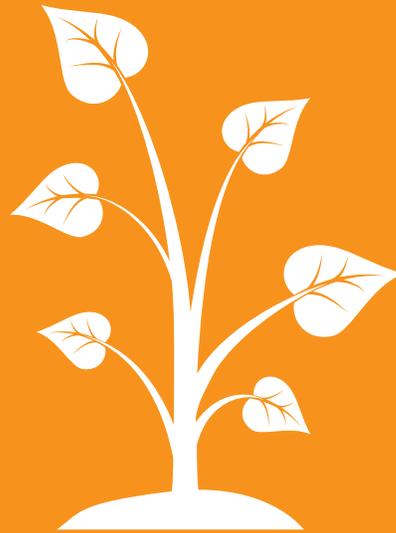




# FOUR LEVELS OF THE SCHOOL OF DISCIPLESHIP

## LEVEL 3



**MATURE**

THREE MONTHS

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

STRATEGY OF JESUS SIMPLIFIED

**strategy**



**APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY  
OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS**

**STRATEGY OF JESUS  
SCHOOL OF DISCIPLESHIP  
LEVEL 3 - MATURE**  
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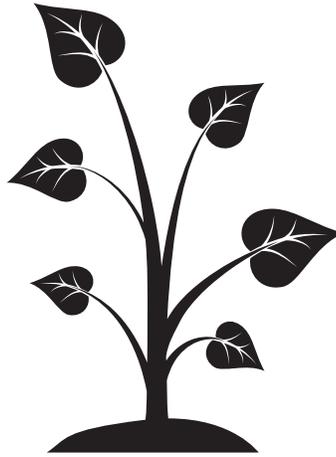
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# FOUR LEVELS OF THE SCHOOL OF DISCIPLESHIP

## LEVEL 3



**MATURE**

THREE MONTHS

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# MATURE

## DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

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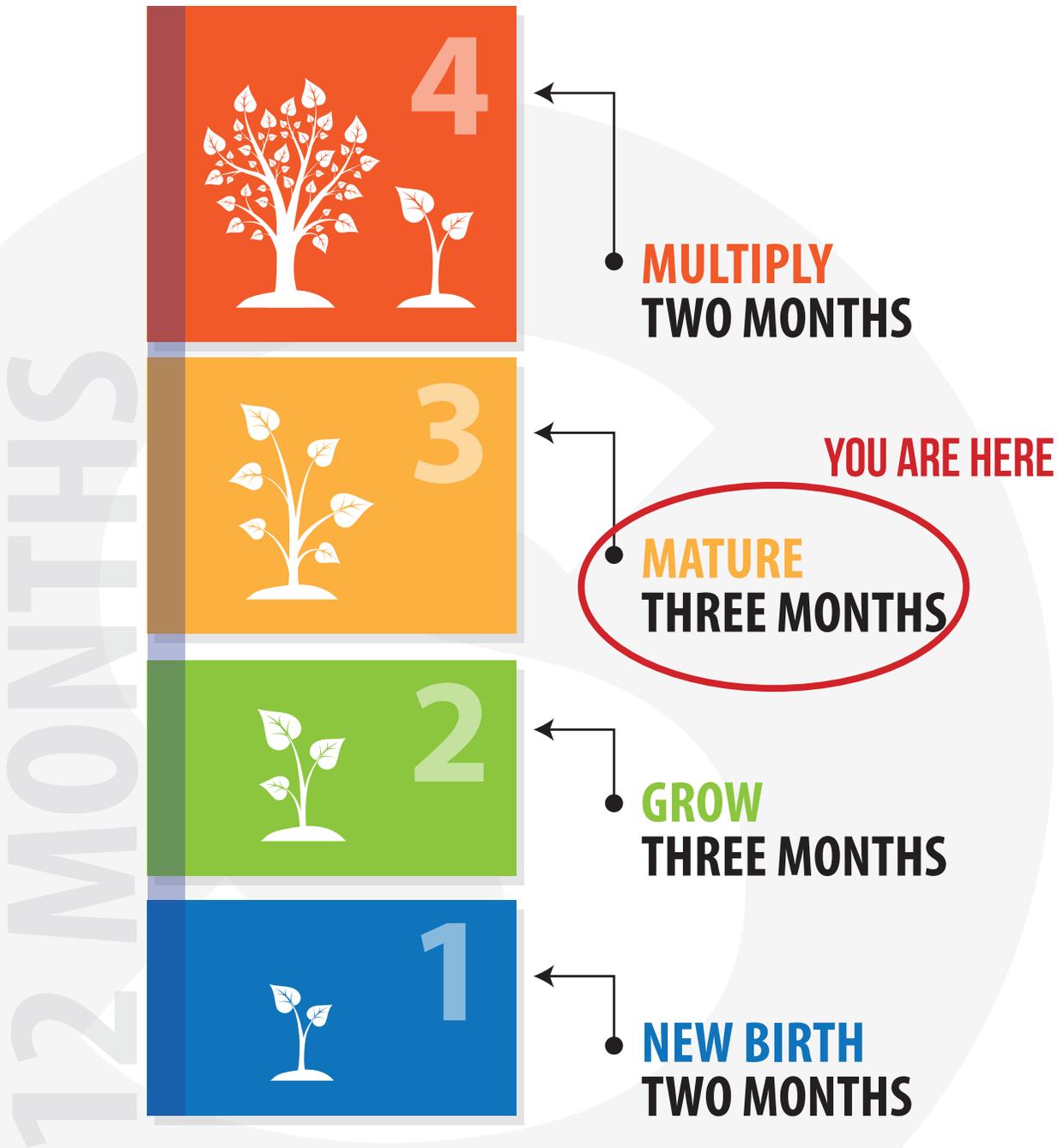
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# MATURE

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

## FOUR LEVELS OF THE SCHOOL OF DISCIPLESHIP



## LESSON 1 - CHRISTIAN MATURITY

What is Christian maturity? Can we obtain it through education or merit? Do the years we have spent in Church determine our Christian Maturity?

Memory verse: ***“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.”*** Hebrews 6:1.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Christian maturity is the goal of every believer. God does not desire for us to remain in the same place, but rather to advance in the Christian life. What does Christian maturity consist of? There are certain fundamental elements that the child of God needs in order to be victorious. Let us examine a biblical passage that shows us the great difference between maturity and immaturity. Then we will look at some of the characteristics of a mature Christian.

### 2. HARD OF HEARING

Hebrews 5:11-14: ***“...Seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”***

Hebrews chapter 5 begins by talking about the requirements for being a priest and states that Christ met all of those requirements. Verse 9 says that He, ***“...being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”*** The absolute perfection of Jesus came by means of his suffering and this made him the Author of Salvation for all of us.

After that explanation, the author makes a change of direction, which continues through chapter 6. It is remarkable that, speaking of Christ, the writer decides to pause and declare, ***“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you ...”*** V. 11, NIV

Paul wanted to communicate something important to the Hebrews, but one thing prevented him; and the second part of the verse tells us what it was: ***“Seeing ye are dull of hearing.”*** The word ***“dull”*** is the Greek word ***“nōthroī”***, which means ***“sluggish or slothful”***. The writer’s claim is that they should be in a better condition, and yet they had allowed themselves to be sluggish and slothful.

He also confronts them saying: ***“ye ought to be teachers”*** because they still needed someone to teach them the basic things of divine revelation. They should have progressed in their faith to the point of being able to teach others; however, they had become ‘dull’ or immature.

***“Are become such as have need of milk.”*** They had gone from an advancing reality to a regressive one. The Christian life is not static, but dynamic; we either move forward, or we fall behind. It becomes clear that some of the Hebrew brethren had been left behind.



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## DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

***“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age.”*** Mature individuals are those who eat solid food, who have learned to delve into the scriptures and thereby nurture their spiritual life. ***“Let us go on unto perfection”*** (Hebrews 6.1). “Perfection” here translated from the Greek word “teleiotēta”, which means “a more intelligent state” and “a moral and spiritual height”.

### 3. WHAT CHRISTIAN MATUREITY IS NOT

***(1) Maturity does not come from education or academic preparation:*** There are many that have an education but not maturity; and there are others who have little or no education but are very mature. As in the case of Moses and the Apostle Paul, God leads some to the desert, so that they can mature and learn from Him:

***“...I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”*** Philippians 3:8-14.

***(2) Maturity does not come from the accumulation of gifts or talents:*** The Corinthian church was rich in gifts: “...Ye come behind in no gift” (1 Corinthians 1.7) but the Apostle told them that they had not yet matured: ***“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”*** 1 Corinthians 3.1–3.

***(3) Maturity is not obtained through merit or seniority in the Lord:*** If so, those with the most years in the Church would be the most mature; and it is not always so. It is the intensity with which the years are lived and not the length of time lived that determines maturity. The important thing is not how old we are, but the manner in which we have responded and the attitude held when dealing with life.

### 4. WHAT CHRISTIAN MATUREITY IS

***(1) Maturity is a continuous process:*** Philo divided his students into three categories: Beginners, those who were making progress, and those who were beginning to reach maturity. Pythagoras divided them into two categories: the beginner and the mature. In 1 John 2:12, 14, the Apostle uses a triple classification: children, youth, and parents. Each of those stages had different goals and limitations; and a continuous process linked one with another.



**(2) Maturity is a natural process:** There are three stages in human development: (1) Childhood, where there is total dependence on parents. (2) Adolescence, characterized by the fight for independence and control. (3) Adulthood, where independence is achieved, and paradoxically the person learns to depend on others — what is called interdependence.

In the spiritual life, there is a similar natural process of growth. A healthy Christian has to grow and mature, otherwise he will suffer the same as the Hebrew and Corinthian brothers.

**(3) Maturity is reached by the power of the Holy Spirit:** Maturity is the result, not so much of human effort, but rather of the essential work of the Holy Spirit. The Christian must have the fruit of the Spirit in his life: **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”** Galatians 5:22–25.

Maturing, then, is not just about attending services or reading the Bible. What God seeks is fruit, and fruit of his Spirit. If there is no fruit of the Spirit, there is no spiritual maturity.

**(4) Maturity is to become like Christ:** The goal of every Christian is to be like Jesus. The apostle Paul said: “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” However, we cannot be like Christ in regards to His perfection. This is because there are two types of perfection: absolute and relative. When speaking of Christ, of course, perfection is absolute. However, when perfection is implied towards us, it is used in a relative sense.

Our perfection refers then, not to something absolute, but to the continuous progress from child to adult. According to Paul, we must continue to advance in the Christian life **“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”** Ephesians 4:13. Christ reached full maturity during His life on Earth. He completed His mission here and reached perfection.

We will not be fully mature until we are with Jesus in Heaven. We will achieve perfection when we are face to face with Him and see Him as He is (1 John 3.2). So then, the standard for measuring our progress is not man, but Christ Jesus.

**(5) Maturity is becoming experts in the use of the Word:** The mature Christian delights in the Word. For him it is not just about reading the Word but studying it in depth and meditating on it. This brings spiritual guidance and courage into your life. This believer cannot be easily deceived, because he knows and traces the Word of truth well. Berea’s brothers had become experts. They searched **“the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”** Acts 17:11.

**(6) Maturity is knowing how to discern between good and bad:** Another sign of maturity in the Christian is his ability to discern between good and bad: **“...those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”** Hebrews 5:14. We can see that the believer becomes mature through “practice” or the continuous exercise of his (spiritual) senses. Over the years, with due discipline and dedication, we learn how to make good decisions and how to apply what we have learned in Christ to our daily life.



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## DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

### 5. CONCLUSION

Colossians 3:14: ***“And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”*** As Christians, we must seek this spiritual perfection or maturity, and this will obviously involve active effort on our part.

Many Christians have stopped growing spiritually, because they have remained at the same experience they had when they were baptized. They have not endeavored to gain more knowledge of the things of God. They have not improved in their behavior either. They are still acting like children!

The Christian who is going to be mature and victorious first needs to be faithful to the Lord and then learn to value what he has, the opportunity that God is giving him. Therefore, let us leave immaturity behind and continue forward until we reach maturity.

***“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”***  
Ephesians 4:14-16.



## LESSON 2 – OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY

What is the origin of earthly authorities? Why do we say God establishes them? Why should we obey them? What consequences does disobedience bring us?

Memory verses: ***“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.” Romans 13.1. “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.” 1 Peter 2.13-14.***

### 1. INTRODUCTION

God is the origin of all the authorities in the universe. God is the one who institutes and commissions them; and they represent Him. Believers know God through His presence, by His Spirit in us; but those who do not know Him in this way can still know Him through authority, since God manifests Himself on Earth through it.

Adam and Eve lived under the direct authority of God, until they sinned and were expelled from the divine presence. At that time, man had dominion over nature; but after the flood, God also gave him authority over man: ***“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.”*** Genesis 9.6. God gave Noah authority to govern over his neighbor, and thereafter on earth, there has always been human government under whose authority we must be.

God manifests Himself above all through His delegated authorities. It is rare for men in the world to meet God directly — just as Saul did on his way to Damascus. Later study Acts 9.1–19. Here we can see once again that God avoids offering directly His instructions, commissioning someone else to dictate them (Vv. 6, 10, 11).

### 2. SUBMISSIVE TO AUTHORITY

God institutes all authorities and we must be submissive to them. Let us read Romans 13.1–7:

***“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.”***

Here we are exhorted by Paul to submit to the authorities (V. 1) since it is a sin to resist them (V. 2). We have no room to choose between obeying God or His delegated authorities. If we are truly obedient to the Lord, we will have no difficulty submitting ourselves to the authorities that He has set. We should not be like the foolish farmers of the parable (Mark 12: 1-9) who rejected the servants sent by the Lord and even His own Son.



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## DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

We can never know the direct authority of God if we are in contempt against His delegated authority, because **“there is no authority except from God.”** Whoever resists or rejects the authorities resists God himself and incurs judgment. Every rebellion brings judgment. The consequence of resisting authority is death. Therefore, we have no other alternative regarding authority than to be submissive to it, just as our Lord Jesus Christ was when we were human.

Jesus submitted to the governing authorities while living on Earth. For example, during interrogation, when the high priest adjured him by the living God to tell them if he was the Christ, Jesus immediately obeyed (Matthew 26.63–64), thus acknowledging the authority of man on earth. Our Lord never participated in rebellions. He lived to obey the law (Matthew 5.17).

Although the majority of nations today do not believe in God and their countries are under Satan’s rule, the principle of delegated authority remains unchanged. We must submit to the local authority where we live, as well as the national authority; knowing that although the laws of each nation differ, they are all derived from the law of God.

Such laws are not to instill fear in him who does good, but in him who does evil. The basic principle of God’s law is to reward what is good and to punish what is bad. For this, the servant of God “carries the sword.” He is the one who executes the laws. Now, the Christian obeys the law not only to avoid anger or punishment, but also because of conscience: our conscience reproves us if we are disobedient (Romans 13.5).

Romans 13.7 says that there are four symbols of subjection to earthly authorities: tributes, taxes, respect and honor. What is our attitude towards tax collectors and government inspectors? Respecting them and abiding by their decisions is to respect and obey God himself. Even the police that we see on the street have been instituted by Him and commissioned for an important task. It is true that it is difficult to see the authority of God in some cases, but still we owe them our subordination.

After leading his people out of Egypt and into the wilderness, God gave them commandments and ordinances; one of which says: **“You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.”** Exodus 22.28 ESV, showing that God had placed them under rulers. The children of God must not only not resist authority; but also neither should we criticize or censure it. To avoid anarchy, we must avoid all murmuring against authority (2 Peter 2.10).

### 3. DELEGATED AUTHORITIES

In the family. Study Ephesians 5.22–24; 6.1–3; Colossians 3.18,20. God’s delegated authority in the home is a key aspect of this lesson; one that the epistles do not overlook. Submission in the family is crucial. Family problems affect the work of God, as can be seen in various letters from the apostle Paul. Without submission at home, service to God is very difficult. Peter also considers rebellion against family authority as rebellion against the kingdom of God. Many of the household difficulties disappear when family members recognize authority. Also, study Titus 2.4–5; 1 Peter 3.1; 3.5–6.

God has placed the husband as the delegated authority of Christ in the family. It is difficult for a wife to submit to her husband if she does not see in him the delegated authority of God for her and her children, but she must understand that by submitting to her husband, she is actually submitting to God. As for children, God has established parents by his authority, promising long lives to those who honor their parents. Children need



to see God's authority in their parents, or their lives will really get complicated. Some may even die young for failing to pay filial honor, while others are healed after normalizing their relationship with their parents.

At work. God has also established authorities at work. Study Ephesians 6.5–7; 1 Timothy 6.1; Colossians 3.22–23. Here the servants are exhorted to submit to their masters, to please them in everything, not to be "responders" or defrauders, but faithful **"...so that in everything they adorn the doctrine of God our Savior."** Titus 2.10. Honoring the Lord's authority in employment causes others to honor the Lord's authority in us. Note that when these words were said, slavery could not be worse in the Roman Empire. Whether slavery is just or unfair is not a problem we will consider now; but we do need to understand that God commanded the servants to obey their masters.

In the church. God has instituted authorities in His Church. Study 1 Thessalonians 5.12–13; 1 Timothy 5.17; 1 Corinthians 11.3; 16.15-16. **"The elders who govern well"** and **"those who work in preaching and teaching"** must be obeyed in the Church. The youngest must learn to submit to the oldest and be willing to serve in all humility. Women are to be subject to men, for God has ordained that men represent Christs as the authority, and that women represent the Church in subjection. This is why apostolic women wear a covering or sign of subjection to authority over their heads when praying or teaching the Word. Let us read 1 Corinthians 11.10. They do this because of the angels. Then study 1 Corinthians 14.33–35; 1 Timothy 2.11–13; 1 Peter 5.5.

In the spiritual world. God has also instituted authorities in the spiritual world: 2 Peter 2:10-11. Here, the Apostle relates to us the fact that there are glorious authorities in the spirit world, under which angels have been placed. Although some of these authorities fell, the angels dare not insult them, because they were once superior. They cannot pass judgment on them, because that would be equivalent to insulting them. On one occasion, and following God's instructions, Michael searched for the body of Moses but met with the opposition of Satan. Michael could have dealt with that rebel but he did not dare to do it, but said: "The Lord rebuke you." Judas 9. Why? Because there was a time when Lucifer was chief of the archangels, and Michael, being one of them, was under his authority.

How honorable is delegated authority in the spiritual realm! It should never be despised, because any insult against it will result in the loss of spiritual power. It should be clarified that, unlike angels, God has never put us under the authority of the devil. There was a time when we fell under his rule, but we have never been under his authority.

In Acts 15, we are told that there was a council in Jerusalem where both young and old could stand up and speak to give their opinion. However, after Pedro and Pablo finished talking, James announced the decision they had reached. Pedro and Pablo referred facts, but James gave the verdict. That is, between the Elders and the Apostles there was an established order. Some were older; others, lesser: **"I am the least of the apostles"** (1 Corinthians 15.9), said Paul.

What a magnificent painting this is! In addition, this is what Satan fears the most, because it will be what finally produces his fall. Therefore, even though each brother has his opinion on some matter, only one should be the one who makes the final decision. This order has been put forth not by man, but by God. Each of us needs to know where he is and where he belongs.



# MATURE

## DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

### 4. SUBMIT TO THE AUTHORITY

After having an encounter with authority - as Saul did - we will be able to see God's authority everywhere. Where ever we go, our question will be: "Who should I obey? Who commands here?" It is tremendous to see that God was not afraid to institute authorities. He took a risk. So how can we not obey the authorities after God has placed His trust in them? Let us obey them bravely and trust that if something goes wrong, the fault will not be ours but the authority; and that God will take care of fixing any problem that may occur.

When the Lord sent his disciples, he said to them, "**He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me.**" Luke 10.16. What confidence the Lord showed in them! Anything they said or did, would be considered on His part. Jesus was not afraid that they would do wrong. He demonstrated faith in them. The Jews, on the other hand, doubted; they did not dare to believe and refused to obey.

When we send a representative to do any task, we usually ask for a report. We also ask that you consult us before making any important decisions, so that you do not make mistakes. However, the Lord has made us His plenipotentiary representatives, demonstrating the great trust He has in us. Can we trust His delegated authority in the same way?

Some will argue: "And what do we do if the authority is unfair?" The answer is: we must risk as God did. If the one who exercises authority is just or not, that is the Lord's business, not ours. Each person must give an account to God. The Lord will not hold us responsible for wrongly obeying, but He will judge that authority for its wrong action. However, if someone rebels against it, they will also be judged. Insubordination to authority is rebellion and all rebellion brings judgment. Therefore, we do not have to worry about how God will deal with the authority that proceeds unjustly, but only pray to Him for a just resolution, and rather worry about carefully obeying, for each of us is responsible before Him in this matter.

The parable of Luke 20.9-16 teaches the subject of delegated authority. God did not come to collect his rights personally after leasing the vineyard to the farmers, but sent servants three times. Finally, he sent his own son. The servants were sent because God wanted to see if their tenants would submit to His delegated authorities. He could have come Himself to collect the rent, but He sent delegates, who were rejected. So finally, God Himself became man on Earth. However, they also rejected Him.

Here we can clearly see how rejecting God's servants is in fact rejection of God Himself. It is impossible for us to heed the voice of God if we ignore that of His delegated servants. We demonstrate that we submit to the direct authority of God when we submit to His delegated authority. Often, by obeying delegated authority, we will feel that we are simply submitting to man, but those who know God understand that these men are His authorities.

Humility is required to submit to delegated authority, and breaking of the flesh. If the believer does not cast off his own flesh, he cannot accept God's delegated authority either. Let's understand that instead of coming Himself, God sends His delegates "to collect." Therefore, let us take care of our attitude towards them. Let us not wait for God Himself to come to begin to obey; because when he comes, he will not do it to collect, but to judge!



After his encounter with Jesus, Saul got up and entered the city, so Ananias would tell him what to do (Acts 9.6). Thereafter, Paul recognized delegated authority. He did not consider himself such an exceptional man that he would only listen to the Lord - directly - but he learned to be under God's delegated authority. Moreover, what about us? How many delegated authorities have we submitted to since we believed in God? How much have we submitted to them?

Let us not despise any authority; be it at home, in church or at work. Let us not neglect any of them. When Saul was blind and received his sight, the first thing he saw was Ananias. Seeing Ananias was like seeing the Lord; and listen to him, like listening to the Lord. Delegated authority is something so serious that if you offend it, you are at odds with God. No one can expect the Lord to give him direct light if he refuses to receive light from the delegated authority. It is impossible for us to cast off delegated authority and still be subject to God. To cast off delegated authority is to cast off God.

Saul did not argue: "Since Cornelius invited Peter, I will invite him too; and I will invite James. I am an important man, and I will not allow this little brother Ananias to be my authority!" The one who dislikes the delegate of God, also dislikes God. Only a fool takes pleasure in the failure of delegated authority. It is man's rebellious nature, that makes him want to obey the direct authority of God without submitting to the delegated authorities that He has established.

Study Numbers chapter 30, which deals with the promise of a woman. God preferred that the woman obey her husband, to keep her vote before Him; and if the husband erred as a delegated authority, leading his wife to iniquity, God still did not hold her responsible. This passage reaffirms the principle that we cannot evade delegated authority to submit to the direct authority of God. God will never invalidate His delegated authority, but rather He will restrict Himself by the authority He has delegated. God confirms what the delegated authority has confirmed and nullifies what it has annulled. He always maintains the authority he has delegated.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The entire Bible, especially the New Testament, is on the side of delegated authority. Perhaps the only exception to this is in Acts 5.29, when Peter and the other Apostles responded to the Jewish counsel that prohibited them from teaching in the name of the Lord Jesus. On that occasion, Peter says: **"We ought to obey God rather than men."** This was due to the fact that the delegated authority had clearly violated God's command, and had also sinned against the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, crucifying Him. An answer like that can only be given in special situation as the one mentioned; but in any other circumstance, we must submit to the delegated authorities. Amen.



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### LESSON 3 - DEFEATING THE ENEMY

Why does the enemy fight us? What is your strategy? How can we defeat him?  
How do we remain victorious over him?

Memory Verse: *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”* 1 Peter 5:8.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

As the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are in a spiritual war, a war that unfolds in the daily life of our lives and that is absolutely real. Unfortunately, many believers are defeated in their Christian life by denying, ignoring, or underestimating this reality. For this reason, and despite the fact that in a previous course we have already studied the issue of our enemy and his threats, here we are going to delve into that issue.

#### 2. A REAL ENEMY

In the world, it is usually believed that the devil is a myth, a character in the Christian imagination, created to instill fear in people. Consider what God’s Word says about him in Ephesians 6: 10–20:

*“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the [a]wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of [b]the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”*

In the quoted biblical text, the apostle Paul describes our relationship with the powers of darkness in terms of a terrible battle, a war that is not optional or secondary for the Church, but a matter of life and death. We will say it again: the existence and activity of the enemy is a total, constant, and threatening reality.

Ezekiel 28:12–18 details how and for what this “protective cherub” named Lucifer was created. It also explains his subsequent rebellion and fall from the glory of God that made him the evil being that he is now. Expelled from the divine presence and removed from his privileged place, the devil has not stood idly by, but has turned against God’s creation. According to Genesis 3, this is the reason why he attacked Adam and Eve, causing them to also fall from the glory of God and lose much of the blessings that God had given them in his immense love for us humans.



That was a strategic attack from the enemy, which had terrible consequences for all humanity; and these consequences last until today. That is why we have no doubts that the enemy is real and that our war against him is a reality as well. Ephesians 6:12 clearly describes the nature of this war, saying that ***“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”***

Through this important verse, we must always keep in mind that our fight is against Satan, not against people. Sometimes a person brings good intentions, but the devil makes us see him or her as an enemy, so that our interpersonal relationships are spoiled. Oftentimes, the devil will use innocent people as a means to hinder us: ***“But He (Jesus) turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are [a]n offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”*** Matthew 16:23. Notice how Jesus makes a distinction here between the person used by the enemy and the real enemy — the devil. Other times, the enemy will directly throw his darts of discouragement, fear, disbelief, deception, negative thoughts, hatred, etc., always trying to make us believe that such ideas and feelings are ours and not his.

Notwithstanding the above, it is also important to consider that not all the people who make life difficult for us act under the influence of the evil one. Human evil is as real as evil. There are people who attack us out of envy, jealousy and the like; as happened to the apostle Paul with the Corinthian brothers, some of whom spoke ill of him and judged him as if he “walked in the flesh.” 2 Corinthians 2:2.

### 3. WE NEED TO BE AWAKE

1 John 5:18: ***“We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.”*** Here we find a clause that states that a Christian who turns away from sin is kept by God and the devil cannot touch him. Some use this text as a way of thinking that we are invulnerable to demonic activity. However, that is not exactly what the Word is saying. Rather, John is referring to the fact that, as long as we are in communion with God, He will protect us from the evil that the enemy tries to do to us.

Now if Satan couldn’t touch Christians, why do we get so many instructions in the Bible to put on the armor of God, resist the devil, and always watch? The answer is that we are vulnerable; liable to be wounded and caught in the traps of the enemy. And those who deny the devil’s potential to destroy us are precisely the most vulnerable to his attack. Satan is a deceiver and will do everything possible to work out of sight, camouflaged. If he and his demons succeed in making a Christian be deceived and indulge in sin, they will have succeeded in nullifying the aforementioned guarantee of God’s protection.

There are believers who do not like to talk about these issues, but Jesus did. He spoke openly of the enemy. Why? Because He considered it necessary and because emphasizing the darkness helped Him at that moment to make His light shine even stronger. Jesus’ teaching regarding the enemy was forceful and can well be summed up in those remembered words: ***“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”*** John 10:10. Glory to Jesus.

Furthermore, the theme of man’s spiritual warfare against the devil runs throughout the New Testament. 1 John 5:19 tells us that all those who are without Christ are under the dominion of the prince of the power of the air: ***“... the whole world is under the evil one.”*** Let’s also consider Ephesians 2:1–3 and Revelation 12:7–12.



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These passages describe the activity of the devil in the world and explain that he works actively because “he knows that his time is short.” And let us remember the main text of this lesson: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” 1 Peter 5:8.

With these Scriptures, we want to help you understand that our enemy is still active and has the power to cause harm in the lives of those believers who, due to their lack of holiness, prayer, and perseverance in the Faith, are in chains, imprisoned and neutralized, having been become slaves of him and his demons. Dear brother, we are in a great spiritual fight right now and our enemy shoots to kill!

