

Follow-Up Studies for Young Christians



“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself
and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

Prepared for

International Churches of Christ, Bangladesh.

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Introduction: The old has gone forever and a new you have taken its place. You are a Christian now, and I thank God for saving you and making you His own. Whatever experience brought you to this stage it is the most wonderful and important transformation of your life. It is our prayer that what will be taught to you in the next few weeks will help you along that ever-transforming path.

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Study#01: Prayer- Speaking to God

Priority of Prayer and Fasting:

James 4:8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. God wants us to come near! Prayer is talking to God, and telling Him that you love Him. It is an opportunity for you to converse with God about things both large and small and be assured that he is listening. Prayer is a process of developing our relation with God, just as we do it with others.

Mark 1:35 Jesus, a busy man, finds time to pray. He finds a place and time free from distraction.

Matthew 6:5-8 Find a private place. Don't do it to impress men. Be specific - God knows what we need before we ask him, but we still need to ask! Don't just babble, talk to God as a friend.

Matthew 6:16-17 Fasting, like prayer, is something that Jesus expected.

See also **Nehemiah 1:4, Isaiah 58, Joel 2:12.**

James 5:13-18 If you are in trouble, pray (v.13). If you are happy, praise God (v.13). If you are sick, get spiritual people to pray for you (vv. 14-15). If you are in sin, confess it and pray (v. 16). Elijah was an ordinary man—but he did extraordinary things because he prayed (vv. 16-18).

Passion in Prayer:

Psalms 42:1-2 The psalmist thirsted for God.

Psalms 63:1-2 The psalmist earnestly sought God.

Luke 6:12 Jesus prayed all night!

Hebrews 5:7 Jesus prayed with "loud cries and tears."

Process of Learning:

Luke 11:1-13 Prayer is not natural. Even the disciples had to be taught. Jesus used a structure in this prayer— this is a useful idea we can imitate:

Adoration — in verse 2 we see him praising God.

Confession — in verse 4 he asks for forgiveness.

Thanksgiving — this prayer does not show it; but Daniel gave thanks 3 times a day in **Dan 6:10.**

Psalms 105:1 tells us to "give thanks to the Lord."

Supplication—supplication means making requests. In Luke 11:2 he asks

God to make his Kingdom come; in verse 3 he asks God for his daily bread.

Colossians 4:2-4 We should devote ourselves to prayer and be watchful and thankful. Paul wanted them to pray for open doors so he could preach effectively. If you are devoted and focused on the needs of others you will learn to pray effectively.

Problems with Our Prayers:

1 Peter 4:7 Lack of concentration can hurt our prayers. You may wish to pray aloud.

Psalms 66:18 A lack of personal righteousness makes prayer ineffective. God listens to godly men (John 9:31).

Luke 18:1-8 Lack of persistence — this widow persevered so that the unjust judge eventually listened.

God is eager to listen to us (Matthew 7:11).

1 John 5:14 Prayer in accordance with God's will is answered.

John 14:13-14 says to pray in Jesus' name.

Mark 11:24 Lack of faith can block our prayers.

James 1:6-8 says we must "believe and not doubt."

Practices:

Ephesians 6:18 Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests!

Philippians 4:6-7 "In everything... present your requests to God." Write out a prayer list of burdens and dreams.

1 Peter 5:7 He cares for you and me. Be sure to hand your burdens to God each time you pray.

Jeremiah 30:21b God is looking for people who will devote themselves to be close to him. Are you ready?

Psalms 5:3 Have a daily prayer time — plan out a time to pray, how long you'll pray, where you'll pray.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray continually, throughout the day and week. It can even be a quick prayer from the heart as you are about to talk to someone, as Nehemiah did in Nehemiah 2:4 while speaking to the king.

Study#02: Bible Study- Listening to God

Assisting young Christians to become rooted in consistent and productive Bible study is one of the top priorities of those discipling them to Christ. Only in this way will we be able to take our stand against Satan and his schemes, wielding "the sword of the Spirit.(Ephesians 6:18). While not fostering independence of spirit, let us carefully call each man and woman in Christ to have the spirit of the Bereans (Acts 17:10-12) who wanted to understand for themselves what the Bible was teaching, so they could have their own convictions.

Introduction:

Matthew 4:4 "Every word." Comparable to physical bread, and just as essential. If you don't stay in God's word, you won't stay in the faith. Matt 24:35 says that the words of Jesus never pass away.

Joshua 1:8 Don't let this book of the law depart from your mouth; meditate on it! See also Psalms 1:2-3.

Ezra 7:10 Ezra devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of God. Let's be like him!

Isaiah 66:2b God esteems the man who trembles at his word.

Work At Your Bible Study:

2 Peter 3:15-16 It is possible to distort the Scriptures—to our own destruction (v.16). Some passages are difficult to understand (v.16), but not impossible (2 Corinthians 1:13). Strive to understand them first yourself. But ask for help from God and other disciples if you don't understand.

2 Timothy 2:15 Become a well-equipped workman (2 Timothy 3:17), not ashamed. Learn to study with people.

1 Peter 3:15 Be equipped for evangelism. This involves more than Bible knowledge it involves answering people's questions in a respectful and kind way.

Psalms 119:9-11 By living according to the Word we can be pure. By hiding the Word of God in our hearts we can protect ourselves against sin. If you read the whole Psalm 119 you can see the Psalmist's love for God's word.

James 1:22-25 It is useless to study the Bible without making the practical applications in our own lives.

Be Inspired:

Romans 15:4 The encouragement of the Scriptures gives us hope!

1 Corinthians 10:11 The Old Testament stories happened as examples to teach us.

Colossians 3:16 Speak to each other using God's word. Use it in discipling each other and in your homes.

2 Timothy 2:7 Reflect on the word of God and God will give you insight.

ABCDE's of Bible Study:

Ask Questions: What does the scripture say? What is written?

- Who is speaking? Who is this about? Who are the main characters? To whom is it speaking?
- When do/will the events occur? When did/will something happen to a person, people or nation?
- Where did/will this happen? Where was it said?
- Why is something being said? Why would/will this happen? Why at this time? Why this person?
- How did/will it happen? How is it to be done? How is it illustrated?

Be Convicted: How does this apply to me? Write down the convicting points and pray about them.

Compare Similar Passages: The gospels often have similar passages. Old Testament history books (1 Samuel to Esther) often have prophets (Isaiah-Malachi) or Psalms or other writings (Proverbs-Song of Songs) tied to them. The book of Acts refers to specific cities also referred to in other New Testament letters.

Dream What It Was Like: Pray about the passages you read. Imagine what it would be like to be there.

Every Day Study: Have a set time to study the Bible daily. Read the New Testament first. Read whole books instead of just here and there. Make a plan to read the whole Bible in a year.

Study#03: Faith, Works and Grace- The Balance

One of the great travesties in the church today is that new Christians are taught to depend on self, to struggle up the road of salvation by works. This attitude may be created before he/she is baptized, in the Bible study setting. But more often this is an acquired deficiency, learned through observation of "older" disciples. Such an orientation undoes the work of the cross. Equally sad, however, is the school of thought that prides itself on having arrived at a true understanding of grace, only to condone and even encourage lukewarm commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ. Clearly we must strike the balance—hence this study.

