart of Moses (Ex.33:13). Listen to the heart of Paul (Php.3:7-8). Our heart's cry should be to know Him also (1Jn.2;3-4).

F. Walking With God

1. First of all, we must possess sound Biblical truth (Mt.22:29; 2Ti.3:15).

It is through His Word that we know what God wants for our lives. His Word will guide us and give us wisdom. His Word will enlighten us. We cannot know God without knowing His Word (Jn.1:1).

It is necessary to remove the spirit of pride from our hearts to walk with Him (Ob.1:3; 2Ch.32:26; Pr.16:18). Pride is deceitful and greatly hinders spiritual growth. We must have the spirit of humility in order to grow spiritually and have a healthy relationship with God (Da.4:37; Pr.18:12; 1Pe.5:5).

We must not be more concerned with what people think of us than what God thinks of us. This is fear of man." Be "God-conscious" rather than "people-conscious." When you are wrong, accept it, repent, and move on.

To deal with pride and selfishness the following selfish attitudes must be overcome: self-will, self-indulgence, self-seeking, self-importance, self-love, selfish desires and choices, self-righteousness, and selfish prayers.

2. We must learn to develop our faith.

Faith is a principle thing in a Christian's walk. In order to have faith in God, we must believe and trust in Him. Without these two (2) ingredients, we can not have faith.

Faith is important for anyone In order to possess the spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

3. We must learn to be obedient.

Obedience is saying goodbye to our past life and being willing to follow Christ wherever He leads us. It is cutting out our hardness of heart and being willing to forgive those who have hurt us. Obedience is denying ourselves our quest for self-glory and living instead to please the Lord and to serve others.

- a. No personal cost is too much to give up for the lord.
- b. Obeying God will result in fruit-bearing (Jn.15:4-5).

Do not bring a strong will into God's ministry. If we have a strong will that is not subject to change, then the ministry is not our place. Unless our ministry to God is based on obedience, it is subject to producing death rather than life.

Obedience must begin with the heart before it can be expressed eternally. It is, after all, our inner life which determines the outer life. In other words, our inner attitudes govern our actions.

Humility is the foundation to obedience. Jesus, who is our role model, chose to be born in a humble home and live a humble life. He humbled Himself by becoming human (Mt.11:29; Lk.14:11; Ro.12:16; Php.2:3).

Humility is simply seeing ourselves for who and what we are, no more and no less. St. Francis of Assisi said, "What a man is before God, that he is, and not more.

A man of God writes that:

“Our lives need to be channeled and directed, much like a river. As the banks of the river provide limits for the flow of water, so authority directs and channels the life of the Church and the individual believer. Obedience is the recognition of the “river banks” which God places in the flow of our pilgrimage through life.

Jesus shattered the Idea of mere ritual performance, placing a high degree of importance on heartfelt obedience to God. *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments”* (Jn.14:15). He stated unequivocally, *‘For whoever does the will of My heavenly Father is My brother, and sister, and mother’* (Mt.12:50). In John's Gospel, Christ enjoined His listeners, *‘If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love just as I have kept My Father's commandments and remain in His love’* (Jn.14:10). Jesus strongly relates obedience to love.

Obviously, then, obedience is not merely a legal injunction but a love response to God: a love response directly related to the concept of true humility before God Almighty. We are told in the New Testament that if our humility and love result in holy obedience, our holiness will actually surpass that of the ‘scribes and Pharisees’” (Mt.5:20).

Obedience is not easy. Sometimes it involves suffering, as in the case of our Lord (Lk.22:42-44; He.5:8-10). However, obedience is the supreme test of faith.

I. **TEAMWORK LEADERSHIP**

God is looking for us to get our thinking changed to Kingdom thinking. If we will examine the Lord's work closely, we will see that He built a team in order to get the job done. Jesus poured Himself into those 12 disciples that He might build the Kingdom. Too often a pastor works himself to the breaking point due to the fact that he does not build a team to help him. There is also the problem of the believers who say that "we pay the pastor to do that". No, we do not! The reason we have a pastor is to have one who will gather, care for, heal the hurts and train us, that we believers might do the work of the ministry (Ep.4:12).