Unfortunately, many believers live as if none of this is happening, as if there is no spiritual warfare. Many live as if eternity for themselves and other people is not at stake. Many believers have even completely forgotten God’s commandments and counsels regarding war against the enemy, and they rest comfortably. These people lack concern, not realizing that their frequent problems in life are not just physical, emotional, relational, or financial, but also spiritual — and sometimes entirely spiritual. The sad truth is that in recent times there are many brothers who live as slaves of sin - and therefore of the devil - without knowing it!

Ephesians 4:27 tells us not to give **“place to the devil.”** In that chapter, Paul has been telling the Ephesian believers to avoid all sin — lying, anger, theft, dishonest words, bitterness, yelling, malice, etc. for when a Christian gives rise to such things in his life, he or she gives direct authorization to Satan to rule him or her. Therefore, believers who had already been freed through Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross, again become slaves of vices, sinful customs, and more. Worse still, by committing such sins, they do not repent, nor do they turn to God. What is the way out for them? Simply return to obedience to the Lord: **“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”** James 4:7. We need to re-depend on divine grace, every day.

Once again, the spiritual warfare against our enemy is real; we cannot turn our backs on him; we cannot ignore it. The devil’s weapons are strong and can hurt any careless believer. We must therefore remain awake, vigilant, and sober at all times in order to succeed in this war. So let’s close every gap to the enemy, so that he finds no way to get in and hurt us.

### 4. RELEASING THE POWER OF GOD

Now, why is the enemy so obsessed with us? The answer is: he knows that Christians are the instruments that God uses on Earth to end his rule over many people; to free them from their power so that they can be saved in the last hour of the Church. For this reason, the devil does everything in his power to neutralize us. On one occasion, Jesus warned his disciples of this matter: **“I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning.”** But immediately, Jesus made a powerful promise: **“Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”** Luke 10:18-19.

Also in Mark 16:17-18, Jesus promises us such authority: **“And these signs will follow those who [a]believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”** Affirmed on these promises, the apostle Paul concludes and says goodbye in one of his letters saying: **“And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.”** Romans 16:20.



So we believers have God-given authority and power to crush Satan, and even more than that: He has placed us ***“far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.”*** Ephesians 1:21. What immense spiritual power we have received from the Lord to defeat every force of the enemy! Paul prayed that the churches under his supervision would understand and recognize this power they had as the Body of Christ; and exercise that power to destroy the works of the devil and thus gain lives for Christ. But he also taught them under what conditions the power of God would be released in our lives and Jesus’ promises of victory could be made effective. Let’s look at two examples.

To the Corinthian brothers the Apostle wrote: ***“Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”*** 2 Corinthians 7:1 NIV. And to the Ephesian brothers he taught that God “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,” Ephesians 1:4. So, we can only make use of the power and authority that God has given us, being in holiness, subject to Him.

## 5. CLOSE EVERY GAP

Ecclesiastes 10:8 tells us: ***“He who digs a pit will fall into it, And whoever breaks through a wall will be bitten by a serpent.”*** Here we have a direct and simple analogy, which shows us that the ancient serpent or devil will not miss any opportunity that we give him; nor will he miss any gap or open door in our life. Many Christians today certainly drive a big wedge when they neglect their spiritual life and practice sin.

We already mentioned what 1 Peter 5:8 speaks to us, of being sober and vigilant, because the devil walks around like a lion, looking for an opening in our life to attack us. Dear student, beware of gaps such as anxiety, excessive worry, materialism, impatience, irritability, discontent, bad mood, complaints, criticism, aversion, resentment, hatred, immorality, impurity, etc. Once again, if we do not close every gap with repentance and confession to God, surely our enemy will take advantage of it to trap and destroy us.

In the interesting incident recorded in Acts 19:11-16, we see that Satan knows and fears consecrated Christians. In this scripture, Satan fears the consecrated Apostle Paul but laughs at carnal believers which in this case were young men who fled in shame. The enemy continues to work and deceive many believers today into living a life without God’s grace and power. He involves these believers in matters of no importance to the Kingdom of God like making them fight each other. Few Christians today walk in true holiness. On the contrary, there are many who live under the control of the devil through disobedience, rebellion, and a double life. There are too many brothers, who at the beginning, had a precious experience with Christ, but later gave way to the father of lies. Even many Christian leaders have fallen for Satan’s lies.

2 Peter 2:19-20: ***“While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of [a]corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into [b]bondage. 20 For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.”***

And many are being eaten up for their lack of financial fidelity. God dealt severely with the people of Israel over the matter of tithes and offerings. Clearly, they had disobeyed the ordinances on the subject (Malachi



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3:10–12) and the Lord had to empower the Devourer — the devil — to afflict them with scarcity. However, God also assured them that if they returned to faithfulness, He Himself would rebuke the enemy. When we return to obey the Lord, the Devourer is reprimanded and has to leave our lives!

### 6. CONCLUSION

The need to wake up from any spiritual dream and walk in complete holiness is urgent for every believer. This is the only way we can defeat the forces of the enemy. This is the only way we can minister to others in the power of God and be a real blessing to them. Christians have been called to war; not to a war against flesh and blood, but to one against principalities and powers that operate in the heavenly regions, as we have seen in Ephesians 6:12.

Beloved brothers and sisters, you must recognize today that you must continue to believe in Jesus and learn from His Word. It is necessary to live in Him and to walk as He walked. But in order to reach that level, the first thing you must achieve is complete freedom from every chain that the devil has put in your life and preventing you from being blessed and a blessing for the Lord's work right now.

Our Lord Jesus Christ says: ***“Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. John 8:34. But He promises us that if we allow Him to set us free, then we will be “truly free.” V. 36. Are you willing to renew your commitment to Christ now, so that He can make you completely free? This is the way we children of God defeat the enemy!***

## LESSON 4 - A WELL-EQUIPPED SOLDIER

What does “the armor of God” consist of? How can we use it effectively? What results can we get from it?

Memory verse: **“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”** Ephesians 6:10,11.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous lesson we studied the enemy of our souls, the devil. Now, we will learn that we as believers have not been left unprotected when fighting against the devil and his threats. Quite the opposite: we have been equipped by the Lord Jesus with everything we need to defeat him. These powerful resources are available to anyone who has been born again of water and of the Spirit. But it is key that we take these resources and learn to use them competently if we are to be successful in defeating our enemy.

### 2. THE SPIRITUAL ARMOR

The Bible often compares us to soldiers in an army. We are soldiers of the Lord and, far from being defenseless or helpless in confronting the devil, we have received from God all the defensive and offensive resources to be able to defeat the enemy. The apostle Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 10:4 that our spiritual weapons are **“... but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;”** Let us now analyze the military armor that the Roman soldiers wore during the time of Paul in order to understand spiritual armor and how it applies to the Christian soldier.

We were given spiritual armor when we received the Holy Spirit, and we must use it if we want to win the battle against the enemy. Ephesians 6:11 commands us: **“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles [methods, strategies, tricks] of the devil.”** A Christian should never flee from the fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Rather, they should face it and strengthen himself **“in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”** v.10. If the believer puts on **“the whole armor of God,”** he will certainly be able to **“withstand in the evil day ...”** v.13.

The Christian’s armor consists of six articles: five for the protection against the attacks of the devil, and one to attack and defeat the enemy: **“13Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; 15And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”** Ephesians 6:13–17.

(1) The belt: **“Girt your loins with truth.”** The Christian soldier must love the truth, the pure doctrine of God. This will give you the necessary firmness, symbolized here by “the loins”; that is, the waist.

(2) The breastplate: **“Having on the breastplate of righteousness.”** The breastplate protects the chest. Living correctly protects the soldier’s most vital organ: the heart. Righteousness and justice must always be in



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your heart so that you can defeat the devil.

(3) Footwear: ***“Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”*** A Christian soldier’s feet should always be equipped with the shoes of preparation to share the good news. 1 Peter 3:15 refers to this saying: ***“...be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you...”***

(4) The shield: ***“Above all, taking the shield of faith.”*** The shield can stop and ***“quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”*** A shield that is held or attached to the soldier’s arm can be quickly moved to protect any part of his body that is attacked. Satan may throw many flaming darts, but the shield of faith will quench them all. Our faith is the victory that has overcome the world (1 John 5:4).

(5) The helmet: ***“And take the helmet of salvation.”*** The last of the defensive pieces of the armor of God is the helmet of salvation. The helmet provides protection for the head. Salvation of the Lord must always cover your mind and thoughts. The helmet is a vital piece of spiritual armor. According to 2 Corinthians 10:4, the evil thoughts in our minds are often used by Satan as “spiritual strongholds.” But the Apostle adds that the weapons of our warfare are powerful in God for the destruction of these strongholds. In other words, we are empowered by God to demolish ***“... imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”*** v. 5.

(6) The sword of the Spirit: ***“and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”*** The wonderful pieces of armor mentioned above are for our protection. However, we have also been given a powerful offensive weapon with which we can reach into the devil’s own territory and decisively defeat him: the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The Word, as we have seen, is represented in the belt of truth, and used in that case for protection; but as a sword it is used for aggressive combat. Just as a trained soldier can use his sword to destroy his adversary, so the son of God can use the Word of God to completely defeat the devil. The glorious victory of Jesus over the three temptations of Satan was achieved not by telling the devil to stop tempting him, but by using the sword of God’s Word against him (Matthew 4:4,7,10). Satan has no defense against the Word of God, because ***“the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword”*** Hebrews 4:12. Therefore, you read it, study it, memorize it, keep it in your heart and use it every time the devil approaches you with his proposals!

### 3. THE COMBAT PRAYER

We must also observe that after explaining the armor of Christ, Paul exhorts us to enter “combat action.” The command is to pray ***“...always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;”*** Ephesians 6:18. A Christian who prays is a powerful Christian. It is said that Satan “certainly trembles when he sees the weakest saint on his knees.” Just as a vigorous man uses his muscles while building a fortress, the Christian becomes spiritually strong by exercising prayer: ***“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,”*** Jude 20.

The early church provides us with an outstanding example of the power that prayer gave them. In Acts 4 we read how Peter and John were threatened, under orders not to bear witness to Jesus again, nor teach in His name (v.17–18). There is no doubt that Satan thought he was going to make them run! But notice what they did: they got together and informing the saints and the other Apostles of what had happened, verse 24 says that



the disciples ***“raised their voice with one accord to God”***. In other words, they prayed a powerful, combative, prayer, which was recorded in verses 24 through 30.

What was the result of that prayer? A glorious victory: ***“...when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”*** v.31. Courage, bravery, and faith quickly replaced fear. They received a mighty support of renewed power and stormed head strong into the city: ***“And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.”*** v.33.

The power that they received through prayer caused miracles to take place (Acts 5.12), the salvation of many souls (v.14), the sick to be healed (v.15), demons to be cast out (v.16), prison doors to be (miraculously) opened (v.17–23), supernatural strength to bear witness (v.26–32), power to withstand persecution (v.40–41), and an increase in fervor to continue spreading the Gospel (v.42). What tremendous power prayer has in spiritual warfare!

#### 4. THE TRIUMPH OF THE CHRISTIAN

Wearing the armor of God in your life enables you to be ***“more than conquerors through him that loved us.”*** Romans 8:37. Truth, justice, faith, salvation, and the power of the Gospel protects you completely. The devil simply cannot penetrate the armor with his craftiness and deceit. You no longer will be defeated or give in to temptation if you are wearing the armor of God, no matter how strong the enemy may seem. While at school, at work, in a bad home environment, or among Godless people, you always have the armor on. Never take it off.

When you put on all the elements that have been provided to you with this armor, and unite them with prayer, you become a soldier prepared to face the devil. Armed like this - filled with the Holy Spirit - a child of God can be very well strengthened ***“... in the Lord and in the power of his might.”*** Ephesians 6:10. Now observe how war is conducted:

***“...Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.”*** Zechariah 4:6. Only with His Spirit can we defeat Satan. The apostle James teaches that when you go out to battle against satanic forces, the first thing you must do is submit to God (4:7). Only then can you resist the devil and make him flee from you. You are not provided with armor for your back because God never intended for you to turn around and run. Meet Satan with the power of the Holy Spirit, using the weapon of God’s Word and prayer. Use your faith and he will flee!

Once again, we are soldiers in the army of God and He gives us authority ***“over every force of the enemy...”*** Luke 10:17. His will is that we are covered with all His armor and equipped with His spiritual weapons that empower us to face satanic forces and gain victory for the kingdom of God. Therefore, you must dedicate yourself to acquire all the parts of the armor of God. Fill yourself with the Word of God, pray until you are filled with the Holy Spirit and move forward in the name of Jesus. Make sure you also give all the glory to God because it will be His power that will enable you to overcome, not yours: ***“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ...”*** 2 Corinthians 2:14.

Before victory is truly won against the devil, a triumph must occur within you. Learn to say no to carnal desires. This is one of the main requirements to be a soldier of Jesus: deny yourself (Matthew 16:24). This is not



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easy, but the armor of God “does not fit” on a bloated and carnal person who cares only about himself. When you learn to say no to yourself, you can say no to the devil. We cannot give the devil even the smallest place in our hearts and hope to conquer him. **“Do not give place to the devil,”** Ephesians 4:27 tells us. With it, one can never be careless. The enemy must be resisted, and this can only be done with the full armor of God on.

Sometimes it may seem to us that the enemy’s attacks are too strong, but **“... He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world,”** says 1 John 4:4. It may also seem that a temptation is irresistible, but we have the promise of being able to overcome it: **“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”** 1 Corinthians 10:13. But if the devil knocks you down with temptation, make your sins known to God quickly, ask him to forgive you, rededicate your life to Christ and feel confident of His forgiveness. Always remember that **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** 1 John 1:9.

## 5. CONCLUSION

There will be times when you fail God, but you never have to feel like you have failed as a Christian. Satan may occasionally win a battle, but by sincerely confessing and forsaking your sins, you will win the war against him. Through the precious blood of Jesus Christ, we can be cleansed from all sin and walk triumphantly in Him. Amen.



## LESSON 5 - THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

What is the purpose and importance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit? Why do we need the manifestation, or operation, of these gifts for the advancement of God's work? How do spiritual gifts operate?

Memory Verse: *"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."* 1 Peter 4:10–11.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The New Testament Church was a Church of profound faith and hope in Jesus Christ. Wherever the disciples went, they believed in the "Acts of the Apostles" and that the Lord would go with them, performing miracles and wonders. And this exactly what happened! ***"And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."*** Mark 16:20.

All of this began in Jerusalem. Shortly after the Lord ascended, reverberations of supernatural languages could be heard in the streets and alleys from the Upper Room. Thousands came marveling, and before the day was out, three thousand people were added to the body of Christ (Acts 2).

What strength there was in the first Church! What glory we can appreciate when we look back on that beautiful time in our history! And how exciting it is to realize that the same power exists and is still manifesting in the Church today! It is imperative for the Church to have this miraculous presence and movement of the Spirit of God, as we have already studied in previous lessons.

Furthermore, we also need to understand that within the movement of the Holy Spirit in the Church, the Lord has organized an operation of special power that is essential to all of us. This is the operational manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

### 2. THE MANIFESTATION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The first Christians, being baptized with the Spirit of God, manifested the operation of His gifts. For example: Peter and John were going to the temple at the time of prayer, when they found a lame man sitting at "The Beautiful" gate begging for alms. Suddenly, miraculous power came out of them that caused the man to walk, jump, and praise God. The people who saw it were filled with wonder and admiration, and thousands surrendered to Jesus that day.

Following this marvelous act, the Apostles were imprisoned that night. They were accused of preaching to people about the name of Jesus. As they stood before the priests and dignitaries, a supernatural wisdom guided them in the answers they gave: ***"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."*** Acts 4:13. Persecution was established from there and all the Apostles were imprisoned. They were accused of filling the city of Jerusalem and its surrounding cities with "their doctrines."



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After a heated debate in the council, they were beaten and ordered to stop speaking in the name of Jesus. The enemy wanted to silence them, but their faith was extremely great and bold: **“... they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy of suffering outrage for the Name’s sake. And every day, in the temple and at home, they did not stop teaching and preaching Jesus Christ.”** Acts 5:41–42.

And there are many more examples. A preacher prayed that those who were stoning him to death would be forgiven (Acts 7:60). Angels stood by the side of God’s people (Acts 5:2–20; 12:7,10; 27:23–24). A staunch persecutor was touched by the hand of God and became a great Apostle (Acts 9). An angel brought the Apostle Peter out of prison (Acts 12:7–10). People of all religious backgrounds were baptized in the name of Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit: Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 2), Samaritans in Samaria (Acts 8), Gentiles in Cornelius’ house (Acts 10), and supporters or followers of John the Baptist in Ephesus (Acts 19).

### 3. THE PURPOSE OF THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are the power of God, given to Christians, for the purpose of edifying the body of Christ. More simply: they are special abilities that God gives to believers to do what He has commanded them to do, which is basically to win new converts and then nurture them in the Church until they reach spiritual maturity. The main purpose of spiritual gifts is taught by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:7, **“...the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.”**

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to edify the Church. It should be clarified that the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of the Holy Spirit - often also called “gift” – are two different things (although they are linked). The gifts of the Holy Spirit are supernaturally bestowed by God for specific occasions. On the other hand, the gift, or baptism, of the Holy Spirit is the individual power given by God to each believer for his own personal salvation and is always to be used. The filling of the believer with the Holy Spirit and speaking in new tongues is for their own edification (1 Corinthians 14:4), but spiritual gifts are for the benefit of the Church in general.

The list of spiritual gifts mentioned by Paul to the Corinthian brothers includes wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, speaking in tongues, and interpretation of tongues: **“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:”** 1 Corinthians 12:8–10. Based on this, we can classify spiritual gifts as:

- (1) Gifts to know supernaturally: Word of wisdom, word of knowledge, discernment of spirits.
- (2) Gifts to act supernaturally: Faith, miraculous works, healings.
- (3) Gifts for supernatural speaking: Prophecy, various kinds of tongues, and interpretation of tongues.

The previous classification is perhaps the most used but not the only one, since in the Bible we find other lists of spiritual gifts. One example is given by the apostle Paul himself in Romans 12:4-8.

**“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, being**

*many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. 6Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.”*

#### 4. THE IMPORTANCE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Myer Pearlman says the following in his book “Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible”: “The doctrine of the Holy Spirit, judging by its place in Scripture, stands out in the most notable category of the truths of redemption. Every book in the New Testament, with the exception of 2nd and 3rd John, contains a reference to the works of the Spirit.”

To be truly effective in our mission as the Lord’s Church, it is vital that we have a clear understanding of the utmost important doctrine of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Most of all, we should understand how these gifts should operate among us. Unfortunately, today this is a neglected doctrine and an almost forgotten practice.

The fear of spiritualistic fanaticism has led many to conform in their religious practice, and is now practically contrary to the emphasis of the work of the Holy Spirit in the personal experience of the Christian and in the collective experience of the Church. This has naturally resulted in spiritual stagnation; for there can be no vigorous Christian experience apart from the Spirit.

Without proper emphasis on the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and in the Church as a whole, there is no real spiritual life. We cannot have spiritual revival without the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. If we want to be a strong, healthy, and growing church, we must live strongly attached to the Holy Spirit. In that sense, we uphold that the operation of spiritual gifts should be common among us.

To be the true church of Christ, the body of Christ, and the kingdom of God, we must operate through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, demonstrating the same degree of divine power that, as we have already seen, operated in the early church and also in the body of our Lord Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry.

Regarding the latter, the words of Christ in John chapter 14 are categorical: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. 13And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”

We can see Jesus’ powerful promise being fulfilled, for example, in Acts 5:12,14–16.

*“And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people... 14And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) 15Inasmuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. 16There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.”*



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### 5. CONCLUSION

It is genuinely exciting to realize that the same power that operated in Christ first, and later in the early church, is still available to us today.

God does not want us to ignore how He expects us to serve Him. He calls us to serve Him obediently and effectively. He has equipped us with different gifts so that we can successfully complete the task to which He called us. If you have received the baptism of the Spirit of God, without a doubt you have at least one spiritual gift given by Him. What you need now is to discover and activate it, focusing on the service of the Lord.

Do you see a need in your local church? Use the gift that God has given you to fulfill it. Are there empty areas or vacant positions because in your church there is no one who can or wants to fill them? Pray that God will equip you or equip someone else for that task. If you seek His holy presence and faithfully obey His guidance, God will undoubtedly equip you with the gift or gifts that are lacking in your local church so you may edify other believers and offer an excellent service to the Lord, all for the honor and glory of His holy name.

2 Timothy 1:6, ***“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.”***



## LESSON 6 - THE NINE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

What are the nine spiritual gifts given to the Church? For what purposes should they be used?

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Memory Verse: *“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 9To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 10To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:”* 1 Corinthians 12:8–10. Let us study the nine spiritual gifts.

### 2. WORD OF WISDOM

This gift, if interpreted by its use in the New Testament, is skill in administration (Acts 6:3), prudence in dealing with those outside the Church (Colossians 4:5), discretion in imparting the truth (Colossians 1:28), interpretation and application of Scripture (Matthew 13:54), and knowledge of the requirements to live correctly and devoutly (James 1:5 ; 3:13). The “word of wisdom” would then mean the supernatural ability to use divine wisdom for the already stated circumstances as well as in other situations.

### 3. WORD OF KNOWLEDGE

This gift is the supernatural knowledge of God, whose example we can appreciate from the Gospels and the Epistles (1 Corinthians 2:14; 10:15). It is also regarding human duties to God (Colossians 2.3; Romans 2.20). The difference between the previous gift, the word of wisdom, and this one, seems to be in the idea that knowledge is the understanding, or perception, of divine things, while wisdom is the ability to administer such understanding. Thayer’s lexicon states that wisdom is knowledge expressed in action or in application.

### 4. FAITH

The Amplified New Testament translates this gift as “faith working wonders.” Weymouth interprets it as a “special faith” to distinguish it from the faith that saves. Saving faith is described as a gift in Ephesians 2:8 - here the word “gift” is used as the opposite of “works” - while in 1 Corinthians 12:9 the word “faith” refers to a special gift of the Spirit. In his description of the gift of faith, Donald Gee says: “It would seem that it seeks to come to certain servants of God on special occasions of crisis, with such potent force that they are raised directly out of the domain of ordinary and natural faith in God, and a divine certainty that triumphs over all things is placed within their souls.” Let us now read Matthew 17:20 and Mark 11:22.



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### 5. HEALING

All believers in general, and particularly ministers, have the power to pray for the sick (Mark 16:18; James 5:14). However, the gift of healing is one that brings health to the sick in a special way - through prayer. It should not be assumed that the person who manifests this gift has the power to heal anyone. The sovereignty of God and the attitude of the sick person and their spiritual condition must be considered. Even Christ was limited in this miraculous ability by the unbelief of the people (Matthew 13:58).

### 6. WORKING OF MIRACLES

God performs miracles materially, physically, and spiritually. In the physical realm, there is a difference between a miracle and healing. A miracle is instantaneous, while healing is the natural course of restoration that operates progressively from a given moment. A miracle, for the most part, causes healing or restoration to occur instantly. Two examples of this gift in function can be studied further in Acts 5:12–25; 11:19–22.

### 7. PROPHECY

The gift of prophecy is not only exercised through preaching, as some may believe. Preaching is generally the product of studying existing revelations, but prophecy is more the result of spontaneous spiritual inspiration. Prophecy is not intended to supplant preaching or teaching, but to supplement it with the inspiring touch of God.

Prophecy is a spontaneous, supernatural message from God through the prophet. It is similar to the interpretation of tongues but without the preceding message of tongues (1 Corinthians 14:5). Harold Horton says, "Prophecy in its simplest form is a divinely inspired and anointed expression. This is entirely supernatural. Just as speaking in unknown tongues is a supernatural expression, so is prophecy a supernatural expression, but in a known language."

Prophecy and the interpretation of tongues are to be judged. Someone using these gifts must be willing to allow others to judge whether their prophecies are from the Lord. The final authority in judging spiritual events in the Church should naturally be the Pastor of the congregation. ***"Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. 30If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace."*** 1 Corinthians 14:29-30.

In prophecy and in the interpretation of tongues, the Holy Spirit speaks through the individual, using his prior knowledge as well as his personality. There have been questions regarding the incorrect use of language: Would the Lord anoint the wrong use of grammar? Would God use an illiterate person? Because God uses the individual as a human instrument and not in a mechanical sense, He presents His message in the words and mindset of the prophet. Southern or Northern accents and accents of cities or countries will be common in the operation of this gift. 1 Corinthians 14:3 states, ***"But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."*** Here we see the three main purposes of prophetic expressions.

### 8. DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

God has ordained that supernatural power be in the Church through the functioning of the gifts. Because

the devil wields a falsehood that many times equates in appearance to the reality of God, it was imperative that God put in the Church a means by which it is possible to discover whether a particular manifestation comes from God or not. This is where the discernment of spirits comes in, which can be supplemented with a practical test (Matthew 7:15–23) and a doctrinal test (1 John 4:1–10). Let us read these important scriptures.

The three types of spirits to discern or distinguish are: the divine, the satanic, and the human. The gift of discernment also gives the believer the ability to recognize a person’s spiritual character. However, this gift must be distinguished from that of the natural understanding of human nature and is certainly not a “fault-seeking” spirit.

## 9. DIVERSE TYPES OF TONGUES

This gift exhibits or exposes itself in the supernatural speaking of one or more languages not learned by the speaker. Isaiah prophesied that the day would come when God’s people would be ministered to and used by Him in this way: ***“For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. 12 To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing...”*** Isaiah 28:11-12.

To understand the gift of various kinds of tongues, one must first know the three functions of speaking in tongues: (1) As initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6), (2) for the self-edification of the believer (1 Corinthians 14:4,18; Romans 8:26–27), and (3) As “missionary” languages (Acts 2:7–12).

The manifestation of the gift of tongues is entirely evident in the private and personal devotion and worship that many spirit-filled saints perform. The manifestation is also evident in Church services (during the time when the church prays and praises together). During these occasions, the Holy Spirit intercedes for the child of God.

At times, the gift of tongues will bring a definite message from God to the Church. There are times when God uses this type of message in tongues for the Church without interpretation, but this should be handled with caution, as advised in 1 Corinthians 14:27–28. And there are times when tongues are given as a sign to the unbeliever (1 Corinthians 14:22), just as it was seen in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

## 10. INTERPRETATION OF LANGUAGES

While the gift of other languages grants the power to speak in a supernatural way in a language never learned by the speaker, the gift of interpreting languages makes that language intelligible (understandable) to those who hear it. This other supernatural operation of the Spirit of God causes the expressed words to flow with divine inspiration directly to the heart of the listener (1 Corinthians 14:5, 27-28). As it happens with speaking in new tongues, their interpretation is not conceived in the mind, but by a spontaneous spiritual impression. 1 Corinthians 14:5 teaches us that tongues, plus interpretation, equals prophecy.

## 11. THE REGULATION OF VOCAL GIFTS

The same electrical currents that can pulverize trees, burn houses, and kill people, are of the same nature as the electricity that operates so gently in our homes. The difference is in control. 1 Corinthians 14 provides the necessary measures to regulate the gifts of the Spirit, particularly to those who are given power to speak in a supernatural way. The Church should not be ignorant of such valuable knowledge, since it needs:



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**a. Balance:** The entire chapter calls over and over with this warning: never go to extremes on anything. The Corinthian brothers spoke excessively in tongues, which is why they were reminded that in any church service they should have interpretation, and also prophecy, so that there would be an intelligent understanding of what was being said and to provide edification for all.

**b. Edification:** The purpose of the gifts is the edification of the Church, encouraging believers and converting those who are not saved. But, as Paul stated, if an outsider enters the church and hears nothing but uninterrupted speaking in tongues, he will conclude that those people are deranged or crazy (v.12, 23).

**c. Wisdom:** *“Brothers, do not be children in the way of thinking ...”* v. 20. In other words, use common sense. Wisdom should always be used in the operation of spiritual gifts.

**d. Personal control:** Some say they cannot be quiet and that they simply have to say something. But Paul says that *“... the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.”* v. 32. That is, he who possesses supernatural expressions can control them when such control is advisable. Let us also read verse 28.

**e. Order:** God works in a dignified way. Nothing messy or shameful will happen if the Holy Spirit is moving, according to verse 40. To outsiders, there will be times when confusion seems to reign, but those who know the Spirit’s movement will know that it is a “holy disorder”. All things fall into place when we realize what God wants to do. Modesty - respect for God, others, and oneself – will reign in the Church when things are done decently and with order.