FAITH:

Hebrews 11:6 We need faith to please God. But what is faith?

James 2:14-17 Faith is more than intellectual belief—it results in action. Faith without deeds is dead.

Galatians 5:6 It is not rituals (circumcision) that count—it is faith expressing itself through love.

WORKS:

Ephesians 2:8-10 The Bible clearly teaches we are not saved by our own effort. But this does not mean that God expects nothing from us. Salvation is an unearned gift, but it is conditional on obedience. In our jobs there are "in-boxes" of work for us to do — files to read or process, items to make, calls to answer or make, emails to answer, etc. In the same way God has prepared good works for us to do out of gratitude for the grace we have received.

2 Kings 5:1-15 Naaman had leprosy. He needed help. But he wanted to do things his way (v.12). In the end, he obeyed and received the gift of healing. It was not that his dipping 7 times earned him the right to be healed But his obedience made him eligible for God's gift.

GRACE:

Titus 3:5 We are saved not because of our righteous deeds, but because of his mercy. Grace is unmerited favor or mercy. GRACE = God's Riches at Christ's Expense.

Jude 1:4 The fact that we do not earn or deserve grace does not give us a license to sin.

1 Corinthians 15:10 God's grace should have an effect on us—to work hard for God in gratitude.

Titus 2:11-14 It is because of grace that we strive to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives.

Practices:

Romans 5:6-8 While we were still sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. We must remember because of God's grace, we have a hope of salvation. God showed his grace while we were still sinners.

Matthew 7:1-2 Grace should make us careful about judging people.

Romans 14:1 We should accept people whose faith is weak.

Luke 11:1-4 We forgive everyone who sins against us when we have grace (Matt 6:15).

Romans 12:3 Have a sober view of yourself, not thinking too highly of yourself.

Study#04: Relationships in the Body

When one enters the community of the redeemed, relationships are radically transformed! Instead of having ourselves as the center of our focus, we are to "consider others better than ourselves" (Philippians 2:3). However, implementation of these biblical principles will never occur as long as we retain a denominational concept of fellowship and the body of Christ. Church is not just something we need to attend; it is an opportunity to tend to needs. And there are many needs to be tended to in a community of believers! In short, if young Christians are not grafted into the body in a functional and practical way, they will most likely be reclaimed by the world. And if that is what is happening in our ministries, we are failing (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). The most crucial time for integrating the young convert into the local congregation is the first few weeks and days after their baptism.

Why Different From Those in the World?

John 13:34-35 Jesus commands us to love each other as he has loved us. This quality of love is what makes us distinct as Christians.

Mark 3:34-35 We are Jesus' brothers and sisters if we do God's will. Because of this common purpose, Christian relationships transcend blood relationships.

How Are They Different?

1 Peter 1:22 Our love for each other must be sincere and from the heart. It must be DEEP!

1 John 3:16 Jesus is our example. Our love for others can be measured by how much we are willing to sacrifice for them.

What Does This Mean in Practice?

1 Thessalonians 5:12-16 Different people have different needs. Leaders need respect (vv. 12-13). Everyone needs peace (v.13). The idle need warning (v.14), the discouraged (timid) need encouragement (v.14), the helpless need help (v.14), everyone needs patience (v.14), no one needs revenge (v.15). All the time we should be joyful (v.16)!

1 John 3:17 Help the poor—look after each others' material needs.

Colossians 1:28-29 Paul struggled to present them perfect (mature) in Christ. We should be concerned about each others' spiritual well-being.

Conclusion

Ephesians 4:29-32 We should always be edifying in our speech.

Ephesians 5:21 We should submit to each other out of reverence for Christ.

Hebrews 13:7,17 We should imitate and obey the leaders of the church, who are held accountable by God for the souls of the sheep.

Other Scriptures:

Acts 2:42-47 These early disciples met together every day, were joyful, shared everything!

Acts 4:32-35 More sharing and joyful fellowship!

Romans 12:5 We belong to each other.

1 Corinthians 12:12-27 We are a body—each part matters. Each part should care for other parts.

Hebrews 10:24-25 We should not get in the habit of missing meetings. We should go to spur one another on!

Hebrews 13:1-2 Hospitality is expected by God, and may result in amazing blessings!

James 1:19-21 We should all be slow to speak, quick to listen, and slow to become angry.

3 John 1:5 Helping strangers is right!

Practices:

- Make a point of phoning or writing other disciples to build relationships. Set personal goals in this area.
- Pray for each other daily.
- Introduce yourself to at least one new person in each service for the next month.
- Write notes, cards, SMSs and emails to your brothers and sisters.
- Write also to leaders in the church to encourage them.

Study#05: The New Testament Church

- Three Aspects

As disciples we expect verses to support our practices—and our practices as a church to be built on Bible teachings. In this study we consider the communion, contribution, and confession-3 aspects of our church practices that are deeply rooted in New Testament teachings and practices.

Communion (Lord's Supper, Eucharist):

Matthew 26:26-29 Communion originated as the Passover supper (Jewish background). The bread is the body of Christ; the wine is the blood of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:23-29 Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. It is the proclamation of the Lord's death until he comes. We should examine ourselves before eating it.

Acts 20:7 Christians came together in order to break bread. It appears from the evidence of the New Testament and the early church history that the disciples broke bread together at least weekly.

Other Verses: Exodus 12, Mark 14:12-26, Luke 22:7-20, John 6:48-58, Acts 2:42.

Contribution (for needs of the church):

Matthew 6:21 Your treasure will be where you heart is.

Matthew 6:24 You cannot serve both God and money, so make sure that God is first.

Proverbs 3:9-10 Are you honoring God with your money? Give him the "first fruits" of your income. In the OT they gave 10%. Jesus expects 100% (Luke 14:33), with us keeping what we need to survive.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 Taking up a regular collection is biblical. We should plan in advance.

1 Timothy 5:17-18 It is biblical to pay staff—we should not muzzle the ox while it is working. As Jesus said, "the worker deserves his wages" (Luke 10:7).

2 Corinthians 8:1-15 The Macedonians were sacrificial and a great example to others (vv. 14). We should strive to excel in the grace of giving (v.7). Jesus became poor so we could be rich (v.9) and he is our model.

2 Corinthians 9:6 We reap what we sow.

Other Verses: Exodus 36:6-7, Mark 12:41-44, Luke 6:38, 1 Timothy 6:5-10,17

Confession:

James 5:16 They were supposed to confess their sins to each other and pray for healing. We all are sinners. We all need help.

1 John 1:5-10 God is light; we should walk in the light. Walking in the light is not being sinless; it is rather being open about our sinfulness!

Proverbs 28:13-14 When we confess and renounce our sins we find mercy and our hearts stay soft.

Study#06: Being Disciplined- God's Plan

Despite much controversy over methods of discipling, it is indisputable that the New Testament teaches the necessity of discipling (teaching/maturing) in the lives of Christians. The importance of ongoing discipleship should be clear to someone before the point of baptism. This study aims to cultivate an attitude of openness on the part of the young Christian towards discipling, as well as to remind him that, in the end, it is the responsibility of the person who has confessed "Jesus is Lord" to persevere in his Christian growth. Discipleship is not just a human expedient; it is a command of God (Matthew 28:19).

