

Vietnam Edition

# **Practical Training for Saturation Church Planting**

**Book 2  
Winning the Lost**

**Practical Training for  
Saturation Church Planting  
Vietnam Edition  
Book Two – Winning the Lost**

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This is a revision of the original version of the *Omega Course*, a practical church planting curriculum which was prepared in 2000 by the Alliance for Saturation Church Planting ([www.alliancescp.org](http://www.alliancescp.org)) in cooperation with Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries ([www.russian-ministries.org](http://www.russian-ministries.org)). The original *Omega Course* was copyrighted by the Alliance for Saturation Church Planting, and is currently under copyright by United World Mission. Materials from the original *Omega Course* are used by permission.

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**PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR SCP**  
**BOOK 2 – WINNING THE LOST**

**Table of Contents**

---

**MONTH 3**

---

**Review of Month 2..... 7**

**THE CHURCH .....8**

**Lesson 1 - Form and Function ..... 8**

    I. Form And Function Illustrated ..... 8

    II. Form And Function In The Church..... 8

    III. Evaluating Form And Function In The Church ..... 9

    IV. Principles Regarding Form And Function ..... 11

    V. Implications Of Form And Function For Church Planters..... 13

    Discussion Questions ..... 14

    Assignment ..... 14

**PERSONAL EVANGELISM .....15**

**Lesson 2 - Understanding the Message ..... 16**

    I. The Good News Is Not..... 16

    II. The Good News Is..... 17

    III. Why Spread The Good News?..... 19

    Discussion Questions ..... 20

    Assignment ..... 21

*Worksheet: The Bridge* ..... 21

**Lesson 3 - The Power of One – Sharing a Personal Testimony ..... 22**

    I. The Nature Of A Testimony ..... 22

    II. The Value Of A Testimony ..... 22

    III. Examples Of Testimonies ..... 23

    IV. Preparation Of Your Testimony ..... 24

    V. The Sharing Of A Personal Testimony ..... 24

    Discussion Questions ..... 25

    Assignment ..... 25

*Worksheet: Examining Jesus’ Methods with Individuals* ..... 26

**Lesson 4 - Evangelism and Church Planting ..... 28**

    I. The Two Bridges ..... 28

II. Go For "Gatekeepers" .....	29
III. Use Existing Relationships .....	29
IV. Have New Believers Witness Immediately .....	30
Discussion Questions .....	31
Assignment .....	31
Worksheet: Evaluating Evangelistic Strategies .....	32
<b>Lesson 5 – Biblical History of Redemption .....</b>	<b>33</b>
I. Redemption In The Old Testament .....	33
II. Redemption In The New Testament.....	35
Discussion Questions .....	38
<b>SPIRITUAL CHARACTER .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Lesson 6 – Who Needs the Gospel?.....</b>	<b>40</b>
I. The Self-Made Man.....	40
II. Replacing The Gospel .....	40
III. Christians Who Need The Gospel.....	42
IV. Ministry And The Gospel .....	42
Discussion Questions .....	43
<hr/>	
<b>MONTH 4</b>	
<hr/>	
<b>Review of Month 3.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>THE CHURCH .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Lesson 7 - History of Christianity .....</b>	<b>45</b>
I. The Mediterranean Era – 75 AD - 500 AD .....	45
II. European Era - 500-1600 .....	46
III. The Colonial Era - 1600-1900 .....	47
IV. The Modern Era – 1900-Present.....	49
Discussion Questions .....	50
Assignment .....	50
<b>PERSONAL EVANGELISM .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Lesson 8 - Barriers to Effective Evangelism .....</b>	<b>51</b>
I. What Keeps Believers From Evangelizing? .....	51
II. What Keeps The Lost From Receiving The Gospel? .....	52
III. Overcoming The Barriers .....	53
Discussion Questions .....	54
Assignment .....	54
<b>CHURCH PLANTING SKILLS.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Lesson 9 - Chronological Bible Storying .....</b>	<b>55</b>
I. The Right Method.....	55
II. Oral vs. Literate Communication .....	55
III. Understanding The Narrative Style .....	56
IV. Using The Storying Method .....	57

V. Getting Started .....	58
Discussion Questions .....	61
Assignment .....	61
<b>INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY.....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Lesson 10 - Introduction to Inductive Bible study .....</b>	<b>62</b>
I. The Inductive Approach .....	62
II. Basic Rules For Studying The Bible .....	63
Discussion Questions .....	63
<b>Lesson 11 – The Inductive Study Method .....</b>	<b>64</b>
I. Observation - <i>What Does It Say?</i> .....	64
II. The Process Of Interpretation - <i>What Does It Mean?</i> .....	65
Discussion Questions .....	68
<b>Lesson 12 - Inductive Bible Study Demonstrated .....</b>	<b>69</b>
Observation – <i>What Does It Say?</i> .....	69
Interpretation – <i>What Does It Mean?</i> .....	70
Application – <i>What Should I Do?</i> .....	72
Discussion Questions .....	72
<i>Worksheet - Practicing Inductive Bible Study</i> .....	73
<b>SPIRITUAL CHARACTER .....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Lesson 13 – The Law and the Gospel .....</b>	<b>77</b>
I. God’s Purpose For The Law .....	77
II. Limitations Of The Law .....	78
III. Living By The Law .....	79
IV. The Gospel - A New Way! .....	79
V. Life In The Spirit .....	81
Discussion Questions .....	82

**CURRICULUM OVERVIEW**

Book	1. Laying Foundations	2. Winning The Lost	3. Establishing Converts	4. Training Leaders	5. Multiplying Ministry
<b>Overall Goal:</b> The participant should complete this book ...	...certain of his call and a strategic approach to the church planting task.	...with the skills and motivation to share the gospel.	... able to organize new converts into small groups and lead them toward maturity.	... able to start corporate worship and to equip new leaders for ministry.	... with the skills and commitment to multiply new churches and continue in SCP ministry.
<b>Subjects / Lessons, Timeframe</b>	<p><u>Month 1</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>God’s Ultimate Purpose</li> <li>Making Disciples Of All Nations</li> <li>Planting Churches Everywhere</li> <li>“Z” Thinking</li> <li>Research</li> <li>SC 1: Spiritual Adoption</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prayer In The Church Planting Process</li> <li>Purpose Of The Church</li> <li>Nature Of The Church</li> <li>Defining The Church</li> <li>SC 2: The Centrality of the Cross</li> </ol>	<p><u>Month 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form And Function</li> <li>Understanding the Message</li> <li>Sharing A Personal Testimony</li> <li>Evangelism And Church Planting</li> <li>Biblical History Of Redemption</li> <li>SC 3: Who Needs the Gospel?</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 4</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>History Of Christianity, Advance Of The Gospel</li> <li>Barriers To Effective Evangelism</li> <li>Chronological Bible Storying 1</li> <li>IBS: Intro</li> <li>IBS: Method</li> <li>IBS: Demonstrated</li> <li>SC 4: The Law and the Gospel</li> </ol>	<p><u>Month 5</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group Inductive Bible Study</li> <li>Cell Group 1: Intro</li> <li>CG 2: Leading Cells</li> <li>CG 3: Preparing to Start</li> <li>SC 5: Understanding and Overcoming the Sin Nature</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 6</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perseverance Through Persecution</li> <li>Prayer And Fasting</li> <li>Discipleship 1: Intro</li> <li>Discipleship 2: Forms</li> <li>Chronological Bible Storying 2</li> <li>SC 6: Understanding and Overcoming Self-Pity</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 7</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discipleship 3: Toward Maturity</li> <li>Caring For Others</li> <li>Team Ministry</li> <li>Developing Your CP Team</li> <li>Styles Of Interaction</li> <li>SC 7: True Repentance</li> </ol>	<p><u>Month 8</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introducing SCP leadership</li> <li>Servant Leadership</li> <li>Spheres of Leadership</li> <li>Christianity and Culture</li> <li>Discipleship 4: Multiplying the Process</li> <li>SC 8: Growing in the Gospel</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 9</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobilizing Leaders</li> <li>Identifying and Equipping Leaders</li> <li>Training Cell Group Leaders</li> <li>Skills for Leaders</li> <li>Strategic Planning</li> <li>SC 9: Forgiveness</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 10</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiplying Cell Groups</li> <li>Corporate Leadership Skills – Supervising Cells</li> <li>Worship</li> <li>Effective Communication</li> <li>Studying Culture</li> <li>SC 10: Conflict Resolution</li> </ol>	<p><u>Month 11</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Church Planting Cycle</li> <li>Next Steps – Planting More Churches</li> <li>Training As Part Of A Church Planting Movement</li> <li>Signs Of A Movement</li> <li>Vision And Telescoping— Taking The Gospel Into The World</li> <li>Contextualizing The Gospel</li> <li>SC 11: The New Nature</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 12</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biblical Examples Of Saturation Church Planting Movements</li> <li>Strategy Components For A Church Planting Movement</li> <li>Shepherding Within A Movement</li> <li>Mobilization</li> <li>SC 12: Ministry Through Weakness</li> </ol>
<b>Outcome Project (Homework)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research The Target Region</li> <li>Organize Prayer Support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evangelize The Lost And Their Friends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize Converts And Contacts Into Cell Groups</li> <li>Identify And Begin Working With Disciples</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Train And Release Leaders</li> <li>Complete A Strategic Ministry Plan</li> <li>Organize Cells Into Corporate Worship Groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research And Cast Vision For Work In New Regions/New Groups</li> <li>Start Daughter Churches</li> </ul>

Note: the Vietnamese language version of this curriculum corresponds to the English, with the exception of being organized into six books of two months worth of lessons in each book.

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# MONTH 3

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## Review of Month 2

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Last month you should have finished the research of your target people or region (which you began in Month 1). If you have not done this, it is imperative that you complete this research before you continue further.

You also looked at God's purpose for the church, its nature, and how to define what "church" is. You also learned about the importance of a strong base of prayer in your church planting ministry, and you were asked to do the following:

### From Lesson 7, "Prayer in the Church Planting Process"

A consistent theme we see in Paul's letters is that he spent much time in prayer for his disciples (Eph. 1:17-19, Phil. 1:9-11, etc.), and that he also asked them to pray for him (Eph. 6:19-20). One of the most important aspects of your church planting ministry will be your prayer support team.

Each church planter or church planting team must develop a prayer support team. These are people from your own church or other Christian friends or family who have a burden to pray for the you, your team, your families and your church planting ministry. Ask people to pray for you regularly, such as once a week, daily, or monthly. Write your prayer supporters' names on a calendar and the days that they have committed to pray for you. This will help you to remember who is praying for you and when they are praying for you so that you will know whom to contact with urgent prayer requests.

Your prayer support team should decide when they will meet together to pray for you and your ministry—once a month or perhaps even more frequently. One person on the prayer support team should take responsibility for contacting the church planter or church planting team for updated prayer requests and answers to prayer. The prayer support team needs to be kept informed of answers to prayer and new prayer needs so that they can rejoice in what God is doing and also be encouraged to keep on praying.

### Prayer Support Team Assignment

Ask the Lord to raise up at least 4-5 people who will commit to pray for you on a regular basis. Spend some time yourself in prayer before approaching the people that God will bring to mind. Give them a vision for what God is calling you to do in your church planting ministry, and ask them to pray specifically for your family and ministry.

The next time you meet with your mentor, bring with you a list of the people who have agreed to be part of your prayer support team. Explain how you are keeping them informed about your ministry, how you are communicating prayer requests to them, and how you are letting them know when those prayers have been answered.

## THE CHURCH

### Lesson 1 - Form and Function

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An understanding of form and function is fundamental to church planting. Our personal experience largely shapes our understanding of, and dedication to, the forms our churches take. We must be challenged to ask why we do what we do to accomplish the mission God has given His Church. This lesson will provide an opportunity to rethink ministry "forms" and give guidance for establishing more relevant and effective forms.

#### I. FORM AND FUNCTION ILLUSTRATED

In society, a function is *an activity that needs to be performed*. This activity can range from one as difficult as getting food or raising children, to something as easy as sleeping. These are things that need to be done. A form is *the method chosen to carry out* that function.

An example could be how you get food. In years past, you could either hunt or you could grow crops. These are two very different methods, but both fulfill the function of getting food.

The question is: how do you decide which is the best form for you? Some of the factors for this decision come from internal sources, such as abilities and preferences. Do you have a good eye and don't mind being alone for long periods of time? Then you might do better as a hunter. If not, farming might be a better choice for you. Some of the factors are external, depending on your environment. Do you live on or near good productive land? If so, you might do well to be a farmer. Some of the factors are cultural, depending on the ideas of the society you are in. Are farmers prized because they add to the amount of crops in the village, or are hunters prized for their skill in case of war? Some of the factors may be moral. Is the killing of animals looked upon as immoral? Another factor is tradition. What did your parents and their parents do?

Forms depend on many factors and can also change with time. Your field may no longer produce, or the game may become sparse. With time, new inventions may change your ability to carry out your profession, or make you choose a new profession that had not been available before, such as a shopkeeper.

Transportation is another example of the principle of form and function in society. Transportation is a function that can be fulfilled through many possible forms such as: bicycle, subway, auto, and horse & cart.

**Question 1:** *What determines the means of transportation you use personally? Why?*

**Question 2:** *Can you give an illustration of form and function in your situation?*

#### II. FORM AND FUNCTION IN THE CHURCH

Form and function can be defined broadly as in the examples above, or it can focus on a particular area. For example, there are also *biblical forms and functions* described in both the Old and New Testaments. However, in order to understand the importance of this concept in church planting, we will focus the definition even more tightly, and look only at *church forms* and *church functions*.

##### Church Functions

The New Testament includes many commands, laws, instructions, precepts, prohibitions, and principles that the church must carry out. These functions are timeless and apply everywhere in the world. They do not change and are mandatory for all believers, regardless of race, culture, age, or language.



Examples: Worship, fellowship, the ordinances, prayer, evangelism, discipleship, giving, teaching, communion (Lord's Supper).

### Church Forms

A Church Form is the method the church uses to carry out a church function. Church forms include all the structures, traditions, methods, and procedures that the church chooses in order to carry out the functions in a particular age, culture, or situation. These forms can and do vary greatly among local churches—resulting in many acceptable forms for every church function.

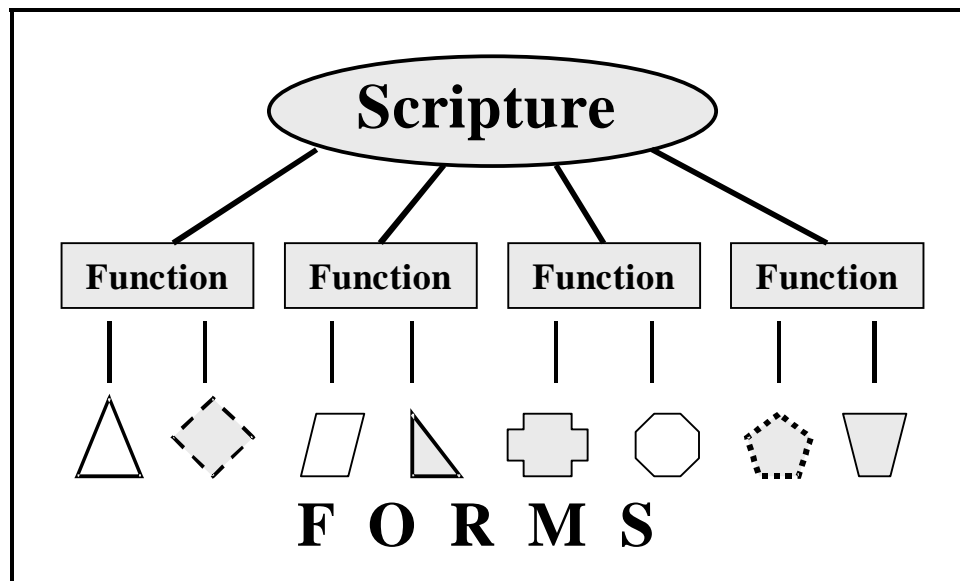
Examples: Offerings for the Jerusalem saints, the Jesus Film, greeters at the front door, paid preachers, Wednesday (e.g. “once-a-week”) evening Bible study.

### Form and Function Together

The life of any local church cannot be taken out of its particular cultural / historical context. Our “experience” of church is not based solely on biblical teaching. The way we understand the church is based upon a mix of historical traditions, cultural (and sub-cultural) practices, and biblical convictions. When we speak of biblical functions (such as worship, prayer, fellowship, teaching, sacraments, and evangelism), it is difficult to do so without describing the forms, traditions, methods, structures and organizations in which these functions find expression and life.

The task of the church planter is to establish church forms first from a biblical basis, then in the light of culturally relevant practices. In the diagram below, we see that there are a number of church functions that are mandated by the Scriptures. These do not change with time or culture. However, the bottom row of the figure demonstrates that each local church may need to adopt completely different forms to fulfill these functions in their context. The forms do not need to resemble those of other churches—they must only fulfill the church functions.

Form and Function



### III. EVALUATING FORM AND FUNCTION IN THE CHURCH

It can be difficult to distinguish between forms and functions in the church unless we take the time to analyze. In the following chart, a number of functions are listed on the left, and some of the many possible forms of each are on the right.

**Table 1 - Forms and Functions**

<b>Biblical Function</b>	<b>Possible Forms</b>
Pray	Kneeling or Standing
	Silently or Aloud
	Small Group or Individual
	Before Meal or At Close of Service
	Confession or Supplication
Teach the Word	Sunday School
	Sermon
	Small Group Bible Study
	Family Devotions
Evangelize	Friendship Evangelism
	Crusade
	Invitation during Service

Please note that the list of forms on the right side of the chart is not exhaustive—there are many, many other possibilities. Is one form better than the others are? No. All of them may be appropriate or inappropriate in a given circumstance and cultural setting. None of these forms are commanded in the Bible as the *only* method. Only the *functions* are commanded. We must choose the form as needed.

In the table below, two sample biblical *functions* are listed. Take a few minutes to fill in possible *forms* on the right side. Then compare your ideas with other trainees.

**Table 2 - Functions vs. Forms**

<b>Biblical Function</b>	<b>Possible Forms</b>
Giving	
Worship	

In the next table, a number of *forms* are listed on the right side. For each *form*, decide what biblical *function* it fulfills and write that in on the left side. Then compare and discuss your responses.

**Table 3 - Forms vs. Functions**

Function	Form
	Youth Camp
	Church Prayer Meeting
	Church Choir
	Passing an Offering Plate
	Church Building
	Special Music in Service
	Children's Church
	Order of Church Service
	Reciting Poetry in Church

#### IV. PRINCIPLES REGARDING FORM AND FUNCTION

##### **The Function Is More Important Than the Form**

In the Bible, functions are stressed. Jesus was more interested in function than in form. Those who gave Christ the most resistance were those who were addicted to forms, rituals and traditions.

*Question 3: Read Matthew 9:14-17. How does Jesus' teaching on clothing and wineskins relate to form and function? What does it mean to start a "new wineskin" kind of church?*

*Question 4: What do 1 Samuel 15:22-23, Hosea 6:6, and Matthew 12:1-8 contribute to this issue?*

Forms are not usually prescribed in the Bible. There is the exception of the temple service, where the design of the tabernacle and its furnishings are spelled out in some detail, but this was done for a different purpose. They were used to teach about God, His work and His attributes. It is not a form that has been carried over into the New Testament Church because the knowledge already exists.

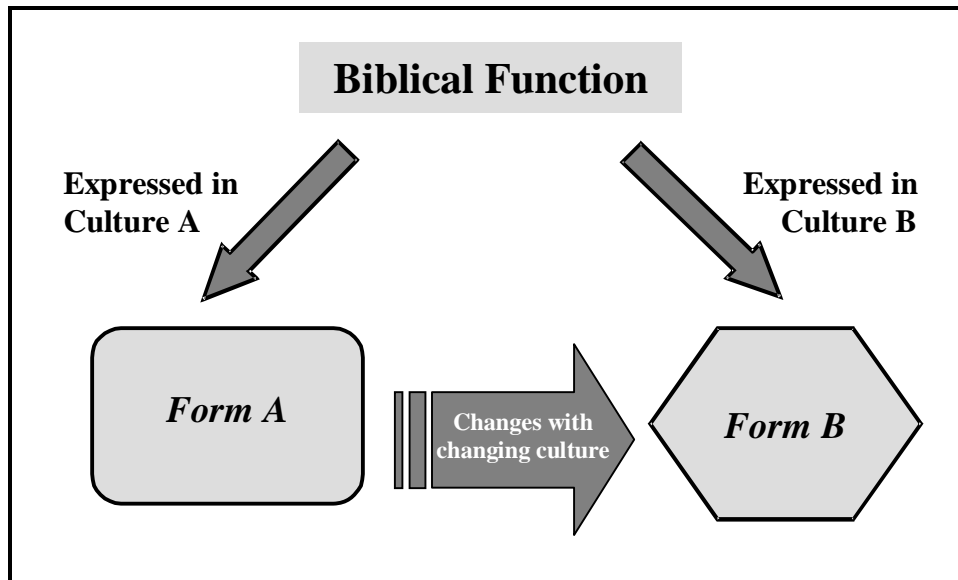
##### **Functions Are Absolute; Forms Can Change**

When forms are described in the Bible, we see changes being made in them. The Passover was a reminder of God's deliverance of His people from Egypt. Jesus changed this at the Last Supper and used it to highlight the deliverance that God was about to accomplish in the death of Jesus. In the first century church, this again changed and became the Love Feast. But this began to be misused (1Co 11:17-34), so the practice was reduced to the sharing of the cup and bread. But even this takes on many different forms. Some use a common cup and some use individual cups. Some use wine and some use grape juice. The form may be different as long as the function is served.

