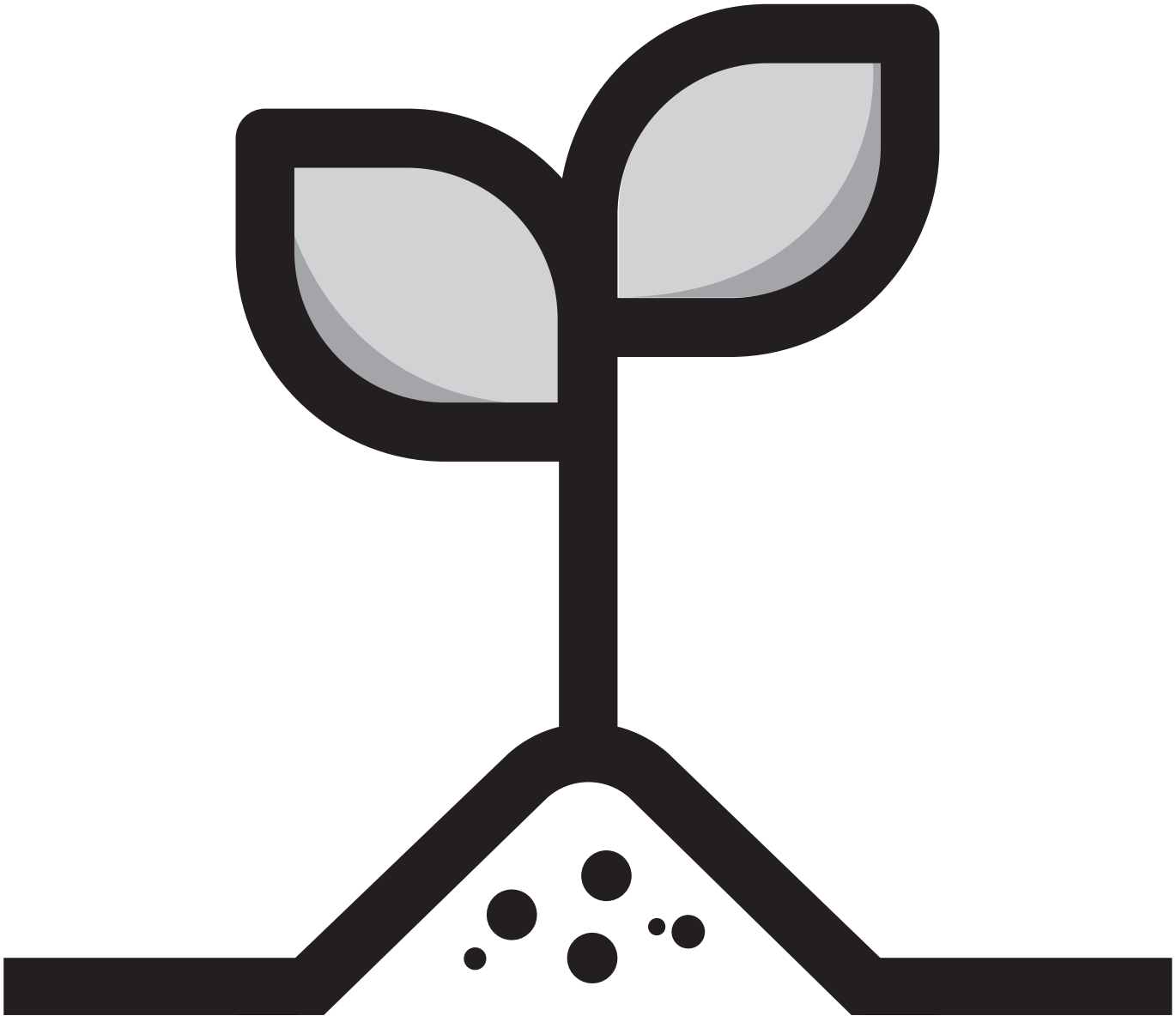
Being Rooted

CLASSES | 102

MENTOR'S MANUAL



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FOREWORD

Jesus made it very clear what His disciples should do: *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. There go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* (Matthew 28:18-20)

He has given us a mission: to go and make disciples. Two things come to mind when we think of this command. First, it is the job of every believer to make disciples. The church is supposed to equip its people to be an army released into the world. Second, this command calls us to make disciples and not converts. Discipleship is so much more than just sharing the news about Jesus; it is also about teaching people to obey the commands Jesus gave us. The goal of discipleship is life transformation.

The question is, how do we go about doing it?

Being Rooted is one of the core equipping classes in FGA. Its purpose is to impart the basic foundations of the Christian faith to every believer. Thanks to a team of dedicated teachers who are key disciple makers in building the next generation of Christ followers.

As we grow as a church, we recognise the need to equip more leaders to disciple young followers and build their foundations in the Christian faith. Discipleship is one of our core values and a priority for all Christ followers. It is our privilege and responsibility. This manual was put together to help you become a stronger disciple maker. We want to give you a tool in your hand.

Take time to be familiar with the contents of this manual. Get some coaching from your network coaches or leaders if you need to. But your spiritual growth accelerates when you start to disciple others. I encourage you to start with one person at a time.

Let us keep on reaching and leading people to become fully devoted followers of Christ!

Blessings,

Rhordan Wicks
Senior Pastor
Full Gospel Assembly Singapore

HOW TO USE THE MENTOR'S MANUAL?

This manual is a tool in your hands for discipleship. As a leader in FGA, you will use this manual to disciple a new believer. It will be most effective if you go over the material with the new believer.

Set regular meetings (weekly or bi-weekly) to meet with the new believer or the disciple and review a chapter together until it is clearly understood. It is recommended that both you and your disciple read the chapter first before you meet so that you can make use of the meeting time to build connection and trust with him or her and answer any questions he or she may have about the topic.

Questions for reflection and discussion are provided in each chapter. These are designed to strengthen the new believer's understanding of the teaching and help him or her to make practical applications to daily life.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) are provided at the end of each lesson. These questions have been collated from the **Being Rooted** class. This will help you to anticipate questions and provide some guidelines on how you can respond.

This manual does not aim to cover everything about the Bible, but it is the first step in leading a young believer in Christ to know more about the faith and getting him or her started on the Christian journey. For those who have been in church for many years, this can also be a useful tool for them to fill in the gaps in some of their knowledge about God and the Christian walk.

We will keep updating this manual as we grow in our spiritual maturity and experience in discipleship. Your input will be valuable in helping to refine this tool. There is a feedback page at the back of this booklet. You can write down your feedback or comments at the back as you go along and send us your input when you have completed the manual with your disciple. This will help us to improve this material.

ROLE OF A MENTOR

Being Rooted can be used in a number of contexts (personal study, one-on-one, one-to-two or a life group), but whatever the context the key person is the disciple maker. Tools don't make disciples. God works through you to model life in Christ for those who desire spiritual growth. Simply covering the content will not make an effective discipleship relationship. Modelling will be where the real teaching and learning occur. Your disciples will get to see how you live out your faith and apply God's truth in your life. This is not meant to be an intellectual exercise, but a life-to-life impartation.

Spend time preparing the assignments of *Being Rooted* and share your responses to the questions in the natural flow of conversation.

The disciple maker model's transparency by sharing personal struggles, prayer concerns and confessing sin. The mentor does not need to have all the answers to biblical and theological questions. Feel free to say, "I am not sure, but I'll try to find the answer." Then go and research or ask your leader or one of the pastors. This learning will help you gain more insight into scripture.

Lastly, weave prayer through all that you do. Begin by acknowledging and inviting the Holy Spirit to be your teacher. As you and your disciple share your life together, pray for one another to unload the burdens to God or ask God to release His blessings. Intercede for one another so that you both can experience life transformation through His power.

LESSON 1: SALVATION

For God so loved the world that He gave His own begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. - John 3:16

Imagine you are in a courtroom accused of a serious crime. The penalty if convicted is death. The prosecutor is adamant about proving your guilt and the evidence is incriminating. You are granted the opportunity to defend yourself, but everything you offer by way of defence seems weak and unconvincing in light of the previous evidence.

The jury retires to consider its verdict. You are left alone to ponder your future. As grim reality sets in, even you begin to doubt your innocence. Somehow deep inside, you know you are guilty.

After a considerable abundant of time, the jury returns. You hold your breath when the spokesman steps forward to proclaim the verdict. “We found the accused guilty,” he proclaims. In shock, you begin to heave and sob. The moment overwhelms your senses and you feel as if you are a stranger on the outside looking in. Suddenly out of the crowd, a voice penetrates your consciousness. “Objection! I recognise the guilt of the accused and understand the need to pay the penalty. I will stand as a substitute for this man. I will take his place so that justice is done.” How would you feel knowing that someone is willing to sacrifice his life for you? You probably would ask “Why would He do this for me? I don’t even know Him!”

This courtroom scenario provides a realistic analogy of the truth of salvation. We are saved by God’s grace. Let’s put this in the Bible context using the elements of the courtroom scene.

THE JUDGE—GOD

The Bible tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ will be the judge of all humankind.

For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son. - John 5:22

And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. - Acts 10:42

THE CHARGE AND VERDICT - EVERY PERSON HAS SINNED AND IS FOUND GUILTY

When Adam, the father of human race sinned, sin entered the hearts of the human race. Have you ever lied to someone or had selfish or evil thoughts about yourself and others?

What is sin? Basically, anything that you have done which displeases God is sin, including evil thoughts. God is holy and just, but man is not. We are all sinners according to God’s standard; therefore we are eternally separated from Him. Every person has been infected with sin and is therefore unable to live the life that God desires for us.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. - Romans 3:23

There is none righteous, no not one. - Romans 3:10

THE PENALTY—DEATH

Death is the penalty for sin. We deserve to die for all the wickedness and evil that we are capable of committing and the evil deeds that we have committed. Because God is holy and just, He cannot allow sin to go unpunished.

In the time of the Old Testament, the people would find an animal substitute for the death penalty. The animal had to be unblemished and without defect. They would place their hands on the animal and symbolically pass their sins onto the animal. The animal would then die in the place of the people. But this was a temporary measure, which was conducted repeatedly to atone for sin. The act of sacrificing animals was instituted by God to point to a future time when one sacrifice would be made that would be sufficient for the sins of the whole world.

Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. - Hebrews 9:22

THE ADVOCATE—JESUS

In every matter of the court, there is an advocate who presents the case for the accused. He pleads the cause for the accused and fights for a lighter sentence or even the nullification of the sentence.

God sent Jesus as our advocate. Because of God's love and grace, He provided the way out of death. Jesus pleaded our cause and offered Himself as the substitute to pay the penalty. He died in our place and paid the price for our sins. Jesus exchanged His righteousness (which means 'right-standing' with God) and gave us the right to become children of God. Because of His sinless life, He was the only one qualified to pay the penalty for man's sin and to bridge the gap between God and man.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. - Romans 6:23

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." - John 14:6

ASSIGNMENT: ORIGIN OF SIN

1. What was God's command in Genesis 2:16-17?
His command was not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

2. How did sin enter the heart of man? And how did God respond to Adam and Eve's sin? (Read Genesis 3:1-13 and 2 Corinthians 11:3)
Sin entered the heart of man in Genesis 3 through the deception of the snake, and the willingness of Adam and Eve to believe it. Seeing the desirability of disobedience (v6), they ate from the forbidden tree.

In 2 Corinthians 11:3, Paul is saying, the only thing I'm worried about is you guys being deceived as eve was. "As the serpent beguiled eve…". From Paul's perspective, it's possible for Christians to be deceived by Satan and compares the way Satan deceived Eve.

God's response to this was first to allow Adam and Eve to confront and recognise their disobedient act and the resultant shame they experienced (v9-13), before pronouncing judgment on them (v14-19). Understand also that this judgment is tempered by evidence of God's mercy (v21).

Note that this corresponds thematically with Paul's account of sin in Romans 1:18-32. In Paul's telling, sin is a result of a willing exchange of "the truth about God for a lie", following which "God gave [people] over" to evil desires that consume them physically (v24), emotionally (v26), and mentally (v28).

3. What is the consequence of sin? (Read Romans 5:12, 6:23 and James 1:15)
In Genesis 3, sin results in a reversal of the original divine order. While in earlier chapters, God gave human beings the task to subdue the earth (1:28), and man and woman were in a relationship of love (2:20-24), following the introduction of sin, the relationship between husband and wife turns into one of rule (3:16), and human beings are made to succumb to the toil of the ground (3:17-19).

Sin also results in human beings' exclusion from the presence of God, and thus of life itself (Genesis 3:23), which is guaranteed by the fact that human nature has become inherently corrupted (Romans 3:9-20). As Paul emphasises in his letter to the Romans, sin has brought death to all by making all humans slaves to its bidding (Romans 5-6). We as humans cannot be right with God on our own terms.

In summary, the effects of sin are,
• Separation of man and God
• Separation of man and man
• Separation of man and creation
• Separation of man and himself (negative emotions, bitter roots)

4. What is God's solution for man's sin? (Read Isaiah 53:6)
As foretold by the Old Testament prophets, God's plan for the rescue of human beings from His judgment involves the substitution of a righteous man in place of all. This person, the New Testament indicates, is Jesus.

GOD'S SOLUTION FOR SIN

Sin is the lack of compliance with the law of God. A selfish state of the will, originated in man's act of free will to rebel against God. Sin is the desire in the heart to choose our own self-interest over God's interests.

The Bible says that no one is without sin:

There is no man that sinneth not. - 1 Kings 8:46

In thy sight, no man living is righteous. - Psalms 143:2

The penalty for sin is death and the implication here is two-fold: physical and spiritual. From the moment man sinned, he faced natural (physical) death. Spiritual death, the eternal separation of his soul from God, is the other consequence of sin; it was what God warned Adam about right from the beginning—"for in the day you eat of it, you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:17)

Recall the analogy of the courtroom: Christ, our advocate, has paid the price for our sins at the cross. This is the reason He came to earth. In order for us to have a personal relationship with God, the gap which sin creates between us and God has to be bridged—the price for sin has to be paid in full. Jesus bore our sins upon Himself, thus paying the penalty for our sins and leaving us debt-free. Because of His death, we no longer have to be eternally separated from God; we can be reconciled with God and set free from the bondage of sin.

This is God's plan of salvation. Salvation means "to be set free". The whole work of salvation is to set us free so that we can walk into freedom as children of God. We do not deserve this salvation, yet forgiveness has been extended to us purely by the grace of God.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. - 1 Peter 2:24

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. - 2 Corinthians 5:21

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. - Hebrews 4:15

The good news does not end here. Not only did Christ die for our sins, but He rose from the dead on the third day. Because He has overcome death, we serve a living Saviour.

For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. - 1 Corinthians 15:3-5

LAW VERSUS GRACE

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God not of works, lest anyone should boast. - Ephesians 2:8-9

> **Grace is the ill-deserved, unmerited and unearned favour of God bestowed upon sinful man.**
> **– Kevin J. Conner**

No matter how many good deeds or charitable acts a person does, all human attempts to gain God's favour through works are useless. Because of sin in our lives, every good work we try to do is stained by sin. Furthermore, to fully gain God's approval and satisfy God's standard, we must not sin even once throughout our lives (James 2:10). No human being can honestly claim to live such a perfect life without sin on earth. The only way to gain God's approval on our behalf is through Jesus Christ. Through His sacrifice on the cross, Jesus gained God's approval on our behalf and He made us righteous in God's sight. There is no further need for us to try to work for our salvation. We are saved by God so that we can do good works: this means that doing good works is an outcome and result of salvation.

DISCUSSION

If we are saved by grace, what is the purpose of the law (e.g. the Ten Commandments)?
The law is like a mirror. The law was not given to make man righteous, but to show man that he is a sinner and that he cannot save himself (see Romans 3:19-20). The law exposes our sinful hearts and prevents us from having any excuse for unbelief in the saving power of the cross.

The law was not given to make man righteous, but to show man that he is a sinner and that he cannot save himself. The purpose of the law is to expose our hearts and prevent us from having any excuses for unbelief in the saving power of the cross. Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God. For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are. (Romans 3:19-20)

The law is not designed to change our hearts. Rather, it is the work of His grace and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our lives that changes our hearts and makes us more like Christ (you will learn more about the Holy Spirit in Chapter 5).

> **The law of God is like a mirror. The purpose of the mirror is to reveal to you that your face is dirty but it is not meant to wash your face. The purpose of the mirror is to lead you to the water and the water is the saving grace of our Lord. - Lanny Hubbard**

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Salvation through Jesus Christ is revealed in three tenses: past, present and future.

Past: When a person believes in Christ, we may instantly say he has been saved from sin's penalty.

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." - Acts 16:31

Present: We also are in the process of being saved from the power of sin as the new nature in Christ grows within us.

For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. - Romans 8:13

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. - Philippians 2:12

Future: We shall be saved from the very presence of sin at the coming of our Lord or our home-going to Him.

And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. - Romans 13:11

It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. - Titus 2:12-13

> **Salvation releases into our lives the overcoming power of Christ's newness of life (Romans 6:4) and allows us a foretaste of our future life as His children (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:14). One day our experience of salvation will be complete when Christ returns (Hebrews 9:28) and the kingdom of God is fully revealed (Matthew 13:41-43). – The Hayford Bible Handbook, by Jack W. Hayford**

HOW CAN WE RECEIVE SALVATION?