Being Disciplined:

2 Timothy 2:2 The discipling process is a chain reaction. We learn often by watching.

1 Timothy 3:6-7 The Thessalonians had great memories of Paul. Paul was happy to hear about their faith. The discipling experience for all concerned should be building great memories in Christ.

Colossians 1:28-2:1 The goal of discipling is maturity / completeness / perfection. There can be difficulties in any Relationship that is challenging, but challenges are made in love (we should realize this).

1 Corinthians 11:1 Follow the example of the one discipling you. He/she is NOT perfect. But you can learn. Follow in so far as he/she follows Christ.

Proverbs 10:17 We should be open to correction. If you have the wrong attitude about it, you lead others astray.

Proverbs 11:14 Ask for advice. Many advisors make victory sure. Different perspectives help us think of things we may have overlooked. Advice is not the word of God, but it surely is helpful.

Proverbs 15:12 Cherish challenge. Initiate with the one who is discipling you.

Luke 6:39-40 The end result: you will become like your teacher, making his good points part of your own life and character.

Discipling Yourself:

1 Timothy 4:7-8 Paul encouraged Timothy to "train himself" to be godly.

Hebrews 5:11-14 We should not be slow to learn. By constant use (habit) we train ourselves. Ultimately you and I are the ones responsible for how we do spiritually. We cannot blame others.

Practices:

- Arrange a regular time to meet together.
- Strive for daily contact (one way or another).
- Be sure to have fun and make memories.

Study#07: The Heart

The Bible speaks of the heart as the governing center of the whole man—intellectual, physical, and psychological. Thus a man's heart makes him what he is and gives rise to all his thoughts and actions. It is imperative that a young disciple be taught to guard his heart, to keep it sensitive and open to God's word.

Introduction:

1 Samuel 16:7 God looks at the heart.

What Are Problems of the Heart?

Jeremiah 17:9 Deceitfulness: in the sense of feelings and impulses. Our feelings and emotions can fool us. The heart may not discern the truth or desire what is best for us.

Mark 7:21-23 Sinfulness: the heart is the source of sin as well as of evil desires.

Hebrews 3:12-13 Hardening: hearts can become hard, become unbelieving and turn away from God.

Amos 6:1-6 Complacency: We feel secure and confident about ourselves, consumed with our daily lives. We live materialistic lives (vv.2-5). We do not grieve over the ruin of others (v.6), the looseness of the world.

Ezek 16:49-50 Sodom and Gomorrah were not condemned for homosexuality, but rather apathy! They just did not care. This is the greatest danger facing the church today.

What Is the Remedy?

Jeremiah 29:11-13 Seek God with all our heart. This verse is for nonbelievers and Christians!

Psalms 51:17 Cultivate a penitent, contrite heart, which responds quickly to God's word.

Psalms 119:8-11 Hide God's word in your heart—memorize the Scriptures that apply to your needs.

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 Encourage one another and build each other up—stay in close touch with other Christians. Prevent hardening of your heart through daily encouragement, as Hebrews 3:12-13 says.

Conclusion:

Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart! It is the source of our spiritual life. It is more important than our jobs, our families, our reputation, anything! Be careful about making decisions that seem to be good for certain areas of our lives but might damage our hearts spiritually.

Other Scriptures:

Genesis 6:5-6 Man's heart was sinful, God's heart was filled with pain because of our sins.

2 Chronicles 16:9 God's eyes are looking for hearts fully committed to him.

Psalms 51:10 David prayed that God would give him a pure heart.

Proverbs 14:12 We may think our way is right, but in the end it leads to death.

Proverbs 28:26 It is foolish to trust ourselves alone.

Ezekiel 18:31 God wanted them to get a new heart and a new spirit.

1 John 3:19-20 Sometimes our hearts make us feel guilty, but God still loves us.

Practices:

- Pray for a pure heart.
- Confess sins and be humble.
- Write out and memorize Bible verses which pertain to your heart.

Study#08: Disciplined Godly Living

How many of us have had great dreams of how God was going to use us, how he would mold us into what he wanted us to be, but those dreams didn't come true? When the going got rough and painful, we resisted and even moved away from God. Few of us are naturally disciplined—it is something which must be learned. Without it how will we take the gospel into all of India? Discipline is something God wants each of us to have.

Introduction:

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Run in such a way as to get the prize (v.24). Paul disciplined himself because he had a purpose in his life. As we noted in an earlier study, we should train ourselves to be godly (1 Timothy 4:7-8).

Diligent to the End:

Hebrews 6:9-12 God is just. He remembers our work and love (v.10). He wants us to be diligent (not lazy) to the end.

Proverbs 12:1 Love of discipline is a love of knowledge. Hating Correction is stupid!

Proverbs 24:30-34 We should not let things slip in our lives—our homes, work, families need consistent care.

Proverbs 26:13-16 The sluggard is always making excuses why he can't be bold (v.13), get up (v.14), finish what he starts (v.15). He won't listen to others (v.16).

Doers of the Word:

Joshua 1:22-25 The word of God is practical. We shouldn't just hear it. We should live it.

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 Our daily lives should be respectable—we should be constructive members of our societies, workplaces, communities. Hard-working people win the respect of others. We should not be financially dependent on others—be careful about debt especially.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 Paul worked night and day (v.8) to be a model to them (v.9). We should be sure to have a regular paying job, and also to live within our means—spend less than you earn.

Discipline:

Hebrews 12:11-12 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but it yields a better life. A life that counts.

2 Timothy 2:4-6 The hardworking farmer gets the first share of the crops.

Practices:

Make a timetable of how you use your time. Set some persona goals.

Spend time with a disciplined person and learn from him/her.

Decide to become a punctual person by leaving earlier than you used to for all appointments.

Study#09: Evangelism, Boldness and Tact

When it comes to evangelism, it is rare to see a young Christian who has both boldness and tact. People usually go to one extreme or the other: they are so tactful that they say little, if anything; or they are so bold that no one listens due to their insensitivity. Boldness comes through prayer; tact comes through careful observation of others who are sensitive. Fear can prevent us from growing in our boldness and our tact, and from being the "city on a hill" and "salt of the earth" that Jesus desires.

Evangelism:

2 Corinthians 5:10-21 Because we know and fear God, we try to persuade others. We are moved by Christ's love for us (vv. 14-15), we are new creations. We are Christ's ambassadors and God has given to us the ministry of reconciliation. Evangelism is not an option—it is our mission from God.

Philemon 1:6 Our understanding and appreciation of God will grow as we are active in sharing our faith!

Acts 8:1-4 The early Christians—everyone who was scattered in the persecution—were evangelistic.

Luke 10:1-2 Jesus sent them out two by two--he understood that when we evangelize together, we can encourage each other as we go. This is a good example for us as well.

Boldness:

Romans 1:16-17 The gospel is nothing to be ashamed of because it has the power to save men.

Luke 9:23-26 If we are ashamed of Jesus and his words, he will be ashamed of us.

Acts 4:29-31 These disciples were under heavy persecution. They did not pray for the persecution to end. They prayed that they might be bold, and God answered them. We must pray!

Tact:

Matthew 10:16 Jesus taught his disciples that they needed to be innocent as well as shrewd.

Negatives to Avoid:

Proverbs 12:18 Reckless words—they pierce like a sword.