The pastor who does not build a team will find that he cannot grow beyond approximately 100 people. But if he builds a team, he may be able to lead thousands through those that he trains. Someone said that it was not about numbers. Yes it is! Jesus does not want any to perish (2Pe.3:9).

The man who builds a team of leaders finds that his influence is multiplied and that church/ministry becomes much more influential in the nation, as well as around the world. The man who does not build a team finds that he has no one to send around the world. Nehemiah is an example of a man who built a team. His team was built from those who were discouraged due to affliction and reproach. Even Sanballat, an example of Satan, did not believe that the wall could be rebuilt around Jerusalem by those who were discouraged and reproached (Ne.4:1-2). His statement was, "Can these burned stones be used to rebuild the wall"? Of course God can do anything if His people are willing to undertake it. But it took a team. We can see in Nehemiah's story that every man built his part of the wall (Ne.3:1-31).

Another aspect of this story is the fact that though these men labored, they were also prepared for war (Ne.4:16). Though there was an enemy that was threatening them, they did not lose their focus of rebuilding the walls and setting up the gates of the city that their reproach might be taken away. This work to rebuild the wall did not just happen. God put it in Nehemiah's heart to do it, but he needed the King, Artaxerxes, to allow him to go and build. Not only did the king allow him to go, but sent a contingent of soldiers and supplied the materials to complete the gates. Nehemiah finished what God called him to do because he built a team and they worked together.

Certain things were required before this could happen. There are things that we should look for as a leader, things that are required, before we can accomplish great things with a team. As a leader we should be looking for three things: 1) greater change in people; 2) greater commitment from people; 3) greater crowds of people.

A. Why People Follow Leaders

People follow us because of our leadership, not because of our preaching or teaching. There are several things that we should know about leadership. For instance, leadership is influence. Leadership is the ability to obtain followers. If we think we are leading, and no one is following, then we are just taking a walk. But if we can obtain followers, the next step will be to turn them into leaders themselves.

Leadership is moving and motivating people who were uninterested to fulfill a cause. That is, there is the cause of the Kingdom, which is at the heart of the Lord's work. Far too often, leaders want to remain in the spotlight, and claim the ministry as "mine". Actually, a leader is a steward of his staff. Everything that we claim as "mine" the enemy can steal. All that we say is God's, the enemy cannot steal. Many people come to church, but are uninterested in building the Kingdom. Others come to church, interested in building the Kingdom, but not knowing how. It is the leader's responsibility to move both groups, as much as possible, into fulfilling the call God gives us to work for the Kingdom.

Leadership is not administration. While there are many administrators, they will not cast vision, and most likely will not train others to take positions of leadership. Further, leadership is not organizational skills. There are many who can organize who cannot cast vision. For leadership to be truly influential, vision must be cast. When the Lord gives the leader a vision, that leader will gain a passion which will filter down through the body, and especially to potential leaders. This is vitally important, for humans do not attack and gain the victory if they do not have a passion for something.

B. Leaders Must Grow

A leader's growth and leadership abilities determines the growth of the new, potential leaders. It is truth that our staff will unlikely surpass us in leadership growth. In fact, the ministry leader who does not grow himself becomes "cork in the bottle" which stops the growth of the others. So as a leader, we must continue to grow, just like we expect those who are joining us in leadership.

Leaders must grow in influence, which means that those who are influential will be attracted to them. This comes about because of a spirit of excellence. So how do we grow? We must plan, schedule, and follow through with regular commitment to leadership growth. That means that we will seek to grow through listening to CDs or watch DVDs on leadership. It means that we will buy and read books on leadership, attend conferences and meetings on leadership, and develop relationships with other leaders.

God designed the universal Body of Christ this way. God designed us to be inter-dependent rather than independent. There is much that we can learn from the goose in this area. It is very seldom we will ever see a single goose flying. Geese fly together for benefit of the entire group. There is a leader goose out front, and the geese then fly in a "V" formation behind the lead goose for a reason. The reason is that

there is a 70% lift factor for those who follow the lead goose. The lead goose takes all of the head wind, laboring to accomplish the goal. When that lead-goose becomes tired, he will drop out of the leadership position, fall in line behind other geese, and take a period of rest. Another goose then moves up and takes the leadership role, facing the headwind.