**f. Meekness:** Verses 36 and 37 imply that some Corinthians may have had some resentment or resistance towards the teachings of their leaders. What is clear in what Paul wrote in this chapter is that there must be a model that everyone follows; and that we must all be willing to be taught.

**g. Discernment:** It is important to differentiate “manifestations” from “reactions”. Let us illustrate this with the example of an electric light bulb. The light from the bulb is a result of electricity since the nature of this energy allows it to manifest as light. Whatever is in range of the light will react by showing shape, size, color, movement, etc. The same happens with spiritual power: the gifts of the Spirit are presented in 1 Corinthians 12:7 as “manifestations of the Spirit”, but many actions that are commonly taken as manifestations, are actually “reactions” of the people to the movement of the Holy Spirit. Among these reactions are screaming, crying, jumping, running, etc.

The practical value of knowing the difference between manifestations and reactions is that we can honor and acknowledge the works of the Spirit, while avoiding attributing to Him certain things that occur in a meeting. Critics who ignore this distinction incorrectly conclude that because an individual’s actions may be “not very graceful,” so to speak, such a person is not under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Let us imagine that a person reaches out to touch the light bulb and receives an unexpected expulsion of



electrical energy. Those who criticize the manifestation of the Spirit in the Church can be compared to someone who, seeing the contortions of the person who is shaken by electricity, exclaims with disgust, "Electricity simply does not work that way." The stirring of the Spirit is sometimes so strong and moving that it will cause reactions in the Church that some will not understand and will misjudge. Let us read Acts 2:13.

## 12. CONCLUSION

The centuries have come and gone, but the Gospel message is still the same. The miraculous power of the Holy Spirit operates today as in the early church. The Word says that ***"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever."*** Hebrews 13:18. The Church that the Lord Jesus Christ began on the day of Pentecost in the first century continues to live in the twenty-first century. The Church today serves her generation actively and vibrantly, with the same opt of the former days. The gifts of the Spirit still stand and operate with power in the Church of the living God!



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### LESSON 7 — PREPARATION FOR SERVICE

Why should we prepare ourselves to serve? What are the benefits of preparation? How do we carry it out? How can we continue to constantly improve?

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Memory Verse: *“that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* 2 Timothy 3.17.

This lesson will teach us the importance of preparing for every kind of good work that we desire to do for God’s glory. The Holy Bible advises us to prepare, especially since the degree of preparation greatly determines the effectiveness of what we achieve when serving the Lord. At the same time, it also gives us a greater degree of confidence in such service.

#### 2. THE IMPORTANCE OF PREPARATION

Often, the value and effects of preparation are ignored or underestimated. Preparing oneself is something that every servant of God should never push to the wayside. Preparation is as important as providing food for your body. Just as you need to eat every day in order to live, it is in the same way, that you need to prepare yourself to serve the Lord. Miguel de Cervantes said that the man who is prepared, has already won half the battle. Roger Staubach said that, spectacular achievements come from routine preparation. John C. Maxwell said that, it is better to prepare than have to repair, and we say, that it is much better to prepare than to improvise.

#### 3. PREPARATION REQUIRES SACRIFICE

First, we must understand that being prepared requires a lot of sacrifice. Skills and achievements never come “magically”, or because we are favored; no, but rather, preparation is obtained as a result of great sacrifices. Preparation requires from our part, the investment of time; praying, practicing, reading, writing, etc. Preparation is for people who are willing to pay the price of great sacrifice.

#### 4. PREPARATION IS THE FOUNDATION OF VICTORY

When a player is about to go onto the field, it is assumed that they must have had to spend a considerable time practicing the sport they are about to play. It is also understood, that the boxer who enters the ring without having trained enough or without preparing well enough, surely won’t make it past the first round. If you don’t prepare well, you won’t get very far and your achievements will be minimal.

In the Bible, we find that preparation has always been an integral part of the great victories that God’s people had, as well as part of the great strides they were able to take. For example, when the children of Israel were about to cross the Jordan River, Joshua commanded them to sanctify themselves. Afterwards, the river opened up to them *“... by itself.”* (Joshua 3:5). Likewise, the priests, before entering to minister, they had to prepare; they could not enter the sanctuary in any which way; they had to be well prepared (Leviticus 16: 11-14). By coming to earth, Jesus also taught us the importance of preparing ourselves before completing what needs

to be done. For example, before beginning his ministry, Jesus fasted 40 days and nights (Matthew 4: 1–11). Before He chose the twelve Apostles, he had spent the previous night praying (Luke 6: 12-13). Before He walked on water, Jesus had been praying until the fourth watch of the night, while His disciples sailed in the wave-lashed boat (Matthew 14: 22-29).

## 5. HOW WE SHOULD PREPARE

If you want to get ahead and be successful in your leadership or service to God, you have to prepare yourself. In order to obtain adequate preparation, you will need to pay attention to the following tips:

**(1) Know what you are preparing for.** Preparation begins by discovering the why and the for what. The apostle Paul said, **“Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.”** 1 Corinthians 9:26. Within the Church, it is very important that the brethren know what they have to do, the purpose of it; and how they should do it.

**(2) Prepare yourself in what attracts you the most.** We perform best in the areas that we are the strongest in, the area that we dominate the most. When someone is not positioned correctly, they cannot deliver proper results. Every team member should know which position is designation for them and which is the correct position for them.

This is clearly marked in what Paul writes regarding the gifts of the Spirit: **“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.”** 1 Corinthians 12: 27-28.

Here, the Apostle details how things function within this great team, the Church. Each one has a position from God, a responsibility to perform a specific job. Sometimes we cannot fulfill things on our own, we cannot advance in what we do, simply because we are working outside of our correct position. In the next two verses Paul rhetorically asks : **“Are they all Apostles? Are they all prophets? [...] Do all have gifts of healings? ...”** (V. 29–30). This demonstrates the importance of placing ourselves in a position that uses the gift or ability that each one of us received from God.

**(3) Find out where to start.** What are the specific areas where you need the most help? How could that benefit the team? Individually, you must be aware of the specific areas of your life that need to be reinforced; and which deficiencies need to be addressed first; that is where you should always start.

**(4) Be diligent.** Sloths rarely prepare. They almost always improvise. The diligent; however, do prepare, and do their best to do so regardless of the sacrifices they have to make. Diligence is consistently applauded in the Bible, while negligence is rejected and criticized.

The wise man, Solomon, for example, said the following: **“The hand of the diligent will rule, But the lazy man will be put to forced labor.”** Proverbs 12:24. **“The negligent hand impoverishes, but the diligent hand enriches.”** Proverbs 10:4. **“The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, But those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty.”** Proverbs 21:5.



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Returning to the Apostle Paul, he wrote the following to the Ephesians: **“See then that you walk [a] circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,”** Ephesians 5:15. To his spiritual son Timothy, he said: **“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,”** 1 Timothy 2:5. **“And the Apostle Peter added to the theme by, saying: “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ...”** 2 Peter 1:5.

The word diligence comes from the Greek noun “spoudazo”, which can also be translated as: velocity, speed, to make effort, be prompt. With this translation, a wider space is opened to support what has been said. The diligent man does not leave for tomorrow what he can do today; nor does he leave for later what he can do in the moment.

**(5) Take action.** Action is defined as the exercise of an effort. Active leaders are the ones who put their teams into action; the ones that make things happen. They are the ones who move things forward and cultivate encouragement and enthusiasm. Men and women of action are those who are ready to go into battle at any moment; those who are simply waiting for the order, since they are always ready.

## 6. WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR PREPARATION

You can improve your preparation by working every day on the things that have to be done. Understand that the more prepared you are, the better you can serve your organization; and that the more dedication you give to the things that need to be done, the more benefits you will receive. Writing a lesson like this; for example, takes many hours and makes you tired and sleepy, but the need to prepare it until it is completed, pushes you to continue working.

The following tips are recommended to improve your preparation:

**(1) Become a thinker.** Henry Ford said, “Before anything else, being prepared is the secret to success.” Preparation requires thinking far in advance so that you can be aware of what is going to happen at the moment of action. Thinkers are visionaries who look at every detail of what is going to happen, and because they have spent time thinking about those details, not a single one is missed, glory to God.

**(2) Research the matter.** When a boxer is preparing to fight someone, they watch videos in advanced of their opponent fighting against others in order to learn how their opponent fights and how they can defeat them. Leaders do the same thing: they analyze everything that needs to be done and plan how to do it in the best way.

**(3) Don’t get tired of learning.** Learning lasts a lifetime. It takes a lifetime to finish learning. The Bible says that when we get to Heaven we will no longer need to ask anything. There, God will open our understanding and we will know everything, but until that glorious day arrives, we should never stop learning.

**(4) Learn from your mistakes.** The greatest schooling in life is without a doubt, our experiences and the mistakes that we have made throughout our lives. They can truly help us grow. Only a fool falls into a hole twice, for holes are designed to teach us how to walk.

**(5) Overcome.** An anonymous saying goes: “Live as if you’ll live forever, but live as if you’ll die tomorrow.”



Even though it is impossible to achieve perfection in life, we can pursue it anyway. That is how, you will improve every day.

Leaders who are continually improving themselves, offer great benefits to the organization they serve. Large companies pay millions of dollars for self-improvement seminars for their employees; why, because it serves as a great benefit for the company in return.

In order for your team to improve, you must improve first. The team cannot improve unless we improve. For a church to grow, its members must first grow as individuals. In order for a church to excel, its members need to excel first; but they will not be able to do so, unless they believe in overcoming.

God wants us to be prosperous, blessed people: ***“And the Lord will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give you. The Lord will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them.”*** Deuteronomy 28.11-13.

As we can see, it is God who gives prosperity. It is He who opens the way for our blessings to increase. That is why His word also says: ***“... And He will love you and bless you and [a]multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flock, in the land of which He [b]swore to your fathers to give you. You shall be blessed above all peoples; there shall not be a male or female barren among you or among your livestock.”*** Deuteronomy 7.13–14.

Without a doubt, God wants us to prosper, to move forward. That well-known verse of ***“being the head and not the tail”*** tells us exactly where God wants us to be: in a leadership position, or in a higher position; but we can’t get there unless we believe His Word and the power of self-improvement.

Therefore, you must practice self-improvement. You should always improve yourself individually, because doing so will not only benefit you, but your church also. Would you agree that the church would greatly benefit from having teachers, doctors, engineers, architects, doctors and all kinds of professional and experts? Of course!

## 7. SOME TIPS TO OVERCOME AS AN INDIVIDUAL

**(1) Be teachable.** Often times, pride prevents us from learning. If you are a person who always thinks they know more than others, then you are proud. If it is difficult for you to learn from others, how, then will you be able to improve yourself? ***“So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; ...”*** James 1:19. In other words, be teachable; by staying silent and humbly accepting the teachings of your leaders. Learn to examine everything and retain what is useful (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

**(2) Worry about progressing.** Read books, look for information, advance in knowledge and carry out tasks. Remember that the more we know, the more we are worth and the better we can serve. In Italy there is a saying



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that says, “he who knows, must command; and he who does not know, must obey.” Henry Brougman said that, “education makes a person easy to lead, but difficult to control; easy to rule, but difficult to enslave.”

**(3) Use your abilities for the work of the Lord.** If you are a plumber, fix the plumbing in the church. If you are a bricklayer, lay bricks for the church. If you are a gardener, take care of the church lawn. If you are a nurse, heal the wounds of injured brethren. If you are a lawyer, help with the legal problems in the church. If you are an architect, help with the plans of your church. Etc.

### 8. CONCLUSION

Imagine what would happen within the church, if we would all prepare ourselves with excellence in different areas, and used our preparations to serve the church. How far would we be able to go as a team?



## LESSON 8 - THE QUALITIES OF A CHRISTIAN LEADER

What is Christian leadership? What qualities or virtues are essential for your healthy exercise?

Memory verse: ***“And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,”*** 1 Corinthians 2:1,4.

### 1. DEFINITIONS OF LEADERSHIP

Basically, leadership is influence; that is, the ability of a person to influence others to follow. Military leader Bernard Montgomery said: “Leadership is the ability and willingness to bring men and women together for a common purpose; it is the character that inspires confidence.” Admiral Nimitz, of the US naval fleet, said: “Leadership is that quality that inspires enough confidence in subordinates that they are willing to accept the views of the leader and carry out his orders.”

PT Chandapilla, a student leader in India, defined Christian leadership as a vocation that combines human and divine qualities in the harmony of a ministry of God and his people for the blessing of others. Li Hung, the Chinese leader, said that there are only three kinds of persons: the immovable, the movable, and those that move! The latter are the leaders. John R. Mott, world leader in student circles, said that a leader is the man who knows the way, who can stay ahead, and who gets others to follow. And Harry S. Truman, president of the United States of America between 1945 and 1953, said that a leader is a person who has the ability to make others do what they do not want to do, and do it with pleasure!

### 2. WHAT IS SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP?

Spiritual leadership is a combination of natural and spiritual qualities. These qualities are most effective when used in the service of God and for His glory: ***“When I came to you ... my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,”*** 1 Corinthians 2:1–4. We can guide others only as far as the path that we have come ourselves. Just pointing the way is not enough. If we are not walking, then no one can follow us; we do not guide anyone. General Montgomery pointed out seven qualities necessary for a military leader. As it turns out, these are also appropriate for spiritual warfare:

- Avoid being overwhelmed by details
- Don't be stingy
- Don't be pompous (self-important)
- Know how to select the right people for the task
- Trust others to get the job done without being intrusive



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- Be able to make clear decisions
- Inspire confidence

### 3. THE COST OF SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

Leadership pays a high price. The spiritual leader is one who is willing to pay that price, one that is higher than what other people are willing to pay. Let's look at four things that this price includes:

(1) Self-denial: In the path of spiritual leadership there is a cross, and the leader must carry it.

(2) Loneliness: Loneliness is the price that the saint must pay for holiness.

(3) Criticism: There is nothing else that so eliminates a leader's effectiveness, ability, and initiative than destructive criticism. It cuts your dignity like a chisel and insidiously destroys your confidence in your ability to meet your responsibilities.

(4) Rejection: Sooner or later, a spiritual leader will discover that he or she is following his Master on the path of rejection. Jesus was rejected: "But Jesus said to them, ***"You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"*** Mark 10:38.

### 4. ESSENTIAL QUALITIES OF SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

(1) **Discipline:** Those who disdain self-discipline and shy away from sacrifices do not qualify for spiritual leadership. Many who leave the ministry have enough gifts, but they have several important aspects of their lives that are beyond the control of the Holy Spirit. George Whitefield, throughout his life he got up at 4:00 in the morning and went to sleep at 10:00 at night. If a leader demonstrates strong self-discipline, others will perceive that, and they will generally cooperate with the expectations you have set for them.

(2) **Vision:** Vision involves foresight as well as discernment. Looking eyes are common but eyes that see are rare. The Pharisees looked at Peter and only saw an illiterate fisherman. Jesus saw Peter as a preacher and pastor, and he became a holy leader who was able to turn the world upside down.

The vision includes optimism and hope. The pessimist sees difficulty at every opportunity. The optimist sees an opportunity in every difficulty. Vision leads to adventure, and history is on the side of faith that takes risks. The person with vision takes new steps of faith to cross ravines and abysses, not without taking risks, but also not taking unnecessary or foolish risks.

Leaders learn from the lessons of the past but never sacrifice the future for the sake of continuity alone. Visionary individuals make decisions based on the future. The history of the past cannot be rewritten.

- Vision without task makes a dreamer
- Task without vision is work without fruit



- Vision and task make a missionary

**(3) Wisdom:** If knowledge is the accumulation of facts, and intelligence the development of reason, wisdom is heavenly discernment. Wisdom involves knowing God and the subtleties of the human heart. More than knowledge, wisdom is the correct application of knowledge of moral and spiritual matters, when handling dilemmas and when negotiating complex relationships.

Wisdom brings balance to the leader, and helps him or her avoid eccentricity and extravagance. If knowledge comes through study, wisdom comes when we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul's prayer was: **"... that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;"** Colossians 1:9.

**(4) Decision:** Prompt and clear decision is the mark of a true leader. A visionary can see, but a leader decides. An impulsive person will be able to declare their preference promptly; But a leader must weigh the evidence and make a decision on sound premises. The catalog of saints in Hebrews 11 is a study on vision and decision. The men of faith who stand out here saw the vision, considered the cost, made their decisions, and took action. When faced with a decision, the spiritual leader does not delay in making it, nor does he or she hesitate after making it.

**(5) Courage:** It is that mental capacity that allows people to face danger or difficulty firmly, without fear or discouragement. Paul admitted that he knew fear but this never stopped him: **"I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling."** 1 Corinthians 2:3. The key verb, however, is found in verse 1 and is **"went"**. Paul did not stay home because he was afraid of the trip.

When Martin Luther left for Worms to face the questions his teachings had raised, he said: "You can expect all things from me except retraction. I will not run away nor will I retract." His friends warned him of the dangers. Some begged him not to go; but he replied, "I will go to Worms even though there are as many devils as there are tiles on the roof."

Before Pentecost, the disciples were afraid. They had **"... the doors closed for fear of the Jews."** John 20:19. But after Pentecost, the fear disappeared: **"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John"** Acts 4:13. The difference lay in the anointing of the Holy Spirit: **"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit."** Acts 2:4. And when the Holy Spirit is given control of the personality, He does not give **"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."** 2 Timothy 1:7.

**(6) Humility:** Humility is the mark of purity of the spiritual leader. The spiritual leader will choose the hidden path of sacrificial service and the Lord's approval over the extravagant conceit of the world. Like John the Baptist, we must say: **"He must increase, but I must decrease."** John 3:30. The humility of a leader should increase over the years, as well as other attitudes and qualities that we will see.

**(7) Integrity and sincerity:** These two qualities of leadership were part of God's law for the Israelites (Deuteronomy 18:13). God wants his servants to show a transparent, frank, innocent character, free from deception. The spiritual leader must be sincere in what he or she promises, faithful in fulfilling his or her responsibility, sound in finances, loyal in service and honest in speaking. We will discuss integrity in more detail in an upcoming lesson.



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**(8) Humor:** Our sense of humor is a gift from God that must be controlled as well as cultivated. Clean and healthy humor relaxes tension and eases difficult situations. Leaders can use it to replace tension with a sense of normalcy. Anthony Norris, a missionary who went to India, said: "I never knew leadership without a sense of humor; the ability to stand outside of oneself and personal circumstances, to see things in their true perspective and laugh. " That is a great safety valve. We can never lead others very far without the joy of the Lord and its attendant sense of humor.

**(9) Anger:** Is that correct? An angry leader? Jesus had that quality, and when we use it correctly, we follow His example. Jesus looked at them **"with anger"** Mark 3:5. Holy anger is the counterpart of love. Both are part of the nature of God. Jesus' love for the man with a withered hand aroused his anger at those who wanted to deny him healing. Jesus' love for the house of God made him angry at the sellers and buyers who had made the temple a **"den of thieves."** Matthew 21:13.

But be careful, because there are at least six conditions that make anger a sin: (1) When it encourages resentment or enmity or when we imagine a non-existent wrong. (2) When the wrong done to us becomes, in our minds, something greater than it really is. (3) When, without real grievance, we feel resentment due to unsurpassed pain. (4) When outrage is exaggerated and our ability to restrain it is exceeded. (5) When we gratify resentments with revenge, causing pain or damage. (6) When we are so perplexed and angry about sin in our own lives that we readily project anger onto the sin we discover in others.

**(10) Patience:** Chrysostom said that patience is the queen of virtues. Patience is the courageous and triumphant ability to endure things, which enables a person to pass the breaking point and not break down, and to always greet what he or she cannot see with glee. Warning: The person who is impatient with the weaknesses of others will be flawed in his or her leadership.

**(11) Friendship:** Leaders can be measured by the quantity and quality of their friends. David's leadership grew out of his genius in gathering men of fame around him who were willing to die for him. So fully did he win their affection and faithfulness that a whispered wish was a command to them (2 Samuel 23:15-16). They were willing to die for him because they knew that David was fully willing to die for them.

**(12) Tact and diplomacy:** When it comes to human relationships, tact is the ability to treat people sensitively, to avoid offense, to have a sense of words or appropriate responses to a delicate situation. Leaders must be able to reconcile opposing views without offending or compromising a principle.

**(13) The power to inspire:** The power to inspire others for service and sacrifice marks God's leader. The leader is like a light to those around. The prophet Nehemiah had that quality. The people in Jerusalem were discouraged and down when he arrived in the city. In a short time he built them and turned them into a team of efficient workers. His powers were such that shortly afterwards we read that "the people were encouraged to do the work."



**(14) Executive ability:** No matter how spiritual a leader is, he will not be able to transform vision into action if he lacks executive ability. God is a methodical and orderly being, and requires his administrators and stewards to do everything **“decently and in order.”** 1 Corinthians 14:40. Our duty is to have a clean and methodical procedure in everything we do for the Lord. We depend on the Holy Spirit to guide converts to Salvation, but we must also plan and carry out our plans for the sake of spreading the Gospel.

**(15) Listening therapy:** In order to attack the root of problems, a leader must master the art of listening. Many of the so-called leaders are too busy to listen. True leaders know that time spent listening is a good investment.

**(16) The art of letter writing:** Letters reveal the person’s feelings and thoughts. We know more about the apostle Paul’s moral integrity, intellectual honesty, and spiritual life from his letters than from any other source. When a difficult situation required his attention, he dipped his pen in tears, not acid: **“Because of much tribulation and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears.”** 2 Corinthians 2:4.

Paul’s letters were rich in encouragement, favorable in praise, and rich in sympathy. Those who received them always got rich (Philippians 1:27-30); but that did not restrict him from being firm in correcting faults: **“Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?...I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.”** Galatians 4:16,20.



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### LESSON 9 - COMMITMENT TO SERVICE

How important is commitment for a servant of God? What does this type of commitment consist of and how do we sustain it?

Memory verse: Then He said to them all, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels..Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." Then He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God." And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house." But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."* Luke 9.23-26; 57-62

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

How many times have we heard and even said that there is nothing better than serving God? It sounds really good, but... do we believe it? More importantly, do we live it? Serving the Lord Jesus, being His servant, is truly the most beautiful thing within the life of the Church; it is the best thing that has happened to those of us who have given ourselves to Him. Unfortunately, not all servants of Christ feel or believe this way...

Further on, we will examine the difference between servants who are committed to the Lord and those who are not. We will look at the enormous contrast between those who have developed a true commitment to serving God and those who only see it as a burden.

#### 2. THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMITMENT

In the biblical passage mentioned, Jesus spoke to His disciples after Peter's great confession and told them that if anyone wants to go after Him, they must deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow Him. As servants of God, we need to reach that same level of commitment.

Good athletes and good professionals are all people committed to what they do. Within the Church, commitment is also something of vital importance. Commitment can be understood as an obligation, a deal or an agreement; but if we examine the biblical term, it can be defined as a covenant.

The word covenant is widely used throughout the Bible. In it, we find various covenants: God's covenant with Noah, with Abraham, with Jacob, etc. But there is a covenant that stands out, and it is the one that God made with the people of Israel: *"These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb."* Deuteronomy 29.1. Through this covenant, God made a commitment to the people to bless and help them; as



long as they were faithful to their part of the covenant and if the people of Israel made a commitment to God.

### 3. WHAT IS COMMITMENT?

It can mean something different for every person:

- For a boxer, it's getting up from the mat when he's been knocked down.
- For a marathoner, it's running ten more miles.
- For a soldier, it is climbing the hill, not knowing what awaits him on the other side.
- For the missionary, it is saying goodbye to his own happiness in order to make others happy.
- For the Christian servant, it is all of the above and more, because he has committed himself to God, and not just to an organization or an institution.

If you want to be a good servant of God, an effective leader, you have to commit. True commitment inspires and attracts people, it shows others that you have convictions. Commitment begins in the heart, is demonstrated by action, and opens the door to great achievements.

### 4. COMMITMENT BEGINS WITH THE CALL

Jesus Christ tells us: ***"If anyone wants to come after me ..."*** He calls us to follow and serve Him, to be part of His team. The expression ***"if anyone wants"*** reminds us that God does not force anyone. The commitment to follow Him is voluntary. Although it is true that Christ is the only solution for humanity, He does not force anyone to follow and serve Him; but He does call us. Let's see how:

***(1) Jesus called us with a Holy calling.*** We are here because of His mercy; not because we deserve it. None of us were worthy, nor are we now, but He rescued us while we were dead in trespasses and sins: ***"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins"*** Ephesians 2:1 NKJV.

Jesus called us from darkness to His light, from death to life, from error to truth, from the flesh to the Spirit; And when Christ calls someone, it is because He really wants to bless them, He wants to save them, He wants to make them part of His body—the Church—and He wants to use them. But His calling demands a total conversion. We speak of conversion because we must be transformed by God before we can follow Him, and this transformation must be a complete one. However, it seems that some "follow Jesus" without being converted.

***(2) Following Christ requires commitment.*** Christian ministry is for committed people. In other words, only through committed ministers and leaders, will God do the things He wants to do. Committed people are willing people. When John came preparing the way of the Lord, he did it so that Jesus would find people who were willing; and that disposition is characterized by commitment. As can be seen in the ministry of Christ, His followers accepted many things... until they were asked to make a commitment; then they did not want to continue forward: ***"From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more"*** John 6:66.



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### 5. COMMITMENT IS DENYING YOURSELF

“Denying oneself” is undoubtedly too strong of a phrase for many, but truly committed people deny themselves and sacrifice everything they have. The committed servant sacrifices what they love the most for their commitment. When a scribe said to Jesus: **“Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”** Matthew 8:19-20.

Observe closely; Jesus Christ, when He was on earth, had nothing. In these current times of extreme consumerism, we cannot overlook this important detail from the life of Jesus; everything He had was borrowed:

- Jesus borrowed a boat to preach (Luke 5:1–4)
- He used someone else’s loaves to feed five thousand (Matthew 14:17)
- He borrowed a donkey to enter into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:2)
- For His last supper, He borrowed the room (Matthew 26:18)
- The tomb in which He was buried was also loaned (Luke 23:53)

Jesus, being the owner of everything, had nothing!

Another excellent example of total dedication and true ministerial commitment is the life of the Apostle Paul, who wrote the following to the church in Galatia: **“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”** Galatians 2:20. Wow. That was a complete surrender to God!

### 6. COMMITMENT DOES NOT DEPEND ON GIFTS OR ABILITIES

Quite often, we think that the most successful leaders are those that are the most talented and have many resources, and abilities; however, this isn’t always the case. Commitment and abilities aren’t always connected, even though it is often believed so. How many talented people do we know who do very little or nothing for God? And yet, how many around us who, even with few talents, are servants always willing to do Lord’s work? Successful Christian leaders are therefore those who are committed even if they don’t have many talents or resources. The parable of the talents clearly teaches us this:

**“For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.”** Matthew 2:14-15.

What happened afterwards? The man with five talents, doubled them, and so did the man with two talents, but the one who had only received one, hid it. All three servants had talents, but the difference from the other two and the third was that he did not want to work with what he had received.



As I mentioned, many people have gifts and talents, but they do not use them as they could and should, but instead **“hide them underground.”** But there are others who, although they do not have much talent, they are willing. This is what God values more. **“But Moses said before the Lord, “Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh heed me?”** Exodus 6:30. Moses simply just had to go. At first he was hesitant, but when he went to Pharaoh, his leadership began to develop and he became the great legislator of God’s people.

## 7. COMMITMENT IS DISCOVERED THROUGH ADVERSITY

People realize if they are truly committed once they go through adversity. It is when adversity comes, that you realize how committed you really are. If you are committed, problems and struggles will strengthen your determination. Adversity breeds even more commitment and commitment breeds hard work and dedication.

The man to whom Jesus said, **“Then He said to another, “Follow Me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.”** Luke 9:59–60. This man postponed following Christ on the pretext of needing to wait for his father to die. Most likely, this man did not want to leave the comfort of his home and when Jesus was arrested, many of those who followed Him abandoned Him. It is true that after those events some returned, but many did not; which shows that they were not committed, because when faced with adversity, they gave up.

## 8. COMMITMENT IS SUSTAINED BY VALUES

It’s one thing to be committed for a day, or for a short time; but it is something entirely different to be able to follow through with a commitment until the end. Many people commit out of emotion, to look good, to be counted; but then they forget their commitment. True commitment, however, is sustained by the values we hold.

There are people who prefer to die before breaking a commitment, while others do not care very much. The Preacher tells us the following in regards to this: **“When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed— Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.”** Ecclesiastes 5:4–5.