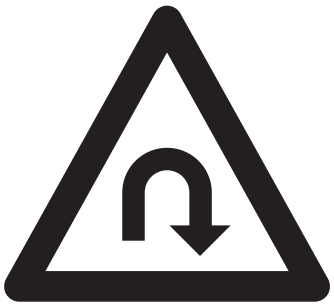
The Bible says: He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy. (Proverbs 28:13)

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. - Romans 10:9-10

To receive salvation, we need to confess our sins, believe that Christ has broken the power of sin over our lives and repent from (forsake) our sinful ways.

MAKING A U-TURN

Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to God. It means we stop trusting in our good deeds and religious activity and start trusting in Christ alone. We were going in the wrong direction; now we are going in the right direction. We were running from God; now we are walking with Him. Repentance is the starting point of a new life. Turning to God means no looking back and no regrets.



Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. - Acts 3:19

LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

We begin our Christian life by acknowledging that Jesus is our Saviour and Lord. Confessing that Christ is Lord means acknowledging His leadership in every area of life.

Lordship demands obedience. As Christians, we need to back up what we believe with action. It is not about following a set of religious rules and traditions. Rather, Lordship is a matter of the heart.

Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." - John 14:23

REVIEW

1. Is it possible to be saved by keeping the law? What does the law do?

2. What is grace?

3. To receive salvation, what must we do?

4. What is the proof of repentance? (Read Acts 26:20)

5. What does Lordship demand? What did Jesus say to those who would not obey Him? (Read Luke 6:46)

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. When you think of total commitment to Christ, what is most unsettling about the idea?

- He might want me to do something I don't want to do.
- I have too many other issues to deal with right now.
- He might want me to give up something I want to keep.
- What if He's not real?
- He might let me down.
- I don't want to be ridiculed for my beliefs.
- Other: _____

2. Are there areas in your life (relationships, finances, time, etc.) that you have not yet submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ?

3. Are you willing to follow and obey Him for the rest of your life?

If your answer is yes, pray this prayer:
"Dear Lord Jesus, I need you. I confess that I have sinned. I need your grace to forgive me and I need your love to change me. Thank you for giving me eternal life. But above all, thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I receive you as my Lord and Saviour. I want to follow you for the rest of my life. I thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Help me to grow in my faith and be obedient to your Word. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen."

? FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. If God is omniscient (all-knowing) and omnipotent (all-powerful),

- Why did God allow man to sin?
- Why is man, made responsible for sin?

Suggested passage(s):
Romans 1:18–3:20

In Paul's detailed account of sin, it is certainly clear that God permitted man to commit wrongdoing (Romans 1:24, 26, 28), which is consistent with His properties of omniscience and omnipotence. The reason Paul gives for God's permission is man's refusal to acknowledge God as God (Romans 1:21-23, 25, 28). Paul is silent on the origins of this first refusal. Hence, the willingness of God to allow for refusal will have to be accepted on axiomatic/indisputable grounds. Any attempt to fully resolve this question will have to be partly speculative.

It is this space for refusal that gives man responsibility for his sin. This responsibility is enhanced, because, according to Paul, God's eternal power, divine nature, and righteous laws have already been made known to all of creation (Romans 1:19-20, 32). The Jews had the law explicitly through Moses (Romans 3:2), while the Gentiles have

it through their consciences (Romans 2:12-15). As the law makes man conscious of his sin (Romans 3:20), there is no excuse for man to claim not to know what he does.

2. Why must sin be resolved

- Through violence instead of forgiveness?
- Through violence inflicted upon a man, instead of e.g. an angel?

Suggested passage(s):

Romans 3:21-31; 5:12-21

According to Paul, Jesus' violent sacrifice was made to demonstrate God's righteousness (Romans 3:25-26). The overriding assumption is that sin requires punishment, and the lack of punishment would thus invalidate God's righteousness. Forgiveness alone without the justice of punishment would therefore be a problem.

In order for Jesus to be a suitable sacrifice to atone for all sin, however, He must be able to be an effective substitute for man, participating in man's ability to sin. His righteousness and obedience while He was living a human experience (Romans 5:17,19) thus qualify Him to be able to die for the sake of others.

Hebrews 9:11 – 10:18

The author of Hebrews puts the point more bluntly when he states the requirement of God's law that blood is required for cleansing and forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22). As aforementioned, there is no further justification given for why this has to be so.

The more important point, though, is the fact that in order for a more perfect sacrifice to take place (Hebrews 9:23) compared to the temporary non-human sacrifices of goats and calves made by the Jews before, Jesus had to be both the high priest (Hebrews 9:11); that is, the representative of all mankind, as well as one who blamelessly and willingly sacrifices himself (Hebrews 9:25-26). No angel or any other non-human would be capable of being that perfect representative, and no ordinary man would have been able to count himself blameless. If violence needed to be borne for man to be saved, therefore, Jesus was the perfect sacrifice.

Note that suggested answers are necessarily partial and incomplete (Isaiah 55:8-9). They merely provide a framework within which specific answers may be given.

LESSON 2: THE BIBLE

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. - 1 Peter 2:2-3

One way for us to understand the importance of reading the Bible is to compare our relationship with God to a natural marriage or family relationship. When we make the decision to marry, we decide that we want to share life with one person. The moment a decision like this is made, certain priorities have to be set in place for the relationship to have a maximum chance of success. Your lifestyle will change because you need to set aside time for your spouse and grow in your understanding of each other.

Likewise, in building our relationship with God, we need to set aside time to hang out with Him and get to know who He is. The Bible is God's Word to us. It reveals God's nature and character, as well as His will for our lives. His Word has the power to transform our lives and make us more like Christ. There are more Bibles in print today than ever before, but a Bible is worthless if it hasn't been read. To be a healthy follower of Jesus, feeding on God's Word must be our first priority. God's Word is the spiritual nourishment for our faith and it helps us to fulfil our life purpose.

WHY READ THE BIBLE?

1. The Bible is divinely inspired and eternally relevant.
The Bible is not the result of human genius or insight. It was revealed to its authors through the Holy Spirit. The Bible is eternally and universally relevant. The Bible speaks to every generation. The Bible contains keys for living effective lives, having successful relationships, raising godly children, running profitable businesses, building healthy marriages, etc.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. - 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Above all, you must realise that no prophecy in scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.
- 2 Peter 1:20-21

2. Reading the Bible builds our faith.
If we exercise and lift weights, our muscles will grow larger and stronger. The same is true with faith. The more we hear or read the Bible and apply what it says to our lives, the more our faith will grow. When we meditate on the scriptures, it has the effect of building up our spiritual strength so that we are able to confidently trust God with our lives and the many situations that confront us. The Word of God is our spiritual food.

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ.
- Romans 10:17

Man shall not live on bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. - Matthew 4:4

3. Reading the Bible renews our mind.
Submitting ourselves to the Word of God purifies our minds and makes us more like Jesus. Right thinking leads to right behaviour. Our minds need to be renewed daily and the best way to do that is to meditate (think deeply and carefully about something) on the Word of God. As believers, we are responsible for building strong spiritual

disciplines in our lives – we need to give ourselves to the teaching of the Word, to prayer and to the fellowship of the believers so that our spirit man can be strengthened daily.

Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.
- Romans 12:2

4. The Bible is our guide to godly living.
The Bible changes those who read it, listen to it, meditate on it day and night and apply it to life. The Holy Spirit opens our minds, ears and eyes to receive and understand the truth. If you have ever read the Bible and felt like the words just leapt off the page with incredible relevance, then you know what it is to experience the Holy Spirit casting light on the truths so that you can actively apply them to your life.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. - Psalms 1:1-3

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realise what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. - 2 Timothy 3:16-17

5. The Bible helps us to resist temptation.
Jesus resisted temptation not by willpower but by knowing and quoting God's Word (Matthew 4:1-11). By storing the Word of God deep in our hearts, it helps us to overcome sin and live morally upright lives. The Word of God gives us victory over sin and the devil.

How can a young person stay pure? By obeying your word. I have tried hard to find you — don't let me wander from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. - Psalms 119:9-11

Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. - Luke 8:12-14

ASSIGNMENT

1. Describe what happens to the man who hears and puts into practice the Word (Luke 6:46-48). What happens to the man who only hears (Luke 6:49)?
46 "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? 47 Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: 48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. 49 But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great." - Luke 6:46-49

The former will continue in his faith, despite challenges to it, whilst the latter will be ruined.

2. List some of the ways that the Word benefits the believer (read Proverbs 4:20-22, Psalms 119:98-105 and Psalms 119:165).
The Word gives life (Proverbs 4:22), brings wisdom and understanding (Psalms 119:98-105), prevents the believer from disobeying, provides certainty in God's faithfulness and not easily stumbling (Psalms 119:165) etc. This list is not exhaustive. It is recommended, however, that additional responses be supported with biblical references as well.

BENEFITS OF THE WORD OF GOD

1. Answered prayer (John 15:7, Proverbs 28:9)
Jesus said if we continue in a vital relationship with Him and His Word is in us, whatever we ask will be given to us. If His Word is in us, we must conclude that we will be praying in His will (1 John 5:14-15). However, if we turn our ears away from hearing His Word, our prayer is an abomination to God (Proverbs 28:9).

2. Victory over sin (Psalms 119:9-11, 1 John 2:14, John 8:31-32, Psalms 37:31)
The Word of God makes us aware of sin and keeps us from sliding down a slippery slope. It doesn't mean we will never fail, but we won't continue to slide down. Like Peter, we will rise up victorious over failure. After denying Christ, he ministered with power on the day of Pentecost. The Bible will keep you from sin as sin will keep you from the Bible.

3. Spirit-Filled living (Ephesians 5:18-19, Colossians 3:16)
There's no easy way to stay filled with God's Spirit. We must read the Word and spend time with Him in prayer. The context of these passages is nearly identical. One refers to being filled with the Spirit, while the other talks about the Word of Christ dwelling in us. The secret to being filled and remaining full of the Holy Spirit is to saturate yourself with His Word.

4. The Word brings purpose to life
"Sanctify them in your truth, your Word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world" (John 17:17-18). Jesus came into the world to fulfil a purpose. Likewise, as we study His Word we find purpose in Him. Sanctification not only set us apart from sin but also set us apart for His divine purpose. Want to know God's purpose for your life? Dive into the Bible until He reveals it to you.

5. The Word causes spiritual growth (Romans 10:17, 1 Peter 2:2)
We cannot grow spiritually apart from the Word. If we don't eat we won't grow and will eventually die. We grow from the Word in two ways:
- Maturity. Peter said we must desire the milk of the Word to grow, but we can't thrive on milk alone. We must also eat solid food to grow to maturity (1 Corinthians 3:1-2, Hebrews 5:12-14).
- Increased faith. All Christians want to have more faith. Even the disciples desired this (Luke 17:5). The best way to increase faith is by spending time in the Word. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word" (Romans 10:17). Our faith will never grow through personal study alone – we must also hear the Word proclaimed in church (Romans 10:13-17).

6. The Word produces fruit in our lives (Psalms 1:2-3)
The Psalmist gives us a picture of a tree planted near a river with its roots going deep into the ground to drink water. Every time we immerse ourselves in the Word of God we are filled with His Spirit (John 15:16). Just like the tree planted by the river, the result is fruitfulness.

7. The Word defeats the enemy (Matthew 4:3-11, Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5)
The Bible is the main offensive weapon for every Christian. We have victory over the enemy through the Word. We are in a spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:12). Jesus said Satan desired to sift Peter like wheat (Luke 22:31) and he desires the same for us. Jesus used the Word to defeat Satan and so should we. It equips us and makes us strong for battle (1 John 2:14). Knowing it isn't enough. A weapon must be used or it is worthless.

8. The Word brings success to life (Joshua 1:8, Psalms 1:2-3, James 1:25)
God told Joshua the Word must not depart from his mouth and he must do all that is written in it (Joshua 1:8). The principles in the Bible work. Meditate on them day and night (Psalms 1:2-3). God promised if we put the Word into practice He will bless us in all things (James 1:25).

9. The Word makes us competent counsellors (Romans 15:14, 2 Timothy 3:16)
Biblical counselling is listening to a person's problems or struggles and applying God's Word to them. Concerning the children of Israel, Moses said, "When they have a dispute, I judge between a man and his neighbour and make known the statutes of God and His laws" (Exodus 18:16). This is exactly how we are to counsel. What I think does a person little good, but what God says is of infinite value. It's the Word that has the power to change lives.

10. The spoken Word is powerful (Isaiah 55:10-11)
Don't be afraid to say Bible verses out loud. When going through difficulties or ministering to someone, speak His Word with authority. It will be released into the spiritual realm and continue to work until it fulfils God's purpose. Like rain watering seed in the ground, it may take a season to come to fruition, but it will come to pass.

11. The Word is a cleansing agent (Ephesians 5:25-27, John 15:3)
The Word has a cleansing effect in our lives. Have you ever done something wrong, confessed it as sin, knew God had forgiven you (1 John 1:9), but still felt guilty? It's during these times we must allow the Word to cleanse us. It is both a mirror showing us our sin (James 1:23-24) and a wash basin to cleanse us from impurities.

12. The Word brings comfort and hope (Romans 15:4, Hebrews 6:17-20)
Many Christians can testify to being discouraged and hopeless, and after reading a few verses or hearing a message preached were filled with hope, comfort and encouragement. During times of despair, we usually don't feel like reading the Bible, but this is exactly when we need to. Get into the Word and let God encourage you.

13. The Word gives guidance and direction (Psalms 119:105)
"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:105). The Bible shines a light on our path so we know which way to go. However, the light shines only so far in front of us. As we walk forward, it shines further out. We must walk in the light we have before we receive additional light (Matthew 25:29).

14. The Word brings joy into our life and situation (Jeremiah 15:16)
Jeremiah said God's Word was the "joy and rejoicing" of his heart.

Extracted from ministrymaker.com/benefits-of-the-word-of-god

CHALLENGES

The greatest challenge that we experience in reading the Bible is this: when we don't feel God or don't immediately receive some new or special insight from His Word, we can lose heart and wonder about the effectiveness of what we are doing.

The other great challenge is finding a good time and keeping up a consistent effort. It is easy to allow busyness or other pursuits and distractions to rob us of this key priority of Christian living. Not only are there natural challenges, but we also have an enemy who will actively distract our lives and do whatever it takes to convince us that we do not have time to commit to this key discipline. He will use all kinds of schemes to keep us from pursuing our relationship with God. We need to understand this dynamic and determine all the more to discipline ourselves to form a healthy habit of reading His Word.

DISCUSSION

What is (are) the greatest challenge(s) you face when it comes to reading the Bible?
The books of the Bible were written many centuries ago.

For us to understand today what God was communicating then, there are several gaps that need to be bridged: the language gap, the cultural gap, the geographical gap, and the historical gap. Proper interpretation, therefore, takes time and disciplined effort.

Language: The Bible was originally written in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Often, understanding the meaning of a word or phrase in the original language can be the key to correctly interpreting a passage of scripture.

Culture: The culture gap can be tricky. Some people try to use cultural differences to explain away the more difficult biblical commands. Realise that scripture must first be viewed in the context of the culture in which it was written. Without an understanding of first-century Jewish culture, it is difficult to understand the Gospel. Acts and the epistles must be read in light of the Greek and Roman cultures.

Geography: A third gap that needs to be closed is the geography gap. Biblical geography make the Bible come alive. A good Bible atlas is an invaluable reference tool that can help you comprehend the geography of the Holy Land.

History: We must also bridge the history gap. Unlike the scriptures of most other world religions, the Bible contains the records of actual historical persons and events. An understanding of Bible history will help us place the people and events in it in their proper historical perspective. A good Bible dictionary or Bible Encyclopedia is useful here, as are basic historical studies.

NOTE FOR MENTORS

Make it known to the person you are discipling that the difficulty in understanding God's Word probably stems from these gaps. As he/she reads God's Word, always keep in mind one simple question: "What does this mean?" To answer that question requires the use of the most basic principle of interpretation—interpret the Bible the way the author intended. Let the Holy Spirit be his/her teacher (1 John 2:27). Ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and posture his/her heart to be open to His leading. If he/she is new to God's Word, start with the stories in the Bible. Most of the Bible is narrative and that is the easiest place to start.

We have developed a course on inductive Bible study, "Getting the Most Out of Your Bible Reading" which you can take a person through to learn how to observe, interpret and apply God's Word in his/her life.

You can assess it through this link: *fgasingapore.org/resources*

HOW TO DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE BIBLE READING HABIT?

1. Start simply
If you are just beginning to read the Bible for the first time, it is good to think of the Bible as a library of books. It is not necessarily the best approach to start with Genesis and read straight through to Revelation. A suggested plan for those who are new to the Bible is, to begin with, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. There are Bible reading plans online that you can follow, such as *biblestudytools.com/bible-reading-plan*.

2. Take time
Spiritual development requires us to take quality time for Bible reading. It is time well spent because every relationship and responsibility goes better after we have saturated our minds and souls with God's point of view and His expectations. It is better to invest 15 minutes of quality time per day than to wait to have longer, intermittent time blocks for study.

3. Read with anticipation
Expect the Bible to speak to your life and you will discover a gold mine of resources for living. The prayer of David is a good one to pray before we read.

Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law. - Psalms 119:18

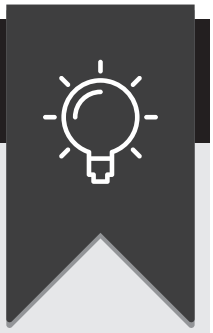
4. Read in spite of feelings
Everyone has mood swings that fluctuate for no apparent reason. You should read the Bible whether you feel like it or not. The words themselves have the potential to strengthen and encourage us out of our state.

5. Read for meanings
When we sit down to read the Bible, we should keep reading until it says something significant to us. Stop and listen to the keywords and phrases, verses or paragraphs. If you come to a difficult passage, take time to seek clarification from commentaries, study notes or Bible dictionaries, but keep reading.

6. Share it
Home Bible studies, family devotions, Bible classes and even casual conversations offer opportunities to encourage others with scripture.

Extracted from Growing Your Soul: Practical Steps to Increase Your Spirituality by Neil B. Wiseman

PERSONAL APPLICATION



1. Set a time and place for daily Bible reading.

2. Start reading the Gospel of Luke or Mark.

3. Record insights, observations, prayers and questions in your journal/notebook.

4. As you study God's Word, always keep in mind one simple question: "What does this mean?" To answer that question requires the use of the most basic principle of interpretation—interpret the Bible the way the author intended. Let the Holy Spirit be your teacher (1 John 2:27). Ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and posture your heart to be open to His leading. If you are new to God's Word, start with the stories in the Bible. Most of the Bible is narrative and it is the easiest place to start.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

If the Bible is written by men, how can I trust it?
Suggested passage(s):
2 Timothy 3:16
In 2 Timothy. 3:16-17 says “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.”

The Bible can be trusted even though it was written by men because God inspired the writers. Inspiration is the work of God through people so that what was written is without error and is true in everything that it addresses. Therefore, scripture is a product of both human effort and divine will. Furthermore, the differences in writing styles within the biblical documents reflect the different writers at different times. But the Holy Spirit of God moved through those writers, along with their personal styles, to produce documents that were accurate and without error.

2 Peter 1:20-21 says, “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

Our sin is not greater than God’s grace and power. God is able to work through sinners to accomplish His will and to make sure the Bible is trustworthy and sufficient to give us all that we need to know to live godly lives. *Source: carm.org/bible-sinful-written-by-people-can-we-trust-it*

Additional Information:
- Historical evidence strongly indicates that the sources of the New Testament Gospels were eyewitnesses of the events of Jesus’ life.
  - The anecdotes recorded in Mark are the testimonies of Peter, preserved in written form by his translator Mark.
  - Luke’s Gospel integrates written and oral sources gathered from eyewitnesses by Paul’s personal physician, Luke.
  - The materials that are unique to Matthew’s Gospel came from Matthew, a tax collector who deserted a profitable profession to follow Jesus.
  - The accounts in the Gospel of John find their source in the apostle John.

- Although the original manuscripts from the biblical authors have been lost, the copies that we possess today reliably reflect the inspired message of the original authors. With more than 5,700 manuscripts of the New Testament available to us, it will be impossible for anyone to modify major portions of the New Testament without their changes being quite easily noticed. When the manuscripts are compared, they completely agree with one another more than 99% of the time. Of the differences that remain, not even one difference decisively affects any aspect of the Christian faith. The text of the Bible is better preserved than the writings of Plato or Aristotle.

- The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls confirmed the reliability of some of the copies of the Old Testament made over the years. Although some spelling variations exist, no variation affects basic Bible doctrines.

- The prophecies in the Old Testament were fulfilled. The prophecies written about Christ in the Old Testament were confirmed by historical records, eyewitnesses’ events and of course, the New Testament writings.

The Bible has withstood thousands of attempts to destroy its truth and to discredit its authority, and yet no one has succeeded. The Bible is still the most widely read, most translated and most sold book in the world today.

Source(s): Why Trust the Bible, by Timothy Paul Jones; How We Got the Bible, by Timothy Paul Jones

Note that suggested answers are necessarily partial and incomplete (Isaiah 55:8-9). They merely provide a framework within which specific answers may be given.

LESSON 3: PRAYER

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. - Philippians 4:6

Have you ever tried to see how far you can swim underwater before coming up for air? Or have you ever tried to see how long you can hold your breath? It's surprising how short the time is! Breathing is necessary for life. It is something we must do constantly, a natural force that works within us. We breathe in to supply our bodies with fresh air. We breathe out to get rid of poisonous gases produced within our bodies. We must breathe to stay alive. If we stop breathing for more than four or five minutes we will die.

Prayer is the breath of the soul. It is the anchor of the Christian life. You cannot grow spiritually without it. Prayer keeps you in touch with your source of life. Prayerless people cut themselves off from God's prevailing power, and very frequently, the result is the familiar feeling of being overwhelmed, overrun, beaten down, pushed around or defeated. Don't settle for lives like that. Prayer is the key to unlocking God's prevailing power in your life. So discipline yourself to build a strong prayer life!

As we grow in prayer, we discover that the greatest fulfilment is not in the number of prayer requests that God answers, but in the qualitative difference prayer makes in your relationship with God. God desires to be in a relationship with us. He wants us to talk to Him about every part of our lives. Prayer is precisely this—talking to God and being in fellowship with Him.

WHAT IS PRAYER?

Simply put, prayer is two-way communication with God. In prayer, God speaks to us and we speak to Him. He listens to us and we listen to Him. Prayer is more than asking. It also involves praising, worshipping, giving thanks, interceding and engaging in spiritual warfare. How can we be sure that God will both hear and answer us when we pray?

The Way of Approach
If we approach God in the way He has ordained, then we can be confident that He will hear and answer us.
• We come to Him by faith. (Hebrews 11:6)
• We pray according to His will. (1 John 5:14)
• We come because of the blood of Jesus. (Hebrews 10:19)
• We rely on the righteousness granted to us by Jesus and not on the basis of our own good works or personal worthiness. (Romans 3:22)
• We come with a clear conscience. (Hebrews 10:22)

There are 2 key pillars that we need to establish in our lives if we want to build a strong, consistent prayer life.

1. Knowing God
When we don't know God, prayer can be like approaching a door with uncertainty, not knowing whether we will be received or whether our attempts to connect will be rejected. However, if we know the nature of God, then we can pray with boldness and confidence that He will hear our prayers and welcome our desire to connect with Him. We need to know God through reading the Bible.

2. Knowing our position
Ephesians 2:6 tells us that we are actually seated in heavenly places with Christ. Through the salvation work of Christ, God Himself has created a spiritual position for us, from which we can confidently approach Him. Feelings, personalities, successes or failures cannot alter the truth of this important reality. Knowing our position also enables us to approach God in prayer with confidence.

WHY DO WE NEED TO PRAY?

1. Prayer expresses our dependence on God (John 15:5)
Apart from God, we can do nothing. He wants us to be fruitful in every aspect of our lives, and as we abide in Him and He abides in us, we can bear much fruit.

2. Prayer promotes change in our lives (Hosea 10:12)
When we pray, the Holy Spirit convicts us of wrong desires and attitudes and as we keep a teachable spirit, we experience positive change in our character.

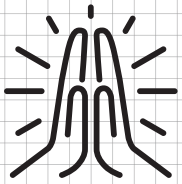
3. Prayer connects us to the unlimited resources of God (Philippians 4:6)
Through prayer, we communicate our concerns, desires and requests to God; in so doing, we relieve ourselves of the burden of carrying them.

4. Prayer gives us spiritual endurance (Luke 21:36)
Through prayer, God gives strength for difficult seasons of life.

5. Prayer keeps us spiritually alert (Matthew 26:41)
Through prayer, we can overcome the schemes of the enemy.

HOW TO PRAY?

How many of you have felt this way towards prayer? “How do I pray? When I get alone with God, what do I say?” Jesus’ disciples felt just like this. So they asked Him, “Lord, teach us to pray”. In reply, Jesus gave them the “Disciples’ Prayer”, which is a model prayer for all His disciples to follow.



This, then, is how you should pray:
“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power
and the glory forever. Amen.”
(Matthew 6:9-14)

Rather than giving the disciples a prayer to be recited over and over again, Jesus was demonstrating a model prayer guide, showing the basic elements which should be contained in your prayer life.

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,..."
Firstly, when you pray, put yourself consciously and reverently in the presence of your Heavenly Father. He is in charge. He has the whole world in His hands. He has everything that concerns us in His hands. The first line reminds you of who you are in God—you are His child and you come before Him in prayer.

"Hallowed" means 'to be set apart or sanctified; to be praised; to be adored'. We begin our prayers by praising God, not because He will grant us our petitions, but because He is God; our perfect Father and Creator, the Most Holy One.

"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."
God's kingdom is coming. You can participate in the coming of His kingdom through your prayer. Colossians 1:13 says, "We have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son."

How do you live in that kingdom? What kind of a difference did Jesus make in your daily life? In making this petition, you are saying that you lay your life before God and say, "Lord, here I am, all of me for your kingdom. Do anything you want to do with me and through me, at any cost. I am your instrument." The Bible tells us that we are no longer used as instruments for evil. We can choose to yield ourselves as instruments of righteousness. The whole world is God's, and you are His. When you pray this prayer, you are asking for the word of God, the truth of God and the glory of God to be in you. You are asking for God's will to be done and your will to be undone. It is a full surrender to the will of God.

"Give us today our daily bread."
This is the prayer of provision or supplication. The keywords are today and daily. We depend on God's provision daily. This does not mean that God does not give in abundance; so often He does! Rather, the attitude Christ is teaching here is to be content with what God gives and not allow greed to come into our hearts.

In the Old Testament, God provided for the people of Israel in the wilderness by raining manna daily. The Israelites were not to collect more than a day's supply. They were to collect enough for each day and no one was to keep any of it till morning. Those who collected more than what they needed found maggots in the manna the next day. The only exception was the sixth day, the day before the Sabbath (the rest day) when they would collect a double portion as there would be no manna provided on the Sabbath day (Read Exodus 16:13-36).

"Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors."
A person once came to John Wesley, saying, "I just can't forgive that person! He hurt me too badly." Wesley replied, "Then I hope you never sin." If you harbour a grudge, you cannot ask God for forgiveness until you are willing to forgive that person. Ask God to give you the right attitude towards others and make a choice to forgive and release those who have hurt you.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."
Spiritual battle is inevitable. We battle daily against our flesh and the powers of darkness. Satan wants to defeat us through temptation and fear. By praying for protection, you are asking God for confidence and power to overcome the struggles in your life (you will learn more about overcoming spiritual warfare in Chapter 9).

"For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."
The prayer opens and closes with praise. In all our petitions to God, it is fit that praise should have a considerable share. We praise God and give Him glory, not because He needs it, but because He deserves it. A fervent believer never gets tired of praising God. Ascribing glory to God forever intimates an acknowledgement that such glory is eternally due, and demonstrates an earnest desire to be doing it eternally with angels and saints above (Psalms 71:14-17, Psalms 104:33, Hebrews 13:15, 1 Peter 2:9).

Lastly, we are taught to affix our 'Amen' to the end of our prayers, which means 'let it be so'. The utterance of the word 'amen' is a token of our desire and assurance to be heard. It is a commendable practice, provided it is done uprightly and with understanding.

DISCUSSION

If God can read our thoughts before we say them, why do we still need to pray? (Read Philippians 4:6)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. - Philippians 4:6

We are inviting God into our lives when we pray. When we pray, we experience—
Fellowship: We become "workers together with Him" (2 Corinthians 6:1). When we pray, God gives us the joy and privilege of administrating His kingdom and His affairs—working together with Him. He could do it without us. We could not do it without Him. But what glory that God allows us the privilege of doing it with Him!

Development: When we pray, God is growing us. Have you ever prayed and didn't receive immediately what you asked for? What did you do? You kept on praying, but you also began to search your heart and life to see if something was hindering God's answer. Many times there is. God uses prayer to grow us.

Dependency: God never wants us to live lives independent of Him. If God just did everything for us and we never had to pray, soon we would begin to take things for granted. We would cease to depend upon God.

Prayer Binds Us to God: God knows what we have need of before we ask, but we're told to pray and to ask—not to impress or inform God, but to invite God, so that we might have that fellowship with Him, so that we might grow, and we would learn to depend upon Him.

Extracted from oneplace.com/ministries/love-worth-finding/read/articles/since-god-knows-everything-why-should-we-pray-9549.html

THE 'ACTS' PATTERN

Developing prayer fitness is like developing physical fitness. It would help to follow a pattern to avoid becoming imbalanced. The ACTS pattern is especially useful when you write out your prayers. Here's an example:

ADORATION

I might write, "Good morning, Lord! I feel free to praise you today, and I'm choosing this moment to say I love you. You are a wonderful God. You are holy, just, righteous, gracious, merciful, tender, loving and forgiving. I'm thrilled to be in a relationship with you."

CONFESSION

"Please forgive me for committing the sin of partiality (specific sin(s) you have committed). It is so much easier for me to direct my love and attention toward those who seem to "have it all together". I'm sorry. Thanks for your impartiality to me. Please forgive me and now I claim your forgiveness."

THANKSGIVING

Thank God for specific answers to prayer, for helping you in your work, for material and relational blessings and for anything else that makes you particularly happy. Putting your thanks on paper reminds you of the incredible number of blessings you have received.

SUPPLICATION

Take out your prayer requests after you have worshipped Him, confessed your sins and expressed your thanks. List specific requests, leave them with God and review them to see how He has answered them. When you make a request, God can answer in three ways, “Yes”, “No” or “Wait”.

HINDRANCES TO PRAYER

The development of an effective prayer life is dependent on us keeping our relationship with God strong and uncluttered by sin.

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. - 1 Peter 3:12

Preparing our hearts in prayer is very important. It is not only the enemy that seeks to obstruct our prayer life; our own sin can hinder our prayers also. Below are some hindrances that can affect our prayer lives.

Unconfessed sin
“If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.” - Psalms 66:18

Lack of faith
“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” - Hebrews 11:6

”But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.” - James 1:6

Disobedience
“Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.” - 1 John 3:21-22

Wrong motives
“When you ask, you do not receive because you ask with the wrong motives.” - James 4:3

An effective way to make sure our motives are pure is to have someone we trust to hold us accountable for our desires and actions.

Unforgiveness
“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” - Matthew 6:14-15

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Fix the time to pray daily and keep to the schedule.

2. Start small, perhaps with just 10-15 minutes a day. Once you have developed prayer as a habit and lifestyle, increase your prayer time to 30 minutes.

3. Be accountable to someone who will inspire and remind you to pray.

ASSIGNMENT

Spend the next 10-15 minutes writing your own prayer to God using the ACTS pattern. This is not something sacred or an end in itself; rather, it helps you pray more authentically. Writing out your prayer enables you to be more concrete about each area of your prayer life.

ADORATION

CONFESSION

THANKSGIVING

SUPPLICATION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How do I know God's voice?

Suggested passage(s):
Psalms 32:8, John 10:3-4, 1 Timothy 3:16-17
The ability to hear God and recognise His voice springs out of our relationship with Him. He promises to guide those who are walking with Him. He says in Psalms 32:8, "*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go*".

Jesus promises to lead and guide His followers. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. His sheep follow Him because they know His voice (John 10:3-4). There are various ways that God can speak:

• Through the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16, Psalms 119:11, 105)
This is the clearest and most effective way God communicates with His people. The Bible is God's manual for His people, but as is the case with other manuals, we often ignore the Bible. How often do we try everything else but His word?

• Through the inner still, small voice of the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:12, Acts 13:2, Acts 16:6-7, 1 Kings 19:12, Isaiah 30:19-21)

• Through the advice and counsel of the men and women of God (Proverbs 12:15)

• Through the audible voice of God (1 Samuel 3, Acts 9:4-5)

• Through dreams (Matthew 1:20-21)

• Through visions (Acts 10:9-18)

• Through angels (Luke 1: 26-38)

• Through circumstances (1 Peter 1:6-7)
However, there is a danger of letting mere circumstances dictate our lives, so be wise and discerning regarding your circumstances, test them with the Word of God and ask God to show you His perspective on these circumstances.

• By inner conviction and peace (1 Kings 19:12)
It is similar to the inner still, small voice of the Holy Spirit. God can give you deep conviction and inner peace about something and it should be aligned with His Word.

How do you know it's God?
Because you know Him and you know the sound of His voice.

LESSON 4:
WATER BAPTISM

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. - Matthew 28:19

Water baptism is a command. Jesus stressed the importance of water baptism when He commissioned His followers to baptise all those who became Christians. He set us an example by going through water baptism, even though He did not need the baptism of repentance (Matthew 3:16 and Luke 3:21-22). Before ascending to heaven, Jesus commanded His disciples to go into all the world preaching the Gospel, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Water baptism is far more than a ritual or religious exercise. It is intended to be an essential part of the spiritual foundation of all new Christians. It is an outward, public, physical declaration of faith, announcing that we have decided to leave our old way of life and adopt the new way of life that Christ has to offer.

In the New Testament, it is evident that new believers were baptised as soon as possible after their decision to follow Christ. There is no reason to delay the step of baptism. Jesus made it clear that one of the first steps in being obedient to Him is to be water baptised. It is not a graduation to an advanced state of spirituality, but a step of obedience.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

The word 'Baptism' in classical Greek, is 'Baptizo'. Used in the New Testament, it means to 'fully immerse', to 'totally submerge' or to 'be fully wet'. It was derived from the words, 'Bapto' and 'Empbapto'. Both words mean 'to dip' or 'dip in'.