If we will listen to geese passing overhead, we will hear them honking. They are honking encouragement to the lead goose. How much we can learn from this! How much better it is to honk encouragement to our leaders than to criticize them and tear them down. After all, we do not know what they are facing, and certainly the enemy shoots at them rather than others who are not facing the headwind. Geese function in teamwork to attain the goal. How much quicker we would reach the goal if the church would do the same thing. After all, “no one can whistle a symphony. It takes an orchestra to play it.” (H.E. Luccock)

C. Choosing Friends

The friendships we choose will cause us to be refreshed or they will cause us to be trapped. Those friendships entered into that have strings attached will trap us. Friendships are vital to us, for iron sharpens iron. Therefore, the leader must be around other leaders, that they may be sharpened.

Those who are friends in the church should be loyal and involved with church. These are the people we should be spending quality time with. There is such great danger to be involved with negative people. Those people who say it cannot be done, not only do not do it, but they also slow down those who say it can be done.

True friends within the church are those who have demonstrated a willingness to serve without recognition. This means that they do not have to have the spotlight. Those who have to have the spotlight are those who have an ego problem. This has likely come about because they did not receive recognition as a child, were not approved of by their father, and are now seeking that approval. We cannot lead people if we “need” people. Those who need people are always requiring approval. The problem with those who require approval is that they can never make hard decisions. Leaders must come to the place where they recognize that they will not please everyone with their decisions, but they also recognize that the decision must be made.

Many leaders need every one’s approval and everyone’s help. When we meet that leader, we will have found a leader that cannot go very far. After all, we must have God’s approval and not man’s. The ability to make those unpopular decisions is one of the reasons why God chooses a person to be the

leader. We must make the decision, no matter whether we will be criticized or not. And perhaps we should say this also, some people will never be satisfied, no matter what decision is made.

D. Developing Leaders

Good leaders develop followers, while great leaders develop leaders. That is a profound statement. Some people try to build a team by getting them shirts that match. Wearing the same shirts does not make a group of people a team. (Buchholz and Roth) So how do we become a great leader? How do we step above the mediocre, or even the good, to the great leader level? It is done a step at a time, by a daily strategy.

1. Daily strategy

We have to get our spirit ready every day for the task before us. This means that we do not skip a day, get lazy, and go a week until we get back on our plan. Many examples lie before us. Michael Jordan, arguably the greatest basketball player that ever played, worked harder in practice than did his teammates. He showed up for practice early, stayed late, and worked hard while he was their. He was developing himself as a great leader. His development into a great leader also developed Scottie Pippen, a tremendous basketball player in his own right, as well as others.

So what kind of daily strategy must we set? We must discipline our priorities, focusing on the things that will bring about change in us. Change is good. When we change, we grow. We must implement a leadership growth process for ourselves, as well as implementing a leadership growth process for others. That is, we encourage them to take the same kind of steps we are taking. We do this by example and by our words. Some have gone so far as to require growth by setting up schedules with books and DVDs and CDs that their followers, leaders and potential leaders, might develop as they are.

Another step in our daily strategy is to focus less on the event and more on the process. What are we saying? Processes carry out what events start. Events are not bad, but if there is no follow-up, due to a real change on the inside, the church or ministry group will begin to depend upon events. This will mean that there is no true growth, as we are always waiting on the next event rather than moving on what has changed inside of us.

2. Thinking time

Every great leader has established a thinking time slot in their week. A thinking time slot is a period of time in which they will allow no disruptions. No cell phone, no visitors, no telephone- nothing except meditation and thought, allowing the Holy Spirit to direct them. Why do they do that? They are working to produce creativity and ideas that are truly theirs. Holy Spirit knows everything. God is omniscient, and all the great ideas belong to him. However, for us to rush here and there, without a time to think and meditate, we will find it impossible for Him to download to us.

Not only must we establish a thinking timeslot in our week, we also need to record our thoughts on paper. This is very important, for Holy Spirit does not shout at us, or come back and repeat very often. It is disobedient to hear the Lord's thoughts and not carry them out. He did not give them to us just because He had nothing else to do. He gave them to us that as a leader we might accomplish His purposes. This includes having a notepad beside our bed. It seems like God delights to give us things in the night season. Perhaps this is because we have not actually spent time being available to Him during the day.

