

PREPARING SERVANTS FOR
The Service Of The Kingdom

BOOK 1
PILLAR OF SERVICE



PRESENTED AND COMPILED BY
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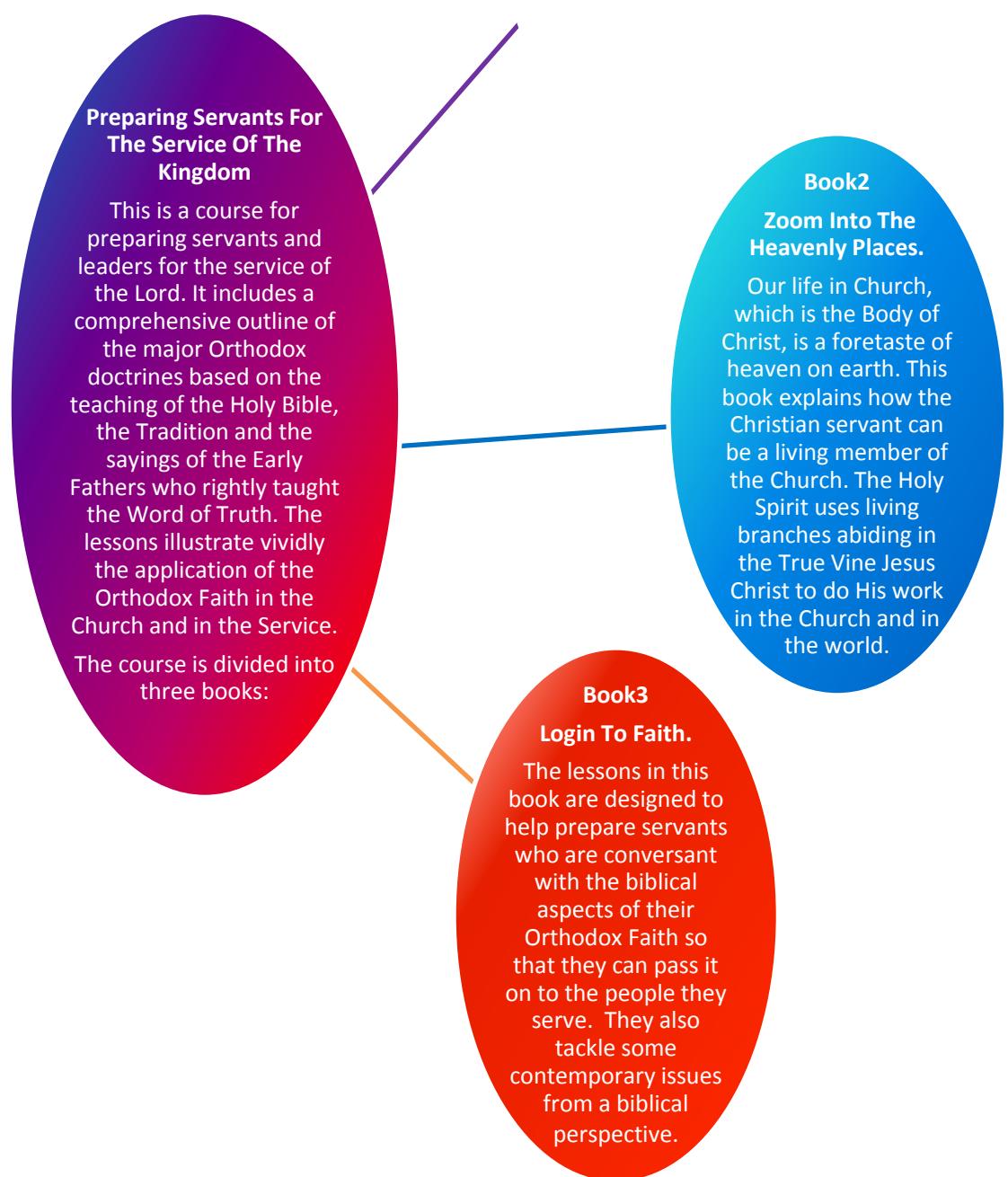
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Acknowledgement



"But the people who know their God will be strong and do valiantly," Dan11:32.

We praise our Good Lord and thank Him for His great help throughout this work. Special thanks are given to the many God-loving people who were moved by the Spirit of the Lord to assist in the production of this book.

May the Lord repay them hundred-fold and bless them

Pillar Of Service



"Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people," Matt9:35.

"For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you," Matt10:20.





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Preface

“The Lord has done great things with us; we are glad,” Psa126:3.

Pillar of Service is the first book of three that make a course for preparing servants for the Lord's service. It deals with the biblical aspects of the service in general and their practical application in Sunday School in particular. The service of the Kingdom is for prepared servants. We hope this course is useful to many more.

The lessons are designed to help build the character of the servants and the people they serve by putting truth into action. Knowledge apart from application falls short of God's desire for His children. He wants us to apply what we learn so that we will change and grow.

These lessons were originally given in Sydney, Australia (1990-2010) to pre-servants classes in

- St Anthony and St Paul's Church, Guildford
- St Mary's Church, Sydenham
- The Holy Apostles and St Abanoub's Church, Blacktown
- Archangel Michael and St Pishoy's Church, Mount Druitt.

June 2013 AD

Feast of the Ascension of our Lord into Heaven



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CALLED TO FOLLOW

Big Idea: Responding to Jesus and what it might mean.

Bible Text: Luke 5:1-11

Bible Verse: Luke 5:11, "they forsook all and followed Him".

Students will

Know:

- ✖ Steps Peter needed to respond to Jesus' call.
- ✖ We all need to make a decision to follow Jesus.
- ✖ What to do to make Jesus Lord of our life.
- ✖ Jesus' Response: "Do not be afraid".

Feel: Encouraged to consider their response to Jesus and what it could mean for their lives.

Do: Pray and renew their commitment each morning.



CALLED TO FOLLOW



JESUS CALLS EVERYONE TO FOLLOW HIM

Jesus called Peter to follow Him. It was a costly call. It meant leaving his home, family and thriving business to be the disciple of a man who was so revolutionary; he had already caused dissension (Luke4). It meant having no obvious means of support and an unknown future. Yet Peter had faith in Jesus. He trusted Jesus.

None of us will help a cause or organization, whether charitable, political or social, unless we **believe** in it. We might put a few coins in a collecting tin without thinking too hard about what we are supporting, but we will not give our energy, or our precious free time to something that does not **convince** us.

Everyone is unique. Jesus calls people in different ways. For Peter, Jesus' call came out of the blue, just when he was in the middle of mending his nets. Although he was taken by surprise, he was still prepared to listen to Jesus and obey Him, and we should copy his example.

Remember, Jesus is all in favour of us enjoying our lives. He came to give us life to the full, and like Peter, we should make Him Lord of our lives. Are you happy with the way you spend your time? What changes would you like to make in your life other than not going to college or doing your chores?

RESPONDING TO JESUS

It took St Peter a few steps to respond to the call of Jesus to follow Him.

An encounter with the Lord (Luke5:3)

St Peter knew about Jesus before that incident. He heard Jesus teach in the synagogue. Jesus visited St Peter and his family at home, when He healed St Peter's mother-in-law (Luke4:38-39). He heard Him preach from his boat. St Peter undoubtedly thought deeply about what he had seen and heard.



Faith in Jesus' Words (Luke5:4-5)



St Peter trusted Jesus against all odds. He had faith in Jesus' words. He called Him "Master" and "obeyed" his master. He did whatever his Master asked him to do.



Peter sees a miracle (Luke5:6)

Peter realized that the enormous superabundant catch of fish was the result of Jesus' divine powers.

Peter is conscious of his sins (Luke5:8)



St Peter kneels and confesses Jesus as Lord. Faced with the holiness of Jesus, St Peter's reaction was one of fear and he wanted Jesus to leave him alone, for things to continue as they always had done. But Jesus' response is "Don't be afraid".

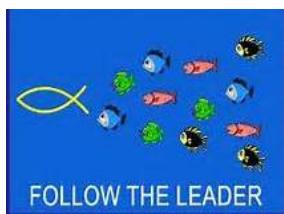
Peter follows Jesus (Luke5:11)

Jesus was asking St Peter to trust Him and was calling him to a new life; he would no longer catch fish but men. St Peter probably didn't understand what Jesus meant but his decision was immediate; he left everything and followed Him.



DECISION TO FOLLOW JESUS

We all need to make a decision to follow Jesus. It is not something which will happen automatically because we go to church. What makes a Christian a Christian is a personal commitment to Christ. One's formal belonging to the church through Baptism and other Sacramental participation remains a mere **potential** if the individual commitment does not take place. The Sacramental gifts of Baptism and Eucharist and of all Sacraments are essential for an **objective** membership in the body of Christ. But again, they are pure potentials if they are not taken seriously and if a conversion of the heart and mind does not occur at some point in one's life.



When we decide to follow Jesus, then He becomes our **number one** commitment. We need to get our priorities right. In terms of priorities, where do our family, our church, friends, social life, hobbies etc. fit in? Can we commit and surrender our lives to the Lord totally and without reservations?



Lord, I give you my life today, please take charge. Help me to follow You today and every day, Lord.

THERE IS ONE CATCH

Jesus came to earth to tell us, "You give me your time, and I will give you my eternity. You give me your weary body, and I will give you my rest. You give me your sins, and I will give you my forgiveness. You give me your broken heart, and I will give you my healing. You give your emptiness, and I will give you my fullness. You give me your humanity, and I will give you my divinity". But there is one catch! He cannot give us anything if we do not relinquish ourselves to Him in love and obedience. In the final analysis, relinquishment is the delicious fruit of love.

Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my moments and my days; let them follow in ceaseless praise.
Take my will and make it Thine, it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is Thine own, it shall be Thy royal throne.
Take my love, my Lord; I pour at Thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself and I will be ever, only, all for Thee.



CALLED TO SERVE

Big Idea: Servanthood is the calling to all Christians.

Bible Text: Isa6:8, 9

Bible Verse: Matt9:38 "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; pray, therefore, the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest".

Students will

Know: ✕ What is servant hood?
 ✕ God calls us to serve in some capacity.
 ✕ How to share our faith.
 ✕ Quotations for contemplation.

Feel: Unworthy to serve but honoured to be coworkers with the Lord.

Do: Surrender to the Lord and His service.



CALLED TO SERVE



Servanthood is God's work for every single believer. Biblical service can be defined as a loving act performed in the power of the Holy Spirit to meet the temporal and spiritual needs of those around us. Each of us must stop focusing on ourselves and generously meet the needs of others. All of our actions should reflect the fact that Jesus is not only our Saviour, but the Master of our lives. Salvation means more than forgiveness and the assurance of heaven; it means we are now servants of the living God. By actively serving Him here on earth, we are preparing for eternity with the Lord (Rev22:3).

SERVANTHOOD IS HOW GOD CARRIES OUT HIS WORK

In John14:11-14, Jesus told His disciples that they would do even greater works than He. Does that mean a human can do something more significant than Christ's death on the cross? No. But the Great Commission - to take the gospel to every living creature - is an impossible task, humanly speaking. It can only be fulfilled because the Holy Spirit equips us to share the message of salvation with the entire world. None of us know our maximum potential as followers of Christ. As we surrender our lives to the service of the Most High God, He will honour our lives with true greatness.

SERVANTHOOD IS ESSENTIAL TO A BELIEVER'S SPIRITUAL GROWTH

If you are not serving God in some fashion, you are not maturing spiritually. In every church, there are people who have talents, skills, or gifts but never use them for the work of the Lord. **Ephesians2:10** says, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them". We are not saved merely to be freed from guilt and sin but so that we will serve the Lord and others.

We should humbly seek to serve people with the attitude Christ had. Even when our giving is overlooked or taken for granted by everyone, our heavenly Father notices. In **Hebrews6:10** St Paul says, "God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints". He will reward us for blessing other people.

IT IS THE PURPOSE FOR SPIRITUAL GIFTS



Every believer has one or more spiritual gifts, and we are to use them to serve the body of Christ (1Pet4:10). That same attitude of humble service should extend outside the church as well. You may know people at work who are going through difficulty and hardship. Ask them, "Is there some way I can help? How can I serve you?" Opportunities to assist others are everywhere.

IT IS NO ASSURANCE AGAINST CONFLICT

An attitude of service does not guarantee we will enjoy harmonious relationships. Paul and Barnabas disagreed about whether or not to take John Mark with them on the second missionary journey (Acts15:36-38). Those who serve the Lord aren't always popular. Some people may not like you, or they may falsely accuse you. When that happens, concentrate on maintaining a servant spirit and allow the Lord to handle the unfair criticism.

GOD CALLS ALL OF US TO SERVE IN SOME CAPACITY

The channels for service include Sunday school, church, home, work, society, community etc. In God's eyes all service is worthwhile and deserving of His rewards and blessings. Be assured that God can use you in such varied services as being a Sunday school teacher to cleaning the church's toilets to visiting and helping the sick and elderly. Also, through our professions we must offer service to God. For example pharmacists are giving free medicine to the poor or teachers assisting students in their own time. The most important thing to remember is that God can use all of us for service. Consider this story.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN EASTER?

Edith Burns was a wonderful Christian who lived in San Antonio, Texas. She was the patient of Dr Will Philips. Dr Philips was a gentle doctor who saw patients as people. His favourite patient was Edith Burns. One morning he went to his office with a heavy heart and it was because of Edith Burns. When he walked into that waiting room, there sat Edith with her big black Bible in her lap earnestly talking to a young mother sitting beside her. Edith Burns had a habit of introducing herself in this way: "Hello, my name is Edith Burns. Do you believe in Easter?"

Then she would explain the meaning of Easter, and many times people would be saved.



Dr Phillips walked into that office and there he saw the head nurse, Beverly. Beverly had first met Edith when she was taking her blood pressure. Edith began by saying, "My name is Edith Burns. Do you believe in Easter?" Beverly said, "Why yes I do". Edith said, "Well, what do you believe about Easter?" Beverly said, "Well, it's all about egg hunts, going to church, and dressing up." Edith kept pressing her about the real meaning of Easter, and finally led her to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Dr Phillips said, "Beverly, don't call Edith into the office quite yet. I believe there is another delivery taking place in the waiting room. After being called back in the doctor's office, Edith sat down and when she took a look at the doctor she said, "Dr Will, why are you so sad? Are you reading your Bible? Are you praying?"

Dr Phillips said gently, "Edith, I'm the doctor and you're the patient." With a heavy heart he said, "Your lab report came back and it says you have cancer and Edith, you're not going to live very long". Edith said, "Why Will Phillips, shame on you. Why are you so sad? Do you think God makes mistakes? You have just told me I am going to see my precious Lord Jesus, my husband, and my friends. You have just told me that I am going to celebrate Easter forever, and here you are having difficulty giving me my ticket!"



Dr Phillips thought to himself, "What a magnificent woman this Edith Burns is!" Edith continued coming to Dr Phillips. Christmas came and the office was closed through January 3rd. On the day the office opened, Edith did not show up. Later that afternoon, Edith called Dr Phillips and said she would have to be moving her story to the hospital and said, "Will, I'm very near home, so would you make sure that they put women in here next to me in my room that need to know about Easter".

Well, they did just that and women began to come in and share that room with Edith. Many women were saved. Everybody on that floor from staff to patients were so excited about Edith, that they started calling her "Edith Easter"; that is everyone except Phyllis Cross, the head nurse. Phyllis made it plain that she wanted nothing to do with Edith because she was a "religious nut". She had been a nurse in an army hospital. She had seen it all and heard it all. She was the original G.I. Jane. She had been married three times, she was hard, cold, and did everything by the book.



One morning the two nurses who were to attend to Edith were sick. Edith had the flu and Phyllis Cross had to go in and give her a shot. When she walked in, Edith had a big smile on her face and said, "Phyllis, God loves you and I love you, and I have been praying for you."

Phyllis Cross said, "Well, you can quit praying for me, it won't work. I'm not interested."

Edith said, "Well, I will pray and I have asked God not to let me go home until you come into the family."

Phyllis Cross said, "Then you will never die because that will never happen," and curtly walked out of the room. Every day Phyllis Cross would walk into the room and Edith would say, "God loves you Phyllis and I love you, and I'm praying for you."

One day Phyllis Cross said she was literally drawn to Edith's room like a magnet would draw iron. She sat down on the bed and Edith said, "I'm so glad you have come, because God told me today is your special day."

Phyllis Cross said, "Edith, you have asked everybody here the question, "Do you believe in Easter? But you have never asked me."

Edith said, "Phyllis, I wanted to many times, but God told me to wait until you asked, and now that you have asked ..." Edith Burns took her Bible and shared with Phyllis Cross the Easter Story of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Edith said, "Phyllis, do you believe in Easter? Do you believe that Jesus Christ is alive and that He wants to live in your heart?"

Phyllis Cross said, "Oh I want to believe that with all of my heart, and I do want Jesus in my life." Right there, Phyllis Cross prayed and invited Jesus Christ into her heart. For the first time Phyllis Cross did not walk out of a hospital room, she was carried out on the wings of angels.

Two days later, Phyllis Cross came in and Edith said, "Do you know what day it is?" Phyllis Cross said, "Why Edith, it's Good Friday." Edith said, "Oh, no, for you every day is Easter. Happy Easter, Phyllis!"





Two days later, on Easter Sunday, Phyllis Cross came to work, did some of her duties and then went down to the flower shop and got some Easter lilies because she wanted to go up to see Edith and give her some Easter lilies and wish her a Happy Easter. When she walked into Edith's room, Edith was in bed! That big black Bible was on her lap. Her hands were in that Bible. There was a sweet smile on her face. When Phyllis Cross went to pick up Edith's hand, she realized Edith was dead. Her left hand was on John14:2-3, "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." Her right hand was on Rev21:4, "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away".



Phyllis Cross took one look at that dead body, and then lifted her face toward heaven, and with tears streaming down her cheeks, said, "Happy Easter, Edith - Happy Easter!" Phyllis Cross left Edith's body, walked out of the room, and over to a table where two student nurses were sitting. She said, "My name is Phyllis Cross. Do you believe in Easter?"

SHARING OUR FAITH: HOW?

In order to share our faith successfully, we must keep the following rules in mind.

1. We must be clean vessels (1Thess1:5, Isa52:11).
While God does not demand golden or silver vessels, He does require clean ones.
2. We must be able to clearly give out the simple facts of the gospel (1Thess1:9, 10).
3. We must avoid arguments and stick to the basic issues of man's sin and Christ's Blood.
4. We must use the word of God (1Thess2:13).
5. We must depend on the Holy Spirit of God (1Thess1:5; 1Cor2:4).



QUOTATIONS FOR CONTEMPLATION

- Forget yourself for others and others will not forget you.
- The most valuable gift you can give another is a good example.



- Don't be afraid of pressure. Remember that pressure is what turns a lump of coal into a diamond.
- People know what you are by what they see, not by what they hear.
- A pint of example is worth a barrelful of advice.
- People may doubt what you say, but they will always believe what you do.
- Depend on it; God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supplies.
- God has a history of using the insignificant to achieve the impossible.
- People will be more impressed by the depth of your conviction than the height of your logic.
- I make it a rule of Christian duty never to go to a place where there is not room for my Master as well as myself.



Rejoice. I have found My sheep which was lost
John 10:1



WORKING WITH GOD

Big Idea: In the world we are agents of the living God and His coworkers.

Bible Text: Acts20:22-24

Bible Verse: John12:26, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honour".

Students will

Know:

- ✖ To live is to serve God in some way.
- ✖ The nature of God's works (the service).
- ✖ What does it mean to be a servant?
- ✖ What prompts me to serve (Psa132:4, 5)?
- ✖ The service gives the soul great happiness.
- ✖ The blessings of the service (John12:26).

Feel: Unworthy but blessed to serve God and His people.

Do: Ask the Holy Spirit to pour the love of God into our heart so that we can glorify His name in the service.



WORKING WITH GOD

 Christianity is about a personal commitment to a relationship with God which is central. It is commitment to a life which revolves around service to God. In the letter of St James, we are told that faith without works is dead (Jam2:20); not that works put us right with God, but a proper living relationship with God spontaneously and automatically evokes a certain response from a Christian. That response must surely be based on the realization that to live is to serve God in some way. For a Christian the whole life must be lived from a different perspective. If we look closely at the great passage of the Bible, the beatitudes (Matt5:3-12), a few things stand out clearly.

Christ Says	The World Says
⌘Blessed are the poor in spirit i.e. those who bear the poverty of the cross.	Blessed are the famous, powerful and affluent.
⌘Blessed are those that mourn i.e. those that bear the sorrows.	Blessed are the prosperous and progressive.
⌘Blessed are the weak, they shall inherit the earth.	Blessed are those who spout about rights and their own worth.
⌘Blessed are those who thirst after righteousness.	Blessed are the complacent.
⌘Blessed are the merciful i.e. those who go out of their way to seek the society of sinners.	Blessed are the honoured and respectable.
⌘Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.	Blessed are the sophisticated and self- sufficient.
⌘Blessed are the peacemakers.	Blessed are the ambitious and pushy ones.
⌘Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake.	Blessed are those who play it safe.

Virtually all those qualities which the world considers of prime importance and which are necessary to get on in the world, Christ here reverses. Therefore,



for us Christians, we live as citizens in the world, but not of the world; as citizens whose connections with the world are tentative and temporary but at the same time as citizens who are called to live in the world as agents of the living God.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A SERVANT?

In an attempt to answer this question, let us consider the following story.



The sheep dogs were helping the shepherd to deal with a lot of very active sheep and lambs, to persuade them into the right pastures, to keep them from rushing down the wrong paths. And how did the successful dog do it? Not by barking, fuss, ostentatious authority, or any kind of busy behaviour. The best dog that I saw never barked once; and he spent an astonishing amount of time sitting perfectly still looking at the shepherd. The communion of spirit between them was perfect. They worked as a unit. Neither seemed anxious or in a hurry. Neither was committed to a rigid plan; they were always content to wait.

The dog was the docile and faithful agent of another kind. He used his whole intelligence and initiative, but always in obedience to his master's directive will; and was ever prompt at self-effacement (making oneself inconspicuous, keeping oneself in the background). The little mountain sheep he had to deal with were amazingly tiresome, as expert in doubling and twisting and going the wrong way as any naughty little body. The dog went steadily on with it; and his tail never ceased to wag.

What did that mean? It meant that his relation to the shepherd was the centre of his life; and because of that, he enjoyed doing his job with the sheep, he did not bother about the trouble, nor get discouraged with the apparent results. The dog has transcended mere dogginess. His actions were dictated by something right beyond himself. He was the agent for the shepherd, working for a scheme which was not his own and the whole of which he could not grasp, and it was that which was the source of the delightedness, the eagerness, and also the discipline with which he worked. But he would not have kept that peculiar and intimate relation unless he had sat down and looked at the shepherd a good deal.



THE NATURE OF GOD'S WORK/SERVICE

Jesus said, "My Father is working still, and I am working," John5:17. Jesus is concerned with the welfare of His children in the world. He bears the burdens of the heavy laden (Matt11:28). He leads His people to the life of repentance and purifies their hearts from the stains of sin. The Lord is looking for His kids who lost their way. God specifically sent Jesus Christ into the world to seek and save that which was lost. (Matt18:14). To build His kingdom on earth, the Lord needs people so that He can work with them, through them and by them. St Paul writes to the Ephesians saying, "For this reason some should be apostles, some would be prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ," Eph4:11. The Lord equips us with many gifts; "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them," Rom12:6.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was sent by God. He didn't come to be served, but to serve. "As the Father has sent Me, I send you," John20:2. His last commandment while He was on earth was concerning service and mission; "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," Mark16:15. Since that time, He has been commanding men, women and young people to preach and declare His Holy Name and love to all people. He who refuses to obey God's voice to fulfill his duty in serving others and who does not share in extending the kingdom of God on earth is denying himself a share of the great work for which Jesus came.

Anyone who does not believe in serving others, by any means, is not a true Christian because he is selfish. There is nothing worse in Christianity than a Christian who thinks only of himself; for loving one's neighbor is the fulfillment of the law (Rom13:10).

The Lord needs helpers. "And I heard the voice of the Lord saying "whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isa6:8. Will you say with Isaiah "here I am Lord, send me?" Isa6:9. Would you help Jesus find the lost sheep and bring them back to His bosom (Isa10:11)? It pleases the heart of the Lord to have people working with Him. St Paul encourages us saying, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," 1Cor15:58. We must remember that the Lord can do ALL the



work On His Own. It is only because the Good Lord is so humble, that He makes us partners and sharers of His Glory. We certainly do not deserve this great honour. We should thank the Lord for calling us.

Are you worried that you can't or don't know what to do? Don't worry because the Lord is the one who does all the work through you. Serving is His business; "**the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve," Matt20:28.** He will pour the Holy Spirit within you and you "**become partners of the divine nature," 2Pet1:4**, i.e. partners of the divine nature of God's work.

You will certainly stop and watch how the Lord works wonders with you, by you and through you. "**The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest," Matt9:38.** You love God and you want to please Him. Therefore, come and work with Him. Tell Him, "**I will follow You wherever You go," Matt8:19.**



WHAT PROMPTS ME TO SERVE?

People that encountered the Lord Jesus were filled with His love and could not but follow Him and serve Him. For example, Andrew called Peter his brother (John1:35-45). Philip called Nathanael (John1:45) who declared Jesus King (John1:49). The Samaritan woman called the whole town (John4:28-30, 39). Mary Magdalene and the other women who were healed from their physical and spiritual infirmities followed Jesus and provided for Him from their substance (Luke8:2, 3).

In fact, this is the feeling of everyone who has experienced the Lord and tasted His Love. It is impossible not to speak of the things he has seen and heard. What does the believer see or hear in his fellowship with the Lord? He sees and hears much. He sees what the physical eye cannot see and hears things that cannot be uttered. He has joy and peace, which surpass all understanding. Didn't the Lord Jesus say, "**He who loves Me, will be loved by My Father and I will love Him and manifest Myself to him ... We will come to him and make Our home with him," John14:21-23.**" Therefore, we find that everyone who is inflamed with the love of God cannot sit quietly or stop serving the souls for whom Jesus died. He says with David, "**I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids until I find a place for the**



Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob," Psa132:4,5. He keeps searching for a place for the Lord, a dwelling for the God of Jacob in every heart in which the Lord would be pleased to be comfortable.

Truly the Word of God cannot be restricted. Serving the souls, which the Lord loves, cannot be restricted. Everyone, whose heart is full of the love of God, cannot be restricted. Serving the souls, which the Lord loves, cannot be restricted. Everyone, whose heart is full of God's love, can always look for opportunities to serve the Lord in His brothers. He serves with his words, his teachings, his writings, his private life and his prayers for those whom he serves. He becomes like a magnet creating an atmosphere around him wherever he goes.

The Service gives the soul great happiness. How pleasing can it be on the Day of Judgment when we hear the Lord Jesus say to us, "**Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to Me," Matt25:35, 36!**

Happy is the believer who gives spiritual food, rather than the physical one. This leads a person to the Living Fountain, from which, when one drinks, he will never thirst again. Happy is the believer who visits a naked person and offers him clothes, not to cover his body, but clothes of righteousness, which he lacked because of sin. Happy is he when he visits a spiritually sick person and introduces him to Jesus to heal him like the four friends who brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus. Happy is he when he visits an imprisoned man, who is in bitter captivity to tell him about the One who can liberate him from the dominion of sin. "**Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin and a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed," John8:34-36.**

This is the message of the Lord Jesus, "**The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are**



oppressed," Luke4:18. See how beautiful are Jesus' comments, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing," Luke4:21. This is the essence of the Service and its blessings. This is the depth of spiritual happiness.

THE BLESSINGS OF THE SERVICE

The New Testament has blessed the service and the servant and has made him a means to bring hearts close to God, to renew souls and to attract them to the kingdom of God. Didn't the Lord Jesus bless the peacemakers calling them the sons of God? They make peace between man and his Creator. The Son of God came to fulfill this great act. When we participate with Him, that is, when we serve to bring souls close to God, we deserve to be called the sons of God.

St Paul clarified this when he said, "**N**ow all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God," 2Cor5:18-20. The Service is a great work by which we reconcile men to their Creator. We continue the work, which Jesus Christ began, and we fulfill His good will for the salvation of all people. "**E**ven so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish," Matt18:14.

Again, St Paul explained the greatness of this service when he said, "**F**or we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building," 1Cor3:9. See the beauty in this expression "God's fellow workers"! There are many comforting meditations in these words. They show how honorable the message is which the servant of the Word of God has to fulfill. He works with God personally. What an honour! It guarantees a carefree life for the servant who works with God. The servant is not responsible for the service, but God is. The servant only works with God.

We repeat that the word "servant" is great, and extremely blessed because of the service. This greatness is derived from the service of our Lord Jesus Himself: "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many," Matt20:28. Therefore, the Lord Jesus has



rewarded His faithful servants with great honour in heaven and on earth. He said, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor," John12:26. Daniel the prophet said, "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever," Dan12:3. When St Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea and was taken to Felix the governor, he spoke about righteousness, and was told, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you," Acts24:25. The judge trembled in front of the prisoner! Also, Emperor Falnez trembled in front of St Basil the Great and almost fell to the ground before him, but St Basil helped him up.

As the service cannot be restricted, it does not mind obstacles or dangers, or even death itself. On the contrary, death multiplies its power and helps make its fruits plentiful. We feel this in the lives of those who preached, and were "slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held," Rev6:9. They were given white clothes and were told to rest until their fellow servants were martyred like them. Look at the apostles who went on with their service with exceeding joy after they were persecuted and whipped. Moreover, listen to St Paul saying, "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God," Acts20:22-24.

Those who choose to build the kingdom of God will be greatly honoured and glorified. On the last Day of Judgment, those builders will sit on thrones next to Jesus and have golden crowns on their heads (Rev4:4; John12:26).





CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ORTHODOX TEACHING

Big Idea: The Orthodox teaching is spiritual and is related to the salvation and sanctification of the people.

Bible Text: 2Thess 2:13-16

Bible Verse: 1Tim 3:15, "... the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

Reference: Lecture by His Grace Bishop Moussa

Student will

Know: ✕ The meaning of "Orthodoxy"
 ✕ The seven main characteristics of the Orthodox teaching.

Feel: The need to know and promote the Orthodox teaching.

Do: ✕ Be eager to know our Coptic Orthodox roots.
 ✕ Be proud to be Orthodox.



CHARACTERISTICS OF ORTHODOX TEACHING

 The word "Orthodox" is often interpreted to mean the straightforward doctrines, thinking, teaching and canonization of terminologies relating to our doctrines. Actually, the word "Orthodoxy" is composed of two words: "Ortho", meaning straight and "doxy" which is derived from the Greek word "thoxa" meaning glory. Hence, Orthodoxy is not involved merely with the teaching of doctrines or the participation in certain intellectual activities. Orthodoxy is in fact, the straightforward way of glorifying God in our lives.

In Orthodoxy, we never accept good doctrines and bad conduct. This is why we find that the spiritual teaching of the Orthodox Church is related to the salvation and sanctification of the people and not just the passing on of some intellectual knowledge. It thus becomes not only a straightforward faith but also an applicable faith which leads to a holy life that glorifies the Lord and ultimately to the attainment of the kingdom of heaven.

There are seven main characteristics of the Orthodox teaching. These are as follows;

1. It must be Biblical.
2. It must be liturgical.
3. It must be patristic.
4. It must be theological.
5. It must be non-individualistic.
6. It must be spiritual, not emotional.
7. It must be holistic.

IT MUST BE BIBLICAL. The Bible is an essential element of our Church. The Bible is always found on the altar. The clergy place it on their heads before the reading of the Gospel and in the monasteries, each one present kisses the Gospel. We switch on the light of the iconostasis and we



put a candle to the left and right of the Gospel and in the old tradition we hold another candle in front, representing St John the Baptist who prepared the way for the Light of the world.

All our doctrines, rituals and prayers are derived from the Bible. For example in the Liturgy of St Basil, there are numerous quotations from the Bible. In fact, every sentence can be referred to in the Bible. Similarly, the hymns and daily prayers (Agpeya) are essentially a collection of psalms, Gospel readings and some very short passages.

Our fathers read the Bible, recited the Bible, interpreted the Bible then taught the Bible. An example is St Didymus the blind who used to "read" the Bible as though he could see, while in fact he was reciting the Bible. He used to recite whole books and not only chapters.

The Orthodox Church is a very Biblical church and all Orthodox teachings must be based on the Bible. We have received the Bible through tradition yet the Bible is the judge concerning any tradition. Therefore, in order to be Orthodox you must read the Bible, recite it as much as you can and you must live the Bible. Otherwise, there will be a split between the mind and behaviour.

In our interpretation of the Bible, two basic principles are involved. The first principle is to never jump to a conclusion based on just one verse, whether that conclusion is a doctrine or even a principle for life. Rather, one should take the Bible as a whole. The second principle is that we do not interpret the Bible by our own capacity. Although this is acceptable for contemplation, it certainly is not acceptable for interpretation or the derivation of a principle. When interpreting, we must go back to the Church, the ecclesia (meaning 'the group'). One should utilize the tremendous heritage passed down by our Early Church Fathers who lived, understood and interpreted the Bible. St John Chrysostom, St Augustine,



Origen and others have passed down to us marvellous interpretations of the Bible from which even the non-Orthodox seek to benefit. We should remember St Peter's warning regarding the interpretation of St Paul's epistles (2Pet3:15-16). Our Lord Himself went especially to the disciples of Emmaus in order to make them understand the scriptures. We should seek the assistance of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as well as the heritage of the Fathers in order to interpret the scriptures correctly.

IT MUST BE LITURGICAL. The holy liturgy is the climax of church life. When we attend the liturgy in order to partake of Christ's Body and Blood, we receive the uttered Word on the pulpit (in the course of each liturgy, nine selected passages from the Bible are read) then we eat it at the altar so that the Word (logos) dwells within us.

Whenever, we talk about spirituality, we must always concentrate on the liturgy because it is through the liturgy that we become united with the Head of the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the heavenly, the saints, as well as the earthly members of the body of Christ.



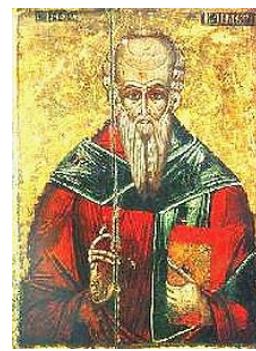
Also in the liturgy, we meet the three hypostases of our Triune God. The Orthodox liturgy begins with 'O Great and eternal God...' then we address the Son when we say, 'Incarnated and became man...' and finally we address the third hypostasis when we ask the Holy Spirit to descend in order to transform bread and wine into the Body and Blood of our Lord. Once this is complete, we take this chance to pray the litanies in the presence of the Lord Himself.

Hence we find in the liturgy that the Holy Trinity is present as well as the Bible, the saints, the oneness of the Church and the Lord Himself. The liturgy encompasses all the issues in the spiritual life of the Orthodox Church. Therefore, it is important that every Orthodox teacher should mention the



liturgy when he is discussing a spiritual topic.