The forms that are described in certain passages are changed or left out in others. They vary from situation to situation:

- Stewardship (1Co 16:1-2; 2Co 8-9)
- Spiritual gifts (1Co 12-14; Ro 12; Eph 4)
- Discipline of church members (Mt 18; 1Co 5; 2Co 2)
- Baptism (Mt 28; Ro 6; Ac 1)
- Day of Worship (Ex 20:8; Ac 20:7)
- Church government (1Ti 3; Tit 1; 1Pe 5)

### Changing Forms



**Question 5:** *How would this principle (that forms can change) affect the way you develop forms in your new church, based on Scripture?*

### People Often Identify More with the Forms Than with the Function

It is unfortunate, but people tend to get attached to the form and miss the function. They can perpetuate forms that have lost vitality in their respective cultures (e.g. the way a worship service is run). There is an old story told about a new bride who cooked her first roast for her husband. When she served the roast to him, the prime pieces on both ends were cut off. He asked her why. She replied her mother always cooked the roast this way. When the new husband asked the mother-in-law why she did it this way, her reply was, "I don't know. My mother always did it that way". When the husband asked grandma why she cut off the ends of the roast, her response was, "The pan was too small for it". This form of preparing the roast had been copied for two generations, even though it was no longer relevant or applicable.

When people believe that certain forms are absolutely necessary, they tend to become legalistic in their approach. Often, resistance to a changing form is caused more by insecurity and fear of change than from theological truth. This can be a form of idolatry. An understanding of form and function can help people see that change is not always threatening.

### Forms Should Not Be Changed Carelessly

It is not unusual for a young man, just out of seminary or Bible college, with no real pastoral experience, to become the pastor of a church and think that he knows exactly how everything should be done. He has an idea of what the "perfect" forms are and is determined to change everything to fit his ideas. He has no idea of what

the people are like, nor does he know what they want to do. He may not even know whether the ideas have been tried before and what the results were. This can lead to a situation in which the people begin to feel that their pastor does not value them but sees them as part of an experiment and come to resent him. They also feel as if the church no longer fits them and either the pastor must go or they will.

Forms can be changed to highlight a function. One time, in order to highlight worship (a function), a pastor started the service with a hymn (as usual) and then gave the sermon. The sermon was normally at the end of the service after the special music, extended singing, greetings and announcements, but this pastor chose to speak about God and His wonderful works, then invited the congregation to worship and thank Him through prayer, singing praises (hymns) and the Lord's supper. The change was very effective. This does not mean that he did it every Sunday. It was done that one time in order to get people to stop and think in a new pattern about the worship part of the service. They then returned to the usual form.

### **When Forms Freeze, Churches Die**

The purpose of the church is to glorify God through the edifying of the members and the evangelizing of the lost. This is the eternal, unchanging purpose. The functions are how we accomplish this purpose. They are also given by God, who has told us how He wants us to glorify Him. They are also eternal and unchanging. A form is only one of many acceptable ways to fulfill a particular function. Forms can change because they are an expression of society.

There are times when the importance of forms can grow to be so great that people will not let them be changed. When forms become so important that they cannot be changed, the church will be unable to reach the lost. As society changes, the church becomes disconnected from the people around it. If the church cannot change its expression of the eternal functions, then the church will become irrelevant to that society and may eventually die.

There was a church that chose to reach out to a certain ethnic group in its neighborhood. The congregation became very comfortable with the forms which they used. But the forms became too important. The neighborhood changed and there were fewer and fewer of this ethnic group in the neighborhood. By the time the church realized that they needed to change, it was too late. They were known as a church that had nothing to offer to the people of that neighborhood and the church building was closed and the remaining membership disbanded.

## **V. IMPLICATIONS OF FORM AND FUNCTION FOR CHURCH PLANTERS**

If church planters are not flexible in how they choose forms, the church planting process can become very slow, expensive, and difficult.

Church planters must think very carefully about form and function. Many of the forms established at a church's birth can become interwoven in the life and fabric of the church. Even if they are ineffective, it may be very difficult (or impossible) for the church planter to change them at a later time.

Church planters tend to go to one of two dangerous extremes in their ministry. They may:

- Use only traditional church forms so that the approach to preaching, style of music, and methods of evangelism are the same as the existing churches in the region. The result may be that the church will reach the same kind of people instead of the target people.
- Adopt only imported, foreign forms that are difficult to reproduce in that culture. When church planters assume that certain programs, equipment or styles of music are necessary because they are effective in some other situation, then the church can have a foreign appearance from the beginning. In your region, "westernization" or a large population of foreign missionaries may contribute to this problem.

The forms that you choose will largely influence what section(s) of your society you will attract. Forms should emerge naturally from the culture so that the target people can understand what they mean with little or no explanation. You need to look at who lives in your target area, identify who is not being reached by existing

churches, and find out how to attract them to your church by choosing forms that will be meaningful to them and faithful to biblical functions.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Why is “form and function” so important to church planting?
- How have the forms in your church tradition developed? In what ways are these forms strange and foreign to visitors or new converts? Do the forms serve a biblical function? How could you improve the forms to fit the culture better?
- What kind of resistance would you face if you sought to establish a new church with forms different than other churches in your culture?
- How could you develop forms that would be more comfortable to new converts without compromising biblical principles? Describe how these forms are relevant to your target group culture in worship, fellowship, sacraments, tithing, and biblical instruction.
- When are forms sinful? Why? Give examples and validate with a biblical principle.

### **ASSIGNMENT**

- Read Acts 2:41-47. Describe all the activities of the early church in this passage and describe the forms and functions at work.

### **SOURCES**

- Thompson, Paul. *Planting Reproducing Churches; A Basic Course*. Toronto, Canada: World Team Institute of Church Planting, 1992.
- Webster, Robert D. *Growing Churches for God’s Glory*. Workbook written for BEE International, 1995.

## **PERSONAL EVANGELISM**

Evangelism means “telling the good news”. The “good news” that Jesus Christ has made salvation possible and available as a free gift is the best news ever heard by the human ear and heart. Evangelism involves assisting those outside of faith in Christ to move toward faith in Him. Evangelism is important work for all believers.

For those involved in church planting, evangelism is no less important. In fact, planting a church without evangelism is impossible. We can find hope for the process in Matthew 4:19, where Jesus challenged the disciples to follow Him with the words, “Come, follow me . . . and I will make you fishers of men”. Jesus wanted these experienced fishermen to use their lives to build His Church. As we follow Christ, observe His law and obey Him, He also desires to make us fishers of men, able to attract and win people to Himself. Only the Lord is able to make us effective fishermen of souls.

There are many ways to catch fish. People use large boats, complicated machines and huge nets to catch them by the thousands. People sometimes use barbed hooks with bait or attractive lures to catch fish. No one catches fish with every toss or cast, but each experience can be a time of learning. People have to go where the fish are and choose an appropriate method in order to catch them.

In the same way, there are a multitude of methods to bring men, women, youth and children to Christ. There is, of course, only one true Gospel. As we preach this Gospel, God’s Holy Spirit convicts the world of guilt regarding sin, and righteousness and judgment (Jn 16:8) and brings people to life-changing faith. Our task is to combine effective methods and strategies to win people to Christ and incorporate them into the church. We will be considering some of these methods and strategies in this lesson.

The strategy of saturation church planting is largely dependent upon focused evangelistic effort. Saturation evangelism goes hand-in-hand with saturation church planting. The initial and foundational work of evangelism—winning people to faith in Christ—must be succeeded by the ongoing work of nurturing and equipping new converts and disciples. Evangelism must take the first place in saturation church planting. Equipping and mobilizing all believers to do the work of evangelism will be a primary ingredient in any SCP strategy.

## Lesson 2 - Understanding the Message

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Evangelists don't convert people – the Gospel does. Those who evangelize are called to witness to the truth of the Gospel. Evangelism is not a matter of manipulation, or salesmanship. We should never think that we can reach the sinner's heart, or direct and change his mind in bringing him to Christ. The evangelist is simply a bearer of good news. In fact, the biblical word for Gospel means "good news".

In a letter to the newly established church at Rome, the apostle Paul wrote these words: *"I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Ro 1:16)*

What is the Gospel message, the "good news", that Paul is not ashamed of and that we share? The "good news" in the Bible is many things, but most of all it is God's redemptive activity. God began to reveal his redemptive plan immediately after sin came into the world (Gen 3:15, Rom 16:20). Later, it was told that a Redeemer would come bearing good news (Gospel) for all people (Is 35:3-4, 52:7-10, 62:11). Then Jesus came preaching the good news (Gospel) of the kingdom (Mt 4:23, 9:35) and dying in our place and before rising again and ascending into glory (1 Cor 15:1-7). By the end of the Bible the good news (Gospel) is all that Jesus is and accomplished for us by His life, death, and resurrection. It is his person and work.

In this lesson, we will review the core of the gospel message - which is the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus offers us the only sure foundation to be accepted by God. However, there are many false gospels out there – nearly everyone has a method by which they are trying to be right. But every method except the biblical one is a false gospel. As an evangelist, your job is to help people see the difference between peoples' false gospel and the true one.

**Question 1: What kinds of "false gospels" do you see at work in your area?**

**Question 2: In your own words (avoid theological ones), what is the Gospel?**

### I. THE GOOD NEWS IS NOT...

#### **The Gospel is not... that we are OK**

Many people in today's world are convinced that we are not really all that bad and that salvation is not necessary. But the fact is that we are all sinners who need a savior. (Rom 3:10-12). If people do not understand this, they will not be interested in the Gospel. Many people live their lives seemingly trouble-free. They do not sense their need for a savior. These people can be the most difficult to reach. But often a crisis in life will help them see their need.

#### **The Gospel is not... that we are made right by works**

The philosopher Aristotle believed that people could become good (be justified) by practice. Many have agreed with him. In Jesus' day, it seems the Pharisees would have agreed with Aristotle. For them the way to be acceptable before God was by practice—specifically by living according to God's law. The well-known theologian Thomas Aquinas agreed with Aristotle; thus a system of salvation by works remains a cornerstone of many world religions.

Those who accept salvation by works could be classified as following "religion". Here, we are defining "religion" as *man's attempt to reach God*. The Gospel however, teaches something entirely different about how



we become good. According to the Bible, the only way to be saved is to accept *by faith* the salvation provided by the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Gospel then, stands in direct contrast to all other religious systems of acceptance before God.

### The Gospel and Religion

<b>Gospel</b> <i>(God's supernatural attempt to reach man)</i>	<b>Religion</b> <i>(man's natural attempt to reach God)</i>
Grace Faith Transforming Holy Spirit Grace leads to obedience	Works Obedience Personal effort Obedience leads to grace

## II. THE GOOD NEWS IS...

There are many ways to describe the Gospel. But that is not to say that every description is accurate or that the Gospel changes. There are several aspects of the Gospel that must be included in every description of it. We want to emphasize four points concerning the Gospel in this section.

### 1. "You are more sinful and flawed than you can even imagine"

People will not want to be saved until they know they are lost. The Bible says that all are lost because of sin. What is sin? **Sin is any behavior, belief or attitude that does not conform to God's will.** It is not only a matter of behavior. Sinful behavior is merely sin's manifestation.

Most people do not think of themselves as sinners. They know they sin, but people have a tendency to minimize their sin. However, people are not sinners because they sin; they sin because they are sinners. In fact, we are all born sinners and apart from the atoning work of Jesus, that is what we remain throughout all of our existence on earth.

*Question 3: What do the following passages teach us about man's sinful state?*

*Jeremiah 17:9*

*Romans 3:23*

*James 2:10*

*Galatians 3:10*

***Question 4: Do you agree that sin is more than a matter of behavior? Why or why not?***

**2. "God loves you more than you can ever hope"**

God created us and loves us; His work throughout history is to redeem mankind to a loving relationship with himself. Many people think that in order to experience God's love, one must get rid of all their sin and unworthiness. But in reality, it is impossible for us to make ourselves acceptable to God. Because of what Jesus has done, however, anyone can experience God's love. This is point of the Gospel.

***Question 5: What do the following passages of scripture teach us about God's love:***

***Zephaniah 3:17***

***John 3:16***

***Romans 5:8***

***Rom 8:38-39***

***1 John 4:10***

Many people reject God's love, not believing they deserve it. These people are absolutely right in that they do not deserve God's love. That is the whole point of the good news--none of us deserve it! The greatest demonstration of God's love is for sinners like us.

We tend to think that God's love must be earned. Often we feel that we fall out of favor with God when we sin and he withholds his love until we get back into shape. While God is certainly not happy about sin, he loves us according to his grace - meaning we do not deserve His favor at all. This concept is completely contrary to our natural ways. But it is miraculously true! According to the Gospel, no matter what you have done, you can experience the love of God and be perfectly acceptable to Him! God's love is like that.

**3. "Jesus lived and died in your place"**

Another way to explain the Gospel is that it is the person and work of Jesus - all that Jesus is and did. Because of who Jesus is and what he has done - we can be worthy to stand before God.

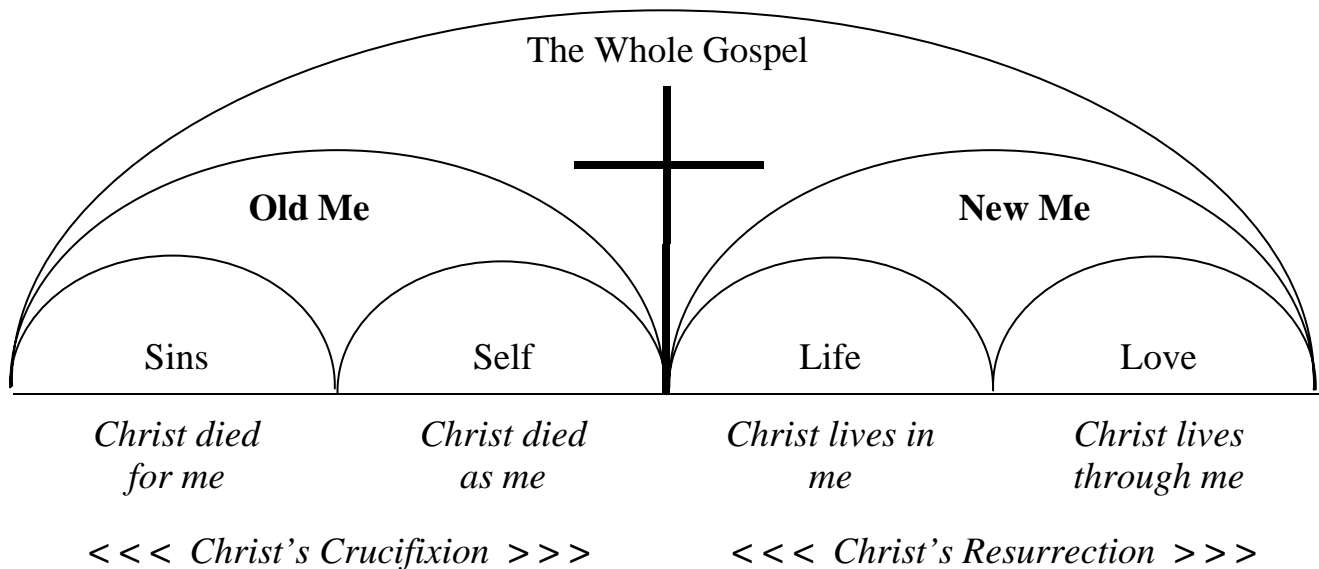
***Question 5: Read Romans 5:8 and John 3:16. How are we saved?***

***Question 6: Read 2 Tim 1:9-10. What did Jesus have to do with the Gospel?***

**Question 7: Read 2 Cor 5:21. On what basis can we become acceptable to God?**

**The Gospel is Jesus**

In a real sense, *Gospel* and *Jesus* are interchangeable. To drink of the Gospel is to drink of Jesus. To say “the Gospel is the answer to all we truly need” is none other than to say “Jesus is all we truly need”. Therefore we can never outgrow the Gospel, or allow it anything other than a central place in our thinking. We are resolved to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor 2:2). In its broader sense, the Gospel includes all the benefits and privileges Christ earned for us. It covers not only the forgiveness of sin but, for example, our being redeemed from the curse of the law, the rights of adoption, and the reception of the Holy Spirit (Gal 4:4-7).



**4. Repentance and Faith in Jesus is the only way to experience God’s love**

There is a lot packed into this statement. In a sense it is all the previous three wrapped into one. It means that first of all, we must acknowledge that we are sinners before a Holy God. If there was anything we could do to save ourselves there would have been no reason for Christ to die. But there is nothing we can do to gain favor with God. There is no such thing as a righteous person (Ro 3:10, 20). We must cast ourselves on His mercy. We need grace and mercy, and not justice (Eph 2:8,9).

No one is genuinely saved until they acknowledge the supremacy of Christ and repent. To repent means to turn from sin and a life of independence and to turn to Christ to rely on Him alone.

The fact that Christ arose from the dead means His promise is true. He has gone to prepare a place for us and will come again to take us home with Him (Jn 14:2-3). Our salvation is settled when we trust Him. We can indeed serve Him with our good works as a way of thanking Him and worshipping Him.

**III. WHY SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS?**

**People Are Spiritually Lost and Forever Separated from God without Jesus Christ**

Not only is every person separated from God spiritually, but also each person is absolutely unable to redeem himself. Because of sin the Holy God is inaccessible to him. Whether an individual is aware of his condition or

not, he is desperate and doomed apart from receiving the solution offered by Jesus Christ, and no one else. Please see “The Bridge” illustration at the end of this lesson for a simple way to explain how Christ bridges the gap between God and us.

- ◆ Romans 1:18ff
- ◆ John 14:6
- ◆ Romans 6:23
- ◆ Romans 3:9-20,23
- ◆ Ezekiel 3:16-21
- ◆ Ephesians 2:1-3

### **We Are God’s Method of Reaching the World**

Since the time of Christ, his followers have been charged with the responsibility to represent the Lord and His kingdom in the world. The apostles were the first to receive this charge. They understood that they were to be witnesses—that they were to be spokesmen and ambassadors of Christ. These roles imply a faithful presentation of the truth as we understand it and a faithful representation of the God who has won us and sent us out.

Paul understood this responsibility as a debt or obligation that he owed to the Lord and to the lost. While it is true that a person may be saved through the Word of God and the Holy Spirit only, this is highly unusual. In fact, even when Christ Himself spoke to Paul on the Damascus road, He sent Ananias to complete the evangelism process in Paul’s life. God desires to use men and women who know Him as the means to reach the lost.

- ◆ 2 Corinthians 5:16-21
- ◆ Acts 1:8
- ◆ Mark 16:15
- ◆ Matthew 28:18-20
- ◆ Romans 1:14-17
- ◆ 2 Timothy 4:5b

### **Many are Eager to Hear and Understand the Solution to Their Dilemma**

French Philosopher Blaise Pascal noted that there is within man a God-shaped vacuum, which only God can adequately fill. Through the ages, people have sought resolution for their spiritual dilemma. The list below is just a sample of the many people in the New Testament who would openly discuss their condition in the hope of resolving their problems. There are others like them who will listen to the Gospel if we will go to them and make it plain.

- ◆ Nicodemus—John 3
- ◆ The man born blind—John 9
- ◆ The woman at the well—John 4
- ◆ Jerusalem crowd—Acts 2
- ◆ Zacchaeus—Luke 19
- ◆ Ethiopian eunuch—Acts 8

### **CONCLUSION**

Throughout every continent, the Gospel, the good news, is having an impact. The Gospel moves people from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God, from darkness to light, from death to life. All who have placed their faith in Christ upon hearing the Gospel message can testify to the fact that God’s grace has profoundly changed them personally. No longer enemies of Christ and slaves to sin, we (and those who come to faith through our testimony) have become a part of the household of God (Col 1:10-14). Families, communities and nations around the world are being changed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What is “the work of an evangelist”? (2Ti 4:2)
- Do you believe that God could use you to reach others for Him? Why or why not?
- What most motivates you to share the Gospel?
- In your own words, describe the most important parts of the Gospel?