Along the same line, it is good to share with someone else our thoughts, especially someone who has traveled the road it seems the Lord is directing us on. This is another reason our associations are so important. Not only should we make friends with the people in the church, but also with those who are outside the church who are believers and have traveled the road we are traveling. As we noted above, iron sharpens iron. To rub shoulders with another leader helps us to become better at being a leader.

E. God Ordained Purpose

God has an ordained purpose for every person, church, and organization. For us to be successful, we must understand that purpose. This is different from vision. Vision is seasonal, while purpose compels people to follow a leader. Purpose is the master of our motivation, giving birth to hope and the passion to act. Purpose is eternal, while vision is seasonal.

Purpose compels people to follow the leader. Purpose is the master of motivation and the mother of commitment. When we see our purpose, there is something on the inside of us that gets us started, while it also gives us the reason for commitment to that purpose. Purpose gives birth to hope, and it will instill passion in us to act. Every human being wants to know what their purpose is. In fact, one of the great questions of life is "Why am I here?" When we learn the reason why we are here, we become fulfilled and committed people.

Purpose is why we exist. God's purpose, the worship of Himself, is why He made us. He wanted a family that He could fellowship with. Jesus is the firstborn of many brethren. Jesus, rising from the dead, became the first of those who would fellowship with the Father. From this understanding we can see that purpose is eternal, while vision is temporary. Our purpose is our mission.

F. Vision

It might seem from the previous statements on purpose that vision is not vitally important. This is not true. Our vision, the one God shows us, is a focus or blueprint to fulfill the mission. Vision has many responsibilities, such as: 1) vision produces unity; 2) vision generates excitement; 3) vision provides direction; 4) vision brings clarity; 5) vision involves everyone.

There is room in this world for people with vision, people who are willing to pay the price to make this world a better place to live. These are people who dream God's dream and feel God's desire for humanity. These are people who vow to seek God's best in everything they do for others and for themselves. These are people who turn daydreams into realities and believe that they are God's workmanship. They sing along with the music that stirs inside their hearts, paint the beauty that forms in their minds, build bridges across rivers, trails through the woods, ships to cross the oceans, planes to cross the sky, tunnels through the mountains, and they leave a legacy behind them as a gift to their fellow beings and as a sign of thanksgiving to their Creator.

G. WHY???

Why do we do it that way? The eight deadly words of the organized church are "That is not the way we do it." This is a picture of those who are stuck in a rut. Ruts are dangerous. Ruts are actually graves with the ends kicked out. We must be ready to minister a positive word in a world of negatives. We must be ready to minister at any time. Leaders, true leaders, will have the mind set of ministering at every season. What about those who are potential leaders? It takes different tools to build the house. We would never think of using a hammer to cut a 2"X4" board in two parts.

Actually, it takes those who care. Yes, we know, Jesus is the One building the house, but He uses the different tools that are in the house to build it. Change has to happen in us for us to grow, and change has to happen in us for most of us to care. God uses those who care. We share here seven goals for the person who cares: 1) commitment to the goal; 2) goals to motivate toward purpose; 3) thinking big; 4) covering the other leader's back; 5) setting small goals to reach bigger goals; 6) preparing to reach the goals; 7) making it a win-win situation. If we are looking to put our life into other potential leaders, we should always avoid the person who does not care. They will never make a quality leader.

H. Connected

A team, by its very definition, is a connected group that knows it is connected. If they are disconnected, they are no longer a team. How can we know if there is a connection or a disconnection? It is actually quite easy. When people are disconnected, their interaction will be very formal. There will be social niceties, but no heart to heart conversation. These people will discuss the weather, or the latest ballgame score, but not the thing that is really troubling their heart. They will never discuss together of that which is at the very root of the situation. Opposite that, the connected person is willing to share their heart.

When people are not connected, they will never expose any conflict. The reason they do not expose the conflict is because they are too concerned about being hurt again. There is no trust there. They will talk about it to everyone else, but never with the person that they are having a conflict with. This also means that there will be no give and take. They will not grab each other and hug and tease with them. We only do that with people we truly love and are connected to. That is the reason why it is very easy for most families to hug and kiss each other without a problem.