IT MUST BE PATRISTIC. Christianity is nearly two thousand years old. Therefore, as an Orthodox teacher, one must not teach his own thoughts and wisdom. We need the guidance, wisdom, richness and heritage of our Early Fathers. We must read as much as we can in the Patristic Writings and we must quote from our Fathers in our teachings as much as we can. This is indeed an important feature of the Orthodox teaching.



For example, it would be a shame if one was to speak about the Incarnation of Our Lord without mentioning the teaching of St Athanasius. This blessed



teacher taught about the Incarnation to all the ages and to Christendom at large. He gave some very simple yet very deep examples to illustrate the Incarnation. He gave the example of the good teacher who, in teaching young children, comes down to the intellectual level of these children; Jesus came down from heaven to teach us and redeem us.

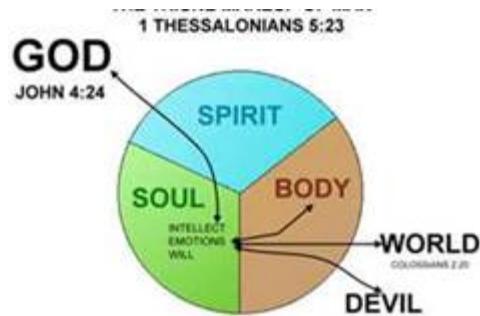
He also gave the example of the straw which when covered with a non-inflammable material will not be consumed by fire even for two or three days. This example also illustrates that when we put on Christ we can be delivered from judgement.

Another famous example is that of the father whose son was travelling to a far place. The father called an artist and asked him to paint a picture of his son before he left. After some days this picture was spoiled. So he asked the painter to draw another picture. Because the painter had forgotten the features of the son, they decided to bring the son back. Then, the painter offered to destroy the old portrait and paint a new one. The father refused and insisted that the painter amend the old one as it carried many memories. So in the presence of the son, the old image was renewed. In this example, the father symbolises God the Father, the son symbolises the Son,



the artist symbolises the Holy Spirit and the painting symbolises man who was created in the image and likeness of God.

IT MUST BE SPIRITUAL. As Orthodox we speak about a holistic spirituality. For example when we pray, this includes the spirit praying, the mind thinking and understanding, the emotions feeling and the body kneeling and participating through prostration, lifting of hands and so on. Therefore our spirituality comes out of our whole being. **"I pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding,"** 1 Cor 14:15.



Therefore the Orthodox spirituality is spiritual, mental, emotional and physical. The whole being is glorifying the Lord. However, if one emphasises only the emotional aspect, through the interplay of certain feelings, hymns, clapping of the hands, he will eventually agitate his body, bringing about the same reaction as effected through certain types of modern music. This type of music agitates the feelings and then the body but the spirit is not working. Mature feelings and emotions are characterised by their calmness, peacefulness and depth, having fervent love to the Lord, analogous to light more than to fire.

In this type of emotion, the body is always under control, not vehemently agitated. He can still communicate with the Lord with understanding through the spirit. However, in the case where emotions are stressed, above all other factors, the person may easily become subject to mind control or "brain washing". The effects of this can be quite disastrous and have reached the extent of encouraging the audience to commit suicide as is known to have occurred among certain sects and religions.

The human personality consists of mind, spirit, emotions and body; these faculties are interlinked and are interdependent. Therefore,



Orthodox repentance is not only emotional but is also intellectual, spiritual and physical. Hence, when one repents, the emotions are there but in a controlled manner. Yet, he repents because he has encountered Christ and has comprehended in a peaceful and logical way that life with Christ is by far better; then having calm feelings towards Christ, he would bow down before Him asking Him to accept his repentance.

Therefore we do not cancel emotions but we also do not allow them to lead us. Some Charismatic sects would build up a lot of emotions to an extent that can have a dangerous effect. This intense emotional activity can easily lead to a sort of personal satisfaction of having accomplished a lot of religious activity leading to a false sense of pride. Also, through its control over the mind, the emotions can destroy the faith. We want emotions that are controlled by the Holy Spirit and the mind. His Holiness Pope Shenouda III used to say that a spiritual person is one whose spirit is led by the Holy Spirit and whose body is led by his spirit.

IT MUST BE THEOLOGICAL. We must continually try to trace our teachings to their theological roots. For example, when we discuss Christ's sufferings we should not be merely emotional. Emotions are not sufficient. Rather, we must probe more deeply into the matter and ask questions such as, "What was the necessity of the redemption?", "What is the function of the Blood of the Lord?", "How does the Blood forgive?", "How does the Blood purify?", "How does the Blood sanctify me and make me abide in the Lord and the Lord in me?"



It is well known that in the ancient church, all the people were theologians in a simple way, in that they knew the major facts of theology. Origen once said that the theologian is the man that can pray. By theology we don't mean profound expressions of Greek terminology but rather to be in contact with God, Theos, and this occurs through prayer. Also it is a patristic saying that the theologian is a martyr. This is



because unless the martyr knows everything about heaven and eternal life he would not sacrifice his life for the sake of Christ. This is the theology that revives the soul and not the theology that sometimes splits the churches. If we study Patristic Writings, we will be enriched and illuminated by the sayings of the Fathers, coupled with their behaviour.

IT MUST BE NON-INDIVIDUALISTIC. The word *ecclesia* means "group". Therefore we never accept individualism in the church. In the church we are not members in a team. We are organs in a body which are useless when isolated from the rest of the body. In the same way, we feel that we are completing, supporting and in need of each other. This relationship has been described in Rom12 and in 1 Cor12. Each member has an important function in the church. In Romans 12, we can see 13 different jobs in the church. Each one is equally important.

In acting as an individual, one can become a dictator. Individualism cancels the body of Christ, the group, the reference. An individualist could easily perish and lead others to the same fate. Orthodox teaching is always group oriented, non-individualistic. I never bring forward my own concepts but the Church's at large. The group supervise my teachings and evaluate and possibly criticise and amend something. St Paul himself, even after 14 years, having received his ministry directly from the Lord, went to St Peter and St John and introduced the gospel to them "**lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain,**" Gal2:2. It was not because he was suspicious but rather it is the Orthodox approach to gain the approval of the church at large, of the "group" and not of his mind alone. Therefore, in our teaching we always need to be together, to complete each other and to criticise each other.

I also must be humble enough to accept corrections to my ideas which will save me from going astray and the people with me also. This constant care and guidance by the Church will assist me and protect me from deviation as well as those with me. It is a very dangerous task to be a teacher and it is very



important to have a reference, the reference being the Church at large - the saints, our heritage, our patristic writings and so on. Therefore, to stick to individual opinion, is non-Orthodox but rather, is a catastrophe to the Church.

IT MUST BE HOLISTIC. We never intend to isolate the congregation from society. This is non-Orthodox. A good Christian personality is one which can interact with other personalities around it. In this sense we are the salt of the world, the light of the world and the ambassadors of Christ in the community. We must have our own political and social roles in society. We must introduce the Lord to them through a practical example. We must lead a life that is active in all directions, not only with respect to the saints and believers but also with respect to the community. For how can they believe without a preacher?

We must be aware of what is being taught in schools, what is being transmitted through the media and so on. When St Mark established Christianity in Egypt, he established the Catechetical School of Alexandria in order to study the Greek philosophy and concepts in order to reach out to people through love, conviction and personal example. We want a Christian who knows his Coptic



roots, knows the meaning of Orthodoxy and who can interact with society.





THE SERVANT OF THE KINGDOM

Big idea: To know and realise the characteristics of the true servant of God.

Bible text: Luke 10:38-42 and others.

Bible Verses: John 17:19, "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, they also may be sanctified by the truth."

Matt 11:29, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls".

Students will

Know:

- ✖ The servant of the kingdom must be a good example to the other members 24/7.
- ✖ The servant of the kingdom must have the knowledge of all matters connected with the kingdom.
- ✖ The servant of the kingdom must practice the 5C's of the service.

Feel:

- ✖ That the church and all her servants are members of the sacred Body of Christ (Eph 1:23).
- ✖ That we are ambassadors for Christ (2Cor5:20).
- ✖ Feel concerned and eager for the salvation of the people.

Do:

- ✖ Be more diligent in participating in the Servants' Preparation Classes.
- ✖ Pray and ask the lord to send labourers to His harvest.



THE SERVANT OF THE KINGDOM



THE SERVANT MUST HAVE AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE KING CHRIST

Be a disciple at the feet of Jesus (Luke10:38-42)

At His feet we listen and learn the message from the Lord before we transfer it to God's people. We have to be filled so that we can flow onto others. You can't give what you don't have. Communion with God increases our spiritual sensitivity.

Be obedient and committed (1Kin58:16-17)

David's desire to build the temple was a good and genuine one. Yet it was the Lord's desire that Solomon, his son, would build it. There is a cost to discipleship. In Luke9:59-62 Jesus reveals three important principles: 1)that the disciple relinquishes personal or earthly security- if the Lord has nowhere to lay His head, neither will the disciple; 2) nothing not even the honour due to parents can be an obstacle to serving the Lord; and 3) a disciple cannot delay the good that Christ demands. In Luke8:38-39, we learn we need to obey even if it is against our good intentions. St Paul described himself as a bond-servant, i.e. with no rights. We have to be obedient to the Lord 24/7 (John4:2).

Trust the Lord (John11:40)

All things work together for good for those who love God. Jesus did not come when Lazarus was sick. He came when he was already dead. Yet we should trust the wisdom of the Lord (Rom11:33).

Be humble and feel unworthy (Isa6:1-9; Luke5:8, 10)

If you think you are good enough for the service depending on your knowledge and enthusiasm, you are sure to fail! If you humble yourself in front of the Lord, you will be given utterance when you open your mouth. Then your words will be effective and produce fruit for the Glory of God.

Experience the presence of the Lord and His sympathy everyday

When you are hurting, He will wipe your tears; when you are weak, He will give you strength. Also experience the reaction of the Lord to the needs and feelings of His people. Mary wept, so did Jesus. St Paul in 2Cor12:7-9 was desperate; he experienced the strength and sympathy of the Lord.





Wait upon the Lord to say the last word in any situation

King Saul in 1Sam 13:8-15 tried to cut corners. He was worried and took a short cut. The result was the loss of his position as King. In any situation, do not be quick to respond. Go to the Lord and ask for guidance before making a decision or taking any action. Pray, "what would You like me to do Lord?" The service belongs to the Lord. Any issues should be put before the Lord, to say His last word regarding them.

Pour fragrant oil on Jesus' body (John12:1-3)

Bringing people to the Lord is like pouring fragrant oil on the body of the Lord. He is the one that can make us fragrant. All humanity stunk. Jesus died to make us fragrant. Like Mary, put fragrant oil on Jesus' body by helping to reconcile His children with Him. St Paul tells us in 2Cor2:14-15 that the Lord diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge through us.



THE SERVANT OF THE KINGDOM MUST BE A GOOD EXAMPLE TO THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE KINGDOM

St Paul wrote to Timothy, the bishop of Colossae, "Let no one despise your youth but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith and in purity," 1Tim4:12. God forbid that the name of the Lord is blasphemed because of us (Rom2:24); rather we should glorify His name (Matt5:16).

THE SERVANT OF THE KINGDOM MUST HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE OF ALL MATTERS CONNECTED WITH THE KINGDOM

This means we should make time and effort in learning. Jesus himself made time and effort to teach us. This is evident in the following:

- ❖ Jesus sent John the Baptist (Mark1:1-4).
- ❖ Jesus came down from heaven (Mark1:14), and Jesus taught the people for more than three years, Jesus chose disciples and explained things more thoroughly to them (Mark4:10-11). Then, Jesus sent them on their missions (Mark6:7).
- ❖ The person that replaced Judas Iscariot was with Jesus from the beginning (Acts1:21).
- ❖ St Paul was no exception. He was taught by the Lord himself for three years (Gal 1:11, 15-18).
- ❖ Jesus gave us the fellowship of The Holy Spirit (John14:26).
- ❖ And Jesus spent forty days after the resurrection explaining and teaching (Acts1:2-3).



THE SERVANT OF THE KINGDOM MUST EXERCISE THE FIVE C'S OF THE SERVICE

Commission

"And say to Archippus, 'take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord that you may fulfill it,'" Col 4:7. We are to be accountable to the Lord. To serve is not optional. It is a must. We are to go ahead and make disciples of all nations. We are given the power of the Holy Spirit, the presence of the Lord with us always, even to the end of the age (Matt28:18-20).

Compassion

Compassion was the heartbeat of our Saviour's ministry. "But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them because they were weary and scattered like the sheep having no shepherd," Matt9:36. We need to care for every soul. God loves the soul more than any of His creation. He fashioned it after at His own image and made it according to His likeness. Sadly, every soul has departed from God and gone astray. Lovingly, Jesus has bought the soul again with a price -the price of His Blood that He shed on the cross.



An immortal soul is beyond all prices. There is no trouble too great, no humiliation too deep, no suffering too severe, no labour too hard, and no expense too large to win a soul. St Paul said, "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some," 1Cor9:22.

Consistency

This means no double standards. "You are the salt of the Earth, but if the salt loses its flavour, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled under feet by men. You are the light of the world... Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven," Matt5:13-16.

Commitment

We are not volunteer servants, i.e. we only serve in our spare time. We have to be reliable and punctual. We put God and His service above all. No excuses (Luke14:16-24). "Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes fourth weeping, bearing seed for sewing, shall



doubtlessly come again with the rejoicing, brings his sheaves with him,"
Psa126:5-6. We will surely be rewarded as promised in John12:26.

Concern

Anyone who knows Jesus will want others to know Him too. "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost," Luke19:10. "And the Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'," Rev22:17. When my concern for others is in keeping with the concern of the Holy Spirit toward mankind there is a community of interest in the individual that results in compulsion. For example, Andrew found Simon his brother (John1:41) and the Samaritan



woman called all the people in her town (John4). Jesus shows the way, "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men," Matt4:19. A love for Christ produces a love for mankind. Christ left this commandment to us: "Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest," Matt9:38. We hope that the Holy Spirit is not saddened at any stage to say as in Eze34:6, "My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every hill; yes, my flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth and no one was seeking or searching for them."

All servants are members of the sacred body of Christ, the Church. As ambassadors for Christ we need to be concerned and eager for the salvation of God's children (2Cor5:20). Let us all be diligent in attending the *Servants' Preparation Classes*. Let us all attend with earnestness to encounter the Lord Jesus as He teaches us all (both you and me).

Let us ask the Lord to send labourers to His harvest because "**the harvest is great and the labourers are few,**" Matt9:37. May the Lord be glorified in every moment of our life. May the Lord give us the blessing and grace to look after His sheep diligently for His greater Glory. Amen.

IN THE SERVICE: GOD WON'T ASK

❖ God won't ask what kind of fancy car your drove.

He will ask how many people, who didn't have transportation, you took to church.



- ❖ God won't ask the square footage of your house.
He will ask how many people you helped who didn't have a house.
- ❖ God won't ask how many fancy clothes you had in your closet.
He will ask how many of those clothes you gave away.
- ❖ God won't ask what your highest salary was.
He will ask if you trampled over any people to obtain that salary.
- ❖ God won't ask how much overtime you worked.
He will ask did you work overtime for your family.
- ❖ God won't ask how many promotions you received.
He will ask what you did to promote others.
- ❖ God won't ask how many degrees you had.
He will ask how many people you thanked for helping you get those degrees.
- ❖ God won't ask what your parents did to help you.
He will ask what you did to help your parents.
- ❖ God won't ask what you did to help yourself.
He will ask what you did to help others.
- ❖ God won't ask how many friends you had.
He will ask how many people you were a friend to.
- ❖ God won't ask what you did to protect your rights.
He will ask what you did to protect the rights of others.
- ❖ God won't ask what neighbourhood you lived in.
He will ask what other neighbourhoods you visited.
- ❖ God won't ask about the colour of your skin.
He will ask about the colour of your heart.
- ❖ God won't ask how many times your deeds matched your words.
He will ask how many times they didn't.





THE SERVICE IS A SACRIFICE OF LOVE

Big Idea: Sacrifices in the New Testament.

Bible Text: various.

Bible Verse: John 15:12, "This is my commandment, that you love one another just as I have loved you"

Students will

Know:

- ✖ A summary of the sacrifices in the Old Testament.
- ✖ In the New Testament we are expected to offer spiritual sacrifices of love.
- ✖ Loving as Jesus did.
- ✖ Types of Sacrifices in the New Testament
 - Sacrifice of faith (Phil 2:17, Exo29:38-40).
 - Sacrifice of prayer (Rom2:1, Psa14:2).
 - Sacrifice of giving (Phil 4:18).
 - Sacrifice of humility (Psa51:17, 1Pet4:11).
- ✖ Acceptable/unacceptable Sacrifices (Phil 4:18; Mal 1:8).
- ✖ The reward (Phil 4:19).

Feel: Encouraged to offer the sacrifice of the service with love.

Do: Be more diligent in the service.



THE SERVICE IS A SACRIFICE OF LOVE



Sacrifice was a ritual through which the Hebrew people offered the blood or flesh of an animal to God in payment for their sins. Sacrifice originated in the Garden of Eden, when God killed animals and made tunics for Adam and Eve (Gen3:21). God's permission of this covering, symbolized that sinful man could come before God without fear of death.

When Noah left the ark, his first act was to build an altar and sacrifice animals to God (Gen8:20). Abraham regularly worshiped God by offering sacrifices to Him (Gen12:7).

In the Mosaic Law, sacrifice had three central ideas: consecration, expiation (covering of sin), and propitiation (satisfaction of divine anger). Sacrifice as worship required man to give back to God what God had given to him.

Some specific sacrificial offerings called for in the Mosaic Law included the burnt offering, which pointed to Christ's atoning death for sinners (2Cor5:21) and His total consecration to God (Luke2:49); the meal offering, which symbolically presented the best fruits of human living to God (Heb10:5-10); the peace offering, which celebrated the covering of sin, forgiveness by God, and the restoration of a right relationship with God (Judges20:26); and the sin offering, in which guilt for the worshiper's sin was transferred symbolically to the animal through the laying on of the offerer's hands (Lev16:8-10).



Both Old and New Testaments confirm that sacrifices were symbolic. Because of their sins, the Hebrews presented offerings by which they gave another life in place of their own. These substitutes, pointed to the ultimate sacrifice, Jesus Christ, who laid down His life for the sins of all people (Heb10:118).





FOUR DIFFERENT LOVES

In the New Testament, a sacrifice is death to the world. We are expected to offer spiritual sacrifices of love. Greek, the language of the New Testament, has specific words for various types of love. 'Eros' is the word for passion, infatuation, sexual, or romantic love. 'Storge' refers to the natural affection a mother has for her child and the child for his or her mother. 'Phileo' refers to the intimacy that good friends share. Agape is sacrificial love; a commitment that motivates us to deny ourselves on behalf of another. This is the type of love that Christ had in mind when He commanded His followers to love one another.

JESUS' COMMAND TO LOVE (John13:34-35)

This was a new commandment. Leviticus19:18 commanded the Jews to "love your neighbour as yourself". How was Jesus' command any different? We are to treat people with the same affection and mercy that God has shown us. Christ's instructions to the disciples raised the standard for how we are to treat others, thinking of their needs, not primarily our own.



JESUS TOLD US TO LOVE OUR ENEMIES.

That doesn't mean we have to like the actions, attitudes, or philosophies of those who oppose us. However, we are called to love them. When Jesus cleansed the temple of the money-changers, He hated what they were doing (Matt21:12-13). However, that didn't change His feelings towards them (Matt23:37-38).

The distinguishing characteristic of a believer should be love (John13:34-35). First Corinthians13:1 says that if we don't have love, we are like a solitary cymbal clang or a noisy gong, loud, unpleasant, and meaningless. We should be so kind to others that no one wonders whether or not we are Christians. We are to walk in sacrificial love. In other words, it should be our lifestyle, part of our character (Eph5:2). More than our words, our deeds should convey God's love.

LOVING AS JESUS DID

How did He love? John15:12 says, "This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you".

Selflessly: Our love should not be centred on what someone can do for



us, but how we can bless him or her. Our attitudes should be the same as Jesus, who "did not come to be served, but to serve," Matt20:28.

Understandingly: Jesus knew the backgrounds and limitations of His followers. He realized that sometimes they were fearful and weak. This is one reason why He was able to have compassion on them when they failed.

We should show the same consideration for others who mistreat us or live sinfully. Instead of judging them, we should ask ourselves, 'What happened to them in the past? How did their parents raise them? What is going on now in their lives?' There is always a reason why people rebel against God. Trying to understand doesn't change their guilt before Him, but it can help you love more freely.

People say, "Love is blind." Yes, infatuation is usually rooted in ignorance, but true love sees people as they are and cares for them anyway. That's why couples are counselled to really get to know each other before marrying. Everyone has faults and shortcomings, but it is wise to discover who someone really is, before committing to a lifetime together.

Forgivingly: A person who loves genuinely will also be forgiving. For example, I remember a believer who told me he was heading to the prison to share the gospel with his mother's killer, who had been driving drunk. That is real forgiveness!

There are countless ways we can take offence but an unforgiving spirit has painful consequences. If we hang on to bitterness and resentment, our health will suffer, not just our relationships with God and others. No matter what you have done, Jesus is willing to cleanse you. Remember that, the next time He asks you to extend mercy towards someone.

Sacrificially: Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me," Mark8:34. The highest form of love is to be willing to lay your life down for another. You may not ever have to die to save someone, but genuine love almost always involves some level of sacrifice. Although we will never duplicate Christ's atoning death on the cross, we can deny ourselves and serve others in love.





TYPES OF SACRIFICES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Sacrifices of faith (Phil 2:17): The service is a sacrifice of faith (Rom10:14). We are poured out like a drink offering (Exo29:38-40).

Sacrifice of prayer and praise (Rom12:1, Psa141:2): In the service, we pray for wisdom and we pray for fellow servants (Eph6:18, 19).

Sacrifice of giving (Phil 4:18): In the service we give time, money, effort etc. The minimum time we can give is 10%.

Sacrifice of humility (Psa51:17, 1Pet4:11): Apart from Christ we can do nothing. Jesus taught saying "So likewise you, when you have done all those things, which you are commanded say, 'we are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do', " Luke17:10.

ACCEPTABLE/UNACCEPTABLE SACRIFICES

Ensure that our sacrifices are acceptable (Phil 4:18), a sweet- smelling- aroma, well-pleasing to God. Avoid offering blemished and unorderly sacrifices (Mal 1:8).

THE REWARD

"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus," Phil 4:19.

Dear Lord

I dedicate this day and every moment of my life for you,
to glorify Your name

I unite myself to all the prayers and masses that are prayed today
through the world

I place upon your hands and into the chalice every moment of my life,
my soul, my body, my intellect and my will.

I place also all those whom I love, those who do good to me, who have
done me good, those who recommended themselves to my prayers.

I place also upon your hands all my joys, my sorrows of today, my work
with its fatigue, my cross with its bitterness.

I ask you, Dear Lord, to retain for me from each of these masses
a drop of your Precious Blood in expiation of my sins.

O Divine Heart of Jesus, give to the world many and holy priests
to continue the work of your Redemption.

Amen



STEWARDSHIP IN THE SERVICE

Big Idea: The service is stewardship.

Bible Text: Matt 24:45-51; Matt 25:14-30.

Bible Verse: 1Cor11:1, "Imitate me just as I also imitate Christ."

Students will

Know:

- ✖ Characteristics of the steward (Matt24:45-51).
- ✖ Faithfulness in talents and gifts (Eph4:7-16).
- ✖ Accountability for gifts (Matt25:14-30).
- ✖ Jesus is our model (John17:4-19).

Feel:

- ✖ The need to serve as Jesus did.
- ✖ Realize that the service is a means of spiritual growth for the servant in the first place.

Do:

- ✖ Be faithful in their talents.
- ✖ Be diligent and accountable in the service.



STEWARDSHIP IN THE SERVICE



The service is stewardship (Matt24:45-51 and Matt25:14-30). As stewards or managers we ought to be faithful in the liturgical life of the church. The church in which the Christian life develops is not primarily an organization but an organism whose parts or members revive their edifying power from Christ to grow up into Christ (Eph4:13). St Paul does not look at the Christian as an isolated individual walking towards perfection, but as a member of the body, striving to reach the perfect faith and full knowledge of the Son of God.

Therefore, the members of the body of Christ, the church, need to participate fully in the liturgies. We need to fast and take part in the mass and seasonal songs and practice the sacraments especially confession. Church life is our life and we ought to live it with diligence. We must not be late to the Mass or to the meeting. We do not fast because it is the Church Calendar, or we have to, or any other reason, but because it builds us up towards spiritual maturity.

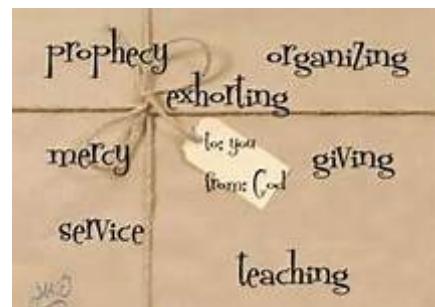
We should look for the meaning in every church rite and practice it with all our heart. If God is our father, the Church is our mother. When we have been built up, each member of the Church is to be a Christian worker so that the work that God wants to perform through the local Church can now be accomplished.

FAITHFULNESS IN TALENTS (Eph4:7-16)

While the Church is one in essence, it is diverse in gifts and functions. Each member is unique before God, with gifts and roles granted by Him. The Holy Spirit extends gifts to each person at Chrismation, i.e. when receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. In Rom12:3-8, St Paul gives seven examples of gifts which are prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhorting, giving, leading and mercy. There are others too.

WHY IS THERE DIVERSITY OF PERSONS AND GIFTS IN THE CHURCH?

- For unity of service (Eph4:12-13).
- For the preservation of truth (Eph4:14).
- For the operation of love (Eph4:15-16), the primary quality of Christian growth.





ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GIFTS (Matt25:14-30)

The parables of the talents illustrate the use of gifts given by God. A talent was a great sum of money and came to designate a special gift or endowment. The Lord came after a long time but exacted full accountability. The wicked and lazy servant wouldn't evade responsibility for ignoring his talent.

We are stewards of every gift, using each for our own and our neighbours' salvation. Idleness is a renunciation of God's grace, as well as a lack of love for God and humanity. Since people are managers, or stewards, of God's gifts, each of us will give account of how we used the abundance (Matt25:29). When one has zeal he will be given more from God, but if he does not use what he has, and fails to participate in the life of the kingdom, God's gift will be taken away. This is a hard say but true.

JESUS IS OUR MODEL

St Paul said, "**Imitate me as I also imitate Christ**", 1Cor11:1. At the end of His ministry, Jesus gave an account of His service to the Father (John17:4-19). From this account we learn that the aim of Jesus in His service was twofold, namely to glorify God and to complete the task allocated (John17:4). His task was (a) to deliver the people He served from the evil one; (b) they were no longer of the world and (c) they became holy. He showed them the way so they knew the Saviour and as a result they were transferred.



HOW DID JESUS GO ABOUT HIS SERVICE?

Jesus taught (John17:6).

The lesson is a relationship between the servant and God. When the lesson is prepared diligently and prayerfully, God's message to the servant and to the class becomes clear. It then acquires the ability and power by the grace of the Holy Spirit to transfer.

Jesus prayed (John17:9).

We cannot solve people's problems. We can only pray and put them in God's hands.



Jesus visited them (John17:12).



Jesus served at the Sea of Galilee.

About 700 feet below sea level, hot springs around the lake believed had



healing powers. Business men and physicians charged high fees for the ill to sit in the bathhouses erected near the pool. Jesus knew of their hurts and healed them. Whether it is a lack of joy, low self-worth, guilt from an unhealthy life style, or physical affliction Jesus heals us.

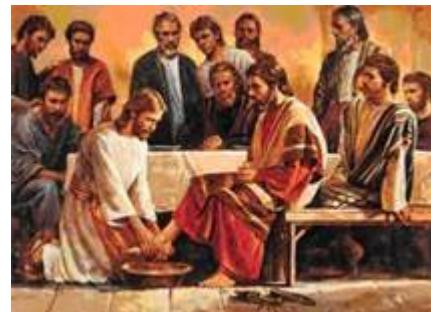
We can also go out and meet the needs of others. Because many people are afraid to come for help, we must free them from the attitude of concern. Then, when they know that we will not turn away, they can freely accept our help. Find a need and fill it. Find a hurt and heal it, as our Lord used to do. Jesus could say that because of His service the people were kept and none was lost (v12). Visitation can be by phone, e-mail and card or to home.



For the sake of the people He served, **Jesus sanctified himself**. He is all holy. He is the Holy one but still, He teaches us to sanctify ourselves for the sake of those whom we serve, so that we are not a stumbling stone to the young ones.

Jesus was servant of all.

At the last supper, Jesus exemplified the real meaning of love and service when, as Lord and teacher, He willingly washed the feet of His disciples. In doing so, Jesus demonstrated the humble role of service to others (John13:12-15). Jesus served His disciples in an unusual, traditionally unacceptable, and unexpected way. By His actions, He taught us that true greatness is accompanied by a loving service and success comes from serving others. Whom can you serve today in an unusual and unexpected way? When God brings a seemingly humbling, degrading responsibility into your life, accept it with positive joy. "**If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all,"** Mark9:35.



We realize that as we serve following Jesus model, we grow in our relationship with Christ, in love for God and His people and in many virtues especially humility.



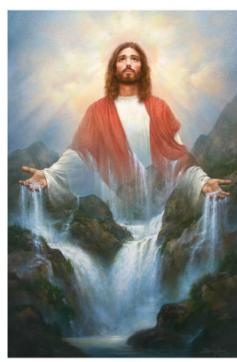
Pray the prayer of Jesus in John17:6, filling in the blanks the names of the people you serve.

"I have manifested Your name to (_____) whom You have given me out of the world. (_____) is Yours, You gave (_____) to me, and (_____) has kept Your word. "Now (_____) has known that all things which You have given Me are from You. "For I have given to (_____) the words which You have given Me; and (_____) has received *them*, and has known surely that I came forth from You; and (_____) has believed that You sent Me. "I pray for (______). I do not pray for the world but for (_____) whom You have given Me, for (_____) is Yours. "And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in (______).

"Now I am no longer in the world, but (_____) is in the world, and I come to you. Holy Father, keep through Your name (_____) whom You have given me, that (_____) may be one as We are.

"I have given (_____) Your word; and the world has hated (_____) because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. "I do not pray that You should take (_____) out of the world, but that You should keep (_____) from the evil one.

"(_____) is not of the world, just as I am not of the world. "Sanctify (_____) by Your truth. Your word is truth. "As you sent me into the world, I also have sent (_____) into the world. "And for (_____) sake I sanctify Myself, that (_____) also may be sanctified by the truth. "I do not pray for (_____) alone, but also for those who believe in Me through (_____) Word; "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.





THE PLAN OF JESUS IN HIS MINISTRY

Big Idea: Christ's nature and policy of His mission were explained before, during, and after the Transfiguration.

Bible Text: Matt16:15-28, Matt17:1-8.

Bible Verse: Matt17:5 "This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear Him".

Students will

Know: ✕ Before the Transfiguration, Jesus established four important truths about Himself.
 ✕ The Transfiguration
 ✕ Significance of the Transfiguration
 ✕ God has a plan for each one of us.

Feel: Grateful to learn from Christ's revelation of His mission.

Do: ✕ Ask the Lord to have a clear vision in the service.
 ✕ Serve the Lord with zeal and honesty.



THE PLAN OF JESUS IN HIS MINISTRY

 In His mission, Jesus had a plan which He revealed to His disciples to follow suit. Eight days **before the Transfiguration**, as our Lord Jesus Christ was teaching His disciples, He established four very important truths about Himself.

HIS DEITY

"**You are Christ the Son of the living God,**" **Matt16:16**, was the answer the Holy Spirit had put on Peter's tongue after our Lord had asked His disciples "**...and who do you say that I am?**" **Matt16:15**. The Lord commended Peter not for his person, but for his faith that Jesus Christ is God. Upon this faith, He promised to build His Church, "**Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.** And I also say to you that you are Peter (Petros), and on this rock (Petrica) I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven," **Matt16:17-19**. It is noteworthy to explain that in Greek, "Petros" is a small stone whereas "Petrica" is a big rock.

HIS PASSION

Following the assertion of His Deity, our Lord Jesus Christ stated that He, the Messiah that Peter had just proclaimed to be the Son of God, came to the world to be handed over to the Jews, who would also deliver Him to the hands of the Gentiles. "**From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day,**" **Matt16:21**. When Peter began to rebuke Him saying, "**Far be it from you, Lord; this shall not happen to You**", Jesus said, "**Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men,**" **Matt16:22-23**. Jesus was focused on His mission and



would not be deviated for any reason. Similarly, we need to be spiritually focused in our service which we have received from the Lord that we may fulfill it (Col 4:17).

DISCIPLESHIP TO CHRIST

Following that, the Lord laid it down explicitly that if anyone wanted to be a disciple of the Messiah, they had to follow His steps by denying themselves, carrying their cross and following Him. **"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"** and **"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it,"** Matt16:25,26.

HIS SECOND COMING

"Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom," Matt16:28. That is how our Lord ended His conversation by declaring His Second Coming. This was a confirmation to the disciples that He himself is the Son of the Living God. The Transfiguration, eight days later, was a clear manifestation of Christ's Divinity and Glory.

From these events, it can be deduced, that prior to talking to the disciples about His Cross and Passion, our Lord Jesus, wanted to confirm their faith in Him as the Son of the Living God. This was necessary in order that they would not be shaken when seeing Him upon the cross. Jesus also declared that the main condition of following Him was carrying the cross. He again confirmed to them that He was the Son of the Living God who shall come in His Father's Glory to reward each one according to his works.

AT THE TRANSFIGURATION

Eight days later, the Lord took Peter, John and James and went up on Mount Tabor. These three disciples were usually the ones that went with Christ on special events: for example, at the miraculous rising up of Jairus' daughter and



later at Gethsemane. According to the Jewish Law, the verification of any incident requires the presence of three witnesses. The three disciples were the eyewitnesses for Christ's Glory and Majesty which He had received from the Father on the Mount of Transfiguration.

The two Old Testament prophets, Elijah and Moses appeared with Him in His Glory. Moses represented the Law and Elijah represented the Prophets, thus proving that both the Law and the Prophets witnessed to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Lord spoke with them about His decease (crucifixion and death) which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem in a week's time.