The Strong concordance's definitions of the word 'Baptizo' are as follows:
- To dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk)
- To cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one's self, bathe
- To overwhelm

Even with the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the term 'Baptizo' was used to translate the passage found in 2 Kings 5:14, where Naaman 'dipped' himself seven times in the Jordan River.

It is clear from the definition of baptism that it involves complete immersion, as seen in Acts 8:38 and Matthew 3:16, not just sprinkling. When we understand the true meaning of water baptism and what it represents, we will see the importance of being fully immersed.

WHAT DOES BAPTISM REPRESENT?

The Bible presents at least three illustrations to help us understand water baptism.

1. Burial and Resurrection
Like Christ's death and resurrection, water baptism represents the death (Romans 6:3, 4, 5 and 11) and burial (Colossians 2:12) of the sin in your life and resurrection (Colossians 3:1, Romans 6:4-5) to your new life as a Christian. It is a physical indication of what has taken place in your heart.

When we are baptised, we are saying, "From this time forward, I choose to put to death the old sin nature with all its habits, sins and failings and receive the forgiveness offered to me by God through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross."

Paul explained the symbolism of baptism in Romans 6:3-5.
"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection." - Romans 6:3-5 (NKJV)

Paul is saying that baptism is a transitional point in a person's spiritual life. The immersion in water represents a burial or putting to death of the sinful nature; the act of rising out of the water is symbolic of resurrection, that is, rising from the death of the old nature to live with a new nature. This new nature is the spiritual nature that a believer received at the time of conversion.

2. Crossing the Red Sea
In the same way that the Israelites were in slavery to the Egyptians, we were all slaves of sin. The Israelites were freed from their bondage by passing through the Red Sea. Baptism depicts the freedom from sin that Jesus purchased for us on the cross.

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.
- 1 Corinthians 10:1-2

3. A Circumcision of the Heart
In the Old Testament, God established circumcision to be an outward work signifying a change of heart and a new covenant relationship between the Jewish people and Himself. In the New Testament, water baptism parallels this and is required for all of God's people.

In Him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. - Colossians 2:11-12

Water Baptism speaks of circumcision of the heart, of the spirit and not of the flesh. The circumcision ritual in the Old Testament paved the way for New Covenant water baptism in Christ. The flesh that is cut away will shrivel and die. This also involves the shedding of the blood and points to the blood and flesh of Jesus Christ given for the redemption of our sins. In water baptism, the believer is identified with Christ's death. His old sinful nature will be cut away and buried with Christ.

Each of these illustrations shows the old life being put away and the new life emerging. In baptism, we identified with what Christ did through his cross and resurrection. We obey Christ's command to be baptised, thereby identifying with the power of the cross and resurrection to deliver us completely from the power of sin over our lives.

ASSIGNMENT

Refer to the following scriptures and share with your mentor what you discovered about the water baptism.

Acts 2:37-38
Baptism is accompanied by the act of repentance. The promise of the Holy Spirit is also given to those who are baptised.

In the early church days, followers of Christ were baptised in water almost immediately after hearing and receiving the Gospel. They will be baptised in the nearest river. There was one occasion in Acts 10:46-48 where followers received the baptism of Holy Spirit before they are baptised in water.

Romans 6:3-10
Baptism is a symbolic representation of our union with Jesus' death, in order that we might be raised to a new life free from sin.

Galatians 3:26-28
Baptism unifies all believers in Jesus. Those who have placed their faith in Christ and are baptised in Christ Jesus, are God's children.

Colossians 3:11-12
In affirming a new life in Christ with the rest of His body, the baptised are to develop the qualities of love that bind each one together and extend forgiveness just as God has forgiven us.

WHO SHOULD BE WATER BAPTISED?

In order for baptism to have significant spiritual meaning in one's life, he or she must already have experienced salvation by repentance, have faith (belief) in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and have the desire to be obedient.

There are 2 major pre-requisites for those who desire to be water baptised:

1. Faith
Faith in Jesus Christ is essential. This is best displayed in the conversation between Philip, a New Testament leader and an Ethiopian who had great faith.

As they rode along, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "Look! There's some water! Why can't I be baptised?" He ordered the carriage to stop, and they went down into the water, and Philip baptised him.
- Acts 8:36-38

2. Repentance
There must be complete repentance, a turning away from sin before water baptism can be a significant and meaningful step in your life.

Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." - Acts 2:38

Faith and repentance must go hand-in-hand. The order, established by Jesus, is salvation through faith and repentance, followed by water baptism out of obedience.

HOW IS BAPTISM CONDUCTED IN FGA?

Baptism is total immersion in water. At FGA, we have a quarter-yearly baptism service and all new believers from our services come together to be water baptised. We encourage our new believers to invite their families and friends to witness this special occasion.

Please speak to your leader or any staff member from church to find out the date of the next water baptism service and sign up for it!

NOTES FOR MENTORS:

- Water Baptism is a command for all believers (Matthew 28:19)
- Baptism is by full immersion (Matthew 3:16 and Acts 8:38) as demonstrated by Christ.
- For those who would like to get baptised at FGA, they will have to first complete *Being Rooted* with a mentor/leader or attend *Being Rooted Class*.

REVIEW

1. What does water baptism symbolise?

2. What are the pre-requisites for those who desire to be water baptised?

3. When should a new believer be baptised?

DISCUSSION

1. What about infant baptism?
We don't baptise infants because we believe that a person has to comprehend what baptism is before making a choice to undertake it.

Note: In FGA, the children from the senior class (10 to 12 years old) will go through a foundation class, called *Blast Off!* (it's a simplified version of *Being Rooted* for kids). Parents participate in the class together with the kids. Children who responded and received Christ will be invited to join the next baptism. We invite the dads to baptise their children together with appointed pastors/leaders of the church.

2. What happens to those who received Christ and died before getting water baptised?
*[39]*One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"
[40]But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence?
[41]We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."
[42]Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." [43]Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." - Luke 23:39-43

Baptism is not a pre-requisite for salvation. We are saved by putting our faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross. Baptism is a public declaration of one's faith in Christ and genuine repentance to turn away from the old sinful life to a new life in Christ. The criminal who was hung next to Christ did not get the opportunity to be baptised before he died. Jesus assured him of his salvation in Luke 23:43.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why is water baptism necessary when salvation is obtained by believing and confession?

Suggested passage(s):
1 Peter 3:21, Ephesians 2:8-9, Matthew 28:19
Baptism is an act of obedience and worship through which believers express their faith and commitment. You can look back to your water baptism as the moment when you publicly declared your faith in Christ. This reference point will always remind you that you began your Christian life with a clear conscience before God.

In the early church (refer to the Book of Acts), salvation and baptism were presented as near-simultaneous events. The moment a person was saved through the preaching of the Gospel, the apostles would baptise him or her almost immediately.

2. If I have undergone sprinkling instead of full immersion before, can I be considered to be water baptised?

Suggested passage(s):
Acts 8:38, Matthew 3:16
It is clear from the definition of baptism that it involves complete immersion, as seen in Acts 8:38 and Matthew 3:16, not just sprinkling.

As a church, we baptise believers by full immersion as it is the biblical norm; but this is not an inflexible norm. scripture and common sense indicate that water is not all-important and that therefore, baptism by sprinkling may be used as a substitute in exceptional circumstances, e.g. for the sick. Salvation is based on faith in Christ and desires to obey Him, not on the basis of how much water covered his body when he was baptised. For those who have been baptised by sprinkling, we will not impose baptism by full immersion but will leave it to the personal conviction of the individual.

In past situations, we had individuals who were baptised by sprinkling when they were babies. They decided to get baptised by full immersion in FGA as an act of personal obedience and to mark their commitment to follow Christ.

Note that suggested answers are necessarily partial and incomplete (Isaiah 55:8-9). They merely provide a framework within which specific answers may be given.

LESSON 5:
LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit. - Acts 1:4-5

God's desire for every believer is to live a Spirit-filled life. The Holy Spirit is a gift for all Christians. The greatest need today is for all believers to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit so that we can be His witnesses and carry out the mission that God has for our lives. The blessing of the Holy Spirit is promised to us and prepared for us. In Acts 1, Jesus gave instructions to the believers to wait and not attempt anything until they had received the power of the Holy Spirit.

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The Holy Spirit is mentioned 90 times in the Old Testament and has 18 different titles. It is mentioned 260 times in the New Testament with 39 different titles. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead. He enables us to receive the truth about God. He is not merely an influence but has personal attributes and characteristics, which enable Christians to personally relate to Him.

If you love me, obey my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate (Counselor), who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. - John 14:15-17 (NLT)

ASSIGNMENT

Refer to the following scriptures and write down some of the ways in which the Holy Spirit helps the believer.

Matthew 10:19-20
The Holy Spirit gives us wisdom when we act as witnesses for Jesus.

John 14:26
The Holy Spirit teaches us and reminds us of God's Word.

John 16:13-14
The Holy Spirit guides us into the truth of "what is yet to come", in order that Jesus may be glorified.

Acts 1:8
The Holy Spirit gives us power to act as witnesses for Jesus.

Romans 8:13-16
The Holy Spirit leads the children of God to be holy, testifying their inclusion in God's family.

Romans 8:26-27
The Holy Spirit intercedes for us, that is, speaks to God on our behalf, when we do not know how to speak on our own.

2 Timothy 1:13-14
The Holy Spirit helps us to guard what God has taught us through His Word.

BIBLICAL TERMS DESCRIBING THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. Baptism: Baptism is immersion, a plunging beneath and submerging. John spoke of the baptism in the Holy Spirit (John 1:30-33). Jesus spoke of it in Acts 1:5. Peter used the same expression in Acts 11:15-17. There is an experience scripturally known as the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13).

2. Filling: Like an empty vessel that is filled to overflowing, so is the believer filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4, 4:8, 31, 6:3-5, 9:17, 13:9). There may be one baptism but many fillings. This seemed to be in harmony with the scriptures. The believer needs to be continually filled with the Spirit and not become an empty vessel.

3. Outpouring: God pours out His Spirit like the rain of heaven being poured out (Acts 2:17, 10:44-45, Joel 2:28-29, Isaiah 44:3).

4. Falling upon: The analogy here seems to be of rain that comes from above to bring refreshing and fruitfulness (Acts 8:16, 10:44, 11:15, 19:6, Luke 24:49, John 15:26).

5. Endued with power: The Greek thought of enduement is "to be clothed upon" (Luke 24:47-49, Isaiah 61:10, Acts 1:8, 4:33, 10:38, 1 Thessalonians 1:5). In the Old Testament, the Spirit of the Lord would 'clothe' select ones with Himself. They were clothed with or by the Spirit (1 Chronicles 12:18, 2 Chronicles 24:2).

6. Sealed: The term signifies the Holy Spirit coming to the believer as a stamp with a signet or private mark for security, preservation, genuineness or authenticity (John 6:27, 2 Corinthians 1:21-22). The Holy Spirit is the seal of the living God upon the believer.

7. Earnest: The term "earnest" speaks of a pledge or foretaste of the full redemption to come (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5, Hebrews 6:4-5). The Holy Spirit is that earnest.

8. Anointing: The Greek word "Chrisma" means 'oil'. The Holy Spirit is the divine oil, the unction, the anointing for service. It was the holy anointing of priests, prophets and kings that constituted them as "anointed ones" for their service and ministry (Exodus 28:41, 1 Samuel 16:13, Luke 4:18, Acts 10:38, 1 John 2:20,27).

Extracted from Understanding the New Birth and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, by Kevin J. Conner

This is not an exhaustive list. Please refer to the book for more terms describing the work of the Holy Spirit. There are 13 terms listed in his book.

The Holy Spirit empowers us to be effective witnesses and dwells in us to fulfil God's will in our lives. The Holy Spirit works in the life of the Christian to effect change from our natural, sinful lifestyle habits (carnal nature) to a spiritual lifestyle. He also equips us with spiritual gifts to contribute to the body of Christ (You will learn more about spiritual gifts in 'Know Your Shape' programme). In short, the Holy Spirit works in us to build spiritual fruit (Christ-like qualities) and empowers us to use our spiritual gifts.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. - Galatians 5:22-23

And there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. - 1 Corinthians 12: 4-7

There is an important distinction between 'gifts' and 'fruit'. Do not confuse gifts with the fruit of the Spirit. Realise that your gifts without love is useless.

> **"**
>
> **'Fruit' shows your maturity.**
> **'Gifts' show your ministry.**

If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing. - 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

BECOMING SENSITIVE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is a dear friend. He is gentle in His dealings with us and makes Jesus real to us in our daily lives. It is of vital importance that when we feel the conviction of the Holy Spirit in a particular sinful area or lifestyle, we respond and do not ignore that prompting. Yield yourself completely to the Holy Spirit and walk in obedience, and soon you will find yourself recognising His voice and His leading. You will begin to truly appreciate the wisdom and strength that He provides.

HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM

It is a spiritual experience, unlike water baptism. Holy Spirit baptism does not involve a physical act of immersion. However, it does have a similar meaning, in that the person is completely immersed in, or filled with, the Holy Spirit. It involves a surrendering of the will of a person to the divine activity of the Holy Spirit, resulting in the impartation of spiritual gifts and an ability to understand and do things that would not be naturally possible.

The Holy Spirit comes to live within us at the moment of conversion to Christ, and so we say that the Holy Spirit dwells in us when we receive Christ. Spirit baptism is an experience which is subsequent to and distinct from being born-again; it is Christ's provision for us to be able to live in the power of the Spirit and to experience His will.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the activation of the dynamic power of Christ in a believer's life; it is the release of the ability to accomplish great things for the Kingdom of God in the world. In the Bible, this experience is also referred to as being filled with the Holy Spirit.

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. - Acts 2:4

HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM IN THE BOOK OF ACTS (EVIDENCE OF BAPTISM)

- Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-13)
- Samaria (Acts 8:14-17)
- House of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48)
- Ephesus (Acts 19:1-6)
- Paul (Acts 9:17-18, 1 Corinthians 14:18)

SPEAKING IN NEW TONGUES

Spiritual tongues and prophecy (in this case, the gift of prophetic tongue) are designed for edification or strengthening. Tongues strengthen the individual, while prophecy strengthens the church. Jesus predicted that His disciples would speak with new tongues (Mark 16:17) and the Book of Acts contains a record of different groups of people and individuals who received baptism in the Spirit and spoke in tongues (Acts 2:4, 10:46, 19:6, 1 Corinthians 14:18). The recording of all these instances indicates that speaking in tongues is the normal manifestation and evidence that one has been baptised in the Holy Spirit.

The purposes of the spiritual language are:

1. To help us to communicate with God (1 Corinthians 14:2a)
- Through prayer (1 Corinthians 14:14, Romans 8:26-27, Ephesians 6:18)
- Through praise and worship (Acts 2:11, 1 Corinthians 14:14-16)

2. To build our spiritual life or spirit man (1 Corinthians 14:4, Jude 20)

3. To reveal mysteries to us (1 Corinthians 14:2b, Matthew 13:11, 1 Corinthians 2:7-16)

4. To release power within us (Acts 1:8, Ephesians 3:16, Acts 4:31)

HOW CAN I BE BAPTISED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT?

1. You must be born-again (Acts 2:38-39)

2. You must recognise that the Holy Spirit is given as a gift (Luke 11:13, Acts 2:38, 10:45, 11:17)

3. Earnestly desire and ask for the gift (Acts 19:2-6, Luke 11:9-13)

4. Prepare your heart by having a clear conscience (1 John 3:21, 1:7, 9)

5. Start worshipping God by singing (Luke 24:49-53)

6. Holy Spirit baptism can also be imparted through the laying on of hands (Acts 8:17)
Ask a mature Christian who has been baptised in the Holy Spirit to pray with you and lay hands on you.

7. Speak out as the Holy Spirit gives you the words (Acts 2:4)

8. Continue to use your spiritual language every day and believe in God to increase the flow of the Spirit within you.

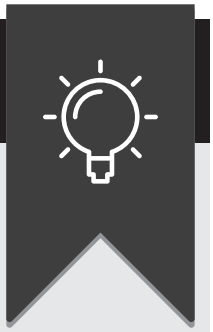
REVIEW

1. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

2. What is the difference between gifts of the Spirit and fruit of the Spirit?

3. What are the benefits of speaking in tongues?

PERSONAL APPLICATION



1. Have you received baptism in the Holy Spirit?

2. Have you discovered your spiritual gifts and activated them in your life?

3. If your answer to the above is no, take a step of faith and have your mentor/leader pray with you to be filled with the Spirit.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why do we need to be baptised in the Holy Spirit when He already resides in us when we are born again?
Suggested passage(s):
Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:1-4, Acts 8:14-16
The baptism in the Holy Spirit is the fulfilment of Jesus' words concerning the 'promise of the Father'. It is a baptism with power. The phrase 'baptism with the Holy Spirit' means to be filled by the Holy Spirit. It is a distinct and separate act of God from our born-again experience. The Holy Spirit resides in us when we are born again, but being baptised with the Holy Spirit means the believer is totally immersed or enveloped in the Spirit of God. The purpose of baptism in the Holy Spirit is to be a witness for Christ in the world.