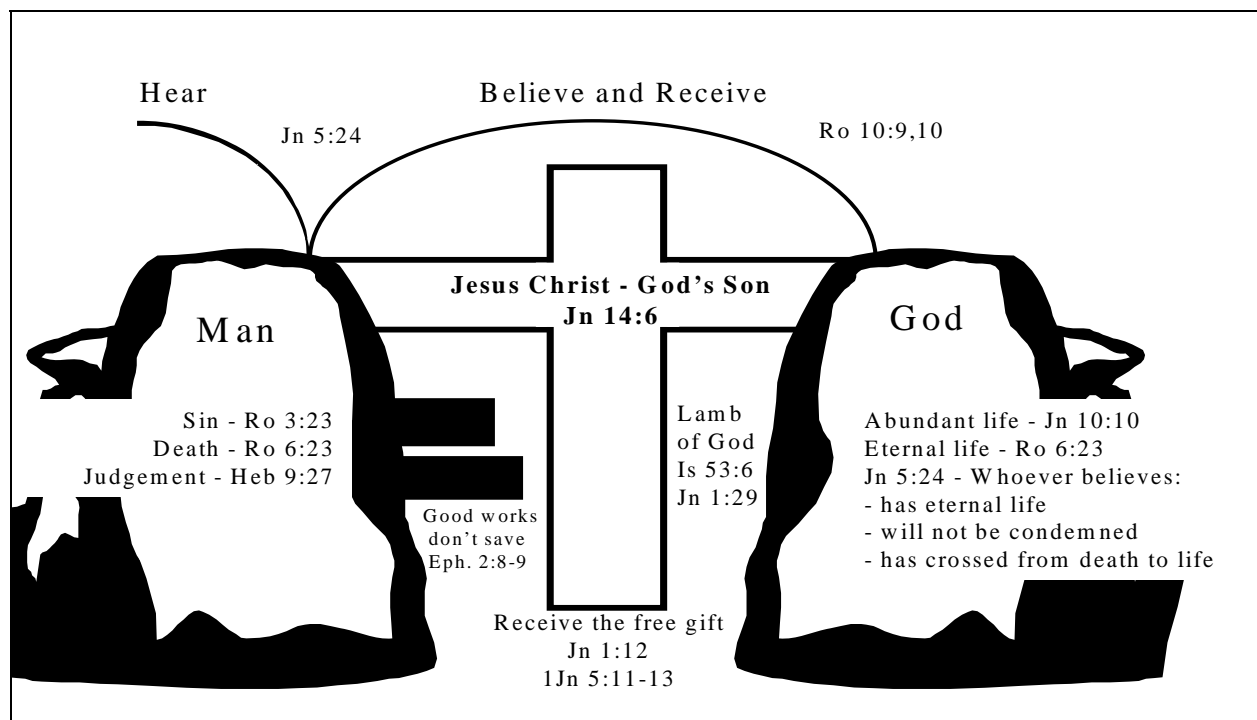
## ASSIGNMENT

Study the Bridge diagram following this lesson. Memorize it so that you can redraw it and include all the Scripture references from memory. Learn to share it with non-believers.

## SOURCES

- Paul, Bunty and David Collins. Back to the Gospel. NewCastle, Australia: Fountaingate Christian Foundation, 1994.
- Living By the Gospel. nd, np.

## Worksheet: The Bridge



The Bridge diagram can be an effective evangelism method. You might find it helpful to gradually make a rough sketch of this on a blank sheet of paper while you share the Good News (with related Bible verses) with unsaved friends. A verbal and written presentation is often more powerful than using either medium alone.

## **Lesson 3 - The Power of One – Sharing a Personal Testimony**

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The process of evangelism is one important way that the Lord involves Christians, in cooperation with the work of the Holy Spirit, to build the kingdom of God—the Church of Jesus Christ. While the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men is invisible, the Christian’s efforts in evangelism are visible and sometimes even public.

Publicly, we use divine encounters to share our faith as we go about the ordinary activities of our lives. We initiate genuine relationships with people in our communities. We spend time with people so they can observe our lives and we can see theirs. We build bridges of trust to individuals and families, expanding the testimony and influence of Christ. Evangelism often includes specific activities designed to win a hearing for the Gospel. It could be through simple acts of kindness or sharing a tract, or it could be as complex as organizing a regional outreach effort using the *Jesus* film or a gifted evangelist.

### **I. THE NATURE OF A TESTIMONY**

The most powerful presentation of the Gospel message is the one we authenticate with our lives. The way we live brings life to the words being spoken. Our integrity, compassion and transparency are essential tools used by the Lord to make us “salt and light” right where we live.

#### **We are Called to be Witness**

In Acts 1:8, Jesus promises His disciples that they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them and that they will be His witnesses. But what is a witness? In a legal courtroom, a witness is one who is called upon to tell others what he has observed. He tells the truth about a critical event, as he has perceived it. A witness is not expected to know every detail or have various perspectives on truth. He is expected to tell what he remembers accurately and honestly. The content that a witness communicates is his testimony.

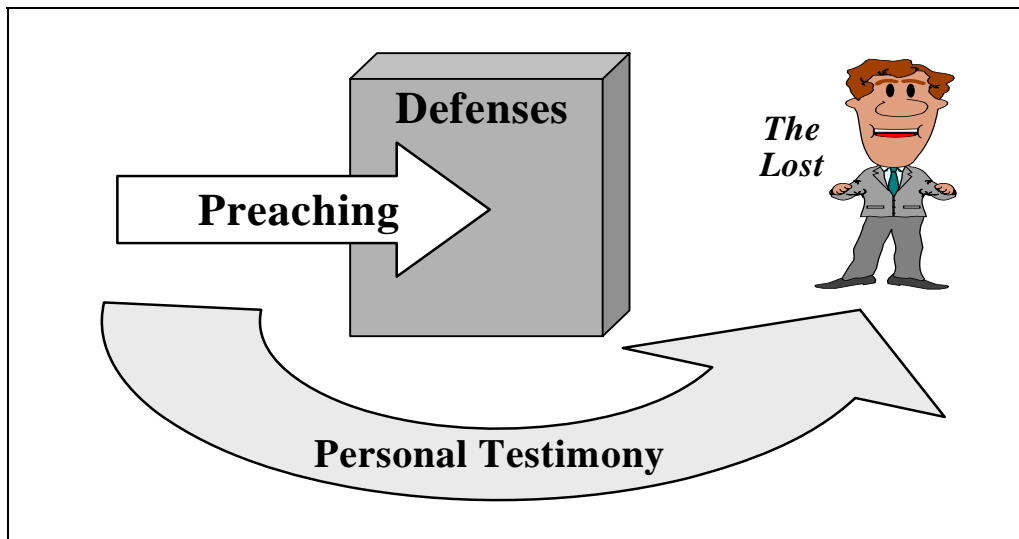
#### **We are Called to Give Testimony**

Each of us who has placed our faith in Christ also has a testimony to share. What has been your experience with Christ? Our testimonies are as individual as fingerprints and snowflakes. Our testimonies provide valuable insight to others about the way God works among men. This is vital information unbelievers need in order to make an informed decision about Christ. Our testimonies also provide encouragement to those who love God. As we tell of Christ’s work in our lives, others are stimulated to greater faith and obedience.

### **II. THE VALUE OF A TESTIMONY**

#### **Overcoming resistance to the Gospel**

People listen selectively. The people you want to win to faith may resist a theological discussion about salvation. But they will easily and readily hear your personal story of how you came to faith in Christ. People like to listen to interesting stories. Whether or not they admit it, they want you to give them a good reason to believe. Your testimony, shared honestly, briefly and creatively, can be used by the Holy Spirit to open up their eyes and minds to see spiritual truth in a fresh way.



### Overcoming Satan in spiritual warfare

When we are sharing our faith with others, we are engaged alongside God in spiritual warfare, assaulting the kingdom of the devil. In Revelation 12:10-12, we read the following:

*"... Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them!"*

Note the means by which the accuser of our brethren, Satan, was overcome ... "the blood of the Lamb" and "the word of their testimony". The finished work of Christ and our relationship to Christ are two things God uses to defeat the evil one. Your testimony of faith in Christ and faithfulness to Christ is an important tool God uses to build his church. Even if we have to experience hardship, suffering or ultimately death for our faith, we win and Satan loses! So tell people what God has done in your life!

### III. EXAMPLES OF TESTIMONIES

Scripture is filled with accounts of people giving their personal testimony. Read the following as examples of personal testimonies and see what you can learn from them. Use the methods you are learning in the lessons on inductive Bible Studies.

#### The woman at the well (Jn 4:28-29)

- What did she say?
- To whom did she witness?
- Why did she choose this particular form of testimony?

#### The man born blind (Jn 9:13-34)

- To whom did he witness?
- What did he say?
- What was the occasion for his testimony?
- How was his testimony received?
- How did he deal with opposition?

### **Paul's conversion (Ac 9, 22, and 26)**

In these passages, note how Paul emphasizes different aspects of the same experience to impact different audiences.

- Chapter 9 is Luke's account of Saul's conversion.
- Chapter 22 is Luke's record of Paul's interrupted testimony before the Jerusalem Jews.
- Chapter 26:2-23 is Luke's record of Paul's testimony before King Agrippa.

### **IV. PREPARATION OF YOUR TESTIMONY**

Please take the remainder of this session to prepare a 3-5 minute version of your personal testimony. Ask God to help you recall your conversion clearly. Make some notes about key ideas or verses you want to be sure to include. It is best if you can isolate one particular thing that moved you to faith in Christ—something that others, non-Christians, could relate to. Your testimony should consist of three parts: **Before, How** and **After**:

#### **Part 1 – Before you met Christ, what was your life like?**

This will point to areas of need that you believed Christ would meet in your life. It provides a sense of common ground between you and the person you want to win to faith. Why did you need Christ? Try to isolate the prominent issue that led to your repentance.

#### **Part 2 – How did you come to Christ?**

What actually happened? Where were you? When did you trust Christ? What did you do? What Scripture did the Holy Spirit use in your life? Did someone help you in this process? Make this as basic as possible; assume that the hearer is a God-seeker and your experience will be used as a situation that he could relate to.

#### **Part 3 – After your conversion, how has knowing Christ changed your life?**

What impact has your faith had on your life? In what practical ways was your life changed? Were there changes that surprised you? Were your expectations met? Do not only talk in the past tense—tell what the Gospel is doing in your life today. Do not avoid talking about difficulties—non-Christians need to know that Christians have problems too. The difference is that for believers, Christ is a solid anchor in the storms of life. Jesus gives us the power to persevere during times of trouble.

### **V. THE SHARING OF A PERSONAL TESTIMONY**

Now that you have prepared your personal testimony, take some time to share it with the other trainees. Each participant needs a chance to share his or her testimony. Take five minutes to hear each testimony and no more than five minutes to give feedback. As testimonies are shared, use the following points to consider the effectiveness of each.

**Complete** - Does the testimony tell the whole story? Does it include the three parts?

- Life before Christ: What can the non-Christian relate to?
- Circumstances at the point of conversion: How is it like the non-Christian's situation?
- Life since finding Christ: How is your life different than the non-Christian?

**Clear** - Will the testimony be easy for a non-believer to understand, or is it filled with religious language that might confuse non-believers? Does it sound like a sermon or is it a helpful recommendation to a friend?

**Gospel** - Are all necessary points of the Gospel message touched upon in the testimony? While it is impossible to go into great detail, the basic concepts should be included.

**Concise** - These testimonies should be not longer than five minutes. Is there any unnecessary detail in the testimony? We do not need to tell the whole story now—evangelism is a process.



## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Where are some places and when are some times in your day or week during which you could share your testimony?
- What topics of general conversation might readily provide an opening for the casual introduction of your testimony? Do you travel on public transportation?
- Do you take breaks or eat a meal at work? Ask the Lord to arrange “divine appointments” for you to be able to share your testimony.

## **ASSIGNMENT**

- Share your testimony with at least three other Christians who will see if you are clear in your presentation.
- Prayerfully make a plan that will result in sharing your testimony with two non-Christian friends or existing contacts within the next two weeks. Ask God to prepare “divine appointments” for you to share your testimony (perhaps without advance warning) within the next four weeks.
- Complete the worksheet following this lesson

## Worksheet: Examining Jesus' Methods with Individuals

As we discuss personal evangelism, it is important to take a look of how Jesus interacted with non-Christians. The Gospel is full of interesting conversations between Jesus and other people. We will take a look at several of these as an example of various ways that Jesus interacted with them. Read each passage and answer the questions below.

<b>Bible Passage</b>	<b>John 3:1-21</b>	<b>John 4:5-26</b>	<b>John 9:5-7, 35-39</b>	<b>Mark 10:17-22</b>
With whom is Jesus speaking?				
What do we know about this person from what is told in this passage?				
How did the conversation start?				
In which verse did the conversation change directions?				
What did Jesus require?				
What did Jesus offer?				
How did the person react?				

Evangelism is a process of bringing a person out of darkness into the light. Understanding where a person is in this process can be the first step toward effective evangelism. Is this person an atheist? Is he seeking God? For our understanding of what goes on inside a person on the way to Christ, it would be very useful to divide the process of evangelism into four stages of development:

Stages of attraction to Christ	Stages of faith	Action	Special attention to:	Biblical example:
<b>1. «Cultivation»</b> <i>Preparing the soil</i>	-12 On one's own path -11 Listening to the messenger -10 Favorable attitude towards the messenger -9 Sees the difference between one's own way of life and that of the messenger -8 Begins to accept Biblical attitude towards life	Reach the heart of people through friendly care	Need of the presence of the speaker and fellowship	John 3 and 4
<b>2. «Sowing»</b> <i>Changing one's mind</i>	-7 Favorable attitude towards Bible -6 Favorable attitude towards Gospel -5 Understanding the sense and thoughts of the Gospel -4 Acceptance of the Gospel basics	Speak to the mind of people through fellowship	Need to speak Gospel truths	John 4 and Acts 8
<b>3. «Harvest»</b> <i>Making a decision</i>	-3 Admitting personal need of salvation -2 Decision to act -1 Repentance and faith in Christ	Focus on the will of people, calling them to faith and repentance	Conviction of man for the need to make a decision	John 4 and Acts 16
* <i>A New Creation in Christ!</i>				
<b>4. «Storing the harvest»</b> <i>Spiritual growth</i>	+1 Assurance of faith and commitment to it +2 Becoming part of the church +3 Spiritual growth and maturity in Christ +4 Walking with Christ and readiness to witness to others	Impact the personality of the people, centered on personal spiritual growth in Christ	Encouraging the person to unite with the church	Acts 2:40-47 and Acts 8

## Lesson 4 - Evangelism and Church Planting

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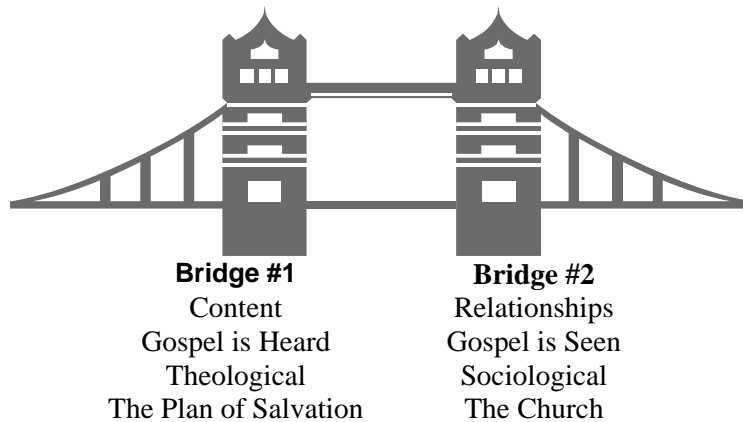
Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ is an integral part of church planting, but evangelism alone is not enough. Church planters need to use appropriate evangelistic methods that will lead to the establishment of growing churches—not just the salvation of individuals.

When we consider the vast amount of tools and methods available for evangelism and try to determine which to use, we must remind ourselves of our goal. As church planters, our goal is not just to expose people to the Gospel, nor is it even simply to help them to make a decision for Christ. Our goal is to make disciples who will come together to worship and grow with God's people. If the church is God's primary instrument for world evangelization, then evangelism should always result in local church growth or church planting.

### I. THE TWO BRIDGES

Two bridges must be crossed in order to bring people to salvation and incorporate them into a local church. One bridge is theological, and corresponds to the basic content of the Gospel. The other bridge is relational and involves the context in which the whole conversion process takes place. If people hear the Gospel without seeing relationships between believers, they may not fully understand the life-changing power of being a Christian.

#### Two bridges - Content and Relationships



Most evangelistic tools take only the first bridge into consideration. The Gospel is presented in such a way that it will be understood and received. Praise God for these evangelistic tools. However, as church planters, we must take both of these bridges into consideration. Somehow, those we witness to must hear the Gospel and see how it impacts people. People should look at our lives and know that we are different. When non-believers begin to say, "I've never sensed love like this before," then evangelism is taking place the way in which it was intended (Jn 13:35).

The following concepts are evangelistic principles of particular benefit to the church planting process. Traditional methods of evangelism often focus on the first bridge, resulting in people who make a personal decision for Christ but do not want to cross the second bridge and become involved in the Body of Christ. By keeping the principles described below in mind, the church planter will be able to bring the lost across both bridges so they will be saved and become active, growing participants in Church life.

## II. GO FOR "GATEKEEPERS"

Every group of people includes some who are more influential than others. When change takes place in a group, these few are normally the ones who initiate the change, or at least allow it to take place. When these "influencers" are won to Christ, others will likely follow. Sometimes we call people with this kind of influence "gatekeepers" because of their influence on the group and because they are the ones who allow access to the rest of the group. Who is a gatekeeper? He is a person who:

- has a good reputation among his peers
- is open to a friendship with you
- is open to the Gospel

Paul, the great church planter, witnessed intentionally to influential people. Understanding the great influence kings have (Proverbs 16:15; 19:12), he boldly targeted them (Acts 9:15)! He proclaimed the Gospel before Governor Felix, Festus and King Agrippa (Acts 23-26). In fact, Paul's normal church planting strategy was to teach in the synagogue and then in the home of a "gatekeeper". For example, at Philippi the gatekeeper was Lydia (Acts 16:11-15) and later the jailer (Acts 16:32-34). At Thessalonica it was Jason (Acts 17:1-9), and at Corinth, it was Titius Justus and Crispus (Acts 18:7-8).

In most cultures "gatekeepers" are male heads of households. If they come to Christ, it is likely that their family and/or friends will follow.

Sometimes "gatekeepers" will be like *big fish*. The big fish are normally in deep water, far from the shore. It may take more effort to go after these big fish, and they can be very resistant. They may fight the Gospel the whole way, but catching these big fish can be worth the effort!

***Question 1: Why is it helpful to reach "gatekeepers"?***

## III. USE EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS

Every person has a network of friends, relatives, co-workers, and others who they know well and with whom they have regular contact. These natural relationships provide for them a free flow of ideas. Often conversions "travel" through these networks, because people are most apt to share good news about changes in their lives with those closest to them.

Jesus was aware of these natural networks. He had the ability not only to reach individuals, but to work through their networks as well. After Jesus met Andrew the fisherman, there was suddenly a whole group of fishermen following Jesus (John 1:40-41). In Matthew 9:9-10, Jesus called Matthew, and was soon at Matthew's house with his whole network of tax collectors gathered. When Jesus shared the Gospel with one person, he often asked that person to share the Good News with those in his or her network (Luke 8:38-39). The book of Acts is filled with stories of whole families (Acts 11:14; 16:31) and whole villages (Acts 9:35) coming to Christ because of one person's conversion.

***Do the following to discover your natural web of relationships.***

1. Write down the names of all the people you routinely have contact with in the course of a typical month. This is your natural web.
2. Now, put a check next to the people who are already believers.
3. Those who are left are people you could and should be witnessing to.

#### **IV. HAVE NEW BELIEVERS WITNESS IMMEDIATELY**

Newfound faith is contagious. Even without deep theological understanding, new converts are enthusiastic about sharing the dramatic changes that have taken place in their lives.

John 4 provides an example of a brand new believer who is an effective witness. When the sinful Samaritan woman met Christ, she had a very simple but profound testimony: "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" This woman could not answer difficult theological questions, but she knew what had happened to her. And who could argue with her? Her testimony was simple, but it was all that she needed to know to draw others to Christ. In verse 30 we read that the men of the city rushed out to meet Jesus.

A new believer is a powerful witness. As a church planter you may want to develop a plan so that each new convert will be able to witness to his family and friends. If they are uncomfortable doing this by themselves, you can offer to go with them as they share through their natural web of relationships.

***Question 2: How effective would the Samaritan woman's witness have been if she had waited a year to start to tell her story?***

#### **CONCLUSION**

Evangelism is a vital ministry, but it is a ministry which should always result in new churches being started. Christ did not tell us to "make converts", but rather to "make disciples" of all the nations. Church planting should always be the goal when praying about and planning evangelism.

One man who has trained many church planters describes the importance of this ministry:

"While serving in the Army, I was taught that no matter how much air power or artillery power you would bring upon a target, land was ultimately conquered by the foot soldier with a rifle. This is also true in the spiritual realm. In the end, it doesn't matter how much mass evangelism, radio broadcasting or literature distribution you do; it is the itinerant church planter armed with

the Bible and the Gospel, empowered by prayer, who wins each village and neighborhood for Jesus Christ by establishing Gospel-preaching, reproducing churches.”

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Does evangelism in your region lead to new churches being planted? Why or why not?
- Describe at least one potential “gatekeeper” in your target area.
- When should new believers be baptized? How was baptism observed in the New Testament? What is your practice? If it is different from the New Testament practice, then why?

**ASSIGNMENT**

Complete the worksheet which follows this lesson.

## **Worksheet: Evaluating Evangelistic Strategies**

Take several minutes to read the following evangelistic strategies. Evaluate these strategies based on the evangelistic principles in this lesson. Will these strategies successfully lead to new churches? How can each of these strategies be modified to ensure a healthy church plant?

### **I. EVANGELISM STRATEGY 1—EVANGELISTIC BIBLE STUDIES**

An and Huong live in a city of 100,000 with no evangelical church. With a desire to plant a church, they start an evangelistic Bible study in their home. After one year, 15 people are faithfully attending and as far as they can tell 9 of them are believers. They realize that with 15 people the group is getting too big to feel intimate, so they start a second group that meets on a different night in the home of another couple. An hopes that when they have enough people in these groups, they will rent a hall and begin to worship each Sunday as a church.