Seeing Christ in His Glory was so beautiful, that Peter confessed ecstatically, "It is good to be here" and suggested upholding three tabernacles for the Lord and the two guest prophets in order to ensure longer enjoyment of that magnificent spectacle. That is how the saints in Paradise feel in the presence of the Lord. Then a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice was heard saying, "**This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him,**" **Matt17:5.** A cloud is a sign of God's presence. The Old Testament registers many incidents whereby God showed His presence through a cloud.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

Is there a link between the events of the Transfiguration and what happened eight days before it? Absolutely and it was by no means accidental; rather it was orchestrated by the Holy Trinity for vital reasons to the human race. St Peter's confirmation and declaration that Jesus was Christ the Son of the Living God was followed, a week later at the Transfiguration, by yet other confirmations that Jesus Christ was God Incarnate. One of these is the appearance of Moses and Elijah who spoke about His suffering and crucifixion. Their presence showed that the Law and the Prophets, the living and the dead, all bear witness to Jesus as the Messiah, the fulfillment of the whole Old Testament. Another is the voice of the Father from heaven saying, "**This is**



my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear him," Matt17:5. This was necessary in order to keep the faith of St Peter and all the disciples intact when they see their Master being beaten and abandoned. It was because of all these details that St Peter could boldly write in his second epistle, "**For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His Majesty,"** 2Pet1:16. Although St John did not write about the Transfiguration in detail, yet he referred to it by stating, "**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His Glory,"** John1:14.

There are three other messages in the declaration of the Father:

- **My Beloved Son**

God the Father is confirming the revelation declared by St Peter eight days before. On the day of Jesus' Baptism, God the Father confirmed to the whole world that the Lamb of God is the Only Begotten Son (Matt3:17). So, when Peter, James and John heard the same voice again repeating the same words, it was a confirmation that Jesus, transfigured before them, is "**the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,"** John1:29.

- **In Whom I am well pleased**

The Son had offered Himself as an acceptable sweet-smelling burning offering (Lev1:9). That is the reason behind the Father's satisfaction. On Covenant Thursday, Good Friday, and the Feasts of the Cross, we sing a hymn saying, "He offered Himself as an accepted sacrifice on the Cross for the salvation of our race, and His Good Father smelled His aroma at the evening on Golgotha". So, when the Father said those words, He was referring to the same offering as an acceptable offering and pleasing to Him.

The first Adam disobeyed and displeased God, whereas the second Adam (Christ) came in order to please God on our behalf. Consequently when we



are united with the Son, we become pleasing to the Father. This unity became possible only after the Son's death outside Jerusalem, the death that Moses and Elijah had spoken of.

- **Hear Him**

This is an order from the Father to listen to the Son. The emphasis on "hearing" is worth examining. The Holy Bible identifies two types of listeners. Some are **dull of hearing** and others are **with itching ears**.

People dull of hearing have ears which have become so heavy that they do not internalize what they hear. Our Lord Jesus Christ mentioned it after the parable of the Soils, saying "And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive. For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them," Matt13:14,15.



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St Paul sensed this problem in Rome, and also among the Hebrews. So, he wrote to them saying, "Of whom we have much to say and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing," Heb5:11. He was telling them that this was hard to explain not because the topic was difficult nor the speaker was ineloquent, but because they had become dull of hearing. The problem was neither in the subject nor the speaker, but in the listener.

The problem of dull hearing starts first and foremost in the heart manifesting itself in the shutting off of the ears from listening. There are biblical examples of people "dull of hearing". Cain, after his offering had been rejected by God, got angry. God explained to him his mistake, showing him His readiness to forgive him, "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door and its desire is for you," Gen4:7.



But Cain was dull of hearing. Had he listened, he would not have perished. God is saying the same thing to us today. Sin is at our door. She has a desire for us, but we should rule over it.

Pharaoh was another example of a man, dull of hearing. Ten times God sent Moses and Aaron to him in order to free the people to worship God in the desert. The result was a punishment in the form of ten plagues. After each plague, pharaoh would forget and return back to his old pattern.

Judas the Iscariot listened to all the teachings and all the warnings coming from the Lord; "**It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish. Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born,**" Mark14:20, 21. But his love for money had dulled his ears to hear the truth.

Nowadays, there are many people who are living totally for their materialistic desires, love for fame and money. They have developed a dull waxed ear as a consequence of leading such a life. Coming to church and attending services do not help them that much spiritually because of their dull hearing. We need to read the Bible faithfully and know how to relate to the Lord in prayer. We need to pursue passionately the one thing that can truly satisfy the deep longing the Father has planted in the heart of every person.



People with itching ears have no tolerance for rebuke or chastisement. Therefore, in order to avoid what they do not like to hear, they change churches, spiritual fathers and seek other worship groups in the hope of finding who would tell them what they would like to hear. Words of praise, false pretences and false fables appeal to them. "**For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables,**" 2Tim4:3,4.



Examples of people with itching ears are the youth who leave home in order to avoid hearing their parents, or stop going to Sunday school to avoid hearing their teachers. Also, there are those who leave their original Church seeking another that would grant them divorce, exempt them from fasting or offer shorter services. A biblical example is during Jeremiah's time when God sent him with a very clear message to the Jews to submit to the King of Babylon (Jer27:12), since the city would be delivered to the Babylonians anyway, or be killed with the sword, epidemics or famine. But they did not like this message and put Jeremiah in jail.

GOD HAS A PLAN FOR EACH ONE OF US

As Jesus was assigned a specific task to perform on earth, similarly, each Christian is assigned a special task. It is your responsibility and mine to learn from the Lord His plan for our lives. He promises to reveal it to you if you genuinely want to know what it is. **"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart," Jer29:11-13.** Although this promise was specifically given to Israel, it also applies to anyone who desires to know His will. St Paul indicated that it was possible to know the Father's will (Col 1:9).

God's plan for you is very personal

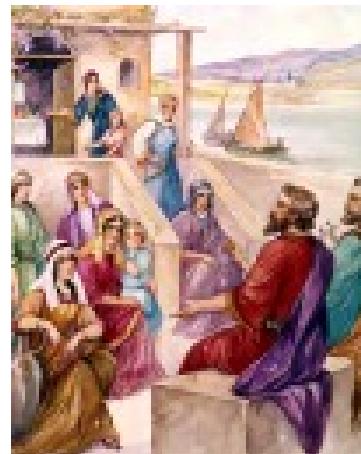
It is just for you. **"For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them," Eph2:10.**

God's plan is very definite and specific

"And your ear shall hear a word behind you saying, 'this is the way, walk in it', when you turn to the right hand and when you turn to the left," Isa30:21. The Lord guides us by His Spirit through His Word. God's plan is suited to our personalities, talents, needs, potentialities and environment.



We need to become followers of Jesus Christ, ready to carry our cross and be good listeners. To develop sharp ears, we need **firstly** to pray that the Lord may open our ears like Lydia who "the Lord opened her heart to hear the things said by St Paul," **Acts16:14**. **Secondly**, we need to listen with the fear of God, for the fear of God sharpens our ears through the wisdom we receive. "**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,**" **Pro9:10.**



May the Lord grant us to fulfill His plan for our life. May we be ready to carry our cross as we follow Him until we are changed from glory to glory and become like Him when we see Him face to face.

(Adapted from a Lecture by His Grace Bishop Youssef).



FOCUS AND DIRECTION IN THE SERVICE

Big Idea: Know and understand the hope of His calling.

Bible Text: Eph1:16-23 and Phil 1:9-10.

Bible Verse: 2Pet3:18, "but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ".

Students will

Know:

- ✖ The need to have a clear goal.
- ✖ The need to be steadfast and not drift from our goal.
- ✖ The need to recognize God's purposes in the service.
- ✖ The need to grow in the knowledge of God as we serve.
- ✖ How to grow in the knowledge of God.
- ✖ Why we need knowledge and discernment.

Feel: Encouraged to serve.

Do: Ask the Lord to help you be sincere and without offense in the service till the day of Christ.



FOCUS AND DIRECTION IN THE SERVICE



The successful servant is one who has a specific spiritual goal and believes in it. He finds his happiness in achieving that goal.

The existence of a clear goal is the first block in building the servant's character. To choose a goal is to give purpose and meaning to life.

A little girl asked her mother one day, "Mummy, how can you stand to wash dishes day in and day out without ever seeming to get really fed up with it?" The mother answered the question with perfect honesty: "Honey", she said, "I'm not just washing dishes; I'm building a home". She had a goal that gave meaning and purpose even to dishwashing.

Life without a goal is like a ship on the high seas without a port, without a destination. It just keeps sailing and sailing knowing that there is no harbour, no haven, no goal, no reunion, no arriving. How monotonous such a voyage would be! How dreadfully dull! No wonder existentialists who deny God speak of life in terms of "plague", "dread" and "nausea".

Contrast this with St Paul whose purpose and goal in life was Christ: "For me to live is Christ," he said. Christ gave so much meaning to his life that he could say: "Eye has not seen; ear has not heard, nor has it ever entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love him."

Toward the end of his life he could say, "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing," 2Tim4:9.

Here is meaning for life! Meaning that comes to those who accept this Jesus as Lord and follow Him as Master; those who commit their lives to Him and lose themselves in service to others; those who live in close



communion with Him through daily prayer, regular reading of His Word, and faithful participation in Church worship and the Sacraments. Man's true and greatest goal in life is God, Christ. It was for this goal man was made to serve. "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with your entire mind and with all your strength and with all your soul,**" **Deut6:5.** Perfect Truth and Perfect Goodness are to be found only in God. Complete fulfillment is impossible except in Him.

The man who has Christ as a goal knows a peace and happiness such as the world cannot give and cannot destroy. The man who has Christ as a goal will not complain that life is not worth living; life will always have meaning and it will have power. The man who has Christ as a goal starts on a journey that will lead him on into eternity and the glorious presence of God.

The pioneers who climbed Mt Everest waged a tremendous battle to reach the summit. Yet they tell us that so long as they could see the peak, no matter how far in the distance, they had the inspiration to keep climbing. So it is with us. If we keep our eyes on our goal, Christ, and continue to press toward the mark of His high calling, His light will shine through the gloom. In every storm He will be our shelter. In every weakness He will be our strength. In every hunger He will be the bread of life. And in death He will be our life.

Our goal in the service is to please God and glorify His name. St Paul writes to the Thessalonians saying, "**But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men but God who tests our hearts,**" **1Thess2:4.** Similarly, he wrote to the Galatians saying, "**For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For, if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ,**" **Gal 1:10.**

St Paul also advises us not to please ourselves (Rom15:1) i.e. we should not seek self-glorification, for even Christ did not please Himself (Rom15:3). There is no better goal than the sacrificial love for God and others. "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all**



your soul and with your entire mind," Matt22:37. The true servant has deep feelings to commit all his life to Jesus Christ who saved him and loves him eternally and unconditionally. So, if the King scarified His life for us, is it not right for the servant to sacrifice himself for Jesus the King of Kings?

Jesus Christ was clear in His goal. Since the beginning of His service, Jesus always focused on His goal. Jesus always talked about His hour to come. "**The son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised the third day," Luke9:22.** Jesus rebuked Peter when he tried to swerve Jesus from crucifixion. In the garden, Jesus said, "Nevertheless not My will but Yours, be done". Jesus' happiness was in completing His mission of salvation. Jesus was humiliated for us to accomplish His goal of salvation.

Jesus Christ's clear goal preserves Him from drifting to become an earthly king. "My kingdom is not from this world". Thus the clear goal preserves the servant from drifting away and sets his eyes steadfastly on it as Jesus did (Luke9:51-55).

St Paul advises us to "**Imitate me just as I also imitate Christ," 1Cor11:1.** Jesus Christ is our high model. Therefore, it is important for the servant to always put Christ in his mind, heart and words as the highest model for sacrificial love.

Imitate Christ as he walked doing good deeds and the people crowded around Him and He was always engaged in merciful acts and sacrificial love without one moment for Himself. Jesus always looked at the cross that was prepared at the end of His service.

Imitate Jesus when He was speaking with His disciples in love and pity and Judas was sitting among them. Look toward Him as He was humiliated and carrying His cross to Golgotha to complete our salvation, which was the will of His Father who sent Him. Thus there cannot be another model showing full sacrificial love except Jesus Christ.



If we lost our highest model, our will would swerve from running toward the right goal. So, we always have to look to the person of Jesus Christ as our highest model in His actions, wisdom, His love without limit, His suffering, His compassion and His strong personality (John12:27).

Jesus said, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working," John5:17. Since the service is God's business, then we should include Him in the service we do, "for we are God's fellow workers," 1Cor3:9. The service is then done jointly and not independently.

To keep in the right direction we also need to "know" God's calling and purposes in the service (Eph1:17, 18). God reveals His purposes to those who are submitting themselves to Him. For example, Jesus revealed to St Peter in a trance that He would like to include the Gentiles in the Kingdom of Heaven (Acts10 and 11:1-18).

St Paul's submission to Jesus on the road to Damascus qualified him for even more revelations about the mystery of Christ. He was entrusted to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, even though he was a Pharisee (Gal 1:11-18). As a true apostle, St Paul submitted himself to the Church and her apostles rather than elevating himself.

In his patriotic zeal, Jonah did not want God's mercy and love extended to the Ninevites, Israel's enemies. Jonah, however, learnt that God wants to save all His creation.

As we serve, it is essential to know and understand the hope of His calling. We need to grow in the knowledge of God; He then enlightens the eyes of our understanding that we may know the hope of His calling and that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith (Eph1:18 and 3:18).

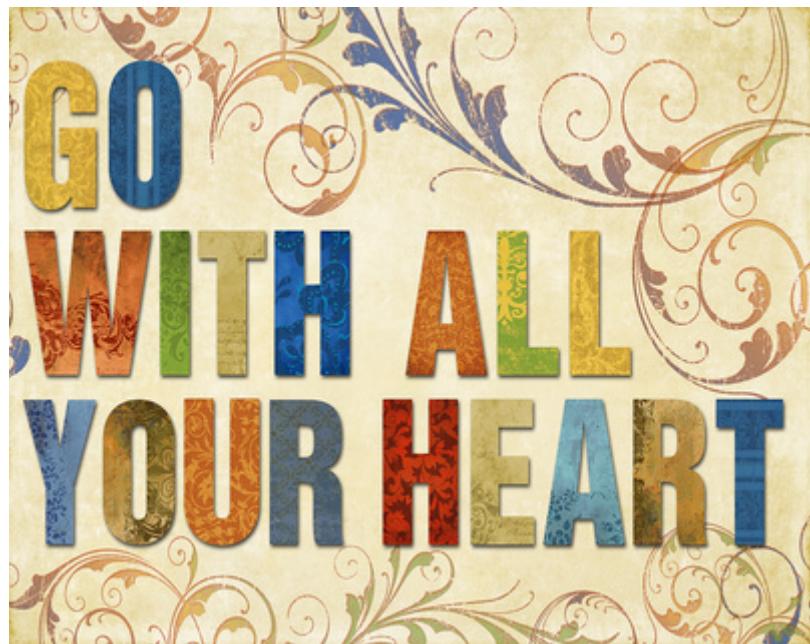
As we serve, we grow in the knowledge of our inheritance that we are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God (Eph2:19). We also grow and comprehend the love of Christ (Eph3:18) and be filled with the fullness of God



(Eph3:19). As Jonah's knowledge of God grew, God became His personal God, not only the creator of heaven and earth (Jon2:2; 3:10; 4:4-12). He realized that God's love extended to the weak and strong, the far and near.

In order to grow in the knowledge God, St Paul prays (Phil 1:9, 10) that we have a personal fellowship with Christ through prayer, the Word of God and the Sacraments (Acts4:13, Matt11:29). Equally, we should have fellowship with each other (1John1:1-3).

We need knowledge and discernment i.e. spiritual understanding to approve the things that are excellent (Phil 1:10, 1Pet3:15, 1Pet2:12) and to be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ (Phil 1:10).





SETTING GOALS IN THE SERVICE

Big Idea: Setting goals is essential for the success of the service.

Bible Text: Philippians 3:9-21

Bible Verse: 2Cor9:6, "But this I say: 'He who sows sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully'."

Students will

Know:

- ❖ What are goals?
- ❖ Why have goals?
- ❖ What stops people from achieving their goals?
- ❖ How to achieve our goals?
- ❖ The rewards
- ❖ Action plan.

Feel: Encouraged to have clear goals in the service.

Do: Set goals and plan to achieve them successfully.



SETTING GOALS IN THE SERVICE



WHAT ARE GOALS??

Goals are a projection of the kind of life you want to lead. Goals can drive you. Goals can make you skip over obstacles. There's no telling what you can do when you get inspired by them. There's no telling what you can do when you believe in them. And there's no telling what will happen when you act upon them.

WHY HAVE GOALS?

The major reason for setting a goal is for what it makes of you to accomplish it. What it makes of you will always be the far greater value than what you achieve. We all need lots of powerful long-range goals to help us past the short-term obstacles. The ultimate reason for setting goals is to entice you to become the person it takes to achieve them.

WHAT STOPS PEOPLE FROM ACHIEVING THEIR GOALS????

Some people are disturbed by those tough days because all they have is the days. They haven't designed or described or defined the future. The opposite of perseverance is procrastination. Perseverance means you never quit.

Procrastination

It usually means you never get started, although the inability to finish something is also a form of procrastination. **Your goals are not working for you. They are working against you.** It is great that you have ninety-day goals that are personal and clear. But your goals are just close enough to provide a sense of hope about your future while also being just far enough away to prevent the urgency to do anything about them in the immediate present. Ironically, they have created the false comfort of having time to stall.

Fears, even the most basic ones, can totally destroy our ambitions. The first enemy that you've got to destroy before it destroys you is **indifference**. What a tragic disease this is. "Ho-hum, let it slide. I'll just drift along." Here's one problem with drifting: you can't drift your way to the top of the mountain.

Indecision is the thief of opportunity and enterprise. It will steal your ambition. I'm telling you, doubt will destroy your life and your chances of



success. But you can't let worry loose like a mad dog that drives you into a small corner.

Over-caution is the timid approach to life. Timidity is not a virtue (unlike humility - they are different); in fact, it can be an illness. If you let it go, it'll conquer you. Timid people don't get promoted. Do battle with the enemy. Do battle with your fears. Build your courage to fight what's holding you back, what's keeping you from your goals and dreams. Be courageous in your life and in your pursuit of the things you want and the person you want to become. **The ability to focus is not a talent. It is a decision.**

HOW TO ACHIEVE OUR GOALS??

Perseverance: Learn from the ants. **First, ants never quit.** That's a good philosophy. If they're headed somewhere and you try to stop them, they'll look for another way. They'll climb over, they'll climb under and they'll climb around. **They keep looking for another way.** What a neat philosophy, to never quit looking for a way to get where you're supposed to go.

Second, ants think winter all summer. So ants are gathering in their winter food in the middle of summer. And the first warm day, the ants are out. If it turns cold again, they'll dive back down, but then they come out the first warm day. They can't wait to get out. This is the "*all-that-you-possibly-can*" philosophy.

Never give up, look ahead, stay positive and do all you can. When Andrew Carnegie died, they discovered a sheet of paper upon which he had written one of the major goals of his life: to spend the first half of his life accumulating money and to spend the last half of his life giving it all away. And he did!

Discipline: Stay focused and be disciplined. The first principle is: **break it down.** Discipline yourself to look neither forward nor backward, and you can accomplish things you never thought you could possibly do. And it all begins with those three words: break it down.

My second technique for defeating procrastination is also only three words long. The three words are: **write it down.** We know how important writing is to goal setting. Break it down. Write it down. These two techniques are very



straightforward. But don't let that fool you: these are powerful and effective productivity techniques. This is how you put an end to procrastination. This is how you get yourself started.

When you allow your goals to pull you, they unleash a creative force that can overpower any obstacle in your path. To unleash this power, though, **your goals must be well defined**. A fuzzy future has little pulling power. Well-defined goals are not fuzzy. Wishes are fuzzy. To really achieve your goals, to really have your future plans pull you forward, your goals must be vivid.

If you've ever hiked a fourteen thousand-foot peak in the Blue Mountains, one thought has surely come to mind "How did the settlers of this country do it?" How did they get from the East Coast to the West? Carrying one day's supply of food and water is hard enough. Can you imagine hauling all of your worldly goods with you mile after mile, day after day, month after month? These people had defined goals. They had ambition. They didn't focus on the hardship of getting up the mountain.

In their minds, they were already on the other side; their bodies just hadn't gotten them there yet! Despite all of their pains and struggles, all of the births and deaths along the way, those who made it to the other side had a single vision: to reach the land of continuous sunshine and extraordinary wealth, to start over where anything and everything was possible. Their dreams to accomplish their goals were stronger than the obstacles in their way.

You've got to be a goal setter. You've got to envision the future. You've got to see Katoomba while you're climbing fourteen thousand-foot peaks. You've got to see the finish line while you're running the race. You've got to hear the cheers when you're in the middle of a monster project. And you've got to be willing to put yourself through the paces of doing the uncomfortable until it becomes comfortable and until you realize your goals. Remember that those who work hard for a season of life are the same ones who discover a new style of life. Remember that extraordinary achievements come from very ordinary actions...executed one day at a time.

REWARDS

For every disciplined effort, there are multiple rewards; that's one of life's



great arrangements. In fact, it's an extension of the biblical law that says that if you sow well, you will reap well. If you're fair and honest and patient with others, your reward will be multiplied. If you give more than you expect to receive, your reward is more than you expect. But remember: the key word here, as you might well imagine, is discipline. Everything of value requires care, attention, and discipline. Our thoughts require discipline. We must consistently determine our inner boundaries and our codes of conduct, or our thoughts will be confused. And if our thoughts are confused, we will become hopelessly lost in the maze of life. Confused thoughts produce confused results.

Remember the law, "*For every disciplined effort, there are multiple rewards*". Learn the discipline of learning all you can learn, of teaching all you can teach, of reading all you can read, for in each book, there is new knowledge; for each success, new ambition; for each challenge, new understanding; for each failure, new determination. Life is like that; everything has its price. Everything affects everything else. Neglect discipline, and there will be a price to pay. Without the discipline of paying constant, daily attention, we take things for granted. Be serious. Life's not a practice session.

And remember, a lack of discipline in the small areas of life can cost you heavily in the more important areas of life. You cannot clean up your company until you learn the discipline of cleaning your own garage. You cannot be impatient with your children and be patient with your distributors or your employees. You cannot inspire others to sell more when that goal is inconsistent with your own conduct. You cannot admonish others to read good books when you don't have a library card. Your life, my life, the life of each one of us is going to serve as either a warning or an example: a warning of the consequences of neglect, self-pity, lack of direction and ambition ... or an example of talent put to use, of discipline self-imposed, and of objectives clearly perceived and intensely pursued.

CONCLUSION: Don't set your goals too low. If you don't need much, you won't become much. If you go to work on your goals, your goals will go to work on you. If you go to work on your plan, your plan will go to work on you. Whatever good things we build, they end up building us. We all have two choices: We can make a living or we can design a life.



Action Plan Declaration Script

■ My name is _____ and I am committed to doing the Spiritual Plan and I plan on accomplishing this goal by using these 3 methods:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

I am committed to:

- Working my goals on a daily basis.
- Working my goals with a serious focus.
- Reaching my next spiritual level at a much faster pace due to my desire to succeed and my willingness to work.
- Teaching others and sharing all that I learn.

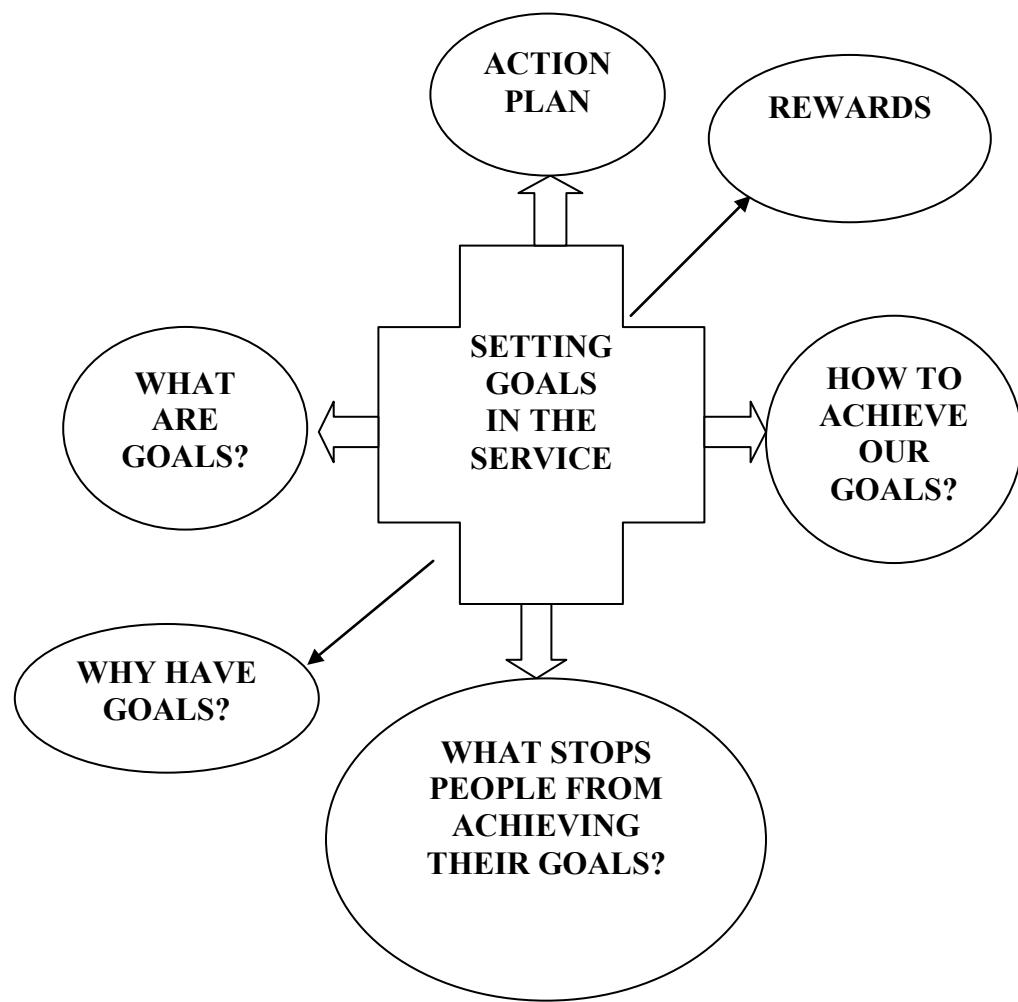
I agree to:

Achieve the activity goals each month.

- Diligently employ myself and stay focused in order to achieve the best results.
- Get rid of the "I'll do my best" attitude and instead work at my goals with the "I'll do what it takes" attitude.
- Be accountable and look forward to working with my Spiritual Leader and other members so I can develop my leadership skills and build a strong and profitable relationship with Christ.



GOALS OVERVIEW





EQUIPMENT FOR SERVING

Big Idea: The four basic tools necessary for the accomplishment of any service.

Bible Text: various

Bible Verse: Matt17:21, "This kind does not go out except by Prayer and fasting".

Students will

Know:

- ✖ Fasting is essential for our own salvation and the salvation of the people we serve.
- ✖ Any service is the fruit of prayer, Jesus prayed and fasted before starting His ministry (Matt4:1-11).
- ✖ Jesus overcomes the devil by the Word of God.
- ✖ Any service without visitation is useless and unsuccessful (Heb1:12).

Feel: The need to be fully equipped for the service of the Kingdom.

Do: Practise and use the four tools of the service in our daily life.



EQUIPMENT FOR SERVING



The Great Commission, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age," Matt28:19-20, tells us to reach the lost, teach them God's Word, win them to Jesus and mature them in the faith. These tasks cannot be done in the strength of man, but only in the power of God through fasting and prayer (Matt17:21), teaching and visitation.



FASTING

Man is body and soul (spirit). Each has needs and desires which are related to the nature of each. The body is made of the material of the earth (world). Its desires and needs are earthly (worldly). The soul (spirit) is from God. Its desires and needs are godly and heavenly. So there are two contrasted natures in man. However, both can live in complete harmony under the management of the free will. Because we live in the world, the desires of the body become more evident and stand out more clearly. If the will concedes to the desires of the body, the balance is tipped and the body tends to overrule the spirit. Examples are the gravitational point on a rod and a magnet and two objects in the magnetic field.

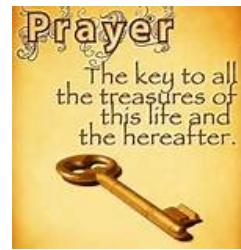
When you buy a new gadget, you find a little pamphlet where there are instructions for use, things to avoid, etc. The Good Lord is our creator (maker). He knows exactly how our body machine works. He instructed Adam how to use it so that Adam with his free will would be in control. God asked him not to eat from one tree while he could eat from all others (Gen2:16, 17). In other words, Adam must fast. In this way, the desires of the body become limited and the harmony between the soul and body is maintained. By fasting we overcome the devil.

At one stage Adam forgot the instructions of the Lord and was misled by the devil. With his own free will, Adam accepted to receive instructions from another source (a different manufacturer) which was the devil. The balance was tipped. Man is still acting in a similar fashion. "However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting," Matt17:21.



PRAYER

Our teaching should be based on prayer. It is through prayer that we receive the power of teaching. Sunday School Service is not merely about having a lesson preparation book for the coordinator to read and comment "very good". This type of preparation will have no benefit at all. It would be called research, and research is not a service. There are many academics that lecture in religious studies, but their teaching has no spiritual impact, and cannot change people's lives.



Being a faithful servant the lesson should be a fruit of prayer. The lesson of the servant who doesn't pray before preparing it will never have an impact on his or her children. Let us now look at what the Bible teaches about preaching the Word of God.

1Cor4:20, "For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power". The power of the lesson and its message come from prayer; without it our lesson will be fruitless.

1Cor2:4, "And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." It is clear from this verse that St Paul taught that human wisdom and research which are persuasive to the human mind would have no spiritual effect unless supported by the Holy Spirit, and the power of prayer.

1Cor2:5, "that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." The faith that we portray to our children should not be in worldly wisdom but the demonstration of the power of God through prayer.

1Thess1:5, "For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake." Once again, this verse tells us that our teaching is based on the power of the Holy Spirit, which we receive through prayer.

1Cor6:17, "But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him". We become united with the Lord through prayer, allowing the work of the Holy Spirit and power of God to work in us.



Acts6:4, "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." This demonstrates the importance that the apostles placed on continual prayer. Notice also that the apostles stated **prayer before ministry**. The ministry must be the fruit of prayer.

Prayer for the People We Serve

The prayer of the servant should be fervent and in depth. Some servants have different talents in their service. Some have the talent of strong personality, persuasive talk or attractive means of conveying the message of the lesson. However, a true and faithful servant should pray first for his or her children before using their talents. Let us look at what the Holy Bible tells us.

Eph3:14-17, "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... He would grant you ... to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, which Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." He, who kneels down and prays for his or her children, will in turn enjoy the result in their children knowing and loving the Lord.

We ought to pray for each of our children by their name, bringing any particular problems they have to the Lord. You may pray thus: "I beg you



Lord, I plead with you Lord, remember (...name/names...) and their problem, and solve it". Some servants, who try to solve the problems of their children only by psychological means, may complicate the problem.

We should use the spiritual means and prayer in solving problems and not worldly methods. Pope Kyrillos VI used the weapon of prayer in solving every problem he faced. He used to put such problems on the holy altar. When the problem was solved, he would say, "My son I brought you the solution to your problem from the altar".



Phil1:4, "Always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy". St Paul emphasises always in each of his prayers, he was praying for them with joy. The secret to the success of St Paul's ministry was his deep, fervent prayer for each of the Churches that he established. Although he established many Churches, geographically distant from each other, he was able to help each of them become fruitful through his



prayers. His prayer was not as matter of duty or obligation, but he prayed for them out of joy from his heart.

Eph1:16, "I do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers". The servant should keep the names of his or her children at hand, taking a note of the needs of every one of them to be mentioned before the Lord. The servant can thank the Lord for the child that starts coming back to church and for those who have become active in the service of the church.

John17:9-17, "I pray for them ... sanctify them by Your truth, Your word is truth". Here, the Lord is praying for His disciples and apostles to teach them the importance of the servant praying for his children. Jesus prays that His disciples may be kept away from the evil in the world, and be sanctified by the truth. Our service should have a similar spirit of prayer.

Luke22:32,"But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail, and when you have returned to Me, strengthen you, brethren". The Lord is talking to St Peter telling him that He prayed for him, otherwise his faith would fail. Therefore our faith is important to preserve the faith of our children.

1Sam12:23, "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you, but I will teach you the good and the right way". Here, we can see that Samuel considered it a sin if he did not pray for his people. Likewise, if we do not pray for our children, we ought to repent and confess this sin for we are accountable to the Lord.

Prayer of the Servants for Each Other

The servant should pray for his fellow servants and should ask the fellow servants to pray for him. They should pray for each other, and for their lessons, activities, and anything related to the service. This is evident from the following verses:

Col 4:2-3, "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains".

Phil 1:4,"Always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy". St Paul places an emphasis here on the constancy of prayer. The





secret behind the success of St Paul's service was his fervent and deep prayers for the Churches he established. Although many were distant from each other, yet each was fruitful through his prayers for them. His prayer for them was not out of obligation, but joyfully from the heart.

Eph1:16, "I do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers". Here, St Paul thanks God for solving their problems, and mentions their names before the Lord in his prayers. The servant should thank God for those children who have started to confess and have Holy Communion.

A group of servants used to pray while their fellow servant gave the lesson. One day, that servant found that he was unable to talk or serve at all. He found out later that his fellow servants were busy with something else, and did not pray for him.

When Joshua was at war with the Amalekites, Moses lifted his hands and prayed. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning the war, but when Moses' arms grew tired, the Amalekites started defeating the Israelites. Thus, Aaron and Hur brought a stone for Moses to sit on, and held his arms steady until the sun went down (Exo17:8-16).

It would be spiritually beneficial that while a servant is giving the lesson, the other attending servants would pray for him so that the lesson might become effective and fruitful.

Prayer for the Service

This is clear from the following verses:

Rom15:30-31, "Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, ... that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints".



Eph6:18-19, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, and for me, that utterance may be given to me,



that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel."

2Thess3:1, "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, just as it is with you."

Obviously, St Paul placed great importance on praying for him and those in the ministry, so that the gospel may be preached to others.



TEACHING

We are to teach Christ as He is revealed in the Bible. The Word of God endures for time and eternity as declared in Isaiah 40:8, "The grass withers, the flower fades: but the word of our God shall stand for ever".

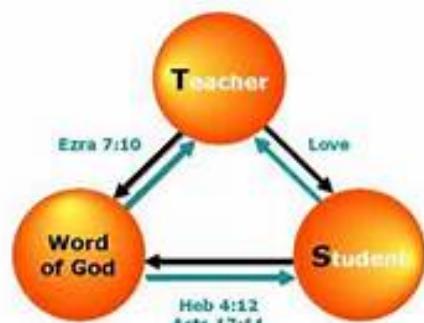
In His ministry Jesus preached the Word of God (Mark2:2).Jesus declared in John6:63, "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life". St Paul instructs St Timothy, Bishop of Ephesus, "Preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with longsuffering and teaching," 2Tim 4:2.

REASONS FOR TEACHING THE WORD OF GOD

- Conviction of sin comes through the preaching of the Word of God (Acts 2:14-37). In Peter's Pentecost sermon nine verses out of twenty three are quotations from the Old Testament.
- Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," Rom10:17.
- Cleansing comes from the Word of God.

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2Cor7:1. The promises are the words of God.