Along this same avenue of thought, those who are disconnected will not spend time together outside the church building. The reason they will not do this is because they are uncomfortable about random activities with others. When we are connected to others, we have no problem sitting down and eating a meal with them, going fishing, to a ballgame, or some other leisurely activity. When we are disconnected from the group, the nearest thing we will get to comfort is to worship in the same building. This means that those who are disconnected are always looking for the time when the service is over with so they can get away from those they are uncomfortable with.

Further, those who are disconnected will not reschedule personal situations for the team's benefit. If they have something that is in their personal schedule and it conflicts with the team's schedule, they will choose their personal schedule. The reason is that they are disconnected from the vision of the group. Disconnected people will not relate to any new person that may attend the group. We will not find them going to a new visitor and shaking their hands and introducing themselves. Since they are disconnected from the large group, they are highly unlikely to get connected to a new person. People who are disconnected will never be a part of the team, never truly help build the Kingdom, and never receive the benefit of teamwork.

II. IMPACT OF TEAMWORK

John Maxwell says "One is too small a number to achieve greatness." That is a profound statement. Many of us admire those who have been successful in all kinds of fields of endeavor. We love pioneers and bold individualists, those who succeed despite odds and opposition. However, nothing that really matters has been achieved by an individual that acts alone. Some seem to be solo efforts, but the truth is, great achievement is always a team effort. Albert Einstein, the man who developed the theory of relativity said,

"Many times a day, I realize how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the labors of my fellow men, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received."

In physics, Einstein's theory is that space and time are relative concepts rather than absolute concepts. The part of his work that we are most acquainted with is the physics formula, $E = mc^2$, which is to say, energy and mass are equivalent and transmutable. Unless we are a scientist, these statements are likely far over our head. But the point is, Einstein had such great mental ability and yet recognized that others going before him had helped him reach the place he had reached.

Team work has been important in America's history, whether we are talking about the wagon trains that conquered the West, the hundreds of laborers who laid railroad tracks to transgress America in a faster fashion, the assembly of the huge airplanes that transport men and cargo around the world, or space shuttles that put men and materials into space. No man can claim to have done any of these things. This

tends to prove the Chinese proverb, “Behind an able man there are always other able men.” C Gene Wilkes, writing in the book *Jesus On Leadership*, says this of the deep history of teamwork: 1) teams afford more resources, ideas, and energy than can an individual; 2) teams maximize the leader’s potential and minimizes his weaknesses; 3) teams provide multiple perspectives on meeting any need or reaching a goal, thus providing several alternatives for each situation; 4) teams share credit for victories and blame for defeats, exposing humility and authentic community; 5) teams hold leaders accountable for the gold; 6) teams simply achieve more than the individual.

A. Working Alone

When we understand the potential of teamwork, we scratch our heads as to why people try to do things by themselves. There are several reasons, including:

1. Temperament

Those who are not outgoing tend to not think in terms of teams, as they do not think about enlisting others to help achieve the goal. While some, facing a challenge, seek to find someone to team up with them, others do not work that way. The person who is not naturally inclined to seek to be part of a team tends to create barriers to their own potential. Much more can be achieved as a result of working with others rather than against them. Teams are required if anything that has lasting value is to be achieved. Even the introverted person can enjoy the benefits of participating with a team. We need each other. Humans require support in this thing called life. In life, we need the give-and-take, the confessing and forgiving, and the reaching out to embrace and rely upon others. There is no human that is a self-sufficient, independent, whole person. We really should stop trying to act like we are.

2. Insecurity

Some people are insecure and do not promote teamwork as they feel threatened by others. Yet to have others around us shows the intelligence of a leader, according to Niccolo Machiavelli. Insecurity is likely to cause a leader to surround themselves with weak people. According to John Maxwell, in his book, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, he says that only secure leaders give power to others. This comes from the fact that insecure leaders fail to build strong teams because they want to maintain control over people, or they fear being replaced by someone. Either way, leaders actually undermine their own potential and keep their people from their best efforts when they surround themselves with weak people. This is to deny the truth of what President Woodrow Wilson said, “We should not only use all the brains we have, but all that we can borrow.”