2. Is water baptism a pre-requisite to the baptism of the Holy Spirit?
Suggested passage(s):
Acts 10:46-48
No, some believers may receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit before they are baptised in water.

3. When I am speaking in tongues, how do I know that I am speaking the right thing?
Suggested passage(s):
Acts 2:4, Romans 8:26-27
The question to put forward is, what is your attitude when you are praying in the Spirit? It is not a matter of language or form or posture. When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you learn to surrender your thoughts, emotions and will to God and stay in His presence; the Holy Spirit will direct all of your speaking faculties to speak the spiritual language without you having to think much about it.

4. If tongues in public need to be interpreted for the edification of the church, why do worship leaders frequently speak in tongues without interpretation?
Suggested passage(s):
1 Corinthians 14
The apostle Paul gladly proclaimed, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, I will also sing with the understanding". Paul will use the gift of tongues, both in prayer and in song, and he will use it often.

Paul here makes reference to how we can sing in the spirit. God can give us the freedom to exercise the gift of tongues in a melodic way so that it flows in with worship. One of the reasons why Christians sing in tongues is because just as praying in tongues is an aid to prayer when "we do not know how to pray", so is singing in tongues an aid when we do not know how (or what) to sing. However, based on the principles in this chapter, if this is done, it should never be done in a way that would draw attention to oneself or distract others.

**Paul's context in 1 Corinthians 14 is more focused on what the Corinthian Christians do when they come together as a church. The Corinthians had made the gift of tongues the sign of true spirituality. It appears that the Corinthians were more zealous for the "miraculous gifts" insofar as they demonstrated one's superior spirituality (14:12), but they had pursued such a course to the detriment of their fellow brothers and sisters.*

In response to the Corinthians' abuse of the gift of tongues and their misguided views of true spirituality, Paul argues the following: true spirituality consists in love of the brothers which manifests itself by making all attempts to bring edification and strengthening to the diversified body of Christ. Under this umbrella, he argues that uninterpreted tongues are detrimental to the body because no one is edified by a manifestation of the Spirit they cannot understand. Prophecy is to be preferred in this light since it is comprehensible to the body, providing the nourishment it so desperately needs. Also, the order is to be maintained in the exercise of the gifts as this promotes edification and reflects a God who produces peace in and between believers (cf. Colossians 3:15).

Source: bible.org/article/argument-1-corinthians-12-14

> *Note that suggested answers are necessarily partial and incomplete (Isaiah 55:8-9). They merely provide a framework within which specific answers may be given.*

LESSON 6: COMMUNION

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
- 1 Corinthians 11:26

The Lord's Table, Communion or 'Eucharist' which literally means thanksgiving, is the centrepiece of Christian worship. When it was first observed, it was in conjunction with a Passover meal, a traditional Jewish ritual commemorating the deliverance of Israel from judgement poured out on their Egyptian masters. It was Jesus' last meal on earth and he used the bread and wine, the most common foods of the day, as tokens of his soon-to-be crucified body and shed blood.

Unlike water baptism, which is a one-time event, Communion is a sacred act that every born-again believer is encouraged to observe throughout his or her Christian life. It is a very personal and holy time of worship when we corporately come together as one body to remember and celebrate what Christ did for us.

PRACTICES OF COMMUNION IN THE BIBLE

1. The Old Testament Acts of Communion

A. The Blessing (Genesis 14:18-20)
It is the provision of God's blessing for our nourishment after defeating our enemies.

B. The Passover (Exodus 12:1-11; Mark 14:12; Leviticus 23:1-15)
It is the provision of God to protect you from the death angel or His wrath or judgment. It is a divine provision.

C. The Meal Offering (Leviticus 2:1-16; Exodus 29:41; 30:9)
It was taken alongside the drink offering by the Israelites in the wilderness. When this happens, the fire of the Lord will fall.

D. The Table of Shewbread (Numbers 28:7; Exodus 25:23-30)
It is a prophetic act of the communion table in the local church in the New Testament. The word 'shewbread' means 'to face.' Literally, the shewbread is called a 'face' bread. It has the idea of someone catching your attention and you turn to face him/her. The shewbread is also called the bread of His Presence. It is to remind you of your face-to-face relationship with God. God wants an intimate relationship with us.

2. The New Testament Acts of Communion

A. Practiced by Jesus and His disciples (Matthew 26:26-29)

B. Practiced by the first New Testament Church (Acts 2:42)

C. Practiced by many other New Testament churches (1 Corinthians 11:21-34)

DISCUSSION

1. Why do we observe Communion? How often should we do so?
Jesus started the tradition of communion. He instructed His followers to use bread and wine to remember the sacrifice He was going to make when He died for our sins on the cross (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Communion is a beautiful picture of what happened at the cross, what it means, and how it impacts our lives as believers.

The Bible nowhere instructs us how often we should take communion. It would seem that, since we take the Lord's Supper to remember Christ's death, we should take it fairly often. Some churches have a monthly Lord's Supper service; others do it bi-monthly; others weekly. Since the Bible does not give us specific instructions as to frequency, there is some latitude in how often a church should observe the Lord's Supper. It should be often enough to renew focus on Christ, without being so often that it becomes routine. In any case, it's not the frequency that matters but the heart attitude of those who participate. We should partake with reverence, love, and a deep sense of gratitude for the Lord Jesus, who was willing to die on the cross to take upon Himself our sins.

2. What do you feel whenever you come to the Lord's Table?

THE SIGNIFICANCE

The Lord's Table is a covenantal meal—the feast of the New Covenant. When you come to the Lord's Table, the elements you hold in your hands are the seal of the covenant that God made with man.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall have everlasting life. - John 3:16

Jesus came to fulfil the promise of the covenant, and Communion is the seal of that promise.

And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner, He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." - 1 Corinthians 11:24-25

"Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you..."
The bread broken symbolised Christ's broken body. When Jesus said this, He pointed out to us that His body was not so much His but it belonged to us.

Just as a lamb without spot and blemish was offered to make atonement for the sins of Israel, Jesus was the broken lamb that was sacrificed for the atonement of our sins. The bread, like Israel receiving manna in the wilderness, also symbolised the provision of supernatural nourishment that provides us with strength for everyday living. (Read also 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; Matthew 26:26)

"This cup is the new covenant in My blood..."
The wine symbolised His outpoured blood. The blood of Christ is the most holy and it's the only agent by which sin could be cleansed. It is His blood that makes atonement for the soul. (Read also Matthew 26:27)

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. (1 Corinthians 10:16-17)

"We who are many are...one body, for we all partake of the one bread..."
Union with Christ involves at the same time union with the members of His body. The observance of the Table must renew the feeling of unity not only with Christ but also with the church body.

> **The link between the cross and the crown is the table of the Lord. Do not forget, when you sit down at the communion, that the bread and the cup point back to Christ's accomplished work, and forward to your accomplished salvation.**
> **- AT Pierson**

ASSIGNMENT: THE LORD'S TABLE AND NEW COVENANT

1. Read Hebrews 10:19-23 and John 6:53-58. What do Jesus' body and blood do for us, according to these passages?
In John, Jesus emphasises that His body and blood ensure an eternal life, both by making sure that the one who consumes is joined to Jesus' presence (v56), and by guaranteeing resurrection at the final day (v54).

In Hebrews, Jesus' body and blood give us the confidence to enter into God's presence with the certain knowledge that we have been cleansed from guilt.

2. Read Exodus 12:1-13. In the original Passover, there was a ceremonial meal, a lamb without defect was slain, and the blood was put on the doorposts of the house. As a result, God "passed over" that family without executing judgment (thus the reason for calling it Passover). What similarities can you identify between the first Passover event and salvation through Christ?
A sacrifice was made; the sacrifice was "without defect" (v5); the blood of the sacrifice served to mark and protect God's people against His judgment (v12-13)

A BELIEVER'S PREPARATION FOR THE LORD'S TABLE

The Lord's Table is a time of intimate communion with God and with one another as a church body. How are we to celebrate what Christ has done for us with appropriate reverence and appreciation? Surely Jesus intended for this sacrament to be a blessing. Behind the elements, it is the covenantal power of Christ. When you have faith in that, communion becomes one of the most powerful ordinances of the church.

So anyone who eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup. For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honouring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself. That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died. But if we would examine ourselves, we would not be judged by God in this way. Yet when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we will not be condemned along with the world. - 1 Corinthians 11:27-32

This scripture mentions a few things about the heart condition of a believer when observing the Lord's Table.

1. Self-examination
(1 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Psalms 26:2; 139:1-2)
Communion is a time of self-reflection, keeping in view that God's gift of grace cost Jesus His life and we can have eternal life and a relationship with God because of Christ's death on the cross. Some things to think about when you come to the Lord's Table:
- Have you extended forgiveness to others just as our Father has forgiven us?
- Have you acknowledged Christ as your Lord and Saviour in all areas of your life?
- Are you still living in guilt? Christ came to take away your sins and extend forgiveness so that you do not need to live under condemnation.

2. Repentant heart (2 Corinthians 7:1-2; Psalms 51:1-15)
We come to the Table not on grounds of our works but we come putting our trust and faith in Christ who takes away our sins. It takes humility and honesty before God and a deep conviction to confess and turn away from your sin.

3. Faith and expectancy (Hebrews 11:6; Romans 14:23)
Faith is essential to appropriate the promises of God. When we partake of the bread, have faith that Jesus was broken on our behalf to make health possible for us. And every time you come to the Lord's Table, expect God to speak to you and allow the Holy Spirit to use you to minister to others. Ask the Holy Spirit,
- What are you saying to me right now?
- What is your will for me this season?
- What do you want me to share with others?

REVIEW

1. What do the broken bread and cup symbolise?

2. Who can partake of the Lord's Table?

3. What do you think Jesus wants your attitude to be the next time you come to the Lord's Table?

So What Does Jesus Want us to Remember?

When we come to the Lord's Table, is our Saviour seeking to insist we remember how much He suffered on the cross of Calvary as nails pierced His flesh, thorns blew His brow and the spear ripped His side? Does He want us to remember that it was our fault that He had to suffer and die in this cruel way? Does He want us to carry ongoing guilt that will mark us out as His disciples? As worthy and amazingly wondrous the grace that experiences those things, the answer to these questions is no.

Rather, He directs us to come to His table – where we are freed to fellowship with Him because He did suffer and He has died – and now says, "Rejoice with me!"

He wants us to remember that His blood was shed once and for all to cover all our sin so that we need never live under condemnation.

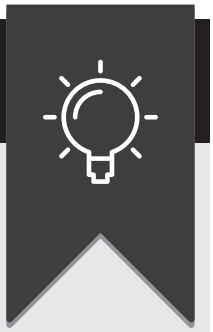
He wants us to remember that when we partake of this bread, like Israel receiving manna in the wilderness, there is supernatural nourishment that provides us with strength for life every day.

He wants us to remember that He was broken on our behalf to make health possible for us so that we do not have to endure interminable suffering. Jesus wants us to remember, when we are assaulted by Satan, that He has defeated the adversary and made a spectacle of him – he is a defeated foe.

This is how we discern the Lord's body, which was broken for us – His suffering and death that have established a new covenant through His blood. This is what Jesus wants us to remember – His victory won and His battle complete.

Extracted from Manifest Presence: Expecting a Visitation of God's Grace Through Worship, by Jack W. Hayford

PERSONAL APPLICATION



1. Whenever you come to the Lord's Table, examine your heart before the Lord. Be open and honest with Him. It is a face-to-face time with God.

2. Expect God to speak to you at the Table. Be obedient to do what the Holy Spirit says.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Can a non-baptised person take Holy Communion?
Suggested passage(s):
1 Corinthians 11:17-34
Paul's mention of the Holy Communion to the Corinthians does not mention the rite of baptism per se. Instead, acting divisively within the church (11:18-22) and failing to "discern the body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:29) are mentioned as possible "unworthy manners" (11:27) of partaking in the ceremony. For Paul, then, the essential criteria for participation are thus entering into the community of believers and taking the elements of the Holy Communion seriously. Moreover in the early church, once a person came to receive Christ as his or her Lord and Saviour, he or she was immediately baptised in water.

In FGA, anyone who has placed his or her faith in Jesus Christ and acknowledged Him as their Saviour and Lord will be invited to partake in the Holy Communion.

LESSON 7:
TITHING AND OFFERING

Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the LORD Almighty, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Let me prove it to you! Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease. Your grapes will not shrivel before they are ripe," says the LORD Almighty. - Malachi 3:10-12

Tithing is an essential part of a Christian's walk. Giving reflects the heart of God. Throughout history, God has been known as the Great Giver. He gave the greatest gift of all—His Son. Giving of our finances is a spiritual matter. It involves our heart condition and our spiritual capacity for faith in God. It is our act of worship.

ASSIGNMENT

Look up the following scriptures and write down what is important about giving.

Matthew 6:19-21
A heart of giving indicates that what we value is not of this earth, but instead in heaven.

Luke 6:38
Our treatment to others, whether through giving or forgiving, will be repaid us in kind. It points out that a believer's behaviour toward others will determine God's behaviour toward him or her.

Acts 2:44-46, Acts 20:35
Giving to those in need within the church body demonstrates unity and solidarity.

HOW ABOUT OFFERINGS?

Tithing is the minimum standard for our biblical giving to the Lord through the local church. An offering is an undesignated, unlimited amount given as a free-will love gift unto the Lord. We are encouraged in scripture to grow in the grace of giving. Freewill offerings and giving to the poor should also be part of our giving. However, these offerings (missions giving, building fund offerings, saints relief etc.) should be given in addition to tithing, as the Lord directs.

So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. - 2 Corinthians 9:7

BRING THE TITHE INTO THE STOREHOUSE

The Old Testament storehouse was the place God designated to keep harvest that was in abundance and distribute it to the people. It was also His tabernacle where His name was established. Today, a storehouse is your local church, the place where you receive your spiritual food, nurturing, fellowship and worship, the place you call home.

Bring this tithe to the designated place of worship—the place the Lord your God chooses for his name to be honoured—and eat it there in his presence. This applies to your tithes of grain, new wine, olive oil, and the firstborn males of your flocks and herds. Doing this will teach you always to fear the Lord your God.
- Deuteronomy 14:23

The Lord will guarantee a blessing on everything you do and will fill your storehouses with grain. The Lord your God will bless you in the land he is giving you. - Deuteronomy 28:8

OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS MONEY

We need to see that our personal attitude towards money is very important. This truth can be stated as the following principle, "Your attitude towards money actually reveals your attitude toward God Himself."

Matthew 6:24 says, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be held to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon."

Jesus speaks about Mammon not as an impersonal thing—"money/finance"—but as a personality. It is a reference to an evil, spiritual power that grips men and enslaves them through the medium of money.

Paraphrasing, Jesus is saying, "Either you serve Me or you serve a satanic being (called Mammon) who controls this world's financial system, and whoever you serve will shape and mould you."

God looks at the heart, not the outward action. So when we tithe as a religious routine, just because we are supposed to and not as a genuine expression of our faith and our love for God, we miss out on the blessings of it. Even as we give 10% of our money, let us also give 100% of our heart!

DISCUSSION

Can you suggest some signs that indicate that money or material things are ruling a person's life instead of Christ?

Giving To Get? The Right Attitude

A popular teaching in recent years has been that giving should be mechanically linked to getting. If you need something, give it something. This is an example of taking a basic truth and carrying it to the extreme. Like any other biblical truth, there is a ditch of error on both sides of the road.

There are some people who do not seem to realise that God wants to bless them. They have no understanding at all of the practical application of the law of sowing and reaping in their personal lives. As a result, giving to them is strictly a matter of duty. They may give but they have no faith or expectation whatsoever about receiving from God. This is unfortunate because they undoubtedly miss out on some of the blessings that God has for them.

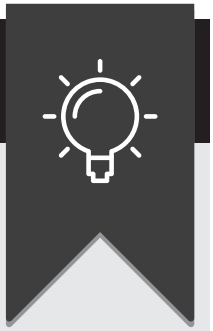
On the other side of the road are the greedy folks who are attempting to use their giving to manipulate God. They try to make the offering plate some kind of heavenly vending machine—put in your offering, pull the handle and get your blessings back! This is certainly the wrong motive for giving.

There are occasions when God will speak to an individual about giving his car or money to some person or ministry. If that person does it out of obedience and love, as unto the Lord, God will bless him in return.

Our motives are crucially important. We need to be willing to give in obedience to God even if we never receive one thing in return. We must keep our hearts right and guard against covetousness. At the same time, we need to realise that God does want us to have faith, expecting Him to meet our needs.

Extracted from The Midas Touch: A Balanced Approach to Biblical Prosperity, by Kenneth E Hagin

PERSONAL APPLICATION



God has called us to be good stewards of our resources and a major part of that is the way we handle our finances. If this is an area you are struggling with, talk to a mature Christian about it and maybe he or she can offer some wise counsel in this area and hold you accountable for the way you manage your finances.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Can I tithe outside the church that I am attending?
Suggested passage(s):
2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15
In Paul's letters, the issue of tithing or offering does not seem to be an individual matter but is taken for granted as one that involves the spatial Christian community that one is in. Hence, Paul's directions here are to the entire Corinthian church, rather than individuals within it. Otherwise, the principles that this passage points to are that the gifts flow out of a spirit of generosity and sincere love (8:2-12; 9:2, 13) and (2) are for the needs of God's people (8:4; 9:12).