- Assurance comes from the Word of God. "These things have I written unto you that you believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life," 1John5:13.





- Comfort comes from the Word of God. "Therefore comfort one another with these words," 1Thess4:18.
- These words are the words recorded in the Bible. The Holy Scriptures must be accepted and interpreted in accordance with the belief which has been handed down by the Holy Fathers, and which the Holy Orthodox Church, our Mother, had always held and still does hold. The Bible is the Book of the Church; the way it is analysed and applied is both liturgical and Patristic.



VISITATION

Any service without visitation is useless and unsuccessful, especially in Sunday School and Youth Service. God, our Lord, visited us by Himself. He also visited Adam in the garden of paradise, and sought him when he tried to hide after eating from the forbidden tree. After Adam's dismissal from the garden, God visited all His seeds through the prophets and messengers. St Paul said, "**God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son,**" Heb1:1-2.

God used to look at people's circumstances and accordingly sent prophets and teachers in order to save them. Today, heresies, false teachings, worldly thoughts and sexual immorality are widespread and can adversely affect our children if there is no visitation. Many children and youth have been lost to the world due to the lack of visitation and communication.



Visitation is not a social activity. The purpose of visitation is the salvation of our children, and ours as well. Salvation has been offered to us on the cross, and we need to help our children know our Lord Jesus Christ and love Him.

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LEADERSHIP

Big Idea: Factors required for effective Christian leadership

Bible Text: Luke 19:11-27 and others

Bible Verse: Luke 8:16, "Therefore, take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him."

Students will

Know:

- ✖ What is leadership?
- ✖ Leading our friends and families towards God is the goal.
- ✖ Leadership is essential to Christianity.
- ✖ "You are the salt of the earth... and the light of the world," Matt 5:13-16.
- ✖ Effective leaders.

Feel: The responsibility to use God's gifts and talents to promote God's work in the world.

Do: Be light to the world and salt to the earth.



LEADERSHIP

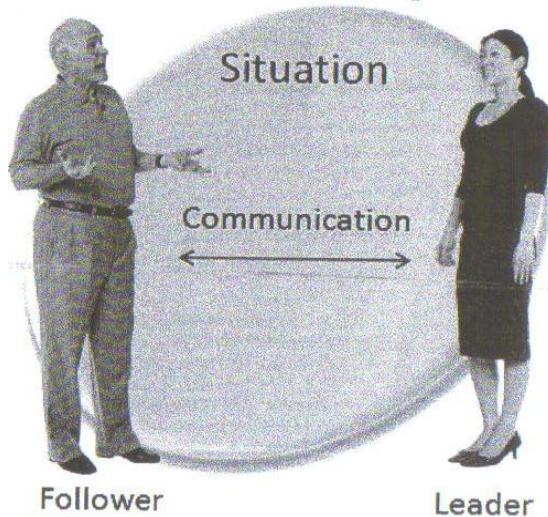


Leadership is the influence of an individual when he/she is directing the activities of a group of followers in a certain situation towards a shared goal. When we talk about leadership, we realize that it consists of three main elements which are:

- A leader
- Followers and
- A situation.

The leader is in continuous interaction with the followers in a variety of situations.

Factors of Leadership



LEADER

You must have an honest understanding of who you are, what you know, and what you can do. Also, note that it is the followers, not the leader or someone else who determines if the leader is successful. If they do not trust or lack confidence in their leader, then they will be uninspired. To be successful you have to convince your followers, not yourself or your superiors, that you are worthy of being followed.

FOLLOWERS

Different people require different styles of leadership. For example, a person who lacks motivation requires a different approach than one with a



high degree of motivation. You must know your people! The fundamental starting point is having a good understanding of human nature, such as needs, emotions and motivation.

SITUATION

All situations are different. What you do in one situation will not always work in another. You must use your judgment to decide the best course of action and the leadership style needed for each situation. For example, you may need to confront a person for inappropriate behavior, but if the confrontation is too late or too early, too harsh or too weak, then the results may prove ineffective.

COMMUNICATION

You lead through two-way communication. Much of it is non-verbal. For instance, when you "set the example", that communicates to your people that you would not ask them to perform anything that you would not be willing to do. What and how you communicate either builds or harms the relationship between you and others.

TOTAL LEADERSHIP

What makes a person want to follow a leader? People want to be guided by those they respect and who have a clear sense of direction. To gain respect, the leaders must be ethical. A sense of direction is achieved by conveying a strong vision of the future.

When a person is deciding if she respects you as a leader, she does not think about your attributes, rather, she observes what you do so that she can know who you really are. She uses this observation to tell if you are an honorable and trusted leader or self-serving person who misuses authority to look good and get promoted. Self-serving leaders are not as effective because their juniors only obey them, not follow them.

GOALS, VALUES AND CONCEPTS

Leaders exert influence on the environment via three types of actions:

- The goals and performance standards they establish.
- The values they establish for the organization.



- The business and people concepts they establish.

Successful organizations have leaders who set high standards and goals across the entire spectrum, such as strategies, market leadership, plans, meetings and presentations, productivity, quality, and reliability. Values reflect the concern the organization has for its employees, customers, investors, vendors and surrounding community. These values define the manner in how business will be conducted. Concepts define what products or services the organization will offer and the methods and processes for conducting business.

These goals, values, and concepts make up the organisation's personality or how the organization is observed by both outsiders and insiders. This personality defines the roles, relationships, rewards, and rites that take place.

LEADERSHIP IS ESSENTIAL TO CHRISTIANITY

God created us to be leaders. Out of His goodness, God bestowed on us gifts (Matt25:14-30). The amount each of us receives is based on each person's abilities (Rom12:4-7). Ignoring our talent for idleness is as much a rejection of God as outright wickedness. Our main goal is to use our talents to lead our friends and families towards God, "that I may lay hold of that for Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me," Phil 3:12.

A short term goal is to have peace with God and with people. Peace with God is the fruit of oneness with God. Faith in Christ makes us justified, an ongoing state of communion with Him. Because of this ongoing communion, we have peace with God which is also ongoing. Genuine faithfulness is continuous loyalty and obedience to God.

We are all ungodly; because of sin, everyone stands in alienation from God and we do not have the capacity to become righteous on our own. Because of God's love, Christ died for our sins to bring us the gift of righteousness (Rom5:1-12). It is our responsibility when we have experienced the love of God that we pass it on to others.



Jesus taught us to pray "Our Father..." (Matt5:9-13). He explained verse 12 in Matt5:14, "**For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**" Jesus insists on mutual forgiveness. Those who do not forgive are not forgiven. Not to forgive others is to flee willfully from the forgiveness of God for ourselves. Therefore, to enjoy the peace of God, we must have peace with God and with people.

A long term goal is to obtain eternal life with the Lord in the Kingdom of Heaven and help others do the same. St Paul advises us in Phil 3:12-16, that we be engaged in the struggle of faith, confident that Christ has made us His own, but knowing we are not yet perfected. Thus we are zealous to press on toward the completion of our salvation, the prize of the upward call of God, the resurrection to eternal life.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD AND THE SALT OF THE EARTH

Jesus defined our role in society when He said, "you are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world," Matt5:13-16. Light is necessary for clear vision and for life itself. God is the true and uncreated light (John1:4-9; 8:12; 1John1:5). Light is linked to Jesus. As Creator, Redeemer and Revealer, Jesus is "the true light that gives light to every man," John1:9. The revelation of God's love in Christ penetrates into lives darkened by sin (John8:12, 9:5; 12:46; 2Cor4:4-6).

Faith relies on this divine light. Believers, who respond to Jesus with faith, are transported "out of darkness into His wonderful light" 1Pet2:9. They become "sons of light" (John12:36; 1Thess 5:5) who shine in a perverse world (Phil 2:15). As children of light (Eph5:8), Christians are expected to walk in the light (1John1:7) and to "**let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven,**" Matt5:14-16.

Salt was used to flavor foods, and rock salt was spread lightly on soil as a fertilizer. Salt solutions were used medicinally as in washing a newborn baby (Ezek16:4). Salt is also associated with purity (Lev2:13, Ezek43:24).



Thus Elisha used salt to purify a poisonous spring (2Kings2:19-22). In **Mark9:49**, Jesus teaches, “**For everyone will be seasoned with fire and sacrifice will be seasoned with salt**”. To be seasoned with fire, means to be tested to see if one’s faith and works are genuine. In saying every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt, Jesus is quoting Leviticus2:13, in which salt stands for the remembrance of God’s covenant with His people.

When warning that salt can “lose its saltiness” Jesus was apparently referring to “rock salt” (rather than the purified salt obtained from evaporation) used as fertilizer. As our lives reflect our personal relationship with God the Father, we “fertilize” others, stimulating their spiritual growth, enabling them to taste and see the goodness of God. Minerals were leached from rock salt by moisture and the salt deteriorated under heat. Without saltines, what remained had no value to anyone.

Salt was valued as a preservative and for seasoning food (Matt5:13, Mark9:50, Col 4:6). Because of its preservative powers, its necessity for life and its ability to give flavor, salt had religious and sacrificial significance (Num18:19; 2Chr13:5). As the salt of the earth, Christians are preservers of God’s covenant and give true flavour to the world.

EFFECTIVE LEADERS

Good leaders are made not born. If you have the desire and willpower, you can become an effective leader. Good leaders develop through a never ending process of self-study, education, training and experience. There are certain things you must be, know and do. These do not come naturally, but are acquired through continual work and study (Luke8:16-18). You must enter through the narrow gate and be a risk taker. In Luke9:23-26, Jesus teaches that each person must take up his own cross. The burden in this world is different for each person, and each has been chosen by God to bear certain struggles for his own salvation and the salvation of those around him. The cross is to be taken daily. Commitment to following Christ is not just a one-time event. Rather, it is the continual practice of faith and obedience, even to the point of being shamed and persecuted by the world.



Jesus chose twelve ordinary men and made them into twelve extraordinary leaders. The harvest is great but the laborers are few. God wants you out there doing His work. He did not promise them a bed of roses but sent them as "lambs among wolves" (Luke10:1-3). Jesus challenged them to a sweet victory, "Rejoice for your names are written in heaven," Luke10:17-20.





ST PETER, A GREAT LEADER

Big Idea: Leadership qualities evident in St Peter's life and ministry.

Bible Text: Matt16:13-18 and others.

Bible Verse: Matt16:18, "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it".

Students will

Know: ✕ The name and authority given to St Peter.
 ✕ Leadership qualities of St Peter.
 ✕ St Peter's role in the Church of Rome.

Feel: That God can use us in His service despite all our weaknesses.

Do: Participate actively in the service of the Kingdom.



ST PETER, A GREAT LEADER



Jesus worked with His disciples to build leaders. To identify the leadership skills that He helped develop within His disciples we will do a study about St Peter as a model of leadership. Before his call to follow Jesus, Simon, son of Jona was a commercial fisherman. He and his brother Andrew worked in partnership with another pair of brothers, James and John, the sons of Zabedee (Luke5:10). He was married and used to take his wife with him on his missionary travels later (1Cor9:5).

Simon means "the obedient" and Jesus changed his name to Peter which means "the rock". **"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it", Matt16:18.** St John Chrysostom explains that this rock does not refer to Peter per se, but to the faith of his confession. The true rock is Christ himself (1Cor10:4).

The church is to be built on the rock of faith that Jesus is the Christ and that He is the Son of the living God. St Peter's confession of the Messiahship of Jesus Christ is the rock upon which the church is to be build (Matt16:13-18).

Jesus gave St Peter the Keys of the Kingdom of heaven (Matt16:19). The Hebrew scribe is given a key as part of his ordination, implying a spiritual authority to interpret the faith. The Pharisees, for all their missionary propaganda, shut up the Kingdom (Matt23:13).

St Peter, recognizing the Son who is over the house (Rev1:18; 3:7; 21:25) finds the "keys" delivered to him to open the Kingdom. Jesus also gave St Peter on this occasion, the power of "binding and losing" (Matt16:19). This authority was given later to all the disciples (Matt18:18). St Peter had no primacy over the other disciples. The early Church Fathers saw in these words a reflection of a



recognised rabbinic authority to expel persons from a congregation and to receive them back again. This was clear in the incidents of the 'Born Blind', the leper, the stoning of the sinners, etc. The apostles would in the coming Kingdom, be like a great scribe or rabbi, who would deliver decisions on the basis, not of the Jewish law, but of the teaching of Jesus Christ which fulfilled it (Matt18:15-17; 1Cor5:5, 2Cor2:7). The Catholics misinterpret this verse (Matt16:19) and teach that Christ gave Peter primacy over the entire Church.

St Peter helped establish the Jerusalem Church. He was known as "the apostle to the Jews" while St Paul was "the apostle to the Gentiles" (Acts14:16-23).

According to Origen, St Peter arrived at Rome in the years 66-67 AD to defy Simon's magic and to help St Paul. At that time Nero the Emperor started to persecute the Christians. The safety of St Peter was at risk, the Christians convinced him to flee. On his way out of the city, St Peter met Jesus, who pretended to be entering the city of Rome. The apostle recognized Him and asked "Where are you going Lord"? "To Rome, to be crucified again," Jesus answered. So St Peter got the message and was embarrassed because he was trying to run away. St Peter decided to go back to Rome.

In Rome St Peter was captured by the Emperor who imprisoned him together with St Paul. After nine months, on the 5th of Abib according to the Coptic calendar, they were taken to Mt Vatican where St Peter was crucified upside down, the way he wanted it, as he felt unworthy to be crucified the same way as his Master.



Leadership Qualities Evident in St Peter's Life and Teachings

Let us consider the following verses which relate some incidents in St Peter's life.

Matt15:15 Open and Curious: He wasn't afraid to say he didn't know something.



Matt14:29 Obedient and trusting (walking on the water).

John6:66-69 Faith and virgin love i.e. no other competing love. He won't let go of the Lord but did let go of all his possessions (Mark10:28).

Matt16:21-23 Sincere (rebuking) love (took Him aside), considerate, tactful, intimately kind.

Matt26:31-35 Voices his feelings, confident.

John21:15-17 Peter became sad: soft hearted, sensitive detects quickly the hurts of the others.

Later, from St Peter's Teaching

1Pet2:13-18 Submit to man's authority and show proper respect; be example and do not retaliate.

1Pet2:21-23 Rejoice in suffering because it teaches us to handle personal struggles.

1Pet5:5 Be submissive to those who are older and show humility towards one another.

1Pet4:8 A leader must love.

Jesus used St Peter as a leader even though he had weaknesses like the rest of us (e.g. denying Jesus, Mark14:27-31). St Peter's life is an example of love, humility and submission accompanied by an inquisitive mind. St Peter stood corrected by St Paul (Gal 2:11-21).



As Christians we honour St Peter as one of the heroes of our faith. We respect him as a leader whose character we admire, whose words - inspired by God - we obey and whose example we gladly follow.



We realize, as did St Peter, that God can use us despite our failures and make us victorious ministers of the Gospel. Consider the following:

- Moses stuttered. David's armour didn't fit.
- John Mark was rejected by Paul. Hosea's wife was a prostitute.
- Solomon was too rich. Abraham was too old. David was too young.
- Timothy had ulcers. Peter was afraid of death. Lazarus was dead.
- Job was self-righteous. Naomi was a widow.
- Paul was a murderer. So was Moses.
- Jeremiah was depressed and suicidal.
- Elijah was burnt out. John the Baptist was a loudmouth.
- Martha was a worrywart. Mary was lazy. Samson had longhair.
- Did I mention Moses had a short fuse? So did Peter, Paul; well lots of folks did.

But God doesn't require a job interview. He doesn't hire and fire like most bosses, because He's more our Dad than our Boss. God doesn't look at financial gain or loss. He's not prejudiced or partial, not judging, grudging, sassy or brassy, not deaf to our cry, not blind to our need. As much as we try, God's gifts are free. We could do wonderful things for wonderful people, and still not be ... Wonderful.

Satan says, "You are not worthy". Satan looks back and sees our mistakes. God looks back and sees the cross. He doesn't calculate what you did. If it is repented sin, it is not even in the record. Sure, there are lots of reasons why God shouldn't want us.

But if we are utterly in love with Him, if we hunger for Him more than our next breath, He'll use us in spite of who we are, where we have been, or what we look like. Step out of your limitations into the unlimited nature of who God is.



ST PAUL, A SPECIAL LEADER

Big Idea: Characteristics of a leader seen in St Paul.

Bible Text: 1Thess2:1-20 and others.

Bible Verse: 1Cor11:1, "Imitate me as I also imitate Christ".

Students will

Know: ✕ The characteristics of a leader from a study of 1Thess2:120.
✕ What made St Paul such a special leader?
✕ How to share our faith?

Feel: Encouraged to serve God in any capacity.

Do: Be a diligent servant as St Paul.



ST PAUL, A SPECIAL LEADER



St Paul was a Jew, born in the city of Tarsus, but trained in Jerusalem as a Pharisee under the most famous rabbi of his time, Gamaliel. Out of misplaced zeal, St Paul actively persecuted followers of Christ, until he himself was converted by a direct confrontation with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. St Paul proved as zealous a Christian as he had been a persecutor.

As we study 1Thess 2:1-20, we learn about the characteristics of a leader seen in St Paul.

Prayerful: 1Thess2:13.

Humble: (1Thess2:3-6); he does not seek his glory (Isa48:11). As His servants, we must step outside the circle of world pleasures and into the arena of pleasing God, whatever the cost (1Thess2:4-11). Spreading the gospel means putting our lives on the line for those we seek to reach, as a mother sacrifices herself for her children. Thus the holy martyrs gave their lives with great joy for Christ and His Church. Note the three verbs St Paul uses to describe his apostolic preaching to the Thessalonians: **exhorted** which can also mean encouraged; **comforted**; and **charged** or implored. These elements are just as important for preaching today.

Sensitive/Caring: 1Thess2:7-11; Rom9:1-3; Rom11:12; Rom 16:3-13; Philemon 10, 12, 17; Gal 4:19; 2Cor7:7).

Brave: 1Thess2:2 (Acts19:30; Acts15, Gal 2:11-21; Acts23:1-10; Acts25; Acts 26).

Pleases God before men: He does not seek glory from people (1Thess2:4; Acts15:36-41).

Wise: 1Thess2:5.

Godly-authority (1Thess2:10-12).

Financial integrity (1Thess2:9).

Broad minded and thinking ahead (1Cor9:19-22).

Strong in face of adversities (testing times, 1Thess2:20).

A man of pain (2Cor11:23-33; 12:7; Phil 1:29).

Though unable to prevail against the Church (Matt16:18) or overcome the faithful (Eph6:11-13), (Rev.12:11), the enemy at times is permitted to hinder



faithful Christians. Remember that God's promise applies, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you," Jam4:7.

1Thess2:19, 20 show that all the trials and disappointments of the Christian life and ministry are worthwhile. Nevertheless, well-grounded, deeply committed Christians need encouragement, instruction and prayer. As leaders and servants, we not only represent God, we work together with Him and our fellow Christians.

WHAT MADE ST PAUL SUCH A SPECIAL LEADER?



• His Motto

⌘ St Paul's motto is evident in many of his epistles. The following verses clearly illustrate St Paul's firm belief that:

No Christ = No life & Know Christ = Know life

⌘ "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me", Phil 4:13.
⌘ "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any", 1Cor 6:12.
⌘ "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain", Phil 1:21.
Therefore as servants, Christ must be the centre of our lives.

• His Attitude



⌘ St Paul suffered many tribulations in the name of his service. He was whipped, beaten, threatened, goaled, smuggled for fear of his life, all for his love for Christ and his mission on earth. Yet at every tribulation, St Paul remained positive and recognised that throughout all these atrocities, our Lord Jesus Christ was looking after him. For example when he was in prison, instead of bemoaning his ill fate, he saw it as an opportunity to preach to the prisoners and led them to repentance.

⌘ His attitude to people was very encouraging. He saw that all people were worthy of Salvation (even the worst criminals) and strived to pass on the



Message of Salvation to as many people as possible. His gentleness and love are evident in the way he addressed others. Terms such as "our brother", "my beloved son", "our beloved friend" and "thank God always for you" show a man who truly loved his fellow human beings.

- **His Outlook**

- ⌘ St Paul always remembered his sinful life and always considered it the Grace of God that allowed him to serve. He often mentioned his former life in his epistles. *"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptances, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life," 1Tim1:12-16.*
- ⌘ By remembering his past sinful life, St Paul remained humble and did not allow himself to think he was too good to serve particular people such as prisoners. We sometimes turn up our noses at certain services thinking we are too good for them. We should remember St Paul's example and realize that the call to service is a blessing from God Himself.

- **His Fire**

- ⌘ St Paul carried out his missions with much faith. When he believed in something he gave it all his effort, energy, time etc. Even when he was against Christianity he was ruthless in his persecutions of the Christians. It is important for the servant to have this fire or what is termed as Holy Zeal. Indifference will kill any service but diligence and passion will fan the flame of a strong and vibrant service.
- ⌘ As servants we must have this enthusiasm and favour for our service to be successful. In fact His Holiness Pope Shenouda thought it was so important that he wrote a book entitled *Holy Zeal*".



• His Example

- ✖ St Paul's famous verse, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ," 1Cor11:1 sum up his view on setting a good example. He fully understood that part of serving meant he would be under the microscope for his actions. People would always be checking to see if he practiced what he preached. By writing this verse, St Paul announced to the world the importance of the servant setting a good example by deeds not words; and to avoid hypocrisy and double standards. The servant has to be the one to show others the way to Christ through one's actions not words only.
- ✖ Thus as servants we must expect and welcome that our actions and are always under the watchful eye of others. People will be waiting to see if we practice what we preach.
- ✖ We mustn't resent this from people, but rather, like St Paul, welcome it and say "Imitate me just as I also imitate Christ". God is aware of how hard this can be and there will be a reward waiting in Heaven for all who endure.

Other Important Points

- ✖ At times St Paul was quite firm with those he trained for service. Throughout the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, he gives them many instructions. Hence we must also accept the guidance and instruction of our elders, knowing that they do this out of love for us not out of malice.
- ✖ St Paul was a successful servant because he never forgot that his ability to serve was a gift and honour from God. He also knew that his service became his gift to God. He kept in mind the verse, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven," Matt5:16.
- ✖ Finally, because St Paul endured to the end he was able to complete his life on earth with his famous verses, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith.



Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing," 2Tim4:6-8.

Quotations for Contemplation

- ✖ A person's true character is revealed by what he does when no one is watching.
- ✖ The measure of man is not how great his faith is but how great his love is.
- ✖ Most people wish to serve God but only in an advisory capacity.
- ✖ You should never let adversity get you down - except on your knees.
- ✖ It is good to remember that the tea-kettle, although up to its neck in hot water, continues to sing.
- ✖ It is good to be a Christian and know it, but it is better to be a Christian and show it.





EXCELLENT LEADERS

ST JOSEPH THE CARPENTER AND ST JOHN THE BAPTIST

Big Idea: Learn about the leadership of St Joseph, the Protector and Servant of the Divine Incarnation and the unique service of St John the Baptist.

Bible Text: Matt1:18-24 and Matt11:7-19.

Bible Verse: John3:30, "He must increase, but I must decrease".

Students will

Know:

- ✖ The boundaries of St Joseph's betrothal to St Mary.
- ✖ St Joseph's character revealed in the events of the Incarnation.
- ✖ The introduction of baptism as a public act.
- ✖ The goal of the ministry of St John the Baptist.
- ✖ Learn to be bold and humble as St John the Baptist.

Feel: Encouraged in the service by the role model of St Joseph and St John.

Do: Ask the intercession of St Joseph and St John in the service.



EXCELLENT LEADERS

ST JOSEPH THE CARPENTER AND ST JOHN THE BAPTIST



The promise of the Saviour was in the Garden of Eden (Gen3:5). The sinful humanity was prepared for this great event through many stages and through Abraham and his descendants. Prophets were sent to prepare the minds and hearts of the people.

Divine Providence waited until the "fullness of time" when the right virgin would be able to accept the wonderful event of giving birth to the Saviour. Equally, the Divine Wisdom was looking for the righteous man to be entrusted with this Divine mystery. Consequently, the birth of St John the Baptist had to be contemporary with the coming of the Messiah for whom he was to prepare the Jewish people.

THE BETROTHED ST JOSEPH

The Bible calls engaged couples husband and wife before their marriage (Deut20:7; 22:23, 24). Just as Rachel was called the wife of Jacob before marriage, because of her betrothal (Gen29:21), so St Joseph is called the "husband" of St Mary (Matt1:19). In the Orthodox Church, St Joseph is remembered as the "betrothed" pointing out St Mary's ever-virginity. St Joseph cannot help but suspect a violation of the divine law when he sees his betrothed pregnant (Matt1:18). An angel of the Lord dispels the false reasoning of St Joseph by announcing the utterly unreasonable: the pregnancy of the Virgin is by the Holy Spirit.



CHARACTERISTICS OF ST JOSEPH

- **He was trustworthy.** Before the birth of Christ, St Joseph was entrusted to look after the twelve-years-old St Mary who was unable to continue to live in the Temple.
- **He was waiting for the Saviour** who would save His people from sin and not from the Romans as the leaders of the Jews wrongly expected (Matt1:21).



- **He believed** Isaiah's prophecy for the Saviour to be born of a virgin (Isa7:14). Consequently, he was not surprised when the angel declared to him that his virgin wife was expecting a child who was conceived in her of the Holy Spirit (Matt1:21). He realized that **his role was to serve and protect the mystery of the Incarnation**. He accepted it without questioning.
- **He was loving and merciful.** The righteousness of mercy, which transcends the Law, is seen in his unwillingness to expose St Mary's supposed sin. Although obliged by law to report the misconduct, he decides "to put her away secretly," Matt1:19. He wanted to spare the young girl death by stoning according to the law (Deut23:17, 21; Lev20:10).
- **He was humble.** After the birth of Christ and seeing all the glory that accompanied it, St Joseph did not go boasting about it. Likewise, he did not complain about the stable or his poverty.
- **He was obedient** to the angel at all times without questioning even though in some cases, it sounded apparently unreasonable. He lived a life of submission which can only be built upon humility and meekness of heart.

Submission is an aspect of our relationships that can be used to give ourselves in love and service to one another, for the purpose of building the body of Christ. At a time when "equality" and "equal rights" are key words in relating to one another, submission is dismissed as old-fashioned. It is often attacked as meaning that one person is less important than another.

At the very foundation of Jesus' relationship to His Father, there is equality. Jesus and the Father are one. Jesus in His equality with God chose freely to participate in the plan for redemption. He "emptied" Himself of His rights as God's equal and took on a human form (Phil 2:5-8). While on earth, He stated His submission to God and His purpose a number of times: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work," John4:34.



When talking about serving one another, Jesus asked His disciples if the servant was greater than the master (John13:13-16), meaning that since He (the Master) had served them, they (the disciples) should also serve each other. No one is too great or too important to serve others. We are brothers and sisters in Christ, joint heirs in the Kingdom of God. We are one, equally loved, equally unworthy of our salvation, equally forgiven, equally unique creations, equal in personhood.

This equality with one another gives us autonomy: the freedom to choose. God does not impose or force His will on us. He invites us to choose to follow Him, to lay down our will, to submit ourselves to Him totally. But it is our choice. Our submission to each other is not something we force on each other, either. Godly submission needs to come from the heart, an inner willingness to lay aside our will.

But why do we need submission? Because the Church is not just a loose collection of individuals, each doing his own thing. The Church is a body working towards the same goals and purposes, plus being one in spirit. If we are hopelessly at odds the body won't function. We need to bend to each other for the purpose of the whole.

Submitting ourselves fully to God is a step of faith based on the reality that God loved us so much that He gave His only Son to die for us (John3:16). We know He loves us! We trust that kind of love! We are willing to submit to God because we know He was willing to give up His own life for us.

And God asks us to have that same kind of love for each other, the kind of love that is willing to lay down our lives for each other, to serve one another (John13:35). This is the kind of relationship that creates trust between us, in which willing submission to one another can thrive and grow. Laying down our lives for each other, serving one another, submitting to one another, all fits together. The purpose? To better love one another and bring glory to God.

We are grateful to St Joseph for protecting and serving the mystery of the Incarnation, in faith, humility and total submission. We ask the blessed St Joseph to intercede and protect our families as he did with his family. We also ask him to help us serve each other as he did, for the glory of God.



CHARACTERISTICS OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST

- **He was the forerunner** of the promised Messiah. He announced that God's Kingdom is near (Luke3:15-18; John1:19-28).
- **He introduced baptism** as a visible sign of confession and repentance (Mark1:4). He baptised in the River Jordan. His baptism undoubtedly reflected the Jewish practice of washing in running water for ritual cleansing (Exo30:17-21; Lev11:25; Num19:17).

Yet St John transformed the meaning of this traditional act. St John's baptism was no longer a private ritual of personal purification.



St John introduced baptism as a public act symbolising repentance and recommitment to God's laws, in expectation of the Messiah's imminent coming. He had a profound effect on the people, and many responded to his message and were baptised, and some became his disciples.

- **He was humble.** It may have been tempting for him to think he was someone special, but he managed to keep his perspective straight. His job was not to make a name for himself but to point others to Jesus. Some people wondered whether John himself was the Messiah; but again and again he took a backseat and said, "No, there is Someone coming who is greater than I".

He expresses a humility that serves as an example for all believers. When many of his followers drifted away to follow the new prophet, John expressed joy over this saying, "**He must increase, but I must decrease,**" John3:30. Rather than feeling jealous at Jesus' growing popularity, John was filled with joy. He was ready to slip into the background to promote Christ. He renounces all earthly glory and reputation for the sake of Christ. By allowing Christ to increase in him, John himself finds true glory. A faithful servant's goal is to link people to Christ and not to self.





Humility is a hard concept to grasp, because it is so easily confused with being humiliated, or a low-self concept. It's true someone else can put me down and humiliate me, and that's a bummer from any point of view. But humility is something that grows out of my own spirit. No one can do it to me; it comes from within me. Humility has to do with my understanding of myself in relation to others. On the other hand, we sometimes equate humility with a low opinion of ourselves. Constant worry about how we are doing, can be as selfish as pride, for it keeps our attention focused inwardly.

Actually, true humility grows out of a healthy self-concept, a realistic evaluation and acceptance of one's strengths and weaknesses. A person, who likes himself, does not think of himself as more or less of who he really is, doesn't have to prove anything to himself or other people, is free to give attention to others, is not threatened when others are praised or honoured.

- **He was bold.** He fearlessly confronted rulers and religious leaders as well as ordinary men (Matt3:7-12). He was similar to Elijah in this respect (1Kin17and18).



St John the Baptist was unique. Jesus testified of him that he was more than a prophet: "**Assuredly I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he,**" Matt11:11.

May we feel blessed in our service by the intercession of St John the Baptist. May we feel bold to witness for Christ in all circumstances.



TEAM WORK

Big Idea: Working together as a team.

Bible Text: Luke 9:1-10.

Bible Verse: Pro 27:17, "As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend."

Students will

Know:

- ✖ The definition of a team.
- ✖ The importance of teams.
- ✖ The role of the individual members of the team.
- ✖ The successful team.
- ✖ Unity in the team.

Feel: Encouraged to work as a team.

Do:

- ✖ Have a clear and common goal in the service.
- ✖ Exercise humility and unity in the team.



TEAM WORK



A team is a group of individuals who may have different needs and experience but are working towards a common, unifying goal.

As servants, we are members of God's team. Our goal is to witness for Christ. We are equally committed to spread the good news of salvation. We work together to accomplish Christ's mission and hold ourselves mutually accountable. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit who works in the Church and in individuals. Before He ascended into heaven, Jesus told His team of disciples whom He called apostles, "**but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth,**" **Acts 1:8.** Jesus identified the goal and mission of His team. They will be guided by the Holy Spirit who will indwell them.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEAMS

Good teamwork is essential in all organizations as it signifies that:

- People are working towards a shared purpose and common goals.
- And in so doing they are sharing their varied skills in complementary roles and in cooperation with each other. The Bible says "**two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour ... and a threefold cord is not quickly broken,**" **Eccles 4:9-12.**

Good teamwork creates synergy - where the combined effect of the team is greater than the sum of individual efforts. Working together, a team can apply individual ideas, perspectives, experience and skills to solve complex problems, creating new solutions and ideas that may be beyond the scope of any one individual. This is how Nehemiah could accomplish the task of building the walls of Jerusalem in adverse circumstances. "**therefore ... I set the people according to their families ... and half of my servants worked at construction, while the other half held the spears ... and the leaders were behind all the house of Judah,**" **Neh 4:13.**

Interdependent Tasks + Work related to the Common Goal = TEAM

Moses could also perform better when he used the advice of his father-in-law: "**What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?**"

¹⁵ And Moses said to his father-in-law, "**Because the people come to me to inquire of God.**" ¹⁶ When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge



between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws.¹⁷ So Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you do is not good. ¹⁸ Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. ¹⁹ Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. ²⁰ And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. ²¹ Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. ²² And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you. ²³ If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people will also go to their place in peace," Exo18:14-23.

OTHER EXAMPLES THAT ILLUSTRATE THE POWER OF TEAMS

- **Noah** built the ark, with the help of a team.
- **Joshua** knocked down the walls of Jericho with the help of a team.
- **Jesus** turned a small group of people with diverse backgrounds, into an effective team that would convert the world to their mission!

As well as enabling and enhancing the organisation's performance, good teamwork benefits individuals too. It enables mutual support and learning and can generate a sense of belonging and commitment.

EVERYONE ON A TEAM HAS A SEPARATE AND IMPORTANT FUNCTION

St Paul emphasised this principle to the Romans, "For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them," Rom12:3-6.

King David gave different jobs to the members of his team. "Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the army; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; ¹⁷ Zadok the son of Ahitub and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar were the priests; Seraiah^[a] was the scribe; ¹⁸ Benaiah the son



of Jehoiada was over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief ministers," 2Sam8:15-18.



LESSONS FROM GEESE

Fact 1: As each goose flaps its wings, it creates "uplift" for the birds that follow. By flying in a "V" formation, the whole flock adds 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew alone.

Lesson 1: People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are travelling on the thrust of one another.

Fact 2: When a goose falls out of formation it feels the resistance of flying alone. It quickly moves back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it.

Lesson 2: If we have as much sense as a goose we stay with those headed where we want to go. We are willing to accept their help and give our help to others.

Fact 3: When the lead goose tires, it rotates back and another goose flies to the point position.

Lesson 3: It pays to take turns doing hard tasks and sharing leadership. As with geese, people are interdependent on each other's skills, capabilities and unique arrangements of gifts, talents or resources.

Fact 4: The geese flying in formation honk to encourage those up front to keep up with their speed.

Lesson 4: We need to make sure our honking is encouraging. In groups where there is encouragement, production is much greater. Individual empowerment results from quality honking.

Fact 5: When a goose gets sick, two geese drop out of formation to help and protect it.

Lesson 5: If we have as much sense as geese, we will stand by each other in difficult times as when we are strong.

Honk! Honk! Honk! HONK!

TEAM UNITY

"Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,... and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved,"



Acts 2:44. St Paul wrote to the Corinthians encouraging, "For, as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into^[a] one Spirit.