For Christian leaders who have values, your word goes a long way; it is your commitment that means more than anything else. On the other hand, those who do not keep their commitments, the Bible calls fickle: **“he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”** James 1:8.

## 9. COMMITMENT COMES AS A RESULT OF A DECISION

History tells us what the great Spanish conqueror, Hernán Cortés did. This man, at the age of 34, arrived in Mexico in 1519, supported by Governor Velásquez de Cuba. Cortés arrived for the purpose of obtaining wealth for Spain and fame for himself. This young conqueror had prepared his entire life for this, but his soldiers did not have the same commitment as him.



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After making landfall, Cortés heard that his sailors wanted to return to Cuba. Learning this, he made a drastic decision: he burned the ships so that the sailors could not return. For Cortés, commitment came first; and even if he died for the cause, he was not going to disappoint Spain and her kings!

When it is time to act, commitment always comes as a result of a decision. Many people believe that conditions determine decisions, but here we are saying, that it is decisions that determine the conditions. When you decide to commit, conditions don't get in your way; on the contrary, you can change the conditions because of your commitment.

### 10. CONCLUSION

Commitment is fundamental when serving God. It is the true essence of Christian ministry. Commitment is nurtured and strengthened through our surrender to the Lord, who only relies on those who are truly committed to Him.

Commitment is then, a strong decision to not back down, not to let go, not to give up, to not even look back. We already read what someone said to Jesus: ***"Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house." But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*** Luke 9:61–62.

Brother, servant of God, can He count on you right now? What does commitment mean to you? How important is it to you? Are you a believer who practices loyalty and follows through with what you start until you finish it, or are you someone who commits today and retracts tomorrow? Do you stand firm when things go wrong? That is, are you really committed to God and His work? Can your local church really count on you? Can your Pastor count on you? Can the Lord's work count on your commitment throughout any circumstance?



## LESSON 10 - THE INTEGRITY OF A LEADER

Why is purity of heart important in Christian leadership? How to maintain our integrity in times of difficulty or pressure?

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Memory verse: *“So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, And guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.”* Psalms 78:72

Integrity is a virtue closely related to character. Character, for its part, arises from our inner moral nature and affects positively or negatively the ethical degree of our decisions. As has often been said: “What we are will determine what we do.” Jesus gave great importance to this concept in his teachings, and summed up this truth with his well-known phrase: “By their fruits you will know them.” Then study Matthew chapters 5–7.

### 2. THE PURITY OF THE HEART

Titus 1:6–9: whoever is *“...blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”*

Integrity is evident in those who practice it, and even more so in Christian leadership! The leader or servant who has integrity will stand out for his or her solidity and transparency. The importance that he or she places on integrity in his or her life will allow his or her character to be recognized as that of a trustworthy person, qualified for leadership. In their book “Ministerial Ethics,” Joe Trull and James Carter ask us this question: “Why are certain people in leadership not authentic people? Why do they only appear to be spiritual? That is possibly the biggest problem in leadership: Lack of righteous character.”

When a person sins and can live with it, he or she ceases to be whole. Integrity involves confession of sin and turning away from it, and not pretending that nothing has happened. That is purity. But, of course, there is a point within the range of sin where disqualification for leadership in the church occurs. To what degree does a person’s attitude toward sin count for such disqualification? Paul responds: *“...lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”* 1 Corinthians 9:27.

We are convinced that certain sins reveal such a break in integrity that the person who has fallen is disqualified from reverting to prominent leadership. We do not believe that acts such as sexual immorality or cover-up are just a matter of sin, but rather reveal a flaw or crack in the character of the leader. People say, “Well, aren’t sins forgiven?” Yes, of course. But at this level it is no longer a question of forgiveness, but of the sad truth that such a person lacks the substance required for the office of leadership. For people who are in leadership there are stricter requirements.

Some leaders who have sinned and do not want to lose their position have defended themselves by saying,



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“But what about King David? He sinned, and was restored.” But it is worth clarifying that David was not a priest or a prophet, but a king. Their role was political and military, not spiritual. David, on the other hand, is the only incident that Scripture records of a prominent leader tried and found guilty of immoral conduct, who was allowed to continue in office.

However, after the incident with Bathsheba, David’s life turned sour. It is true that he came out clean from the confrontation with the prophet, but over time his reign lost stability and his family went mad. David never reached the pinnacle again and, although he managed to remain on the throne until the last days of his life, his sin was disastrous for the nation, and even his best descendants were not able to set the course for Israel.

### 3. SOME DANGERS IN LEADERSHIP

Rick Warren, author of the best seller “A Life with Purpose,” mentions three inherent dangers of ministry; realities to which we need to be alert:

(1) Fatigue. When you are tired, your resistance is diminished and you become susceptible to many things: discouragement, depression, and all kinds of temptations. Christians often fall after a great spiritual victory. You know the story of Elijah, recorded in 1 Kings 18. He faced a great challenge with the false prophets on Mount Carmel, but right away he appeared on the other side of the desert saying: “God, I want to die. Take my life.”

Fatigue is a constant danger in leadership, because it diminishes our resistance to temptation and everything else. Good advice: Take a day off every week, and a vacation every year. And every so often do a spiritual retreat. You can go alone, with your spouse, or with a few close friends.

(2) Flattery. Flattery is dangerous. The enemy tried to use it even with Christ: **“Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk. And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men.”** Matthew 22:15-16. See also Proverbs 5:3–5.

Being in leadership is something that attracts some people. As a leader or future leader, you will be watched and admired like on a pedestal. World-renowned Pentecostal evangelist Jimmy Swaggart confessed after his fall: “I forgot I was human. I thought I was better than other people.” We have to be very careful about believing in people’s flattery!

(3) Bad interpretations. Good leaders usually become popular people. If you are friendly and warm, but not caring, you could easily be misunderstood by people. Your kindness, your smile, your affection and hugs may be misunderstood by some. That is why it is very important to maintain a balance between being accessible and avoiding that our actions cause misinterpretations by people.

### 4. TRAVERSING DIFFICULT TIMES

In times of crisis, there are few people who can appeal to their character and be sustained by it, especially if it has not been strengthened layer by layer throughout his or her life. What feeds and affirms our character in “fat cow” years, so that it manifests itself during lean years? There are several factors, but let’s look at four of them and their applications in leadership:



(1) Transparency. The ability to accept criticism and absorb negative opinions. This not only helps to avoid delicate situations, but also to close gaps or slits caused by mistakes. Trull and Carter tell us: “Only the person with something to hide is discovered; only someone with a secret is exposed.

People who bury their mistakes often find that later it is they who end up buried; they are dirty, smelling of mold and embedded in the lie.” **Paul said that “But all things that are [a]exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.”** Ephesians 5:13.

(2) Discernment. The wisdom to know when to battle and when to let go; the ability to understand what is truly important and what we can ignore. This can help us to avoid many mistakes, or to overcome the committed ones.

(3) Honesty. Honesty is still the best policy. What is not clarified through direct statements will eventually be dispersed and probably distorted through the channels of the gossip of the people in the church.

(4) Straightness. Wrong “solutions” abound in the aftermath of a mistake: Cover-ups, pretexts, accusations; but one mistake is never made up for by another mistake.

After making mistakes - and we will all make mistakes more than once - comes the moment when we must be totally upright. This feature must be marked in our soul before the disaster. The person who makes righteousness a habit will be able to respond with righteous actions even if everything seems to be falling apart in his life.

## 5. ESTABLISHING PREVENTIVE MEASURES

1 Corinthians 10:12-13: whoever “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

According to psychologist and writer Archibald Hart, “Leaders must protect themselves from making mistakes that undermine their ability to lead.” Here are some measures that will allow us to prevent mistakes that could be fatal to our leadership:

(1) Integrity. First of all, we insist, is the fundamental issue of integrity. True integrity requires not only fairness in finances or dealing with the opposite gender, but also fairness in the application of authority, gentleness in the way we act, and compassion in how we obtain and use confidential information.

(2) Use of power. After the issue of integrity comes the basic aspect of how we use our power. Do we use power compassionately? Do we use it to serve? Or is the use of our power motivated by the ego? Remember that the bird eats the worm; but when he dies, he is eaten by them.

(3) Be accountable. Generally, people fall because they have chosen to move forward alone. Accountability demands that the leader have a regular meeting with his superiors; or at least with a group of leaders like him, to share feelings, reveal temptations, and identify problem areas in both personal and spiritual growth.



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(4) Balance. The apostolic servant who wishes to be a healthy leader must learn to balance the demands of leadership with the demands of the family and his personal life.

### 6. CONCLUSION

Without integrity in your character, your leadership will be only a religious activity. The Pharisees called what they did “ministry”, but Jesus called it hypocrisy. They cared about their reputation, but not about their character; they sought the praises of men, but not the approval of God.

Leader, if today you had to present yourself before the Lord, do you really think that you would pass the integrity test? Would you calmly say that your character was upright? Have you seriously thought about doing a “spiritual audit?” How would you do it?



## LESSON 11 - THE LAW OF THE HARVEST OF SOULS

What is the harvest of souls? How can we obtain a great spiritual harvest through Evangelism and Discipleship?

Memory verse: *“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”* (KJV) *“Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy. They weep as they go to plant their seed, but they sing as they return with the harvest.”* (NLT) Psalm 126:5-6

### 1. INTRODUCTION

If we are to hear Jesus say “well done” then we have to do well. We have to reach our world. We have been ordered to do that. It is a simple matter of sowing seeds to harvest. If we want to collect the bunches or sheaves, we have to go out into the field and sow the seed. God teaches us that if we sow the good Word of God in the good soil of the hearts of men, it will grow: “... it will come again with rejoicing bringing its sheaves.” Psalm 126:6. This passage of Scripture contains God’s law of the harvest. This is irrevocable! This is absolute! It will never fail!

### 2. GOD’S LAW OF THE HARVEST

The law of spiritual harvest is divided into three steps: (1) Going forward, (2) Crying and (3) Producing precious seed. Let’s study each step:

**(1) Going Forward.** This step includes the desire to win others to Jesus Christ. If this desire is fervent, it will motivate the believer to make a special evangelizing effort, focused on the salvation of the lost. This involves leaving the comfort of home to reach sinners wherever they may be. They won’t come to you!

**(2) Crying.** Crying involves more than shedding tears. Fasting and praying are the main motivators to have a burden for the lost. This kind of emotional involvement will bring agony and crying over a lost person... or over a city. The beautiful story of Hannah is told in 1 Samuel 1. She wept because **“The Lord had closed her womb.”** No loving care from her husband, Elkanah, could ease the agony of her unfulfilled desire of having a child. She **“... with bitterness of soul, prayed to the Lord and wept abundantly and vowed...”** Her burden was so heavy that she promised a sacrifice to God, if He would only allow her to have a child; and God gave her a son named Samuel, who would in his time be a salvation for Israel. Another childless woman, Raquel, also cried saying: **“Give me children, or else I’ll die.”** Genesis 30:1. And God remembered her, listened to her, and opened her womb. The first child born to Rachel was Joseph, who was to save the family during the famine.

The desire to win the lost — friends, relatives, or others — will produce tears and sacrifice. These are essential elements in the true production of a fruitful harvest. There can be no effective harvest without watering the work. Unfulfilled hopes bring only frustrations. When the results do not come, the heart falls ill with regret. God will do nothing unless you fast and pray. Crying is essential to the bottom line, but we still have one step left to fulfill God’s Law of the Harvest.

**(3) Produce precious seeds.** No farmer expects to harvest where he has not sown. If one expects to harvest,



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necessary steps must be taken: preparing the soil, sowing the seed, and waiting. No matter how high the quality of that soil is, no farmer sows the seed in the ground without preparing it. The heart of the sinner must be made sensitive. The sacrificial and loving attitude of a child of God can soften the hardest of hearts. The sinner has to feel this kind of love from the believer.

The lost cannot be saved with words alone. When the spirit of the one to be converted is tender, then the Word of God is gladly received. The Word (seed) begins to be quickened and a new life begins. Small changes often begin to occur before a full surrender. It is very exciting to see a miracle happen before your eyes! ***“First the blade, then the ear, then full corn in the ear.”*** Mark 4:28. There will be no harvest without sowing seed. For a sinner to be truly born again, he must have the Spirit and the Word planted in his heart. A full barn at harvest time indicates that someone has mixed faith with works and succeeded.

### 3. WE CANNOT KEEP WAITING

Too often we have tried to make God “an errand boy.” We have been asking Him to do what He has delegated to us. We have asked him to win souls when that is our task. God has sent us to sow the seed:

2 Timothy 4:1–5: ***“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”***

Are we going to keep waiting to sow the seed? When a farmer wants to harvest his crops, he does not wait for it to go into his cellar on its own. He goes out, and gathers it. It is the same with soul winning. Inviting people to church is not necessarily bearing witness of Jesus. If we want lost souls to be saved we have to put the good seed of the Word in their hearts. We must go where the lost are!

A field that is not sown with good grain will only produce weeds; never a good harvest. A watered but seedless work is just a muddy field. But ***“...he who was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears and understands the Word...”*** Matthew 13:23. The seed will grow when it is properly planted and cultivated.

### 4. THE WORD OF GOD IS LIFE

The seed — the Word of God— is full of life. Jesus says in John 6:63: ***“The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.”*** And Hebrews 4:12 declares: ***“The Word of God is alive and effective.”*** There is Power and Life in the Word of God!

In Ezekiel chapter 37, the Prophet recounts his vision in which he was carried away by the Spirit and placed in the middle of a valley full of dry bones. The Lord asked Ezekiel, ***“Will these bones live?”*** Ezekiel could only reply, ***“Lord, you know.”*** Verse 4 is the key to the miraculous resurrection described here: ***“Then He said to me: prophesy over these bones and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.”*** The first message of the Word caused the bones to come together and be covered with flesh and skin. The second prophecy of the Word caused their breath to come and they stood on their feet as a huge army.



The Word of God is infallible. It will never fail. God declares through Isaiah: ***“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”*** Isaiah 55:11. There is power in Scripture to create new life. We have depended on, and tried many things, but have often failed to believe that God’s Word will not come back empty. The teaching of the Word, the sowing of the seed, will result in a harvest of souls. The law of spiritual harvest is still in effect today!

Going forward, crying, and producing precious seeds are the duties of every child of God. We have wanted things easy. We thought that the souls would come by themselves, and that the new converts would remain in the Church without any extra effort on our part; but now is the time for all of us to get involved in winning and retaining souls, for the glory of the Lord; because ***“The tears that we shed when we sow the seed will become songs of joy when we harvest the wheat.”***

If the sowing of the seed in the field results in a harvest, then it is of primary importance that we identify the fertile field. A farmer will not sow his precious seed on the lot of a horse stable or in a place where it is walked on. The seed would thus be trampled and destroyed. The farmer abandons his comfort zone and goes to remote areas, in the field, where the seed can be sown and left to grow undisturbed.

## 5. THE FIELD OF THE HOME

In the Bible “the field” has always been the world. This is especially true in relation to evangelism. Since it is impossible for a Christian to reach the whole world at once, he must begin by reaching the individual. What is the most effective way to reach a sinner with the Gospel? What is the best place to sow the seed? The simplest and most direct answer to this important question is found, with example and commandments, in the ministry of Jesus Christ and his Apostles. They went to the homes. Jesus and the disciples carried the Word of God from house to house.

(1) Jesus sent his seventy disciples to the homes: ***“Entering the house, greet it.”*** Matthew 10:12. (2) Jesus was in the house of Zacchaeus: ***“Today salvation has come to this house.”*** Luke 19:9. (3) The disciples spread the truth in the houses: ***“And continuing with one accord each day in the temple and in the houses...”*** Acts 2:46. ***“And every day, in the temple and at home, they did not stop teaching and preaching Jesus Christ.”*** Acts 5:42. (4) Peter preached salvation to Cornelius along with his family in his house: ***“The spirit told me to go and we entered the house of a man.”*** Acts 11:12. (5) The jailer and his family received the Word in their house: ***“They spoke the Word of the Lord to him, and to all who were in his house.”*** Acts 16:32. (6) The Apostle Paul preached at home: ***“I have taught you publicly and at home.”*** Acts 20:20.

The great revival in the Book of Acts was founded on the ministry of Jesus and his disciples, and much of their ministry took place in the homes. The addition of new souls to the Church was perpetuated by the revival that centered in the homes. The early church in Jerusalem began in a home and from there reached the world at that time with the true gospel.

In Acts 20:26 Paul said: ***“I am clean from the blood of all men.”*** It was impossible that Paul could have touched every individual personally. So why did he claim to be clean from ***“everyone’s”*** blood? Because he had multiplied his life through his trained disciples. He sought a place and time to train his converts to teach others: ***“... this charges faithful men who are suitable to teach others as well”*** 2 Timothy 2:2. This was the basic



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method of the early church and the best mode of multiplication to date: evangelizing, teaching, training, and sending. Much of our apostolic ministry began in the homes, with small beginnings from which great revivals were born.

### 6. 21st CENTURY DISCIPLES TAKING GOD'S WORD TO THE HOME

The most proven apostolic biblical method of soul winning is that of home Bible study, or cell group. New Christians can reproduce through home Bible studies. It is not difficult to teach. Almost anyone can do it. What a new convert has received, he can pass on to others through teaching God's Word in the home.

Much of the Bible is written in the form of stories. Sometimes these are poetic and majestic, but they are always very frank and clear. The teaching of home Bible study is not preaching sermons, but relating the beautiful truths of God's Word as revealed in the Bible.

A home Bible study teacher doesn't need to be a pastor, or a Bible college graduate, or even a longtime Christian. After a short training, both those who have been saved for years and those who are new converts can effectively teach the Bible at home. When the tools have been placed in the hands of an active Christian, he suddenly has a proven method for becoming a successful soul winner. So soul winning becomes an exciting reward.

It is of the utmost importance to win the lost, make disciples, and train new converts, so that they continue the work done with them in others. It is a chain. A person who wins a soul for the Lord should not feel that his responsibility to that soul has ended with the conversion of that soul. A mature Christian, with proper understanding and training, can disciple the new convert and establish him or her in the faith so that he or she in turn becomes a soul winner. It is to this end that we come to the discipleship school.

Each one of us is given this opportunity for growth so that we can try, with the help of God, to guide many souls towards the salvation of Acts 2:38, until we see that they become stable and productive disciples of the Lord Jesus. It is God's will that his disciples make other disciples. Jesus taught us to go and make disciples, giving us his example...

### 7. GO!

Christ's primary method of making disciples was teaching. He taught everywhere, in the marketplace, in the temple, in the synagogue, in the home, on the mountainside, and even on the shore. In Acts 1:8 Jesus says: **"... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria and to the ends of the earth."** This command to testify includes the knowledge of Jesus, which will be transmitted to the lost through example and teaching by every believer:

***"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."*** Matthew 28:18–20.

The Lord's definitive command to his disciples was to go and reach out, preach, baptize, and teach all



nations. Through this plan of multiplying disciples, teaching and training them, the early church reached out to their generation. This has not been achieved since that time. This generation has an opportunity to acquaint our communities with the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. This gigantic task can be accomplished soon, if all of God's children become participants in the ministry of teaching His Word.

You must decide what you are going to do with your life. You need to know where you want to go and what you want to achieve. This will require setting goals and priorities. What is the most important thing in your life? If soul winning is secondary or even lower on your list, then you don't have to wonder why you are not a soul winner. How much of your life would you give to win a soul? Would you give a year, and if so, after that year, would you give another to win another soul? Winning souls is addictive, it becomes a habit. True soul winners continue to win souls. They are not super-Christians, but normal Christians in the eyes of God who want to share their new life of love with everyone.

Now ask yourself some questions: Why did God save me? What does He want from me more than anything else? How do I get involved in the dynamics of evangelism? The answer to all these questions is: going to where the lost souls are; the homes! How great would it be for God Almighty to crown souls that bare traces of your ministry? Wouldn't you like the fruits of your labor to be in heaven?

## 8. CONCLUSION

John 4:35: ***"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."*** The fields are still white, but laborious hands must touch the harvest. Each one must touch one. This is the will and plan of God: that all believers reproduce spiritually. This can be done by getting involved in home Bible studies, cell groups, and classes for new converts. If you are interested and care, you will participate: ***"... freely you have received, freely give."*** Matthew 10:8.



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### LESSON 12 - JOIN THE HARVEST

Why is it urgent that we harvest souls for God? What role does spiritual passion play in this? How is passion related to spiritual warfare for lost souls?

Memory verse: ***“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”*** 2 Peter 3:9.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus will return soon. The brethren of the early church proclaimed this promise. But why have so many years passed and Christ has not yet come? In 2 Peter 3:9 we find the answer: Christ has not yet come because he does not want the condemnation of human beings.

Let’s think: if Christ had come thirty or forty years ago, some of us would have perished; but in His mercy, He waited and gave us the opportunity to receive Him before the end comes. Let’s thank the Lord for that, and also for the people who preached the Word to us! However, there is...

#### 2. AN URGENT TASK

That’s right; now it is up to us to freely give what we have received freely, as we said in our previous lesson. God ***“is patient with us,”*** that is, with His Church, since the mission of preaching to the lost is ours and ours alone.

We believe that the grace and patience of God will soon give way to His justice, and Christ will come to judge the Earth — not without first raising His own; for this reason, we must actively share the good news of salvation; testify of Jesus to friends, neighbors, and family, while there is still time.

Jesus taught his disciples to look at crowds like sheep without a shepherd, to see people as lost beings. He said to them: ***“Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.”*** John 4:34–35.

Here Jesus makes his disciples look at the spiritual fields, already white. They thought they had plenty of time to share the good news, but Jesus shows them that the harvest of souls was at that very moment.

The Greek word that was translated as “look” in this passage means “study with intensity.” Jesus wants us to carefully study the miserable condition of the sinner next to us. Do you carefully observe those who live in your neighborhood, your co-workers, or your relatives? How do you see the people around you? Do you see them as sheep without a shepherd? Do you see them with urgent needs?

Evangelizing the lost is an urgent task! The harvest is now. Today is the day of Salvation. Let’s share the Word of Life now!



### 3. THE PASSION OF GOD'S SERVANT

Biblical experience and the history of the Christian church teach us that all spiritual revival or awakening began with passionate leaders. How is your spiritual passion? If you want to know what the temperature of a cell group is, you have to put a thermometer on the leader, the assistant, the host.

The passion of the leaders radiates to the group. It is the fuel for the growth of the Church. But what happens when there is no passion? We are simply going ... nowhere! No one can lead others where he has not gone. So why not check your level of spiritual passion with a simple test?

#### SPIRITUAL PASSION LEVEL TEST

Answer the questions honestly. Then look at the result on the next page.

**1. Do you praise God on "auto pilot", mechanically?**

- (a) Mechanically (b) I enjoy praising and worshiping him

**2. When was the last time God specifically answered a prayer to you?**

- (a) I don't remember when (b) He constantly answers me

**3. Does God teach you things directly, or do you learn everything through others?**

- (a) I learn through others (b) God reveals many things to me

**4. Do you feel joy serving the Lord, or do you only do it out of duty?**

- (a) I do it out of duty (b) I serve the Lord joyfully

**5. Do you love to read the Bible and pray, or have these practices become routine?**

- (a) It has become customary (b) I love to pray and search the Word

**6. Do you enjoy the sermons and teachings of others, or do you criticize them?**

- (a) I criticize them (b) I enjoy them

**7. Do happy Christians bother you, or do you like them?**

- (a) They annoy me (b) I like them

**8. When was the last time you had a great encounter with God?**

- (a) It was a long time ago (b) It happened to me recently



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9. Are you engaged with others at your church, or are you isolated from others?

- (a) I have isolated myself                      (b) I am well engaged

10. How do you respond when someone asks for your help, advice, prayer, etc.?

- (a) I don't respond                              (b) I respond quickly

### YOUR LEVEL OF SPIRITUAL PASSION

9—10 "a" Totally Dispassionate    9—10 "b" Totally Passionate

5—8 "a" Alarms ringing                      5—8 "b" You have a spiritual cold

1—4 "a" Descending passion              1—4 "b" You need urgent help

Why does passion fade? **Passion is quenched** when there is **chronic disobedience**, continued omission, or neglect in our relationship with God. All of this leads us to a seared mind and uncircumcised ears, reaching the point of not being able to realize that we are doing something wrong. And because of this, God is often distant from us. We need to confess our sin, to receive His forgiveness, and return to Him!

**Beware of the unconquerable spirit.** This was the characteristic of King Saul: a proud heart, unwilling to hear and learn. Look at what the prophet Samuel told him:

**"And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king."** 1 Samuel 15:22-23.

Hardness of heart and stubbornness made the big difference between Saul and his successor, King David. It is true that David sinned as well, but while David repented each time and returned to God, Saul tried to justify his sin and turned further and further away from God, until he had a sad ending. Why wait until such an extreme? Why leave being right with God for later?

There are many things that can get in the way of your spiritual walk. According to Luke 8:14 the cares, the riches, and the pleasures of life are real hindrances; Burdens that may not kill you immediately, but they will slow you down, even endangering your spiritual life.

Hebrews 12:1 says: **"Let us shed all weight"**, which means that whatever you put higher or at the level of God in your life, you should eliminate it, because it is something that turns off your spiritual sensitivity.

When you notice that the passion fades, you need to examine yourself for sin. Sin separates man from God, and apart from Him we can simply do nothing. You need to review your life now, to see if you have any unconfessed or hidden sin.

It is possible to have a damaged relationship with God and not know it. ***“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”*** Psalms 139:23–24.

#### 4. SOLDIERS TRAINED FOR WAR

The Bible tells us that we are in spiritual warfare. On the one hand, the devil tries to take as many people to hell as possible; on the other, our Lord Jesus Christ wants every person to believe in Him and receive Him. Paul says that we too are soldiers in this war:

***“...my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”*** Ephesians 6:10–13.

We are not soldiers in a volunteer army. If you gave your life to Jesus Christ, you are a soldier, whether you like it or not. There are countries like the United States where people volunteer to serve in the army, navy, or marines. But in other countries, military service is compulsory. However, even in the United States, during World War II, those who did not go to the front lines had to work in the weapons and projectile factories. They were all involved in the war in some way.

So also in the army of God; we are all involved and we are at war, since only through joint participation can we rescue those who are being lost; to rescue those who ***“...the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”*** 2 Corinthians 4:4.

Every army has a strategy. In the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the Western allies won thanks to their military strategy. Cell churches also have a strategy; an extraordinary strategy that mobilizes troops quickly to win many people to Jesus.

The cell church strategy is to establish a cell group in every home, in every neighborhood in the city. This strategy consists of loving people for Christ, and creating a friendly atmosphere for them in a home. Through this strategy, we can invite people into the home and then love them as they receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

Matthew 9:36–38 tells us that Jesus’ heart was filled with compassion — he was moved — as he saw the helpless and scattered multitudes ***“like sheep without a shepherd”***. But then He did not try to win those people, but commissioned his twelve disciples for that task. Jesus also asked his disciples to pray ***“to the Lord of the harvest to send workers into his harvest.”*** The greatest need in the Lord’s “fields” is for laborers; And the solution to this tremendous need is to pray that the Lord will send more workers into the harvest field — the world.

Like Christ, we cannot reap the harvest alone. We need the help of others. The cellular strategy is based on



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gathering the harvest by means of new workers, leaders, servers or hosts. Jesus Christ is looking for workers for the harvest. Are you willing to respond to His call? Will you say like Isaiah said: **“Lord, here I am, send me.”** Isaiah 6:8.

Returning to the war analogy, Ephesians 6:14-18 tells of the armor that God has given the Christian soldier, and tells us that he must pray **“at all times, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.”** These are the weapons of war for the Christian soldier. We know that soldiers must train hard before they can fight. Just as a soldier must learn to use weapons, the soldier of Christ must be well trained before serving in a cell group.

Please don't think that it takes years of training to become a servant or cell leader in your local church. If you are a new convert, a year of preparation is probably enough for it. There are even churches that prepare people in six or eight months. The training will come in the next few lessons, but for now we will say that this training will provide you with two fundamental things: (1) Training in evangelization. (2) Training in how to serve in a cell group.

The two things mentioned above are essential to be able to successfully lead and multiply a small group or cell group. Success in this is often believed to depend on the leader's personality, education level, age, or gender. However, statistics prove that these elements do not determine success. What is the key to effective cell group leadership? It is in two elements: training and commitment. We have talked about commitment before, and from now on we will start giving the appropriate training.

## 5. CONCLUSION

God wants us to be willing to commit ourselves to Him. God is still looking for workers. He is looking for willing people, who will give what they have just as the boy in the Bible who gave his loaves and fishes. You may not have many talents, or a high educational level, but are you willing to give what you have to God and enter your church's cell ministry program?