### **II. EVANGELISM STRATEGY 2—CHRISTIAN BOOK TABLE**

Quang and Lan have been Christians for a long time. With a desire to start a church that will reach a new group of people they develop the following strategy. Noticing how many people in their region like to read, they collect as many Christian books as they can find and begin a book table with only Christian books in a nearby market area. Every day Quang and Lan set up their table with Christian books for sale at modest prices. Some free Gospel tracts are offered to anyone who stops to browse. They also have some Bible study worksheets which people take home and work on. It is set up so that people discuss the worksheets with Quang or Lan upon the completion of each one and before the next one is received. These worksheets are evangelistic and Quang and Lan pray that people will find Christ as a result of these lessons and they will eventually start a church.

### **III. EVANGELISM STRATEGY 3—CHRISTIAN VIDEOS**

Thanh is trying to plant a church in the capital city. In order to evangelize, Thanh uses Christian videos. He invites people in his neighborhood and at the factory where he works to see these videos. Now, a group of young curious non-believers gather in his apartment every Tuesday evening. The meetings normally last an hour and a half. For 30 to 45 minutes the participants view a video followed by a discussion led by Thanh using a discussion guide that goes with the video. By using this method, Thanh hopes that enough people will come to Christ that he will be able to start a church.



## Lesson 5 – Biblical History of Redemption

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God’s ultimate desire is to spread his glory throughout all creation. Perhaps the most important aspect of this for us is His redemptive activity. Beginning in Genesis, God created Man (male and female) to have a relationship with Him. When Man sinned, that relationship was broken. The account of how God began rebuilding that relationship begins in Genesis 3:15 and ends in Revelation 22. In fact, the Bible is primarily the history of God’s redemptive plan. As we study it we see that he works through methods of his own choosing, methods which we would never dream of, and methods which we might not even recognize as His hand at work.

Indeed, redemption is the theme of the Bible and Christ is central in that theme. Seeing the theme correctly brings eternal meaning to all the people, events, poems, parables and lessons of the Bible. Without Jesus, the redemptive theme of the Bible is not possible. Indeed, no one will understand the Bible, until he sees Jesus.

### I. REDEMPTION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

#### Creation – This is God’s world

The Old Testament begins with the creation of the world. With great care and intentionality God made the earth, the sea, all the living things in it. He established the order and the natural laws by which the world is held together and sustained. The world we live in God’s world. It was His idea and His creation.

The creation was declared good (Gen 1:31). It still bears testimony of God’s glory (Ps 8:3-9). The most honored aspect of his creation was man, whom he made in his own image (Gen 1:27). The first man and woman, Adam and Eve, were placed in the Garden of Eden and put in charge of caring for and enjoying the created paradise (Gen 1:28). They enjoyed a true friendship with God in a way that we all yearn for today.

#### The Fall – the Need for Redemption

Sadly, man rebelled against God. The rebellion took the form of eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil which God had forbidden (Gen 3:1-14). Believing the lie of the serpent, who was in fact Satan, was more than just poor judgment, a mistake, or a misunderstanding. It was a choice not to believe their Creator and Friend, the Lord God. This is nothing more than prideful rebellion which says, “I can do it myself” (James 4:4).

What they said:	What they should have said:
The man said, “The woman you put here with me - she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”	“God, I have failed you miserably. I have disobeyed your clear command to not eat of the fruit. I have sinned. Please forgive me.”
The woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”	“Lord God, I too have sinned by disobeying your command. I want to see our relationship restored to what it was. Please tell me how”
Victim mentality - Blames others	Responsible for own actions - Seeks ways to restoration

By this deliberate act, Man declared his independence from and opposition to the will of God. The results of man’s sin were:

- Fellowship with God was broken.
- The image of God in the man and woman was marred.
- Man experienced physical and spiritual death.
- The woman would experience suffering in childbirth.

- The man would experience pain in his work.
- The ground (nature) was cursed (Ro 8:21-22).
- Fellowship between the man and the woman was broken.
- Rule over the earth was usurped by Satan who became “the god of this world”.

Along with these results, Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden, experienced shame, and hid from God because of the guilt that they felt (Gen 3:8). People do not often hide from their friends – but the relationship was no longer one of friendship.

The result of sin is always separation from God. Mankind has received what his rebellion has declared he wants - separation from God. Physical death and eternal death in Hell came into the world. This is why man needs redemption. The word redemption means to “buy back”. Ever since the Fall, God has been working to set man free by buying him back from sin and Satan.

***Question 1: How is it that God holds mankind responsible today for the sin of Adam and Eve?***

### **The Promise of a Redeemer**

God could have destroyed his creation and started all over again. But he did not. Instead, since the fall of man, God has been working throughout history to restore fellowship between God and man. He chose a man (Abraham), who gave birth to a nation (Israel) among whom was born a messiah (Jesus) to conquer the work of Satan and restore man’s true fellowship with God. God’s ultimate redemptive plan includes:

- The redemption of Man, restoring him to the image of Christ (2Co 3:18).
- The restoration of fellowship between God and Man and between men (1Jn 1:3-7).
- The restoration of God’s reign over the earth (Rev 11:15) and man’s reign with him (Rev 22:5).
- The creation of a new earth (Rev 21:1).

God announced His solution over sin with His judgment of the serpent in Genesis 3:15. Even here, we see hints of God’s redemptive plan. When Adam and Eve hid, God *called for them* and *found them*. We also learn that a descendent of Eve would someday crush the head of Satan (Gen 3:15). This is a reference to Jesus, God’s ultimate solution to man’s sin (Col 1:20; 2:9). In Jesus Christ, God is reconciling people to Himself, restoring their relationship with Him (Eph 1:9-10).

The promise of redemption is repeated and further explained to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; 15:5-21; 17:4-8; 18:18-19; 22:17-18) to Isaac (Gen 26:2-4) to Jacob (Gen 28:13-15) to Moses (Ex 3:6-8; 6:2-8) and later to King David (2 Sam 7:12-16) the Prophets (Is 11:12-16; 9:6-7; Jer 23:5-6; 33:15-121; Mic 5:1-2) and to others.

All along there are critical times where the promise seems impossible. For example, Abraham is told of the blessing to come though his descendants when he and his wife Sara seem too old to have children. The sons of Jacob ended up in Egypt where they fell into slavery. Moses is able to get the people out of Egypt, but due to disbelief is unable to lead the people into the land of the promise.

Additionally, these early biblical events all reinforce that fact that man is a sinner and needs redemption while providing insight as to how it will come to pass. For example, the stories of Cain and Abel, Noah and the Ark, the tower of Babel, Abraham, his family and his journeys, etc, all teach us aspects of man’s sinfulness and God’s heart of persistent grace. These are part of God’s redemptive plan.

### **Preparation for a Redeemer**

Most of the remainder of the Old Testament is about the preparation for a redeemer. Miraculously Sara does have a child Isaac, who gives birth to a great nation Israel. This partial fulfillment of the promise bears testimony to the fact that the whole promise is true.

By the time Moses is born, the Israelites find themselves in slavery in Egypt. This is hardly the position from which you would expect redemption. Again the promise seems impossible. Yet God miraculously works, freeing the Israelites from slavery, giving the law and then through Joshua establishing them as an independent nation in the land of promise.

The people of Israel remain a people with a promise throughout the Old Testament. The promise that Israel carries is for a messiah to redeem the world. There are two ways in which they carried the promise. First, they maintained the line through which the redeemer would come. Second, they were a living witness to the world of the trustworthiness of God concerning that very same promise.

God's dealing with Israel reveals much about himself and his redemptive plan. Through the law, the tabernacle and later the temple and the sacrificial worship system of the Israelites, God gave pictures of his character and aspects of his redemptive plan. For example, sacrificing a lamb of sins is a picture of the coming redeemer, who would be a sacrificial lamb for the sins of the world.

The Israelites were often tested. Through the times of the judges, and the monarchies of Saul, David and Solomon, and through the divided kingdom, the exile and later restoration, the faith of Israel is tested. God sent prophets to point out sin, reestablish the promise of a coming redeemer, and call the people back to God. Sometimes God's people prove faithful but most often they doubted God and repeat the sin of rebelling against God just as Adam did in the first place. But God shows himself to be faithful. No matter what the failure and regardless of the circumstances, God brings them back to Himself.

***Question 2: How were the Old Testament people of Israel a “missionary” people?***

## **II. REDEMPTION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

### **The Incarnation – The Appearance of the Redeemer**

At the right time “The Word become flesh” (Jn 1:14). Jesus, God in the flesh, a descendant of Abraham and of David, appears in the town of Bethlehem, born of the virgin named Mary. He lived among man as a normal human – though he was far more. Only a few knew he was the promised redeemer, the “Lamb of God” (Jn 1:29) and those who knew could not grasp how he would achieve his purpose.

He began his public ministry at age 30. He taught publicly and gathered many followers with whom he traveled and ministered. His lessons tended to be about a future age, which he called the “kingdom”, a time when God's rule would be realized on earth in a way that had not been seen since the Garden of Eden. He preached against hypocrisy and showed great compassion for the people who had been ignored by their society. He also showed power over the natural laws of creation by doing miracles of all kinds. The most notable of these were healing the sick.

***Question 3: What does the incarnation show us about the heart and character of God?***

### **The Death and Resurrection of Christ – The Payment is Made**

At the end of Jesus' short earthly life, he was crucified as a criminal. This had to appear like a great victory for Satan and a great, even final, defeat for Jesus and his followers. But even this, the most potent arrow of Satan, does not and cannot stop God's redemptive plan. On the contrary, it is part of God's plan! You see, the purchase price for our redemption is the blood of Jesus (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; 1Pet 1:18-19; Heb 9:12). Because Jesus cried “It is finished!” from the cross, we can celebrate that the price has been paid. Redemption is as good as complete. Nothing more needs to happen in order to obtain it. Men and angels in glory can celebrate the

victory over sin and Satan. Three days after his death, Jesus rose from the grave, making his death all the more glorious and demonstrated His power over death and destruction.

All of history and the eternal destiny of every person hinges on this event. Now that Jesus, the Lamb of God, has come, lived and died for us, only to rise again for us, we understand and can experience more of God's redemptive plan. All those who lived before the cross had only a glimpse of what God had in mind (2Cor 3:7-18). Now as a result of Jesus' death we can experience a new relationship of harmony and friendship with God (2Cor 5:19). We can enter his presence (Heb 10:19), as his loved children (Gal 4:3-7). We have been redeemed, or "bought back", by the blood of Christ. The lostness that mankind experienced in the Garden of Eden was, in effect, put into reverse by the death of Jesus. This is because in his death, he took the punishment of our sins. He paid the price in full, making redemption possible, giving us access to the Father.


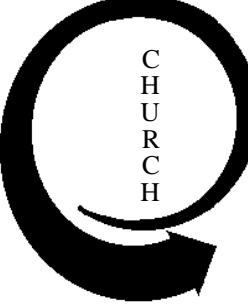
***Question 4: Why is blood the price for our redemption?***

### **The Church – Redeemed people**

Most of the rest of the Bible is all about living as God's redeemed people and spreading the good news of redemption. As redeemed people, we belong to God. The teachings of Jesus along with the Epistles and the rest of Scripture helps us understand what it means to live lives dedicated to God (1Pet 1:15).

***Question 5: Read 1Cor 6:19-20 and 1Cor 7:22-23. As one bought with a price, what is your obligation to your Redeemer?***

Just as Israel was the primary instrument of God to bring the redeemer into the world, so the church is the primary instrument of God to spread the news of Jesus in the world. In contrast to Israel, the church is composed of people from many nations (Jews and Gentiles). The inclusion of the Gentiles (Eph 2:12-24) as the people of God in the church was always part of God's plan. Accordingly, the way that the church witnesses is different than the way that the nation of Israel witnessed:

The Nation of Israel	The Church
<p>The orientation of the Nation of Israel was <i>centripetal</i>. God’s plan placed Israel as a light to the nations, to which the nations would <b>COME</b> to see and hear of His glory. To participate in His glory meant to come to the Nation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth by addition (birth, take by force, God-fearers)</li> <li>• Centralized plan “when they come to this House”</li> <li>• God’s glory temporarily residing in Jerusalem (1Ch 28; 2Ch 6-7)</li> </ul>	<p>The orientation of the Church is <i>centrifugal</i>. God’s plan places the Church as a Light to the nations. The people of the Church are to <b>GO</b> and be salt and light among the nations (Mt 5:13-14; 28:18-20).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth by multiplication (conversion, church planting)</li> <li>• Decentralized plan “... into all the world”</li> <li>• Released and empowered by the eternally indwelling Holy Spirit (Ac 1-2); God’s glory residing in the hearts of men (2Co 3)</li> </ul>
 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Growth through attraction</i> (<i>centripetal</i>)</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Growth through expansion</i> (<i>centrifugal</i>)</p>

The church, born in Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit came to dwell in man as never before, was purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28) and includes men and women who believe in Jesus from every tribe and nation. Jesus the redeemer remains with the church (Mt 28:20) lives in the church (Col 1:27) and works through the church (Mk 16:20). The mission of the church is a continuation of the ministry of Christ - to bear the good news of the Gospel to the nations. In the book of Acts we see the Church take the Gospel from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Ac 1:8).

Today, there is victory over sin and death through the blood of Christ, and the Gospel is being proclaimed by a church willing to die for Christ (Rev 12:11). Revelation gives us a picture of the end of this earth. At that time people from every tribe and nation will be seen worshipping the redeemer (Rev 7:9).

**Question 6: Will God’s redemptive plan be successful? How do you know?**

**CONCLUSION**

God has been working throughout all of human history to redeem his people. The establishment of the church is the most recent step in God’s redemptive plan. The Scripture declares: “*Through the church the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms according to His eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Eph 3:10-11). The Church is God’s plan to reach the world today, to manifest His progressive victory over Satan, and to enfold those who would be part of the “people of God”. Involvement in establishing and strengthening the church is no small task. It is an

essential activity for every believer and yields eternal results. Never underestimate your role concerning planting or leading the church!

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- How has Satan worked to destroy God's redemptive work in the world?
- What was the purpose of Israel in the Old Testament?
- How did Israel witness to the nations around them? How does this differ from how the church should witness today?
- How is Jesus central in history?
- Read Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; 1Pet 1:19; Heb 9:12. What is redemption? How is it obtained?
- Is there a concept of redemption among the religions and cultures of your region? How is it different from the Biblical truth?

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**Redemptive History of the World in the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT)**

This table provides an overview of the Bible by showing that the Old and New Testaments are united in declaring God's redemptive plan.

<b>OT</b>	Creation: Ge 1, 2	Fall/Sin: Ge 3:1-14	Promise of a Redeemer: Ge 3:15, 21	Promise repeated to Abraham: Ge 12	Sacrificial System initiated under Law of Moses/Blood Atonement: Exodus	A chosen people to be His Witness throughout the World
	- Man (Male & female) created in the <u>IMAGE of God</u> 1:27 - to have relationship with God, 3:8 - to have relationship with each other, 2:24 - to reproduce, 1:28 - to rule over earth, 1:28 - to receive God's blessing, 1:28	- Image Marred - Relationship with God broken - Pain and suffering - Try to rule over each other - All under a curse	- The "offspring" of the woman would strike the heel of the serpent. - God made garments of skin for them.	- I will bless you - In you all nations of the earth will be blessed - God chose one nation to be His people & to make Him known throughout the earth.	- Isa 53:7 - Ex 12:13 - A lamb to be sacrificed for sin. (Picture of the Lamb of God that would take away sins of the world). - Leviticus	- Jos 2:8-14; 4:24 - 2Sa 7:25-26 - 1Ki 8:41-43 - Isa 43:10-12; 54:5; 55:4, 5; 59:20; 60:16 - Da 7:13-14 - Zec 13:1 - (plus many, many more)

<b>NT</b>	Jesus: Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world	Gospels: Jesus the Redeemer Came	Acts: History of story of Redemption taken to ends of earth	A Redeemed people being transformed into image of Christ: "How should we Live?"	Revelation: Ultimate Redemption
	- Jn 1:29	- Mt 1:21 - Jn 3:16, 17 - Lk 4:18, 19 - Lk 19:10	- Jerusalem 2 & 6:7 - Judea & Samaria 6:8 - 9:31 - Palestine & Syria 9:32 - 12:24 - Eastern part of Roman World 12:25-19:20 - To Rome 19:21-25:31	- Ro 3:24; Ro 4:22-25; Ro 6:11-14; - Ro 8:29 - 2Co 3:18 - Eph 4:21-33 - Col 1:15-22 - 1Pe 5:1, 10 - 1Th 2:19 - Jude 24, 25	- (Creation of) a New Heaven and New Earth (21:1) - Everything made new (21:5) - His servants will reign with Him (22:5) - Blessed are those who wash their robes (22:14)

## SPIRITUAL CHARACTER

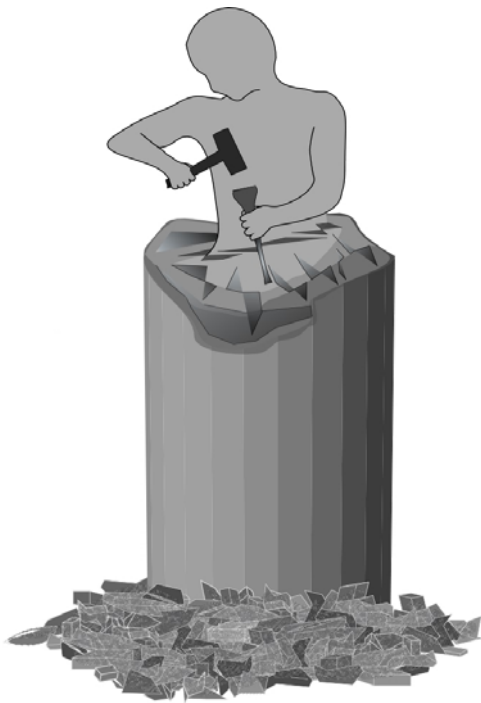
### Lesson 6 – Who Needs the Gospel?

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What does the Gospel mean today for people who accepted Christ many years ago? It seems that people who have been Christians for a long time give little attention to the Gospel that first brought them to Christ. Instead, they elevate to the highest level of "discipline" and strictly keep the rules hoping in their own strength to gain favor with God. Discipline is important. It is part of the Christian life, but it should not replace the Gospel. In this lesson, we will look at the role of the Gospel in the life of a mature Christian.

#### I. THE SELF-MADE MAN

What do you notice about the picture below? This statue is of a man who is trying to create himself by chiseling himself from a column of marble. What is wrong with this picture?



Obviously this is an impossible image. A man cannot make himself in such a fashion. Even if he could chisel what is left, he obviously did not create himself from the beginning. How could he have created the hands that hold the hammer and chisel, or the hammer and chisel that the hands use in the first place? Obviously, someone else created this man in the beginning.

***Question 1:*** *What does this picture illustrate about the Christian life?*

Many believers live like this picture. By careful obedience and determination, they believe that they are creating themselves, making themselves spiritual. There is a common, subtle conviction that "the Gospel is important for the beginning of the Christian life, but then everything after that depends on the individual person".

The truth is that faith in Jesus and the promises of the Gospel is the constant source of strength for the Christian life.

***Question 2:*** *Read Col. 2:6. How did you receive the Lord Jesus Christ? Explain how you must "walk in Him?"*

#### II. REPLACING THE GOSPEL

Paul wrote one of his first letters to the churches which were started during his first missionary trip to Galatia. There were many misunderstandings and questions about the Gospel, the law, and Christian growth. Paul had to confront the situation. He started his letter with strict exhortation. He said: *"I am amazed that you are so*



*quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different Gospel...*" (Galatians 1:6-7). Later he expresses his doubts, wondering if his work was in vain (Gal. 4:11). In indignation, he uses very strong words calling the Galatians "foolish" (Gal. 3:1, 3).

Why was Paul so upset with the Galatians? Paul understood that there was one reason for all their problems - they had turned away from the Gospel. The Gospel can be explained in the following way: *though we are prone to sin in more ways than we can imagine, we can experience God's love more than we can imagine, because Jesus died for us.* Instead of believing this, the Galatians were persuaded that through works, like circumcision and keeping the law, they could earn God's love. They began to seek to please God through their accomplishments and not through faith in Jesus. Separating themselves from the true source of strength, they traded a living hope in God for performance and self-effort (Gal 3:1-5; 4:10-11).

**Read Galatians 3:1-5.** The Galatians tried to gain righteousness through works, which means they were trusting in themselves and didn't acknowledge their own constant need for Christ. Paul wrote that at first they accepted the Gospel by the "Spirit", but then traded it for "flesh" (the Greek word "sarks" in verse 3 is sometimes translated "human effort"). By using the word "flesh" Paul is referring to sinful nature and human effort. We know that "flesh" is not a good thing because Paul uses the same word in Galatians 5:19 where we read about "the works of the flesh". Using that same word in Galatians 3:5, Paul is making a very strong statement about the seriousness of falling away from the Gospel.

The Galatians were "bewitched" (Gal 3:1) by the rules and rituals of living a religious life. Their attention was taken off Christ and was focused on themselves. It was for this reason that Paul exhorted the Galatian Christians.

***Question 3: How had the Galatian believers turned away from the Gospel?***

***Question 4: Read Galatians 4:15 and 5:15. What were the results of replacing the Gospel with human effort?***

Like the Galatians we can fall into temptation and trade the Christian life for a mere performance. A person can attend all the church functions and on the outside look good, at least to those around him. But in his heart he may be full of pride and self-centeredness. God's word might be meaningless to him and prayer might become nothing more than a formality.