¹⁴ For in fact the body is not one member but many.¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?¹⁸ But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where would the body be?²⁰ But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.²¹ And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."²² No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.²³ And those members of the body which we think to be less honourable, on these we bestow greater honour; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty,²⁴ but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honour to that part which lacks it,²⁵ that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it.²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually," 1Cor12:12-27.

In Acts 18:24-28, we learn about the great leadership of Priscilla and Aquilla as they deal with Apollos. Instead of laughing at Apollo's ignorance or decrying his lack of understanding of true biblical orthodoxy, Priscilla and Aquilla took him into their home and in love expounded the way of the Lord more perfectly to Him. Then he began to use his great oratory gifts for the glory of God and winning of the souls.



THE DANGER OF DISUNITY IN A TEAM

St Paul writes to the Galatians, "If you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!" Gal 5:15. To correct the problems of disunity and rivalry, St Paul exhorts the





Philippians to have a spirit of unity and mutual concern by embracing the attitude of humility (Phil 2:1-4), the greatest example of which is the incarnation and crucifixion of Christ (Phil 2:5-11).



THE SUCCESSFUL TEAM

The team of the Twelve Apostles were very successful. They "turned the world upside down," Acts 17:6. What was the secret of their success?

TEAM INVOLVEMENT

The **leader** is involved with the task and the team (Luke 9:1-6).

The **team** is involved with the leader and the task (Luke 9:10).

AND ALL IS WITHIN THE FEAR OF GOD...



All are engaged in:

1. Information (Luke 9:1-6; Acts 1:3),
2. Feedback (Luke 9:10, Rom 16:1-6),
3. Recognition (Rev 2:19),
4. Listening and
5. Involvement (Luke 10:1-2), that eventually lead to
6. Empowerment (Matt 28:18).

To develop strength and overcome challenges, it is important to build and maintain good team working. Understanding the value of teams and how to develop teamwork is an important leadership skill. May the Lord give us the blessing and wisdom to serve together as members in God's team to achieve His purpose and for His Greater Glory Amen!



ENCOURAGEMENT

Big Idea: Encouragement is essential to the Service.

Bible Text: 2Cor11:3-7; Heb12:12 and others.

Bible Verse: 1Thess5:14, "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the faint hearted, uphold the weak, and be patient with all".

Students will

Know:

- ✖ The meaning of "encourage".
- ✖ Why encourage others (2Cor1:3-7).
- ✖ How to encourage others (Rom14:19; 1Cor14:3; Phil 2:1; 1Thess2:11, 12; 3:7, 8; 4:18; 5:11; 2Thess2:17; 2Cor2:6-8; Eph4:29).
- ✖ The primary sources of encouragement and their effect:
 - The Holy Spirit (Acts9:31),
 - Word of God (Rom15:1-4),
 - Visitation (1Thess3:2-3) and
 - Assemble together (Heb10:24-25).
- ✖ The importance of attending and participating in the servants' meeting.

Feel: The need and importance to be comforted so that they can comfort others (2Cor1:4).

Do: Attend the servants' meeting diligently (Heb10:25).

ENCOURAGEMENT



One of the greatest problems that our youth face these days is the loss of their self-esteem. Sometimes many of the youth come to me and say I'm worthless...I'm nothing. My parents are always telling me that I am stupid. The problem is that I have started to believe them".

If I go on, I can recall thousands of cases of youth who feel down, desperate, desolate and hopeless. I understand that youth are very sensitive and can be hurt easily. They always consider other people's opinion as a true fact etched in stone, like the Ten Commandments. They are constantly conscious of themselves and people's views of them. For example, another person's comment can either make or break their self-esteem and self-worth.

The source of afflictions is the sin of humanity. The purpose of afflictions, if we use them properly, may be our comfort and salvation, as the Father preserves us through them. Having experienced God's comfort, we in turn can comfort others and we should not be concerned only with our salvation (2Cor1:3-7). As Christians, therefore, encouragement is our business because it is God's command too (1Thess5:14). The Scriptures also tell us how to encourage one another.

WHAT IS ENCOURAGEMENT?

If someone is discouraged, he or she feels a loss of courage, an inability to go on; a sense of hopelessness. To be encouraged then is to be given courage and hope once more. This is also one of the meanings of the word "comfort", to give hope and strength to another. We usually think of comfort as trying to ease the pain of someone who is hurting or grieving. This is true, but the meaning of "comfort" goes beyond easing hurt or grief. It means building a person's inner resources, giving the strength, hope and courage to go on.

The word "comfort" in the Bible is variously translated "to give courage", "to exhort" (instruct) and "to edify" (build up). Encouragement, then, is whatever supports another and allows that person to be strengthened and built up. It may be a word of understanding, a touch or hug which says, "I care", sayings, "I love you" or "I'm glad you're my friend", or a statement of belief in that



person, "you can do it". It may be helping a person overcome discouragement by teaching him how to look at himself and the situation clearly.

PRIMARY SOURCES OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Source	Verse	Effect
When the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples, the once frightened, little band of men and women took a bold stand for Jesus.	Acts 9:31	The result of the Spirit-given-courage was that the Church multiplied and was built up. It grew and became strong.
In the struggles of daily life, it is easy to become discouraged. We may seem overwhelmed by our failings or the evil around us. But when we come back to God's Word , our courage is restored.	Rom 15:1-4	Looking at God's promises in Scriptures, we can review how God has been at work throughout the ages, and we can deepen our knowledge of God and His control over all of life. Through this knowledge we have hope.
St Paul sends Timothy, a brother in the Lord, to the Thessalonians "to establish" them in their faith" (i.e. visitation).	1Thess3:2-3	The personal encouragement gave them strength "to stand firm and be strong".
St Paul instructs the Hebrews to assemble together "to exhort one another" (i.e. meetings and support groups).	Heb10:24-25	This results in stirring up love and good works.

IMPORTANCE OF PARTICIPATING IN THE SERVANTS' MEETING (Heb10:24-25)



It is imperative and not optional. It is God's command. Any group of compatible people can enjoy themselves, but Christians can enrich their social enjoyment with the knowledge that when they spend time together, they can have an eternally significant input on one another.

BLESSINGS OF ASSEMBLING TOGETHER

When we assemble together in Christ's name we have the fulfilment of his eternal promise that he will be among us. "**For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them**", Matt18:20. How much more can we be honoured! What else do we request other than be in the presence of Christ?

In the presence of Christ, it would suffice to enjoy feeling and being in His presence. Some of St Anthony's disciples went to him one day to hear a word of benefit and ask some questions. One of them was very quiet and didn't say a word. St Anthony asked him why he was so quiet. The disciple answered, "It suffices one just to look at your face, Father".

In Mark 6:30-31, "**the apostles gathered to Jesus and told him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And he said to them, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.**" For there were many coming and going and they did not even have time to eat. Isn't it similar to our circumstances in the Service? Note in that occasion Jesus multiplied the five loaves and two fish and blessed everybody.

We have also God's promise in Matt18:19, "**Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.**" Therefore in the presence of Christ we tell him about the service and the children. We pray and ask for ourselves, our Service and the spreading of the gospel in every heart in the world. We are definitely going to receive the answer to our prayers as we trust in Jesus promise. In addition, we will also have, rest. "**Come to me all you who labour**



and I give you rest", Matt11:28. "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask and you will receive that your joy may be full," John16:24.

After the ascension of Jesus into Heaven, and while awaiting the promise of the Holy Spirit, the disciples stayed in the Upper Room and "all continued with one accord (mind, purpose) in prayer and supplication with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brothers", Acts1:14.

After St Peter healed the lame man, the chief priests and elders commanded St Peter not to preach. So the Apostles gathered together and prayed (Acts 4:24-30). "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the word of God with boldness", Acts4:31. St Paul writes to the Thessalonians saying, "Therefore comfort each other and edify one another just as you also are doing", 1Thess5:11.

As encouraged servants, we feel comfortable to encourage those whom we serve by holding fast the confession of our hope without wavering. We should give hope to everyone and must not lose hope in the salvation of anyone (1Thess5:14).

MRS THOMPSON'S FIFTH GRADE CLASS

Here is a story many years ago of a primary teacher. Her name was Mrs Thompson. She stood in front of her 5th grade class on the very first day of school and told the children a lie. Like most teachers, she looked at her students and said that she loved them all the same; but that was impossible, because there in the front row, slumped in his seat, was a little boy named Teddy Stoddard.

Mrs Thompson had watched Teddy the year before and noticed that he didn't play well with the other children, that his clothes were messy and that he constantly needed a bath. And, Teddy could be unpleasant. It got to the point



where Mrs Thompson would actually take delight in marking his papers with a broad red pen, making bold X's and then putting a big "F" at the top of his papers.

At the school where Mrs Thompson taught, she was required to review each child's past records and she put Teddy's off until last. However, when she reviewed his file, she was in for a surprise. Teddy's first grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is a bright child with a ready laugh. He does his work neatly and has good manners... he is a joy to be around". His second grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is an excellent student, well liked by his classmates, but he is troubled because his mother has a terminal illness and life at home must be a struggle". His third grade teacher wrote, "His mother's death has been hard on him. He tries to do his best but his father doesn't show much interest and his home life will soon affect him if some steps aren't taken". Teddy's fourth grade teacher wrote, "Teddy is withdrawn and doesn't show much interest in school. He doesn't have many friends and sometimes sleeps in class".

By now, Mrs Thompson realized the problem and she was ashamed of herself. She felt even worse when her students brought her Christmas presents, wrapped in beautiful ribbons and bright paper, except for Teddy's. His present was clumsily wrapped in heavy brown paper that he got from a grocery bag. Mrs Thompson took pains to open it in the middle of the other presents. Some of the children started to laugh when she found a rhinestone bracelet with some of the stones missing and a bottle that was one quarter full of perfume. She stifled the children's laughter when she exclaimed how pretty the bracelet was, putting it on and dabbing some of the perfume on her wrist. Teddy Stoddard stayed after school that day, just long enough to say, "Mrs Thompson, today you smelled just like my mom used to".

After the children left, she cried for at least an hour. On that very day, she quit teaching reading, writing and arithmetic. Instead she began to teach children.



Mrs Thompson paid particular attention to Teddy. As she worked with him, his mind seemed to come alive. The more she encouraged him, the faster he responded. By the end of the year, Teddy had become one of the smartest children in the class, and despite her lie that she would love all the children the same, Teddy became her favourite.

A year later, she found a note under her door from Teddy, telling her that she was the best teacher he ever had in his whole life. Six years went by before she got another note from Teddy. He then wrote that he had finished high school, third in his class, and she was still the best teacher he ever had in his whole life.

Four years after that, she got another letter, saying that while things had been tough times, he'd stayed in school, had stuck with it and would soon graduate from college with the highest of honours. He assured Mrs Thompson that she was still the best and favourite teacher he ever had in his whole life.

Then four more years passed and yet another letter came. This time, he explained that after he got his bachelor's degree, he decided to go a little further. The letter explained that she was still the best and favourite teacher he had ever had. But now his name was a little longer. The letter was signed, Theodore F. Stoddard, MD.

The story doesn't end there. You see, there was yet another letter that spring. Teddy said he'd met his girl and was going to be married. He explained that his father had died a couple of years ago and he was wondering if Mrs Thompson might agree to sit in the place at the wedding that was usually reserved for the mother of the groom. Of course, Mrs Thompson did. And, guess what? She wore that bracelet, the one with several rhinestones missing. And she made sure she was wearing the perfume that Teddy remembered his mother wearing on their last Christmas together.



They hugged each other and Dr Stoddard whispered in Mrs Thompson's ear, "Thank you for believing in me. Thank you so much for making me feel important and showing me that I could make a difference".

Mrs Thompson, with tears in her eyes, whispered back. She said, "Teddy, you have it all wrong. You were the one who taught me that I could make a difference. I didn't know how to teach until I met you".





SUNDAY SCHOOL

Big Idea: The nature of Sunday School and its role.

Bible Text: John17:1-26.

Bible Verse: Deut31:12, "Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully observe all the words of this law".

Students will

Know: ✕ The four distinct areas of Sunday School.
 ✕ Habeeb Guirguis established the Coptic Sunday School.

Feel: ✕ Proud of their Sunday School.
 ✕ Indebted to the Lord for His work with them when growing up in Sunday School.

Do: ✕ Endeavour to promote and support the Sunday School mission.
 ✕ Participate in the service of Sunday School.

SUNDAY SCHOOL



A healthy Sunday School emphasizes the basics of reaching, teaching, winning and spiritually caring for the students. This fourfold nature of Sunday School is perhaps best expressed in an Old Testament verse that has often been used in historic Sunday School conventions. **"Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully observe all the words of this Law," Deut31:12.** This verse reflects the four distinct areas of Sunday School ministry.

SUNDAY SCHOOL IS THE REACHING ARM OF THE CHURCH

First, Sunday School is the arm that reaches all ages for Christ. **Reaching** is defined as making contact with a person and motivating him or her to give an honest hearing to the gospel. Since evangelism is giving out the gospel, reaching is basically pre-evangelism, for it gets people to listen to the gospel. In Deut31:12, it is expressed in the word "gather". Those who are gathered are fathers, mothers, little ones or children and the stranger.

SUNDAY SCHOOL IS THE TEACHING ARM OF THE CHURCH

Second, Sunday School is the teaching arm of the Church. **Teaching** means guiding the learning activities that meet human needs. The first step of teaching is expressed in the verse by the words "that they may hear". The ultimate step of teaching is "that they may learn".

SUNDAY SCHOOL IS THE WINNING ARM OF THE CHURCH

Sunday School is also the arm of the Church that wins people to Christ. **Winning** is defined as communicating the gospel in an understandable manner and motivating a person to respond to Christ. The Old Testament expression "fear the Lord" means to bring a person to a reverential trust of God. It was a concept of salvation. Today we may describe a person who "fears the Lord" as a person who receives Christ, or trusts the Lord for salvation.

SUNDAY SCHOOL IS THE CARING ARM OF THE CHURCH

Finally, Sunday School is the arm of the Church that gives care to all members. One of the objectives of Sunday School is to care spiritually for all so that all will "carefully observe all the words of this law".

Sunday School is the reaching, teaching, winning and caring arm of the Church. However, this definition becomes a mosaic when applied to



individual churches. Just as it takes all the pieces of tile to make up a mosaic, so it takes all four aspects of the definition to describe a beautiful Sunday School. The beauty of the mosaic can be destroyed when we focus on one section of the mosaic and lose the whole picture. This happens when a church demonstrates a strong emphasis of only one aspect, such as gaining an abundance of visitors because of a dominant emphasis on a bus outreach ministry. The focus on outreach causes the church to neglect the perspective of teaching, winning or caring.

Some churches have strong teaching Sunday Schools with a deep commitment to Bible mastery, but they have no outreach. Other Sunday Schools are committed to soul-winning; their success is measured by how many people they have won to Christ or prepared for church membership, but they do not have a passion to oversee students to help them grow in Christ. Finally, some Sunday Schools do a great job of caring for their students but ignore the other three objectives.

As important as each function is, do not forget to build a balanced Sunday School. The healthy Sunday School will perform all four ministries equally. To make your Sunday School healthy, cover the four basics for your students: reach, teach, win and spiritually care.

ROLE OF ST HABEEB GUIRGUIS IN THE COPTIC SUNDAY SCHOOL



Archdeacon Habeeb Guirguis was contemporary to Pope Kyrillos V, the 112th Patriarch of the Holy See of St Mark. He was born in Cairo in 1876. He taught in the Theological College and travelled across Egypt preaching the Word of God. Along these two fronts, St Habeeb Guirguis worked very hard to bring the Copts to realise the importance of preserving the Orthodox Faith by training capable and enlightened priests to nurture it.

The era in which St Habeeb Guirguis lived witnessed a struggle against powerful foreign forces that attempted to impose western culture, social attitudes and religion on the Egyptians. The latter half of the last century marked the arrival of western evangelical missions who gradually increased in number and worked in tandem with the colonial powers, using sometimes the methods of the colonialists to spread their influence.



To entice the locals into accepting their teachings, some missionaries made the mistake of offering the Copts many job opportunities at that time offered only to foreign nationals. They assured them that joining a "modern church" would not be a denial of Christ but would be a window of opportunity for them and their children to enjoy the lifestyle of Europeans and Americans. In their efforts to "convert" the children of the national Church, they used to enter Coptic homes and recount to the families the many benefits they are able to offer, and then leave them a free Bible, attractive pictures and pamphlets. Their next step was to denigrate the mother Church in front of the family, young and old. This resulted in the breaking up of many Coptic families.

To counteract the effect of foreign evangelism, Pope Kyrillos V embarked on an exhausting pastoral tour in 1904. He visited many places alongside the Nile Valley in order to meet his people and increase their bond of love to the Church and its Orthodox faith. He was accompanied with three metropolitans, his secretary and two laymen, one of whom was Habeeb Guirguis who acted as the Pope's spokesman throughout the tour. The Papal tour paid particular attention to Assiout, which became the head quarter of the American mission. St Habeeb Guirguis also accompanied the same Pope on his second Papal tour five years later in order to build on the efforts of the first.

After a few years of preaching, St Habeeb Guirguis realised that the foundation of the Orthodox Faith had to be laid firstly with the children. The future generations of the Church had to be taught from an early age so that the Orthodox Christian values would be a way of life. During his tours, St Habeeb observed the modern means by which the missionaries attracted a number of Coptic families. He thought that the Church would probably benefit from borrowing some ideas from the missionaries, such as afternoon spiritual gatherings for adults and Sunday Schools for children, and the use of hymns and individual prayers.

St Habeeb put his skills as a poet at work and wrote a book of hymns which he called "*Spiritual Hymns and Songs*." Some of these hymns pointed to the glories of the Coptic Church, like the famous "My Coptic Church, the Church of God" (Kanisati-el-Keptia, kanisatul-Elah), which is well known till this day. In this way he successfully provided an alternative to the attractions of the services of the other churches.



St Habeeb Guirguis founded Sunday School in the year 1900, when he was twenty four years of age. He started by teaching the children in some Cairo churches and Coptic School halls. The increase in the number of children encouraged him greatly, and he sought the help of others who shared his love for the Church and zeal to protect her teachings.

The Lord blessed this work so much that by 1908 St Habeeb Guirguis organized a Central Committee to set the study curriculum and oversee the expanding work in that new fertile field, and also to ascertain the continued harmony of all who work in it. The number of the branches multiplied and extended from the north of the country to the far south. By 1941 a conference was held for Cairo's Sunday School Servants; it was attended by around 500 servants.

Sunday School was so popular, thanks to the efforts of its founder and his co-workers, that it became an important organ of the living Church, and it remained throughout the years a living testimony for Christ and the teachings of His Orthodox Church in young hearts and minds.

Many activities sprang from the Sunday School such as the retreats to monasteries and churches, conferences, seminars, exhibitions as well as the publication of pamphlets and books. His co-workers in the movement in turn took upon themselves the responsibility of continuing the march of the Church out of the darkness and to emerge back into the Christian world as a leading light. It was its golden age.

(Adapted from "A Man of Vision" by Michael Gabriel)



THE ROLE OF A SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER

Big Idea: A Sunday School teacher is a shepherd to the students in the Sunday School flock.

Bible Text: Acts20:28-30.

Bible Verse: Acts20:19, "Serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials."

Students will

Know:

- ✖ The three responsibilities implied in Acts20:28-30
- ✖ Right focus
- ✖ Periodic review of the teaching ministry

Feel: Honoured and humbled to be a shepherd to the people they serve.

Do: Be a good example to the people served.



THE ROLE OF A SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER



There is no other institution in the world like the Sunday School, so we cannot define a Sunday School teacher's role by comparing it to something. We must go to the Word of God for a description.

The most important role of a Sunday School teacher is to be a shepherd to the students in his or her Sunday School flock. The original word "shepherd" is the one translated "pastor". That means the Sunday School teacher has the same responsibility to his or her class of sheep as the pastor has to the larger flock. Just as the pastor must visit absentees, so must the Sunday School teacher go after those who stray. Notice how the three responsibilities of the pastor, implied in Acts 20:28-30, relate to a Sunday School teacher.

Lead a Flock. St Paul told the elders at Ephesus that they were to be serious about following God and leading the flock that God had given them to follow after God. The leader must lead by example. A Sunday School teacher is first and foremost a spiritual leader. **Actions speak louder than words.**

Feed the Flock. Just as the pastor is to feed the flock, so the Sunday School teacher should give the Word of God to his students. He teaches by lecture, storytelling, question-and-answer discussion for older students and using guided conversation with younger ones. The teacher uses visual resources, repetition and explanation. The teacher should use every means possible to reach and teach every student.

Care for the Flock. St Paul warned the elders that "savage wolves" would come from the outside, attempting to destroy the flock (Acts 20:29). Therefore they were to be watchful. St Paul also warned that some would arise from within the flock to tear it apart. Just as a shepherd must protect his sheep so a pastor must protect his or her congregation.



Following this example, the Sunday School teacher must protect his or her Sunday School flock. This means paying attention to absenteeism that happens two weeks in a row. The teacher should mail/e-mail a card, contact the student by phone and/or make a personal visit. A teacher cares for straying lambs. Even those who are sick need a "protective call" to encourage them in the faith. The old adage remains true: A home-going teacher makes a church-going student.

RIGHT FOCUS

The Sunday School teacher must always remember the goals of Sunday School which are:

- To reach students,
- To teach students the Word of God,
- To win students to Jesus, and
- To care for students, spiritually.



REVIEW

Periodic review of your teaching ministry is an important part of your personal growth plan as a teacher. Your dreams for your students involve more than just attending class.

Measuring your students' progress is one of several benefits associated with the review. A review of a lesson is not an evaluation of what your students have learnt, as much as it is an evaluation of how well you have taught. We all need periodic evaluation. In fact, as a teacher, someday you will be evaluated by God (Jam3:1, 2).

Review helps you identify the strengths of your teaching upon which you can build (1Thess5:21), and problem areas that need to be addressed as you seek to become a better teacher.

You also want to review choices, conduct and habits. Your goal in teaching is to achieve behavioural change. As your students learn the Bible, the Holy Spirit can use your lessons to change your students to become more like Jesus.



EFFECTIVE TEACHING BEGINS ON YOUR KNEES

Big Idea: Five ways to pray for your class

Bible Text: Pro3:5-6

Bible Verse: Psa119:18, "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from your law".

Students will

Know:

- ✖ Pray for a teachable spirit.
- ✖ Pray for the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit in your Class.
- ✖ Pray for guidance in lesson preparation.
- ✖ Pray for the moving of the Holy Spirit in each student's life.
- ✖ Pray for your student's growth.

Feel: You are not prepared to teach until you have prepared yourself through prayer.

Do:

- ✖ Make a commitment to yourself and the Lord to pray for the people you serve.
- ✖ Not to lean on your understanding and knowledge; rather, lean on the power of the Holy Spirit.



EFFECTIVE TEACHING BEGINS ON YOUR KNEES



When Mina arrived home after Sunday dinner at a local restaurant with his wife, he grabbed his Bible, Sunday School manual and class from the backseat and carried them into his den. Closing the door to his study, Mina opened his class book and began praying over the names of his students. Each name represented someone whom Mina felt God had especially entrusted to his keeping.

This Sunday afternoon prayer time was the first of several that would take place that week. Mina thanked God for the opportunity to teach. Each week he felt a sense of fulfilment as he taught the lesson and saw the responses among class members when they discovered something new about God or themselves. He also thanked God for each person who had been in class that morning. He took a minute or two to also ask God to forgive his own shortcomings as a teacher.

This exercise reminded him of problems that several in the class were struggling with, and he prayed for them. Mina glanced at the teacher's guide, and noticed next week's lesson topic and immediately prayed for clarity in communicating the truths of that lesson to his class.

By the time an hour had passed, everyone in the class had been mentioned in prayer a couple of times. It wasn't the only time they would be prayed for that week, but Mina had made a commitment to himself and the Lord to pray for his class every Sunday afternoon for an hour. Sometimes he felt as if his real ministry wasn't so much teaching Sunday School as it was praying for his class members on Sunday afternoons.

FIVE WAYS TO PRAY FOR YOUR CLASS

You are not prepared to teach until you have prepared yourself through prayer. Prayer preparation involves more than leading your class in prayer. Prayer preparation also means more than asking God to bless your time of study and preparation.

First, pray for a teachable spirit. Ask God to make you teachable. Before you can teach others; the Master Teacher Himself must teach you. As you



approach your Scripture lesson, ask God to guide your study. Pray like David, who said, "**Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from your law,**" Psa119:18. As you pray, be sure you are willing to learn. Jesus said, "**If anyone is willing to do God's will, he shall know the truth of doctrine,**" John7:17.

Second, pray for the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit in your class. Sometimes you may feel as if you are the only channel in the classroom, but you're not. Jesus promised, "When He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth," John16:13. He also said, "**The Holy Spirit... will teach you all things,**" John14:26. This promise referred to the Holy Spirit's becoming the teacher through you. The Holy Spirit indwells you and wants to teach others through you.

Third, pray for guidance in lesson preparation. Anytime you sit down before the Scriptures during your lesson preparation, ask God to guide your study. Most Christians have a habit of asking God's blessing upon food when they sit for a meal. Likewise, get into the habit of asking God's blessing upon the Word of God when you sit down to study. "**Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and he shall direct your paths,**" Prov3:5-6.

Fourth, pray for those in your class. Teaching the Word of God is earnest business with eternal consequences. When you teach, you are attempting to change the destiny of each student. Lost students will be presented with salvation and backslidden students will be exhorted to repent. You cannot effect these changes in your students' hearts; only God can do that. Therefore, avail yourself of God's power by praying for conviction of sin (see John 16:7-11), for the impact of the scriptures (see Rom1:16) and for the moving of the Holy Spirit in each student's life (see Acts1:8).

Fifth, pray for your student's growth. God answers the prayers of those who ask for their ministry to be enlarged, but prayer alone cannot build a Sunday School. God will not do what He has commanded us to do. He commanded us to reach people. Classes grow when teachers are busy visiting, phoning, mailing and praying all week.

The most effective ministry of a Sunday School teacher is accomplished on his or her knees in prayer before God.





VISITATION

Big Idea: Visitation is a means of salvation to the servant and the people served.

Bible Text: Luke10:1-9.

Bible Verse: Jam1:5, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all liberally and without reproach and it will be given to him".

Students will

Know:

- ✖ Visitation is necessary for the service.
- ✖ The goal of visitation.
- ✖ Preparing for visitation
- ✖ How to perform home visitation.

Feel:

- ✖ More diligent about visiting the people served.
- ✖ Reach others for Christ.

Do: Visit the people you serve at least once a year.



VISITATION



Visitation is in essence Christ visiting the hearts of His people. Faithful servants carry the message of salvation to the people and play a vital role in the spread of the gospel. **"After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go," Luke10:1.** The goal of visitation is to knock on the door of the heart to prepare a place for the coming Lord.

VISITATION IS NECESSARY FOR THE SERVICE

Any service without visitation is useless and unsuccessful, especially in Sunday School and Youth Service. God, our Lord, visited us by Himself. St Paul said, **"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son," Heb1:1-2.** We are to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ in His visitation of mankind. We need to be diligent in visiting the people entrusted to our care and service and also reach others for Christ and bring them to church.

THE GOAL OF VISITATION

God used to look to people's circumstances and accordingly sent prophets and teachers in order to save them. So the purpose of visitation is the salvation of our children and us. Salvation has been offered to us on the cross, and we need to help our children benefit of it. The goal is to allow your children to know our Lord Jesus Christ, love Him, and abide in Him. Therefore, visitation is a means of salvation to the servant and the people served. Visitation can also be a means to reach other children for Christ and bring them to church. The easiest way to build a Sunday School class is when your students get their friends to come and join up.



When St Peter first preached the gospel at Cornelius' house, Cornelius "had called together his relatives and close friends" to hear the Apostle preach (Acts10:24). St Paul also used this approach in the city of Philippi, where



after the conversion of Lydia, her household was reached for Christ (Acts16:15). The same happened with the Philippian jailer and his household (Acts16:31). Even in Rome, before any of the apostles had preached there, St Paul knew of at least five households who had been converted to Christ (Rom16:3-5, 10-11, and 14-15).

Friendship evangelism views each Christian as the key to reaching others in his or her sphere of influence. One of the most effective ways to grow your class is through networking. Successful youth servants know the best way to build a youth ministry is to mobilise young people to reach for Christ their friends in school.



PREPARING FOR VISITATION

Because visitation is not simply a social activity, but an important spiritual service, it needs prior preparation lest we get into disputes, trouble and undesired outcomes. We can prepare for visitation by:

Prayer: If two servants are going then they should pray together before the visitation. Ask the Lord to reveal to you what the needs of your children are and mention their names in your prayer. If they have any problems, then ask the Lord to intervene and solve them for you. Entreat the Lord to give you a word of wisdom when you open your mouth. Ask Him to give you grace in the eyes of your children and their parents. Take the Lord with you when you go visiting, and don't rely on yourself or your wisdom. Lift up your eyes and heart to the Lord while you are driving and ask for His help. Listen to a spiritual tape in your car to have a spiritual environment before such a serious and important service. Ask the Lord to give you peace and calm and cover up for your weaknesses. Pray that the Lord reveal Himself and His beauty to all.

Spiritual readings: Studying the Bible with depth and contemplation, and reading many spiritual books will assist you in answering any questions asked by your children or their parents. All servants should have a rich knowledge of the church rites, theology, doctrines etc. Being a servant, you are





the church representative, and have to answer any questions by the Word of God, and according to the Church and not your own opinion.

HOW DO I PERFORM HOME VISITATION?

- Choose a convenient time. It should be an appropriate time for the family and your child. Therefore, it should be arranged and organised beforehand. It should not be done when your child has exams. It is sufficient, in such a case, to phone him or her, and say a few words of encouragement and give them God's blessing. The time of the visitation is also important. For example, do not visit a young child at 10 pm.
- Ask the parents if it is all right to sit with their son or daughter alone.
- Start with a prayer. Then begin by asking them about school, study, family and friends. Through such a start, the family or the child may begin to ask questions about the Bible, Church, friends, or talk about problems their child is facing.
- While you are sitting, lift up your heart and your eyes to God asking for His help and guidance. Ask the help of the Holy Spirit, who is the source of wisdom and the Word of God.
- Talk in a friendly way. Don't let them feel that you are a teacher or a parent to them. However, if they ask a question you are not sure of, then tell them that you will give them an answer later (after reading or seeking the help of others).
- Talk to them about repentance, Holy Communion, reading the Bible, fasting and prayer.
- Try to help them organise their time between studying and spiritual life, such as reading a chapter from the Bible before studying, and finding an appropriate time for the Agpeya.
- As much as you can, be true in your feelings and care towards your child so he/she will trust you and consider your visitation as a spiritual service.
- Avoid making your visitation merely a social visit.
- Deal very carefully with parents who usually complain of their child. Do not accept their complaint in front of the child. Try to find what is good about the child and talk about it to encourage the child. This will help you to gain his/her trust and love. In private you can discuss with the



parents the child's problems. Do so in a spiritual and realistic fashion to solve such a problem. If necessary ask the Church Father to intervene.

- Try your best to encourage mutual love and respect between parents and child.
- Write notes about the visitation, and what you were asked to do for the child, such as their request for a Bible, Agpeya or help in anything. Give them what was required as a present, later.
- Conclude by reading the Bible and pray again a short prayer mentioning the name of your child saying, "Please remember'.....' bless him and his family, this home and fill them with grace".
- Pray, when you go home, that the Lord may make the seeds of your visitation bring fruits. As Jesus said in the parable, "**But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty," Matt13:8.**
- Give the names of the children you visited to the Church Father to mention them on the altar. Tell him if there are any problems in the homes of any you have visited.
- Keep your visitation short and focused on the goal of visitation, and family.
- Make an effort to visit all your children in the class at least once a year.
- When you have left, pray that Christ remains behind to accomplish His wish for them. "**My son, give Me your heart and let your eyes observe My ways," Pro23:26.**

Glory be to God forever Amen.





HOW TO PREPARE AND WRITE A SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

Big Idea: When preparing the lesson, there is a need to address the mind, the heart and the will.

Bible Text: Matt3:2, 4-17, Mk6:12, Acts2:38; 17:30 Matt15:29-39.

Bible Verses: ✕ Deut6:5 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind (might)."

✕ Rom12:2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God".

Students will

Know: ✕ The main aim of the service is repentance.
✕ Definition of repentance.
✕ Repentance involves the mind, heart and the will.
✕ How to prepare and write a Sunday School lesson.

Feel: The importance of addressing the mind, the heart and the will when preparing the lesson.

Do: Repent (change direction of our lives) as we go about calling souls for repentance.

Jesus Is...

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life:
Without the Way there is no going;
Without the Truth there is no knowing;
Without the Life there is no living.



HOW TO PREPARE AND WRITE A SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON



One day St Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan, refused to give the sacrament of Holy Communion to Emperor Theodosius because the Emperor had ordered the population of Thessalonica to be massacred. The Emperor protested, "Why should I be rejected when David who was both murderer and adulterer was not rejected by God"? St Ambrose turned to him and said, "You have imitated him in his crime, now imitate him in his repentance".



THE MAIN AIM OF THE SERVICE

That everyone comes to repentance is the main aim of the service. The first sermon Jesus ever preached was only one sentence long: "**Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand**", Matt4:17. John the Baptist had a similar call (Mark3:2). The Lord himself advised the Apostles to do the same (Matt10:7). "**So they went out and preached that people should repent**", Mark6:12. On the day of Pentecost St Peter called everybody to repent (Acts2:38). St Paul went about saying, "**Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent**," Acts17:30.

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

By definition repentance is revolution (change) not against the world or other people but against the evil in oneself. It is the spiritual awakening of a person and his determination to turn away from the field of trespassing (sin) to the bosom of Christ and into church life. True repentance means that we cease serving sin, idols and self and we turn to the worship and service of the one true God.

Repentance involves the mind, the heart and the will. "**You shall love the lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all mind (might)**", Matt22:37, Deut6:5. In Mark7:21-22, Jesus taught his disciples saying "**for from within, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteress, fornications, murders, thefts....**".

If we are to bring about a change in a kid's life, we are to address his mind and



his heart. The change of mind and heart leads to a changed direction of life. St Paul made a "U-turn" on the Damascus Road. He wrote to the Romans, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God," Rom12:2.

(Adapted from "Eastern Orthodoxy, A Way of Life" by Rev Fr A. M. Coniaris, P172-175).

AS YOU PLAN YOUR LESSON ASK YOURSELF:

- What Bible truth do I want to plant in the children's mind? What questions would I ask?
- How differently should they feel? How would we apply the new truth we have learned to bring about a change of life and spiritual growth?

Plan to sow seeds, water and fertilize the plants, and harvest the fruit.

Where do we stand? Repentance is followed by spiritual growth. In the process of growing, every Christian should go about calling souls for repentance. "Repent" said Jesus, "for the kingdom of God is at hand". What is the kingdom of God? It is nothing more than a state in which God is the king and rules. God invaded the world at Christmas. He came to forgive, to enlighten, to lead and to make all things new. He comes to reign on the throne of your heart.