The other question to ask is, what is holding him or her back from tithing to the local church that he or she is attending? Find out the reason(s) why.

Note that suggested answers are necessarily partial and incomplete (Isaiah 55:8-9). They merely provide a framework within which specific answers may be given.

LESSON 8:
BIBLICAL WORSHIP

Praise the Lord. How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise Him.
- Psalms 147:1

The primary purpose of a pedestal is to elevate an object, not just its physical height but also its status. If there is a pedestal in your heart, there will be something in it. Not everything in your heart has equal status. There will be something you think about all the time. For example, career, romantic relationship, addiction, longing for acceptance, etc.

Do u know why this is the way our heart works? God has hardwired us this way. We are created to be worshipers. As believers, we gather to worship God. Worshipping God does not mean singing a couple of praise and worship songs on a Sunday morning. Worship is way more than that. God seeks to inhabit, visit and commune with us during our worship time.

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." - Romans 12:1

Our church is committed to biblical worship. It is a priority and we seek to follow the biblical pattern. We do not take for granted that everyone understands our vision, philosophy and principles of worship, thus we must have a clear teaching on why we worship and how we worship.

WHAT IS PRAISE AND WORSHIP? - BIBLICAL WORDS USED FOR PRAISE AND WORSHIP

1. Hebrew Words on Praise

• ***'Halal'*** (verb) – To be sincerely and deeply thankful, satisfied in boasting in God, to celebrate, to be clamorously foolish, to brag about God, to confess, acknowledge, express one's public proclamation or declaration of God's character, of who God is and what He does. It is a declaration of trust. (Psalms 119:164, 1 Chronicles 16:4, 23:30)

They (the Levites) were also to stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD. They were to do the same in the evening. - 1 Chronicles 23:30

• ***'Shabach'*** (verb) – To triumph in praise, to be free to care, to shout, to address in a loud tone, to commend, to give forth a war cry, to proclaim the victory over an enemy, to raise a noise with shouting or with instruments. (Psalms 63:3, 147:12, 47:1, 35:27, 2 Chronicles 13:14-16, Joshua 6:16)

My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you." - Psalms 63:3

• ***'Tehillah'*** (noun) – A celebration, lauding and exaltation of God who is praiseworthy, to sing praises (Psalms 100:4, 31:15, 22:3, 2 Chronicles 20:22, Nehemiah 9:5, 12:46, Psalms 33:3)

Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and bless His name."
- Psalms 100:4

• ***'Epainos'*** (noun) – Praise in the sense of "commendation" this isgiven and received, as well as "adoration" offered to God. (Ephesians 1:6, 12,14, 1 Corinthians 4:5, Philippians 1:11)

To the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves. - Ephesians 1:6

2. Hebrew Words on Worship

• ***'Shachah'*** (verb) - To bow down before someone as an act of submission or reverence; to bow down when paying homage to God. The primary meaning is to make oneself low. 'Shachah' is used in contrast to exaltation – exalt the Lord (lift Him high) and worship (bow yourselves down low before Him) at the place of His feet. (Psalms 99:5-6, Exodus 33:10, Psalms 22:27)

Exalt the LORD our God and worship at His footstool; He is holy. - Psalms 99:5

• ***'Yadah'*** (verb) – To worship with extended hands, to throw out or up the hands, to express thanks to God, to sing a song of love. (Psalms 134:2, Nehemiah 8:6-7, Psalms 63:4, Exodus 17:8-12)

Lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the Lord!" - Psalms 134:2

3. Greek Word on Worship

• ***'Proskuneo'*** - To prostrate oneself, bow down, render homage to God and the ascended Christ; one-dimensional worship toward God alone, not to angels, saints, shrines, relics or religious personages, have a sense of awe. (1 Corinthians 14:25, Revelation 4:10-11, 5:14)

The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they were created and have their being."
- Revelation 4:10-11

A. Worship is the highest form of praise

• In our corporate worship gatherings, we generally commence with praise and then move on to worship.

Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into His presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise! For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are His also. The sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the dry land. Oh come, let us worship and bow down;let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! - Psalms 95:1-6

B. Worship is an attitude of the heart (Psalms 24:3-4, Mark 12:30)

• Focus the attention on Christ and not on ourselves
• A genuine and pure heart brings us to His Presence

C. Worship is an overflow of thoughts and emotions that flow forth spontaneously, not pumped up (John 4:23-24)

D. Worship is a deep expression of reverence, awe, wonder and adoration for God Almighty (Hebrews 12:28; Revelation 14:7)

E. Worship is a surrender of self (Romans 12:1)

• Example in the Old Testament: Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22:5)
• Abraham was willing to offer up Isaac, in whom was all of his future, his plans, ambitions and wishes.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. - Romans 12:1

True worship acknowledges His Kingship in our lives and His right as our Lord. Worship recognises God's goodness, justice, graciousness, holiness, power, victory, majesty and dominion.

DISCUSSION

How can we "present" our bodies to God as an act of worship (Romans 12:1)? What does this look like on a daily basis? In what area(s) of your life is God asking you to yield to Him?

Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
- Romans 12:1

The sacrifice of our bodies to God is not a sacrifice for sin. That is done already in the sacrifice of Christ. Which is why bodies like ours are acceptable. Peter makes this really clear in 1 Peter 2:5 where he says something similar to Romans 12:1: "Offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God" — then he adds these words: through Jesus Christ. It's because of Jesus that our sacrifices to God are acceptable.

So put out of your mind any thought that your body will ever deserve acceptance with God. It won't. If you are acceptable, it is "through Jesus Christ." Through his perfection, not your perfection.

The offering of our bodies is not the offering of our bodily looks but our bodily behaviour. In the Bible the body is not significant because of the way it looks, but because of the way it acts. The body is given to us to make visible the beauty of Christ. God doesn't demand our bodies because he wants models for Mademoiselle or Planet Muscle. He demands our bodies because he wants models of mercy. God wants visible, lived-out, bodily evidence that our lives are built on his mercy.

"Present a living holy body to God" means give your members — your eyes, your tongue, your hands and feet — give your body to do righteousness, not sin. That's what would make a body holy.

Closing with two statements from the apostle Paul, "It is my eager expectation and hope that… Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death" (Philippians 1:20). Second, his exhortation to us from 1 Corinthians 6:19–20: "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." In other words, "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." Show the worth of Christ by the way you use your body. Let every act of your body in living be an act of worship. That is, let every act of your living body be a demonstration that God is your treasure. Let every act of your living body show that Christ is more precious to you than anything else.

Extracted from desiringgod.org/messages/present-your-bodies-as-a-living-sacrifice-to-god

WHY DO WE PRAISE AND WORSHIP GOD?

1. The Bible commands us to worship
Psalms 117:1, Romans 15:11, Psalms 150:6

2. God inhabits the praises of His people
Psalms 22:3, Job 36:27, Ecclesiastes 11:3, Hosea 6:3

3. Praise and worship releases the supernatural power of God
2 Chronicles 20:21-22, 13:14-15, Acts 16:25-26, Jonah 2:9

4. Praise and worship dispels evil and tormenting spirits
1 Samuel 16:14-23, Psalms 106:47

5. Praise and worship releases the manifest presence of the Lord
Psalms 22:3, Exodus 29:41-46, 2 Chronicles 5:13-14

6. Praise miraculously releases the spiritual rain of the Holy Spirit
Zechariah 10:1, Psalms 65:9, Deuteronomy 11:10-11, Job 36:27-29

7. Praise and worship releases the river of the Holy Spirit
Ezekiel 47:1-8, Joel 3:18, Psalms 105:41, John 7:37-39, Psalms 46:4

8. Praise and worship releases the prophetic word and prophetic songs
2 Kings 3:11-27, 2 Chronicles 29:27, Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 5:19

9. Praise and worship release victory upon defeated souls
Isaiah 61:3; 42:3, Psalms 25:1, 86:4

HOW DO WE GIVE PRAISE AND WORSHIP TO GOD?

There are two expressions of worship mentioned in the Bible.

1. Vocal expression
- Offering praises (Psalms 34:1, 66:8)
- Shouting (Psalms 47:1, 45:11)
- Singing (Psalms 7:17, 9:2)

2. Physical expression
- Standing (Psalms 33:8, 134:1)
- Raising of hands (Psalms 134:2, 143:6)
- Clapping (Psalms 47:1)
- Bowing or kneeling (Psalms 95:6, Philippians 2:10)
- Dancing (Psalms 149:3, 150:4, 2 Samuel 6:14)
- Playing musical instruments (Psalms 150:3-5, 1 Samuel 16:23)
- Keeping silence (Psalms 46:10)
- Weeping (Nehemiah 8:9)
- Rejoicing (Psalms 119:111)

DISCUSSION

Discuss the different ways we worship and share some examples of the way you have worshipped God.

ASSIGNMENT

1. In your own words, what is the difference between attending worship and living in worship?
Worship is more than attending a worship service or a collection of songs. God's people gather for worship yet worship is more than just a meeting. God's people are called to be worshippers. Worship is a lifestyle—that we show the worth of Christ by our words, action and deeds—by the way we live.

2. What is the objective of our worship?
The purpose of our worship is to glorify, honour, praise, exalt, and please God. God is the object of our worship, He and He alone has the right to determine how we are to worship Him. Our very best in worship is due God and is prescribed by Him in the Bible. The worship God has prescribed is the only way we can be pleasing to Him in this life.

3. In John 4:23, we read, "A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks." How does God seek you, drawing you to worship Him?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

Are you committed to biblical worship? Look at your life and ask yourself: What can lead you to adore God more today than you did yesterday?

LESSON 9:
THE FAMILY OF GOD

Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. - Ephesians 5:25

Loving God and loving God's house are vitally connected and fundamental to fulfilling God's plan and purpose for your life. Jesus loves the church and gave himself for her. In your journey as a Christian, one of the greatest revelations is to discover that your destiny is hidden in the greater works and plan called the local church. Those who are planted in God's house will flourish, according to Psalms 92:12-14. When you are born-again, you are born into the family of God. Worshipping God together with other believers is an essential part of being a Christian.

Jesus loves the church, and the church is the expression of Christ in a local area or region. The church is the instrument that God uses to carry out His redemptive plan and mission. The church is the hope of the world.

Question: When you hear the word 'Church', what comes to mind?

THE LOCAL CHURCH DEFINED

The scriptures reveal two clear aspects of the church: the universal church (Matthew 16:16-18) and the local church (Matthew 18:16-19). The universal church involves everyone who is truly born again, from every village, city and nation of the world. When scripture refers to the universal church, it is used to denote the unity of the church worldwide regardless of locality (Ephesians 1:22, 5:22-32, Colossians 1:18).

The local church is established in concept by Christ's teaching in Matthew 18:15-20. It would be impossible to fulfil the principle of reconciliation in Matthew 18:15 unless it was in a given locality with a group of people who respond to authority.

> **The local church is a congregation or assembly of people in a given locality who join together to fulfil vision, pray, worship, grow in the Word, reach the lost and the unchurched, and have a visible impact on the region.**

A Christian writer, Chuck Colson, said it really well as he underlined the value of the local church, *"Although we are justified through our faith, Christianity is much more than just a private transaction with Jesus. When Peter made his confession, Jesus did not say, "Good, Peter. You are now saved and will have an abundant life. Be at peace." Instead, He announced the church and established a divinely ordained pattern. When we confess Christ, God's response is to bring us into His church, we become members of His church—and our commitment to the church is indistinguishable from our commitment to Him."*

BUILDING AN ACTS 2 CHURCH

The Church is not a building. The early church in Acts had no buildings; they gathered in homes and public places. The house of God is spiritual, not natural.

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,... (Acts 2:46)

The first time Jesus used the term 'Church' is in Matthew 16, "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." What did Jesus' disciples think of when He used the word "Church"? The Greek definition for the word 'Church' in the New Testament is '*ekklesia*'. It literally means "*the called out ones*". As Christians, we are called out of the world and separated unto God. The Church is God's 'called out' people.

> **"**
>
> **It is in the Church where all of God's intended purposes will come to realization. The Church is God's final instrument that He is using to bring about everything He intended. He is going to use the church and His operation through the Church to bring us to completion, maturity and perfection. - *The Local Church Today: A Biblical Study of Its Purpose and Ministry*, by Bill Scheidler**

This does not mean that the church building is bad – quite the opposite, in fact. The church building facilitates the opportunity to meet and to minister to the children and the poor. But realise that the building itself is not our focal point. We do not 'go' to church – we are the church!

In the book of Acts, there was only one church. Today, there are many denominations, e.g. Catholics, Anglicans, Pentecostals, Methodists, Independents, etc. So who is the church? Not any one of these denominations by themselves. Nor is everybody who is a member of a denomination part of the church. The church is the sum total of all born-again believers, in all denominations, of all times. Do not get caught up with labels; rather, look at what's within!

ASSIGNMENT: THE ACTS 2 CHURCH

Read Acts 2:41-47. What made the early church distinctive? Make a list of characteristics you observed about the church in the space below.

- They believed in Peter's message of repentance, and the Word of God preached and taught by the apostles (v41-42)
- They were baptised (v41)
- They shared all that they had, from material possessions (v45-46), to their fellowship (v42), to prayer (v42); they met everyday (v46)
- They witnessed the wonders and signs of the apostles (v43)
- They enjoyed the favour of the wider community (v47)
- They saw an increase in their numbers (v41, 47)

Go back and read the rest of Acts and share with your mentor/leader what you have discovered about the church when you meet the next time!

THE LOCAL CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Jesus gave us the foundation upon which the New Testament church was to be built. On the day of the Pentecost, that church was inaugurated. In the Book of Acts, Chapters 1-7 describe the church that Christ built after His ascension. These chapters describe the culture of the Kingdom of God in terms of priorities and practices. These priorities are critical to building a strong foundation for a biblically functioning community in a local church.

- A **powerful** church (Acts 1:8)
- A **witnessing** church (Acts 1:8)
- A **praying** church (Acts 1:14)
- A **unified** church (Acts 1:14, 2:1)
- A **spirit-filled** church (Acts 2:1-4, 38)
- A **word-based** church (Acts 2:42)
- A **reverent** church (Acts 2:43)
- A **gathering** church (Acts 2:26)
- A **supernatural** church (Acts 2:2, 3:1-10, 19:11-12)
- A **fellowshipping** church (Acts 2:46)
- A **rejoicing** church (Acts 2:46)
- A **worshipping** church (Acts 2:46, 15:15-17)
- A **growing and expanding** church (Acts 2:42-48)

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH?

1. Ministry to the Lord
The church is here to minister to the Lord in worship and prayer. All born-again Christians are the New Testament priests who bring worship to God through Jesus Christ.

You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ... - 1 Peter 2:5

2. Ministry to the Saints
The Bible tells us to look after those from the family of believers. The church family is the first port of call in times of need. Not all needs can be met, but there should always be an open door for understanding and support.

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. - Galatians 6:10

3. Ministry to the World
The key purpose of the church here on earth is its ministry to the world. While both ministry to the Lord and to the saints can be performed in heaven one day, ministry to the world is limited in time and space. The call to preach the Gospel to all nations is at the end of all four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) and the church is God's strategy for winning the world for him.

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. - Matthew 5:14

DISCUSSION

1. Is it necessary to attend church services regularly? Why?

2. What are the wrong attitudes or perceptions about the church today?

YOUR PART—BE A PLAYER

Very often church is like a spectator sport - people sit and watch a small number on the field playing the game. They think they know how to play the game, yet they never get involved.

What are the differences between players and spectators? Players get to be where the coach, Jesus, is; spectators do not have any relationship with the coach. Players grow and work at being fit; spectators remain fat (most of the time). Players learn about TEAM and they enjoy the victory; the spectators don't.

The Bible never speaks about the concept of a Spectator Christian. God has an expectation that His church be filled with people who are participants in the things that are important to Him - in the purposes that He established. Take Moses for example. When he received his call, he wanted to be a spectator, but in the burning bush experience God said that he was to GO. Zacchaeus wanted merely to get a glimpse of Jesus.Yet Jesus called him down and went to his house, then challenged him to change his life. There are no Spectator Christians. So what does it mean to be a participant?

1. Get PLANTED in the house; not potted.
The person who is planted receives all the nourishment, care etc from the Gardener. The potted one just brings his pot to church, says "Bless me!" and then leaves.

The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green... - Psalms 92:12-14

It is impossible for everyone in church to receive the same amount of care if we merely meet for services! We believe that life change happens best in small groups. Community is a foundational value here at FGA. We are committed to developing meaningful relationships, where authentic community can be built and established. Our life groups are designed to help us build the kind of community we read about in the New Testament. We want every member to be connected to a life group. Speak to your mentor if you are not connected to a life group and make a commitment to a life group that you can journey with.

2. Become a SERVANT in the house
Jesus came to serve and His house must be filled with people who understand that we are called to be servants—to serve God and serve people.

Where do we serve? Our gifts give us a clue. They lead us to discover our place in the body of Christ. Our gifts show us the path to our destiny and our specific purpose on the planet. Proper usage of our gifts and talents causes the church to grow. If we are to be passionate for the house, then we need to discover our gifts and start using them well.

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others. - 1 Peter 4:10

In FGA, we have developed a programme called 'Know Your Shape' to help you discover your gifts. Sign up for the next 'Know Your Shape' class or speak to your mentor/leader.