This subtle, but deadly tendency is specifically what Paul is talking about in Gal. 3. The danger is that a person might live like a Christian on the outside, but on the inside he is dying. He is like a person sick with cancer, but doesn't know anything about it. As the tumor grows inside of him it kills all that is infected by it. When the person feels bad enough he goes to the doctor, only to find out that it's too late to do anything. This is what happens to us spiritually when we stray from the Gospel.

We grow when we learn to turn away from hope in our own strength and start to live by faith rooted in Christ. Only then do we discover our unlimited need for Jesus. God wants us to see that through our need for Christ, he strengthens our faith and transforms us into his image.

***Question 5: What is the difference between self-effort and faith?***

### III. CHRISTIANS WHO NEED THE GOSPEL

#### Why does "Huy" need the Gospel?

When Huy first turned to God and received forgiveness of his sins through Jesus Christ, he experienced tremendous joy. He felt like prisoner set free. He has a deep desire to please God in all he does. But, after he failed in one area of his life, he became depressed for weeks. Like the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-31), Huy sought to find comfort in fleshly pleasures rather than in God's love. He does not feel good enough to be loved by God. Huy also cannot find victory over his sin or a sense of closeness to God.

Huy knows that he is a sinner, but he doesn't understand his privilege as a loved child of God. In Romans 8 God speaks about His unchanging relationship with us even when we fail. There are six questions: *"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He, who did not spare His own son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the One who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"* (Romans 8:31-35). The answer is obvious. With these questions God confirms: *"I love you. I don't condemn you. Nothing can separate you from My love!"* (see 8:39).

The Gospel teaches us that God accepts us because of Jesus, not because of our performance. If God were to stop loving Huy, He would have to say that the sacrifice that Christ made on the cross was not enough. God cannot do that and for this reason will never stop loving us. God is waiting to restore Huy and give him the power over the sin that so easily defeats him. Huy needs the Gospel because of his deep need to find answers in the love of his Father, and not in sin. Like the prodigal son, he needs to return to his Father who is waiting with open arms.

#### Why does "Kinh" need the Gospel?

Kinh was born into a Christian family. He came to salvation at an early age. He has been a strong witness of the Christian life even though many tried to discredit him. Kinh faithfully followed the Lord and became a leader in the church. Many consider Kinh to be a model Christian, and deep in his heart he feels that he is. However, Kinh is serving God out of his flesh. As a result his heart is filled with pride and he lacks real intimate communion with God. Trusting only in himself, Kinh excludes God from his ministry and is alone.

Kinh doesn't acknowledge the sins in his heart. In doing good deeds, he subconsciously believes that he must continually add them to the Gospel as if the victory of Christ wasn't enough. Like the older son in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-31), Kinh is distracted by his service and falls into the temptation of pleasing God and people with works. For him, the most important thing is his own accomplishments and not the victory of Christ on the cross. He behaves like the Pharisees of the New Testament, who lived to do good works for God but lacked a heartfelt connection to God.

Kinh needs the Gospel to realize that he is a bigger sinner than he thinks, that Christ died to save him and that he cannot save himself nor can he keep himself saved by good works.

***Question 6: Are you more like Kinh or Huy? In what ways?***

### IV. MINISTRY AND THE GOSPEL

Many believers live with the idea that the results of their ministry depend on how well they perform at any given moment. Reasons for ministry success or failure are numerous. But, because of the way that God loves us and because of the nature of the Gospel, success in ministry depends more on God's power than on our skill or performance.

Trusting in our own resources is perhaps the best practical description of unbelief. We are called to stop depending on our own resources and to live by faith.

As an example, let's compare two days in your life. One beautiful Saturday you get up and go to a prayer meeting as is your custom. On your way out, you have a brief but pleasant conversation with your neighbor. You go to the prayer meeting and continue on to have a wonderful day in which God's presence is obvious in many ways. On the way home, you have an opportunity to share the Gospel with someone, and so you share Christ and His salvation with him. You are confident in yourself and feel that God is pleased with you.

The next Saturday is quite a bit different. You wake up late. You do not feel very good. The weather is bad. You speak unkindly to your neighbor on your way out. You miss the prayer meeting. In general, the day is filled with confusion and God does not seem to be near. You begin to feel badly about what you have done, but to your surprise, you have another opportunity to share the Gospel with someone.

***Question 7: Would you pass by the opportunity to share your faith because you feel like you are unworthy to share the Gospel with this person? Do you think that it is possible for God to bless you on a bad day? If not, then why not?***

We want to suggest that what really convinces others of the truth of the Gospel is not our perfection or self-righteousness, but our willingness to identify with the needs of others and show how Christ meets those needs even in our own lives. When our weaknesses become our point of contact, then others open up and share their heart needs in return. Perhaps this is what Paul meant when he talked about rejoicing in weaknesses (2 Cor 12:9-10).

We often think that while we are saved by grace, we either receive or lose God's blessing based upon our performance. But we must understand that if justification by faith in Jesus Christ is the basis of our relationship with God, then our worst days are never so bad that we are beyond God's grace, and our best days are never so good that we are not in need of God's grace. We are always in need of grace and it is always available.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Gospel must remain central in our walk with Christ. Replacing the Gospel with some other system of justification destroys the value of our salvation. Jesus Christ's accomplishments on the cross fully benefit only those who forsake all other systems of justification and become men and women of faith rooted in Christ. Shifting our confidence from Christ's accomplishment to our own accomplishments and rule keeping, or to anything else, only produces a false righteousness.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- In what way do people who have already received the Gospel still need it?
- Read Phil 1:27. What does it mean to live a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ? What does it mean to strive for faith in the Gospel?
- Read Gal 2:14. How do you act in line with the truth of the Gospel?
- What is the difference between hope in our own strength and faith in the strength of the Gospel?
- Why do you need the Gospel today?

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# MONTH 4

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## Review of Month 3

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Last month you learned about form and function within the church, and how this impacts your church planting ministry. The main emphasis of Month 3 was personal evangelism, learning the essence of the Gospel message, how to share your faith and how to use forms of evangelism that lead to church planting.

You were asked to do the following:

From Lesson 1, “Form and Function in the Church”

- Read Acts 2:41-47. Describe all the activities of the early church in this passage and describe the forms and functions at work.

From Lesson 2, “Understanding the Message”

- Study the “Bridge” diagram at the end of the lesson (refer back to it if needed). Memorize it so that you can redraw it and include all the Scripture references from memory. Learn to share it with non-believers.
- The Bridge diagram can be an effective evangelism method. You might find it helpful to gradually make a rough sketch of this on a blank sheet of paper while you share the Good News (with related Bible verses) with unsaved friends. A verbal and written presentation is often more powerful than using either medium alone.

From Lesson 3, “The Power of One – Sharing a Personal Testimony”

- Share your testimony with at least three other Christians who will see if you are clear in your presentation.
- Prayerfully make a plan that will result in sharing your testimony with two non-Christian friends or existing contacts within the next two weeks. Ask God to prepare “divine appointments” for you to share your testimony (perhaps without advance warning) within the next four weeks.
- Complete the worksheet following this lesson

From Lesson 4, “Evangelism and Church Planting”

- Complete the worksheet “Evaluating Evangelistic Strategies” at the end of the lesson. Refer back to it if you have not yet done this.

## THE CHURCH

### **Lesson 7 - History of Christianity**

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How has the Great Commission been obeyed? How has the Gospel been spreading around the world? How did Christianity first come to your region? What can we learn today from those who have spread the Gospel before us? These are questions that concern Church history. In this lesson, we will briefly review the expansion of the Church from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth to see what we can learn about the task God has for us today.

#### **I. THE MEDITERRANEAN ERA – 75 AD - 500 AD**

##### **The Early Church**

The book of Acts and the rest of the New Testament record that the apostles established churches all over the Mediterranean world. Most of the early Christians in these churches were poor and uneducated. Many were slaves. They lived simple Christian lives, gathering in homes or private places for worship and caring for one another in natural ways without fancy programs, professional leaders, or church buildings. Christianity spread during this time through the natural witness of average believers. Christians were noted for purity, in stark contrast to the immorality of the day. They were often severely persecuted by the ruling Roman authorities who considered all those who refused to worship the Emperor to be traitors. Countless thousands lost their lives as martyrs for their faith during this time.

##### **Conversion of Constantine**

The face of Christianity changed dramatically in 313 AD when Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan, which guaranteed religious freedom for all and ended the persecution against the Christians. Soon after, Constantine announced that he had become a Christian. Whether or not the conversion of Constantine was genuine is not clear. However, the Edict of Milan and Constantine's profession of faith greatly changed Christianity. For example, before the edict of Milan, Christians tended to stay out of public life and refused to serve in the army or work for the government, which they considered worldly and in some cases, evil. But after the Edict of Milan, nominal Christianity (being Christian in name only) grew and 'Christians' began to be active in all branches of the government and every aspect of society. By 375, Christianity became the official religion of Rome. Gradually the Empire and the church became interwoven, resulting in what is called the Holy Roman Empire.

##### **The Church Fathers**

The rapid expansion of the church in the first few centuries created an environment in which heresies could easily spread. One of the main needs of the early believers during this time was the clarification of theology based on Scripture. This task was taken up by the church fathers. Great intellectuals like Clement of Rome (?-100), Ignatious of Antioch (?-107), Polycarp (69-140), Clement of Alexandria (150-220), Irenaeus (130-200), Tertillian (160-215), Origin (185-254), Athanasius (293-373), Basil (330-397), Ambrose (340-97), Augustine (354-430), Chrysostrom (347-407), Jerome (345- 420) and many others, were the first ones to spell out the doctrines that the church still considers to be foundational today.

##### **The Church Councils**

When there was theological disagreement in the early church, church fathers and leaders would meet to discuss the issues and make decisions. Seven main councils were held in Nicaea in 325 AD, Constantinople in 381, in Ephesus in 431, in Chalcedon in 451, in Orange in 529, and again in Constantinople in 553 and 681. The main

subject of these councils concerned Christology--the deity, humanity and will of Jesus Christ. These councils also had the effect of bringing unity to the church.

### **Lessons learned**

Historians estimate that by 300 AD perhaps 10% of the Roman Empire were considered Christians. After the Edict of Milan, this percentage grew higher as Christianity slowly became the state church. However, one wonders how many Christians were actually believers. As Christianity became popular, missionary and evangelistic efforts died out and personal commitment to Christ came to be seen as less important. In short, many pagans converted to Christianity without changing their real beliefs. Because of this, it has been said that Christianity converted the Roman Empire and then the Roman Empire perverted Christianity through syncretism. Syncretism is the combination of different beliefs or practices into one religious system. We see from this that a state church tends to spread an external, cultural form of Christianity (nominal Christianity) but not the true faith.

*Question 1: What was the impact of the ‘conversion of Constantine’ on the church?*

*Question 2: Do you think the Church Councils were a good way to deal with heresies? Why or why not?*

## **II. EUROPEAN ERA - 500-1600**

### **Converting the Tribes**

Christianity spread beyond the Mediterranean world through the slow conversion of the animistic tribes that occupied the continent of Europe particularly between 400 and 800 AD. This happened through missionaries like Patrick (390-461) who took the Gospel to Ireland and Boniface (680-754) who preached among the Germanic people. Also, Celtic believers (one of the first European groups to be converted), as well as the Benedictines, established as many 1,000 monasteries which served very much like missionary compounds in Western and Central Europe.

### **Encounter with Islam**

A new religion emerged on the Arabian Peninsula led by Mohammed (570-632), who claimed to have received a special revelation from God in 610. Mohammed built on some basic truths from Christianity and Judaism and preached the worship of one God—Allah. Before his death most of the Arabian Peninsula had become his followers. Between 636 and 661 Islam conquered the entire Middle East and began to move across northern Africa and into Spain with what seemed like unstoppable force. The spread of Islam halted in 732 when Mohammed’s followers were defeated at the battle of Tours in France.

### **The Crusades**

The spread of Islam led to a series of wars against Muslims by the Holy Roman Empire. So many of the Christians in the middle East had converted to Islam and so many of the holy sites had been lost that the Christians in the Western part of the Mediterranean organized armies to forcefully reclaim holy sites and reestablish Christianity as the dominant religion of the region. There were seven such crusades between 1095 and 1291, all of which failed to retake any ground for more than a few years. This effort was clearly not missions. While the crusaders may have believed that they were spreading Christianity, they succeeded only in creating obstacles to the Gospel for millions of people, some of which remain to this day. Efforts to win

Muslims to Christ through a genuine, loving witness were undertaken by Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) who went to Syria and by Raymond Lull (1232-1315) who went to North Africa.

### **East-West Schism**

Early in the Roman Empire, the Greek-oriented East and the Latin-oriented West developed very different cultures. Invading European tribes weakened the Western Empire, while the Eastern Empire (also called the Byzantine Empire) had to deal with the influence of Islam. Likewise there were significant power struggles and philosophical differences between Constantinople and Rome. These differences intensified through the centuries and lead to the official split in 1054. Today we know the Western Church as the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Church as the Eastern Orthodox Church.

### **The Protestant Reformation**

Much of what we are calling the European era was a very dark time for the church. The spread of Islam also took a toll. Likewise, the state-church relationship proved only to weaken spiritual vitality and corrupt the leaders. Those who spoke out against the corruption were normally put to death. But on October 31, 1517 a young German monk named Martin Luther (1483-1546) began to publicly protest against many of the church's errors such as the infallibility of the Pope, the teaching that salvation could be earned and the failure to base doctrine on the Scriptures. He was followed by Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), John Calvin (1509-1564), John Knox (1514-1572) and others who took a similar approach to theology. While the reformers set out to reform the state church, their protests led not to reformation but to whole new denominations of churches such as Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian and others.

### **Anabaptist**

The Anabaptist is a smaller movement that rose up at the same time as the Reformation. Led by Conrad Grebel (1492-1526), Felix Manz (1498-1527) and Menno Simons (1496-1526), the Anabaptist considered infant baptism to be illegitimate and they were all re-baptized as adults to show their commitment to Christ. Thus they were named Anabaptist which meant "re-baptizers." While they were in agreement with many teachings of the reformers, they took the ideas even further--disagreeing over baptism and teaching separation from the world (the state) and pacifism. This movement lead to Mennonite, Brethren and Baptist churches.

### **Lessons learned**

Christianity and political power do not mix well. This is seen in the spiritual decline of the Holy Roman Empire and in the failure of the Crusades. Even today Muslims are among the least receptive to the Gospel. Likewise, nominal Christianity is merely a religion and not really Christianity at all. While there were many dark times during the European era, God was still at work, as we see in the Protestant Reformation and the Anabaptist movement.

*Question 3: In what ways are religion and politics mixed in your region?*

## **III. THE COLONIAL ERA - 1600-1900**

### **European dominance**

When the countries of Spain, France, Portugal, Holland, and England established colonies in Africa, Asia and the Americas, they often established Christianity in an attempt to "civilize" the indigenous people. During this time, forced baptism was common and Christianity was equated with European culture. In other words, things like eating European food, speaking European languages and wearing European clothes were equated with civilization and with Christianity.

## **Pietism**

The Protestant Reformation continued in development, transforming Europe and the world, well into what we are calling the colonial era. However, while the Protestant Reformation corrected theology, this correction did not always impact spirituality. This vacuum paved the way for what we call the pietistic movement. The pietistic movement began in Germany under the leadership of Philip Spener (1635-1705), a Lutheran pastor and later under August Francke (1663-1727). Pietists emphasized a personal piety growing out of a genuine conversion experience and leading to evangelism and missions. Following this tradition, the Moravian church under the leadership of Count Zinzendorf (1700-1760) were zealous and active in taking the Gospel to the lost all over the world. In many ways, modern missions is a direct outcome of this movement.

## **The Evangelical Awakening**

The revival led by John Wesley (1703-1791) and George Whitefield (1714-1770) in England resulted not only in the spread of the Gospel, but in social change that may have averted a British revolution like the one in France. Wesley, who was converted through the witness of the Moravians, was a powerful preacher and a strategic organizer. During his 40 years of ministry, he traveled 550,000 km on horseback. He preached 42,000 sermons and wrote 200 books. At the height of the movement, some 100,000 people in England were gathering in 10,000 groups that Wesley had started. The revival spilled over into America and, led by Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) and Francis Asbury (1745-1816), resulted in the formation of Wesleyan, Congregational and Methodist churches.

## **William Carey**

A young Baptist man from England named William Carey (1761-1834) was one of the first people in centuries to suggest that Christians should spread the Gospel to other lands. At that time, the prevailing opinion was that God would fulfill the Great Commission by his own means without the help of believers. Inspired by the Moravians, Carey pleaded his case until his association of churches reluctantly established a mission board and sent him to India where he served for forty years. William Carey is often called the “father of modern missions”.

## **“The Great Century”**

The 1800’s were a time of incredible growth and expansion for believers. The Moravian idea modeled by William Carey caught on. Adoniram Judson (1788-1850) became a missionary to Burma, David Livingstone (1813-1873) served in Africa, and Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) went to China. These and others were missionary pioneers. They endured persecution and harsh living conditions as they proclaimed the Gospel, established churches, and translated the scriptures while also establishing schools and hospitals.

## **Lessons learned**

By the end of this era a Christian presence was established in nearly every country of the world. However, as we have said, during much of this time Christianity and European culture were blended. The outcome of this was that sincerity of conversion was difficult to discern. Likewise, there was great resentment among the leaders of emerging churches and nations because of the politics which were a part of existing ‘Christian’ religion. Christianity is not equal to any earthly culture, but transforms all cultures. Missionaries should focus on transformation rather than importing the culture of their sending country.

***Question 4: In what ways has Western Christian influence been helpful in your region? In what ways has it been harmful?***

***Question 5: How can you avoid importing your culture to those you are evangelizing?***



#### **IV. THE MODERN ERA – 1900-PRESENT**

##### **Inter-nationalization**

As colonialism died, new countries emerged, the mission field matured and missionaries became guests in the countries in which they served. Combined with that, during the 1950s the number of Christians in the United States and Europe was surpassed by the growing number of Christians in the rest of the world. Nationals became the leaders of the churches and foreign missionaries began to take on supportive roles. In many places “mission fields” have become missionary sending centers as countries like South Korea, Brazil, Nigeria, and others now send out thousands of missionaries to unreached peoples.

##### **New strategies**

Leaders like Donald McGavran (1897-1990) were some of the first to apply cultural anthropology and other social sciences to the missionary task. McGavran suggested that the culture of a given group of people should be researched and understood by missionaries and that the Gospel should then be “contextualized” and preached in a way that takes into consideration the unique culture of the audience. Missiologists (experts concerning missions) like Paul Hiebert (?-present) and Ralph Winter (1924-present) began to call for, and lead very creative, strategic efforts to spread the Gospel taking McGavran’s ideas into consideration.

##### **Hidden peoples**

Instead of viewing the world geopolitically, McGavran’s insights led believers to look at the missionary task via what has become known as the “people group” principle. It became clear that the Gospel travels naturally among people of the same culture and that people from the same country were not always of the same culture. Today, missiologists estimate that there are some 16,150 people groups in the world, each of which is ethnically, linguistically or culturally distinct enough to require their own evangelistic effort. Of these, perhaps 6,900 are still considered unreached (they have no Gospel witness). Missionaries like Cameron Townsend (1896–1982) began ministries to translate the Scriptures into the languages of every people group in the world. More recently, groups like the Joshua Project have begun to catalogue these groups and mobilize laborers to reach each one.

##### **Lessons learned**

In this modern era we learn that there is more than one way to do missions. There are multitudes of people doing a variety of tasks in the effort to establish churches among every people group. But as things have become more sophisticated and the social sciences so prominent, we risk falling into the trap of thinking that missions is the result of human effort. The truth is that modern efforts are doomed to failure unless God is at the center of our plans. This always has been, and always will be, true.

***Question 6: How many unreached people groups exist in your country?***

#### **CONCLUSION**

History is not a series of random events. Rather, history is a stage on which we see God at work to redeem people from every tribe and nation. Through “ups and downs,” failures and successes, God uses imperfect people and unlikely circumstances in unexpected ways to spread the Gospel. All history should be viewed in light of this unseen reality. As ministers in God’s hands we can be confident of His success. Jesus said “I will build my Church” and He is doing it!

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Describe some of the pivotal events in missions history.
- What is your favorite era in church history? Why is this your favorite?
- How has missions changed during these four eras?
- What lessons can we learn from church history?
- What is wrong with linking Christianity to one particular culture?

## **ASSIGNMENT**

How has the Gospel come to your region? Interview those who might know more about this than you do and write a small report summarizing what is known. What kind of insights does your local church history give you into the present task? Include this in your report.

How many unreached people groups still exist in your country? (Joshua Project [www.joshuaproject.net](http://www.joshuaproject.net) may help you find the answer to this). What can you say about the missionary task that still remains in your country? Include this in your report as well.

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## PERSONAL EVANGELISM

### Lesson 8 - Barriers to Effective Evangelism

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For several decades, most believers living in this region have been legally denied the privilege of openly sharing their faith in their communities. The result of such circumstances is that some churches encourage religious "fortresses" to develop around them. A sense of alienation, isolation, and distrust of those in the "secular" world becomes pervasive. Often the only legal place to share Christ is in the church building. While circumstances may change, decades of such realities leave an enduring mark on the mindset and traditions of those who love Christ. Barriers have been erected. These barriers must be identified and torn down.