PREPARING THE LESSON

The preparation of a Sunday School lesson is very important for the Sunday School servant first and then for the class. It is important to keep in mind that the servant must first live and benefit from the lesson before his class can be expected to benefit. "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," Heb4:12. The lesson is above all a message from God to the servant first and then to the class (through the servant).

The servant must be fully aware of his class' age, ability, needs, development stages, spiritual level etc before preparing any lesson. However, when preparing a lesson, regardless of age group or ability, there are certain steps



that should be followed:

- Bearing in mind that the lesson is a message from God, then the first thing to do is **PRAY**. Ask God to lead you to the message He is sending you. Ask Him to send the Holy Spirit to guide you, to help you benefit, to send to you the words to be written in the lesson and how you will give the lesson to the children so they can benefit.
- Next you start to **LIVE** the lesson in your life. Draw on your experiences and knowledge of the theme of the lesson. For example, if the lesson is about faith, think of times when your faith was strong or weak. What did you feel? What were you doing at the time? What actions did you take to handle the situation? What mistakes did you make? What did you learn? Etc...

Think how this lesson applies to you. For example, a lesson on stealing may, at first glance, appear to have no relevance in your life. Thus you must ask yourself, "am I covering all aspects of the lesson? Have I considered different types of stealing such as spiritual stealing, social stealing, psychological stealing etc"; a person who does not pay their tithes steals from God.

- At the same time, **READ** available literature on the topic of the lesson. Start with as much relevant Scripture passages as possible. Then read spiritual books written about the topic. Preferably, start with anything written by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III then other Orthodox writers. If there is still time then read other Christian writers and non-religious material (as long as they are relevant and not opposing the teachings of the Coptic Orthodox Church). Hence it is important that servants invest in an Open Book Bible and make every effort to build up a good personal library.
- Put pen to paper and **WRITE** the lesson.

Every lesson, regardless of whether it is for year 1 or year 9 must have:

Aim: The aim sets the direction of the lesson and keeps it from going off on different tangents. It should clearly state what is expected the children will gain from the lesson both spiritually and otherwise.



References: Starting with the Bible, list all resources used in preparing the lesson.

Preparation: Make notes of all pre-lesson preparation so that there are no nasty surprises during the lesson; e.g. do you need an overhead projector, scissors, pens, photocopying etc?

Introduction: Use this time to guide the children's thoughts in a particular way. Maybe read a story or ask a question that requires a response from every child. As an example, if the lesson was on forgiveness, ask the children to think of a time when someone was upset with them and to share with the class how they felt. The introduction sets the mood and tone of the lesson and thus is a very important part of the lesson.

Body: This is the main part of the lesson. This part of the lesson should have definite order and be guided by the aim of the lesson. Take the responses from the introduction and continue with the lesson. Depending on the class and topic, the body of the lesson should contain some of the following:

Scripture Reading: To be read by the children themselves where possible. This has the following benefits: it allows the children to participate in the lesson; it gives the teacher the opportunity to assess the class' Bible reading at home; and helps the children to get used to the language of the Bible.

Discussion: Use open-ended questions. This draws out the children to participate in the lesson and share their experiences.

Activity: This can include role-plays, craft, colouring in, etc.

Games: Should be chosen with care and can also be used as part of the introduction. For example if the lesson is on the Book of Jonah, then younger children can make mobiles based on the story which they cut out and colour in themselves. Older children can have a discussion on 'attempting to hide from God when we have done something wrong'.

Conclusion: Finish with a summary of the main points of the lesson in order to leave a last impression on the children's minds. By the end of each lesson, students should **know, feel and be able to do** the key Bible truths and response goals.

Also the lesson should have the following:



Verse: Each lesson should have a verse from the Bible that the children learn before they leave.

Spiritual Exercises: Tell the children of anything you want them to do during the week to keep the lesson with them. For example, go home and read a chapter in the Bible; make the effort to smile to someone new in their school.

Pray: Incorporate the lesson in the prayer at the end. For example, "Lord please helps us to forgive someone who hurts us this week".

Give: If it is at all viable it is also a good idea to give the children some sort of pamphlet or icon or something to take away with them as memory of the lesson.

WHAT TIME FRAME CAN I GO BY?

The Sunday School Lesson is a powerful tool that can leave lasting impressions on young minds. Therefore it is important that the servant takes the preparation seriously. Unfortunately many times, due to bad time-management, the lesson is rushed and done the day before. Unfortunately, you may not realize it then but the children will not benefit properly if the lesson is prepared in this way. They will not benefit from the lesson if you have not benefited from the lesson. We should always remember that our Lord God does everything in its due time and season and we should do the same.

Start preparing from the Sunday before. Read the lesson title and start praying and thinking about the lesson. Then start researching the Bible and other literature on the topic. By Wednesday, you should start writing the draft of the lesson and continue in research and prayer. By Friday, the lesson should be fully prepared and all that is left for you to do is more prayer.

QUOTATIONS FOR CONTEMPLATION

- The Lord can do great things through those that don't care about who gets the credit.
- Be like a postage stamp; stick to something till you get there.
- Unless we reach our children's hearts today, they will break our hearts tomorrow.
- God has great confidence in you to place you where you are.
- Prepare and prevent instead of repair and repent.
- I am responsible to God for the talent He has given me.
- Educate children without faith, and you make a race of clever devils.



- Life affords no greater responsibility, no greater privilege, than the raising of the next generation.
- Wherever the Spirit of the Lord sways a heart, there is a passion to serve.
- Success lies not in what we start, but in what we finish.
- Others will follow your footsteps more easily than they will follow your advice.
- Depend on it; God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supplies.

LESSON GUIDE

Introduction

In your introduction you aim at involving the students and grabbing their attention by using an interest-generating activity and/or story (reference is needed); or discussion (write discussion questions); or Song relevant to the lesson (write reference and name of song).

Body of the lesson

Teach the Bible lesson itself. Include appropriate exercises or discussion questions.

Conclusion

Encourage learners to apply a main Bible truth to their lives. Learn memory verse.

Practical application

Apply Bible principle learnt in the lesson during the week. Include a homework page.

Teacher's tip

Are you ready for your students when they arrive in your classroom? Eighty percent of all teaching difficulties occur as a result of lack of preparation. Kids behave differently when you are not prepared. Consider the following checklist before you start. Adjust it to fit you and your setting:

- Read and think about your lesson early.
- Gather all the materials you will need.
- Set up before students arrive.
- Pray for yourself and students to learn God's truth.



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Big Idea: Elements necessary for making the right classroom connections

Bible Text: Mark6:30-42

Bible Verse: Mark6:39, "Then He commanded them to make them sit in groups on the grass".

Students will

Know:

- ✖ Creating a positive environment is essential in a classroom.
- ✖ Reflective teaching.
- ✖ How to communicate warmth and empathy to students?

Feel: Confident to serve a class.

Do: Consider all elements needed to establish a positive environment in the classroom.



CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS



Creating a positive environment is essential in a classroom. Classroom climate refers to classroom characteristics that promote students' feelings of safety and security, as well as a sense of understanding and challenge. Climate is important because it influences both student achievement and satisfaction by providing a nurturing environment in which to learn.

A positive climate is one in which students work with the conviction that the teacher is genuinely concerned both about their learning and about them as human beings. They are secure in the knowledge that they're free from threats to their emotional security of self-esteem. Teachers create a positive climate by encouraging students, patiently supporting their learning efforts and allowing them to feel comfortable taking intellectual risks without fear of being criticized for making mistakes.

A positive climate is also one in which students are treated as competent individuals capable of learning and understanding the need to learn. Students are challenged, and expectations for both performance and success are high. Teachers who care and who display high levels of warmth and empathy, motivate students to a greater extent than those who don't. Students value the caring in their teachers more than any other characteristic. It is virtually impossible to successfully manage a classroom, or in fact succeed in any part of teaching, without genuinely caring about students and their learning. A caring teacher creates a positive classroom environment in which students feel free to learn. Children's basic needs of safety, belonging, and self-esteem must be met.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Quality of learning is closely linked with classroom climate. Teachers who manage their classrooms effectively are much more successful communicators of truth. Teachers need to establish a "code of conduct" with students from the very start. Then the students will know what to expect if they step beyond the code.



Children grow not only in size, knowledge, and skills but also in their awareness of themselves as a person. This growing personal awareness, the development of self, is known as self-concept. Self-concept is the sum totals of one's perceptions about one's academic, social, and physical self. Our decisions about who we are, based on our interactions with others, and teachers are second only to parents in their influence on those decisions (Phillips, 1990). Even young children can sense whether adults have low or high expectations for their achievement, and these expectations influence achievement.

Once a safe and orderly environment is established, students' expectation for success is the most important climate variable that exists. Success is reinforcing. The reinforcement is motivating, which in turn leads to increased effort. Increased effort promotes positive attributions for further success, and enhances one's self-esteem.

Teachers can increase success rates in several ways. The following list describes some strategies:

- Prompt students when they have difficulty answering questions.
- Develop skills in short steps.
- Use many examples and demonstrations.
- Provide teacher-aided practice before students are put on their own.
- Provide extensive independent practice.
- Reteach the lesson, when necessary.
- Provide students with detailed feedback about their performance.
- Encourage every student to become involved in classroom activities, by providing activities that require them to interact with their peers, and also the teacher.
- Encourage students to take on their own responsibilities.

HOW DO WE AS TEACHERS COMMUNICATE WARMTH AND EMPATHY TO STUDENTS?

As teachers it is of great importance to develop a relationship with every student in the classroom. Providing time for our students, both inside and outside of the classroom is also essential. We all react positively when someone is willing to spend time with us when we need something or have a



problem. Only a few seconds spent listening to students' needs as people with fears, concerns and joys can have long-lasting effects on their general attitude toward the classroom. This is particularly true for students having personal adjustments or behaviour problems. Effective teachers "build personal relationships and work with their problem students" and they take personal responsibility for students' academic and personal growth.

Teaching requires an enormous number of decisions. As teachers we are all forced into making them. How will we know if our decisions are wise and valid? This is a difficult question, since teachers receive little feedback about their performance. They often get only vague and uncertain feedback from their students and their students' parents. This all means that each teacher is primarily responsible for assessing his or her own classroom performance. There is a need for "Reflective Teaching". **Reflective Teaching simply means think about what you're doing.** Reflective teachers are thoughtful, analytical, and even self-critical about their teaching. They take their time to plan lessons thoughtfully and to analyse and critique them afterward (Cruickshank, 1987).





UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN

Big Idea: Understanding children is essential to edifying them successfully.

Bible Text: Matt19:13-14

Bible Verse: 1Cor13:11, "When I was a child I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things".

Students will

Know: How to understand children's thinking.

Feel: Concerned with the child's personal life, whether it be the family, school, the child's friends, interests, likes, dislikes and so on.

Do:

- ✖ Maintain a positive relationship with all the children in the class.
- ✖ Be willing to develop a relationship with the children that are beyond the classroom.



UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN



Matthew19:13-14, "Then Little Children Were Brought To Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the Little Children Come to Me and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of heaven".

SOCIALISATION

- It is the family's responsibility to bring their children to church. Not by force, but by teaching the child how special the House of the Lord is.
- The child should be taught about the church in the simplest way, by describing the role of the church, the sacraments of the church, and also how the Coptic Orthodox church functions,
- The children should be taught, the songs and tunes of the church, how to pray, and how to behave and stand in the place of worship.

It is the parents' responsibility to take their children to Holy Communion frequently at a very young age, to allow them to understand the importance of partaking the Body and Blood of Christ, and become familiar with them.

TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

- It is the teacher's responsibility to understand what he/she is teaching, in order for the children to understand.
- The teacher must be patient and willing to explain to the children anything they may have difficulties understanding. The teacher may overcome this problem by repeating the lesson and providing visual aids to assist the children to comprehend the lesson.
- The teacher must always encourage the children to be involved in the lesson, by providing a variety of activities. This also allows the children to interact with their peers, as well as the teacher.





- Children enjoy activities that include colours and pictures.
- The teacher must always reward the children on their achievements, and also for attempting and participating in activities.
- The teacher should always provide the opportunity, for the children to ask questions during any time of the lesson. Children are often frightened of asking questions in front of their classmates.
- It is of great importance to greet the children with a warm smile, to allow them to feel relaxed and comfortable in the classroom. If this is achieved, the child may develop an open relationship with the teacher.
- A child knows by an adult's facial expressions and body language, how the adult feels about him/her.

St Paul the Apostle wrote in 1Cor13:11, "When I was a child, I spoke as a child; I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things".

"I UNDERSTOOD AS A CHILD"

Children understand and comprehend information in their own way. That is evident as you observe children. To observe a child, means to take notice and to pay attention to what the child says, as well as his/her actions. Whilst observing a child, focus on certain aspects such as:

- The children's movements.
- Their gestures.
- Body language.
- Changes in facial expressions.

Their comments and responses to the information that is discussed in the classroom may allow the teacher to begin to understand:

- What the child has learnt.
- How the child thinks and interprets information.
- How the child is feeling.

Teachers must not try to force a child to understand something that



they cannot understand. The more a child is forced to understand, the more the child will rebel, and block out information which is given to him/her. A child will mostly likely rebel if you order him/her to do something out of their own free will. These children require individual attention, as they may be having problems in their personal life, and need extra care and attention.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND CHILDREN'S THINKING

- The period between two to eight years of age, brings enormous changes in the way children think.
- Changes occur by the way children act on objects, as well as by what they say. The younger the child, the more closely thinking is tied to actions.
- Changes such as systematic approaches begin to develop. For example, they may distinguish between light and heavy objects.
- In order to investigate how a child's thought has changed over a period of time, teachers might present the same or similar tasks at the beginning, middle, and the end of the year.
- Young children are quick to pick up and repeat the words they hear, however they do not always understand the meaning of what they are saying.

What a teacher says or does in response to a child's comments or actions can further or deter the child's thinking.

An effective teacher maintains a positive relationship with all the children in the class. The teacher must also be willing to develop relationships with the children that are beyond the classroom. Teachers should be concerned with the child's personal life, whether it be the family, school, the child's friends, interests, likes, dislikes and so on.

Children enjoy talking to people who take the time to listen and who are interested in what they are saying. A few minutes of your time, when a child needs someone to talk to will be everlasting.



GRABBING STUDENT ATTENTION

Big Idea: Motivating and involving the students in the teaching process.

Bible Text: Matt15:32-33

Bible Verse: Matt15:32, "...I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way."

Students will

Know:

- ✖ The teacher's manner and style.
- ✖ The media and materials of instruction.
- ✖ The need of interaction between teacher and student for effective teaching.

Feel: The importance of incorporating many different teaching methods appropriate for the age group they teach.

Do: Judge the effectiveness of the teaching method used by how well it accomplished the teaching or goal for the lesson.



GRABBING STUDENT ATTENTION



I have been given the opportunity today to talk to you about being able to grab student attention in your lessons. I'm hoping that by the end of this small session you will have the tools and be inspired to develop lessons that will inspire your students to achieve the outcomes of your planned lessons.

Does anyone have any ideas as to why it is important to be able to arouse student attention? What are some ideas that you have that may help you in getting student attention?

The preschoolers in Marina's class had a great interest in the lesson she presented each week, but that interest usually lasted about five minutes before their thoughts went to other things and their active little bodies followed. As a result, Marina found it frustrating because she had to spend most of the class time trying to keep kids under control and get their attention. Then she came to a conclusion: *If I can't change the kids, maybe I should change the way I teach.*

Initiating student attention is based on surprise. Arousal leaps at the unexpected. Research has shown that arousal and maintaining interest are attributed to three factors:

- The teacher's manner or style,
- The media and materials of instruction and
- The interaction between teacher and student.

TEACHER'S MANNER AND STYLE

To be 'interesting', a speaker should vary speed of delivery e.g. slowing down for emphasis and volume increasing for importance or a double surprise, speaking the climax very softly so that the audience strains to hear.

Tone and pitch provide further contrasts with volume and speed e.g. the



teacher's voice can range from sharp emphasis to quiet encouragement. Variations of grammatical style and use of questions at unpredictable moments during the lesson are further examples of ways of creating the unexpected. There are 3 types of teaching material, namely visual, aural and tactile.

VISUAL

Visual resources include, film, actual objects, pictures, maps, charts, videotape, television, overhead and duplicated materials. There are also the classroom environment and outings which add variety and interest to lessons when conducted properly.

AURAL

Start the lesson by using material in which the students are already interested e.g. playing a game of cards where you cheat to win to teach the importance of rules and God's commandments.

Arouse interest at the beginning of the lesson by asking leading questions about the topic that they might find interesting and want to find the answers to. These questions also guide them as to what they are listening out for. The questions should reflect the outcomes of the lesson to be effective.

Questioning throughout is also an effective technique. But be careful not to make questions ridiculous for student's age of learning. Students tend to code information in parts of the brain, overloading can have negative effects such as loss of interest which will lead to disruption and seeking attention from others.

TACTILE

It is the handling of objects, something concrete to see and feel. This is especially effective for younger students. For example, if you want to show how much sin is going to tie you down and you cannot escape, ask for a volunteer to sit on a chair at the beginning of the lesson and get some rope and tie their hands at the back. Then ask them to go about their everyday



business. Ask for feedback of how they felt and this can then lead into discussion of sin.

A vital aspect of teaching is selling the task to the learner and the learner's scale of importance is the key. Good conversationalists recognise the importance of tapping into the learner's interest whenever they can. If you know that they are interested in football come in with a few facts the next lesson about his favourite football team and relate a message to the student. We often can link a message working towards a goal.

Repetition is also a good technique in helping students to become familiar with certain terms and verses. This can be done by verbal repetition or by having certain words on overhead, board, poster etc for them to see throughout the lesson.

The underlining factor that these types of activities are based on is **PLANNING**. If you walk into a lesson unprepared then no matter what you try to do to try and attain student attention will be futile. Students are experts in knowing whether the person in front of them is prepared or not.

Talking to students at their level is the foundation of your activities. Activities need to be organised so that they meet student needs and fulfil your desired outcomes. In order to organise for a student activity you must have a purpose or outcome that you wish to achieve or have them achieve. For example, play a game of Knots and Crosses to establish rules.

What I have outlined today might be the basis of the teacher education program that aspiring teachers would undertake but we have examples from the Bible, in fact from Our Lord Jesus Christ. When He spoke to adults He spoke in parables. When He spoke to children He is often pictured sitting with children around Him speaking to them at their age level? He referred to the simplicity of children showing us that we need to approach and speak to them in such a manner.

Finally suggestions as to the type of activities you may want to organise:



- Story telling using pictures.
- Unjumble phrases to read a verse or summarise a story.
- Colouring in certain characters at a time to emphasise importance.
- Playing games.
- Crosswords.
- Find word.
- Who can find the quickest verse?
- Overhead with key words or verse.
- Watch part of a video to illustrate certain emotions.
- Use everyday examples that they can relate to.
- Have students writing.
- Have lessons structured. Students relate better to when they know who and what to do?

VARY YOUR LESSON ACTIVITIES SO THAT YOU ARE DOING SOMETHING DIFFERENT EVERY 10 - 15 minutes (must still do with the same lesson).

This tactic makes you a better teacher because those you teach are likely to learn when you employ variety during the teaching hour.

As you consider various ways to teach your lesson, it will not be uncommon to come with two or three different methods for each class. As you pursue excellence, you will want to use the best methods available. Remember, a method is only a tool to help you get the job done. In the final analysis, judge the effectiveness of your tool by how well the job gets done. For a Sunday School teacher that translates: *Has the Word of God changed a life as a result of the lesson you taught?*



USING VISUAL AIDS

Big Idea: Visual aids help clarifies thoughts by making ideas concrete.

Bible Text: Matthew13:51-53

Bible Verse: Matthew13:34, "All these things Jesus spoke to them in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them."

Students will

Know: ✕ The importance of using visual aids.
 ✕ The proper use of visual aids.
 ✕ The shortfalls of using visual aids.
 ✕ Guidelines for using visual aids.

Feel: Empowered to use visual aids properly.

Do: Follow the guidelines when using visual aids.



USING VISUAL AIDS



STUDENTS LEARN BY LOOKING

Sandra's eyes opened wide as she walked into the Sunday School Class. She could not help but see the bold red colours on the bulletin board announcing St Mark's Festival. It wasn't until she took her seat for the opening session in the second and third grade department that she noticed the new posters along the opposite wall. Each poster was tied to a lesson to be taught in the coming week.

Seven children helped the teacher hold up bright red heart-shaped sheets with the memory verse. Each time they read the verse on love, one of the pages would be turned around, hiding a keyword from view. It's amazing how quickly children learn verses when visual aids are used.

When the larger group was divided into smaller groups for class time, Sandra's teacher placed flannel graph characters on a board to tell the story. Later in the class, several girls used the flannel graph figures to retell part of the story during review time.

Sandra's picture was posted in "the wall of fame" with those of the other girls in the class. The teacher explained that every girl in the class had her picture on the wall because they were known by God and were important to Him.

Visual aids are objects, symbols, materials and methods that appeal to our sense of sight and help to clarify thought by making ideas concrete. Visual aids are valuable in the teaching-learning process. Proper use of visual aids will clarify the materials, illustrate difficult points, make learning more lasting (children remember 50 percent of what they see), complement other teaching methods, speed the learning process, hold attention, improve behaviour, make learning more enjoyable and provide eye appeal as a window into the soul.

THE SHORTFALLS OF USING VISUAL AIDS

Extensive use of visual aids can be a hindrance to good teaching if they become lessons in themselves or become a substitute for traditional teaching methods. Do not limit yourself to one form of visual aid or let the tools become a source of mere entertainment.



There are some disadvantages and limitations to the use of some visual aids. For example, the cost associated with a visual aid may be prohibitive. The upkeep of mechanical aids and replacement of materials also can be expensive. Some churches lack the storage space required for large mechanical aids (puppets and staging materials).

In contrast, small-sized visual aids (flannel boards and poster board displays) are limited to being viewed by small groups. Projected visual aids (use of overhead projectors, movie projectors, etc.) require space for seating, good acoustics and good lighting. And it takes time to set up and take down such visual aids, write scripts for them and train people in their use. But these problems are not insurmountable.

GUIDELINES FOR USING VISUAL AIDS

There are several guidelines to help you use visual aids more effectively in your teaching.

Know the field. Take time to know what the latest developments are in teaching methods and effective use of visual aids.

Know the visual-aid products. Select aids in your price range and with which you are familiar or will become familiar. Choose aids that are durable, attractive, professionally made and present a message effectively.

Choose Aids Appropriate To Your Teaching Situation. Use aids that are interesting and understandable for each age level. The tools must be accurate, authentic, realistic and educational, rather than just entertaining.

Test the Visual Aids and Practice Using Them. Have all equipment set up and tested before hand. Plan and practice all mechanical procedures thoroughly. Be sure of visibility of the aids from all parts of the room. Plan a smooth transition into use of the visual aid.

Apply the lesson illustrated by the visual aid to the lives of the students. Used appropriately, a visual aid can be a great asset to your teaching. But if you do not have a lesson and you don't have a point to get across, a visual aid can't make nothing into something. Remember a visual aid is just that- an aid .



INCENTIVES AND REWARDS

Big Idea: Understand the motivating influence of incentives and rewards for children

Bible Text: Revelation 22:12, 13.

Bible Verse: Rev 2:7, "To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God".

Students will

Know:

- ✖ Code of Conduct.
- ✖ Incentives and Rewards for Children.
- ✖ Principles of the Token/Point Programme.

Feel: Empowered to teach the children fairly.

Do: Implement the Token/point programme in their classes.



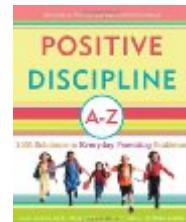
INCENTIVES AND REWARDS



In order to maintain a healthy environment and discipline, teachers are advised to communicate a code of conduct from the very start. Then the students will know what to expect if they step beyond the code.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Establish a code of conduct with your students during your first session together. Students can help establish the rules and thereby "own" them. Address these areas: remaining in seats, paying attention, participating, showing respect, listening, talking and use of hands. Be sure to outline consequences of breaking the "code of conduct" that you establish.



Let students know that you are in charge. Kids will "test" you to determine your limits. They want to find out whether you will enforce the rules. Therefore, if you correct the first child who misbehaves, then you may eliminate future skirmishes with other students.

INCENTIVES AND REWARDS FOR CHILDREN

The Creator knew what it took to rescue people from sin; He sent Jesus. He understood how to empower believers; He sent the Holy Spirit. He also knew the importance of motivating His Church; He promised to reward the faithful, "...we do it to get a crown that will last forever," 1Cor9:25.

Consider rewarding your students for their efforts. Incentives and rewards can be useful if used effectively and carefully. If used correctly, children and adults will benefit with the process.



PRINCIPLES OF THE TOKEN/POINT PROGRAMME

This programme is based on two principles:

1. Behaviour that is immediately followed by a rewarding consequence or event will be more likely to occur again, or will occur more often.
2. Behaviour that is immediately followed by a non-rewarding consequence or event will be less likely to occur again, or will occur less often.

In token/point programmes, points (that may be given as stars, stickers,



cards, ticks, or points) serve as rewarding and punishing events that **immediately** follow the child's behaviour. Points by themselves have no value; they only become useful/valuable to the child if she/he can do something with them, e.g. if they can use them to obtain prizes or privileges.

MAKING POINTS POWERFUL

To become effective in increasing wanted behaviours, points must be rewarding to the child. The child must feel she/he has gained something when given a point. Losing points must be unpleasant, or the children will not feel that they have lost something valuable.



PRIZES OR PRIVILEGES

One way of making points valuable is to allow the child to purchase prizes with their points (much the same way you would in a shop). Another way is to allow a child certain privileges. These can be anything the child likes to do, e.g. a special snack, being allowed to leave early, having special time with the teacher etc.

BEHAVIOUR

There will be some behaviour which can only earn points and others which can only lose them. You need to decide which behaviours will be rewarded, and which will be punished. For example, behaviours that can only gain points would be: answering questions correctly, putting up the hand before speaking, sitting quietly or listening, etc; behaviours that can only lose points would be: throwing things, shouting, back-chatting, hitting others, talking out of turn, etc.

It is always more important to give points than to take them away. For this system to be effective, you must catch the child being good and reward them consistently, or you must take the points away immediately, and every time one of the unwanted behaviour occurs.



HOW TO GIVE POINTS

1. Make eye contact with the child and use a pleasant tone. Make sure the child is facing you and looking at you.
2. Reward them with points and describe the appropriate behaviour so that they know exactly what the behaviour is being praised or rewarded, e.g. I



am giving you 2 points for putting up your hand before speaking.



3. Give them the points.

HOW TO TAKE AWAY POINTS

1. Make eye contact with the child and use a pleasant tone (the child must not be able to tell whether you are going to give points or take them away by the tone of your voice or facial expression). Make sure the child is facing you and looking at you.
2. Explain what was inappropriate, e.g. I am taking 5 points because you hit John on the head. Be sympathetic; e.g. say, "I know it's hard to lose points, but that's the rule". Prompting the appropriate responses will sometimes be necessary. For example, "Come give me a smile; that's right".

OTHER POINTS TO REMEMBER

Make sure all children at some stage receive a point. If they have not any, create jobs and simple tasks that will enable them to try again.

It is sometimes useful for the teacher to keep a record of points given and taken, and make it available for the children to follow their progress.

Sometimes, being too generous with the reward system can be unsuccessful. Children adjust to behaving only to receive a reward. This is why we must be careful; after about six weeks, rewards would be made harder to achieve. The teachers must sit with their class and discuss new and more challenging tasks to achieve.





EARLY CHILDHOOD

Big Idea: Considerations taken when plan a lesson for the age group of 2-6 years.

Bible Text: 2Tim1:3-5.

Bible Verse: 2Tim1:13, "Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Jesus Christ".

Students will

Know:

- ✗ Be aware of the needs, interests and experiences of the children.
- ✗ Prepare lessons relevant to them.
- ✗ Be aware of how the children think.
- ✗ Select contents and methods which are appropriate and effective.

Feel: More informed about the developmental needs of early childhood.

Do: Plan the lesson accordingly.

EARLY CHILDHOOD



EARLY CHILDHOOD- WHO ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?



Roughly, the period between 2 and 6 years of age are called the early childhood period. This period is often known as the play years because it is at this age that children are at their most playful. This makes them a lot of fun, but also exasperating, because life is a game to them for which they seem to have endless enthusiasm. They refuse to sit quietly, and won't think logically, or act realistically. They are sources of seemingly endless energy, and require constant attention. What makes them who they are?

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Egocentricity: They see themselves as centre of all experience, can't see someone else's perspective; the world shares their emotions, monologue conversation.

Type of operations: Physical attributes are very important when trying to solve problems:

- deceived by perceptual appearances e.g. conservation of volume.
- can't perform logical operations e.g. "If this, then that".
- incapable of reversibility- can't reverse actions.
- centration - tendency to think about one idea at a time, at the exclusion of other ideas.
- understanding is static, not dynamic- absolute; can't think in an abstract fashion.

Symbolism: is reflected in their play; it becomes more complex; imitates the world around them.

Nominal realism: they think names are parts of objects.

Animism: believe that inanimate objects have mental processes.

Attention: very short attention span, have difficulty remaining seated for any length of time.

Memory: excellent for simple short words accompanied by gesture and/or melody.

Historical consciousness: sense of time is limited; no sense of chronology



of events happening in a particular order.

They can't separate fantasy from reality: ask questions but all answers are accepted.

God is willingly accepted as He who made everything, magical power of prayer is believed in.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Community consists mainly of family, a little school and play mates.

CONCERNS IN A TEACHING SITUATION

- That the material is understood.
- That the material is suitable.
- That the material is presented in a suitable, interesting way.
- To do this we need to understand our audience.

So, to plan lessons we need to:

- Be aware of the needs, interests and experiences of the children.
- Prepare lessons relevant to them.
- Be aware of how the children think.
- Select contents and methods which are appropriate and effective.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING METHODS

- Stories should appeal to the senses and involve the children actively e.g. acting out stories, drawing, painting, games that allow explanation of a concept.
- Divide lessons into short periods and change the child's place in the classroom; let them move around (let them do the Wiggle!!); vary the type of attention they need.
- Give each child individual attention as much as possible to satisfy the egocentricity.
- Friendly, relaxed atmosphere and sense of belonging are much more important than the actual information; we want them to like Sunday School and want to come every week.
- Take them through physical aspects of Church behaviour, rather than the spiritual, because what they see and touch and experience first-hand is remembered better, and is more interesting.
- If trying to explain some behaviour e.g. helping show them visual aids of helping professions such as doctors.



- Don't emphasise doctrinal ideas in Bible stories; impressions and preliminary ideas are all they need at this point.
- Clear and simple stories with no reference to time or distance.
- Short prayers can be memorised, they can make up personal prayer too.



THE KINDERGARTEN CLASS

Big Idea: Understand the characteristics of children in the age group 4-6 years, so that we can teach them accordingly.

Bible Text: Mark10:13-16

Bible Verses: ✽ Mark10:15, "Assuredly, I say to you, 'Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it'".

✽ Psa127:3-5, "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them".

Students will

Know: ✽ Children are important to God.

✽ Developmental stage of Age Group 4-6 years.

✽ Dealing with the Class in Sunday School.

✽ Dealing with specific problems.

Feel: Confident to deal with the Kindergarten class.

Do: Prepare the lesson according to the characteristics of children in the class.



THE KINDERGARTEN CLASS



ARE CHILDREN IMPORTANT TO GOD?

The Bible has many verses about the importance of children in the eyes of God. In fact our Lord Jesus Christ made sure that we all understand the special place He has for children.

"Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it'. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them," **Mark10:13-16.**

Also the importance of teaching children is very clearly described in the Bible. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," **Pro22:6.** "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up," **Deut6:6-7.**

THE DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE OF AGE GROUP 4-6 YEARS

This is the stage of developing initiative in exploring the environment around them but only with adult encouragement and reinforcement. This stage can be termed as the time for 'showing off'. Morally children in this group will not do the wrong thing for fear of punishment rather than 'this is wrong and I should not do it'.

POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS

Love Activity – they express emotion, needs, and wants through motion, e.g. excitement sees children in this age group jump up and down.

Very Helpful - children need love and love to be needed. Helping adults gives them positive attention and satisfies their need to be important.

Quick Learners – this is the age that is quick to absorb and retain information. They are not yet inundated with the finer points of schooling (such as spelling, addition etc) so their minds are quite free to absorb more general information, i.e. stories, verses etc.



Live in a World of Make-Believe – their imagination has no bounds. Therefore, they love stories to be animated, filled with movement, expression, action and always with a specific and defined ending. Also they like to be part of the story, becoming one of the characters- human, animal or otherwise. They will also make up their own story and retell them with great attention to detail.

Simple – they are able to enjoy even the smallest things. E.g. a small toy car will bring the same joy as a huge remote control affair.

Pure/Trusting – easily believe anything told to them. However if lied to, they will also lose trust quickly.

NEGATIVE CHARACTERISTICS

Egocentric – everything revolves around them. They demand attention and will do much to grab it.

Cruel – easily mock and laugh at those they perceive as different, especially other children. Also, they can show much cruelty to animals.

Selfish – the concept of sharing is not one they want to be involved with. They are especially selfish about toys and adult attention.

Inquisitive – this is the age of the difficult questions such as where does God live? Most of their questions are usually just WHY?

Cunning – will attempt to hide anything wrong they have done, to avoid getting into trouble, by assuming an innocent expression.

Can be Dishonest – will lie if they think it will get them out of trouble.

Very Short Attention Span – can usually only concentrate on a task for no more than fifteen minutes.

Everything is Black/White – do not make allowances for any inconsistency in the treatment of others compared to them. They do not understand the concept of 'grey areas'.

Mimickers – they will watch and mimic everything the adults in their lives do. This means that the adults must watch everything they do and say in front of them.

DEALING WITH THE CLASS IN SUNDAY SCHOOL

- Despite their young age, these children are very perceptive and pick up on everything. Hence the servant of this class must be fully prepared or the class will be a disaster. Under no circumstances must the child be treated as dumb or incapable.
- The servants must know the developmental stage of their children and their characteristics as a group and prepare accordingly.



- The servant must form a personal relationship with each child and know about each child's personal circumstances, any problems they may be having at home, school etc. Therefore, the servant must communicate with the parents or guardian of the child, ask about the activities the child is involved in etc.
- The more dedicated a servant is the more he will be successful with the children. Such things as lateness, unprepared lessons, and lack of patience are only a formula for disaster.
- The children will pick up on changed body language, facial expressions or tone of voice and react to the changes. Hence if a servant is agitated the children will misbehave. Thus the servant needs to leave all his own problems 'outside' the Sunday School classroom before attempting to deal with the children.
- At the beginning of the year, it is important to set clear rules and guidelines on acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in the classroom. This will apply to both the servant and the children. As they need lots of repetition, keep reminding them of the rules for a few lessons until they fully understand.
- As a consequence of setting guidelines, the servant needs to apply reward and discipline for different behaviours. The most important thing here is consistency and fairness. Same punishment for same misdemeanour! **BE CAREFUL OF FAVOURITISM!** Consistency and lots of love is the only way to gather the trust of the children.
- The lesson must be prepared and allow for flexibility, with a variety of activities – remember the attention span. The typical lesson should have a story (with media if possible), physical activity, a quiet activity (such as colouring in), a short verse to be memorised and a small present for each child (such as a lollipop, picture etc.) Also other variations can include a video, hymns and little songs, role- playing etc. For example, a lesson on Noah's ark can involve the children pretending to be all the different kinds of animals followed by colouring in a picture depicting Noah, the ark and the animals.
- Follow up with visitation, outings, phone calls or little cards in the mail. This shows the child you care and think they are special. This sort of care also helps to forge your relationship with the children.