Proverbs 25:17 Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house—too much contact

and people avoid you.

Proverbs 27:14 A positive thing (a blessing) is a negative thing if done at the wrong time. Don't be too aggressive; be sensitive to people's schedules. Some with BPO jobs sleep in the day, try not to wake them up when you are doing your follow-ups!

Matthew 7:6 Don't cast pearls to pigs—a pig cannot appreciate a pearl. Don't waste your time with People who are not interested.

2 Timothy 2:23-26 Avoid arguments. Religious people love to argue.

Positives to Embrace:

1 Corinthians 9:20-23 Paul tried to relate to his hearers to win as many as possible. Emphasize what you have in common.

Titus 2:10 Make the gospel attractive.

1 Peter 3:15-16 Show gentleness and respect as you answer their doubts and questions.

Practices:

Set yourself a goal for sharing your faith, and **keep it**. Work on improving one area of your life in order to make the Gospel more attractive. Evangelize together with someone.

Study#10: A Serving Spirit

When Jesus came to the earth, he came as a servant (Mark 10:45). He still a servant, since he always lives to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25). As we follow "in his steps" (1 Pet 2:21) we also must be servants.

Matthew 20:26-28 Jesus taught his followers that unlike the world, in the kingdom the way up is the way of service, opposite the way of the world. Jesus came to serve, not to be served.

Philemon 2:3-8 We should do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit— instead, consider others better than ourselves, seeing to their needs first (w.3-4). Jesus' attitude of service and humbling himself is the model for us (v.5).

Luke 17:7-10 When we have served, our attitude should be that we have only done our duty. We should not wait around for a "thank you"--sometimes we will be overlooked! But God saw.

Philemon 2:14-16 We should do everything without complaining or arguing

Colossians 3:23-24 When we serve, wherever we serve, it should be with all our hearts. We are serving Jesus.

Other Verses:

Proverbs 3:27-28 Don't withhold good from anyone you can help if it is it your power. Do good today!

John 13:1-17 Jesus was secure in God. He knew who he was and who God was (v.3), so service did not humiliate him. He rushed to do the most menial job (feet-washing). This was an example for his disciples—and us (v.17).

Ephesians 6:7-8 Serve with all your heart, Jesus will reward us for all we do

Philemon 4:4-5 Our joy and gentleness should be evident to all—the Lord i near us!

Galatians 6:1-2 We should carry each others' spiritual burdens, careful to no also fall into sin or arrogance.

Galatians 6:10 Whenever there is opportunity we should do good to all people, especially Christians.

Galatians 2:10 We should be eager to remember the poor.

Practices:

- Learn to serve without being asked.
- Look for needs —Ushering, kingdom kids, singing, babysitting.

- When asked to help in a particular way, be responsible —keep your word, be punctual, do a great job!
- **HOPE world wide** is the church's NGO to help the poor. Talk to a HOPE worker and spend some time as a volunteer helping the poor in your city with your fellow disciples.

Study#11: Academics: Obstacle or Opportunity?

God certainly expects excellence of Christian students: if not excellent results, at least excellent effort. Too often undisciplined students become Christians and then use evangelism or "the church" as an excuse for mediocre performance. We must help our students to see that academics are a God-given responsibility. There is nothing unspiritual about studies. The unspiritual course to take is to neglect academics. Without perseverance the student suffers great loss in character, discipline, confidence, and credibility—not to mention future prospects.

Clear Commission

- **2 Corinthians 5:18-20**—God called us to be Christians as students for a reason! We have a responsibility to glorify God in academics and evangelism.
- **Colossians 3:22-23**—Attitude is more important than aptitude. Academics are a vital part of a student's spiritual life. To have consistent motivation, work for God, not for self.

Evangelistic Example

- **1 Thessalonians 4:11**—A consistent example has an impact! Classmates will be drawn to those who can help others.
- **Mark 7:37**—People were amazed by Jesus' all-around excellence. You will amaze family and friends if you excel in all areas. Conduct your ministry through academics, not in spite of academics.

Powerful Preparation

- **James 1:2-4**—Persevering with academics leads to spiritual maturity: discipline, focus and faith.
- Suggested—**Proverbs 6:6, 18:9, Philipians 2:14-16, 1 Timothy 3:7, 4:15-16.**

Practicals

- Seek discipling in your academics.

- Get input from professors, lecturers and classmates.
- Attend every lecture. This is important for your example.
- Take good notes and catch up on missed lectures.
- Go through homework within a day of receiving it, and plan how you will get it done.
- Keep current at all times! For conscience's sake, as well as for practical reasons.
- Aim to sleep reasonably, especially during exams.

Study#12: Single Christian Living

Absolute Purity:

1 Timothy 5:1-2 Brothers are to treat younger women as sisters, with "absolute purity."

Genesis 39:6-12 Joseph was a handsome man. His master's wife was offering him sexual pleasure, but even though he was single, he had some deep convictions. How did Joseph react? HE RAN AWAY. Things to remember:

- Never be alone in the company of a single man/woman.
- Avoid sinful thoughts.
- See lust and immorality are sins against God himself.

Ephesians 6:10-18 We can win the battle of purity if we wear the helmet of salvation and use the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. The battle for purity is a spiritual battle against Satan. It starts with us having strong quiet times.

1 John 1:8-10 As a single openness is so important. Satan lies to us by saying that if you confess, they'll look down on you, you won't be accepted. But God expects us to confess, be open, and be free from sin and guilt. **Is there anything you need to confess?**

Proverbs 28:13-14 Hidden sins hinder our spiritual growth in Christian life.

Psalms 32:3-5 We cannot be joyful and fired-up for Christ, if we cover up our sins. It only saps our energy.

Total Devotion:

1 Corinthians 7:29-35 We must remember that both Paul and Jesus were single and had an incredible impact. Jesus taught that some people may have the gift of being able to stay single and be "eunuchs for the kingdom" (Matthew 19:12). A single can be totally devoted to God (v.32), whereas a married person has other commitments that can distract them. It is much better to be a fired-up single than to be trapped in a marriage to an unspiritual spouse.

God's Plan for Marriage:

Genesis 2:18, 24 God said, "it is not good for the man to be alone" so he made a helper "suitable" for him. God made women and men to complement each others' needs. They are to leave their father and mother and be united to each other. Many marriages in this world are spoiled because the husband or

the wife never really leaves his/her parents. The parents then try to change their son's wife (or daughter's husband) in a way that makes everyone unhappy. When disciples get married both husband and wife leave their own parents to start a new life.

Proverbs 18:22 If we get married we find something good and receive blessing from God.

Ezra 10:1-2 During a time of revival the Israelites realized they had been unfaithful to God by marrying foreigners from outside God's people.

Nehemiah 13:23-27 Nehemiah had great conviction that we must marry inside the faith (v.25). He noted that Solomon, king of Israel, had sinned in this way (v.26).

1 Corinthians 7:39 When a Christian woman's husband dies, she can remarry—but he must belong to the Lord.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 The Bible warns about being yoked or "mismatched" with unbelievers. A yoke ties two oxen together. A commitment like marriage ties us together for life. If one of us is a totally committed disciple, whose dream is to sacrifice to build the kingdom, who wants to live by the Bible, get discipling, and change the world, while the other has a different set of dreams, the marriage is doomed to trouble. This can even be true when one is a "believer" who does not practice the Bible day-to-day. The lifestyle of a disciple is one that creates great pressure on anyone living with the disciple who is not living the same kind of life of purity, sacrifice, open relationships, discipling, evangelism, etc. We must trust God that he will give us the right person to marry. If not, we will stay single and follow the example of Jesus and Paul.