3. Grow to be a STEWARD of the house
The difference between a servant and a steward is that the steward causes the affairs of the master to increase and to grow. He takes responsibility and ownership over the area that the master has called him to, earnestly seeking to bring fruitfulness and increase in that area. He shares in his master's vision.

His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' - Matthew 25:21

Extracted from Passion for the House—Church is not a Spectator Sport, sermon series by Rhordan Wicks

THE BALANCE BETWEEN CORPORATE GATHERINGS AND LIFE GROUPS

They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved. - Acts 2:46-47

CORPORATE	LIFE GROUPS
Celebration	Assimilation
Preaching of the Word	Sharing of the Word
Direction	Discipleship
Equipping	Encouraging
Building & Edification	Expanding (Evangelism & Multiplication)
Acts 1:14, 2:1,41,45, Hebrews 10:24-25, 2 Chronicles 5:11-14	Acts 20:20, Romans 14:7, Hebrews 3:13, Matthew 28:19-20, 1 John 3:14-18

NOTES FOR MENTORS:

Learning objectives

• Understand the difference between the universal church and local church. When we talk about the local church, it is the specific family we are planted in and growing with. "All that believed were together..." (Acts 2:44), every born-again believer was connected to other believers in the early church.

• To show the priority of the local church in God's plan. The local church is God's vehicle to manifest His glory and to build up His people and it is the instrument that God uses to carry out HIs redemptive plan and purpose. God loves the world and uses a human instrument (the church) to reach the world with the message of the kingdom.

• Understand the plan and characteristics of the New Testament local church (Acts 2)

• We each have a role to play in the church. God wants us to be planted, to serve and to become stewards of His house.

Additional notes

1. The first time Jesus used the term "church" is in Matthew 16:13-19, "upon tis rock, I will build my church..."
2. In the English dictionary, there are at least 8 different definitions. Described church as a building, as a regular religious service, as a denomination, a local congregation of believers, the clerical profession, any religious body or society. Getting the right biblical definition of Church is important as it will determine where you put your time and effort. Church in Greek means "the called out ones". The church is called out from the world, separated unto God.

Suggested questions for the mentor to ask

1. Discuss your experience with the local church. What churches have you been involved in and what have you learned from this experience?

2. Why do some people have problems with the church? (e.g. fear or being hurt, do not want to commit/being tied down)

3. "Church-hopping" is a major problem today. What are some key factors a person would be wise to consider before changing churches?

4. Discuss the church as being a 'community'. What does that look like? How does that work out practically in our lives day-by-day and week-by-week?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. We need to be planted in the house of God by being part of a life group. If you are not plugged into a life group, speak to one of the leaders in church or to the person who is following up with you. Make a commitment in your heart today to move from being a SPECTATOR to becoming a SERVANT, to ultimately becoming a STEWARD of this house!

2. What practical steps can you take to grow and become a steward of this house? What sacrifices would you have to make?

LESSON 10:
SHARE YOUR FAITH

Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone, everywhere. - Mark 16:15

Why am I still here? This is one of the big questions of life. Someone once asked this question and God replied, "Your mission on earth has not been accomplished yet." What is our mission on earth? Jesus has made it clear in His last words to His disciples in Mark 16:15, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone, everywhere."

Let's break down the verse:
"Go" is an action word. The world today forces us into a place of inactivity; almost every gadget in the house can be activated by a remote control. However, Jesus commanded us to "Go into all the world". We need to go and not wait for people to come to us.

"Into all the world"
The word "into" means "to the inside or interior of, or to the activity or occupation of". It is a shame that there is a division between the world and the church today. We are called to go into the world and influence the friends in our schools, people in our workplace, neighbours in our community and even leaders of the nations. But know that there is a difference between being "in the world" and being "of the world".

"And" tells us that it doesn't end there. There is one thing we need to do when we go into the world. That is to **"Preach"** the Gospel to everyone. It is not our job to convince or convert anyone. We are called to tell others about God and be His witnesses. Only the Holy Spirit can convict the hearts of men and draw them towards God. Wherever you are, start creating spiritual conversations with the people around you.

"The Good News"
What is the good news? It is simply the fact that Jesus came to this world to pay the price of our sin. He opened the way to eternity in heaven and not hell. He built a bridge for us to come home.

People matter to God. If you have ever helped someone commit his or her life to Christ, you already know how awesome it is to be part of God's plan. Leading someone to Christ is the single greatest contribution you can make to his or her life. When God uses you to bring someone to Him, your life will never be the same.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. - Matthew 28:19-20

Extracted from Habits2—Sharing Your Faith, sermon series by Rhordan Wicks

**Evangelism isn't something we do,
it needs to be something we live.
- Marc Estes**

TELLING OTHERS

There is no one “correct” way to tell others about Jesus. Although the message never changes, we need to learn new ways to communicate the good news to others in a way they can understand. The apostle Peter said,

> *But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. - 1 Peter 3:15*

DISCUSSION

What keeps us from sharing our faith with others?
These are the common fears that stop us from sharing our faith:
- Fear of rejection
- Fear of not knowing enough
- Fear of offending a friend/relative
- Fear of being ridiculed / persecuted

Ask the person you are discipling which is his/her greatest fear?

Sometimes, our own misshapen attitude and approach to evangelism misses the point about sharing our faith with others. Instead, we inadvertently put people off by the mere mention of Christianity. When others watch us living the Christian life, they should not have any cause to shrink back or feel intimidated. Even though we are not all called to be preaching evangelists like Billy Graham or Reinhard Bonke, God has called each one of us to do our part and be a witness to share our heart and lives.

Sharing your testimony is one simple way of telling others about Jesus. People can often argue about theology. However, it is hard to argue against your personal experience. A well-prepared testimony can be used in nearly every witnessing situation.

A Personal Testimony

The best way to rattle the seeker’s cage is through the use of personal testimony. This is simply telling your story. Most people are willing to hear someone share what their faith means to them. In your story, describe how you became a follower of Christ. Talk about the difference Jesus has made in your life. Tell another person how great God is and what having faith in Jesus has done to change your life. One way to structure your personal testimonies is to use the 3 handles:

Before Christ (BC)
What were you like before you came to know Christ? How did it affect you?
What made you start thinking Christ could make a difference in your life?

Meeting Christ (MC)
What was it that finally motivated you to trust in Christ?
Specifically how did you receive Christ into your life?

After Christ (AC)
How did your life begin to change after you came to Christ?
What other benefits have you experienced since you became a Christian?

Keep your story brief and focused. Make it easy to understand and convey it with a humble and honest heart. Here is an example of a good story.

Example: “I was angry and depressed all my life, thinking that the world revolved around me and I wasn’t getting my due. I was cynical and isolated. After finding Christ, though, I felt an amazing love and acceptance for the first time. I began to be liked for who I was by the people around me, and my whole life changed. I came to know the joy of relating authentically with people—opening up with honesty and truthfulness about my life.”

Extracted from Just Walk Across the Room: Simple Steps Pointing People to Faith, by Bill Hybels

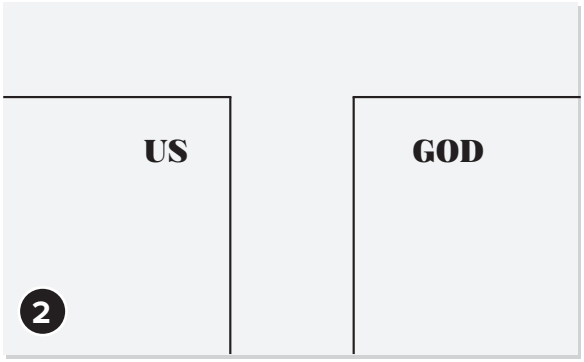
ASSIGNMENT

Using the 3 handles, write out your personal testimony on a piece of paper and read it out to your mentor/leader the next time you meet. Your mentor/leader will provide verbal feedback to help keep the testimony short and impactful!

The Bridge Illustration
This is a simple visual illustration to convey the Gospel. This requires a pen and paper.

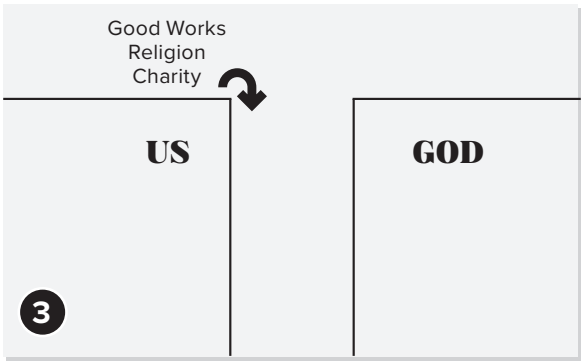
God wants to have a relationship with us.

“We matter to God. He made us, and He wants to have a relationship with us.”



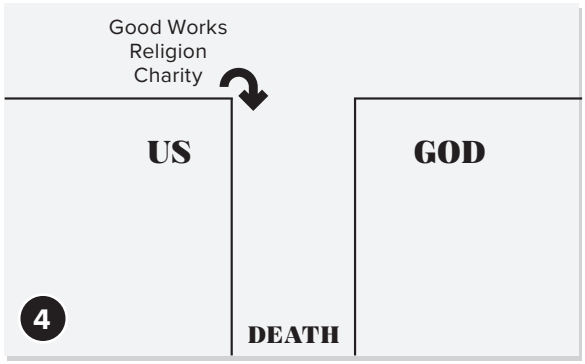
However, we have rebelled against Him and broken off that relationship.

“However, we have all disobeyed Him: our sins have separated us from Him and broken off the relationship.”



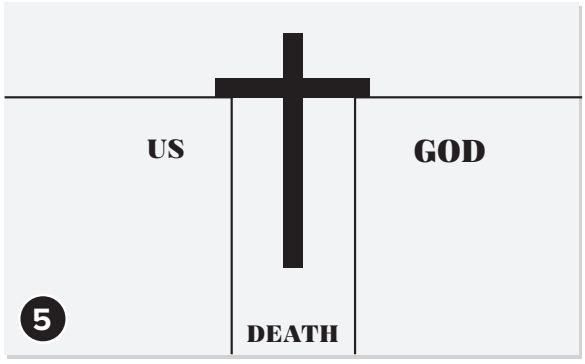
Most of us are aware of this and try to do things to draw closer to God, but it doesn’t work.

“To varying degrees, most of us are aware of our distance from God, so we start doing all kinds of things like being a helpful neighbour, paying our taxes, going to church, or giving money to charities—all in order to get back to Him. There is nothing wrong with these things, but the Bible makes it clear that none of them can earn us God’s forgiveness or re-establish our relationship with Him.”



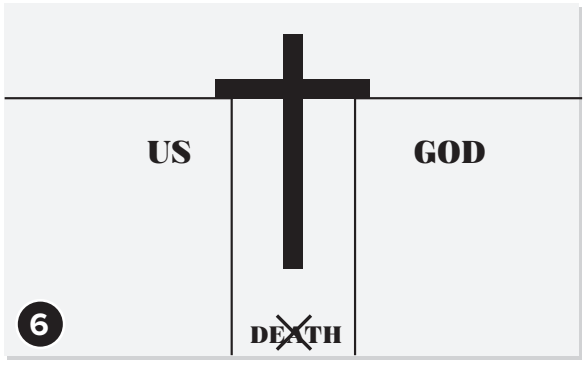
The sins we have committed have to be punished by death.

"Furthermore, the sins we have committed must be punished. The penalty we owe is death, which is a physical death as well as a spiritual separation from God for eternity in a place called hell."



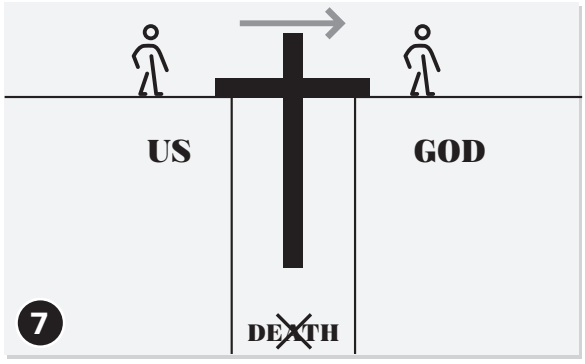
But God did for us what we could not do, and that is to build us a bridge back to Himself.

"It looks pretty bleak, but the good news is that we matter to God. In fact, He loves us so much that He did for us what we could never do for ourselves. He provided a bridge over which we can find His forgiveness and restore our relationship with Him.



He did that by paying our death penalty when He died on the cross.

"He built it by coming to earth as one of us and dying on the cross to pay the death penalty we owed."



One last thing, it is not enough just to know this. We must act on it by admitting that we have sinned and by telling God that we want His forgiveness and leadership.

"This is a picture of what the central message of the Bible is all about. This is what God wants each of us to understand. But it is not enough for us to just know about this, or even agree with it. We have to act on it. God wants us to move over to the other side. We do this by humbly admitting to God that we have rebelled against Him, and that we need his forgiveness and leadership. With our sins pardoned and our debt paid, our relationship with God is firmly established because we are immediately adopted into His family as His son or daughter."

At this point, you can ask the following concluding questions:

- Does this make sense to you?
- Where do you think you are, in relation to God?
- Is there any reason why you wouldn't want to draw close to God by accepting Him as your Saviour?

Extracted from Becoming a Contagious Christian, by Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg

FURTHER AFIELD...

FGA has a strong mandate for planting churches and have churches in Indonesia and Philippines that are part of our network. We believe that sharing our faith goes beyond our own circles and extends to discipling the nations as well. Sharing your faith with people in other nations will open your eyes to how God is working all over the world, changing hearts and transforming lives by the blood of Christ and by the word of our testimony.

If you want to experience what sharing your faith with other communities would be like, sign up for a short term mission trip! Short term missions range from day trips to 4-5 days to suit your schedule and budget. Sign up and start your adventure with God! Email info@fgasingapore.org for more information.

ASSIGNMENT

Practise presenting the bridge illustration to your mentor/leader the next time you meet. Try to keep it to 3 minutes. Leader will provide verbal feedback on what worked well and what areas could be improved.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

Most of us have friends or family who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus. Do not underestimate the power of prayer. God desires for all to be saved and to have a relationship with Him. When we pray for the salvation of our loved ones, we are standing in the gap for them. Moses modeled the power of a single gap stander in a crisis and reminded God of the covenant He made with His people:

Then Moses pleaded with the Lord his God, and said: 'Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?...Turn from your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. - Exodus 32:11-14

Because of Moses' petition, God relented from the harm He said He would do to His people. Also, when we pray fervently for our loved ones, the Holy Spirit moves on our behalf and enables us to be effective witnesses for our Lord Jesus Christ.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. - Acts 1:8

PERSONAL APPLICATION

Statistics show that 80% of people who come to Christ are influenced through friends, neighbours, relatives or co-workers. List down the people in your sphere of influence today. Out of the list, write down 3 names below and begin to pray for them everyday. Remember it is not your job to convert them; that's the job of the Holy Spirit. We are only His instruments.

Impact List:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

LESSON 11: SPIRITUAL WARFARE

“I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. - Luke 10:19

As Christians, we must realise that our adoption into God’s family automatically incurs the wrath of the devil or Satan. There are two kingdoms in the spiritual realm—we belong to one or the other.

Most people have a wrong view of the devil. The extremes are: (1) to stand in awe and fear of him or (2) to treat him too lightly and scornfully. The right balance is to know who he is and our position of authority in Christ, who gives us power over him and the demonic beings under his authority.

WHERE DID THE DEVIL COME FROM?

The Bible teaches that Satan is a fallen angel. He was created by God and held a privileged position in the courts of heaven. Perfect in beauty and full of wisdom (Ezekiel 28:12 and James 3:15-16), his name was Lucifer, which means ‘day star’ or ‘son of the morning’ or ‘light bearer’. As the leader of heaven’s music, he was created with music in his being (Ezekiel 28:13). However, he became proud and self-willed and wanted to be independent of God. He manifested self-will against God’s will. His rebellion resulted in expulsion from heaven. Note the 5 “I will’s” of Lucifer in Isaiah 14:13-15:

- I will ascend into heaven (self-will).
- I will exalt my throne above the stars of God (self-exaltation).
- I will sit also upon the amount of congregation in the sides of the north (self-enthronement).
- I will ascend above the heights of the clouds (self-ascension).
- I will be like the Most High (self-deification).

WHAT IS THE DEVIL’S ACTIVITY?

Satan’s activities in our lives and in the world are very much a reflection of his nature. There are seven main areas which his activities can be divided.

1. Temptation
He acts to entice humankind into sin. (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:13, Luke 14:1-13 and 1 Corinthians 7:5)

2. Sin
He is the author of sin, which is rebellion against God’s authority. (1 Job 3:8; Ephesians 2:2)

3. Deception
The greatest power of Satan. In the last days, Satan will deceive the nations of the earth. (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10, Revelations 13:14 and Acts 13:10)

4. Accusation
Satan continually directs accusations our way, bringing condemnation and making us feel that we are unworthy and failures as Christians. His intention is to cause discouragement and despair, making us believe that we have messed up and are unworthy of living the Christian life. His accusations must always be confronted with the truth of God’s Word concerning our position in Christ. (Revelation 12:10; Job 1:2 and Zechariah 3:1-2)

5. Affliction
The enemy seeks to afflict us physically and mentally. When we are physically and mentally unwell we become vulnerable to further attacks. (1 Corinthians 5:5; Luke 13:16 and 2 Corinthians 12:7)

6. Opposition
Satan and his demonic hosts are involved in a great spiritual war against God and His kingdom. (Acts 10:38, Revelations 2:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:18 and 1 Peter 5:8)

7. Death
Death is the greatest power of Satan manifested, but Jesus conquered death by His resurrection. (Hebrews 2:14, Jude 9, 1 John 3:12 and John 8:44). The Bible says the last enemy to be destroyed is death.