DEALING WITH SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

Attention Seekers – one of the most common problems faced by servants of this group is the child who demands too much attention. These children want to feel important. So get them busy as your little helpers. This will satisfy the child's needs and give you more time with the other children.

Disrupters – these children are those who will call out answers, make noise, move around etc. Firstly make sure that the lesson has enough variety and the children are not bored. Then when a child misbehaves remind them of the class rules, making the whole class recite the guidelines. After warning then reward these children when they remember to do the right thing. This will reinforce that you are serious.

Overly Shy – let their presence be felt by the rest of the class by giving them jobs to do (at first with others then on their own). Slowly, get them to participate in class discussion by directing simple questions to them, which you know they can answer. Eventually, involve them fully in the class discussion when you see they are ready.

FINALLY

The servant must **PRAY** for their class and for themselves. Put their names on the altar. Dedicate a Mass for them and especially the difficult ones.

These children are a special gift from God. Make the effort to **LEARN** something from the children. Remember our Lord said that unless we become like children we cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

QUOTATIONS FOR CONTEMPLATION

- The cure of crime is not in the electric chair, but in the high chair.
- The measure of a man's character is not what he gets from his ancestors, but what he leaves his descendants.
- Unless we reach our children's hearts today, they will break our hearts tomorrow.
- Prepare and prevent instead of repair and repent.
- Educate children without faith, and you make a race of clever devils.
- A child is likely to see God a Father, if they see God in their father,
- It is good to be Christian and know it, but it's better to be a Christian and show it.



- We should seize every opportunity to give encouragement. Encouragement is oxygen to the soul.
- Stack every bit of criticism between two layers of praise.
- To love what you do and feel that it matters- how could anything be more fun?

SAYINGS OF THE FATHERS

- *A man must himself be cleansed, before cleansing others: himself become wise, that he may make others wise; become light, and then give light: draw near to God, and so bring others near; be hallowed, then hallow them; be possessed of hands to lead others by the hand, of wisdom to give advice (St Gregory Nazianzus).*
- *The soul of a little child is pure from all the passions. Towards them who have vexed him he bears no resentment, but goes to them as to friends, as if nothing had been done (St John Chrysostom).*
- *First give your children virtue as an inheritance and then distribute your estate also (St Basil the Great).*
- *If artists who make statues and paint portraits of kings are held in high esteem, will not God bless ten thousand times more those who reveal and beautify His royal image (for man is the image of God)? When we teach our children to be good, to be gentle, to be forgiving (all these are attributes of God), to be generous, to love their fellow men, to regard this present age as nothing, we install virtue in their souls, and reveal the image of God within them. This, then, is our task: to educate both our children and ourselves in godliness; otherwise what answer will we have before Christ's judgment seat? (St John Chrysostom).*
- *Have great care of your children. We live at a time when much freedom is given to the expression of thought, but little care is taken that thoughts should be founded on truth. Teach them to love truth (A Father).*
- *But to humble oneself as that little child is to imitate the Holy Spirit, who humbled Himself for the salvation of men (Origen).*



TEACHING AGE 6-8

Big Idea: Characteristics and concepts of six-to-seven-year-olds and seven -to-eight-year-olds.

Bible Text: John10:11-13.

Bible Verse: Pro27:23, "Know thoroughly the souls of your sheep, and you will set heart on your flocks".

Students will

Know:

- ✖ Concepts of six-to-seven-year-olds and seven-to-eight-year-olds.
- ✖ What Bible lessons to include.
- ✖ Moral Christian values.

Feel: The importance of understanding the age level of the children they serve.

Do: Be a good shepherd.



TEACHING AGE 6-8



CONCEPTS

- Caring for others.
- We play and work together in Sunday School.
- Everything God made is good. There are some bad things in the world. We try to help God by taking care of things.
- God cares for us (i.e. loves us, gives us good things, wants us to be happy; Jesus helps people).
- God loves us even when we have been bad.
- When we pray we speak to God. We ask Him to help us and others. We thank Him.
- God wants us to be good. We are sorry when we do something bad or hurt someone. When we say sorry for doing something bad, God always forgives us.

LESSONS SHOULD INCLUDE:

Bible stories:

The creation of the world.

Bible stories with emphasis on family:

- How God saved Noah's family and animal families;
- God's promise to Abraham;
- Baby Moses;
- The birth of Christ;
- The birth of St Mary; her presentation in the Temple;
- Abraham and Lot making up, in quarrels.

Bible stories with emphasis on relationships:

- Balaam's learning from animals.
- The little boy who gave Jesus his bread and fish.
- The Good Samaritan.
- The Sign of the Cross.
- Jesus and the children.
- Epiphany.



- Calming the Tempest.
- Healing the paralytic.
- Jesus and Zacchaeus.

Bible stories about Faith and Feasts:

- Jesus enters Jerusalem.
- Last Supper.
- Crucifixion and Resurrection.
- Ascension.
- Pentecost.

MORAL CHRISTIAN VALUES

- Origin of evil; fall of the proud angel;
- Adam and Eve in the Garden; their disobedience;
- Cain & Abel;
- David and Goliath.
- The Prodigal Son; forgiving others as God forgives us;
- Modern-life stories illustrating moral problems within a child's experience of life.

TEACHING METHODS

- Parents should be kept in close touch with what the teacher is trying to do in class.
- A child should have a leaflet to take home and some of his work to show his parents after every lesson.
- Parents should be invited for individual conferences with teaching servants.
- Children should be encouraged to take part in "show and tell".
- Stories told should appeal to the five senses and involve children's active participation.
- Children can act out stories and illustrate them in various ways.
- Games allowing expressing concepts by gesture and action.
- Lesson should be divided into several short periods involving change of place and movement and type of attention.

ATMOSPHERE CREATED IN THE CLASSROOM BY THE TEACHER:

- Friendliness, interest in each child's achievement.



- Compassion and sympathy.
- Maintenance of simple discipline such as waiting for one's turn and keeping the rules of games and work.
- Willingness to help each other is more important than the story told.

KNOWING YOUR STUDENTS

Take time to learn about each child individually. Only by knowing your students can you really begin to meet their needs. The following list will familiarise you with the abilities of the typical 6-8-year-olds. While this list will not apply to each student who walks through your door, it will help you meet their personal needs.

Typical six-to-seven-year-olds:

- Learn best if you "hook" new concepts to known facts.
- Sit and listen for twenty minutes at a time. Switch activities every fifteen to twenty minutes.
- Learn best by being actively involved; will retain more if you use their five senses.
- Learn more if learning is made fun will understand abstract concepts only when you "hook" them to something concrete.
- Need to go to the bathroom every hour; need a morning snack.
- Thrive on affection and sincere recognition of personal success.
- Are devastated by public acknowledgement of personal failure.
- Will seek to meet the teacher's expectations.
- Identify inconsistency in expectations very quickly; find it difficult to tolerate "unfairness".
- Are often clumsy and messy.
- Will give 110 percent effort if they sense "ownership" in a project.
- Love to "act out" and pretend.

Typical seven-to-eight-year-olds:

- Are still learning the basics of reading and writing but are gaining confidence in this area are beginning to be more aware of their peers.
- Thrive on acknowledgement of personal success.
- Have fairly well developed large and small motor skills.
- Need to move around and be actively involved in their learning.
- Can wiggle and learn simultaneously.



- Are comfortable in an environment where limits are clearly set and consistently adhered to.
- Are learning to accomplish tasks in small group settings.
- Are at the height of the "tattletale" stage.
- Learn best if learning is made fun.
- Learn new concepts best if those new concepts are "hooked" to familiar concepts.
- Are still in the concrete stage of learning and thinking.
- Want to please their teacher and will "catch" the enthusiasm that the teacher displays.



TEACHING AGE 8-10

Big Idea: Characteristics and concepts of eight-to-ten -year-olds.

Bible Text: John10:14-16.

Bible Verse: 1Cor3:2, "I fed you with milk and not with solid food".

Students will

Know:

- ✖ Concepts of eight-to-ten -year-olds.
- ✖ Teaching methods.
- ✖ Knowing Your Student.

Feel: The importance of understanding the age level of the people they serve.

Do: Be a good shepherd.



TEACHING AGE 8-10



CONCEPTS

- Friendship means receiving and giving: it is a "two-way street".
- Decision-making: How do I act on my own? How do I decide who is right and who is wrong? How can I help others?
- Our Church services have a plan, a structure. The things that are done and said in church have a meaning. There are some things I can do in church.
- Lay the foundation of an understanding of the relationship between science and religion.
- If God created a good world, why are there so many bad things in it? How did evil come into the world? Is God stronger than evil?
- God acts in our life, in the past and today. God is present in our own life.
- God the Father, God the son and God the Holy spirit
- What do the payers we say mean e.g. the Lord's Prayer?
- What happened when I was baptized?
- How do we approach confession?
- Holy Communion is God's gift for us .Jesus Christ shares His life with us in the Holy Communion. What can we bring as our gifts to God?
- Concepts like forgiving others, not being boastful, helping those who need help, not judging others, etc. can be brought home by means of parables.
- God wants us to obey Him. He has given us certain laws of how to behave; we try to obey God's laws.
- The Church has many rules; that is meaning rules of external behaviour e.g. certain objects in Church can be touched by the priest only, rules of fasting, boys taking off their hat or shoes; girls cover their hair. The children are ready for a concept of disciplined behaviour.
- God has a plan for the life of the world. God also acts in the life of individual persons.
- What did Jesus look like? What was the world like at the time when He lived?



- How did our Church look like a long time ago? Were things always the way they are like now?

TEACHING METHODS

Research, dramatization, audiovisuals, and assigning simple responsibilities in the classroom.

KNOWING YOUR STUDENT

Take time to learn each child individually. Only by knowing your students can you really begin to meet their needs.

The following lists will familiarize you with the abilities of the typical eight-to-nine-year-old and typical nine-to-ten year-olds. While this list will not apply to every student who walks through your door, it will help you meet their personal needs.

TYPICAL EIGHT-TO-NINE-YEAR-OLDS

- Are beginning to place more value on peer relationships and are forming peer cliques.
- Can read and write independently although some students may still struggle with these skills.
- Are eager to please the adults in their lives.
- Are beginning to think and learn abstractly.
- Will be enthusiastic about learning if they are actively involved.
- Can work well in carefully-formed small groups.
- Love to plan presentations and skits if given careful guidance and instruction.
- Can work independently for extended periods of time.
- Are experiencing rapid physical growth.
- Respond well to sincere encouragement.
- Learn best if the topic is presented in fun and exciting ways.

TYPICAL NINE-TO-TEN YEAR-OLDS

- Want to belong and feel valued.
- Are developing higher-level abstract thinking skills.



- Compare themselves with their peers.
- Hesitate to "go out on a limb" to try new things.
- Have well-developed reading and writing skills.
- Will match the teacher's enthusiasm for projects and activities.
- Can be harshly judgemental about things that bother them.
- Feel compassionate when others' needs are pointed out to them.
- Can stay focused through an hour-long lesson if they are actively involved.
- Are concerned about things being just and fair.
- Are developing a greater sense of independence.
- Learn and retain best if learning is made fun.



TEACHING AGE 11-12

Big Idea: Characteristics and concepts of eleven-to-twelve-year-olds.

Bible Text: Psalm23.

Bible Verse: **Jer31:33**, "I will surely put My laws into their mind and write them on their hearts".

Students will

Know:

- ✖ Concepts of eleven-to-twelve-year-olds.
- ✖ What the lessons should include.
- ✖ Characteristics of the age group.

Feel: The importance of understanding the age level of the people they serve.

Do: Be a good shepherd.



TEACHING AGE 11-12



- Our parents are not perfect and they too ask God to forgive them; they are not always right, but they love us and we love them and obey them. We have responsibilities to the members of our family.
- Salvation history, redemption, the Kingdom of Heaven, life after death.
- The meaning of relationships: friendship, responsibilities, obedience, loyalty, self-reliance.
- Learn to make up one's mind and express one's own thoughts and opinions.
- What difference does it make to me whether I receive Holy Communion or not; whether I am baptized or not? What do the Sacraments mean? They are interested in the external rites of the Sacraments, but are capable of understanding some of the meaning.
- Need to identify with a few friends or with an adult Leader in the church.
- Need to feel at home in church through active participation: junior choir, serving as altar boys.
- Conflict between their loyalty to their Church and their loyalty to the society their friends outside church.
- Science and religion: Do they teach the same things? Do they contradict each other? Which one is right? What about evolution and the Bible story of creation?
- What happens when people die?
- To be made clear: what does science say? What do sceptics say? What does materialism teach? Is there a conflict with the Christian faith? Where? Why? What can I accept as my faith? What is our responsibility in the world as it is today?
- Prayer must not be "bargaining" with God. Prayer is not magic. Prayer can be power in our life. Some people's lives have been deeply affected by prayer.



LESSONS SHOULD INCLUDE

- The Bible: "Why should I believe it?" "What does it mean that it is a source of doctrine?" the meaning of "Tradition".
- The meaning of love.
- The history of the early Christian Church: Acts, the Epistles, early martyrs.
- Units on Faith and Science should be included in the teaching of doctrine; very important that the treatment of "science thinking" and "laws of science" be up-to-date and objective. Much harm can be done by under-estimating the critical ability of this age group.
- The doctrine of God as revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ who took upon Himself to suffer for the sins of the world.
- Writings of the Fathers on Prayer.
- Study of the parables of the Kingdom, the Last judgment, Creation and Salvation history.

KNOWING YOUR STUDENTS

The following lists will familiarize you with the abilities of the typical ten-to eleven years old and the eleven-to-twelve-years-old. While this list will not apply to every student who walks through your door, it will help you meet their personal needs.

Typical ten-to eleven-years-olds

- Are beginning to question authority.
- Are very aware of peers and peer approval.
- Are concerned about "fitting in" with peers.
- Are becoming more self-conscious.
- Hesitate to go out on a limb.
- May be entering puberty sometime this year.
- Can solve higher-level problems and think on a more abstract level.
- Will enjoy immersing themselves in projects and activities that are fun, purposeful and well-planned.
- Enjoy using their creative abilities in class projects.
- Will be turned off if learning is not made fun and does not actively involve them.



- Respond best to private, personal encouragement or discipline.

Typical eleven-to-twelve-years-olds

- Often question authority.
- Are beginning to focus on peer relationships as primary.
- Consistently seek peer approval.
- Are very self-conscious.
- May be entering puberty sometime this year.
- Can solve higher-level problems and think on a more abstract level.
- Will respond positively to adults who respect them and ask to understand them.
- Have a level of enthusiasm for and involvement in projects and activities that correspond to their rapport with the teacher.
- Are emotionally and socially complicated.
- Enjoy using their creative abilities in class projects if motivated.
- Will "tune out" if learning is not interesting, purposeful and age-appropriate.
- Eagerly participate in activities that include food.
- Respond best to consistent, private, personal discipline or encouragement.



TEACHING AGE 13-16

Big Idea: Characteristics and concepts of 13-16-year-olds.

Bible Text: John10:11-13.

Bible Verse: Pro27:23, "Know thoroughly the souls of your sheep, and you will set heart on your flocks".

Students will

Know:

- ✖ Concepts of 13-16-year-olds.
- ✖ What Bible lessons to include.

Feel: The importance of understanding the age level of the people they serve.

Do: Be a good shepherd.



TEACHING AGE 13-16



CONCEPTS



- The questions asked are not "what do we do?" and "what's that?" but "why should I?" and "how do you know?"
- The two major concepts that absorb them are the discovery of the **truth** "what do I believe?" and **love** "what does love mean to me?"
- Authoritarian statements as well as their own childish behaviour are easily rejected.
- Ability to figure out one's opinion, one's own faith.
- "I am I" and not merely a member of a group. I have responsibilities within the society in which I live. How do I find them out? Do I want to assume them?
- The adolescents' church life either begins to wither or can flourish because of a more personal and real experience. They should be exposed to experiences of worship made meaningful at his level. They can begin to share in some real responsibilities of parish life e.g. serving in the Church at some level.
- Church doctrine should be directed towards the question "What is the Church?"
- "What do I believe?" is the major question for young people, in the face of the skepticism and the variety of beliefs that they encounter; the actual issues, the questions raised
- Do miracles really happen? How?
- Who is God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? What is Heaven? Do we believe in angels; are they like fairies in fairy stories? How does God show Himself to others and to me? How do I hear Him?
- Jesus Christ: Why do we call Him "Saviour"? "Redeemer"? What does this mean for me?
- These are some of the questions the children think about even if they do not ask them in class.



LESSONS SHOULD INCLUDE

- The blessing given by God to His people is carried on through family patriarchs.
- Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son changed into the concept of "living for God".
- Jacob and Esau: Esau's wrong choice of values was worse than Jacob's deceit.
- Study of the Creed.
- Study of the Sermon on the Mount.
- Study of the Sacraments.
- At least one or two lessons should be included each year to deal with the questions and doubts children have at this age.
- Concept of the Holy Trinity taught through the Genesis story of the Creation.
- Freedom of choice and the responsibilities for the choice that they beat.
- Biblical characters:

Old Testament: Samson, Job, Noah, Jonah and others.

New Testament: The difference between Peter and Judas, Pontius Pilate, St Paul, lives of saints involving conflict and choice.





CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE

Big Idea: Good behaviour doesn't come naturally.

Bible Text: Luke 9:14-16

Bible Verse: 1Cor9:25, "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified".

Students will

Know:

- ✖ What is discipline?
- ✖ Why is Christian discipline important?
- ✖ What does the bible say about discipline?
- ✖ Effective discipline.
- ✖ How do I discipline my Sunday School class?

Feel: Enlightened and encouraged to serve in Sunday School.

Do:

- ✖ Be a good model.
- ✖ Use the service as a means of self-discipline and spiritual growth.



CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE



WHAT IS DISCIPLINE?

Discipline: training that produce orderliness, obedience, self-control; system of rules; training etc.

According to dictionary discipline is about training that aims to develop good virtues in the person being disciplined. In fact orderliness, self-control and obedience are some of the pillars of Christian behaviour. In the story of the feeding of the five thousand, Christ did not bless the five loaves and two fishes until all sat as He instructed.

"Then He said to His disciples, "Make them sit down in groups of fifty." And they did so, and made them all sit down. Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude," Luke9:14-16.

WHY IS CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE IMPORTANT?

Studies show that a society which is successful is one where all members of the society understand their place, role, worth and limitations within that society. The society can be as small as a married couple or as large as the whole of humanity. A society may include a department at work, a Sunday School class, a diocese, a sporting group etc. This cannot be achieved if there is no training provided to the members about what is expected of each member. This training is what is called **DISCIPLINE**.



So basically without discipline the members of the society have no guidelines as to the behaviour expected of them.

Discipline is important because it clearly illustrates all expectations and limitations within a society.

Christian discipline is the means by which a person learns to deal with all situations in life. When a person is placed in a difficult situation, the one which has had good Christian discipline will be able to handle the situation in a Christian way and come away from the situation unscathed. He will also come away from the situation leaving any others unscathed as well. The news is filled with people who have committed criminal acts. These acts



result directly from a lack of right or the wrong types of discipline.

Christian discipline helps us to set a good example. When someone is well disciplined, people want to spend time with the person because when they do they come away feeling happy and uplifted. Those who are polite and deal with others in a calm and loving manner are those that have good discipline. Joseph the Righteous became second only to Pharaoh in Egypt because of his upright character and behaviour i.e. because of his discipline.

GOOD BEHAVIOUR DOESN'T COME NATURALLY

Daniel loved teaching junior boys but was frustrated over the behaviour problems he faced. Times were sure different from when he was their age. He thought about quitting teaching because he spent more time dealing with problem students than communicating the lesson. The superintendent counselled Daniel and explained that involving the students in the learning process was the first step to correcting behaviour problems. Then he described some ways to deal with negative behaviour.

Sadly, many new Sunday School teachers have a problem with students' behaviour. It's a discipline problem that has mushroomed on a frightening scale.



WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

In the Old Testament, God Himself set down His discipline for the Israelites. In the book of Leviticus there are whole chapters on the behaviour expected of the Jews. The Ten Commandments outline the foundation of Christian discipline. Consider the following instruction from God to Moses about the Jews, **"And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do,"** Exo 18:20.

SOME VERSES THAT SPEAK ABOUT DISCIPLINE

- "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it," Pro 22:6.
- "Harsh discipline is for him who forsakes the way, and he who hates correction will die," Pro 15:10.
- "Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction," Pro 19:18.
- Hear, my son, the instruction of your father, that you may become wise



in your last days." Pro19:20.

- "My son, do not despise the instruction of the Lord, neither detest His reproof; for whom the Lord loves He instructs and chastises every son He receives," Pro3:11-12.
- "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him," Pro22:15.
- "The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother," Pro29:15.
- "Correct your son and he will give you rest; yes, he will give delight to your soul," Pro29:17.

HOW HAVE TEACHERS REACTED?

Corporeal punishment is not an option. Some teachers yell at students, who only yell back. Other teachers grit their teeth, cry or quit.

The authority of the Sunday School is the Word of God, whereas the authority of the public school is the democratic process. Therefore, teachers should usually handle problems differently on Sunday. Since God is love, teachers must communicate His love. Since the Bible upholds what is right, teachers cannot let students continue in wrong behaviour. Since the Ten Commandments prohibit saying God's name in vain, teachers cannot allow cursing.



EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE

When Jesus told us to make disciples, He intended that we first discipline ourselves, and second, teach discipline to our students. The first thing one must do is to look inside oneself first and make sure that anything expected from the class is in my life first. St Paul says, "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, least, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified," 1Cor9:23. Therefore, before I expect my class to behave in a particular way I must check on the sort of example I am setting for them.

One must ask oneself: "Am I disciplined? Am I punctual, attentive, polite, loving etc? Do I respect myself in the way I dress, walk, talk behave etc?" We cannot expect anything from the children in our class if we do not do it first. For example, many Sunday School teachers get upset if the children come to the class chewing gum but they are guilty of the same thing when they turn up to meetings and Church Service doing exactly that. Remember that the best teacher is through a real life example that you set yourself.



We must be able to say with St Paul, "Imitate me just as I also imitate Christ," 1Cor11:1. Once you have examined yourself then you can start to consider the sort of discipline you will apply to your class.

FROM THE SAYINGS OF THE FATHERS

- A monk once said, 'Do not do anything before you ask your heart if what you are about to do is according to God'.
- Experience is a good thing: it is what tests a man.
- Abba Macarius said, 'If you reprove someone, you yourself get carried away by anger and you are satisfying your own passion; do not lose yourself, therefore, in order to save another.'
- He who shows another to be wrong ought to do so with all tenderness, in the fear of God, and with the object of converting the sinner.
- Anger is a dislike hatched from the memory of offences received, a desire to hurt the people who have hurt us. The sweet scent of humility, however, makes it disappear, as the darkness scatters when the sun rises.
- Gentleness attains its highest expression when we keep our heart calm in the face of someone who is provoking us, and actually show him our love.
- Hold patience in your heart, my friends, and put it into action when the situation calls for it.
- Spiritual visitation is to visit someone, when God is with you, and when you depart, you will be leaving God in his home and in his heart.
- Make people rejoice in meeting you, feeling that, for them, you are a reason for joy, and that in coming to them is good tidings.
- True patience grows with the growth of love. We put up with our neighbours to the extent that we love them. If you love, you are patient. If you cease loving, you will cease being patient. The less we love the less patience we show.
- First give your children virtue as an inheritance and then distribute your estate also.

HOW DO I DISCIPLINE MY SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS?

- The first premise of discipline is that the mother or father has the right and obligation to discipline a child. Therefore, the home must be involved in the process of teaching and not just in the process of negative discipline.
- The second premise is that Sunday School must be a place of love and acceptance. Therefore negative discipline must be approached with care.





What can teachers do?

Good class discipline begins with teacher self-discipline. Teachers must prepare well, plan class activities, master the content of the lessons and give attention to interesting teaching techniques. They must remember that listening is not learning; therefore, teaching is not just talking. Students must stand, s-t-r-e-t-c-h and yell, and act out Bible stories. One worker with primary-aged children directs the little ones in spontaneous callisthenics at the beginning of class. They are able to jump all over the place. "It gets the wiggles out," explains one teacher.

Sometimes students are disruptive because of room conditions. The room is too crowded, too stuffy, too cluttered, too hot or too dark. Adequate facilities won't guarantee good behaviour, but poor facilities will produce the opposite behaviour.

Teachers can defuse disruptive behaviour by knowing their students and then coming early on Sunday to talk with them before class. When a child is rebellious, be that child's friend and remind him or her that Sunday School is a place to learn about Jesus Christ. By sharing love and attention, a teacher may meet the very need that causes the child to rebel in class.

A classroom may be an intimidating situation for many students; therefore, they react and strike out at you. Remove some of the threat by letting them know what you expect. Students will respond better when they know what is expected of them.

Don't respond to your students out of bias or prejudice. Some teachers don't like long hair on boys, tattoos, dirty dresses, runny noses or laughing pushy girls. If a teacher reacts personally, behaviour degenerates into a shouting match. When a teacher corrects a disruptive student, it is an argument, even though the teacher is in the place of authority. Make sure that student discipline is the result of broken rules, not personality clashes.

Other positive steps toward achieving good behaviour are recruiting enough helpers, teachers sitting among student, attractive visuals and concentrated prayer for problem students.

However, in certain cases, negative steps will be in order. Some excellent teachers have captivated the interest of all the juniors but one. What



happens when a rebellious boy laughs as the flannel graph story is explained to the whole class? The majority of the class who wants to hear the lesson should not be sacrificed to one lawless student's disruption.



Remove the belligerent student from the class. Put him in the care of the other teacher in the class. In doing so, he loses his platform to perform for the kids and you reduce pressure on him. When he is out of the room, you can counsel him individually. Before counselling him, let him sit quietly and wait. This gives him a chance to think. When talking with him about his behaviour, appeal to proper motives and place responsibility back on him to re-enter the class and practice good behaviour.

Your attitude toward behaviour is important. Always keep the goal of good behaviour before the class.





CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Big Idea: St Paul wrote to urge the believers in Philippi towards unity, humility, selfless generosity and joy in Christ.

Bible Text: St Paul's Letter to the Philippians.

Bible Verse: Phil 2:5 "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus".

Students will

Know:

- ✖ Importance of the city of Philippi in spreading the Gospel.
- ✖ Events that happened in Philippi as recorded in Acts 16:9-40.
- ✖ St Paul wrote this letter in jail in Rome.
- ✖ The practice of unity.
- ✖ Resolving interpersonal conflict God's way.
- ✖ The mind of Christ.
- ✖ The process of peace.
- ✖ Humility.
- ✖ The experience of peace.
- ✖ Is it happiness or joy?

Feel: The importance of having "the mind of Christ in our dealings with each other in the service and in everyday life."

Do: Pray and ask the Lord to give us "His Mind".



CONFLICT RESOLUTION



St Paul identifies himself as the author of this letter written to the church at Philippi, a city in Macedonia. Paul, whose Hebrew name was Saul, was born in Tarsus a major Roman city on the coast of southeast Asia Minor. Tarsus was the center for the tent-making industry, which may have influenced Paul to choose that craft as his occupation (his primary paying profession). His religious profession was that of a Jewish Pharisee.

Paul was from the tribe of Benjamin (Phil 3:5) and trained at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts22:3), a well-respected rabbi of the day. He was an ardent persecutor of the early Church (Phil 3:6, Acts8:3; 22:4-5; 26:9-11) until his life changing conversion to Christianity (Acts9:1-31, Gal 1:11-24).

After believing in Jesus Christ as his Saviour, Paul was called by God to take the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts9:15). This was an amazing change-about-face for a committed Pharisee like Paul who ordinarily would have nothing to do with Gentiles (Acts10:28). Paul wrote 14 epistles in the New Testament. Tradition has it that Paul was beheaded shortly after he wrote 2Timothy in 67 AD.

Philippi was a city in eastern Macedonia, or modern northern Greece, 10 miles inland from the Aegean Sea. The city was founded in 356 BC by the Macedonian king, Philip, who was the father of Alexander the Great. Philippi was a great strategic city in the Greek empire as it was surrounded by mountains and close to the sea. Much traffic to Rome from the east went through Philippi, which served as a gateway city to Greece and Italy (a major crossroad on the Egnatian Way - one of the empire's interstates linking the Aegean and Adriatic Seas). Philippi was a transplanted Roman colony. The citizens in the colony were given the same rights and privileges as those who lived in Italy. They were able to maintain their own senate and magistrates and were not subject to regional government. Most importantly, this excluded them from taxation. Luke refers to Philippi as a "leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony" (Acts16:12).



Philippi was also Luke's hometown.

The Church at Philippi was founded around 51 AD during Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16:9-40). During this visit to Philippi, Paul and Silas probably looked for a synagogue to share the gospel with the local Jews (as was their custom when entering a city - Acts 16:13). The lack of a synagogue indicated that there were few Jews in Philippi (as it took 10 Jewish men to start a synagogue).

Paul and Silas found, instead, a group of women outside the city gates by the riverbank gathered for prayer. One of the women at the riverside that day was Lydia, a prominent businesswoman who worshipped the God of Israel (she was probably not Jewish by birth). When she heard the good news of Christ she immediately received salvation and converted to Christianity. The good news of Christ was also embraced by her household, which possibly included her servants and children. Lydia became the first believer in Philippi and was a gracious hostess to the first Church in Europe, which met in her home.

Next Paul and his companions met a demon-possessed slave girl (Acts 16:16). Paul commanded the spirit to leave the girl and she, too, became a convert. Since her fortune-telling skills had been used by her owners to make a profit, they became angry with Paul for destroying their source of income. The dishonest men had Paul and Silas brutally beaten and thrown into the local jail for "throwing the city into confusion" (Acts 16:20).

While in jail, Paul and Silas met the Philippian jailer. After Paul and Silas' chains had been miraculously broken during an earthquake, the jailer who had been guarding Paul and Silas converted to Christianity (Acts 16:23-34) and his entire household believed in God and were baptized. When Paul and Silas left Philippi, Luke remained there to continue the ministry to the newly formed church. At the end of Paul's third missionary trip, Paul visited Philippi again. Paul had a very close relationship with the Philippian Church. They were a source of encouragement to him and they also provided financially for his ministry more than once (Phil 4:15, 16, 2Cor 11:9). Paul calls this Church his "joy and crown" (Phil 4:1).



The letter to the Philippians was written by Paul around 61 or 62 AD during his house arrest in Rome (Acts21:27 through Acts28). Being under "house arrest", Paul was chained to a Roman soldier 24 hours a day, but was free to receive visitors and write (Acts28:17-31). The guard was changed every 6 hours, which gave Paul an excellent opportunity to share his faith with many different guards. During this time period, Paul wrote the prison epistles (letters): Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Philippians was the last letter Paul wrote from the Roman prison, as Philippians 1:21-28 seems to indicate a decision about his fate would be made soon.

The main purpose for which this letter to the Philippians was written was to urge the believers in Philippi toward unity, humility, selfless generosity and joy in Christ.

THE PRACTICE OF UNITY

The Church is a living organism, not an organization. An organism is made of individual parts. Just as our human bodies respond immediately to repair a wound whether minor or major, so should the body of Christ. Suppose you cut your finger. What happens? The body does whatever it takes to enable



the healing process to take place. The closest cells start working to clot the blood, close the wound with a scab, and fight invading germs. It is the responsibility of those cells closest to the wound to get there first and stop the bleeding. Then, others step in to help repair the damage and make the body stronger. So also is the case within the body of Christ. The cells within our physical body know what to do. The members of Christ's body don't always know what to do. But, the Word gives us direction and guidance so that we can be obedient.

In Philippians 4:2, Paul urges Euodia and Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. We don't know anything about these women. Perhaps they were two of the women at the river who first received the gospel from Paul. Maybe they were deaconesses in the Church. Paul calls them fellow workers for the gospel. They weren't insignificant troublemakers. They were labourers in the spread of the gospel at Philippi. These were probably



mature women, well known by the recipients of the letter.

We don't know what their conflict was. It may have been accidental friction between two energetic Christian women. Perhaps they took turns having the Church at each other's home. One may have criticized what the other did when she hosted everybody. Not enough food. The chairs were too close together. Perhaps one dared to discipline the other one's child. That's all it takes. Whatever happened affected the unity of the congregation. It was brought to Paul's attention. This was a wound in the Philippians body. Apparently ineffective means had been used to stop the bleeding. Paul speaks directly to this situation in his letter, and from his wise advice, we can draw the principles regarding conflict resolution.

Resolving Interpersonal Conflict God's Way

We serve Jesus together, and we serve one another individually. Part of serving Jesus through serving one another is resolving interpersonal conflict within the Body. Conflict wounds His body and minimizes the effectiveness of the Church to advance the gospel. It's hard to preach Christ and make disciples when we are spending emotional energy on internal conflict. Interpersonal conflict can take many forms from simple behaviour clashes (two women who just don't blend well together) to open defiance of one another. Regardless of the form, a conflict presents opportunity for growth. In fact, some people don't pay attention to their needs for growth in an area of their lives until conflict occurs.

When people are quarreling, the path to peace is to seek humility, rather than to assess arguments and weigh one against another, because when we do that we run into relative values which are so subjective that it's impossible to come to a conclusion. The way to settle an argument is to seek humility in each party.

The question that comes to mind is how do we do this? When tempers are hot, passions are aroused, and patience is strained, how can you get people to calm down and start thinking about a humble attitude? How do you quell the rising of pride in a human heart? How do you stop the urge to defend yourself, and the





stubborn insistence of what we call our "rights"? This sounds familiar, doesn't it? The answer is in this marvelous passage concerning Christ.

Let's begin by recognizing the answer is possible only to Christians. When non-Christians quarrel, all that is possible is compromise, which is really a way of perpetuating pride on an agreed level, what we call "saving face". That is the most you can expect from those in whom the Spirit of Christ does not dwell, but with Christians it is possible to have peace. So many times in our Christian lives we are so content to settle for compromise, which is nothing more than the best the world can attain in disagreements.

Christians can achieve peace, not merely a truce, or cold war, or an agreed settlement, but peace, which is a mutual sense of wrongdoing. Each person acknowledging they have contributed to it, and burying the past in forgiveness. The result is a deeper sense of acceptance than ever before. When we come to this point the quarrel actually helps unity rather than destroy it. It will result in deeper understanding and love than before. That is what the apostle is wanting for these two ladies in Philippi and those in the Church who were taking sides with them.