Matthew 19:9 Marriage is for life!

Proverbs 15:22 Getting advice in this area is so important.

Study#13: Married Christian Living

God's word and his power provide us with everything we need for godly, fulfilling lives in every area (2 Timothy 3:17, 2 Peter 1:3, John 10:10). The area of marriage is one where Jesus can make a huge difference. Our marriage relationships are a vital area for discipling, especially since the traditions of our society are not always based on the Bible. A godly Christian marriage, filled with love and respect, is a light that will draw the world and the lost to Jesus.

Healthy Communication:

Husbands and wives need time together. This time should be used to build each other up in the Lord.

Basic principles:

Ephesians 4:29-32 Positive, up building communication. Not gossip (1 Timothy 5:13).

James 1:19-21 Both sides listen and are slow to get angry. This takes time together! Talk about practical things to make sure you agree on schedule, finances, visits to relatives, etc.

Colossians 3:13 We've all been forgiven much. Don't let resentments build.

Spiritual Dynamics:

Husbands should lead the relationship spiritually. Wives should submit.

Ephesians 5:22-33 Wives are asked to submit (vv.22-24). Husbands are asked to love sacrificially (vv.25-29). The goal of the husband is to help his wife be radiant, happy, glowing in Christ (v.27). He does this by really loving her (not being harsh —Colossians 3:19).

1 Peter 3:7 The husband should be considerate. This can include helping with the housework!

Proverbs 21:19 Wives should not nag (see also Proverbs 25:24, 27:15) but rather communicate respectfully.

Outward Focus:

Hospitality helps us in many ways. It is not God's intention for the married couple be a self-focused unit pleasing each other, but to be his instrument in a lost world.

Hebrews 13:1-2 When we are hospitable we may be entertaining angels!

1 Peter 4:9 Hospitality is a biblical command! When we must give to others it

motivates us to work together and overcome our petty differences. We can have singles over, other couples, or the lost. Giving to people together is a wonderful experience.

Spirituality:

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 "A Cord of three strands is not easily broken" (v.12). We need each other. We keep each other warm. We pick each other up when we fall. The third strand is Jesus--one great habit for married is to pray together every day.

Colossians 3:16 We should speak to each other in a spiritual way.

Ephesians 4:15 We should speak the truth in love to each other, with respect.

Acts 5:1-11 We should not protect each other in sin, but rather be honest. Discipleship from the beginning our marriages should be open to discipling from other Christians.

Proverbs 13:20 He who walks with the wise grows wise. Marriage is two sinners living together. There will be conflicts. That is why we need help from wise people.

Proverbs 14:1 The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down. By our own hands we might tear each other apart.

Proverbs 13:10 Pride only breed quarrels, wisdom is found in those who take advice.

Romance:

1 Corinthians 7:5 Don't deprive each other physically. Song of Songs Remember the special touches that keep romance alive (cards, flowers, presents...)

Practices:

- Pray together daily.
- Evangelize together—including hospitality.
- Share quiet times together from time to time.
- Spend regular time alone together to communicate.
- Study Song of Songs.
- Have regular discipling times with other couples.

Study#14: Christian Parenting

The family is where Christian principles can produce amazing results over a period of time. It is a light to the world—it is a light to our families who may have doubted our faith at the beginning. The family following God's word is a happy, communicative, warm, loving, committed, and fruitful family.

Spiritual Focus:

Ephesians 6:1-4 Jesus expects children and parents to be "in the Lord."

Deuteronomy 4:9 Teach your children about the things you have experienced in Christ, and to their children!

Deuteronomy 6:1-7 In the law they were expected to love God with all their hearts, and to "impress them on your children" (v.7). They were to talk about them at home, at night, in the morning, and on the road! Practically this means that the Bible needs to be a part of our family life. Regular family devotionals, quiet times with our children, prayer about problems, memorizing Scriptures should all be normal activities for our families.

Parenting:

Hosea 11:1-4 Children need love. God was not an absent father—he taught Ephraim to walk (v.3). He led his children with "Cords of human kindness" (v.4)—we should not be harsh as fathers with our kids (Ephesians 6:4). There should be great affection in our homes.

Proverbs 15:17 Better a meal of vegetables with love than a fatted calf with hatred. Many fathers think that our children need us to make money and "provide for the family." They need us, our time, more than they need the things that extra money can buy.

Colossians 3:21 Don't embitter your children—they need encouragement, not discouragement. Too much correction can really discourage people.

Discipline:

Proverbs 23:13-14 It is the loving thing to do.

Proverbs 22:15 God commands it. It drives folly out of the heart of the child.

Proverbs 29 in v. 15, 17, 19 and 21 we see God repeating his emphasis on discipline. Pampering doesn't work (v.21). Words alone don't work (v.19). Hard-line discipline produces wisdom in the child, peace and delight in the parents (v. 15, 17).

Proverbs 13:1 A wise son heeds his father's instruction/discipline. The father

should lead in the disciplining of the children. The husband/wife must communicate in private and agree on standards and consequences so that the children will not divide/conquer their parents! Never argue in front of the children about how to discipline them—be united.

Training:

Proverbs 22:6 Train a child at the right time and when they are old they will not turn from it.

* Respect * Speech * Warmth/kindness * Tidiness * Manners * Moods

Practices:

- Weekly discipling times with each child to train and bond together.
- Help them have daily quiet times; pray together in the morning and/or before going to bed.
- Commitment to church—get there early, serve, come with Bibles & notebooks.
- Commitment to fellowship—hospitality. Attend baptisms and social functions of the church.
- Regular family devotionals at least once a week (older kids) and nearly daily for young ones.
- Get input from others on your kids; don't undermine the church leaders who help your kids.
- Have a system of allowances and rewards for work for the children.
- Go out evangelizing together.

Study#15: Understanding the Holy Spirit – 1

(Quiet Times)

As Christians, each one of us has the Holy Spirit living inside of us. And yet so many of us do not really understand what the Holy Spirit is and how it can help us. Tonight, we begin a 3-part series to help you to understand this great gift God has given us. This study expands on the Holy Spirit study in the regular studies.

1. Stay in the Spirit: 2 Peter 1:19-21. According to this, the Bible was written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Men wrote it down, but God's Spirit inspired it. 1 Corinthians 2:6-16. Here Paul speaks of God's wisdom (v.7). People don't understand the wisdom of God today. And they did not understand it in the time of Jesus, either—they killed God's Son (v.8). Verses 9-10 say that no one has seen, heard, or understood what God has prepared for us. Heaven is so awesome, and God is so great, that we can't even understand it. Yet God has revealed himself to us through his Spirit (v.10). The Spirit wrote the Bible, and the Spirit lives in us, so we can understand what is in the Bible (v.12). In a family, the people understand each other without talking, because they've lived together for so long. Q: Have you ever understood something before the other person said it? Do you sometimes know what the other people you live with are going to say? It is the same way with the Spirit. God has given us the mind of Christ (v.16), so that we can understand the Bible. Yet many of us read the Bible without understanding it. That is because we're not letting the Spirit inside of us work to give us insight.