## LESSON 13 - HOW TO WIN YOUR FRIENDS TO CHRIST

What is the importance of applying the Golden Rule in our relationships with friends? How does that translate into better service and greater evangelistic outreach?

Memory verse: *“For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue,[a] and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful...”* 2 Peter 1:5–8  
ESV

*“In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God’s promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful...”* 2 Peter 1:5–8 NLT

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The foundation of the process of winning our friends to the Lord Jesus Christ is the power of the Holy Spirit, as can be seen in the book of Acts. And what is next? Relationships.

The filling of the Holy Spirit in the early Christians resulted in a supernatural development in their interpersonal relationships:

*“And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”* Acts 2:44–47.

Being a soul winner means dealing with people, and this, of course, is never easy, from a human perspective. However, when the power of God is manifested in our life and we are filled with the Holy Spirit, our interpersonal relationships are taken to a whole new level.

Our success in bringing friends to the feet of Christ depends largely on how we relate to them. That is why it is so important to develop ourselves in this area - the area of interpersonal interaction. The following four questions are a brief evaluation to see if you are a person who relates well to others and if you are someone with the ability to win friends for Christ:

- (1) Am I quick to respond to the needs of others?
- (2) Do I escape from problems, or do I seek solutions to them?



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(3) Is my way of speaking generally positive or negative?

(4) Do I give others a second chance?

## 2. THE GOLDEN RULE

Now we will learn what the key is to relate to others in order to win them to the kingdom of God. Christ gave us the basic rule for the establishment of quality personal relationships; we call it the “Golden Rule” and it consists of learning to put myself in the place of others, instead of trying to “put the others in their place”, as they say (in the latter, many of us are experts...).

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Christ summed up a series of deep thoughts about human behavior, saying, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them...” Matthew 7:12. In this brief but crucial commandment, Christ teaches us two fundamental things about developing excellent personal relationships:

(1) I must treat others as I want them to treat me.

(2) The way I treat the other is my decision.

What Christ was trying to say could be paraphrased more or less like this: “Whatever your position in a relationship, if you are aware of a problem or conflict, it is your responsibility to make the necessary effort to create positive change. Stop pointing your gun with your finger on the trigger, or making excuses for your poor attitude. It begins to be a catalyst, initiating and demonstrating the right attitude. Make up your mind to be a proactive person and not a reactive person.”

Sometimes we have feelings of rejection towards some people. When this is the case, it is impossible for us to treat them well, at least not all the time. Other times, we think wonderful things about people, but we don’t tell them. They will never realize what we think, unless we express it to them! Appreciation has no value if all we do is think about it; but it becomes something valuable when we manifest it. When we do manifest our appreciation, people respond the way we think of them. “If you don’t like what life is telling you, you must change what you are saying; because life is like the echo: it only returns what we have told it.”

## 3. HOW WE WANT TO BE TREATED

Basically, there are five ways we all want to be treated.

(1) **“I want others to encourage me.”** The happiest people are those who invest their lives in others; the most unhappy, those who always think about how the world should make them happy. Raúl Meninger, a famous psychiatrist, was asked: What should a lonely and unhappy person do? His response was: “Unlock the door, go out and look for an injured and needy person.” The key is to forget yourself and serve others!

(2) **“I want others to appreciate me.”** William James said: “The deepest principle of human nature is the desire to be appreciated.” In other words, we should never underestimate the value of a person, much less do something that harms them in any way.



At the end of the 20th century, a survey was conducted of different classes of workers in the United States of America as to what the main sources of dissatisfaction in their workplace were for them. These were his six main responses:

- (1) Lack of recognition of contributions and suggestions.
- (2) Lack of encouragement.
- (3) Lack of correction of injustices and favoritism.
- (4) Criticism of an employee in front of other people.
- (5) Not taking employees opinions into account.
- (6) Failing to inform employees of progress.

If we asked brothers and friends in the local church about what the main sources of disagreement with the congregation or cell group are for them, what would they answer? Let us remember that The Golden Rule says that we must appreciate others in the same way that we want to be appreciated; treating them like they are important people, because they are!

**(3) “I want others to forgive me.”** A forgiving spirit is the basic ingredient for building strong relationships. Forgiveness frees us from guilt and allows us to act positively with others. People who have difficulty forgiving do not relate in a genuine way, much less pleasant way. They are either very arrogant or very insecure.

Although holding a grudge produces some satisfaction, the damage that the angry person does to himself is greater than the damage that he feels it does to others. No forgiving others produces emotional and physical stress, and many illnesses. James 5:16 tells us that there are people who need healing, but they need to confess and forgive before being prayed over, in order to be healed.

Three days before he died, Senator Hubert Humphrey said: “At this point in my life, at sunset, all the speeches, the political conventions, the crowds and the big fights, are behind me. At this moment I feel forced to face my essence, to face what is really important. What I conclude about life is that when all has been said and done, what counts is how many people I have forgiven and redeemed so that they can move on.”

Do you want to die victoriously? First you have to live victoriously; and for that you have to be tolerant and forgive. You have to be a person of inner peace. You cannot lead others where you yourself have not gone. If you don’t have peace, it’s not because someone took it from you, but because you let it go.

You can’t always control what happens around you, but you can control what happens inside you. “You can’t stop the birds from flying over your head, but you can stop them from nesting over it,” wrote a Greek philosopher. If we don’t have the peace of Christ in us, we can never bring others to the Lord. In reality, Christians have to be “unoffendable” in order to win his or her friends to Christ!

**(4) “I want others to listen to me.”** In his book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Steven Covey says,



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“Seek to understand first and then seek to be understood.” There is a big difference between being able to hear people and knowing how to understand them. Listening is wanting to understand, while a deaf ear is the first indication of a closed mind.

The natural tendency with the passage of time, with the accumulation of experience, with the years in the Church, is a lack of patience to listen to those who come after. Often “the cow forgets that it was a calf” (popular proverb). When a person moves up, they tend to feel less compelled to listen. But your need to listen in that moment is greater than ever!

If you haven’t gotten into the habit of listening carefully and intelligently, you won’t be able to get the necessary information, you won’t be able to understand other people, you won’t feel compassion for them, and they won’t want to follow you or talk to you. Why would they waste their valuable time with someone who is not sincerely interested in them?

**(5) “I want others to understand me.”** How do you feel when someone misunderstands you, doesn’t understand you, or doesn’t care to understand you? Let’s say someone has no interest in what happens to you. What kinds of feelings arise in you? Do you feel lonely? Do you feel frustration? Disappointment? Anger? It is the same thing that others feel when you don’t pay attention to them, when you don’t offer understanding or compassion.

It is proven that the lack of good communication results in: (1) 50% of all divorces. (2) 60% of all economic failures. (3) 90% of all crimes. (4) Incalculable desertions from the Church. Good communication is the foundation of progress!

#### 4. BRIEF COURSE OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

So far we have said that every human being expects others to: (1) Encourage him. (2) Appreciate you. (3) Excuse him. (4) Listen to him. (5) They understand you. Now we will look at a short but powerful interpersonal relationship course, with just seven statements:

- (1) The most important word: **You.**
- (2) The first important phrase: **You matter.**
- (3) The second important phrase: **Tell me about yourself.**
- (4) The third important phrase: **I understand what you’re saying.**
- (5) The fourth important phrase: **I have felt this way too.**
- (6) The fifth important phrase: **I have a Friend who can help you.**
- (7) The least important word of all: **Me.**



## 5. CONCLUSION

Your success in winning your friends to Christ depends on your ability to relate to them in a healthy and positive way. The biblical key is to put yourself in the other person's shoes, and not wanting to "put them in their place." **"...all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them..."** Matthew 7:12. Ultimately, if you want to win many friends to Christ, you have to treat them the way you want them to treat you: encourage, appreciate, forgive, listen, and understand. And remember that the word "you" is the most important! Don't you think so? What do you think of all this? Do you want to become an expert at winning friends for Christ? What aspects or characteristics of your life do you think you need to improve for that? When will you start?



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### LESSON 14 —TESTIFYING OF CHRIST EFFECTIVELY

Why is it important to share our personal testimony effectively? How can we do it? How can we lead people to repentance and conversion?

Memory Verse: ***“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:”*** (1 Peter 3:15)

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

You can be a soul winner! When we were baptized with the Holy Spirit, Jesus gave us supernatural power to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8). He commanded us to go and promised ***“I am with thee.”*** Christians have the responsibility of personally witnessing to anyone who does not know the Savior and to anyone who is on their way to an eternity without God. We are sent as ***“... sheep among wolves.”*** Our Lord warns to be ***“wise as serpents, and harmless as doves”*** (Matthew 10:16). The truth must be preached with courage, with love and with the greatest prudence; as Solomon said, ***“... he that winneth souls is wise”*** (Proverbs 11:30).

The Apostle Paul advises us to take unto you ***“... feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace”*** (Ephesians 6:15). And as we have already seen, Peter advises us to be ***“... ready always to give an answer”*** (1 Peter 3:15). It is our solemn duty to prepare the good news and to be ready to share it with someone else. Winning souls is a spiritual matter. Without a dedicated life and intercessory prayer any strategy we try to use will be fruitless. However, with the power of God and a plan, you can be a soul-winner.

#### 2. YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY

What God has done for you is a powerful, persuasive, and undisputed argument. What can others say? It happened to you! As people listen to you, they cannot help but think, “If it happened to him, it could also happen to me.” You are living proof of God’s power to change a life through evangelism. You are a living witness of the risen Christ!

Sharing your testimony is one of the most effective and exciting ways to win souls. When a child of God lives right before God and men, his words have irresistible authority. The gospel is most effective when it is lived and shared with others. The devil can trick us into believing that others will know what we believe simply by witnessing our Christian life.

However, Christians who are spiritually discerning realize that this is a half-truth. How can anyone know what we believe unless we tell them? On the other hand, one can profess Christianity and not bear the fruit of a Holy Spirit-filled life. Both are very destructive to Christ’s cause and bring reproach or criticism to His Name.

Our testimony will only be effective when we live and speak it; we must possess it and profess it. Both a silent and spoken testimony are necessary.

### 3. HOW TO WITNESS

In Acts 1:8 Jesus Christ commands us to be his witnesses. Our Lord does not require us to do the impossible. He only expects us to be His witnesses. A witness, according to the translation of the Greek word “ka,” is one who bears witness in a court of law. To be a witness of Christ is to recount our experience of what He has done for us. Whether we have grown up sitting on a church bench or have come from the world, we were all sinners on the way to an eternity without God.

Surely, He has done something for you and for me! We all have a miraculous experience we can share with others! The Lord does not require much of us when he asks us to testify of His saving grace in our lives. It is the least we can do. You and I were called to be witnesses, not occasional jurors, defense attorneys, nor judges who condemn others to hell. We must share “... **the things we have seen and heard**” like Peter and John did (Acts 4:20).

In John chapter 9, the blind man did just that when he was called before the court to answer about how Jesus miraculously healed his eyesight. He replied “**Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.**” (v. 25) This is like what Paul did when he was called before kings and religious leaders to answer for his faith. Paul could have impressed them with his great rhetoric and knowledge, yet he used his most powerful weapon in defense of the gospel-his testimony (Acts 9:1–18; 22:1–16). What was his technique? Let us look. Paul informed them using the following steps: (1) how he was before meeting Christ, (2) how he was converted, and (3) how he was afterwards.

This is a good formula to follow when we share our testimony:

**(1) Before:** How I was, how I thought; my attitudes towards God, others, and myself; the power of sin in me.

**(2) During:** How I became a born-again Christian. Give a brief explanation of the complete Gospel (John 3:3–5; Acts 2:38).

**(3) After:** How I am now, how I think; my attitudes towards God, others, and myself.

Take some time to write out how you would share your own testimony with someone you know or come across. Make it short and enjoyable (about 300 words), practice it, and above all, share it! After engaging in a friendly conversation with someone, let him know what God did for you. God’s children can share their testimony, pass out tracts, and invite someone to a Holy Ghost-filled service. Remember, you have something great to say and have the power to say it (Acts 1:8).

### 4. PREACHING REPENTANCE

When we share our testimony, some may be receptive and hungry to know more about God. When this happens, we need to be prepared to guide the person to salvation.

We must be prepared with a plan. That plan can be found in Acts 2:38. It is the first plan of salvation in the New Testament: “**Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.**”



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Repentance is the first step in this plan and one of the main doctrines of both the Old and New Testaments. It was zealously preached by the Prophets, Apostles, and Jesus Christ himself. Jesus said, **“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”** (Luke 13:5). The Apostle Paul preached, “[God] commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30).

Repentance is essential to experiencing salvation; it is the first step every soul that comes to God must take. Baptism has no value without repentance. It is crucial that we understand this as witnesses. Without repentance, the Spirit of God cannot be received.

Many times, we put “the carriage in front of the horse” and find ourselves explaining baptism or the initial sign of speaking in tongues when receiving the Holy Spirit before teaching repentance. However, God clearly tells us in His Word that, unless a person repents, they will not be able to experience these essential things. So, first things first. Our goal must always be to direct a soul to the cross, then we can guide them “to the water” and then “to the fire.”

Unrepented souls usually hesitate to go to church just as repentant souls hesitate to go to a bar. However, once someone repents, they not only want to come to church, but also responds to the entire plan of Salvation.

Repentance is only the first step of salvation, nevertheless it is especially important and should not be dismissed. We can lead souls to Jesus Christ anytime and anywhere. They do not necessarily have to be at the altar of the church to repent. Souls can be won in a home Bible study, in a cell group, at work, while traveling, and just about anywhere.

## 5. THE ROMAN WAY

The Roman Way is one way to lead a soul to repentance. It is called “The Roman Way” because of the four Scriptures used, three are in the book of Romans. This plan is immensely powerful and effective for its simplicity and more so because it is based on the Word of God.

Memorize these four biblical references, and when the opportunity presents itself, you can share them with someone. Explain to them that as there are invisible natural laws in the universe—for example, the law of gravity—there are also invisible spiritual laws that command our lives. Let the soul know you would like to share those spiritual laws with them.

Read the Scriptures indicated and easily explain each one.

(1) Romans 3:23: **“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”** Explain: We all think, say, and do evils because of our sinful nature. Sin is simply anything that separates us from the pure and holy God. Right now, I can think of some things I do that are wrong. Can you also think of some?

(2) Romans 6:23: **“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”** Explain: As we receive wages for the work we do, we will also receive a payment for sinning. The payment is death which is the separation from God in this life and in the life that follows.

(3) Romans 5:8: **“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ**



**died for us.**” Explain: Christ died for us; he took our place. It is just as if we were sentenced to die as punishment for a crime we committed, and an innocent man offered to take our place.

(4) Acts 2:36 –38: ***Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*** ” Explain: When the Jews that heard Peter’s message realized that Jesus Christ was Lord and that he had died for them, they felt sorry for their sins and asked Peter what they should do. He said, ***“Repent, stop sinning and return to God.”***

At this point you can ask them, “Do you believe that Jesus is Lord and that He died for you? I feel sad about my sins when I think of Calvary, do you? Are you willing to give God control of your life? Would you like to do it right now?”

If they say yes, pray with the person and review each Scripture. After praying, ask him them if they have repented. If the person says yes, explain that this is the first step in the plan of salvation. After receiving Bible studies, the person is ready to be baptized in the name of Jesus and may receive the Holy Spirit.

When you ask someone if they are ready to repent, they will often say no. Do not let this make you feel rejected. Simply say, “I understand how you feel and respect your decision, but if you ever decide to give your life to Jesus, you already know He loves you and can be found through repentance and sincere prayer.” This response will help ease the tension and leave the door open for future conversations.

## 6. CONCLUSION

When you learn, practice, and use the personal testimony and Roman Way method, or any variation of it that best suits you, you will be empowered to be used by God to lead souls to the precious Cross of Jesus. Have no doubt that bringing people before these truths is a great thing. You can expect amazing results!



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### LESSON 15 — PREACHING ABOUT SALVATION

How can we present the plan of Salvation to the lost in a simple way? How can I pray and minister to them with the Word of God?

Memory verse: *“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? 15 As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”* Romans 10:14-15

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Gospel means good news. We must share the good news with everyone. These good news teach all men how to become new creatures in Christ and how to live forever in a kingdom of peace, love, and joy.

There is no greater emotion—apart from being born yourself in the kingdom of God—that can be compared to the joy of seeing someone you brought to the Savior come out of the baptismal waters and begin speaking in tongues. The scriptures rightly declare, *“how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things”* (Romans 10:15)

The methodology we will learn in this chapter is designed to be used even by those not well versed in the Scriptures. The scriptures we will study in this chapter are highly effective when we personally witness to someone.

#### 2. THE FIVE KEYS TO ENTERING THE KINGDOM

When we preach about the new birth, we need to discuss baptism in the name of Jesus Christ and the infilling of the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in new tongues. ***We will discuss a few scriptures from the days of the early Church and examine the Gospel through the eyes of the first disciples of Jesus. Here are the five keys:***

**Key 1.** Matthew 16:19: *“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.”* Explain: When Jesus asked his disciples who they believed him to be, Peter answered, *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (v.16). ***Because of this profession of faith, Jesus gave Peter the keys of the Kingdom. We can see that God has a celestial kingdom and there is a way to enter in.***

**Key 2.** John 3:3–5: *“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? 5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”* Explain: *“Before he died, Jesus told Nicodemus, a religious leader, that unless man is born again of water and of the Spirit, he will not be able to enter the kingdom of God.”*



**Key 3.** Acts 1:3–5: *“To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: 4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”* Explain: *“This scripture shows us that after Jesus rose from the dead, he spoke about things concerning the kingdom of God and the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit, for forty days. ”*

**Key 4.** Luke 24:44–49: *“And he said unto them, these are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. 45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, 46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And ye are witnesses of these things. 49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”* Explain: *“Just before Jesus ascended to Heaven, he declared to his disciples the reason why the Old Testament was written and the reason why he died, was buried, and rose on the third day. It was all so that repentance and sins could be preached in His name, and that people could receive the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit. He told them to wait in Jerusalem until the latter happened. Let us look to see what happened in Acts 2.*

**Key 5.** Acts 2.1–17,32–33,36-39: *“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? 8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? 9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. 12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? 13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. 14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: 15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. 16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; 17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: 32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. 33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. 37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the*



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*rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. Explain: "This is an account of the Spirit of God being poured out upon all flesh for the first time in history (v.1–17). As Peter preached, he referred to the manifestation of tongues as a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy: 'This is that' he said (v. 16). He continued to preach Jesus Christ and argued that He had risen from the dead and poured out 'those things which ye see and hear.' His message prompted people to ask what they should do (v.37)."*

In conclusion say: *"Peter, who had been given the keys of the kingdom in Matthew 16:19, answered Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you."* (This was exactly what Jesus said should be preached.) *On the day of Pentecost, Peter opened the door of the Kingdom of God. We can clearly see that his message included the birth of water and of the Spirit. In John 3, Jesus said that this was necessary to enter the kingdom of God. This is the biblical salvation, as it was taught by the Apostles and experienced by the early Christians. "*

*Now it is time to say: "These same experiences have occurred throughout the history of the Church and are still happening today throughout the world! They even happened to me! This promise is for you, too. Would you like to be baptized in the name of Jesus and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost? "*

If additional explanations are needed, there are four examples of people born of water and of the Spirit in the book of Acts. These scriptures should be sufficient to answer any questions a person may have Jews (1:13–15), Samaritans (8:12–17), Gentiles (10:44–48) and the religious (19:1–7).

### 3. PRAYING WITH THE NEW BELIEVER

When a Holy Ghost-filled Christian gives the word of God to a hungry heart, great things begin to happen. A person may be ready to receive the Holy Spirit while having a conversation about the Lord! When you explain repentance or the new birth under God's inspiration, His Holy Spirit can descend upon anyone (who has repented) at anytime and anywhere as it happened to Peter at Cornelius' house (Acts 10).

We need to help people understand that the Holy Spirit is a gift received by faith. God eagerly awaits to give it to anyone who asks him (Luke 11:11–13). In fact, He has already bestowed it upon every human being. Many times, people simply do not meet the prerequisites of repentance and faith to receive it. The price has been paid and the promise has been made. Living water is available to anyone who wants it. Let us now examine a faith-building outline to pray with a new believer who has already been touched by the Holy Spirit.

The following is unnecessary when someone instantly receives the Holy Spirit, it should only be used if someone delays or hesitates more than a few minutes. It is also important to avoid being guided by our enthusiasm without considering what the person desires. If you are not experienced in this, let another brother who has more biblical knowledge explain how the Holy Spirit is received, while you and the others pray fervently at a reasonable distance. Shouting instructions at the person, huddling together, or shaking them will certainly not help.



Important: First, inform yourself by asking the soul their name. Second, ask if they have already repented (this will not turn off the Spirit). If not, briefly explain that they must believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, turn away from sin, and give all their life to Him. Then pray for repentance in the style of the “Roman Way”. Third, ask if they have already been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. If not, ask him if he wants to be baptized. If necessary, read the commandment in Acts 2:38 to them. Finally, ask him if he would like to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. If he says no, I am not ready or I am scared, do not force the issue. However, if he says yes, share the following Scriptures with them.

**1. Read Acts 2:38–39.** Explain: *“What you feel is God’s Spirit. The Lord is giving you the Holy Spirit. He wants you to receive it. It is a gift from God to be received by all. You can receive it by yourself by faith!”*

**2. Read Mark 11:24.** Explain: *“Do you want to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost? Jesus said that you can have whatever you desire when you pray, if you only believe you are receiving them. This is also true with the Holy Spirit. Do you know what happens when someone receives the Holy Spirit?”*

**3. Read Acts 2:4.** Explain: *“When you receive the Holy Spirit, you will begin speaking in other tongues. God will give you the words to say. You will only speak them as he gives them to you. Do you want to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit right now? Let us pray.”*

## 4. CONCLUSION

The strategies for winning souls given in this lesson are designed especially for use in personal evangelism. You will be ready to answer anyone when you study, memorize, and practice them. Keep in mind that each person is different and should be treated differently. Use prudence and allow the Holy Spirit to guide you with everyone. Then stay in touch with anyone you have witnessed to. Do not leave them. Pray for each one sincerely; their eternal life is at stake!

Jesus calls us saying, *“Follow me and I will make you fishers of men”* (Matthew 4:19). As we follow Jesus, he continually prepares us to be effective in fulfilling the purpose for which he came. In the day of His flesh, Christ’s supplicating prayer was, *“Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest”* (Matthew 9:36–38). The fields are white and ready for harvest. People everywhere are looking for something that satisfies them. We must collect the golden grain while it is day because *“the night cometh, when no man can work”* (John 9:4).

Will you answer the Master’s call and dedicate yourself to reaching out to the lost before it is too late? Someone is waiting for you!



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### LESSON 16 — THE STRATEGY OF JESUS

What does The Strategy of Jesus consist of? In what aspects does it contrast with the traditional church model? How do we actively get involved in this plan?

Memory verse: *“And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”* Acts 2.46,47.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Lord’s church traverses right now what the Apostle Paul called “dangerous times”; times of instability and pressures of all kinds that assail us from different angles and threaten to destroy the church. And, although it is true that this phenomenon is not new, we have never experienced it as in the present. Nevertheless, this difficult century has also brought us a unique opportunity that challenges us to face the changes we need to embrace, so that we avoid making the mistakes of other movements that have disappeared or tend to disappear just because they did not know how to make the necessary changes.

#### 2. LET’S TAKE BACK OUR LEGACY

What is the difference between a winning team and a losing team? Perseverance, certainly. Losers easily give up; the winners never give up the fight. Our church has a rich legacy that comes to us from brave men and women who persevered and were willing to give up their very lives along the way. Luke describes the lifestyle of the early Christians in Acts 2:42. They: *“...continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”*

The ability to persevere in the four areas mentioned by Luke is something we urgently need to return to today. The church is what we are, its members. The quality of the church is the quality of its members, and this depends on their spirituality. Israel fell because the spirituality of the people fell. The same thing happened with the church in Corinthians. Let’s read 1 Corinthians 3.1–4. The problems in Corinthians were due to “envying, strife and divisions”, symptoms of progressive deterioration of spirituality. When discord and division take hold of a church, it inevitably falls. We can avoid all this and survive the assaults of the present time, simply by taking back the lifestyle presented in Acts chapter 2. Let us now review verses 42, 46 and 47.

Is there a tool that helps us recover this precious legacy? Yes: The Strategy of Jesus!

#### 3. THE STRATEGY OF JESUS

In Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:15, the Lord Jesus leaves the mission for his church very well established, with words that clearly show what beats in His holy heart; that is, the salvation of all sinners without distinction of culture, race or language, until the end of time. And we can fulfill such a mission by following the Strategy of Jesus. Mark 2.1 says: *“... and it was noised that he was in the house.”* That is the Strategy of Jesus: That He “be at home”!



Most of Christ’s ministry was not in a temple, but in the homes. Later, His disciples extended this strategy, as we can see in the Acts of the Apostles. Those home gatherings were not just about eating bread. In them there was also the ministry of the Word and people of all kinds arriving to hear the preaching of the Gospel (V. 2). We have the example of the four men who brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus to heal him (V. 3). They knew that when Jesus was in the house miraculous things happened; so they coordinated their efforts and, faced with the obstacle of the crowd, raised the roof to lower their friend directly at the feet of Christ (V. 4). He, seeing their faith, proceeded to fulfill not only the healing of the paralytic but also the forgiveness of his sins (Vv. 5–11). Verse 12 concludes the story by saying that everyone present was amazed and glorified God for what happened.

#### 4. DISRUPTORS

Clearly, the Lord was recruiting disciples who would join His vision, as a team, as one man. And they would become “disruptors.” The Lord succeeded in preparing twelve Apostles — apostle means “sent” in Greek — who later shook the very foundations of the great Roman Empire. In Thessalonica, the people said: “These who disrupt the whole world, have also come here.” ***“These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also”*** Acts 17.6. Glory to God! Disrupt means to “turn a thing upside down, or from one side to the other.” The disciples were taught by Jesus in such a way that they came to disrupt the society of His time. The passion with which they preached the Gospel of Salvation was so great that they altered the life of every place where they passed.

Now is our turn and opportunity to take back that passion and disrupt the routine order of things. It is our time to disturb and shake people’s consciences and behavior; time for us to take back the exciting community environment where those in need are ministered; the sick, healed; and the captives set free. It is our time to become disruptors, soul winners, to the glory and praise of His Name. We are going to go back and persevere in what was so important to our pioneers: the Strategy of Jesus.

#### 5. TRADITIONAL MODEL VS. CELLULAR MODEL

Local church cell groups make a real difference in at least four areas.

(1) The first is the ability to reach. In the traditional model, church worship or service is generally the entry point into the Kingdom of God; and the work of reaching the lost is usually delegated to the department of evangelism. In the cell model, the homes of church members provide countless entry points to the Kingdom and all are involved in the ministry of reaching the lost for Jesus Christ.

(2) The second big difference is the retention capacity of new converts, a topic that we will talk more about in the next section. In the traditional model, the needs of new converts are met through the Pastor and/or a select group of brethren. New believers are taught to get closer to their pastor, something very noble but that not only solves the problem of limited pastoral availability, but it aggravates it; and more when the church grows, because the Pastor every time takes care less, creates fewer bonds and supplies fewer needs, making the new converts feel inferior with respect to the other members.

In the cellular model, the new converts are immediately connected to a small group. Many are even won through a small group, where they receive personal attention from the leaders and other members of the group. God’s love is canalized towards new believers thanks to the continuous contact that is developed there. Spiritual



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and emotional needs are met, making people feel part of the church family. This inclusive style exponentially increases the degree of retention of new believers.

(3) The third is the ability to disciple. The best context for souls to spiritually mature is that of a cell group. Salvation is an event, but also a process. After water baptism, the new convert must identify with a small group of believers to ensure their spiritual growth. Although each person is responsible for individually developing a relationship with Christ, the other members of the group must be vigilant to help them advance in that purpose.

In the traditional church model, discipleship takes place primarily through the preaching and teaching given by the Pastor and the ministers of the local church. The problem with this model is that, unless the church membership is quite small, new converts end up leaving. In contrast, in the cell model, leaders and members of small groups work on the discipleship process. New believers not only receive biblical instruction but can also see an example of Christian living in their leaders and other members of the cell. Additionally, discipleship in the cell allows for extra personal contact, weekly, outside of the group meeting time.