3. Ego

Some people like to believe that they can do everything, though these “Supermen” or “Superwomen” do not really exist. Trying to do everything soon puts us in a position of failure, opening our eyes to the truth. When we come to realize that other people can help us do a better job than we could do alone, it means we are developing. If we are going to do something big, we will have to let go of our ego and encourage others to join with us in the project.

4. Naïveté

To be naïve is to underestimate the size of the task before us. Trying to go alone, these people fail to become team builders, and then fail in the vision or goal. There is potential to escape from this situation, as a person discovers that their dream is bigger than their capabilities. Recognizing that they cannot accomplish the goal alone, they began to build a team to achieve their goal. For some, the realization comes too late, so they give up and never accomplish the goal.

B. The Impact of Teamwork

Perhaps teamwork is nowhere seen to be as beneficial as in the military. At the lowest level, a squad of men, probably led by a young lieutenant, will work together to root out the enemy. They cover each other for protection. Every man in the squad has his eyes out for the enemy. When the enemy is found, covering fire will be given in order for other members of the squad to get in better positions to kill the enemy. If a member of the squad is wounded, other members will come to his aid, covering him and rescuing him from the enemy fire. Each man in the squad is assigned to do a particular job and will carry it out. One may be a sniper with a long-range rifle and scope, while another carries a mortar launcher. Yet another has the ammunition for the mortar launcher, and others carry and use automatic weapons. Each man in the squad depends upon others in order to accomplish the goal, the elimination of the enemy without loss of life. This can be seen in every aspect of the military. Each man is trained to perfection that he might add his part to the overall achievement of the goal. No one goes it alone.

At every level of the military we can see this precision training and preparation for achieving the goal. From the tank team, which train to use long-range guns as well as short range, to the aircraft carrier that has a precision team for launch and retrieval of aircraft as well as those who prepare the planes, to those who fire the missiles. In each we can see great preparation and teamwork in the precision processes of achieving the goal.

The same is true in all kinds of teams. In a choir, each voice level must stay not only at their level, but also sing their part. In the sports team, each member has a part to play and the team is likely a loser if members do not carry out their part. So it is at work, business, Ministry, and just about every other kind

of activity we might be involved in. In each of these areas, teamwork is what causes more to be done than we could possibly do by ourselves. There is a compounding effect that takes place, including talent

John Maxwell says that there are essentially five impacts of good teamwork: 1) teamwork divides the effort and multiplies the effect; 2) talent wins games, but teamwork wins championships; 3) teamwork is not about you; 4) great teams create community; 5) adding value to others adds value to you. (John Maxwell, *Teamwork 101*) Let us explore these impacts.

1. Dividing the effort-multiplying the effect

Teamwork provides better results from less work. People working together can always do more than the person who works alone. This is true beyond the simple mathematical standpoint. Synergy, the cooperative interaction among groups, especially among the acquired subsidiaries or merged parts of a corporation, that creates an enhanced combined effect, is what we are talking about. It is the interaction of two or more agents or forces so that their combined effect is greater than the sum of their individual effects.

While this technical understanding of synergism is important, the impact is greater than our understanding. Synergism can be difficult in the beginning, for teams seldom come together or develop on their own. To develop a team, there must be leadership and cooperation. This means that there is usually more work on the front end, while putting the team together, than there is at the back end where we actually reach the goal. However, the front end work is worth it.

2. Winning championships

The New England Patriots football team, winner of three Super Bowl championships in a four-year period, has a sign in their locker room that says:

“Individuals play the game, but teams win championships.”

How appropriate the understanding that no one individual can win a championship. While there are many excellent football players on the team, not one of them can get the whole job done. This team and others like them are models of teamwork. Other examples abound, such as the Boston Celtics who dominated the NBA and have won more championships than any other team in NBA history (eight consecutive championships). Perhaps even more amazing than their eight consecutive championships is the fact that they never had a single player who led the league in scoring. The coach of the team said,

“One person seeking glory doesn’t accomplish much; everything we’ve done has been the result of people working together to meet our common goals.”

Business has its teamwork also. Harold S. Geneen, leader of ITT (International Telephone and Telegraph) for 20 years said,

“The essence of leadership is the ability to inspire others to work together as a team- to stretch for a common objective.”