In order to accomplish this task of liberation and reclamation, believers must build bridges to the non-Christian world around us. Often our Christian counter-cultures are so foreign and strange that the unbelievers will not make an effort to join with us. If they are to be reached, we must reach out to them by building bridges of sincerity, mercy, compassion, truth, and love.

#### I. WHAT KEEPS BELIEVERS FROM EVANGELIZING?

Evangelism should be natural behavior for believers. Knowing what we once were and have now become by grace should lead to a response of great thanksgiving (worship) and enthusiastic sharing of the good news (evangelism). His love for us must become his love in us for others! Unfortunately however, this does not always happen. Many believers are not active in evangelism for the following reasons.

##### **Lack of faith**

Do you believe that the Gospel can transform ANYONE and EVERYONE? If you do not believe this, how can you boldly preach the Gospel? An evangelist must have faith that the Gospel can change lives or his witness will be very weak.

Of course not everyone will accept the message of the Gospel. There are many who will not. This may discourage you and tempt you to think that the Gospel is powerless. When people reject the Gospel, it is evidence of man's foolishness, not proof that the Gospel somehow lacks power. God's has promised that his word will not return empty (Is 55:11).

Paul was a powerful evangelist because he believed in the power of the Gospel. To the Romans Paul described the Gospel as the power of God to everyone who believes – Paul was not ashamed of it! (Ro 1:16) In 2 Timothy 3:5 he describes people who have a form of Godliness, but who deny its power. Paul warns Timothy to stay away from such people.

##### **Fear**

Many of us are simply afraid to share our faith. Real persecution, rejection and failure may feed this fear. Apparently Paul's disciple Timothy had some fear, for Paul admonished him not to be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord (2 Tim 1:8). If you are afraid to share your faith, remember that fear does not come from the Lord (2 Tim 1:7). Faithfulness in the face of fear brings glory to God and people into His kingdom. Your zeal for the Gospel must grow to be greater than your fear.

*Question 1: What fears do you have concerning sharing your faith?*

**Question 2: Read 2 Timothy 1:7-8. Are our fears about sharing our faith ever legitimate?**

### **Pride**

If you think you're a good person apart from Christ, then you'll likely be a weak evangelist. If you think that you are right before God because of your heritage, training or because of anything other than the work of Christ on the cross, then you are doomed to be an ineffective evangelist. Only the Gospel sets men free. What really convinces others of the truth of the Gospel is not our perfection or self-righteousness, but our willingness to identify with the needs of others and show how the Gospel meets those needs.

### **Lack of love**

Do you really love the lost? Do you really want the best for them? Can you sacrifice for them? Answers to these questions reveal love for the lost. If you do not have it, evangelism will be a struggle for you.

There are groups of people in each culture that are dismissed as insignificant or unworthy of love by the general population. For Jonah it was the people of Nineveh. In Jesus' day it was the Samaritans. Even Christians today may have prejudices. They may be ethnic in nature, or moral. Some may spend our time and efforts with attractive and wealthy people and ignore the needy and those who are social outcasts. Recall the stern words of James (Jas 2:1-13). Ask the Lord to cleanse your hearts and give you a love for all who need the Savior.

**Questions 3: Evangelism is not natural behavior for many believers. Why?**

## **II. WHAT KEEPS THE LOST FROM RECEIVING THE GOSPEL?**

### **Cultural Barriers**

Most people do not want to change cultures in order to accept a new faith. For this reason, your witness is likely to be most effective when you are speaking with someone from your own culture. But there are many cultures and subcultures of people in which there are few or no believers. These people need to hear the Gospel. Special kinds of ministry and evangelism may be needed in order to cross cultural barriers and effectively share the Gospel. Christian workers must learn to understand and adapt to cultural differences of the target people in order to overcome the barrier between themselves and those they would reach with the Gospel.

As Paul wrote *"I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some"* (1Co 9:22), notice how Jesus spoke to the woman at the well in John 4. Also, notice the differences in the preaching style and content which Paul used when speaking to Jews (Ac 9:20-22) as compared to when he was preaching to non-Jews (Ac 17:16-31). When the Gospel appears foreign, or as belonging to another culture, people are likely to reject it.

Let us acknowledge this. We *will* be misunderstood. We *will* become tired physically, emotionally, and spiritually. But effort must be made to reach this generation and each culture and subculture with the Gospel. It is our task, our mandate, and our particular challenge.

### **Religious Barriers**

In each culture, the Church has established traditions that may have been noble and effective when they were originally implemented, but which over time have become archaic and cumbersome. These church cultural traditions may be evident in our music, our dress, and our architecture, to name just a few. We may be very

comfortable with these traditions. But, if we are serious about reaching the lost with the Gospel, they need to be re-examined and re-considered.

As we approach people of differing backgrounds, be they nominally Catholic, agnostic or atheistic, animistic, etc, they may place a whole different meaning on the words and practices we have come to take for granted. Words like "salvation," "faith," and "belief" may require explanations so that people can understand their meaning. Our special greetings and spiritual vocabulary may trouble those from different backgrounds. They may expect religious teachers to wear special clothes, or seekers of God to have certain symbols or icons.

It takes spiritual discernment to determine how to adjust to the religious worldview of the people you are reaching. But be aware that in their eyes, you may not appear to be a messenger from God because of their preconceived religious ideas. You may need to find fresh ways of declaring that which is most important—the message that God loves lost humanity and has come to redeem men, women, and children.

### **False or unclear Gospel**

Many non-believers never really hear the Gospel even when a believer has presented it to them. Sometimes the Gospel is just not clear or another message overpowers the Gospel message. Consider the non-believing woman who said, "I want to become a Christian, but I love going to the theater". Somehow she thought that in order to become a Christian, she had to give up the theater. This is not the Gospel, but it was her understanding.

### **Spiritual Strongholds**

This final barrier is of a different quality from those previously mentioned. This critical barrier to effective evangelism is the one that separates those who are spiritually alive from the spiritually dead. We must recognize that the opposition we face ultimately comes from Satan. We need to stand against him for the sake of the Lord, His church and the lost we long to win. Only the Holy Spirit of God can give life through the Gospel we bear. Only He can regenerate and redeem the lost. Ultimately, the weapons of intense prayer and fasting, God's Word, and our own testimonies are those that the Lord will use to defeat Satan and release the captives. Spiritual battles cannot be won by use of fleshly weapons.

*Question 4: Read Ephesians 6:12. Describe the spiritual battles in your region.*

## **III. OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS**

The ministry of evangelism is a ministry of faith. This is the key to believers becoming more active as evangelists. Evangelism requires courage to risk ourselves and our reputations for the sake of those who may not respond to our Gospel. We may feel inadequate for ministry, thinking that we don't know enough or are not skilled enough. Training can help, but ultimately, we must each choose to follow the Lord in faith and obedience to accomplish the task He has given us. He has given us the weapons of His Spirit, prayer and the Scriptures. More than that, He has promised His own presence with us.

Overcoming the external barriers will require significant consideration, research and creativity. We will have to invest time in learning to recognize and understand the diverse backgrounds of our audiences. What do our hearers think the Gospel is when they have heard it explained? In some cases we will find ourselves "swimming against our own strong denominational currents" for the sake of the Gospel. Prayer and a bold stance may be required to correct long-standing barriers.

*Question 5: Read 2 Corinthians 4:3-7. List the barriers to the Gospel, described in the passage.*

***Question 6: What does it mean that the powerful Gospel message comes packaged in "jars of clay?"***

## **CONCLUSION**

The barriers mentioned in this lesson and any others that may be interfering with the spread of the Gospel, must be overcome. Pray that the Spirit of God will use the Word of God to illumine our minds so that we may see things God's way. He will rebuke the values and prejudices that are not pleasing to Him. He will give us courage to make the changes necessary to accomplish His purposes in regard to evangelism. He will give us faith to overcome our fears as we focus on obedience to His written Word.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What barriers have you personally experienced as you considered reaching out with the Gospel? Have you overcome them? If yes, in what way have you overcome them?
- What groups are historically the victims of prejudice in your culture? What would the Lord have you do to address this prejudice?
- What practical changes could you make in coming weeks to overcome barriers and increase your intentional evangelism?

## **ASSIGNMENT**

- Do an inductive Bible study of John chapter 4. Identify the barriers that Jesus overcame to reveal Himself to the woman at the well.

## CHURCH PLANTING SKILLS

### Lesson 9 - Chronological Bible Storying

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Everyone likes a good story. Maybe that is why the Bible is full of them. The best preachers and teachers use them. We identify with people in stories, and we remember events as stories. In fact, we live stories! In this lesson we want to explore how we can share the greatest story of all – the Gospel story of redemption – with the lost.

#### I. THE RIGHT METHOD

When talking with people about the Gospel, the content of what is presented is very important. Without the right content – *what* is presented, or, the information that is put forth – an unsaved person will most likely not understand the truth of salvation, and how to know God personally. The *message* is critical to an unbeliever's understanding.

Along with the message, the *method* used to communicate the truth of salvation is also very important. The method – *how* the message is communicated - can determine whether the person hearing it understands, and whether or not the message penetrates the heart and soul of the hearer. The method centers on:

- who the target audience is
- what format is used
- the form of communication selected

There is a natural tendency within human beings to look at other people the same way they see themselves. In other words, how we see ourselves is often the way we see others. How we heard the Gospel and responded to Christ is often the same approach or method we think will be effective to evangelize others. We think that other people learn new information the same way that we do. We need to understand the different ways that people learn and process new information because there are different ways of learning.

#### II. ORAL VS. LITERATE COMMUNICATION

There are basically two communication processes by which people learn. One method is oral communication that uses stories and symbols as the main way to get ideas, concepts, facts and information across to others. The second method of communication is the literary method used by cultures where reading and writing have become dominant. This method spreads information through logically developed, sequential, linear summaries or lessons drawn from events, information and data. The people in these two groups are very different in how they follow along, process and learn, as well as transmit information about the world in which they live. ***It is important that the method of communicating the Gospel matches up with the way in which the target group learns and shares information.***

##### Oral Learners/Thinkers

Oral learners are typically people who do not read and write, or have not been reading and writing very long. Because of this, they have relied on their memory to store and pass along information. This is done by categorizing the data in their minds so they can withdraw it again later. To help this process, things that happen are often associated with significant events. This is why an older, more primitive person cannot tell you how old they are, but they can talk about things that happened in the year they were born: a big flood, a severe drought, a hailstorm, etc. Oral learners tend to live in rural areas, in less-developed countries, particularly those that have not had a long history of reading and writing.

Oral learners are not ignorant, nor are they less intelligent than literate learners. One should never assume that they are slow or limited learners. In some ways, their minds are sharper than those who depend on writing in order to remember things. They can learn as fast as people who live in a literary culture. The difference is that they learn in a different way, by a different process. Even their thought processes and patterns are different – the way they think and put information into their minds. Just because someone reads and writes does *not* make them a literate learner. Oral learning is often deeply imbedded into a person’s mental makeup and is not rapidly replaced. Do not assume that a literate person is also a literate learner.

### **Literate Learners/Thinkers**

Since the invention of the printing press, a literate style of learning has been promoted and emphasized, dominating the western world as the primary teaching style. Since information, facts and concepts can be written down for later recovery, rather than being recalled in the mind, lots of information can be given at one time. There is little, if any, thought to presenting things in such a way that they are easily remembered. Literate style places emphasis on explanation and interpretation, which not are bad, but often end up confusing oral thinkers and learners. One way to say the above is that a literate teacher would give out quite a number of facts and then say, “Now here’s what this means”. This style leaves little room for discussion, dialogue and looking for the meaning through group interaction or inner reflection. It can actually close down discussion, since the teacher’s interpretation has already been given. Prominence can be placed on the teacher, possibly giving him or her more significance than is warranted.

The impact of a literate style of the Gospel presentation is widespread. With many early missionaries coming from the west, the Gospel spread using a written approach. This style of communication was fine with literate thinkers; however, among oral peoples it did not communicate well. The more literate and expository the format is, the more difficult it is for oral communicators to understand, relate to life situations, remember for any length of time, and recall for use at a later time. The depth of their faith in Christianity could well have been determined by the method of communication used. It is possible that oral communicators, having received only a literate presentation of the Gospel, will repeat these methods in their evangelism, discipleship, and preaching/teaching, even if it is not the most effective approach for their situation. In their thinking, the same style had to be replicated as they shared the Gospel – with less-than-optimum outcomes.

### **III. UNDERSTANDING THE NARRATIVE STYLE**

Given that nearly one-fifth of the world’s population is non-literate (cannot read or write), and many more are oral thinkers even if they do read and write, what possible solution is there to reconciling the Gospel presentation (and discipling) with a style of communication? It is important that the Gospel be presented to them in a method they understand and relate to. This method is called a narrative style.

This narrative style uses a story format to relay important pieces of the communication “picture” – what happened, who was there, what was said, what the responses were, feelings that came out – all in an interesting and captivating manner. Using a narrative style lets the story bring out the point, or lesson, one is trying to make. This is often where literate thinkers make mistakes with oral learners/thinkers: they try to give out the point of the story by means of explanation, illustrations, and so on. The thinking is that this will make understanding easier, but it often makes it more confusing and less clear for an oral learner.

When using the narrative approach, the Bible is shared or storied in chronological sequence from Genesis to Revelation. Through discussion and dialogue, the lessons in the stories emerge, allowing the listeners to draw the truth of the Gospel into their worldview, ultimately to accept Christ as Savior and be reconciled with God.

### **Stories In The Bible**

The Bible was written for the most part as a chronological narrative. This means that the Bible is a story – the story of God at work creating, blessing, judging, promising, redeeming, revealing Himself to man, and restoring the broken relationship with mankind. The story begins in eternity past when only God existed, and continues until eternity future when redeemed man will join the glorified Christ in the God’s presence. Within this



awesome story are many smaller stories – stories of the beginning of all created things, the story of man’s disobedience to God and the hopeless consequence that followed. There are stories of the early patriarchs (fathers of the nation Israel), stories about the nation of Israel and God’s plan to use them as a blessing to all the nations, stories of Israel’s sin and judgment, and their restoration to God. There is the story of the Promised Redeemer, the Messiah spoken of hundreds of years before He appeared. Within this story are many smaller stories about His life on earth, those He loved and trained to carry on His work on earth; the story of the final sacrifice and total forgiveness through Christ. There is the story of the spread of the church, how it grew from a few hundred to thousands and touched much of the known world. There is the story of the promised return of Christ to receive His own and judge the world. The overall story ends with the story of a final battle between God and Satan, and the ensuing celebration for all believers from every tribe, tongue and nation.

### **Themes In The Bible**

There are more than 150 well-known stories in the Bible and many, many more if all the stories were to be listed. It can be said that three main themes run through the Bible in these stories:

1. God’s Work in the World
2. Man’s Response to God
3. Satan’s Work to Oppose and Destroy God’s Work

It is important to remember these themes, as they provide a thread of continuity within the “individual” stories of the Bible. To oral learners, it is important that they understand the continuous elements in each story: how does this story relate to the previous one? What in this story will help build up the lesson, or point, in the upcoming story?

*(Note: other themes could replace those mentioned above or be added to them. The list is not meant to be exhaustive, but to provide a broad overview and continuity to the many stories within the Bible.)*

## **IV. USING THE STORYING METHOD**

The following tips are listed to help you use Chronological Storying for evangelistic or discipleship purposes. There is much more that could be presented concerning this subject. These tips are enough to allow for effective communication, leading to clear understanding in order to accept the Gospel.

### **1. Storying is chosen because it is the primary communication medium of the target people.**

This would be decided after it is determined that the target group are oral learners or that the storying method would be effective. Cultural research should help you answer this question.

### **2. Stories are chosen based on biblical concepts to be communicated.**

Your cultural research should reveal the Biblical concepts that need to be communicated. Do the target people believe in one God, or many, or none at all? Do they understand their situation as sinners in need of a savior? Answers to questions like these will help determine the themes to emphasize, and in turn, the stories to use.

### **3. Storying is based entirely on the Bible.**

Stories rely on the scriptures to provide the truths. You need to tell the story as it is presented in the Bible. Refrain from giving your own explanations and interpretations.

### **4. Storying is chronological and sequential.**

Stories are told in the order that they happen in the Bible, beginning with Genesis and creation. The only exception to this is element is telling how Satan came into existence, piecing together parts of the scriptures that reveal his rebellion and expulsion from heaven.

**5. Storying looks backward but never ahead.**

It's ok to review and go back over previous stories. In fact, you'll need to review previous stories to help an oral learner remember them. You may also need to refer back to something that happened previously to bring out a point in a current story. *"Remember when God called Abraham and promised him a land, a people and a blessing? Now that the nation of Israel is settled in their own land, we can see God's promises to Abraham coming true!"* But NEVER say, *"We haven't gotten to the story about Jesus Christ yet, but He is the one God sent to take away our sins"*, when still in the Old Testament. What you can say is, *"So you've heard the name Jesus Christ before? Well, keep coming to the sessions and we'll get to stories about Jesus."*

**6. Allow discussion to bring out meaning and application after the story has been told.**

Having questions to open the discussion is necessary. "What does this story help us learn about God? How did the main character chose his own way instead of God's? What was a result of this choice? How do we see that God always keeps His promises through this story?" and so on. Allow the listeners to struggle for the answers, talking among themselves if they need to, rather than giving the answers to the questions.

**7. Stories are chosen to build bridges and remove barriers to understanding God.**

Once the barriers and bridges have been identified, select specific stories that keep the sequence (storyline) flowing through the Bible, and also address the barriers in the target culture. If there are stories from the target peoples' history that are similar to biblical accounts, make sure to tell these stories. Examples may be: the garden of Eden, the flood, crossing the Red Sea, etc. Be sure a connection is made to the local story either in the introduction or in the discussion time so the people grasp how one might be related to the other.

**8. Build repetition and review into the session structure.**

Before beginning a new story, always go back and review not only the previous story, but the applications that the listeners have drawn out. Touch on the themes of scripture, and how these were illustrated in the stories. It may be helpful to review several previous stories. Following the story, allow some of the listeners to re-tell the story as they heard it. This helps with review, and it allows the presenter to know if the listeners heard it correctly. If some correction to the story is needed, you can re-tell the story.

**9. A single session does not have to be limited to just one story.**

Perhaps two or three stories can be told in one session. This can be particularly helpful when two or three stories make up one longer story. BUT, after each story, allow for adequate discussion and interaction before moving to the next story. Make sure the listeners have drawn out the application for each story.

**10. Allow the listeners time to internalize the things they are hearing.**

Sometimes, truths from scripture will conflict with or contradict the listeners' own beliefs. These old beliefs don't die easily. You should expect that they will need time to process the things they have heard.

The most important time for reflection and lack of haste is when the message of salvation is presented AFTER the stories of Christ's death and resurrection. An invitation to accept Christ should not be made before this. But the listeners may need time to think through all of this before they make a decision. Allow for this, and pray for the Holy Spirit to work mightily in the hearts and minds of the people.

**11. Storying works best in small groups.**

Small groups allow for personal interaction and two-way communication. This is ideal for storying and for building relationships. Remember, your goal is to establish worshipping fellowships – churches – among the target people. Meeting with people in groups helps you more quickly move closer to that goal.

**V. GETTING STARTED**

The Chronological Storying method can be used for evangelism, discipleship, and even church planting. At this point we are dealing with the first level - evangelism.

The goal, at this evangelism stage, is to learn to tell the biblical stories so that people from the target group can understand who God is, how they have offended him, their need for a Savior, who the Savior is, how they can accept the gift of salvation, the new life with the Holy Spirit and the support they need from Believer's Fellowship.

The first series of stories should be designed to clearly inform your audience about the following **biblical concepts**:

1. *God*
2. *Perfect Creation*
3. *Man/Woman*
4. *Satan*
5. *Sin*
6. *Character of God*
7. *Depravity of Man*
8. *Need for a Savior*
9. *The Savior*
10. *Salvation Plan*
11. *Holy Spirit*
12. *Believer's Fellowship*
13. *Equipping Church*
14. *Spiritual Reproduction*

The following stories and their **passages** illustrate the Biblical concepts and can be used for evangelism.