(4) The fourth area where cell groups make a difference is in the ability to send. Rick Warren said that the greatness of a church is not measured by the number of its seats, but by the number of missionaries it sends out. And Jesus said: ***“37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.”*** Matthew 9.37,38. In other words, for the Church to grow, more workers must be equipped and sent to God’s harvest field. Let’s read Ephesians 4.12,13.

In the traditional church model, only a limited number of positions are available where members can serve using their spiritual gifts. As a result, many who wait for an opportunity to serve become discouraged and lose interest after some time. But in the cell church model, each member, new or not, has the opportunity to begin serving in their group immediately. When the cell grows large enough, a new one is started, thus allowing more members to use their spiritual gifts to serve. This model offers countless opportunities for new leaders to develop and the result is that more members are satisfied and happy because they can use their spiritual gifts and be an integral part of the spiritual ministry of the body of Christ. Everybody wins!

## 6. THE CHALLENGE OF RETAINING

One of our great historical challenges has been the retention of new believers. Many of our churches have had or have the problem we call an “open back door,” because a large percentage of their new converts — up to 90% in some congregations — drop out of the Church; they return to the world. What can be more frustrating than spending so much effort winning people to Christ only to see them leave, walk away from church, and probably become unfaithful? And why does this happen?

Direct answer: Many new converts leave the church because they feel they are not welcome in the circle of friends. This is a very sad thing for us. Now, if the desertion of the new believers breaks the hearts of pastors and leaders, can you imagine what God will feel, since He, out of love (John 3.16) came “to seek and to save that which was lost” Luke 19.10, giving “himself a ransom for all” 1 Timothy 2.6? But with the Strategy of Jesus we can close that back door from our churches, thus preventing many of the newly baptized from leaving. Through the cellular strategy, the necessary bonds are created to link each new believer with the rest of us.



The first weeks of any new believer are critical, since the enemy of souls knows very well how to discourage them and make them doubt at that stage, taking advantage of their lack of maturity. It has been shown that the new convert must join a small group of believers within a maximum period of two weeks; otherwise deserted; and that they need to be contacted every week, having at least six friends in the local church, in order to stay. The cell group provides that spiritual warmth and care necessary to protect the new believer. There, they learn to share, study the Bible, pray, fast, live in holiness, serve, and evangelize to bear spiritual fruit. These elements are key to the retention of people being baptized.

## 7. THE FORCE OF LOVE

The force that moves us to become involved in the care of God's flock is, without a doubt, that of His love. God's love is the fundamental basis in all work for His Kingdom, and it has two facets: (1) Love for God. (2) Love for saved and unsaved people. The apostle Paul wrote: ***"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."*** 2 Corinthians 5.14,15.

God's love was poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit with which we were baptized (Romans 5.8). This makes us intensely love God and the work of saving people. Paul's fervor to care for the Church of God was motivated above all by that love, demonstrated by Jesus in laying down His life for all mankind. Pushed by an irresistible force, the Apostle canalized all his energy into working for the kingdom of God.

A lawyer brought a question to Jesus, concerning Salvation, and in response Jesus said unto him: ***"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."*** Matthew 22.37.38. And how do we show love for God? Obeying His commandments. Christ said: ***"If ye love me, keep my commandments."*** John 14:15. And one of His commandments is: ***"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..."*** Matthew 28.19,20.

We also show our love for Jesus Christ when we imitate His example of dedication and commitment to other people. His commitment to us was so great that he loved us and gave himself for us (Galatians 2:20). So our love for Him is shown when we love people and commit ourselves to them. We must love people as ourselves (Matthew 22:39), because ***"And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."*** 1John 4.21. God tells us: ***"...Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers (supervisors, leaders, servants) to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."*** Acts 20.28.

When a leader loves his people, he does whatever it takes to serve and minister to them. No one has loved or will love people as much as Jesus, who gave His life for the Salvation of all. Jesus is love made flesh. And we, can we honestly say as He said: ***"While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled."*** John 17.12?



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### 8. CONCLUSION

Larry Crabb wonders: “Where are the spiritual leaders, the shepherds of the flock, the elders of God’s people? Why is it that one or two church officers are assigned the pastoral task, expected to carry the burden that belongs on the shoulders of many? Where are the people who can listen to us in the midst of our problems and lead us to the heart of God? Where are those Christians who regard their service as a calling from God? What has happened to the idea that all believers are priests of Jesus Christ? ”

As if it were a hospital, each local church is responsible for giving first aid to people in crisis; to offer rehabilitation and also long-term, lifelong care. And all of this can only be accomplished through small groups. A church that wants to be big must first be small, building itself through its cell groups, progressively becoming a community with an integral scope. This is God’s will for His people and this is our privilege as His servants. Amen. Therefore...

It is worth giving ourselves to the mission of saving one life at a time, through the Strategy of Jesus!



## LESSON 17 — SPIRITUAL STRATEGY

What role does intercessory prayer play in the Jesus' Strategy? What are the keys to effectively intercede for the lost? What results can we expect from this spiritual strategy?

Memory verse: *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place."* 2 Chronicles 7.14,15.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Those who serve and minister in the cell group, whether as leaders, helpers, hosts, or support members, must be prayer warriors first and foremost; they must be fervent spiritual intercessors. And what is a spiritual intercessor? Someone who prays asking in favor of others; someone who intercedes before God for individuals, families, towns and cities; even for entire nations; in other words, one who "stands in the gap" before God. These people are nothing less than...

### 2. THE METHOD OF GOD

Men are always looking for better methods to do things, but what God is looking for is people who are willing! God's method is us, His people: *"And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none."* Ezekiel 22.30.

2 Corinthians 4.4 tells us that Satan has blinded people's minds, so that they cannot see the glorious gospel of Christ. Ephesians 6.12 also tells us that our fight is against the spiritual wickedness in high places, and not against "flesh and blood." Therefore, our methods of evangelism cannot be the ones that save.

God refuses to be tied to our methodology, but He glorifies Himself through our prayers. The cellular structure is not what gives the growth... God is the one who gives it! Our first responsibility is to seek His face and cry out to Him for Him to do the work. We must pray with fervor and persistence. Prayer and God's dependence will guide us in everything we do (John 16.13), because we do not trust the method, but in the God of the method.

Only the power of the Lord Jesus Christ can give sight to the blind and freedom to enslaved souls; and the only way this happens is through prayer. All the prominent cell churches of today are 100% dedicated to fervent prayer. The largest churches in Christianity, in the past and the present, are the ones that pray, the ones that pay the price in prayer. And as a result, God blesses them.

God is the one who produces the multiplication of saved souls. He is the one who gives the growth (Acts 2.47; 1 Corinthians 3.6); not the man. The local cells are only instruments of His great power. We don't trust our methodology, but rather in the power of God. We trust and must continue to trust in the living God!



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### 3. PERSEVERE IN PRAYER

Colossians 4.2–4: *“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*”

Paul wrote the epistle to the Colossians at the end of his life while imprisoned in Rome. In his last exhortation to this church, he asks the brothers to dedicate themselves to prayer. The word “persevere” that he uses here, in Greek means “to attend constantly.”

Later (V. 12) the Apostle refers to Epaphras as an example of this dedication to prayer: *“he’s always labouring fervently for you in prayers”* Here Paul uses a Greek word that means “to agonize” or “to fight,” and which can also be translated as “to work fervently.”

The largest cell churches around the world are those that agonize in prayer! The flourishing cell churches are those that have understood that the persevering cry to God is what moves His hand and releases His power to work on souls. These churches have understood that nothing at all will happen if God does not work. These churches have learned to pray; they have won the battle of persevering in prayer.

The foundation of the success of the Strategy of Jesus is intercessory prayer, spiritual warfare; one of whose main elements is what we will call “Prayer by Ten Friends”. This consists of praying and fasting for a certain period of time for ten people who do not know Christ, crying out to Him for their salvation.

In this way, spiritual warfare is done in favor of the lost and a partnership with God begins in the process of their salvation. This period or cycle of spiritual warfare precedes two important events: Friend’s Day and the Spiritual Retreat of Salvation, of which we will speak of in future lessons.

### 4. SEVEN KEYS TO AN EFFECTIVE INTERCESSION

For our prayer of intercession for the lost — prayer of spiritual warfare — be effective, there are at least seven keys we must use:

The first key is to ask with faith, believing, trusting. When we come into the presence of God, we must always do so with the firm conviction in our hearts that He will move His hand on our behalf. Let’s now read Hebrews 11.6 and James 1.6–7.

The second key is, as we already said, to be persistent in our prayers. There are many Christians who do not receive what they ask for, what they need, because they give up because they do not see a prompt answer to their prayer. God loves, hears and blesses those who persevere in prayer. So, you ask in faith and you will receive what you ask for! Let’s read Luke 11.5–8.

The third key is to stay in our relationship with Christ. He declares in John 15.7: “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” God’s power is gained through prayer and sustained through an unbreakable relationship with Him, day by day, moment by moment. So you spend time with God, wait on Him in prayer and listen to His voice, allowing Him to reveal Himself to you.

The fourth key is to obey and do God's will. God's will is revealed in His Word. Let the Word of God penetrate in your spirit. There, she will take root and produce results. Something that prevents and hinders the answer to prayer more than anything else is disobedience to the word of God. We need to walk and live according to the Word, if we want to get God's answer to our prayer.

The fifth key is to ask according to God's will. A great obstacle that prevents many Christians from receiving answers to their prayers is that they ask with the wrong intentions. Therefore, a powerful weapon for the believer is to pray to God in the Spirit, that is, in tongues inspired by the Holy Spirit — new tongues. Let's read Romans 8.26–27. When we are in communion with the Spirit of God, we pray according to His will.

The sixth key is to walk in forgiveness. One of the conditions for possessing the Lord's promises is being willing to forgive each other. There are many leaders who do not receive an answer to their prayers, because in their hearts there is bitterness, resentment and unforgiveness towards those who have hurt them. Let's look at Matthew 7.7.

The seventh and final key is to intercede with understanding. From chapter 9 of the book of Daniel we learn that the prophet specifically asked forgiveness for Israel's sin, mentioning the rebellion, disobedience of his ancestors and of his own generation. He asked God for mercy, not only for the people, but for himself. Daniel identified with the sin of his people.

Additionally, effective intercession will be enhanced if we maintain a friendly relationship with the people for whom we intercede, as well as with the guests who attend our cell group. We will study the friendship factor in an upcoming lesson.

## 5. DIMENSIONING THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Praying in intercession for lost souls also helps us in our own growth, in the sense that we are empowered by God to understand or discern at least three things: (1) What blinds people who live without God. (2) What enslaves them. (3) What destroys them. Let us read 2 Corinthians 4.4; John 8.34; James 1.15.

The salvation of people is not the product of casualty but of casualty. God is open to the salvation of "every creature", but it is only through those believers who step into the gap, as we have already said, that He will reap the harvest that He already has ready. Let us look at 2 Corinthians 4.1–6; 10.2–4.

Let us also read Mark 3.27. Here Jesus tells us that no one can enter the house of a strong man and plunder his property without first tying him. Only by tying up the strong man can his house be plundered. In other words, you cannot take a house — soul — without a prior spiritual confrontation with the forces that dominate you.

## 6. THE PASTOR'S PRAYER

The pastors of the largest cell churches around the world are men of prayer. They are an example in prayer for the rest of the congregation. A church will never go beyond what the senior pastor's prayer life has gone. If the Pastor is a man of prayer, the church will be too. In addition, the Pastor is the one who must direct this vital responsibility in his congregation.



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Joshua 10.7–15 tells us about the battle Israel fought against the Amorites at Gilgal. There, God struck Israel's enemies with mortality and huge hailstones that killed more Amorites than Israelite swords: ***“Then spake Joshua [...] in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.” Vv. 12–13. The next verse is very shocking: “And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel.”*** RV95.

God stopped the movement of the Earth at Joshua's request, so that Israel could finish their work of destroying the Amorites. Jesus wants to respond to us today in the same way He responded to Joshua. He is willing to stop the Earth for us. For Him nothing is impossible! He is Almighty and delights when His servants say big prayers.

Furthermore, God's Word tells us that He can do greater and more abundant things than we ask or think (Ephesians 3.20). God wants to do tremendous things in our ministry, in our cities and nations. If we cry out to Him: “Lord, I want to reach this city for your glory!” He will certainly answer us.

Pastors in today's large cell churches are pastors just like everyone else. The only thing different from them is their prayer life. In South Korea, David Yonggi Cho prayed for the largest church in the history of Christianity and God granted it. God likes big prayers like that. God is eager to hear great prayers, and to do great things for His glory.

## 7. THE PRAYER OF THE LEADERS OF THE CELLULAR GROUP

Effective cells are those that pray. The cell meeting begins with prayer, continues with worship of the living God, continues with the lesson through which God speaks to us, and ends with prayer for the needs of those present, especially for loved ones and friends who are not yet saved. Prayer in the group meeting is fundamental, but much more so is the private prayer life of the leader and the collaborators.

In Matthew 6.5–6 we read that we should enter our room, close the door, and pray to God, who dwells in secret and rewards us in public. What God does in public through the cell leader depends on what he has done in private with God. Effective small group leaders are not extraordinary people, nor do they possess special talents; they are only successful because they prioritize prayer, to their dependence on God. They have learned to close the door to noise and to the things of the world around them, to seek the face of God. Doesn't the Bible say that God will bless us if we seek His face?

If we want God's reward, we will have to pay the price of private prayer. When we seek God in private, He teaches us how to deal with the constant talker, the interrupting child, the doubter. The Lord will guide us by giving the lesson so that the hearts of the people are pricked, as in Peter's sermon (Acts 2.37). He will touch and transform every heart.

Jesus will honor our private relationship with Him by blessing us in public. Therefore, a cell church's spiritual warfare strategy should include elements such as these:

(1) One hour or more of weekly Pastor prayer with local leaders. (2) Weekly prayer of cell leaders. (3) One or more days of general fasting per month. (4) Fasting chains. (5) Prayer vigils. (6) Prayer walkathons. (7) A booklet



or card with the names of the members and guests of the cell group, so that the leader, assistant and host intercede for them daily.

The most important discipline in the Christian life is spending time with God every day. Our life revolves around our intimacy with Him. Those days when we have run out of the house, without having had our devotional with God “due to lack of time,” have been the days that usually ended in a disastrous way; when we have returned bruised and discouraged, having to ask Him for forgiveness. We are nothing without God!

It is fine for cell leaders to prepare their lesson in detail and carefully organize the meeting plan; but there must be an hour when the leaders simply look for Jesus. The lesson, songs, or announcements are important, but not as important as the spiritual condition of the cell leader, who must be filled with the Holy Spirit in order to deal with any needs that arise in the cell group.

Another essential thing is daily intercession for the members of the cell. Cell leaders who pray for their people every day multiply their group much faster than those who pray little or occasionally. When we pray for the people in our cell group, God Himself works in the people, on behalf of the leader, even if he is not physically present. God transforms people’s lives when we pray for them.

When Carl Everett, a very successful cell leader, was asked about the secret to his success in cell multiplication, he simply replied, “Prayer.” He was asked if he had any other guidelines, but he replied again: “Prayer.” Finally, he was asked if he wanted to add something, and he said again: “Prayer.” For years, this man and his wife fasted every Friday — the day of their cell meeting — without eating anything until snack time.

## 8. CONCLUSION

God is the reason for cell multiplication. The success of cell growth depends absolutely on our fervent and constant prayer to God. For us to be successful in the Jesus Strategy, all of us involved in it — Pastor, Leaders, Helpers, Hosts, etc. — are required to be willing to have a life of prayer. This is what it means to become “partners with God”!

Ultimately, unless we are ministers, leaders, helpers, and hosts who pray, unless our church prays, little or nothing will happen in terms of the salvation of the lost. But if we seek the face of God with a burning desire that souls be saved, we have complete certainty that great things will happen in our cell group, in our church and in the lives of each one. Amen!



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### LESSON 18 - THE EVANGELISTIC CYCLE

What does the Evangelistic Cycle consist of? What benefits or results does it produce? How is it performed?

Memory verse: *"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour."* 1 Corinthians 3.6-8

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Evangelistic Cycle is a five-week period in which each member of the local church or cell group focuses on winning ten friends for Christ, to connect them to the cell, the discipleship school, and finally to the membership of the church. During these five weeks, the hearts of the friends are prepared so that the seed of the Word of God can be sown in them.

#### 2. SURPRISING RESULTS

The Evangelistic Cycle, which may also be called the "Win Cycle" or "Born Cycle," is a tool used by thousands of churches around the world to move their membership to a surprising new level of outreach to new souls, by engaging to all members in evangelism. This, in turn, ends the traditional practice in which a single man — usually the Pastor— or a small group of local evangelists are held accountable for what Jesus entrusted to all of us: to go and make disciples of all nations.

*"Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."* Luke 24.45-47

*"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."* Matthew 28.19-20

*"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."* Acts 1.8.

The Evangelistic Cycle, then, opens a great door of opportunity for the expansion of the Kingdom of God, by making the local church and the cell group focus their strength and capabilities on winning the lost, offering their members the same opportunity to participate. in local evangelism actively and effectively.

So the Evangelistic Cycle puts every member of the body of Christ to function in their true purpose as such: to be a priest of the Lord. In reference to this, the Word of the Lord tells us: *"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;"* 1 Peter 2.9.



### 3. A PLAN THAT INVOLVES EVERYONE

The Evangelistic Cycle is a synchronized effort of the cell or congregation, in which all baptized persons must participate, as we have already said. Your goal is, once again, for each member to win ten new souls to Christ in a five-week period.

In continuance, the tasks that correspond to each week of the cycle: (1) Write down the name of ten friends, (2) Contact them by phone, (3) Visit them, (4) Invite them to Friend's Day and (5) Take them up to Friend's Day so that the Word of God is sown in them. This simple plan can undergo certain variations if, for example, the cycle is carried out in virtual form, or if the congregation is still a new work or a mission.

Other factors, such as the culture or geography around a church or cell, could also influence the way the Evangelistic Cycle is implemented. The important thing is that every member participates in the evangelizing effort of the same. We all have family, friends, or colleagues who need Salvation. Only this reality should serve as motivation for every brother to get involved in each Evangelistic Cycle that their church or cell carries out.

During the five weeks, the Pastor or leader will encourage the people of the church or group to become enthusiastically involved in the work of evangelizing. He will also motivate them to pray and fast, since in order to have God's support and effectiveness in the spiritual field, spiritual efforts must be made. This is essential.

Spiritual consecration before and during the Evangelistic Cycle is so important that there can be no abundant harvest of souls without it: ***"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness."*** Acts 4.31.

Let us now see what should be done specifically in each week of the Evangelistic Cycle.

### 4. THE FIVE WEEKS

(1) First week: Identify. In the first week, each member of the church records the names of ten friends on a bookmark, to pray for each of them throughout the whole cycle. They will also fast one day a week for the Lord to release their friends from the chains that bind them. The Word teaches that ***"No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house."*** Mark 3.27.

(2) Second week: Contact. In the second week, each friend is contacted by phone call. The purpose is to inform them that they are being led in prayer and fasting; also know their needs so that you can pray more specifically for him or her. It is also very important to bind the spirit that has blinded friends to the light of the Gospel: ***"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."*** 2 Corinthians 4.4.

(3) Third week: Visit. In the third week, friends are visited at home or at work to speak to them with the Word of God and personally pray for them. They should be ministered with words that edify their lives: ***"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."*** Colossians 4.6.



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(4) Fourth week: Invite. In the fourth week, an invitation is brought to friends to attend the celebration to be held in the cell group or temple. They must confirm their assistance so that proper arrangements can be made. Cell leaders should make sure their group members attend as well.

(5) Fifth week: Bring. In the fifth week, friends are brought to the event we call Friend's Day. This special activity is held in the home where the cell group meets or in the church sanctuary, for the purpose of connecting or engaging guests with the cell group and discipleship school.

It is important that each time you have contact with your friend — and not just in the third week — you seek the opportunity to pray together with him or her, since it is very likely that your heart is ready to be ministered with the power of God at that time.

As can be seen, the five weeks of evangelism places each member of the congregation or cell to function as a soul winner, that is, to fulfill their mission as a true disciple of Jesus!

## 5. FRIEND'S DAY

Friend's Day is a party that must be prepared with dedication and excellence, to receive the friends that we want to win for the Lord. The event, whether in the church or in the cell, must be widely announced from the very beginning of the Evangelistic Cycle, using all available means of communication; for example, social networks, web pages, brochures, cards, newspapers, radio, television, etc.

At this special gathering, an extraordinary reception is held for first-time souls to the cell group or church. There, each guest is warmly welcomed and introduced to the other attendees. During the celebration, praises to God are sung, the Word of the Lord is exposed, the guests are prayed for and finally the food prepared for them is served.

The entire gathering program should be thought out for the guests, to make the best impression on them. There is no second chance for a good first impression. No person should be left unattended on Friend's Day. On that day (it should always be like this) a special atmosphere of fellowship, love and service must reign in the cell or the sanctuary. The gathering should be dynamic, joyful, vibrant, motivating, and unforgettable for everyone.

The opening prayer should be simple and short. The songs should have the love of God as their theme, avoiding doctrinal issues or foreign language for the guests. Teaching should be clear, easy to understand, relevant to the needs of friends. The goal of all this is that the guests open their hearts to Jesus Christ and have an encounter with Him.

Attention: the program should not be too long: an hour, or an hour and a half maximum. We want friends to feel like coming back! Make sure everyone fills out registration cards with their data and requests. The card can be virtual, so that people fill it out and send it with their mobile phones. Before dismissing the meeting, invite everyone to the next group or church meeting; also to enroll in discipleship school.

Friend's Day can be done with families - in which case there must be a group of members prepared to take care of children in another space - or with homogeneous groups such as young people, ladies, couples, older people, etc. Naturally, in these cases the Friend's Day program must be adjusted to the specific needs of the



participating group.

***“And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law (although I am not subject to the law) as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. 1 Corinthians 9.20-23***

Therefore, the Evangelistic Cycle ends with Friend’s Day. And then what comes? We must begin immediately with the discipleship classes Level 1 Born, where each friend receives the teachings that guide them in their preparation for baptism in water in the name of Jesus Christ. We will provide details of this in an upcoming lesson.

## 6. LET’S FOLLOW THE PLAN

Those who know about sowing understand that, to sow effectively, you must wait for the appropriate time in each stage of the cycle. For example, the type of seed depends on when the sowing has to be done. If sown before or after the correct time, it is unlikely that the plant will be able to bear fruit or even hatch.

Hence the importance of carrying out the Evangelistic Cycle as we have presented it in this lesson, without neglecting any detail of it or forgetting the spiritual intercession in prayer and fasting for the friends that one wants to win for the Kingdom of God. Let us remember what God’s will is in this regard:

***“And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” Luke 14.22-23.*** If we carry out the Evangelization Cycle in the right way, the only possible result for our church or cell group will be this: God’s house will be filled with guests. Hallelujah, amen!

## 7. CONCLUSION

The gospel does not need complicated things to produce results; it just has to be sown in one heart, and then another, and so on. The Gospel alone has power for salvation: ***“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” Romans 1.16. “Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” 1st Peter 1.9.***

So, are you willing to actively get involved in the next Evangelistic Cycle that your Pastor or cell group leader conducts? If so, why don’t you start praying today for those ten friends that you are going to bring to God’s house?



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### LESSON 19 - THE CELL GROUP

What are church cell groups? What is its importance? What purposes do they develop? How is the cell meeting carried out? What roles do the cell group leader and collaborators play?

Memory verse: *“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ”* Acts 5:42

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Cell groups or small groups are an essential element of the Jesus Strategy. These groups generally meet weekly in the homes of local church members. The Christians of the early church set out to work in the homes. That was its evangelization strategy, as can be seen in Acts 5:42; 12:12; 16:32; 20:20; Romans 16:5,10-11; 1 Corinthians 16:19 and other New Testament passages. The houses of believers were central to the development of the mission of the Church during its first centuries of existence.

#### 2. FIVE PURPOSES OF THE CELL GROUP

Cell groups or small groups in the church are very important because they offer believers the opportunity to come together to discover and develop God’s plan for their lives, through mutual support in prayer, the study of the Word of God, and the development of interpersonal relationships.

Cell groups fulfill a fivefold function in the Church:

**1. Worship:** Worship brings people closer to God. Through worship, converted and unconverted people experience His presence. By worshiping together in the cell group, believers find the path of unity and this pleases God: *“... breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people...”* Acts 2:46–47. See also Psalm 133.

**2. Discipleship:** Those who attend the weekly cell group meeting learn biblical truths through teaching. They even learn how to be leaders themselves! The cell is the best discipleship workshop because it transcends theory and leads to practice, just as God commanded Moses: *“And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.”* Exodus 18:20. Empowering and coaching cell group members in biblical truths causes them to develop strong convictions in God’s Word and reproduce those convictions in other people. This is the group’s way of caring for converted souls - through ongoing discipleship.

**3. Ministry:** In the cell group, you learn to serve others by knowing the needs of each person and by praying for the requests that are presented. This promotes the development of the ministry and the Christian life of the members: *“...but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”* Galatians 5:13–14.

**4. Fellowship:** Developing close relationships in general church meetings can be quite difficult, especially if the congregation is large. In that context, relationships tend to be superficial. A better degree of companionship can be achieved in the cell, where we learn to relate closely to each other and to accept each other despite our



mistakes and shortcomings. These come to light, precisely, in the intimacy that there is in home gatherings. God made us so that we can relate to each other. It is very important that we learn how to relate to others while we are here on Earth, because we will live together for eternity in Heaven!

**5. Evangelism:** Cell groups are the basic unit for evangelism in the church. During the Lord’s earthly ministry, the way in which they would win the lost was by bringing them to Him. In the time of the early church, the lost were brought into the homes of believers, where God’s presence and love were manifested. We also do this in the Strategy of Jesus. We are not trying to invite friends to the sanctuary only, but rather to take them where God’s love may be most evident to them: the cell group. The group leader must, therefore, motivate each member of his cell to strive to win souls and be an evangelist. Each member of the cell in turn must commit to inviting and bringing their friends to the meetings. And when friends arrive, they must be cared for with patience and love until they develop and sustain themselves. Each believer in the cell must do for others what others have done for him. The purpose of evangelism is crucial in the group, as it allows believers to fulfill Christ’s commission, which is to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19).

The cell group also enables its members to develop spiritual gifts. As they edify and minister to one another, they discover the supernatural abilities that God has given them through the baptism of the Holy Spirit — abilities that they can exercise through mutual service. That is why it is common for cells to have healing, liberation, and conversions. They are the wonderful works of God’s power in His church!

### 3. THE CELL GROUP MEETING

The small group or cell can start with just three people: the leader, the helper, and the host (who lends his/her house for the meeting). If the host is both a leader or an assistant, the group can even start with just two people. Matthew 18:20 tells us that where two or three are gathered together in the name of the Lord, there He is in their midst. Now let’s see how the weekly cell meeting is conducted.

**1. Fifteen minutes of praise:** After the welcome and prayer, comes the time of worship through song. Ideally, the song should be led by someone who can sing and play a musical instrument. If not, music videos can be used with the lyrics of the song. The important thing is that everyone participates by having the lyrics clearly displayed on a screen, printed sheet, or in other creative ways.

**2. Thirty minutes of teaching:** This is the central part of the cell group meeting, as people are brought under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, converted, and grow through the teaching of the Word of God. We recommend that the leader or teacher designated to teach, prepare the lesson well and avoid reading it as much as possible during teaching. The written lesson should only be used as a guide. They should not exceed 30 minutes, so as not to tire people out. To make the lesson time enjoyable, it is good to encourage everyone to participate by asking questions or involving them in the lesson. Cell group lesson books are available for download as well as other resources on the Jesus Strategy website.

**3. Ten Minutes of Prayer:** Here you call for obedience to the Word and pray emphasizing the theme of the lesson. We also pray for the sick and for the needs of others. It must be asked in faith, without doubting, that God’s answers will come and that testimonies of His great power will be heard in the following meetings.



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**4. Five minutes of planning:** Before finishing, the leader will make plans for the next group meeting. During this time, the leader is able to delegate activities such as opening prayer, praise, babysitting, or prayer for needs to others. You can also delegate teaching to someone who is qualified to teach. And you can ask who would like to bring refreshments from the next meeting.

**5. Announcements:** Immediately after planning, announcements of upcoming church activities are given and an attentive invitation is made to the Sunday celebration for that week.