If it works in business, and it works in sports, and it works in the military then why do we not use it in ministry?

3. It is not about me

A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a purpose, performance goals and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable, according to the Harvard Business School. This can be a challenge which requires good leadership, for sometimes people do not want to work together as team members. Another problem is that the more talented an individual is the better qualified the leadership must be in order to get them to work with others as a team. We could say that getting people to work hard together is the true measure of leaders. Following are some quotes from men who have been involved in team leadership:

“The freedom to do your own thing ends when you have obligations and responsibilities. If you want to fail yourself- you can- but you cannot do your own thing if you have responsibilities to team members.” (Lou Holtz)

“In order to have a winner, the team must have a feeling of unity. Every player must put the team first ahead of personal glory.” (Paul Bryant)

“If the team is to reach its potential, each player must be willing to subordinate his personal goals to the good of the team.” (Bud Wilkinson)

“There are plenty of teams in every sport that have great players and never win titles. Most of the time, those players aren’t willing to sacrifice for the greater good of the team. The funny thing is, in the end, their unwillingness to sacrifice only makes individual goals more difficult to achieve. One thing I believe to the fullest is that if you think and achieve as a team, the individual accolades will take care of themselves. Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships.” (Michael Jordan)

“Team work requires that everyone’s efforts flow in a single direction. Feelings of significance happen when the team’s energy takes on a life of its own.” (Pat Riley)

From these comments and others, we can see that great teams have players who made decisions based on what was best for the team and not based only on what they thought was good for them as individuals. There is no organization or group for which it is not true. While many highly talented people have strong egos, that individual ego must be converted into sacrifice and synergy for the team.

True team leaders are those who believe that they do not have all the answers and therefore do not try to provide them. They also believe that they do not have to make all the key decisions, so they do not. Truly great team leaders understand they cannot succeed without the combined contribution of every member of the team for the common goal. This causes them to avoid words or actions that would hinder another team member's input or anything that might intimidate another team member.

4. Creating community

No team can be effective or reach their goal without creating an environment that relationships can grow in. This means that teammates must become connected to one another for success. This has been called community, which is an environment based on trust. Without trust, little can be accomplished.

When we examine winning teams, we find that the players extend trust to each other. While there is a risk that their trust might be violated, and they could be hurt, they actually give trust freely and conduct themselves in a way that will earn the trust of others. Those who give freely of trust will develop bonds of trust which will be tested over time. As trust is tested and proven to be trustworthy, players begin to believe and have faith in each other. They learn that the other person will be consistent in keeping their commitments, maintaining their confidences and support. As the sense of community grows, so grows the potential to work together.

Those who extend trust to others will find that there still may be conflict. Because we are individuals, disagreements can and likely will, be experienced. All relationships have tension, but with good leadership, they will be worked out. Some think that unity is a place where there are no disagreements. This is not true. If this is the idea people have, many will hide their concerns to protect that false notion of unity. We do not have to avoid the conflict, but rather acknowledge and face the disagreement and deal with it.

The true spirit of community has a reconciling spirit. That is, we face the conflict, find the places of agreement, and continue to be on the same team, which reaches for the goal. Even if we disagree, we should do so agreeably. Not everyone will agree with a particular position, but no one should leave the team just because of the conflicting position.

5. Adding value

As we add value to others, they add value to us. Sometimes people “join” a team for their personal benefit. Some are looking for a title and position, but not the responsibility. Others desire to be a star and want a supporting cast. This attitude will hurt and hinder a team. When a very talented person (or even a mildly talented person) has a mind to serve, great things will happen.

Those who take advantage of others will fail in business and in relationships. Those who add value to others will succeed. These are the same thoughts Jesus had. He said, *“No greater love has a man than that he lay down his life for his friends.”* The 28th President of the United States of America, Woodrow Wilson, understood this. He said,

“You are not here merely to make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with a greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and to impoverish yourself if you forget the errand.”

C. Accomplishing the Dream

To accomplish the dream we must put together a team to help us. God sets great tasks before us. The greatest task that we could ever have is the preaching of the Gospel to the whole world. The Apostle Paul said, “How shall they hear except a preacher is sent?” (Ro.10:15) Following are some questions that we need to answer that we might put together the proper team.