God Creates the World	Gen. 1:1 - 2:3
Man & Woman	Gen. 2:7-25
Man & Woman Disobey God	Gen. 3
Cain & Abel	Gen. 4:1-17, 25-26
The Flood	Gen 6:3-22; Matt 24:38; Gen 7:1 - 9:17*
Lord Calls Abram	Gen 11:27 -30; Acts 7:2-4; Gen 11:31 - 12:20
Abraham & Isaac	Gen. 22
God Calls Moses	Ex. 3 – 4:20
Passover	Ex. 12:1- 46* 13:19
Ten Commandments	Ex. 19:1-19; 20:1-21; 24:3-8
David & Bathsheba	2 Samuel 11-12:25a
God Promise Messiah	Isaiah 53*
Angels Prepare for Jesus Birth	Luke 1:26-56; Matt. 1:18-25* Luke 2:1-20
John the Baptist & Jesus is Baptized	Matthew 3:1-17
Nicodemus	John 3:1-6, 9-10, 12, 16-18

Samaritan Woman	John 4:4-42
Paralytic	Mark 2:1-12
Mathew - Tax Collector	Mark 2:13-17
Woman Sinner Anoints Jesus' Feet	Luke 7:36-50
Jesus Calms Storm & Madman's Soul	Mark 4:35 - 5:20
Bleeding Woman & Jarius' Daughter	Mark 5:21-43
Jesus Heals Deaf Man	Mark 7:31-37
Rich Man & Lazarus	Luke 16:19-31
The Last Supper	Lk 22:7-20* Mt 26:28; Jn 13:4-30* Mt 26:30
Jesus Trial 1, 2, 3	Jn 18:12-24; Lk 22:55-58; Mt 26:59-66; Lk 22:59-65; Lk 27:66-71; Matt 27:3-5
Jesus Trial 4, 5, 6	Jn 18:28-38; Lk 23:7-16* Mt 27:15-23; Lk 23:23; Mt 27:26-30; Jn 19:4-15; Mt 27:24-26
Jesus Is Beaten, Crucified & Buried	Mt 27:32-33; Lk 23:32-33a; Mk 15:23-25; Lk 23:33b-34; Jn 19:19-24; Mt 27:39-43; Lk 23:39-43; Mt 27:45-46; Jn 19:28; Mt 27:47-49; Jn 19:30; Lk 23:46; Mt 27:51, 54; Jn 19:31-34; Mt 27:57; Jn 19:38-41; Mt 27:60
Jesus Resurrection	Matt 28:1-4; Mk 16:1-8; Jn 20:2-29
Jesus Commissions Disciples / Ascend	Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:4-12
Holy Spirit Come & Thousands Believe	Acts 2:1-8, 12-24, 30-31, 29, 34, 32-33, 36-39, 41
Believer's Fellowship	Acts 2:42-47

### **Telling the Story**

At this stage, the evangelist is primarily concerned with telling the story and checking with the audience to see if they understood the story, i.e. *Where was it? When was it? Who was in the story? What was said or what happened? How do you think the people in the story felt? Or what do you think they were thinking? What did you see in the story that was positive/good? What did you see that was negative/bad?* (Resist the temptation to “teach” or “correct” ... we must accept that if they do not have the Holy Spirit, they will not understand the spiritual meaning. Just make sure they know what happened in the story and wait for God to move in their hearts).

The stories designed for evangelism will climax with the events of the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, coming of the Holy Spirit and the establishment of the church. The teacher should be prepared, at this time, to respond to any and all who want to know, “*What must I do to be saved?*” (Note – often people are saved at earlier stages in this process. They should be taken aside individually and given a clear presentation of what they need to know). Those who accept Christ should be encouraged to be baptized and join a local believer’s fellowship.

All of the participants, whether they accepted Christ or not, should be encouraged to join a new group designed to go deeper into what it means to follow Christ. This will involve a series of “discipleship” stories which we will discuss at the next training session.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Are your target people primarily oral learners/thinkers or literary learners/thinkers?
- What are some of the strengths of the chronological storying method? Do you foresee any difficulties using it?
- Do you think the chronological storying method will work among your target group?

### **ASSIGNMENT**

Try this method out with some people you are trying to evangelize, even if they are not oral learners. Begin by picking a biblical concept that they need to hear. Then pick three Biblical stories that teach the concept and tell them the story. Think of questions which will help bring out the truths from the scripture you are using.

Report on the experience to your mentor.

### **SOURCES**

- Slack, Jim. Chronological Bible Storying; Int'l Publication Services, Edenvale, S. Africa 1996.

<b>INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY</b>
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## **Lesson 10 - Introduction to Inductive Bible study**

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The Bible is the most important book ever written. It claims to be the very words of the almighty, infinite God, given to reveal Himself to finite man. The “living and active” Word of God is able to penetrate the hearts and souls of those whom we seek to win for the Lord. It equips us for every good work, which certainly describes our ministry of multiplying churches across the land. It serves as a standard by which we measure and evaluate every doctrine, practice, tradition, and every other book. History, tradition and the human intellect may lead astray, but the Bible stands firm as the truth of God. Its teaching is always correct. Its prophecies always come to pass. Its words help us to win the lost and to resist the devil. The Bible is indispensable to our Christian life and ministry.

Since we believe that the Bible was given to us by God for our instruction, we need to approach it carefully and handle it accurately (2Ti 2:15). The divine nature of the Scriptures demands that we read it with the intent of *learning from it*, rather than *making it say what we want to hear*. How can we be sure we rightly understand the Word? The inductive Bible study method is designed to help disciple makers better understand the teaching of the Word of God. This lesson will introduce this simple and effective method, and following lessons will describe each step in more detail.

### **I. THE INDUCTIVE APPROACH**

Generally speaking, the inductive learning method examines the particulars of a situation, and then attempts to form a general principle from them. The deductive learning method, by contrast, begins with a known principle or assumption from which various conclusions are drawn.

The inductive method is normally used in those situations where we do not have a general principle to begin with, and are therefore unable to use deduction.

#### **1. Inductive Reasoning**

Deduction is essentially the process of using our pre-existing knowledge. Induction, by contrast, is about *learning*. We assume that we do not yet know the answers, and examine the facts closely in order to try to understand *what they mean*. In this method, the emphasis is on the specific details and facts of the situation.

#### **2. Inductive Bible Study**

When we use the inductive method to study the Bible, we come to the Scripture as learners. We acknowledge to God and to ourselves that we do not yet know all the answers. Our purpose is to *gain understanding*. We come with a commitment to carefully examine the text, and allow the Lord to speak to us through it.

This is very different from the more common approach of starting with a pre-conceived idea about God, our faith, etc., and looking for passages which will confirm our point of view.

A deductive method usually leads to a quick sermon—the inductive method leads to spiritual growth.

#### **3. A Better Method**

The inductive method is superior to the deductive method because it makes *the Scriptures* the authority, rather than our understanding. It is also better because it matches the process of understanding and applying biblical principles to our lives. As we study the Bible, we look at how God dealt with people in a particular situation, at a particular time, and in a particular culture. Our task is to take these facts and to form from them a biblical principle. We then translate that principle into our current situation so that we can correctly apply it to our lives. This process of inductive Bible study has three components:

1. **Observation** of the facts in the Scriptural context.
2. **Interpretation** to find the principle that the passage teaches.
3. **Application** of the principle to equivalent situations in our lives.

The three steps of the inductive Bible study method are each important. They build progressively on each other to lead us from what the Bible says to a correct application in our lives. Essentially, the three steps ask three different questions about the text. Notice the logical progression through the three steps, beginning with the Bible text and ending with application to our Christian life. If the steps are not completed in the proper order, the result is flawed.

## **II. BASIC RULES FOR STUDYING THE BIBLE**

Although studying the Bible is essentially an art to be developed through practice, there are some basic rules that should be followed. The rules described below assume that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and that God intends for us to read and understand it. Not everyone agrees with those assumptions, and this is the source of many of the religious disagreements in the world, as well as the source of many of the cults.

### **Truths about God's Word**

- The Bible is the authoritative Word of God.
- The Bible is its own best interpreter, reflecting the character of God.
- Saving faith and the Holy Spirit are necessary to understand the Scripture.
- History, actions, attitudes, personal experience, etc., should be interpreted in the light of Scripture and not Scripture in the light of these things.
- The primary purpose of the Bible is not to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives.
- Every Christian has the right, the responsibility, and the privilege to investigate and interpret the Word of God with the help of the Holy Spirit.

## **CONCLUSION**

The inductive Bible study method is a superior method of studying the Word. It leads to a more accurate understanding of the Bible, and promotes true spiritual growth and learning. As such, it is the best method for disciple makers. We are all to be learning from the Scriptures. Every house fellowship servant should not only master this method, but should also teach it to every believer in his care.

The following lessons will describe in more detail how to use each of the three steps of the inductive method. You will also be invited to practice and become comfortable with the process. The effort required will be more than balanced by the resulting new understanding of the Word of the Living God.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What is the basic difference between deduction and induction?
- Why is the inductive method a superior method of studying the Bible, compared to the deductive method?
- Can you explain the difference between observation, interpretation and application?
- What have you learned new in this lesson that you need to apply to your personal Bible study practice?

## Lesson 11 – The Inductive Study Method

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### I. OBSERVATION - WHAT DOES IT SAY?

The first step of the inductive method is observation. It is also the most important step—in the same way that a solid foundation is critical to the construction of a house. At this stage, we observe the text, looking for every detail we can find in it, and recording our observations. The key to this step is to ask an endless series of questions such as “Who?, What?, Why?, Where?, When?”, etc. These questions help us focus on *what the Bible says*, rather than bringing our ideas to it. We also look closely at the context of the verse, paragraph, chapter, and book to discover and understand the situation in which it was written. At this stage, it is very important *not to interpret or apply* the text. We must discover all the information first—in the next step (interpretation) we will look at what it means.

#### Take Enough Time

The first step is to **read the text over several times** to get an overall understanding of the passage. This takes time, but bears much fruit. There are many passages where it is easy to get bogged down in details unless you can discern the general theme through several readings. A good understanding of the passage’s overall focus will help you to keep a proper balance and divide your time appropriately for the different parts under study.

#### Look at the Context

The term ‘context’ refers to the verses that surround the passage being studied. Understanding the context is one of the most valuable tools of Bible study, and yet it is often ignored. When we look at the context, we are seeking to understand the theme or subject of the book, chapter, and paragraph of the verses that we are studying. Looking at the context means examining:

- What do the preceding and following verses talk about?
- What is the theme of the paragraph?
- What is the theme of the chapter?
- What is the purpose and theme of the book?
- How does the passage relate to the entirety of the Bible?

#### Examine the Structure

Having looked at the passage from a distance, it is now time to look more closely. Read the passage several times, looking for and recording any of the following details of the structure:

<i>Key words:</i>	Note any word or words that are repeated. Often this indicates the theme.
<i>Comparisons or contrasts:</i>	Is something the same as something else, or the opposite?
<i>Progression:</i>	Does one thing build upon another? Are they linked to other ideas like a chain?
<i>Verbs:</i>	Is there some kind of action? Is there a command we must obey?
<i>Conjunctions:</i>	Is something equal to something? Often the conjunction “but” appears in contrast, and the words “like” or “as” may indicate comparison.
<i>Illustrations:</i>	Visualize in your mind the thing or action that is being described.
<i>Kind of literature:</i>	A passage may be history, prophecy, allegory, didactic truth, logic, parable, or many other possibilities. Noting the type of literature in the passage will also affect the interpretation in the next stage, so it should be recorded carefully now.



### **Ask Questions: Who?, What?, Where?, When?, How?, and Why?**

The best method of discovering the content and meaning of a passage of Scripture is to ask key questions about it, and record the answers. The figure here shows the six key questions that should be asked and answered. There are, of course, other possible questions, but these are the most important ones. Other questions tend to be variations of these six.

Ideally, you should ask every form of these questions that you can think of (the more the better). Sample variations of these questions are shown in the next section. As you ask questions, carefully record the questions and the answers on a sheet of paper. You will need to refer to them in the interpretation stage, so you need to write them down and not simply answer them in your mind.

If you ask a question and cannot find the answer, note the question and come back to it at a later time. Do not disregard those questions. They may be important. Instead, pray about them, meditate on them, and ask God to show you the answers. Ask other believers for their input to improve your understanding. Be prepared for this to take time and effort, but it will be worth it when you arrive at a clearer understanding of the passage. Only then will you be able to apply it with confidence in your own life, and teach “thus says the Lord . . .” to others.

## **II. THE PROCESS OF INTERPRETATION - WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

The process of interpretation has two parts. The first part is to determine *what the passage was intended to say to the original audience*. The second part is to formulate *the message of the passage as a biblical principle* that can be applied to other similar situations.

This stage requires serious and prayerful thought, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. At this point, we need to compare all our understanding of the original historical, geographical, political, cultural, and religious situation with the facts that we unearthed in the observation stage. Any facts that we have missed in the observation stage will hinder our work here. Now is also the time to compare this text with other similar passages to see if they can help us understand it—being careful that they do not distort the facts of the text we are studying. If the meaning of the passage is still unclear, it might be necessary to return to the observation stage and keep digging for more information.

When we interpret a passage of Scripture, we seek to clearly describe the original biblical situation, and to state the message that God communicated in that situation. We can then carefully and prayerfully assume that God would speak in a similar way to a similar situation—resulting in a general biblical principle. Therefore, interpretation involves:

- Understanding the original, biblical situation and people.
- Identifying the message communicated to those people at that time.
- Formulating a principle that summarizes these facts, and which would apply to a similar situation in any era—especially today.

The principle that results from interpretation might be a warning, a promise, a challenge, etc. The important thing is to understand the original situation clearly enough that we can use this principle with confidence when we apply it to our own lives and the lives of others.

### **Sift through the Observation Facts to Find the Key Ones**

Interpretation is more of an art than it is a science. That is, it is more than a matter of following certain rules—although rules and guidelines do exist. Practice, prayer, and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit’s leading are necessary in order to develop the ability to sift through all the facts from the observation stage, identify the most important ones, and understand the main message of the passage.

### **Determine the Author’s Main Point**

When we refer to the author of the passage, we have in mind both the human writer, and also God who directed the writing. With the exception of some prophecies that the human writer did not understand, the writer’s point and God’s point should be the same.

In some cases, the main point may be clearly stated in the passage. Usually, however, it will be necessary to look for the clues and key observations. The context is normally the most important indicator of the topic or main point. Repeated word or phrases are also valuable clues. Each passage will be different, but you will be looking for the following information:

- What subject is the author writing about?
- What is he saying about that subject?

The ideal situation is to be able to summarize these two things in a concise sentence. This may take quite a few attempts before it is right. Continuing the analogy of building a house, this is like laying the foundation properly. The fuller description of the message of the passage will be built on this statement, as will the application.

### **Determine the flow of thought in the passage**

Once the main point of the author has been stated, the next step is to describe how he builds that point in the passage. What style does he use? Why? What method or what logic? Why did he choose this way of presenting it? It should be possible to note both the content of the passage, and also the attitude or emotion being communicated. Texts might be encouraging, sarcastic, angry, confronting, soothing, pleading, challenging, etc.

Some General Principles:

- You should interpret words according to their meaning in the historical and cultural context of the author. Always think about how the original hearers would have understood and reacted to the message.
- It is important to understand the grammar of a passage before trying to understand the theological truth that it teaches.
- Figurative language normally has one main point. Do not try to read too many things into that kind of passage.
- You should be no clearer on a subject than the Scriptures are clear. Don’t add your own thinking or church tradition to what the Bible says, for you or others could come to believe those thoughts are actually Scriptural.

### **Common Interpretation Errors to Avoid**

Three common errors in interpretation happen because of the failure to remember key attributes of Scripture.

#### *1. Springboard*

This kind of error takes its name from the springboard that gymnasts use to help them jump higher. The springboard is not central to their performance—it only helps them get started. This error occurs when the interpreter already knows what he wants to say, and is not particularly interested in discovering the meaning of the text. He briefly looks at a passage and “jumps” from there to some other topic or teaching that he really wants to discuss. This insults the Lord, who wrote the Word to communicate truth to us.

#### *2. Allegory*

We should never look for “hidden meanings” when one is presented clearly. This error is also very common, but just as unacceptable. It involves ignoring the clear meaning of Scripture and trying to find some hidden message. There are indeed some passages that are very difficult to understand. However, most passages make sense when we look carefully and the words and grammar. We should never look for “hidden meanings” when

one is presented clearly. Even in the case of a difficult passage, it is better to admit that we don't understand it than to try to fabricate some kind of meaning that is hard to support.

### 3. Ignoring the Progressive Revealing of God's Truth

God reveals truth about himself and his redemptive plan little by little through out Scripture. It may be difficult to understand a passage if we forget this progressive aspect of the Bible. For instance, in the Old Testament, God required literal animal sacrifices. However, these sacrifices were meant to symbolize what Christ would someday do and therefore were only temporary. When God's perfect Lamb died on Calvary, He fulfilled all the Old Testament requirements (Heb 9:12). No sacrifice of any kind is required in the New Testament. If someone were to sacrifice a lamb for his sin today, it would be an insult to Christ. Therefore, interpretation decisions must be made with the broader teaching of the Word in mind.

### General Questions for Interpretation

Just as the observation step had six key questions that can help you understand any passage, the interpretation step can be easier if you know what to look for. With reference to you observations, the following questions can help you interpret any passage:

- What do today's listeners share in common with those to whom these words were originally written?
- Is God's way contrasted to man's ways in this passage?
- Is there a conflict involving man's rebellion against God's rule?
- Does this passage shed any light on how God works to redeem mankind?
- Does this passage reveal man's sin and need for the Savior? If so, how?
- How does Jesus meet this need, both in his character and in his work (and/or the work of the Holy Spirit)?

### III. Application—What Should I Do?

The final stage of the inductive method is application. At this point, we take the result of the interpretation stage and decide how the principle might apply in our situation. Since we have carefully looked at the original context, and know the details of it, we can look for similar contexts in our day.

The difficulty of this stage is to determine what situation today really corresponds to the original situation. We can derive some application from a passage only if we can demonstrate that this similarity exists. If our situation is truly the same as a biblical passage, then we can assume that the Lord expects us to apply the message to ourselves. In that case, the important task is to state *specifically* and *clearly* "what we should do."

There are two very important issues that must be addressed in the application stage. The first is the fact that application should always be made to oneself, rather than only to others. It does not matter whether the study is for the purpose of personal growth, or for teaching others. If we do not apply it to ourselves first, we become hypocrites. Whatever we teach to others should always flow out of what we have already learned and applied in our own life. Then we can teach others if the need arises.

The second important point is to make sure that *our context* is the same as the *original context*. We cannot, and must not apply a message given to biblical characters to our own lives unless our situation is equivalent. Therefore, much of the application stage consists of asking, "What in my life is similar to the situation described in the passage?"

Proper application starts with a logical and systematic consideration of the basic areas of our life and ministry that should be affected by the biblical principle that we have seen in the text. It is helpful to consider each topic, and then to ask ourselves probing, thought-provoking questions about what we should do in response to the message. As always, this process should be surrounded by prayer, and accompanied by a willingness to learn and grow in the Lord.

### Application Topics

The ultimate goal of application is personal character development and greater ministry effectiveness. There are a number of areas or topics that we should consider when we try to apply the message of a passage personally. These topics include both our personal life and ministry. Some examples are listed here:

<i>Faith:</i>	What can I learn about personal faith?
<i>Attitudes:</i>	What attitudes are good or bad? What are their results? How can I change negative ones?
<i>Actions:</i>	What should I start doing? What should I stop doing?
<i>Sins:</i>	What sin(s) have been pointed out to me? Do I need to repent? How can I right things with God/others?
<i>Challenges:</i>	What challenges have been made clear to me in my personal life? In relationships with others? In my ministry?
<i>Promises:</i>	What promises can I claim as my own? Are they specific promises to individuals, or can they be applied to all believers? Are there conditions? What are the implications for my life and ministry?
<i>Character:</i>	What are the godly character qualities that I need to develop in my life and ministry?

### General Application Questions

Several application questions may be asked of any passage of Scripture. They are:

- Is there a sin to confess and repent of?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a condition to meet?
- Is there a challenge to face?
- Is there a doubt I must recognize in myself?
- Is there a way I have not believed in Jesus as Lord and Savior – i.e., that he is all the righteousness I need?

Sometimes the Holy Spirit will speak to us about a general area of application in our lives which needs attention. Perhaps we have an attitude which needs to change or a truth we need to live out. However, you need to be careful that your applications are not so vague *that they do not require any change in your life*. For example, if we are studying a passage about being witnesses of Jesus Christ, one application might be "I need to share Christ with those around me". A more specific application would be "On Monday I'm going to invite my cousin for dinner and try to show him the difference that Christ has made in my life". Do you see the difference between these two applications? They are both valid, but the more specific you can be, the more opportunity you will have to internalize the truths of Scripture as you apply them to your life.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Discuss this lesson with your mentor.
- What have you learned new in this lesson that you need to apply to your personal Bible study practice?
- When you study the Bible do you spend most of you time on observation, interpretation or application?
- Are your applications of scripture in your life specific ("this week I will try to show God's love to my neighbor"), or are they vague ("I need to love people more")?

## Lesson 12 - Inductive Bible Study Demonstrated

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We are going to study Luke 7:36-50 using the three steps already described.

### **OBSERVATION – WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

Open your Bible to Luke 7:36-50. Pray for enlightenment, and then write answers to the following questions. Take special note of the *kinds of questions* that are asked. In your own study later, you will need to develop similar questions concerning other passages as you study them.

#### **1. Who?**

- **Who** are the persons mentioned in this passage?
- Who is present at the meal?
- To whom does Jesus direct his story?
- To whom did Simon comment concerning how the women who had live a sinful life treated Jesus (vs. 30)?
- Who are the characters in the story Jesus told?
- (etc?)

#### **2. What?**

- **What** words are repeated often in this passage?
- What was the response to Jesus by each of the persons who were present?
- What question does Jesus ask Simon concerning the story he told?
- What question do the guests ask about Jesus at the end of this event?
- (etc?)

#### **3. Where?**

- **Where** does this event take place?
- Where did women who had live a sinful life come from?
- (etc?)

#### **4. When?**

- **When** (after/before what events) does this take place?
- At what point (when) does Jesus tell the story of the two men who owed money?
- (etc?)

#### **5. Why?**

- **Why** did Simon the Pharisee invite Jesus to his home?
- Why did Jesus accept the invitation?
- Why did the women who had lived a sinful life come to the meal?
- Why does Jesus tell the story of the two men who owed money?
- Why did Jesus forgive the woman's sins?
- (etc?)