**6. Fellowship:** This is a very important part of the life of the cell group, since it is during this time that the bonds of companionship are strengthened and the guests feel better accepted. Snack time is an excellent icebreaker for new friends and a very good occasion to spend pleasant moments of fellowship in the cell group. Fellowship can happen before or after the meeting. The duration may vary depending on the culture and chemistry of the group, but it is recommended to spend approximately 30 minutes in fellowship.

### 4. THE FRIENDSHIP FACTOR

The cell meeting is basically a group of friends who meet weekly to learn more about God and grow in relationship with each other. That is why many churches call their cells "Friendship Groups." Friendship is very important in the cell group because it produces unity and strength, and therefore growth. Friendship is key to making the group flourish, since by making friends with people, we can win them much more easily to God and help them persevere on the Path.

Friendship is a magnet that attracts and holds the lost. It has been proven that a person who comes to church but does not have friends there is much less likely to continue attending than people who does have friends in the church or cell. In other words, friendship is an antidote to desertion and a determining factor in the goal of retaining souls in cell groups.

Friendship satisfies the need for acceptance. One of the things people fear the most is rejection. We all want to return to a place where we are accepted, because we all need to be accepted. Friendship satisfies that basic need, providing people with emotional rest. When the load is shared, its weight is greatly reduced as we can see in Proverbs 17:17; 27:9 and Ecclesiastes 4:10.

How can friendship be fostered among those attending the cell? (1) With a phone call, showing genuine interest in the person. We should not show interest only in having them attend our meeting. (2) With an invitation to eat. This is a clear way to express friendship or fellowship. The early church was very used to this. (3) Doing group activities outside of the meeting. This will foster friendship and provide friends with an alternative to their social life, allowing them to better integrate into the life of the church. Friendship must be cultivated, not only in the group meeting, but also outside of it, since this is how relationships are deepened and the conversion process of friends is accelerated. The time dedicated to being friends with them is a significant and highly productive investment that we must all be willing to make.

### 5. WHO IS WHO IN THE CELL GROUP

Each member of the cell must know their functions, in order to participate actively and effectively in the

vision of their church. Next we will observe a brief description of the functions of the three key elements of the cell group which are: (1) The leader, (2) the assistant, and (3) supporting members.

**1. The leader:** Let's read Luke 9:1–2. The cell group leader leads the believers that God has placed under his/her care. The cell leader is really a shepherd of a small flock; that is, he/she assists the senior pastor of the church in caring for the believers. Therefore, the cell leader must first of all ensure that he/she understands the pastor's vision well. You must also be committed to transmitting that vision faithfully to the small group entrusted to you. He/she must also take care of everyone, making sure that they grow as disciples and are fruitful. That is the main mission of the cell leader. Their task is arduous, of course, but we know that the Lord is with those who serve Him faithfully, and He enables them to fulfill His mission. What are the responsibilities of the cell leader? (1) Connect people who come to Friend's Day with their cell group. (2) Connect with your cell people who only attend the temple. (3) Motivate the assistant and host to bring friends to the cell. (4) Go out with group members to invite people; through streets, squares, public places, and other houses. (5) Carefully plan the cell meeting each week, so that it is successful. (6) At the meeting, follow the six-step plan that we have presented. (7) Involve as many members as possible in the work of the cell. (8) Teach your people to be accountable. (9) Be responsible. Submit all necessary reports to whom it corresponds. (10) Be faithful to your pastor and supervisors. (11) Have a good testimony inside and outside the church. (12) Faithfully attend the cell group meeting, being an example in bringing souls to it. (13) Be willing to receive criticism and complaints. (14) Love everyone. (15) Be very patient with people. (16) Be firm but at the same time tolerant. (17) Have a life of prayer and holiness. (18) Establish mentor-disciple relationships with those members of the cell who are called to leadership. Then consider the following scriptures: Proverbs 24:6; Luke 9:56; John 12:47; 1 Corinthians 1:21; 2 Corinthians 12:15; 1 Timothy 1:15. Leading a cell is a beautiful task that the Lord Jesus entrusted to us; one that involves winning those who are lost and caring for those who have been won. If the leader focuses well in these two areas, he/she will achieve a great multiplication and consolidation of disciples, bringing a great revival to his/her local church for the glory of God.

**2. The assistant:** Also called "Timothy," this is the helper or closest collaborator of the cell group leader. He/she is a potential leader preparing to serve as a cell leader in the future. The helper must: (1) Love God and people, that is, have a passion for the lost and be a soul winner. (2) Be an example of a person focused on the mission of the Church, which is to make disciples. (3) Be a servant, as your progress in the church and cell group structure will largely depend on your learning the importance of serving others. Those who only serve themselves should not be promoted. (4) Be willing to serve when called to do so. (5) Be willing to collaborate, help, and learn. (6) Be teachable, always seeking and accepting the direction and instruction of your leader. (7) Train to be excellent. (8) Work well as a team. (9) Recognize their authority and be subject to it, because this is how a mature character is achieved, whose main characteristic is respect and obedience to their superiors. (10) Know how to follow instructions. (11) Have a commitment and a good disposition towards the tasks that are delegated to them. (12) Complete tasks in a timely manner and with excellence. (13) Be a promoter of unity in the group. (14) Work so that group members feel like a team, connected to the larger vision of the church. (15) Motivate others with an excellent attitude. (16) Be faithful to your local church, its leadership, and vision. (17) Strive to attain the honorable degree of leadership in the future.

**3. Supporting Members:** The great commission given by Christ to all believers is to go and make disciples. We exist to win the world for Him. That is our most pressing task and the main purpose for which Jesus Christ came to earth. Every member of the church must be involved in evangelism and committed to a cell group; and everyone who participates in a cell must always keep in mind that winning souls for Christ is the main task in the



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kingdom of God. He who wins souls is wise! Proverbs 11:30. Therefore, all members of the cell group must: (1) Win souls to expand the Kingdom of God. The Church of the Lord Jesus exists to exalt Him, equip the saints, and evangelize the world. (2) Understand and commit to the Win and Disciple cycle — or Birth Cycle. (3) Actively participate in bringing friends to the cell meeting, Friend's Day, and Discipleship School. (4) Pray for friends and help them move through all stages of the Birth Cycle, until they give their lives to Christ and become established members of the church. This commitment from cell group members is essential for the group to be productive and multiply frequently.

### 6. CONCLUSION

The cell group has been and continues to be a powerful strategy that our Lord Jesus Christ employs to win the lost, for the expansion of His Kingdom. The cell group also fulfills the very important function of caring for the baptized with love, so that they do not return to the world. It also provides the training that allows each believer to serve Christ with his gifts, thereby offering more people the opportunity to fulfill the divine call to go and preach the Gospel to every creature: ***“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ”*** Acts 5:42.



## LESSON 20 - DISCIPLESHIP SCHOOL

What is Discipleship School? What is its purpose? How did our Lord Jesus Christ disciple? How do we establish and implement the discipleship school in the local church?

Memory verse: *“And in those **days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied [...] 7 And the word of the Lord increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly...**”* Acts 6:1,7.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Jesus Strategy’s Discipleship School provides a biblical, theological, and practical education that leads the new believer on the path of growth from being born again in God’s way until he/she multiplies or begins to win souls. This discipleship school has been structured in four levels: (1) BIRTH (2) GROW (3) MATURE and (4) MULTIPLY, with the basic purpose that the disciple develops sequentially until becoming a productive member of the church - a successful soul winner. Our discipleship school enables each disciple to develop a mission in the world and a ministry in the Church, for the glory of God.

### 2. THE FOUR LEVELS OF THE SCHOOL OF DISCIPLESHIP

(1) LEVEL 1 BIRTH: *“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**”* John 3:3. At this level, we have 16 basic doctrinal lessons to be taught to souls prior to their water baptism. The objective of Level 1 Birth is to lay the foundation for the soul to know the elements of the Christian life and be properly prepared for baptism. The goal is conversion. This course lasts eight weeks or two months if lessons are given twice a week. Giving one lesson per week, the course lasts four months. At the end of it there is an extra lesson that teaches the importance of the believer’s commitment as a member of the local church. It is recommended that, when baptized, the student signs the document “Commitment to the local church” included in the manual; and to complete the forms “Request for baptism in water” and “Personal data for the membership book.”

(2) LEVEL 2 GROW: *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby”* 1 Peter 2:2. At this level we present the newly baptized members with 24 lessons, which will help them to further develop their new relationship with God, as well as their relationship with the other members of the body of Christ. In Level 2 Grow, we teach Christian disciplines and other subjects that are of the greatest importance to the spiritual life of the disciple, so that they can grow healthy in the Kingdom of God and become a Christian filled with the Holy Spirit.

(3) LEVEL 3 MATURE: *“until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the [a]knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature [b]which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”* Ephesians 4:13 NASB. At this level, we again have 24 lessons. The objective is for the believer to mature spiritually and develop his/her responsibilities in the Kingdom of God. Such responsibilities include beginning to serve and taking his/her first steps as a host and even as an assistant of a cell group. Through a theoretical-practical training, he/she will learn to be a priest of the Kingdom of God; a soul winner committed to his/her cell group and his/her church.



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(4) LEVEL 4 MULTIPLY: ***“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.”*** Acts 6:7. After being involved in service in a cell, the disciple begins preparation to become a cell group leader. At Multiplication Level 4, we give 16 lessons that provide the basic training for multiplication, connecting the disciple with the vision of the church, and teaching him/her step by step how The Strategy of Jesus works with its gears and processes.

### 3. THE DISCIPLESHIP OF JESUS

To effectively develop discipleship in our church and achieve its purpose, we should study the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ; particularly the way He made disciples. First of all, Jesus was fully committed to this work. He saw the discipleship process as central to the advancement of the Kingdom. And something very important is that He not only made disciples to follow Him during the years of His ministry here, but He also taught them how to disciple others to do the same. True to this task, the apostle Paul would write a few decades later: ***“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”*** 2 Timothy 2:2.

The Lord’s commitment to discipleship was such that even after resurrecting He continued to instruct His followers: ***“To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God”*** Acts 1:3. The Kingdom of God is the central message of discipleship as well as the Gospel. The good news of Salvation implies a commitment to change for the disciple, entering a new lifestyle aligned with the Word of God. This comes as a result of being transferred from the realm of darkness to the realm of Light. The disciple of Christ no longer lives to do his/her own will but now lives to do the will of the One who has called him to His service.

Second, Jesus used a practical method of making disciples. In Acts 1:1, Luke explains that at the beginning of His ministry ***“... Jesus began to do and teach...”*** That is to say that the Lord first acted, and then he instructed. His discipleship was not only theoretical but also practical. Jesus taught what he lived and that is the best discipleship - that of the example or model. People will do what they see their leader do; not what the leader tells you to do. The leader’s greatest teaching is his own example.

In that sense, we need to find a healthy balance. Our disciples need us to give them formation and opportunities for ministries in the church, yes; but also motivation so that they are mobilized to the field of work, to evangelization and discipleship. Our focus should be that each believer fully recovers the priesthood of the saints: ***“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light”*** 1 Peter 2:9.

A third lesson we draw from Jesus’ discipleship is that He made disciples in close proximity. The twelve Apostles were trained and discipled for three and a half years, with Jesus being with them. He instructed them on a daily basis, close-by, and because of that, their conviction became very strong; so much so that most ended up giving their lives for Jesus. He not only taught them - in the strict sense of the word - by transmitting information or knowledge, but he also spoke to them. The biblical term “speak” used in the Gospel is broad in its meaning and implies the communication of love, conviction, passion, hope, disappointment, anger, and many other things. So Jesus’ discipleship was also aimed at strengthening His relationship with the disciples. It was a relational discipleship, characterized by trust and companionship.



Fourth, Jesus not only trained His disciples, but He also left them commandments to keep: ***“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”*** John 14:21. Discipleship not only deals with practices and results but also with doctrines, commandments, and disciplines; which were not intended to burden us with heavy legalisms. John wrote that the Lord’s commandments are not burdensome (1 John 5:3), but to provide us with a firm foundation on which to build a lasting spiritual life (Luke 7.24–25). So a disciple is a commandment-keeper; an “obeyer.”

After serving with his/her own life as a practical example for the disciple, the teacher should faithfully transmit knowledge of the Word of the Lord; the doctrine, the commandments, and the spiritual disciplines. For the knowledge of these things will facilitate the spiritual maturity of the new believer, as we said at the beginning of this course. The believer who becomes a disciple of Jesus must live in a constant search for the perfect will of God, and this will result in a healthy and abundant spiritual life: ***“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone”*** Ephesians 2:20.

On the other hand, the weak biblical foundation and/or the little or no spiritual discipline will deprive the disciple of the formation and values necessary for a strong spiritual life. Although it is true that Salvation is a gift from God, something impossible to buy with merits, it is also true that the doctrines, commandments, and disciplines of the Lord are essential to safeguard us from the world and keep us within the safety zone that is the real Christian life.

Fifth and finally, Jesus empowered His disciples; He endowed them with His power. Acts 1:4,8: ***“And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father [...] But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”*** Here we find the ultimate purpose of Jesus’ discipleship: the release of the disciple for relevant and effective ministry.

It is not enough to teach and train them. They must be empowered and sent. The teacher must guide his disciples to the aforementioned experience, to that transcendent moment also called “empowerment”, where the believer receives new and significant responsibilities in the kingdom of God, as happened to the Apostles. All training has been for this purpose; so that the disciple receives the fullness of the Holy Spirit and commits himself to the mission of his life. This call is essential for the child of God to have the ability and the opportunity to be a true witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let’s look at Acts 2:4; 4:31; 8:3–4.

## 4. IMPLEMENTING THE SCHOOL OF DISCIPLESHIP

Forming true disciples is the main task of The Strategy of Jesus. We can attract people through revivals, friend days, evangelization services, etc. but only through discipleship modeling Jesus’ way will they be preserved serving the Lord. Again, the main objective of the Strategy of Jesus through discipleship is recovering the priesthood of all the saints in the Church, to not only form believers but also disciples of Christ; to bring many souls to Him.

When the church is still small, discipleship school can start in cell groups, in homes. Each cell leader sets



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aside one day of the week for a second activity in the same house, which now becomes a discipleship school classroom. In the discipleship class, the format of the cell is not followed, but the lessons of the Level 1 Birth course are taught. So the cell group leader has two tasks here: leading the weekly cell meeting and giving the Birth discipleship school Level 1 teachings on different days.

The leader should encourage those who attend the group to bring friends to the weekly meeting and when they arrive, they should immediately connect them with the discipleship school, so that they will soon reach the new birth through the Level 1 Birth classes. If the cell group has mature and prepared members, they can also serve as teachers of the discipleship school level 1. In this way, the first purpose of the discipleship school is fulfilled, which is the new birth of souls through repentance and water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ.

By carrying out a cycle of evangelization in the cell group every four months, which equates to three cycles per year, a great harvest of souls can be obtained for the glory of God. This happens because people are integrated not only into the cell but also into the discipleship school that operates in the same home. The other levels of the discipleship school, Grow, Mature, and Multiply, can also be implemented in the cell. Through this combination, the cell group and the discipleship school come together to work and fulfill the Great Commission that the Lord left us, to go and make disciples; getting each believer to take the three basic steps that will make him a true disciple of Jesus: Baptism in water in His name (John 3:5); be baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5); and bear fruit for God; that is, to become a soul winner (Matthew 13:23).

Salvation comes by believing in Jesus Christ and receiving him in the heart; But to become His disciple, the new believer must bear fruit — abundant and lasting fruit: ***“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples”*** John 15:8. ***“...I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain...”*** John 15:16.

The discipleship school is key to the development of the mission and the growth of the local church. All members of the congregation must be involved in one way or another. Some will probably not be eligible to teach at the discipleship school, but all can certainly bring people to study. For the disciple-making process to be fully successful in the church, it must be understood by everyone and involve everyone. Everyone should understand that in this discipleship school Bible studies are not given for the simple fact of imparting knowledge, but we seek to take believers through a process whose main purpose is to produce disciples capable of ministering to other people and bearing fruit, this is , win souls for Christ.

## 5. THE TEACHER OF THE SCHOOL OF DISCIPLESHIP

Coordinated work, good communication, and constant training are very important elements of the ministerial function that those of us in charge of the honorable task of teaching the Word of God to the people fulfill. We need to understand the importance of good coordination, continuous training, and teamwork. We need a team in which there is a strong bond of relationship and whose common fruit is to fulfill God’s mandate to announce His message of Salvation to the people. We are a vital part of this divine plan.

Implementing the discipleship school requires an organization that acts as a guiding rail by which we all move towards a common goal, which is clearly outlined in the word of the Lord: ***“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end***

*of the world. Amen.” Matthew 28:19-20. “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Mark 16:15-16.*

A critical key to excellence in discipleship is for the teacher to be completely faithful in his commitment to the Lord, in the performance of his duties, and in his ministerial responsibility to the people. Of course, the teacher of the discipleship school must know the Word of God, the doctrine that we believe and practice, as well as the administrative guidelines of the organization and the local church. The teacher must also understand the dynamics of The Strategy of Jesus, which is the vision of the Apostolic Assembly.

Having the ministerial gift of teaching is not enough to do a good job as a teacher. Every gift requires its development through constant training and practice. 1 Timothy 4:13, ***“As long as I go, engage in reading, exhorting, and teaching.”*** Take advantage of every training opportunity that is available and aimed at acquiring specific knowledge on topics relevant to Christian discipleship: biblical doctrine, general history, religions, grammar, geography, etc. The discipleship teacher should also be trained in areas such as hermeneutics, exegesis, didactics, public speaking, etc.

Every person who has the call of God to teach, also has the gift of understanding; but, once again, understanding is not enough. Training is also needed. One who is not trained first, cannot teach others, even having a lot of understanding. Before you can be a good teacher, you have to be a good disciple; and this requires preparation. Two essential qualities in the preparation process are humility and self-discipline. Humility, because pride hinders learning; and self-discipline because training must be continuous, periodic, and is often intense.

## 6. CONCLUSION

1 Corinthians 8:1: ***“Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.”*** This edifying, perfecting love is expressed through service to others, when we teach the word of the Lord; not only transmitting information but also maintaining a loving relationship with people, so that they see Christ reflected in our lives. Let us continue to learn, grow, prepare, mature and enrich ourselves in the service of God through the wonderful knowledge of His Word, for an excellent and fruitful discipleship in the name of Jesus. Amen.



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### LESSON 21 - LEADERSHIP MEETING

What is the importance of the cell group leaders meeting in the local church? What is its purpose? How is it structured?

Memory verse: *“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful”* 1 Corinthians 4:1-2

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The meeting of local cell group leaders is closely related to the vision of the local church. What is vision, in this case? It is the divine revelation that allows the Church to be effective in its mission. God has provided us with a vision or way of working in order to reach the lost world with the Gospel. Our mission has not changed, nor will it change; but the vision must be something dynamic. Why? Because the world is changing. It is necessary to renew the work strategy or vision in order to be successful in the mission, and the meeting of leaders is key to this.

The Strategy of Jesus is the vision that God has given to the Apostolic Assembly in recent years to evangelize the world. What do we need for our vision to be successful? We need a partnership between Heaven and Earth; one in which God provides us with the resources and we wisely manage them.

#### 2. THE LEADERSHIP MEETING AND THE ADMINISTRATION

Matthew 25:14-15,19: *“For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey...After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.”* As we can see here, we will be held accountable for how we manage the resources the Lord has placed in our hands. We must therefore use them wisely and with the fear of God.

Just as a steward manages the assets of the owner or lord, the Pastor of the local church manages the vision of God and the resources provided by Him. We refer to the spiritual, human, material, and financial resources of God’s work. The vision of the Jesus Strategy and the resources used in it are managed from the meeting of cell group leaders; meetings that we also call “MEET”. This name is an acronym containing the four purposes of the Leadership meeting, namely: **Minister**, **Empower**, **Evaluate**, and **Tactic**.

#### 3. VISION AND PASTORAL INFLUENCE

The Leadership Meeting or MEET, allows the Pastor to work periodically with the leaders to remind them of the vision of the Strategy of Jesus, minister with the word of God to them, evaluate the work that they carry out, and establish plans to grow. In a general sense, we can affirm that the importance of the MEET lies above all in that it allows the Pastor to influence the leaders. Influence is the ability to shape the thinking of followers. The Pastor’s influence on small group leaders is vital, as it largely determines the results the church will achieve. The Pastor’s leadership is measured mainly by this ability to influence their leaders, so that they follow the vision that



God has given and so that they do it “willingly” (Mark 12:37) that is, of their own free will.

The Pastor is the main promoter of the vision and MEET; the best tool for this crucial function. The Pastor must assume the direction of this meeting, because he will be able to involve the whole church and the leadership in the cell vision, in the Strategy of Jesus. Cell leaders need to hear the Pastor’s vision every week so they can stay identified and attached to it and not to take another vision, since this would produce the much dreaded divisions - two or more visions - in the church. The MEET meeting is highly beneficial in that sense, as it promotes the faithfulness of the leaders to the Pastor and the vision.

Additionally, the MEET makes everyone accountable for their work, motivating leaders to strive, preventing stagnation, and guiding the church toward results. The MEET meeting is then a fundamental key to keep the cell structure of the church functional and productive; producing healthier cell groups for a great expansion of the kingdom of God.

#### 4. KEEPING THE FOCUS

We know that in the church it has never been easy to keep the focus on the Great Commission. As in any work team, the spirits of the brothers and the passion to win souls tend to diminish as time passes. Every church tends to become stationary and loses effectiveness in the great task that the Lord has given us to go and make disciples. Therefore, the Word tells us that the edge of the ax must be sharpened frequently (Ecclesiastes 10:10a). If the equipment is “dull” —motivated, disconnected, etc.— too much effort has to be made to get results and still little or nothing is achieved. But if a team of leaders is constantly “sharpened” by its pastor, it will work much more effectively: “... **wisdom is helpful to lead**” (V. 10b), Solomon concludes.

The number one need in cell leadership is to receive focus, guidance, and training. The most effective way of imparting these things is MEET. This meeting facilitates the interaction of the Pastor with his leaders that include feedback, diagnosis, and socialization of problems, as well as the implementation of plans and initiatives that lead leaders on the path of growth, until they achieve excellence. Believers approach the Lord in cells while leaders do it at the MEET. This is the main goal of the leaders meeting!

The apostle Paul, a great mentor of pastors and leaders of the New Testament church, defined this goal as follows: “**Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.**” Colossians 1:28-29. “**We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers,[a] as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.**” 2 Thessalonians 1:3 ESV. Thus, the Pastor strives to push his leaders forward, toward the likeness of Jesus Christ, knowing that at the end of the road a crown awaits them that will last forever: “**And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible**” 1 Corinthians 9:25. Glory to God!

#### 5. PLAN OF THE MEET MEETING

Recall that the acronym “Meet” contains the four purposes of the meeting of leaders: **Minister**, **Empower**, **Evaluate**, and **Tactic**, which practically defined the plan to be followed in this meeting.



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**1. Minister:** Cell leaders are always serving. Every week, they bring God’s Word to people in their group meetings, discipleship school, etc. They pray and minister to people in need. And they get tired. Therefore, leaders need to be ministered to. A mistake often made is to focus on building cell groups and recruiting leaders, hoping that the cells will then function on their own. But leaders must not only be called and trained to lead small groups, they too must be continually shepherded. Not only do you have to ask them for reports and results; you also have to recognize their work, help them, motivate them, advise them, etc. In the Meet meeting, the Pastor should take time for that and pray for each of his leaders anointing them with oil. **“And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.”** 2 Chronicles 30:20. If leaders are to genuinely lead, guide, and shepherd the people in their cells, they must also have anointed shepherding or ministry that affirms, strengthens, renews, etc. **“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;”** Colossians 1:9-10.

**2. Empowering:** Cell groups are very important, and they are exciting because they provide the opportunity for believers to share their lives and win over non-believers. Cell groups are also important because they allow ordinary people to become new leaders. Delegating authority from God or empowering these leaders is a task that pastors carry out at the Meet. This is key for the cellular model to work. The Meet allows the self-esteem of the leaders to grow because they are recognized and respected as people of capacity and leadership. Sometimes the leader who started his cell group with enthusiasm finds himself exhausted, wanting to move to a less demanding position due to lack of empowerment. Thus, cell groups that were once healthy begin to slowly die. The Pastor’s empowerment is the fuel that fuels the cell leader’s motivation, keeping him inspired, sharp, and accurate. Empowerment can prevent disasters before they happen. The best tool to empower leaders is, of course, the biblical teaching that the Pastor imparts at the Meet. This teaching — about 30 minutes — must be directed by God; fresh, comforting, inspiring, motivating, challenging, and vision-focused: **“In green pastures he makes me rest. 3 He leads me beside calm waters; itme new strength...”** Psalms 23:2-3 NIV.

**3. Evaluate:** For there to be achievements, evaluation is needed. In the Meet, the results of the local Jesus Strategy are evaluated to correct the deficient areas and be able to grow until reaching the established goals. The evaluation is a dialogue, not a monologue; an open conversation between the appropriate authority and his subordinates. The weekly evaluation of cell groups and other components should be taken with great seriousness and responsibility on the part of all. We must evaluate how many friends are we bringing to Friend’s Day, how many of these friends have we connected with the cells and the Sunday celebrations of the church, how many friends we take to the spiritual retreat, how many of us enrolled in Discipleship Level 1 Birth, and how many friends do we baptize. The other three levels of the discipleship school must also be evaluated — Grow, Mature, and Multiply. If the church is still small, the Pastor should review the reports of the cell groups to see if they are making progress or not. If the church is medium-sized and its cells are distributed in sectors, the Pastor will evaluate the sector supervisors so that they do the same with the leaders of the groups. If the church is already large and its cells are organized by zones, the Pastor will evaluate the coordinators or zone pastors; they will evaluate the supervisors of the sectors, and these the leaders of the cells. **“And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.** Exodus 18:25-26. **“Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants”** Matthew 18:23.



**4. Tactic:** After the minister, empowerment, and evaluation, the leadership should receive specific direction from the Pastor for the week’s work, on the different purposes of the Jesus Strategy. It is very important to develop plans and objectives, as well as to give precise instructions to the leaders, because they need to know exactly what they have to do in order to take the vision to higher and higher levels in the local church. Oftentimes, little matters of the Strategy, little mistakes, are what make the difference between winning and losing in the business of saving souls for the Lord. Thanks to the detailed planning that the Pastor presents at the MEET, leaders can be more effective in their work and better develop their leadership skills and methods. Faithfully attending the MEET allows the cell leader to know first-hand the goals of the week, the prayer strategies, the indications to improve in areas with deficiencies, the adjustments that will allow better results, etc. Exodus 20:20b: **“... show them the way they should walk, and what they should do.”**

## 6. CONCLUSION

For local cell leadership to effectively develop its ministry throughout the year, a lot of focus and motivation is required; and the Leadership Meeting or MEET is the ideal tool to provide these elements. For the Jesus Strategy to work as expected, the leadership meeting must be conducted consistently and effectively. The well-structured MEET will create and sustain the spiritual values necessary to produce faith, commitment, love, and passion for God’s work in cell group leaders.

If you are a leader or helper who really wants to grow and win many souls for God, attend your local church MEET with all seriousness and commitment. Support your Pastor and the other cell leaders with your active participation; and always remember what the Lord said: **“And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?”** Luke 12:42. **“His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”** Matthew 25:21. Amen.



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### LESSON 22 - SPIRITUAL RETREATS

What is the importance of the Jesus Strategy retreats? What types of spiritual retreats do we hold? How do we organize and carry them out to make them successful?

Memory verse: *“But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea” Mark 3:7. “And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.” Luke 9:10.*

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Lord led people out of their environments to better deal with them and disconnect them from the world; thus He drew them to Him. In addition to ministering to the crowd, the Lord also took time to share with His disciples. As agents of the kingdom of God, they were to know the vision of the Lord well. For this reason, in the Strategy of Jesus we carry out two types of spiritual retreats: (1) The Retreat of Friends, for guests or new believers in the church; and (2) the Leadership Retreat, also called the Launch Retreat. Let’s study how these two spiritual retreats are carried out.

#### 2. THE LEADERS RETREAT

The cell leader retreat plays a very important role in the ongoing process of training and commissioning new leaders to serve in cell groups. It is also called “Launch Retreat” because it operates as a launcher of the Evangelistic Cycle.

These are the seven purposes of the Leadership Retreat:

1. To guide the leadership to a higher spiritual level, through an atmosphere that helps them have an intimate encounter with God; an encounter that changes their lives.
2. Breaking strongholds, seeking the Lord together to receive from His power.
3. Provide leaders with training in the spiritual area, evangelism, cell group leadership, and discipleship.
4. Provide instruction on the operation of the Holy Spirit in cell group meetings.
5. Unleash blessing on each cell leader.
6. Commission and launch new leaders.
7. Prepare and plan the Evangelistic Cycle.