Let me give you some practical advice. Every day, before reading the Bible, ask God to give you insight and understanding through the Spirit. And be sure to be fired up about reading the Bible! If we don't read the Bible, the Holy Spirit who lives inside of us will get lonely. The Spirit inside of us longs to have a relationship with God! So let us stay in the Spirit by reading daily!

Being Led By the Spirit, How does the Holy Spirit lead us?

Galatians 5:16-25. Here Paul talks about the acts of the sinful nature and the fruits of the Spirit. Notice that in v.18, he says that being led by the Spirit means that we are not legalistic. And in v.25, he tells us to keep in step with the Holy Spirit. The question we must ask ourselves is this: "Am I walking in the footsteps of the Holy Spirit? Am I doing what the Holy Spirit would do? Or am I doing what my sinful nature wants me to do?" Romans 8:12-14. Here we clearly see that being led by the Spirit means putting sin to death in our daily lives.

The Holy Spirit leads us through the Word of God. Psalms 143:10. Here the Psalmist asks God to teach him to do God's will. He asks God that the Spirit should lead him on level ground. When we're led by the Spirit, we are on a path of righteousness, not sin. Going by feelings can lead us astray: Jeremiah 17:9. Here we see that the heart is deceitful above all things. The way we feel is not necessarily the way of righteousness.

Some people confuse their feelings with the Holy Spirit. This is a big mistake.

2. Pray in the Spirit: The Bible repeatedly advises us to "pray in the Spirit"

(Jude 1:20). This point will explain how to pray in the Holy Spirit. Let's turn to Ephesians. Ephesians 6:17-19. Verse 18 tells us to pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. Prayer is not just us giving a list of requests to God. It is us having a relationship with God. It is God's Spirit in us talking to God the Father in heaven. Think about your prayers. Are they a ritual, or are they a personal time with the living God? There are a few practical keys to having great, powerful, spiritual prayers. One of these keys is in verse 19. We have to always be alert. Sleepy prayers are dead prayers.

Another one of these keys is in verse 17. We must grab the sword of the Spirit, the Bible, when we pray. The Bible is full of great examples of prayers that we can learn from. There are many great prayers in the Bible? A few examples: Nehemiah 1:4-10, 1 Kings 8, Daniel 9, 1 Chronicles 29:10ff, 2 Samuel 7:18ff, the Psalms, Luke 1:46ff, 68ff. One thing you can do is to pray through a few verses of the Bible. Let's do that now! Pray through Ephesians 6:21-24, reading each verse, and then praying about that verse. Let me give you a few other keys to PRAYING in the SPIRIT.

3. Power from the Spirit: Ephesians 3:16-21. Here Paul prayed that God would use his Spirit to strengthen them with power, so that Christ could live inside of them (vv. 16-17).. Paul wanted them to know how much God loved them (vv. 18-19). Praying about Jesus and his love will help you to get closer to God. Paul also wanted them to realize that God can do MORE than we ask or imagine. The next time you pray, remember that CHRIST is in you. Remember that God loves you. And remember that God is very powerful.

4. Rely on the Spirit: Romans 8:26-27. Sometimes we don't know what to pray, but God's Spirit helps us. He intercedes with God to tell God what we need. Jesus said in Matthew 6 that our "Father knows what you need before you ask him." Sometimes we lack faith in our prayers because our words are simple and not impressive. That does not matter. God is looking for you to do your best. He will hear even the simplest, most humble prayers.

5. Adopted by the Spirit: Romans 8:15-16. This verse explains that the Spirit inside of us makes us God's adopted children. We do not need to be slaves to fear. We are God's sons and daughters, and we can call him, "daddy", or "Abba". We need to approach God with a childlike dependence and trust and faithfulness in our prayers.

6. You Can Be Filled with the Spirit: Acts 4:24-31. Here the government was persecuting the disciples. Q: Did they get fearful? [No.] What did they do? [They prayed for boldness!] And what happened? [Verses 30-31 say that the room where they prayed shook, and they all were filled with the Spirit and evangelized boldly!] Our prayers need to make us bold and courageous! You may start out down and discouraged, but your prayers need to change you and fill you with God's Spirit! We need to believe that God can fill us with spiritual power!

Conclusion:

These four ideas spell PRAY. In conclusion, I want to give us all a simple assignment. In the next week, let's all have AWESOME quiet times of prayer and Bible study, relying on the Spirit!

Study#16: Understanding the Holy Spirit – 2

(Christian Living)

This study shows how we can use the Holy Spirit to have victorious lives as Christians. There are 4 keys.

1. Recognize the Struggle: Galatians 5:16-24. In verses 16-18 we see that our sinful nature wants one thing, and God's Spirit wants another. There is a battle going on inside of our hearts. Have you ever felt that battle going on inside of your heart? Was there ever a time you were struggling, trying to decide whether or not to give in to a sin? The first step to pure living is to RECOGNIZE the spiritual struggle between the Spirit and the sinful nature. Let us allow the Spirit win in our lives. Verses 19-24 show us how we can know if the Spirit is winning in our lives. If the sinful nature is winning, then we will be committing some of the sins in verses 19-21, and we will go to hell. But if God's Spirit is winning, our lives will be full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Think about this list. Does this describe your life? If it doesn't, then you are not letting the Spirit work in your character. Surrender your character to Jesus and let him change you!

Sometimes people talk a lot about the Holy Spirit, yet they forget that the most important thing the Spirit does is to change our lives. If someone is trying to argue about the Spirit, you will quickly see that they don't have the peace, gentleness, kindness, joy, and love that vv.22-24 talk about. If they really had the Spirit in their lives, they wouldn't want to argue!

2. Evangelize Through the Spirit: Acts 8:26-30. In v.26, we see an angel directing Philip to a particular road. This angel sent Philip there to evangelize. And he saw a man going on the road, sitting in a chariot. Verse 29 says that the Holy Spirit told Philip to go near the chariot. Philip ran up the chariot (v.30), and this guy was totally open! I really believe that when you go out to preach, the Holy Spirit will point out the open people to you if you pray and listen. Have you ever had a time when you were evangelizing, or just riding a bus or waiting for a bus, when you knew you had to invite someone? Let me give you a challenge. When your heart is telling you, "Invite that guy" or "Talk to that woman", then do it! That is the Holy Spirit prompting you! The Holy Spirit loves to preach God's word. 1 Thessalonians 5:19 warns us not to put out the Spirit's fire. The Holy Spirit is burning inside of you. It wants to evangelize! Be sure to fan it into flame!

3. Attack Sin with the Spirit: Romans 8:1-4. It says here that there is NO CONDEMNATION for us as Christians, because God's Spirit has set us free from the law of sin and death. The first key to overcoming sin is to realize that YOU CAN CHANGE. God is with you! You don't have to sin anymore! Let's continue reading... Romans 8:5-8. When we are not disciples, our minds are set on sin. But when we become disciples, we change our minds and set them to what the Spirit desires. It is like a TV set. Before we are disciples, it is on a dirty channel with violence, selfishness, and sex. But when we get baptized, we change channels! Unfortunately, sometimes we accidentally switch back to the old, sinful way of thinking. Think about your mind. Have

your thoughts been pure? Are they pleasing to God's Spirit? Would you be happy if your thoughts could be shown to this group on a video?