1. What is my dream?

The answer to this question reveals much. If we do not have a dream, we will never cause much to happen. The really great things that happen start with a really great dream.

God places things in our hearts for His purpose. God shows us our possibilities, by what He puts in our hearts.

Hold fast to dreams for if dreams die,

Life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams for when dreams go,

Life is a barren field frozen with snow.

(Langston Hughes)

2. Who are my team members?

A person's current situation is measured by this question. Our potential for accomplishing the dream is only as good as the current team. This gives us reason to examine who is joining us on the journey.

Halfhearted companions will never help us accomplish the dream. Great dreams with bad teams will only produce nightmares.

3. What is the quality of my team?

To accomplish the dream that team must be of the same size/quality. Otherwise we will not achieve it. If we have a gigantic dream, and a mediocre team, the dream will never be accomplished. A great team with a weak dream is better than a great dream with a weak team.

D. Focus on the Team

Many times those who have a dream focus more on the dream than they do on the team. This is shortsighted, for if we build the right team, the dream will be accomplished. As each dream brings challenges of its own kinds, so we must understand the type of challenge the dream brings that we may build the right kind of team.

If the challenge is something new, we must have a creative team. If the challenge creates controversy, we must have a united team. If the challenge is bringing change, we must have a flexible team. If the challenge will bring things that are not pleasant, we must have a motivated team. If there is diversity in the challenge, there must be a complementary team. If the challenge is long-term, there must be a determined team.

If we really want to achieve the dream, we must grow the team. Our motives must be correct here, for some people grow a team just to benefit self. Others simply enjoy a team experience and want to create a sense of community, without the goal of fully completing the dream. Others simply want to build an organization. These reasons are not bad, for if we are motivated by all of them as a group, those desires to build the team likely will add value to everyone on the team. If the desire is to build a team from only one of these reasons, we should re-examine our motives.

E. Team Growth

Many times the dream we have finds us in the position of not having a matching team. At this point, we can either grow that team or give up the dream. When we believe that God gives us the dream there are several things we must do to grow the team.

1. Develop members

Individual team members must grow to their potential. As leader of a team, our most important responsibility is to see potential that is in people, even though they may not see it themselves. Great leaders develop other leaders, so we must draw those leadership qualities out of them. The job of a leader is accomplished in this process. We must look at the people of our team, think upon them and determine what they need. For instance, the person who is a self reliant achiever will need responsibility. The disillusioned learner will need coaching. The cautious completer will need support. The enthusiastic beginner will need direction. These attributes are in many people who will be our team members. This means we have to give them a chance to grow by putting them in the position they need to be in.

2. Add members

As we place people in the position they need to be in, we may find that there are those that we still lack, due to the talent content of the ones who are on our team already. Recruiting talent is a vital aspect of accomplishing together as a team. While this may be one key person, at other times it may require two, three or four people. Obviously, the key person with talent in a specific area can make the difference between success and failure in accomplishing the dream.

3. Change leadership

Different types of challenges require different kinds of leadership. When a team has the right talent but is not growing, the possibility is that someone else should be stepping into the leadership role. This could be for a short season or for a more permanent timeframe.

The challenge that is faced at the moment likely determines who the leader needs to be. This is due to the fact that each team member has strengths and weaknesses. Some can cast vision and model unselfish service. Others can organize and motivate, while others can do the hard labor and yet others can do the finishing process. If we build the right kind of team, when a particular challenge shows up, there will also be a leader to meet it. If we are facing a challenge and do not seem to be making progress, we may need to change the leader.

4. Ineffective members

Team members who are ineffective will cause a winning team to lose. This may be due to poor attitudes or lack of skills. The team must always come first, which means we may have to remove a team member. That does not make them a bad person, but just that they are on the wrong team.

When there are flare-ups and tensions between team members, we should look at why that is happening. Leaders should not have to negotiate peace between two team members. Often there will be a member who is stirring up dissension that is at the root of the problem. To remove that person is to restore peace. If the team continually falls short, breaking down in morale, it is likely there is a need to change a team member.

It is important for us to remember that growing a team is demanding and requires much time-consuming effort. To achieve great dreams is to have no other choice. When the challenge escalates, the need for teamwork escalates. The effort will be worth the goal.