## 6. How?

- How did Simon treat Jesus? How did Jesus respond to him?
- How did Simon treat the woman who had lived a sinful life?
- How did the sinful woman treat Jesus? How did Jesus respond? How did Simon respond?
- How did Jesus know what Simon said to himself (vs. 39-40)?
- How is this woman saved (vs. 50)?
- (etc?)

## INTERPRETATION – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

### 1. Questions to help you understand the meaning

Answering the following questions should help you understand the *meaning* of the text. Perhaps you will think of other questions. These are offered to help you get started in the process.

- What contrasts or comparisons are made in this passage?
- How would you describe Simon the Pharisee? What is his main concern in this passage?
- How would you describe the woman who had lived a sinful life? What is her main concern in this passage?
- What is the point of the story that Jesus told?
- Why did Jesus use a story to make this point?
- How did the story that Jesus told relate to what happened at the meal?
- What is the meaning to the “debt” in the story Jesus told?
- What is the relationship between debt, forgiveness and love according to Jesus?
- Why do you suppose Simon did not wash Jesus’ feet or greet him in the culturally appropriate way?
- What do you suppose gave (or would give) Simon a sense of righteousness?
- What do you suppose gave (or would give) the woman a sense of righteousness?
- How is it that the woman is forgiven of her sins?
- Do you think Simon the Pharisee was forgiven of his sins? Why or why not?
- Etc.

### 2. General Questions for Interpretation

Just as the observation step had six key questions that can help you understand any passage, so the interpretation step can be easier if you know what to look for. With reference to all you have learned to this point, the following questions can help you interpret this, or any, passage.

- What do today’s listeners share in common with those to whom these words were originally written?
- Is God’s way contrasted to man’s ways in this passage?
- Is there a conflict involving man’s rebellion against God’s rule?
- Does this passage shed any light on how God works to redeem mankind?
- Does this passage reveal man’s sin and need for the Savior? If so, how?
- How does Jesus meet this need, both in his character and in his work (and/or the work of the Holy Spirit)?

**3. Review your Observations**

As I re-read the observations on Luke 7:36-50, it seems to me that the most important observations are (*list*):

**4. State the Main Point**

The subject of these verses is:

The thing that Luke (the author) is saying about this subject is:

A concise statement of main point, reflecting the two ideas above, is:

**5. Describe the Flow of Thought**

Luke develops the main idea of the passage by:

**6. The Biblical Principle**

The final step in the process of interpretation is to attempt to state the meaning of the passage as a concise biblical principle. This statement should be related to the specific context of Luke 7:36-50, more than 2000 years ago. The principle that you want to formulate now should be valid at any time, especially today.

The form of the principle would be something like: “In this kind of situation, we should...” or “When this happens, God will....” The exact wording of the principle for a particular passage will vary, of course. Also, the principle should be as specific as possible. This process is not easy, but it is important. And with God’s help, it is possible.

**From my study of Luke 7:36-50, I find the following timeless biblical principle:**

### **APPLICATION – WHAT SHOULD I DO?**

Having determined what the passage means, it is time to understand how the timeless truth should be applied. The following questions directly relate to *what you should do*. There are an endless number of these specific questions, since they are different for every passage. You are limited only by your creativity. The important thing is to open your heart to the Lord, and allow Him to show you what He wants to be different in your life.

**1. Some sample questions are listed below. Feel free to add to them as you work through the passage.**

- What do these verses say personally to you about your personal relationship with God the Creator?
- Of all the characters in this story, who are you most like? Why?
- What is your typical reaction to sinners?
- What impact does this verse have regarding your faith in God's love?
- Describe your debt.
- Describe how you have been forgiven. Have you been forgiven much or little?
- Describe how you love others.
- Can you see any similarity between the point of this passage and your task as a disciple maker?

**2. General Application Questions**

Several application questions can be asked of any passage of Scripture. They are:

- Is there a sin to confess and repent of?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a condition to meet?
- Is there a challenge to face?
- Is there a doubt I must recognize in myself?
- Is there a way I have not believed in Jesus as Lord and Savior – i.e., that he is all the righteousness I need?

### **SUMMARY**

The application I see for my life and ministry in Luke 7:36-50 is:

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Share your answers and conclusions with your mentor.

Which questions were most helpful in leading you to understand the passage?

What have you learned new in this lesson that you need to apply to your personal Bible study practice?

What further help do you need to be able to use this method in your personal Bible study?



## **Worksheet - Practicing Inductive Bible Study**

You have now learned all about observation, interpretation, and application. **Before the next seminar, you will need to study portions of the Bible using the inductive method.** You will have an opportunity to share what you have learned during a workshop in that seminar. The next seminar will discuss the principles of *leading* an inductive study.

Your assignment is to study a passage using the inductive method, and to prepare as many observation, interpretation, and application questions as possible. Practice the inductive Bible study method on your own using any two of the following passages. You may want to compare your choice with the other trainees so that everyone does not do the same passage. Write and answer your own questions as has been modeled for you in the previous lesson. Use the **Inductive Bible Study Outline** which follows if it helps you.

- *Acts 13:4-12 (Paphos)*
- *Acts 13:13-52 (Antioch)*
- *Acts 14:1-7 (Iconium)*
- *Acts 14:8-20 (Lystra and Derbe)*
- *Acts 16:11-40 (Philippi)*
- *Acts 17:10-15 (Berea)*
- *Acts 17:16-34 (Athens)*
- *Acts 18:1-17 (Corinth)*
- *Acts 19:1-10 (Ephesus)*

**Each of your two inductive Bible studies must be in written format, and should include all three aspects: observation, interpretation, and personal application. Bring these written studies with you to the next seminar.**



**2. General Questions for Interpretation**

- What do today's listeners share in common with those to whom these words were originally written?
- Is God's way contrasted to man's ways in this passage?
- Is there a conflict involving man's rebellion against God's rule?
- Does this passage shed any light on how God works to redeem mankind?
- Does this passage reveal man's sin and need for the Savior? If so, how?
- How does Jesus meet this need, both in his character and in his work (and/or the work of the Holy Spirit)?

**3. Review your Observations**

As I re-read the observations on this passage, it seems to me that the most important ones are (*list*):

**4. State the Main Point**

The subject of these verses is:

The thing that the author is saying about this subject is:

A concise statement of main point, reflecting the two ideas above, is:

**5. Describe the Flow of Thought**

The author develops the main idea of the passage by:

## **6. The Biblical Principle**

From my study of this passage, I find the following timeless biblical principle:

### **APPLICATION – WHAT SHOULD I DO?**

#### **1. Specific Application**

#### **2. General Application Questions**

- Is there a sin to confess and repent of?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a condition to meet?
- Is there a challenge to face?
- Is there a doubt I must recognize in myself?
- Is there a way I have not believed in Jesus as Lord and Savior – i.e., that he is all the righteousness I need?

### **SUMMARY**

The application I see for my life and ministry from this passage is:

## SPIRITUAL CHARACTER

### Lesson 13 – The Law and the Gospel

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Somehow it is a natural tendency of men and women to misuse and even destroy some of the best gifts of God. For example, we see this in creation. God made the world and called it good, but Man seems to be intent on polluting and destroying God's creation. Likewise, we see this in relationships. God gives us children and try as we might, we find it hard to love them as we should. Even at the most basic level, in our walk with God and in our ministry to others we tend to misuse the *law* while failing to live according to the *Gospel*. This is a serious problem.

In this lesson, we will examine the proper and improper use of the law in comparison to a new way of living, by the Gospel, which the New Testament introduces to us. Our need is to learn to live by faith in the Gospel and power of the Holy Spirit.

#### I. GOD'S PURPOSE FOR THE LAW

##### The Law Shows Us God's Holiness

God gave us His law so that the curtain which veiled His glory might be pulled back and so that we might behold what our human heart cannot comprehend, the awesome holiness of God. This is the aim of His law.

It does not take long for someone who reads the Bible to realize how strict God's law is. The law is strict because God's holiness is severe. We see this in every aspect of the law; in the holy life it calls us to, in its uncompromising spirit, and in its tough penalties for failure. Consider the penalties for disobeying God's law. Adultery required both persons to be stoned to death (Dt 22:22). If a son cursed his parents in a fit of rage, he was to be put to death (Ex 21:15,17). It is scary to think how many of us would be dead if these penalties were applied to us.

Should we then avoid God's law so that we will not suffer exposure to its severity? No, not at all. In doing so we would never really come to know God in His true holiness. Knowing God in His holiness is essential for us to understand our true need for Jesus Christ and His redemption. Without an ever-growing knowledge of God's holiness, we will walk in pride, we will be merciless in our relationships with others, and we will walk in self-confidence and unbelief.

##### The Law Shows Us Our Sin

A second purpose of the law is to show us our sin. In Romans 7:7 we are told how the law worked in the Apostle Paul's life. Through the commandment "You shall not covet," Paul learned that coveting was sin. Paul then tells us in verses 8 and 9 that after he learned this, the commandment acted like a mirror reflecting all the times he would covet other things, and he saw how truly sinful his heart was. "*Through the commandment, sin produced in me coveting of every kind,*" he says. In the end, as Paul saw how "alive" sin was in him, he also became aware of how condemned he was before God as the words of the Mosaic Covenant rang out, "*Cursed is everyone who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out*" (Dt 27:26). Through the law, he learned that he was cursed; he was a "dead" man.

### **The Law Shows Us Our Need For Christ**

If God is holy, as the law demonstrates, and we are sinners, as the law shows us, then what are we to do? We need a savior! A third purpose of the law is to show us our need for Christ.

The law was given to us by God to “lead us to Christ” (Gal 3:24). Do we understand what this means? We come to see our need for Christ as we see the holiness of God, as well as our inability to keep the requirements of the law. After we have turned to Christ, do we think that the law is supposed to stop functioning in this way? Is the law supposed to stop pointing us to Christ after we become Christians? No, the law is ever before us to show us that we need Christ, Who alone fulfills the ideals of the law and makes us worthy to be the children of God.

So the law is necessary, first for the unbeliever, to reveal God’s awesome holiness in order to lead him to Christ. The law is also necessary for the believer, to show him what holiness looks like, as well as to show him when he goes wrong and needs to repent. We might say that the law is the tangible expression of the character of God. To imitate His character, we need the law’s concrete pictures.

## **II. LIMITATIONS OF THE LAW**

As we have seen, the law has its place. The Bible clearly teaches that the law of God is good. Romans 7:12 says, “*So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.*” However, as we are about to see, the law is not, nor was it ever intended to make men holy or to be the primary basis through which we relate to God (Ro 8:3, Gal 3:1-25). The law has another function. It cannot make us holy because of the following limitations:

### **The Law Does Not Deal With The Heart**

Holiness is primarily a heart issue (Dt 6:4,5; Mt 22:37-38). When the heart is changed, everything is changed. Holiness that is based on rigorous observance of the law usually grows out of the misperception that Christian maturity and holiness are a matter of behavior only. This was the error of the Pharisees (Mt 23:23-28). They tried to attain holiness through strict observance of the law. Jesus was certainly not impressed!

Take the example of the rich young ruler (Lk 18:18-23). He was a “good man” who followed the law. But his unwillingness to sell his possessions revealed this man’s heart. For that reason, Jesus rejected him. Though he had kept the law, he was not a spiritual or holy man. A holy man would have obeyed Jesus at this point.

The focus of the New Testament is on radical change from the inside (Ro 12:2; 2Co 5:17). By emphasizing the law as a measure of holiness, we lose the radical heart change that the new covenant is supposed to bring to the believer. Yet many Christians around the world do not have a heart for God. One of the primary reasons for this is that we have turned to relying upon the law as the foundation for life and ministry and, as a result, the church shares the same weaknesses of Old Testament Israel (Ro 9:31-32).

### **The Law Produces Guilt**

If you accept the law as your primary way of relating to God, then with it comes a “curse”. The “curse” is that the law is “all or nothing”. If you are going to live according to the law, then you must obey ALL OF IT—ALL OF THE TIME (Gal 3:10). But no one can keep the law; because as God’s holiness is beyond measure, His law is beyond our keeping. A constant focus on the law then produces a conscious sense of guilt, because you never keep the law well enough. Instead of making progress, you are condemned by the law. The law kills and condemns (2Cor 3:6-9). It takes away your joy, causing you to see your failure and doubt the work of Christ, the power of the Spirit, and your adoption by our heavenly Father.

When church leaders focus on the demands of the law without grace, they weigh people down with demands that no one can keep. Instead of pointing people to the answer found in the Gospel, these leaders, like the Pharisees, often create new laws to help people keep God’s law. By doing this, they simply heap on a greater load, a load that no one can bear.

### **The Law Produces Pride**

There are some who do better than others at keeping the law. These people tend to be those with good personal organizational habits and self-discipline. Often, these people are exalted as models of the Christian life, not because of their hearts of love but because of their outward obedience to the rules.

Perhaps you are one of the ones who does better than most. Do you feel more spiritual because of your hard work at keeping the law? If you do, beware. Law-keeping and good works often comes with an ugly by-product: boasting and pride (Eph 2:8-9, Php 3:4ff). The person who keeps the law through his own effort usually develops a sense of pride over his accomplishment (Ro 2:23). Pride is the last characteristic a godly person should have (Php 2:1-11; Ro 12:3).

If Abraham was right with God because of his works, then he had something to boast about. But as it turned out, he was justified by faith and therefore had nothing to boast about. On the contrary, he could do nothing but respond to God with a heart of gratitude for God's goodness to him (Ro 4:2-3). In the same way, the spiritual person is not proud of his spiritual standing as if he got there through his own hard work. Instead, we boast in what the Lord has done for us (1Co 1:29-31; Gal 6:14).

### **III. LIVING BY THE LAW**

Living according to the law—legalism—could be described as living as if man must obey certain rules and regulations to win favor and rewards from God. Following the law is important. Certainly a holy or spiritual person observes and honors the law. But observing the law legalistically, in order to gain a reward or special favor, is another matter (1 Tim 1:8).

Relating to God legalistically is seen when there is a constant focus upon the demands of the law. This comes from the widespread perception that the law makes us holy. New rules are made to keep us on track. Programs and gimmicks are designed to maintain some semblance of outward holiness. All this is done in hopes that observing these laws and regulations will bring our fleshly indulgences under control and create holiness.

Life under the law often results in a vicious cycle. If our lives are based on the law, then, when we become aware of sin in our lives, we often respond with defensiveness. We blame others or deny the sin because the condemnation of the law is unbearable. This will lead to either pride or depression, depending on how we go on dealing with our sin. If we beat our sin by our own effort—then the natural result is pride. If the sin beats us, then we tend to despair. But in either case, there is no joy. (Note Paul's question to the Galatians, "*What has happened to all your joy?*" (Gal 4:15)). Outwardly, when we engage in ministry to others, if it is motivated by the law then our own efforts are on the line. The results once again are pride in successful ministry or despair because of failure.

***Question 1: How does the law take away joy?***

### **IV. THE GOSPEL - A NEW WAY!**

If the law is not our primary way of relating to God, what is? Now that Christ has set us free from the law, how do we grow in holiness? If the law does not have the power we thought, what will keep people from living like non-believers? Many Christians have lived so long under the law that it is difficult for them to comprehend any other way to grow. However, there is a new way to live the Christian life and it is the right way. We must learn to live in this new way in order to know the true power to obey and serve in the Kingdom's advance.

Instead of legalism, the Bible, especially in the New Testament, teaches that God deals with us by His grace. To understand how this can be, we need to review the common biblical analogy in which God is a father and we are His children. Any child who has loving parents can relate to the concept of grace. A loved child does not earn his way into his parents' favor; he is loved because he exists. When a child disobeys or disappoints his parents,

he may be punished, but he does not have to earn his way back into his parents favor (like the Prodigal Son). No matter what he does, he remains the son and is always loved without earning that position.

This truth of grace is summarized and displayed in the Gospel. By the Gospel, we mean that *although you are a bigger sinner than you realize, by repentance and faith in Jesus, you can be loved more than you can imagine, because Jesus died for you.* The New Testament teaches us that the law has been replaced by this reality. In Romans 8:1-4, we see the contrast between the law and the Gospel, and we are clearly told the limitations of the law. *“For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending His own Son...”* (Ro 8:3). The law could not produce holiness within us because our flesh is powerless to produce holiness within us. The law is weak because we are weak.

Christ’s work on the cross changed everything between heaven and earth. Through His death and resurrection, He has conquered the law and given us the indwelling Holy Spirit, something far more powerful by which to live.

- *“But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code”* (Ro 7:6)
- *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us...”* (Gal 3:13a)
- *“So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law”* (Gal 3:24-25)

As these verses indicate, Christ has conquered the law, releasing us from its condemnation. He has fulfilled the law through His perfect obedience. As we have put our faith in Christ, the law no longer condemns us! We no longer fall under its curse when we fail to obey it as we should. We have Christ’s complete forgiveness and perfect righteousness, and our faith in Him fulfills the law’s demands of us.

The Apostle Paul sheds more light on this new way to grow in holiness. In Romans 7:4-13 he describes service *“in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code”* (Ro 7:6). What is the difference between these two kinds of living? Let’s look at them contrasted:

**New Way vs. Old Way**

<u>New way of the Spirit</u> <i>‘through faith in the Gospel’</i>	<u>Old way of the written code</u> <i>‘under the law’</i>
Out of love for God in view of what Christ has done for me.	Out of fear, trying to obey God well enough to be accepted.
With an awareness of my own failure; I put my confidence in the Holy Spirit	Out of self-confidence, my own effort
From my heart	From a slavish obligation
Out of a freedom from condemnation and failure	Out of a deep concern to succeed or be condemned
Out of a gratitude for God’s grace	Out of a superior attitude because I am a “keeper of the law”

**Question 2: Do you serve through faith in the Gospel or do you serve under the law?**



## **V. LIFE IN THE SPIRIT**

Through faith in the Gospel we receive the Spirit, enabling us to serve in this new way. Consider Paul's words to the Galatians: "*Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?*" (Gal. 3:2-3,5). We receive the Spirit by believing the message of the Gospel. The Spirit then works in us in the following ways.

### **The Spirit Leads Us Into Knowing God Our Father.**

Having the Holy Spirit indicates a special relationship with God. We have special privileges and access to the Father through the Holy Spirit because of the Holy Son. We are no longer frightened and alone like orphans or slaves. Because of the certainty of God's love, nothing is lethal any longer. The Holy Spirit in us is the presence of God with us! The Holy Spirit is God helping us when we are weak, and guiding us when we are lost.

*Question 3: Read Rom 8:15-17. What is indicated about the Holy Spirit's work in believers?*

*Question 4: Read Gal. 4:5-7. What is indicated about the Holy Spirit's work in believers?*

### **The Spirit Convicts Us Of Sin And Leads to Obedience.**

As we know, the law shows us our sin, and so does the Spirit (John 16:8). If we respond to the Spirit's conviction with confession and repentance, then we move from repentant sorrow into renewed joy. The mark of true repentance is not continued sorrow but joy for God's grace and the greatness of Christ whose blood washes us clean (2 Cor 7:10). The Spirit's work is to keep bringing us back to the Gospel. This of course, leads to joy.

How do we know if we are walking in the Spirit? One way to know is to notice how we respond to our sin. Do we establish rules and try harder using our flesh? If so, we are living according to the law. Do we repent acknowledging our weakness as well as God's power to change us? Are we truly changed, finding victory over the sin? If so, then we are walking by the Spirit (Gal 5:16).

### **The Spirit Leads Us Into Ministry**

The Spirit gives us a new and powerful approach to ministry. If we are walking in the Spirit, then life and ministry is an opportunity to die to self and take on whatever the Spirit has for us. This is a joyous life of service to others and God our Father. However, if we are living under the law and in the flesh, then we will find the opportunities for ministry are little more than pressure. They are filled with fear of failure. When we respond to these opportunities, they leave us with either pride or depression, depending on how the opportunities for ministry turned out.

How can our ministry be powerful—like the ministry of Jesus? This very question was once asked of Jesus: "*What must we do to do the works that God requires?*" Jesus' answer is simple: "*Believe in the one He has sent*" (Jn 6:28-29). Our faith is critical to our growth and to our ministry effectiveness.

## **CONCLUSION**

Do you see the radical difference between the Law and the Gospel? Do you see the difference between serving in the "new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code?" Certainly, the law of God has its place. It helps us to understand the holiness of God, to see our own true sinfulness. But the law was also given

to lead us to Jesus Christ. It is through Jesus, that we relate to our Father by way of the **liberating power of the Gospel, through the indwelling Holy Spirit**. These we received when we were adopted as His children (Eph 1:13; Gal 4:6; Ro 8:14).

Life in the Spirit and faith in the Gospel ought to transform our personal spiritual lives as well as our ministry to others. If we are ever to see churches planted, the Gospel, and not the Law, must be the guiding force in our lives. *“For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”* May God give us eyes to see *our* true need for the Gospel of Jesus Christ and a heart to believe that all of our needs are met in Him.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What are the purposes of the law and the Gospel in the Christian life?
- Why is the law powerless to produce holiness within us?
- What is legalism? Do you think that it is a denial of the Gospel’s power? Is it putting trust in the law? Why or why not?
- What does it mean that we are “not under law” in Galatians 5:18, though we are still called to obey God’s commandments?
- How does faith in the Gospel enable us to live in newness of the Spirit?
- Does your ministry to others focus upon the law, because you think that it empowers people to change?