Romans 8:9-11. This is one of the most important passages in the Bible on the Holy Spirit. It teaches here that every Christian has the Holy Spirit living inside of us (vv.9-11). We received this gift when we were baptized (Acts 2:38). Anyone who does not have the Spirit living in them isn't a Christian (v.9). All of us who were baptized have a weapon, with which we can conquer sin.

Romans 8:12-14. Paul explains here that through the Spirit we can "put to death" our sins (v.13). This is great news. We've got to attack sin with the Spirit. Let me give you an example. Suppose there is a cockroach, or a bug in your room. To kill it, you turn on the light, chase it, Corner it, and hit it with a shoe or newspaper or something. The Holy Spirit is a light that shows you the sin that you must kill. You then chase that sin, identify it more clearly by talking with your disciples and others who know you well, and then smash it with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit allows us to have victorious Christian living. And if someone is a Pentecostal and they start talking about doctrine, talk to them first about sin in their lives. If they have the Spirit, then they won't be controlled by sin!

4. Live in Peace with the Spirit: Ephesians 4:29-32. This is a great passage. It talks about getting along with other disciples. We should always be encouraging, not gossiping or critical (v.29). Even for some of us, we need to hear that. If you have been negative or complaining, stop it! It is not right. And it says we must get rid of bitterness, anger, malice, etc. We should be kind, compassionate, forgiving. Verse 30 is especially important. It says we should not "grieve the Holy Spirit of God." You see, the Holy Spirit is unhappy when we don't get along with other people.

The Bible teaches that the Spirit lives inside of our hearts. In a house, if people are not getting along with each other, then everyone in the house will be unhappy. In the same way, if we are not getting along with people, the Spirit who lives with us feels sad. Let's not grieve the Spirit! Let's make every effort to have great relationships with everyone we know.

Conclusion:

The four points we've covered today spell REAL. The Holy Spirit is REAL, and it can have a real effect in our lives if we let it. The challenge this week is simple. Have a meeting with everyone you live with. Talk about what you think you need to do better in your relationships with them. Then let them share what they can improve. Then everyone must forgive and encourage each other! No challenging, just confession and repentance! Let's talk about how it went next week!

Study#17: Understanding the Holy Spirit – 3

(Love Lasts Forever)

Today we'll talk about some misconceptions people have about the Holy Spirit, and how you can correct these ideas using God's word.

1. Make Sure You Obey: Matthew 7:21-23. Some people think that if they've experienced miracles in their lives, then they must be saved. Perhaps God has answered their prayers, or healed their sickness. Perhaps they've gone to a Pentecostal meeting and had a feeling. But here Jesus says something amazing. On the judgment day, MANY people will say, "Jesus, we did great things in your name, aren't we saved?" But Jesus will say, "I never knew you." According to v.21 and v.23, they did not do the will of the Father. They did not know Jesus. They didn't obey him.

The Bible is very clear. Miracles and experiences do not prove salvation. Obedience is the issue. Other passages that show this are Matthew 24:24, 1 Sam 19:18, Deuteronomy 13:1-11, and 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12.

2. Miracles Prove God's Spoken Message: All through the Bible, whenever God has wanted to reveal new truths, he has done miracles to show his people that it is him who is speaking. The creation, the flood, the parting of the Red Sea, the manna in the desert, the fire from heaven for Elijah, and the miracles of Jesus all proved that God was speaking. Hebrews 1:1-3. This says that now God has spoken to us through Jesus. Jesus is the final message from God. Hebrews 2:1-4. We must be sure not to drift away. We know that this message is the truth because God confirmed it through miracles (vv.3-4). According to verse 4, God give these miracles according to his will. We demand God, "Do a miracle for me." He might do it, if he wants to, but it is up to him, not us!

The Bible is very clear. Miracles had a purpose. They proved the new spoken message of God. Other passages that teach this are Exodus 4:5, 1 Kings 17:24, Mark 16:20, Acts 2:22-24, Acts 14:3. The written word of God needs no miracles to prove it, as we see in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:27-31), and when Thomas doubts (John 20:30-31).

God can do miracles today, but it is up to him. He does answer prayers. But he does not do miracles in the way these Pentecostal meetings claim, where they bring people up to the stage and "heal" them, and then ask for money! We should not look for miracles, but rather righteousness. Jesus himself said in Matthew 16:4 that "A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah."

3. Many New Languages- Many New Converts: Let's look at the beginning of the church. In Acts 2, religious people from all over the world had come to Jerusalem for the religious festival of Pentecost. They spoke all different languages. Jesus had died 50 days earlier, and the apostles were all together in one place. Acts 2:1-8. Here we see that God did an amazing miracle. There was wind and fire (vv.2-3). Everyone started to speak in "other tongues" (v.4). The Hindi word "bhaasha" is a good translation of "tongue". The word "tongue" means language. Look at verse 8. These languages were not gibberish or garbage (babbak), they were real languages that the people could understand. When all the people in Jerusalem heard the apostles speaking in their own languages, they were amazed! Imagine if I started speaking tonight in Urdu, then Malayalam, then Gujarati, then Oriya! You would be amazed, wouldn't you? But see, back then, they did not have the Bible in all those languages. That is why the apostles needed the miraculous gift of speaking in tongues, so they could convert many new people! Today's Pentecostal churches use "tongues" completely differently. They simply babble, and then say it is from God. That is not right.

One practical challenge: it is good to learn new languages. If you don't know English, learn it. If you don't know the main language of your city, learn it. It will help you to make many new converts for God.

Holy Spirit Baptism: The same miracle of Holy Spirit Baptism (Acts 2) was repeated by God in Acts 10, when he enabled Gentiles to speak in tongues to prove to Peter that they also were eligible to receive salvation through water baptism • Acts 10:44-46. This "Holy Spirit Baptism" followed by speaking in tongues only occurs twice in the Bible: once in Acts 2 [33 A.D.], then again in Acts 10 [41 A.D.]. According to Ephesians 4:5 (written 62 A.D.), there is only "one baptism," which can only be water baptism. Thus the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" promised by Jesus in Acts 1:5 was a special gift for the apostles only, while the "gift of the Holy Spirit" received at baptism is for everyone (Acts 2:38-39). Except for Acts 2 and Acts 10, the other times people spoke in new languages were when the apostles laid hands on them. But the apostles are dead today, so they can't lay hands on us, and we have the written word of God in every language. So we do not need the gift of "tongues" the way they did. But back then it was a powerful way for God to show that he was with the people.

4. Money Can't Buy This Power: Acts 6:5-8. There were special miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit during the early days of the New Testament church. These gifts were passed on by the apostles laying their hands on people (v.6,8; also Acts 8:6,8:18, Romans 1: 11, 2 Timothy 1:6). You can see in verse 5 that Stephen already was full of the Holy Spirit before they laid their hands on him. But after they laid their

hands on him, he also could do miracles. This was important, because people

who had never met Jesus needed to see miracles to believe the spoken message of these men. Now we don't need miracles to prove that the gospel is true--we have the Bible! Philip was one of the men in Acts 6. He went to Samaria and started converting lots of people, doing great miracles. Let's see what happened...