The following are the materials or resources needed for the Leaders’ Retreat:



1. A printed program of the retreat.
2. List of registered leaders, all who must have received an invitation.
3. Badges with the names of the participants.
4. Folder with the lessons. It can be given one per couple.
5. Spiritual self-assessment form. One per person.
6. Pencil or pen for each person.
7. Sound system.
8. Video system.
9. Items to celebrate the Lord's Supper and foot washing.

Three matters to be taken into account in the Leaders' Retreat: (1) Music: Songs of adoration should be sung, leading to intimacy with God. Praise during the time of ministering should lead to meditation and commitment. (2) Food: There must be meals during the breaks, prepared by the organizing team of the retreat. Lunch should be light, so as not to cause drowsiness. (3) Children: The children of those attending the retreat must be registered on a list and cared for by a group of well-prepared siblings.

### **3. LEADERS' RETREAT PROGRAM**

The following is a suggested example or model of a program for the Leaders' Retreat:

1. Breakfast.
2. Prayer and praise.
3. The first topic to be dealt with should focus on the encounter with Jesus for healing of wounds and liberation from sins. Only by experiencing these things can leaders serve effectively in the ministry of Jesus Strategy.
4. Next, leaders must fill out the spiritual self-assessment form, a tool that covers a long list of pro blems that believers face in life that can hinder the flow of God's anointing on them.
5. Participants are led in a prayer of repentance, and instructed to bring their spiritual evaluation forms to the altar where they will be destroyed with a paper shredder or burned.
6. Participants are led in a victory prayer after they have been released from their past sins. Then they make a commitment of consecration.



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7. Communion, Lord's Supper, and Foot Washing.

8. Review of cell group dynamics. Leaders learn how to conduct the cell meeting and participate in group discussions.

9. The social aspect of cell groups. Leaders receive instruction on how to have healthy social relationships, and how to turn their group into a family.

10. Lunch.

11. Spiritual disciplines. Leaders are instructed in the three basic disciplines: prayer, fasting, and Bible study. They are also taught to manage time well.

12. Leaders are instructed on how to cultivate an atmosphere where the Holy Spirit and his gifts flow in the cell group meetings.

13. Leaders are taught about the importance of vision for group growth, and a discussion is held on the subject.

14. Leaders are instructed about the responsibility of filling out reports.

15. Break.

16. Leaders are taught about the Evangelistic Cycle and Friend's Day.

17. Spiritual Authority. Leaders are taught the importance of obeying spiritual authority and the blessings that follow those who do.

18. Leaders are challenged to fulfill their ministries at the head of cell groups. They are commissioned and prayed for. They are anointed for pastoral ministry and then presented to church, where the congregation prays for them.

The Leadership or Launch Retreat must be held at least once a year and scheduled with all excellence. Ideally, do one before each Evangelistic Cycle. The church will grow unstoppably if it continually develops, trains, and launches leaders through these spiritual retreats.

### 4. THE FRIENDS 'RETREAT

After the guests participate in Friends' Day, attend the cell group for several weeks, and attend the Birth Level 1 Discipleship School, we take them to the Friends' Retreat where they have a closer encounter with Jesus Christ. This brings growth and spiritual maturity to their lives, and they can be expected to leave there baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit.

It is recommended that no more than three months elapse between Friend's Day and the Friends' Retreat. This retreat can last one or two days, depending on factors such as the strength of the local church or the



availability of brothers prepared and willing to help carry it out.

New believers are encouraged to attend and it is explained that this will be a new, personal, and supernatural experience with God; something different from anything they have experienced before, as they will spend a special time with the Lord, separated from everything and in an intense search for the presence of God.

By this time, thanks to the Bible studies received in the cell group and the Discipleship School, the person will already know the Christian language and will be able to understand more easily what is taught during the retreat, as well as what the Lord Jesus Christ wants to do in their life.

Let's look at the steps and key aspects for a successful Friends Retreat.

**(1) Place of withdrawal.** A quiet place should be sought, where the environment is conducive for God to work in people's lives. The mountains or the countryside are very appropriate places for this. The place should have a closed conference room, not outdoors, so that a video projector or television screen can be used efficiently for the presentation of PowerPoints, videos, etc. The place of the spiritual retreat must also have a secondary meeting room to be able to separate men from women at certain moments of the retreat, so that they receive different teachings. If the retreat lasts for more than a day, the place must have good rooms.

**(2) Advertising.** This must be clear and striking, capturing the attention of the public. The idea is to present it at the end of the Friend's Day, or from at least two months before the retreat so people have time to make plans to attend and request time off from work or school. The advertisement must contain: (1) Subject; something that grabs the public's attention. (2) Biblical basis for the topic. (3) Date and place for the retreat. (4) Place and time for transportation to the retreat. (5) Recommendations on clothing and other items to wear; for example, blankets, toiletries, etc. (6) Cost, which should be as affordable as possible, and should aim to only cover expenses and not to make a profit. The retreat should now be viewed as a business.

**(3) Materials.** The elements that should not be missing in a friends retreat are: (1) Computer. (2) Video projector. (3) Screen. (4) Conference packet. (5) Musical instruments. (6) Sound equipment. (7) Anointing oil. (8) Pencils. (9) Folders. (10) Self-evaluation sheets. (11) Bibles. (12) Disposable tissues. (13) Bottled water. (14) Jugs for water. (15) Disposable cups. (16) Badges. (17) Flags. (18) Souvenir souvenirs.

**(4) Committee.** It will be made up of people chosen with great care, who must meet important requirements to be part of it. These requirements include being of good testimony, filled with the Holy Spirit, in full communion in the church, and preferably have experience in retreats of this type. Their functions will be the following:

1. Coordinator. He/she has the greatest responsibility, from finding the place of the event to designating and training the brothers who will serve during it, according to the gifts of each one. During the retreat, he/she is the one who watches over its proper development. He/she will have an assistant helping at all times.

2. Intercession group. It is made up of a leader and at least three other members who will remain praying during the retreat meetings. They will pray for each teacher or speaker and for the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. They will enter the meeting to help during the ministry to the new believers, and they will collaborate in spiritual liberation, if any case is presented that requires it.



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3. Guides. For every ten people who attend the retreat, there will be an assigned guide who will be watching them at all times. He/she will take care that in each conference they receive the message, that they do not leave, that they do not fall asleep (he will bring them a sweet or a coffee), and so on. During prayers, he/she will pray with them and help them receive a blessing. During the breaks he/she will spend time with them, eat with them, and help them with any need.

4. Logistics. These are the brothers/sisters in charge of keeping things in order. One of them will be in charge of stationery and other conference materials; they will have a table in the back of the room with materials organized by topic, self-assessment sheets, pens, etc. Another two or three will be in charge of moving chairs when people go to the altar and arranging everything again for the next meeting; two or three others will serve the tables for meals, and one will serve as a messenger.

5. Musicians. There must be three or four musicians; pianist, guitarist, drummer and bassist. They should be chosen according to the same requirements as the other members of the committee. Each ministry should be accompanied with praise commensurate with the message.

6. Technician. He/she is in charge of managing the sound, the computer, and the video projection. He/she will review the entire package of lectures and videos that will be used in advance. The atmosphere of the event depends greatly on him/her, because when the sound or video does not work well, new believers become restless.

7. Kitchen. Its members must have experience in cooking for large numbers of people. They will have the food ready in the stipulated times, in order not to alter the program.

8. Speakers. They must be chosen according to their holiness and experience. It is appropriate for each one to teach about the area in which God has worked in his own life, so that they do it with more passion and the impact on people is greater.

9. Ministers. They are in charge of ministering deliverance, divine healing, baptism of the Holy Spirit, anointing people, declaring blessings on them, and rebuking curses.

10. Planning. The members of the committee will be summoned to a planning meeting where the role of each one will be defined at least one month in advance. At least three other planning meetings will be held so that everyone knows their role well.

11. Fasting and prayer. Committee members will make a commitment to fasting and prayer during the final month of planning. They will have a list of the names of the new believers who will attend the retreat and pray that each one will have a supernatural encounter with God. Those who do not attend the training meetings or abandon fasting and prayer will not be able to serve at the retreat.

## 5. FRIENDS RETREAT PROGRAM

For the spiritual retreat program to be entirely successful, these guidelines must be followed:

1. New believers must register in advance so that the committee can calculate the material and food properly;



thus avoiding unnecessary expenses or unforeseen situations during the event.

2. It is recommended that the group of new believers be a minimum of 40 and a maximum of 80. Too small groups cause discouragement. Groups that are too large are difficult to control.

3. Children are not permitted for any reason, as they distract the audience; especially their parents. In addition, children are very sensitive to spiritual phenomena, so it is necessary to avoid witnessing demonic manifestations that occur during liberations.

4. The group of new believers should enter and leave the event at the same time, so that no one misses any part of the retreat. If some arrive after the retreat has started or leave before its end, the whole process and the objectives of the retreat will not be met in them.

5. Some brothers must first arrive at the place of the retreat to go out to receive the group of new believers. As the line of new believers traverse the fence of servants, they will declare blessings upon them. Hence the importance of new believers arriving all together.

6. At the entrance of the retreat, four tables will be arranged with the materials that will be distributed to the new believers, who will make four lines: Ladies, young ladies, men, and young men.

7. In the meetings, the women will sit on one side and the men on the other; young ladies and young men in front, ladies and men behind them.

8. The schedule of each activity must be respected: Departure to the retreat, arrival at the place, conferences, meals, breaks, and completion.

9. Inauguration and regulation. The Pastor will open the event and ask that each person be given a rule sheet. They will read it all together, and they will make a pact of obedience.

10. Conferences. It is very important that they stay within the topic. Leaving it could damage another speaker's topic and disrupt the program. Also, it would confuse new believers. To avoid this, it is necessary for the speakers to participate in the previous planning meetings.

11. Ministering. It should be consistent with the topic discussed in the conference. For example, if the speaker talked about forgiveness, the ministers will motivate people to forgive.

12. Foods. The main objective of these is fellowship. The guides will be able to know the needs of the people by listening to them talk about their problems. This is a vital time. By the time people go out to eat, the logistics group should have the tables set, to be able to sit down and share with the people.

## **6. THEMES OF THE FRIENDS 'RETREAT**

The themes presented at the Friends' Retreat are divided into four phases, and they comprehensively cover the most important areas of the spiritual life of new believers.

1. First phase: Reflection. It serves to appreciate the need to have a real experience of encounter with God.



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2. Second phase: Confession. It is a time of self-evaluation with the aim of obtaining cleanliness or spiritual purity.

3. Third phase: Filling of the Holy Spirit. The goal is for every new believer to experience God's presence and personal revival.

4. Fourth phase: Vision. It teaches how to fulfill God's mission and purpose in each life.

Believers cannot receive spiritual vision — God's eyes — if they are not filled with Him first. They cannot be filled with God if they are not cleansed first. And they cannot be cleansed if they do not first understand their spiritual need. This is what determines which phases must be strictly adhered to.

Many new believers ask for water baptism during the Friends Retreat, but they are often more excited than converted. We must be prudent and baptize only those who are properly prepared. The people who are baptized in the retreat must have understood the plan of Salvation, the Apostolic doctrinal principles and the basic disciplines of our church; otherwise they are likely to fail in their Christian life. All of these topics are taught in the Born Level 1 of the Discipleship School.

After their baptism, it is imperative that the new believer continue to attend cell group and Discipleship School levels 2, 3, and 4 — Grow, Mature, and Multiply, respectively — so that they can be actively involved in the ministry of The Strategy of Jesus at your church.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Spiritual retreats, both for leaders and friends, are very important for the success of the Jesus Strategy, since they facilitate spiritual and emotional healing by allowing the person to enter into an environment of searching for God. It is in the presence of the Lord that brokenness, repentance, and restoration come, and the heart becomes fertile soil for the seed of the Lord's Word to bear fruit.

Far from the distractions and disturbances of daily life, in spiritual retreat the believer finds the ideal environment to reflect on his own life and be filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

## LESSON 23 - EXCELLENCE IN MINISTRIES

What is excellence in local church ministries and why is it important? How can it be achieved? What are its benefits or results?

Memory verse: ***“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.”***

Colossians 3:23-24

### 1. INTRODUCTION

If every church that implements the Strategy of Jesus is to retain and successfully increase the fruit that God will give it, it must pay the price of serving Him with excellence, in all its ministries and areas of work. Our God is excellent, and He expects us to be excellent in all that we are and do, for His glory.

### 2. THE IMPORTANCE OF EXCELLENCE IN THE BIBLE

To get a biblical perspective on this topic, let's take a brief tour of the Word. Joshua 1:7-8: ***“Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”*** 1 Samuel 13:14: ***“...The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.”*** Daniel 6:3-4: ***“Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm. So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him.”*** Ezekiel 16:14: ***“Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you,” says the Lord God.*** Acts 13:22-23: ***Having removed “... He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, ‘I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.’ From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus—”*** Philippians 1:9-11: ***“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”*** Colossians 3:23-24: ***“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.”*** 2 Timothy 4:7-8: ***“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”*** Hebrews 11:4: ***“By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.”*** Revelation 3:1-2: ***“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: ‘I know your works, that you have a name***



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*that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God."*

These and several other biblical passages clearly show us how important excellence is to God. They teach us that the Lord seeks excellence in us and that He expects us, as a church, to develop excellence in all areas, so that when our career here ends, He may reward us for it.

### 3. TWELVE CHARACTERISTICS OF HEALTHY APOSTOLIC CHURCHES

Beginning in the 21st century, the Apostolic Assembly in the United States of America conducted a study that encompassed several growing local churches. The purpose of this study was to discover the characteristics or qualities that determine the growth of our churches. The result of the study established that healthy and growing apostolic congregations have twelve characteristics:

(1) They are churches passionate about the Lord Jesus and the lost.

(2) Their pastors generally have several years of pastoral experience, although in some cases they may be starting their careers. They are pastors who may not necessarily have a good secular education; who may or may not have formal theological education. They are mostly mature-aged herders, although some are just on the way to maturity. In other words, the age, experience or level of education of the Pastor are not determinants for growth.

(3) Its pastors promote renewal and influence the congregation to make changes that allow it to improve. These pastors are not afraid of taking on a large debt in order to have the most suitable facilities for the church. They are pastors who take care of all areas or ministries of their church.

(4) These are well-organized churches, with attractive worship, lasting about two hours on average; with presentable facilities, very clean and well cared for; churches where the ministry of ushers or receptionists is very effective.

(5) They are churches that can move their schedules flexibly, that have their services in the morning or early Sunday afternoon, that begin their services on time, that have a very good sound equipment and video or video system. projector.

(6) They are churches of worshipers, with a worship team and a suitable team of musicians who rehearse every week; churches that make an investment in musical instruments, sound and video equipment a priority; where contemporary praises and traditional hymns are sung from time to time.

(7) They are churches with transparency. They have a professional accounting system where tithing is taught frequently and where special extra offerings are hardly ever raised.

(8) They are accountable churches, where a treasury report is delivered every six months to all members, in writing.

(9) They are faithful and responsible churches, where a minimum of 75% of their members tithe. They are



churches where the pastor's salary is high and where they also invest in assistants or co-pastors who are partially or fully dedicated, and where they invest in other dedicated full-time or part-time people.

(10) These churches also have biweekly or weekly cell leader training sessions; they have other training sessions for at least five other ministries; They have more than ten cell groups and more than fifteen Birth level 1 discipleship groups.

(11) These churches and their pastors have a friendly and attentive attitude towards guests, documenting their addresses, sending them follow-up letters, making telephone contact with all of them, and connecting them with a cell group and with Birth level 1 discipleship.

(12) Finally, these churches adopt one of these models: Be congregations with hundreds or thousands of members, or establish daughter churches in their city or district.

Ultimately, excellent churches are those that have a passion for the Lord Jesus and for those who do not yet know Him. They are healthy congregations, which grow largely thanks to the fact that they are implementing the Jesus Strategy with excellence.

#### 4. UNITY AND COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVE EXCELLENCE

What does it take for a church to become excellent? There are several elements that contribute to a church's success in developing excellent ministries, as we just read in the study conducted in the U.S.A. But there are two requirements that stand out here and they are essential for a church to be great. These two requirements are: the unity of its members and a high level of commitment to the vision. Regarding the first requirement, the unity of the members of the church, the Word is insistent and clear. Let's see...

1 Corinthians 12:12-14: ***"For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many."*** Romans 12:4-10: ***"For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;"*** Philippians 1:27; 2:1-2: ***"Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel," ... "Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."*** 1 Corinthians 1:10: ***"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."***



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Regarding the vision commitment requirement, the Word also tells us a lot...

Ephesians 4:14-16: ***“that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”*** Hebrews 13:17: ***“Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.”*** 2 Kings 6:17: ***“And Elisha prayed, and said, “Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”*** 2 Chronicles 20:20b: ***“...Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.”***

The intensity with which a local church carries out its mission and ministries will be in direct proportion to the clarity or strength of the vision that has been received and the level of commitment of all towards it. If the vision is strong and clear, and people are well committed to it, there will be success in achieving the objectives that have been set.

## 5. WE ALL HAVE A MISSION

Each member of the body of Christ, the Lord’s church, has been called to do basically two things: fulfill a mission in the world through evangelism and develop a ministry in their local church through service. In other words, everyone who is part of this body has been called not to be a mere spectator but to be an active part of it, fulfilling the two mentioned functions, for the edification of the Church and for the glory of the name of Jesus Christ. .

What is the mission? The mission is what we do in cell groups, in the discipleship school, in the evangelistic cycle, etc. This is how we follow the biblical model left by Christ to win this lost world for Him. Our mission is clearly described in the New Testament, as we can see in the following Scriptures...

Mark 1:17–18: ***“Then Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” They immediately left their nets and followed Him.”*** Mark 16:15: ***“And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”*** Matthew 28:19: ***“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,”*** Matthew 20:4: ***“and said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ So they went.”*** Luke 9:2: ***“He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”*** Acts 1:8: ***“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”***

These and other biblical verses teach us that the greatest task of the Church is the proclamation of the Gospel of the kingdom of God; that the Church has no other purpose to be, but to reconcile the world with Jesus Christ. This is the mission that He entrusted to us and we must be diligent in fulfilling it.

## 6. WE ALL HAVE A MINISTRY



Regarding ministry, it consists of the service that each of us offers in the church to other believers, for their edification or growth. Ministry is what we do through the gifts of the Holy Spirit that we have received to perfect the saints for the Lord's work. We can all serve in some ministry of the church, such as ushers or receptionists, musicians, singers, teachers, administrators, etc.

Ephesians 4:12: ***"for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,"*** 2 Timothy 4:5: ***"But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."*** Colossians 4:17: ***"And say to Archippus, 'Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.'"*** 1 Corinthians 12:5: ***"There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord."*** Acts 6:4: ***"but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."*** Acts 20:24: Pay attention to ***"But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."*** Acts 21:19: ***"When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry."*** Romans 12:6-8: ***"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophecy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness."*** Titus 3:14: ***"And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful."*** Ephesians 4:13: ***"till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;"***

As is evident, the responsibility of ministries should not fall solely on the Pastor and ordained ministers, or on a few members of the church. Rather, all members of the body of Christ have a ministry given by the Lord and all must commit to fulfilling it in their church. To promote this, it is necessary that each local church establish the School of Ministries, where each member is trained to be able to develop the ministry or ministries that God has given you with excellence. The following are some of the ministries that commonly operate in a local church: ushers, special staff, use of talents, children's teachers, School of Disciples teachers, musicians, singers, prayer warriors or intercessors, those who pray for the sick, those who lead worship, those who preach, deacons, ministry school teachers, etc.

## 7. CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that each believer is responsible for fulfilling the mission that the Lord has given him or her with excellence and for the glory of God. We highly recommend that, if you have not already done so, prayerfully seek the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:31) —we have taught about them in a previous lesson — and that you train in at least one ministry. Get involved in evangelism, in discipleship, and in winning souls to the Lord. Strive to capture the vision of your Pastor, to support it with all your heart, uniting in the work and serve with believers who fear, love, and serve the Lord with all excellence.

***"And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?"***  
Deuteronomy 10:12-13.



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### LESSON 24 - EARNESTLY CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

What does the biblical mandate given to the Church to “earnestly contend for the faith” mean? Why should we obey this now more than ever? And how can we carry it out?

Memory Verse: *“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”* Jude 3.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

We cannot deny that our faith — the Apostolic Faith — is undergoing a series of attacks in these end times. Attacks against our doctrine no longer only coming from outside, but also from within. Now more than ever, we must take the advice of the apostle Jude and contend earnestly for the faith that had once been given to the saints. Let us study this epistle.

#### 2. TRUTHS ABOUT OUR FAITH

Our faith was not invented or composed from the thoughts and will of men. The apostle Jude clearly states that this faith has been given to us. Our doctrine is a gift from God to His Church. Similarly, the apostle Peter said, *“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”* 2 Peter 1:21. Our doctrine was given to us by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit!

Therefore, our doctrine is sound and does not need fixing, changes, or repairs. Just as it was given to us, so we must preach it. Our doctrine is like a lion. The lion does not need someone to defend him. When Jude says to contend earnestly for the faith, he is exhorting us to preach sound doctrine. Our doctrine alone defends itself if we preach it as it was delivered to us.

Matthew 24:10-13: *“And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. 11And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. 13But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”* This verse describes a prophecy from our Lord Jesus Christ and applies to the Great Tribulation period. It is the time before His second coming, and it also describes what we already see in the Church: a time of lukewarm living and apostasy.

The Holy Spirit warns us through the apostle Paul: *“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 5Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”* 2 Timothy 3:1–5.

***“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 3Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;” 2*** Thessalonians 2:1–3.

### 3. SIGNS OF APOSTASY IN THE CHURCH

Today, we see how the foundations of our doctrine are questioned: (a) The full divine inspiration of the Bible, (b) The oneness of our God, (c) Baptism in water in the name of Jesus Christ, (d) The baptism of the Holy Spirit with the audible evidence of speaking new tongues, (e) Our rules of holiness and separation from sin and, (f) The doctrine of the approaching rapture of the Church.

Additionally, a spirit of rebellion has been manifesting against the spiritual authorities established by God, which we have already studied in the second lesson of this course: (a) Sons rebel against their parents, (b) Marriages break their marriage vows, opting for divorce, (c) Members of congregations rebel against their pastors, (d) Ministers openly disobey their superior authorities and even sue them in earthly courts and, (e) Gossip, criticism, and public defamation against our spiritual authorities and their families.

***“For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. 8Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.”*** Jude 4,8.

### 4. THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

The apostle Jude reminds us that God will judge these people, and cites three examples of judgment:

(1) v.5: ***“I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.”*** God miraculously saved about two million people from Egypt. They all crossed the Red Sea and experienced the wonders and miracles of the Most High God. However, not all were believers. The unbelievers murmured against the spiritual leadership of Moses. God had to destroy everyone who rebelled against Moses, and they all died in the desert. This shows us that God judges those who rebel against the spiritual authority that God has established.

(2) v.6: ***“And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.”*** Here Jude reminds us of God’s judgment against the fallen angels, who were in God’s presence but joined Satan’s rebellion against the Most High God and were cast out of Heaven. The price of their rebellion was eternal punishment from God.

(3) v.7: ***“Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”*** The third example of judgment that Jude cites is that of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which fell slaves to the sin of homosexuality. The apostle reminds us that God severely punishes sins of immorality.



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God's judgment comes in three ways, according to these scriptures: (a) It can be sudden, as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, (b) It may be later, as in the case of the fallen angels and, (c) It can come little by little, as in the case of the people of Israel, who walked in the desert for 40 years.

### 5. DISOBEDIENCE TO SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

Jude 8–13: *“Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. 9Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. 10But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. 11Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. 12These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; 13Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.”*

Here, Jude describes how the sin of rebellion unfolds in the heart of man. He exposes the rebellion of three Biblical characters: Cain, Balaam, and Korah. Let us examine what they did.

(1) Cain: Cain represents the selfish man who cares only for his personal interests. Cain never loved his brother, Abel. Rebellion always begins with a selfish spirit, a spirit capable even of murdering his own brother. Many will not do it literally, but will kill their brother by murdering his testimony, his ministry, the honor of his family, etc.

(2) Balaam: In the Old Testament we find two accounts of him, in Numbers 22:21–35 and in Numbers 31:15–16. You may study the first scripture later, but let us read the second one: *“And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? 16Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.”* Balaam taught the men of Israel to sin with pagan women, and these women in turn taught the men of Israel to worship other people's gods. The sin of Balaam mentioned by Jude is teaching a brother to sin. Doing this is something profoundly serious before God: *“Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! 2It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.”* Luke 17:1-2.

(3) Korah: Korah was the one who caused rebellion and division in the people of Israel against Moses and Aaron. Due to this rebellion, more than 15,000 of the people of Israel died, including him. Let us read Numbers 16:1–3, 19–21, 25–33, 49–50. *“Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: 2And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: 3And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one*



*of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord? 19And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation. 20And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 21Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment. 25 And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him. 26And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of their's, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. 27So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children. 28And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. 29If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the Lord hath not sent me. 30But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord. 31And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: 32And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. 33They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. 49Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah. 50And Aaron returned unto Moses unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the plague was stayed."*

Korah openly challenged the spiritual authority established by God. The Lord saw the division that Korah had made and commanded Moses and Aaron to separate from them at the Tabernacle. This shows us that God recognizes the divisions that are made in His people and rejects them. Korah and all his people suffered God's judgment, which teaches us that He judges all rebellion against spiritual authority.

In verses 14 to 19 of his letter, Jude gives us a warning about all these things, which are to take place in the Church in the last days, before the coming of the Lord Jesus for us. "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, 15To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. 16These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. 17But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; 18How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. 19These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit."

## 6. HOW TO LIVE VICTORIOUSLY IN THESE DANGEROUS TIMES

Let us carefully read the advice of Jude in verses 20 and 21. "*But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, 21Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*"



# MATURE

## DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

Jude's advice is not that we form a movement to counter the men he warns us of. The Holy Spirit, through the lips of the apostle, shows us the steps we must follow: (a) Build on our most holy faith, growing in the knowledge of the Word of God, (b) Praying in the Spirit, that is, praying according to God's perfect will, (c) Keep ourselves in the love of God and keep ourselves in Him and, (d) Expect the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, which means standing firm in the great hope that He will soon come for His Church.

And what about the others? In verses 22 and 23 we are told: ***"And of some have compassion, making a difference: 23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."*** Here we have three recommendations: (a) Convince the doubters, (b) Strive to save those who are being lost and, (c) Have mercy on those we can no longer help.

Finally, the apostle gives us words of encouragement and assurance: ***"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, 25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."*** Jude 24-25.

Here we learn three other particularly important things: (a) If we are faithful, our mighty God will keep us from falling, (b) When Jesus looks at us, he sees no stain on our garments. This is thanks to the power of His blood that is continually sanctifying us and, (c) We must live to exalt and glorify the mighty name of the only wise God, our Savior Jesus Christ, now and forever. Amen.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Dear brother, the day of the Lord Jesus Christ is near. He is already at the gates to raise up His beloved Church. You must continue fighting the good fight of faith so that at the end of this day you can also say like the apostle Paul: ***"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."*** 2 Timothy 4:7-8. Amen!





Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus

## COMMITMENT TO LOCAL MEMBERSHIP

*This commitment must be submitted by any person who integrates into our church by water baptism or request for admission*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, in the city of \_\_\_\_\_, country of \_\_\_\_\_,

having understood my need and obligation to be committed to a local church, I

**ASSUME MY RESPONSIBILITIES AS A MEMBER** of the Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus and this local church.

I declare that as of today, I will identify with the other members of this congregation, as well as their needs, and I pledge to pursue the following levels of the School of Discipleship.

### THEREFORE, I DECLARE THAT I WILL...

- (1) ...**PROTECT THE UNITY OF MY CHURCH**, acting in love, rejecting gossip and following my leaders.
- (2) ...**SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF MY CHURCH**, praying at least fifteen minutes a day for their growth, inviting those who do not attend and treating those invited with kindness.
- (3) ...**SUPPORT THE TESTIMONY OF MY CHURCH**, faithfully attending its activities and meetings, living a holy life and contributing regularly with my tithes and offerings.
- (4) ...**SERVE IN MY CHURCH**, through my gifts and knowledge, developing a servant's heart and being prepared to serve.

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