The secret to this unity set forth in **Phil 2:5** is a certain set of mind. I think "disposition" would be a better word to use here. "Have this disposition among yourselves which you have in Christ Jesus." Have this set of mind, or as the King James Version says, "**Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus**". He doesn't say proudly imitate Christ. It is a mistake to say that Christianity is imitating the life of Christ. If that's the best we can do, it's a cheap substitute. No, it isn't imitating Christ, following His example, or trying to be like Him. The word of the Apostle is "Let His mind be in you." Let us see, then, what the mind of Christ is.

The Mind of Christ

"...who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death



on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," Phil 2:6-11.

It is an amazing passage, yet I think there is a temptation as we study it to forget its background, remove it from its context and treat it as a passage on Systematic Theology or Christology. We must never forget that this passage is set against the background of two quarreling ladies in the Church at Philippi. That quarrel was threatening to destroy the unity of the whole Church.



The apostle has made it clear already in this letter that the secret of maintaining unity is humility. "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself," Phil 2:3.

Wherever there is contentiousness, it is a revelation of the presence of pride. Pride in a single individual life, in a family, a church, in government, or a whole nation, always destroys, divides, sets one person against another, perpetuates conflict, breaks up marriages and partnerships and unions of every sort.

THE PROCESS OF PEACE

But three things are very clear in this passage, three steps that are evident in the preaching and actions of the Lord Jesus.

Renunciation

The first one is Jesus gave up the right to His rights. He did not give up His rights- He couldn't do that-but He gave up the right to enjoy those rights. And what rights they were! Paul says that He was existing in the form of God, and was equal with God. That doesn't mean equal with God the Father, but that he was equal with all the members of the Trinity in the expression of the nature and essence of God, and was existing in the exact form of God.



In Col 2:9 Paul says, "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily". And St Paul in his letter to the Hebrews begins that great letter with a similar expression, that He was the express image of the substance of God, that He bore the very stamp of God's nature upon His being, "upholding the universe by His word of power."

Paul agrees, writing in Colossians, "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." All of these references together agree that in Jesus Christ there was the fullness of all that God is, fully made manifest and visible. From all eternity, those were His rights.

But having all this, the argument goes, He did not count all these things to be held onto at all costs, but He emptied Himself. He did not empty Himself of His deity-He couldn't do that, just as we could not empty ourselves of our humanity no matter hard we tried, because we are human, and all we do is an expression of our humanity. When Jesus entered this world, stepping out of eternity into time, He could not empty Himself of his Deity. That needs to be made clear. What He could and did do was empty Himself of every expression of Deity. He did not come to manifest what God was like. He came to show us what man ought to be. He did not give up His rights as God. He gave up His right to *enjoy* the rights of God.

In other words, He did not insist on His rights, but laid aside the right to have His rights, and emptied Himself. This is where humility begins-the readiness to lay aside the right to *enjoy* our rights. The thought was followed by His action. The scripture uses this very expressive term, "He emptied himself."



He became a man, and never once did He ever take a step in the thirty-three years of His life on earth, ever utter a word or perform an act of any kind on His own inherent Deity, but in sole and unremitting dependence upon the indwelling Father. He said so Himself, "the Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing", and "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not



speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does His works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me." That is what a man must be, completely available to an indwelling God. That is what He came to show us. He came to show us that the secret of man's life is complete dependence upon an indwelling God.

But even that is not enough. This is only the first step. If all that Jesus did was to demonstrate all that man ought to be, we would have a perfect example, but we would not be anywhere closer to being that ourselves. We would have learned how we ought to live, but we would have been totally unable to do it.

Jesus Christ would never have solved men's quarrels and brought men to peace if the only thing he had done was renounce His right to be Himself and come into this world and live as a man totally dependent upon the Father throughout His earthly ministry. It would not have helped, only discouraged us. It took another step, "being found in human form, He humbled himself and became obedient unto death," Phil 2:8.

Humility

Following the step of renunciation is humility. He not only gave up the right to enjoy His rights, He also assumed all the indignity, the injury, and hurt, all the rejection of an unbelieving world Himself, without complaint. That's the key-without complaint. He was obedient unto death, we are told. He is the only man who ever lived who didn't have to die. He said so of Himself, "I lay down my life of Myself, and I take it again." And though He was nailed on a cross and gave Himself up to death, He never had to die. He voluntarily gave up His life. No one could take His life, but He became obedient unto death.



Remember that, Paul writes to his friends at Philippi. Remember that when you feel self-assertive and tempted to withdraw from others and break the bonds of fellowship. Remember that! Remember that with renunciation comes the willingness to bear injury, to put up with insults, to accept the cost of another's wrong doing. This is the place to which the Lord Jesus



came, and the startling thing is that the lowest place to which He came is the place for you and me to begin. The death on the cross is where we belong, the place to which He came.

Peace

The third step inevitably follows the first two: exaltation. "**Therefore, God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**" You see, Jesus does the first two; God does the third.

The result is peace! This is the word of peace, and it results from the work of our Lord. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." In the letter to the Corinthians Paul says, "**We have the mind of Christ.**" Now let



it show! The place to do it is when you get into disagreement with someone. These people were divided by conflict, separating from one another, and it was in that kind of situation Paul came with this tremendously healing ministry based upon these two actions: renunciation and humiliation.

THE EXPERIENCE OF PEACE

If you were holding the door closed and I wanted to enter the room and asked you to let me in, what would you do? Wouldn't you stop resisting, step aside and open the door and let me in? That is what Paul is saying here: let the mind of Christ, involving the renunciation of your rights and the willingness to accept injury, breakthrough in your life. Accept these conditions as God's will for you. This is why you have Christ in you. Accept the hurt without complaint, and without fail He will bring you through to victory and to peace. Do you believe that? You will only experience the mind of Christ to the degree you accept it. Are you willing to believe that taking the first two steps will lead to the third in the quarrel you are having with someone right now? If you don't believe it, then don't say Christianity doesn't work, or that having Christ doesn't make any difference. You are simply not using what is available to you.

PEACE
IS NOT THE ABSENCE
OF CONFLICT BUT
THE ABILITY TO
COPE WITH IT



I know perfectly well that our normal reaction to mistreatment is to feel upset and angry. Don't beat yourself up if that is your immediate reaction. That is simply the inevitable human reaction, and it becomes the ground of temptation to respond with evil, to strike back, to separate, to rail with angry words, to retaliate. This is why Paul says to the Ephesians, "Be angry, but sin not," Eph4:26.

We not only feel the temptation to respond in sinful acts, but we also feel the mind of Christ pressing our will. You know about that, don't you -that quiet, insistent voice of the Spirit that says to you: 'now don't insist on your rights. It's not that important. Bear the hurt gladly and willingly for the sake of peace. Explain the situation if you can and try to work it out, but if you get nowhere, forget it. Take it, for Jesus' sake, without complaint'. Paul is saying listen to that voice. Let this mind which you have in Christ Jesus take hold; yield to it. The inevitable result is that God works His will and His way and you will share in the Lordship of Christ. You are not under the circumstances; you are the master of them, and you live in peace.



Now I don't know whether or not there are quarrels among you. There could be. But this message is not intended to simply stimulate our intellect and move our emotions to thank God for His grace toward us, but to have the practical effect among us that I trust it had in the Philippian Church when this letter was read to them. If you have a quarrel with someone and your temptation is to withdraw or break off fellowship and stop talking with them, then comes the exhortation of the Spirit to you: "Let this mind be in you which you have in Christ Jesus." He gave up His rights and humbled Himself even to the death on the cross, that He might one day be Lord of all, Master of the universe. His joy was to do God's will (Heb12:3).



"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say rejoice," says Paul, Phil 4:4. As we abide faithfully in the 'mind of Christ', we can be confident that we will experience the joy which St Peter describes as "joy inexpressible and full of glory," 1Pet1:8.



Is It Happiness or Joy?

Paul's letter to the Philippians is a well-crafted expression of gratitude and joy. So, what exactly is joy? How does joy differ from happiness? Happiness is a fleeting emotion based on **external circumstances**. But true joy is different - it is something that comes from within - it's a deep abiding peace and sense of contentment and strength that is due to something **internal**.



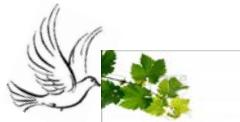
True joy is based on a saving relationship with God and in maintaining fellowship with Him. The believer's joy is found in the inner work of the Holy Spirit. Even non-believers in Jesus can know happiness as they find it in the good things that God has given to all human beings so generously. The Christian knows a heightened joy that is rooted in the bond that exists between the believer and the Lord and the bond that exists with other believers whom we have come to love (Phil 1:4, 25-26; 2:2, 29; 4:1). The deeper our relationship with Jesus and with His people the greater the joy that awaits us and the less that joy is dependent on external circumstances.

Joy is produced in us by the Holy Spirit and is a fruit of His presence (Gal 5:22; 1Thess1:6). It is not linked with material possessions, but rather is an overflow of salvation (Acts8:8; 16:34). Joy is not dependent on external circumstances and is applied to suffering as well as to salvation (Acts13:50-52; 2Cor7:4; Jam1:2; 1Pet1:6-7). Joy is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of Christ.



The book of Philippians is an excellent mini-study of joy. Paul mentions joy or rejoicing 15 times in this letter. That means that on average joy or rejoicing appears every 7 verses. This is even more significant when you realize that while Paul is writing these words of joy, he is in prison in Rome and chained to a Roman guard! What does Paul know about joy that transcends his circumstances? Are you hungry for joy in your life? This special letter encourages all who read it to **know Jesus and know joy!**

(Adapted from "Authentic Christianity: a study of Philippians", by Ray Stedman).



ST PAUL'S PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

Big Idea: A study of the second letter of St Paul to the Corinthians to understand the philosophy of the ministry according to St Paul.

Bible Text: 2Cor2:14-6:10

Bible Verse: 2 Cor6:2, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation".

Students will

Know:

- ✖ Christ causes us to triumph (2Cor2:14).
- ✖ Changed life prove ministry (2Cor3:1-5).
- ✖ New covenant is the basis of ministry (2Cor3:6-18).
- ✖ Christ is the theme of ministry (2Cor4:1-7).
- ✖ Trials abound in ministry (2Cor4:8-15).
- ✖ Motivation in the ministry (2Cor4:16-5:2).
- ✖ Giving no offense in the ministry (2Cor6:1-11).

Feel: Empowerment to serve as St Paul.

Do: Grow in the Spirit and in the knowledge of God.

ST PAUL'S PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY





St Paul had been speaking to the Corinthians about his pressures, and his problems, and the problems in Corinth. He was waiting in Macedonia for Titus to return with news of what was happening in the Church at Corinth. He was feeling great disturbance of mind, and out of that there grew this magnificent description of the power by which he laboured and lived. It came almost as a spontaneous outburst from the apostle's heart to counteract the sense of failure and despair which he was feeling in his ministry at the time. He wrote, "When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, and a door was opened for me in the Lord; I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia," 2Cor2:12-13.

Those brief words gathered up a tremendous experience in Paul's life. He had gone to Troas from Ephesus to preach the gospel of Christ. So he came into the city of Troas for that purpose, and a great door was opened for him by the Lord; that is, there was a huge response to his message and great opportunity to get it out. A church was already there; and the city was stirred as Paul came and had this great opportunity to preach. Yet, he was unable to take advantage of it. His heart was so troubled, his spirit so anxious for news of what was happening in Corinth, that he could not minister. He was restless of spirit and troubled of heart; and he had to leave. He left Troas and went up into Macedonia instead, hoping to find Titus there and find some relief for his troubled mind.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE MINISTRY ACCORDING TO ST PAUL

The clearest explanation in all the Word of God of the secret of the Apostle Paul's phenomenal ministry runs from 2Corinthians Chapter 2:12, through Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6, and ends Chapter 7:2.

CHRIST CAUSES US TO TRIUMPH

"Now thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place," 2Cor2:14. Paul longed to preach the gospel in all the earth if he could, because it was such a tremendous thing to see the power of God let loose among men to set them free. He knew that because his ministry did not rest



upon his feeble efforts to do something for God, but on his expectation that God was going to do something through him, that he was at the very moment of his frustration being led in triumph by Jesus Christ. A great, widespread testimony of the fragrance of Jesus Christ was going out. People were being set free, and his ministry was a success. And so he cries from this eternal gratitude of his heart, **"Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ."**

There are a lot of people who have that view of the Christian life. They think, because they are Christians, because they happen to now be a child of God, a son of the King, they are going to be protected and kept from every single pressure and danger of life, and nothing is ever going to get to them. Paul did not know anything about it, because he went through terrible testing and great times of pressure. Yet he could cry out with great confidence and a triumphant spirit that rings throughout this whole passage, because he knew, according to the great principle which he had learned, through much pain and anguish that God was carrying out His purposes through the very weakness he was going through. **"For we are not, as so many, peddling the Word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ," 2Cor2:17.**

His ministry, as he describes it, is four-fold: He is first, **sincere**, that is, he practices what he preaches; he believes what he is saying. He is doing what he declares. And, second, his ministry is **purposeful**. "We are commissioned by God," he says. "We are not just sent into this world to enjoy ourselves and try and get through it and retire in a comfortable way. We have a **goal** to accomplish. We have been sent to do something." He declares it in **Colossians1:28-29**, **"that we may present every man mature in Christ. For this I toil, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, striving with all the energy which He mightily inspires within me."** That is his goal, and he never forgot it.

That ought to be the goal of every Christian, that we help one another grow up and become mature individuals, emotionally, spiritually, and in every way to forget our childish little ways, to turn away from that and grow up and be men and women in Christ.



And finally, he does so "in Christ." He says, "We speak in Christ." Later on he calls himself "an ambassador for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God," 2Cor5:20. He spoke with authority because he came as a representative of God Himself to deliver a message the world desperately needed to hear.

The victorious Christian life is not one of continual victory in the sense of overcoming all obstacles and feeling triumphant as you go. It is one of being opposed oftentimes, yet confident that the God who is within you is able to work His work and do His will, that out of the fear, the frustration, and the failure is coming triumph and victory and the fragrance of Jesus Christ.

CHANGED LIVES PROVE MINISTRY

¹Are we beginning to commend ourselves again, or, do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? ²You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. ³You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

⁴Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. ⁵Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. ⁶He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

⁷Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, ⁸will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? ⁹If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! ¹⁰For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. ¹¹And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!" 2Cor3:1-11 (New International Version).

It is amazing, unbelievable, that these people would ever think that the Apostle Paul needed a letter of recommendation when he came back to them.



After all, he had led these people to Christ, and yet here they more or less infer to him that the next time he came it would be very good if he brought some letters from John, or Peter, or James, or one of the real apostles. Paul is asking them, "Do you really mean that? Don't you understand? You are our letter of recommendation. Christ has written it on your hearts. He didn't use paper, or deliver it on stones, as He did with Moses on Mount Sinai. He wrote it on your hearts, and the ink He used was the Holy Spirit. As for me, I'm nothing but the postman; I just delivered the letter. God did the work."

Paul wants these Corinthians to understand that the changes that had occurred in their lives, the freedom they were experiencing, the deliverance from evil habits such as immorality, adultery, homosexuality, drunkenness, stealing (1Cor6:11a), all happened because Christ had changed them.

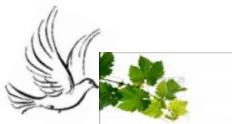
Christ, Paul said, led us in triumph. He saw himself as the commanding general, marching in triumph through the streets of Rome, having won great victories everywhere he went. In another beautiful figure of speech, he said that his ministry was like a bottle of perfume, the fragrance of which was spreading all through the world; the sweetness and fragrance of Jesus Christ Himself.

NEW COVENANT IS THE BASIS FOR MINISTRY

"Such is the confidence (that is, the sufficiency) that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life," 2Cor3:4-6 (RSV).

Paul says he needed confidence too. There is nothing wrong with that. God knows we need to have a sense of ability. But the great question is where does it come from? When Paul answers that question, he says, "It doesn't come from me. There is nothing coming from us; everything comes from God." Therefore he takes no credit for anything. Read through all of the writings of Paul (and it is true of Peter, James, John, and all the other apostles as well), and they are constantly denying that their ability, their power, ever comes from them. "Not I," Paul says, "but it is Christ who lives in me. I labour; I toil with all the energy which he mightily inspires in me."





Therefore, this new covenant that Paul talked about was entirely different than anything the world knows about. The world would say that Paul was a success, and the great apostle that he was, because he was doing his very dedicated best to give himself totally to mobilize all his resources and his considerable abilities to serve God with all his heart. He says, "Everything is coming from God. The ability that is evident in my ministry, the changes that occur in people's lives because of what I am and where I go have nothing to do with my natural skills or ability. It's all coming from God at work in me." The old covenant is Paul trying to do his best on behalf of God; the new covenant is God doing His best through Paul. What a difference that is! That is the great truth we need to learn.

Apostle Paul was an unusually competent person. He had marvelous gifts. He had the keenest mind, perhaps, of all time. He had a powerful personality; he had a zeal that was simply remarkable. He told us in the letter to the Philippians that there were four things that he counted on for success. And they were remarkable things: First of all, there was his impeccable ancestry. He was born into the right family and he belonged to the right people. He could claim an ancestry that went all the way back to Abraham. The tremendous religious inheritance of the Jewish people was all his.

As well as having an impeccable ancestry, Paul tells us himself that he had a fantastic record of orthodoxy: "**I am a Pharisee of the Pharisees,**" Phil 3:5. Now if any people ever gave themselves to careful, thoughtful, religious observance, it was the Pharisees.

More than that, he had a record of incredible activity. He was the most zealous young Pharisee of his day. At an early age he advanced to a tremendous position of prominence by being granted membership in the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the Jews, even though he was but a young man. He was zealous in his career against the Christian Church, "**breathing threats and murder,**" Acts 9:1, pursuing this cause night and day to stamp out this whole religious community.

He also had an unblemished morality. There was no charge you could level against him, no accusation you could find. His private life was just as clean as his public life. He was, before the Law, blameless. "**But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ,**" Phil 3:7.



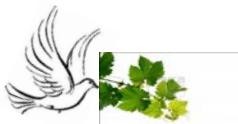
But he speaks of a new covenant. The old covenant is, "Here's a standard to achieve. Now do your very best to do it"; self-effort, build up self-confidence. The new covenant is exactly the opposite. It says, "Just show up, present yourself. God will work through you, and what God demands, God Himself will achieve, using you as the instrument of it. You will never get the credit for it; you can never say it was anything you did, or had, or was; it is God alone." That is why all through the Scriptures you find Christians denying that they were the explanation for what was accomplished, but that it was God Himself at work. That is what Paul calls the new covenant; and God has made us competent to be ministers of it.

That is true of all Christians, not just apostles. We are all ministers of Christ; there is no special class set aside to be ministers. You too are called to be a minister of the new covenant, depending on God to be at work in you, not on your ability to do something for him. That is the difference.

Jeremiah had described this in his prophecy long centuries before. He said there is going to come a day when God will write His laws in people's hearts, not on tables of stone (Jer31:31-34). It is the same law. He would live with them, they would be His people and He would be their God. They could draw upon His wisdom, His energy, His power and strength for any demand they had in their lives. He would instruct them by His Spirit that their eyes would be opened to see the real meaning of the things they learned. He would settle once and for all the question of their guilt. He would forgive their sins right at the very beginning; and they could rest upon that constant washing and cleansing and forgiveness of God all through their lives. That is the new covenant as Jeremiah described it. That would change their whole motivation and outlook on life.



Everybody who tries to live a life that is pleasing to God by self-effort always discovers that he never quite makes it because he never knows when he has done enough. Indeed, in this case, what once had splendor has come to have no splendor at all, because of the splendor that surpasses it. For if what faded away came with splendor, what is permanent must have much more splendor (much more glory) about it (2Cor3:10-11). That is the Christian life. That is the what the world is waiting to see in our day. We are all called to be ministers of new covenant. God is making us able, not ourselves.



CHRIST IS THE THEME OF MINISTRY

"For what we preach is not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2Cor4:5-6.

That is a fantastic statement. First, the apostle says, "Don't look to us for any help. We don't come preaching ourselves. We ourselves can't do a thing for you. No, we are your servants. We have come to help you. We have come to minister to you, to labour among you, to teach and instruct you, but we are not here to boss you." The apostle is careful to make that plain.

On the other hand, he wants them to understand, "You are not our masters either. We do not come to do what you tell us to do. We are your servants for Christ's sake. It is He who tells us to be your servants. He is our Master and our Lord." And then he turns their eyes to the One who can help. "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord," 2Cor4:5a.

TRIALS ABOUND IN THE MINISTRY

⁷But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. ⁸We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. ¹⁰We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. ¹¹For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that His life may be revealed in our mortal body. ¹²So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.



¹³It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak ¹⁴because we know that the One who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in His presence. ¹⁵All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God," 2Cor4:7-15.



In verses 7-11, there is a detailed description of how to exercise the power of God; and verses 12-15 describe how to display the glory of God. That is what life is all about. Christians are Christian in order to exercise the power of God and display the glory of God. That is what Paul is talking about here.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us (2Cor4:7). First, it is obviously God's deliberate program that His mighty power be displayed through "earthen vessels." All of us, in one sense, are nothing but clay pots, although some of you have a little finer clay than others, perhaps. You know, clay can be made into beautiful, fragile chinaware, which, of course, cracks easily. A pot, or a vessel, is made to hold something. This is a beautiful figure to use, because basic to our humanity is that we are not designed to operate on our own. We are made to hold someone; and that someone is God Himself. Paul's answer is in verses 10-11. Here we have a marvelous setting out of the process of walking in victory: always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies (2Cor4:10).

Notice that the "life of Jesus" always rests upon the "death of Jesus." We must have, in our experience, the "death of Jesus" in order to have the "life of Jesus." For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, in order that "**the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh,**" 2Cor4:11. What we want, of course, is the "life of Jesus"; every one of us wants to be like Him. But the power of God is the miracle of others seeing in us, in the midst of our pressures and trials, the character and the life of Jesus coming out. Paul prays that his friends in Colossae may be "**strengthened with all power, according to God's glorious might,**" Col 1:11. That is our problem. We want the kingdom of God, and we want our own personal rights as well. But you cannot have both. That is where the new covenant brings us, "**always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, in order that the life of Jesus may be manifest in our mortal flesh.**"

Paul says in verse 11 that while we live, not after we die, but while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake. Verse 10 is a conscious choice we make where we agree to giving up our personal desire for recognition and significance, etc., in order to let God give it back to us in a



right way. But verse 11 is telling us that there are circumstances into which God puts us where we have to die whether we like it or not.

Have you been in those circumstances recently, where no matter what you do you cannot seem to get any glory or credit for yourself? That is exactly where God wants you, because out of those times of inordinate pressure, times of hurt and despair and heartache, and a sense of being wasted and not used, God is working His will. Others, perhaps, are being given life because of the death you are going through. "So, death is at work in us, but life in you," 2Cor4:12.

Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, "**I believed, and so I spoke,**" we too, believe and so we speak. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God (2Cor4:15). He is talking about people who have gone through great sorrow, deep hurt, real heartache, but in the midst of it they have looked to God for strength and have found His comfort. They have known and trusted His love, and the result has been there has been such an inner joy and peace and strengthening in the midst of the trial that they cannot help but give thanks to God that the whole thing came about.

That is the kind of thanksgiving that glorifies God. Out of the midst of the pain, the pressure, the heartache, and the perplexities there comes a joy, a strength, a faith, and a love that makes clear that the power is not coming from us, but from God. That is what impresses the world.

MOTIVATION IN THE MINISTRY

"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal," 2Cor4:16-18 RSV.

Motivation of the Future Presence of God

Here is the great cry, "We do not lose hope." There is a reason for hope, not only coming from our present experience of the grace of God, as Paul has been describing it, but also as we look to the future we do not lose hope.



Then he gives three great reasons why he has such a hope in the hour of death. First, verse 16, "Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day," 2Cor4:16 (RSV). That gives him hope. It is true, he says, that the outward man is perishing. Now we need to clearly understand that there is a difference between the "outward" man and the "old" man that you read about in Scripture: The "old" man, of course, is what the Bible calls the "flesh," the evil moral nature we inherited from a fallen forefather, Adam, to which we died when we came into Christ. It is no longer us. It once was, but no longer. It is still present in us to tempt us, but as an alien to which we are no longer identified. But the "outward" man that Paul speaks of here is the body and the mind, which he says are slowly falling apart. We can all give testimony to that.

Paul says, "But I don't get discouraged, because the inner man is being renewed day by day." The "inner" man, of course, is the "real" me. It is the human spirit inside that has its conscious expression in the soul, that unique character, that combination of soul and spirit that marks mankind as different from the animals. Paul says that his experience is that this is daily being renewed. The word he uses is, "made new," "made over afresh." He is speaking of that kind of inner stimulation of mind and spirit that keeps him triumphant, rejoicing, optimistic, faithful, trusting, expectant, as he lives day by day, even though the outward things, his body and his mind, are gradually falling apart. That is the hope of the believer. Paul says the very fact of that is testimony to us that we are being inwardly prepared for something great to come.

Motivation of Future Eternal Reward

Second, our present sufferings are preparing us for something so incomparable, so amazing, and so marvelous that there are no words to describe it. That means that no trial, no pain, no isolation, no heartache, no loneliness, no weakness or failure, no sense of being put aside is without significance. All of it is playing its part in accomplishing God's work in your life and the lives of others. It is building for us an incomparable weight of glory. How do we know that is true? "**Because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal,**" 2Cor4:18 (RSV).

This is the third reason for our hope. We gain the gift of seeing the unseen



which are ... eternal. Our eyes, therefore, must look beyond the visible to the invisible things. We learn that there are angels, both good and bad, working both for and against human beings. We are caught up in a great invisible conflict in which we are both under attack and supported by invisible hands. We labour and live in the midst of that battle so that, as Paul could put it, "**we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places,**" Eph6:12. Ultimately, of course, there is God Himself, invisible to the human eye, the Lord Jesus, Lord of earth and heaven and the entire created universe; and though we do not see Him yet we love Him and follow Him. He is in control of history.

As we approach the end of life, these things will become more and more significant to us. There is something happening to us. The old life is deteriorating, the outward man is falling apart, but the inner man is getting richer and greater and warmer and more loving and anticipating the future with increased expectation. That is a taste of glory.

It is a great hope. It is a hope to nerve us in our present stress. If we have to go through struggle, we must remember always that the struggle, though it is God's choice for us now, is part of the immense privilege we have of sharing His sufferings, that we may also "reign with Him", forever. What a hope. So our concern should be that our actions be faithful and honest and open and properly motivated, and that we will use the opportunities we have while we have the time.

Motivation of the Love of Christ

Then the last thing he sees here is that of living a life for others, motivated by love: "**For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if one died for all; therefore all died. And He died for all, that if those who live should live no longer for themselves but for Him who died for them and rose again,**" 2Cor5:14-15 (RSV). Here again is the second great motive in the life of the apostle, "the love of Christ controls us." Actually it is a word that means constrains us, drives us out, motivates us, and then guides us after we get there; that sets the limits to what we should and what we should not do. That, he says, comes from the sense that Christ loves him.





Motivation of Reconciliation

Christ died for all, and that means "all have died" in order that they might understand that they live no longer for themselves. After having your needs met by Christ, when you turn and try to meet the needs of others, you discover that is the secret to life as it ought to be lived. That is what Paul is saying here. **"He died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves,"** no longer with their needs at the centre of their life, trying to build everything around them, **"but for Him who for their sake died and was raised."** What will this do for you?

There are two things. First, it will make you see everybody else differently, and then it will make you treat them differently. **"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come,"** 2Cor5:17 (RSV); being "swallowed up by life," not by death. It is a further experience of fulfillment and satisfaction, because He who has prepared us for this very thing is God (2Cor5:5a RSV). **"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come".**

GIVING NO OFFENSE IN THE MINISTRY

"We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed," 2Cor6:3. A creative God can reach the most hopeless, the darkest, the lowliest, the worst, and the farthest away. And, when they are reached, you never need to give up hope for them because they are part of a new creation. God has started a work that He is going to finish. We put no obstacle in any one's way, so that no fault may be found with the ministry.

It is a very important thing that we have an awareness of what we look like to others, that we are careful not to allow anything in our lives to turn someone off from becoming a Christian. Paul lived continually with that objective in view, so that he says, "no fault may be found with our ministry." Paul lived in this continual awareness that he was being examined by men, as though he were on stage and everybody was watching him. Therefore, he is very careful to see there is no fault found in his ministry.

The second category here is his sense of approval before God, **"but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance,"** 2Cor6:4a (RSV). Endurance is the





key there. God, looking upon Paul's life, is pleased and glorified by the fact that no matter what happens to him he sticks with it. He endures; that is the point. This word literally means to "stay under the pressure." We all feel pressure, pressure to give in here, to give up there; pressure to go along with something. But the mark of a Christian who has learned how to walk with God is that he stays under the pressure; he does not quit. The modern term, "hang in there," expresses exactly what this verse means -- "Just hang in there and don't quit until you are triumphant."

There were certain pressures Paul goes on to list here, in groups of threes, which fall into three categories. First, there were tough circumstances: "**afflictions, hardships, calamities**," **2Cor6:4b** (RSV). Afflictions are the normal problems we face. The literal word is "distresses." It can be financial problems, in-law problems, disappointment of some sort, and the threat of physical illness, whatever.

Then there were hardships. That is a word that really means "necessities," things you cannot help, things you did not ask for but you cannot get away from. It may be that somebody has taken ill and you are his only surviving relative. You have the responsibility to help and you do not like it because it undercuts all your plans. That is a necessity laid upon you. Sometimes some of the physical ailments and handicaps you face are necessities. There is nothing you can do about them; you have to live with them. That is dealing with necessities in a cheerful spirit, which Paul also did.

Then he speaks of calamities. The word is "narrow places," where life kind of presses in on you and you do not see any way out at all. But in all of these Paul says he hung in there, and, thus, glorified God. He did not quit; he stayed with it; he endured.

Not only were there tough circumstances, but there was tough opposition that he faced: "**beatings, imprisonments, tumults**," **2Cor6:5a** (RSV); also **(2Cor11:23-27)**.

Then there were imprisonments. According to Clement of Rome, who wrote just a few short years after Paul died, Paul had been in prison seven





different times in his life, although we only have three of those times recorded in the Scriptures. That is a hard thing for the spirit to bear; an active, vigorous man like this locked up and shut up. But it did not make him quit, that is the point. He hung in there.

There were tumults, mobs, Paul says. Paul faced those situations. Then there were certain commitments that he had already undertaken. He calls them, "labors, watchings, hungers," 2Cor6:5b (RSV). These are things he chose for himself. His work of preaching and of making tents at night so he could feed himself and those who were with him oftentimes meant long nights of sleeplessness and many missed meals because he was trying to keep active and to pay his expenses by his labour. He did not have to do this but he chose to because it was part of his deep drive of commitment to get the "good news" out to those around.

So in these three categories, tough circumstances, tough opposition, and tough commitments, he faced continual conditions of pressure. Yet he never quit. This is what made him "approved" by God. Not only did he face these conditions, but in the midst of them there was a certain character that he displayed: "by purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God," 2Cor6:6-7a RSV.

There are two divisions here, each containing four parts. The first four are consistent qualities of the apostle's life. First, there was purity. The second quality was knowledge. That is very important. What enabled him, in a sense, to be pure was the fact that he constantly "renewed his mind" (Rom12:2b RSV). You have to renew your mind every morning so that you look at yourself, and life, and those around you as God sees them. It is a deliberate effort not to drift along as the world does, reflecting all the attitudes of those around, but deliberately choosing to think rightly about life.



Then there was forbearance. That simply means long-suffering, patience, but particularly patience with other people. It is always interesting how people get to us, how hard it is to keep putting up with them, forgiving them, and ignoring some of their irritating ways. Then there is kindness. That means thoughtfulness, courtesy, warmth in our words and in our tone of voice; no coldness, no sharp, cutting sarcasm. These four things characterized the



apostle: purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness. Those are the qualities he worked at manifesting in his life.

Now, in the next four, he goes deeper, showing the resources he relied on in order to be like that. First in the list is the Holy Spirit. When you became a Christian, God gave you the Holy Spirit to live in you, and he came to stay with you. In John 14 we are told that when the Spirit of truth comes HE will "be with you forever," **John14:16**. He will never leave you or forsake you. He is your constant companion through life, to be your helper, your strengthener, your comforter, your guide. This is what Paul relied on more than anything else. You cannot continually manifest this kind of a character unless you are resting upon that kind of a resource. That is why he looked to the Holy Spirit, and that is why he puts him first.



Linked to that is genuine love. I am sure this is a reference to an earlier passage where Paul says, "**The love of Christ constrains me,**" **2Cor5:14 KJV**. This is the sense that Jesus was with him too as Lord of Lords and King of Kings, as the One "**who opens and no one shuts, who shuts and no one opens,**" **Rev3:7**, as the One who was the companion of the disciples through all the troubles and trials of their years with him. He is with us too. That is the point. If you read the record of the great saints, they always bear witness to the fact that the thing that held them steady and kept them under the pressure was the continual sense of companionship with the Lord Jesus and the love of Christ for them. This is what enabled them to reflect that same love to others.



The third resource is "the word of truth," i.e., the Scriptures, the knowledge of how God sees life. I do not see how you can live without studying your Bible. It tells you what the world is really like, what you are up against, and what you are facing in the pressures and dangers and joys around you. That is where Paul spent a great deal of time.

Finally, Paul's greatest resource is the power of God. That is his reliance that even in the simple things he did, God was at work. God would make them have impact far beyond what could ordinarily be expected. This is always the secret of a God-honored life. It has impact that has tremendous power to change



people, power coming from God working with us, resurrection power going beyond anything we can anticipate.

A significant area of his approval before God is the conflict that he wages: "**with the weapons of righteousness on the right hand and on the left; by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report,**" 2Cor6:7c-8a. What a magnificent life! I know that you feel, as I do, about it that there is not much that we seem to measure up to in this regard. But the thing that glorifies God is that whatever it is we are up against no matter how tough it may be, it is hanging in there in dependence on God to see us through that wins the crown and wins the prize.

We are all in that race. That is the life that wins, the "ministry of reconciliation" in action. May God grant that we will see that we are called to be that in this day and hour. There is no Apostle Paul in the 21st century. There are you and me, and our lives lived out in these times. Yet the same witness is to be ours before a lost world.

(Adapted from "Authentic Christianity: a study of 2Corinthians", by Ray Stedman).

“The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the word of our God abides forever,”
Isa40:7, 8.

BOOK 1

PILLAR OF SERVICE

This volume lays out in simple, succinct language the basic foundations for authentic Christian servanthood. It presents an inspiring call to love others in a very practical way as well as describing what it means to be a humble Christian leader who can effectively influence the lives of those they serve for the better. In a modern world where selfishness is so common, especially among the young, this important book promises to be a valuable resource and guidebook for young people contemplating doing something meaningful with their lives.

Fr Ant (Fr Antonios Kaldas)