Acts 8:14-23. The church in Jerusalem sent Peter and John, the apostles, to Samaria. They did this because there were many family groups starting there, but Philip was the only one who could do miracles. And since Philip was not an apostle, he could not give miracle power to anyone else. But the apostles could, so they came to appoint other leaders in Samaria and give them miracle power (v.16). Simon was a magician Philip had baptized. When he saw in verse 18 that the apostles could give others miracle power, he wanted this power, too, so that he could make others into miracle doers. He offered them money (v.19)!

The apostles reacted sharply to this offer by rebuking him (v.20). Peter said that his heart was not right (v.21). Money cannot buy miracle power. Only the apostles could give this power to others, and when they died, and the people they had touched all died, then the miracles died, too. Of course, that God still answers prayers today, and he can do miracles in response to our prayers, according to his will. But these miracles are not of the same kind as we saw in the first century, when the Holy Spirit gave individuals touched by the apostle's tremendous powers to authenticate their message as coming from God.

In our lives God can still do miracles today. Have you been praying for God to do miracles? Have you asked him to do great things? When we ask, he will answer.

5. Men Need to Be Convicted: 1 Corinthians 14:18-26. Chapters 12-14 of 1 Corinthian focus on the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, because the Corinthian church was abusing them, focusing on the gifts rather than on love and evangelism. Paul made some interesting statements here. In verse 19 he said that he'd rather speak 5 understandable words to instruct others than 10,000 in an incomprehensible language. In verse 20, he told them to not be childish. He explains that tongues are a sign, a miracle, to prove to unbelievers that we are from God (v.22). But prophesying, that is preaching, is for believers (v.22). Therefore, the church should not be focused on "speaking in tongues", but on preaching, so that people can be convicted of their sins (v.24-25) and repent!

God's heart is to see men repent and be convicted of their sins. Think about your life. Have you been convicting others about their sins? Have you been challenging them and teaching them the truth? That is what the Spirit wants you to do!

6. Most Excellent Way: 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. Paul here stresses the

most excellent way, the way of love. All the miracles in the world are worthless without love. 1 Corinthians 13:8-13. According to verse 8, prophecies, tongues, and special knowledge will pass away. But faith, hope and love will remain (v.13). The foundation of the church is faith, hope and love. Love lasts forever, though the miraculous gifts passed away. They had a very important purpose: to help establish the early church and prove the divinity of Jesus. But now God's word and our love are enough to get the job done!

Conclusion:

Today we've covered a lot of deep ideas that may be hard to understand. Take away the practical challenges, and change your life. Realize that love is what matters, not the so-called "miraculous" experiences of Pentecostals today. Pray for God to do miracles in your life. Preach in a challenging way, to help others to change! And let the Spirit change you to be more and more like Jesus.

Study#18: Heaven and Hell

Jesus believed in heaven and hell, and so as Christians we also believe. It is a simple choice—we must ask ourselves: who knows better about what happens after death? Me or Jesus, who was raised from the dead? The choice is obvious.

Whatever It Takes:

Mark 9:42-48 Jesus explained here that in hell, the fire never goes out (v.43), and the worms that feast on the dead never die (v.47). He is very strong that we should not send anyone to hell (v.42). He explains that it would be better to lose your hand, or foot, or eye, and go to heaven, than have your whole body goes to hell. Whatever it is in our life that is keeping us from God, we should be willing to cut it off. This could be a relationship, a job, a bad habit, a hobby. These things are not necessarily bad things in and of themselves. But if they keep us away from God we should be radical about dealing with them. We should do whatever it takes to avoid hell.

Judgment is Immediate:

Luke 23:39-43 The criminals were both insulting him (Matthew 27:44). But one had a change of heart and started talking about the fear of God, and that they were being justly punished (w.40-41). He asked Jesus to remember him in his kingdom. The amazing answer in verse 43 was that "tonight you will be with me in paradise." His judgment was to follow immediately after his death.

Many scholars have spent much ink and paper trying to define the eschatology surrounding this statement. If we have not yet reached the judgment day, how can Jesus speak of paradise? The word in Greek used by Jesus is paradeio. This same word appears in Revelation 2:7, referring to the fact that Jesus will give those who overcome the right to eat from the tree of life in the paradise (paradeio) of God, a reference to heaven. In any case, scholars have parsed his words and come up with many possibilities. (For example, some have suggested that there is a temporary holding place for the righteous called "paradise" and a temporary place for the unrighteous called "Hades," and they are transferred to their permanent homes on judgment day). I don't believe Jesus was making a theological statement on the cross, but one of vision and love. God is outside of time, and when we die, time ends for us. We are transported to the future, to the Day of Judgment. It is the same day that we die. And so if we go to heaven or hell, it is "today," the day of our death that we go there.

Clearly it is important that before our death Jesus can say to us, "Today you will be with me in paradise." Paradise is a beautiful place—of peace and

fellowship.

The Biggest Choice of Our Lives:

Revelation 20:11-15 God is on his throne in heaven (v.11). All the dead will stand before him, including us (v.12). The books were opened—detailing our lives. We all were found guilty (vv. 12-13). Yet the book of life redeems us. It is there where we want our names to be written (vv. 14- 15). Those whose names are not in the book of life ended in the lake of fire (v.15).

Revelation 21:1-5 John saw the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven (v.2). Heaven is a place of fellowship with God (v.3). Every tear is wiped away (v.4). There is no more death, mourning, crying, or pain (v.4). It is a place that we and everyone we love would long to reach. It is worth it.

Revelation 21:6-8 Jesus gives the water of life to the thirsty (v.6). But if we live in sin we will be condemned (v.8). God judges cowardice, unbelief, immorality, idolatry, lying, and other sins very severely.

Jesus Painted a Picture of Heaven and Hell:

Luke 16:19-31 In v.19-21 we see the rich man living in luxury every day (v.19). At his gate was a man in need, Lazarus (v.20). The man was so poor and in such bad health that the dogs licked his sores (v.21). But the time came for both of their deaths, as it will also come for us (v.22). The angels carried the beggar away to Abraham's side. The rich man was buried. It must have been an impressive funeral. People must have said very nice things about him. But he ended up in hell (v.23), where he was in torment.

In hell the rich man could see heaven. He could see what he had missed (v.23). He cried out to Abraham for help (v.24). Spiritual things now mattered to him. He asked for some water to soothe his agony (v.24). But Abraham answered him that heaven is a place of comfort for the righteous (v.26), but hell is a place of judgment for the selfish (v.25). And we can't cross over from one to the other after our deaths (v.26). The time for crossing over is now!

In v.27 we see the rich man begging Abraham to send Lazarus as a missionary to his brother's house. He wanted them to be warned (v.28). Abraham explained that the Bible is enough for them to repent (v.29). The rich man insisted that they needed to see a miracle (v.30), but Abraham was firm. He explained that if the Bible is not enough, then even a resurrection will not convince them (v.31).

Jesus' picture of heaven and hell is clear and convicting. Heaven is a place of fellowship, peace and comfort, where every need is met. Hell is a place of loneliness, strife and need, full of regret and sorrow. Surely we should make every effort to see as many people as possible join us in heaven.