DISCUSSION

Pair up and join with a partner to see if you can come up with a list of weapons that the enemy uses to trip us or get us off course in our Christian life. What are some ways that we have experienced him coming against us to reduce our effectiveness in living for God?

One of the enemy greatest weapon is unbelief. The enemy is a deceiver and will use any tactic he can to get you to renounce Christ. He shudders every time you confess to God. Satan attempts to steal our faith, by tempting us, discouraging us, making us doubt God's goodness, distracting us and dividing us. He employs various strategies to attack our faith and our assurance in God. This is why we find the fight of faith and the unity of faith so hard (1 Timothy 6:12; Ephesians 4:13). The stakes are very high in this spiritual war and the battle line is drawn over our faith.

Read more at:
• '5 Ways to Beat Satan's Greatest Weapon', *tinyurl.com/y8433vyh*
• 'Satan's Favorite Weapon Against You', *tinyurl.com/y7shkgwb*

WHAT HABITS OR ATTITUDES GIVE THE DEVIL LEGAL ACCESS OR A FOOTHOLD IN OUR LIVES?

As you move through the following list, explore why some of these give the Devil a foothold.

1. Unforgiveness – 2 Corinthians 2:10-11; Matthew 18:35; Colossians 3:13

2. Unresolved anger – Ephesians 4:26-27, 31; James 1:20; Colossians 3:8; 1 Timothy 2:8

3. Involvement in occult practices – Galatians 5:19; Revelation 22:15

4. Rebellion – 1 Samuel 15:23; Romans 13:2; 1 Timothy 1:9

5. Wilful disobedience – Ephesians 2:2; Hebrews 4:11

6. Lack of self-control – 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Peter 1:6; Galatians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:6

7. Spiritual lethargy – 1 Peter 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; Romans 13:11

ASSIGNMENT: PULLING DOWN A STRONGHOLD

Look up each scripture and write down the corresponding and specific action that the Scripture says to take in order to pull down a stronghold, sin-habit or destructive attitude or action in our lives.

1 Peter 1:13
Consciously focus on the hopeful day of Jesus' return to earth.

Philippians 4:6-7
Thankfully pray to God.

2 Corinthians 10:5
Work to rationally combat every thought that contests what God has revealed in His Word and direct them to Christ.

Romans 12:2
Open ourselves, and our minds in particular, to the correction of God's Word.

From the list of habits/attitudes above, can you identify any that may have given the devil a foothold or a legal access to in your life? If you want victory in this area, do talk to your mentor/leader about it and pray a prayer of confession together. Think of specific steps that you need to take to pull this stronghold down. God wants to heal you and set you free! We also encourage you to go for Encounter Retreat. It is an annual retreat that the church organises to help believers to encounter God and experience freedom in Christ.

OUR AUTHORITY

Jesus Christ is the supreme authority in the universe and He has given us spiritual authority to preach the Gospel, heal the sick and cast out demons. As believers, we must understand the authority that we have and remind ourselves of the following:

- **Acknowledgement** – Our position in Christ and Satan's defeat
- **Belief** – Our belief must lead to action
- **Humility** – Be aware of false pride (thinking we are wonderful when God uses us)
- **Boldness** – Faith in full manifestation

I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. - Ephesians 1:19-22

I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. - Luke 10:19

OUR SPIRITUAL WEAPONS

The good news is that God has not left us in the mercy of our enemy. He has equipped us with spiritual weapons to defeat him. The devil can only hold us back from our destiny when we allow him a foothold in our thoughts, words and actions. Through faith in Christ and by putting on the spiritual armour, we can walk in victory over every attack of our enemy.

Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. - Ephesians 6:11-17

The weapons of our warfare:

1. The Belt of Truth
The devil is the father of lies (John 8:44): openness and honesty will disarm him (Psalms 32).

2. The Breastplate of Righteousness
God gave us His righteousness when we were born again. The righteousness of God is protection against the enemy gaining access to our lives.

3. The preparation of the Gospel of Peace
Our active proclamation of the Gospel is a powerful offensive against the kingdom of darkness.

4. The Shield of Faith
Faith will help us stand firm in the face of contradictory circumstances (2 Corinthians 1:24, 1 Thessalonians 5:8)

5. The Helmet of Salvation
The mind is the enemy's battleground. We are told to "demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5)

6. The Sword of the Spirit
You need to know the Word of God to be able to apply it in every situation. Jesus used the Word against the devil (Matthew 4, Mark 1 and Luke 4). There is power and authority in the Word to deal with Satan and his spirits (Matthew 12:29).

7. Praise and worship
There is spiritual authority in our praise, which God transforms into a mighty weapon to bring defeat and destruction to the Kingdom of Darkness. It is not just singing the songs. It is faith and obedience combined with the declaration of His promises and Word that will bring victory (Psalms 149:6-9). In fact, many situations in the Bible were transformed by praise. One good example is the fall of Jericho (read Joshua 6).

8. The name of Jesus
There is power in His name. As His representatives, we are instructed to use the name of Jesus in ministry (Acts 16:18b, John 14:13-14, Colossians 3:17).

9. Spiritual gifts
The nine spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12 are wisdom, knowledge, discernment of spirits, faith, working of miracles and healings, tongues, prophecy and interpretation of tongues. The Holy Spirit gives us these gifts so that we can be effective and powerful witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ.

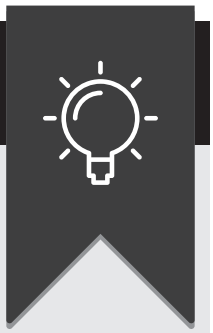
10. Prayer
Through prayer, we enlist the help of the Holy Spirit and strengthen our own spirit against the onslaught of the enemy (Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38; Luke 22:40). Jesus was constantly in prayer and only did what the Father told Him to do. Much warfare is intercessory prayer. We ask the Lord to show us what and how to pray or we pray in tongues and allow the Holy Spirit to intercede on our behalf (Romans 8:27-28; Philippians 1:19, Ephesians 6:18).

11. The Blood of Jesus
We ask the Lord daily to cover us with His blood in our body, soul and spirit, as well as our mind, will, emotions and heart. We also pray it over our homes and family (Revelations 1:5; 12:11).

It is important to realise that not every adverse circumstance indicates some fault or sin on our part. Job was a "perfect man", yet suffered enough catastrophe for a dozen lifetimes (Job 1-2). Acknowledge the fact that we do not have all the answers at the point of suffering and God may choose not to reveal them to us. But recognise that He is still sovereign and has allowed us to go through trials to mould our character and cause us to become more like Christ.

As a young believer, you are particularly vulnerable to the enemy's attacks. Start grounding yourself in the Word of God and pray regularly for God's protection. Place yourself in the care of more mature Christians or in a life group where you can be accountable to each other for your spiritual growth. If you would like further information about how you can join a life group, speak to your mentor/leader in church about it. We will be delighted to help you find one that suits you.

PERSONAL APPLICATION



Which of the spiritual weapons do you need to put on today to walk in victory? Your freedom must be maintained and you can walk in freedom for the rest of your life as long as you choose to stand on God's Word and exercise your spiritual authority.

To maintain your freedom in Christ, we strongly suggest the following:

- Be involved in a loving, caring church fellowship where you can be open and honest with others and where God's truth is taught with grace.

- Read and meditate on the Bible daily. Memorise key verses.

- Learn to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Assume responsibility for your thought-life. Don't let your mind become passive. Reject all lies, choose to focus on the truth and stand firm on your true identity as a child of God in Christ.

- Don't drift back to old patterns of thinking, feeling and acting. This can happen very easily if you become spiritually and mentally lazy. If you are struggling with walking in the truth, share your battles openly with a trusted friend who will pray for you and encourage you to stand firm.

- Don't expect other people to fight your battles for you. They can help you but they cannot think, pray, read the Bible or choose the truth for you.

- Commit yourself to daily prayer. Prayer demonstrates a life of trusting in and depending on God. You can pray the following prayer often. Let the words come from your heart as well as your lips and feel free to personalise it to suit your particular needs.

  "Dear Heavenly Father,
  I praise You and honour You as my Lord. You are in control of all things. I thank You that You are always with me and will never leave me nor forsake me. You are the only all-powerful and only wise God. You are kind and loving in all Your ways. I love You and thank You that I am united with Christ and spiritually alive in Him. I choose not to love the world or the things in the world.

Thank You for the life I now have in Christ. I ask You to fill me with the Holy Spirit so I may say “no” to sin and “yes” to You. I declare my total dependence upon You and I take my stand against Satan and all his lying ways. I choose to believe the truth of God’s Word despite what my feelings may say. I refuse to be discouraged because You are the God of all hope. Nothing is too difficult for You. I am confident that You will supply all my needs as I seek to live according to Your Word. I thank You that I can be content and live a responsible life through Christ who strengthens me.

I now take my stand against Satan and command him and all his evil spirits to depart from me. I choose to put on the full armour of God so I may be able to stand firm against all the devil’s schemes. I submit my body as a living and holy sacrifice to God and I choose to renew my mind by the living Word of God. By so doing, I will be able to prove that the will of God is good, acceptable and perfect for me. In the name of my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.”

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can Christians be possessed by evil spirits when we are supposed to have the Holy Spirit in us?
Suggested passage(s):
1 Peter 5:8-9, 1 Timothy 4:1
There are many warnings to Christians to be on their guard against the attacks of Satan. There are two parts to 1 Peter 5:8-9. First, we are to be self-controlled and vigilant. Otherwise we will not detect the presence or activities of demons. Second, we are to resist demonic pressures, taking an active stand against them.

If we are not self-controlled and vigilant, we will fail to recognise and resist our enemies and may be devoured by the enemy.

Certain passages in the New Testament warn us explicitly against exposing ourselves to demons. In 1 Timothy 4:1, Paul’s warning is urgent: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times, some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.” Obviously, they could not depart from the faith unless they had been in the faith. They could have opened themselves up to deceiving demons and consequently turned away from their faith in Christ.

Our safeguard is to stay vigilant at all times and obey God’s instructions. An obedient lifestyle is the condition for being protected by the blood of Jesus.

LESSON 12: BIBLICAL MARRIAGE AND SEXUALITY

For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church.
- Ephesians 5:31-32 NIV

WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF MARRIAGE?

God's purpose for all godly relationships is that they should reflect Him to a dying world. This is certainly true of the marriage relationship, where a man and a woman enter into a sacred covenant before God and man, vowing to love and cherish one another the rest of their lives. A healthy Christian marriage reflects the love Christ has for the Church. In Ephesians 5:25-27, Paul said, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."

If Jesus Christ used marital metaphors to describe His relationship with the Church, it would be useful to understand what He expects from us in our earthly marriages. This is relevant whether or not we are married, for as members of His Body, we have a responsibility as a community to uphold and support marriages. In building strong, godly marriages and families in our church, we are being sanctified as the Bride of Christ, preparing for our Bridegroom.

Question: How do you think God uses marriage to communicate His love for the Church? OR Why do you think God instituted marriage?

MARRIAGE DEFINED

Jesus summarised marriage in Matthew 19:4-6 when He said, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." From this we learn that marriage is:

1. Between a man and a woman
2. A unification of two people to become one flesh, by the power of God
3. The creation of a new family unit ("leave and cleave")
4. A lifelong commitment that no one should separate

Let's dive into each part of this definition of marriage:

1. Why is marriage between a man and a woman?
God demonstrated His multifaceted nature in creating two distinct genders in His image. Traits that are inherently female or distinctly male also reside in the Triune God. Because man and woman are both made in His image, they hold equal importance and value to God. As image-bearers, we all hold inherent dignity. Marriage allows a husband and wife to benefit from one another's distinctive traits and to support one another through their strengths and weaknesses.

Marriage thus celebrates equality in personhood but differences in roles and authority. We see in the Trinity that the three Persons of God are equal and yet have distinct roles: God the Father sent God the Son to earth to be our perfect sacrifice. God the Holy Spirit was poured out for empowerment in the church. Husbands and wives similarly are equal but hold different roles. 1 Corinthians 11:3 illustrates this parallel with the Trinity, where Paul says that “I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God."

2. Why is marriage a unification of two people?
Just as the Trinity works together and exists in harmony, man and woman are intended to share love and to honour one another. This unification is expressed in every aspect of marriage: emotional, spiritual, and physical. God gave sexual unification as a gift to married couples.

Hebrews 13:4 reads "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." Within a marriage, partners should be faithful to God and each other. When two people become one, there is singleness of purpose, and a couple must work together to follow God’s lead for them as a family.

3. Why is marriage the creation of a new family unit?
Part of God’s mandate to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28 was that they should “be fruitful and increase in number,” and marriage is the means by which families are formed, children brought into the world and the next generation raised up. Our mandate extends beyond marriage, as we are called to multiply spiritually as well, but an important purpose of marriage is to raise up the next generation through family life. The call for a man to “leave his mother and father and be joined with his wife,” as referenced by Jesus in Matthew 19 actually comes from Genesis 2, when God first instituted marriage.

The importance of establishing a distinct family unit reflects God’s desire that upon marriage, a husband and wife’s loyalties shift first to their spouses, and that it is not a place for their parents (or anyone else) to pull on their loyalty.

4. Why is marriage a lifelong commitment that no one should separate?
As marriage reflects the eternal unity between the Trinity, a lifelong commitment brings honour and glory to God. A lifelong commitment means that a couple will experience God’s transforming work in their lives and their marriage over the course of many years. In the intimacy of marital relationships, God sanctifies and purifies spouses. Unfortunately, marriages can be fractured and even broken by the interference of others. Monogamy is written into our DNA, and infidelity has no place in a healthy marriage. “For I hate divorce!” says the LORD, the God of Israel. “To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. “So guard your heart; do not be unfaithful to your wife.” (Malachi 2:6) Relationships, particularly marriages, are tough!

Marriages go through ups and downs, and yet we are called to work to maintain the unity of our relationship. The God who designed marriage to reflect His unity within the Trinity does not desire the fracturing of any marriage. It expresses disunity, breaks up families, and causes untold harm. The Bible does explicitly allow divorce in the case of sexual immorality (Matthew 5:32, 19:9). In these cases, divorce is not required but permitted. Marriages may be strained by any number of things, to include spousal or child abuse and addictions. The protection of those suffering from abuse or their spouse’s addictions is paramount. In these cases, separation with a view for reconciliation may be necessary. If you find yourself struggling in your marriage, we advise that you seek biblical marriage counselling.

WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF SEXUALITY?

God invented sex, both as a means for procreation and to provide a way for intimacy between husbands and wives. Sex is the most intimate act two humans can experience. When scripture uses the term “know” to describe sex (see Genesis 4:1), it conveys much more than a physical act. Sex creates a unity and a vulnerability that allows a husband and wife to know each other deeply. Inside the covenant of marriage, sex creates bonds of unity, to the point of being called “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:6).

Sin in the world has perverted the sexual experience God intended. By the time God gave the Law to the Israelites, there were already many ways humanity had strayed from God's plan. In Leviticus 18-19, God addressed the sins of sex with a close family member, adultery and homosexuality. Consider how many of the troubles of our day are connected to sex: divorce, sexually transmitted diseases, rape, abortions, pornography, sex trafficking, pedophilia and abandoned children. God gave us good boundaries to protect us and preserve the holy covenant of marriage. In honoring the marriage bed, we also bring glory and honor to God, as marriage is a picture of God's loving relationship with humanity.

In today's culture, it is increasingly socially acceptable for unmarried couples to live together. As God designed sex to be enjoyed within the commitment of a marriage between one man and one woman, it is a sin to engage in sexual activity prior to marriage. 1 Corinthians 7:2 says "But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband." Hebrews 13:4 says, "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." Sex before marriage dishonours the marriage covenant and the relationship that God intends to represent His unity within the Trinity.

ASSIGNMENT

Look up the following scriptures and write down what it tells you about God's desire for marriage:

2 Corinthians 6:14

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Look up the following verses and write down some of the reasons God condemns any sexual relations outside the covenant of marriage.

1 Corinthians 6:18

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

Matthew 5:28

Ephesians 5:5

1 Peter 2:11

DISCUSSION

1. What are some characteristics that you have seen in good marriages?

2. What are some traits of an unhealthy marriage?

3. How does your view on sex line up with the biblical view? Is there any area that needs to be brought into alignment?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. If you are married, can you identify areas of your marriage that need attention, based on the understanding of God's purpose for marriage? Ask God to help you strengthen your marriage, and seek counsel from a mature Christian.

2. If you are not married, how can you support the marriages in your community? What mindsets should you develop today as you prepare yourself for marriage?

3. Can you identify any ways in which you are not within God's boundaries for sex? Confess and ask God to help you walk in His ways.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & FURTHER READING

Lesson 1
- What's So Amazing About Grace?, by Philip Yancey
- The Grace Awakening: Believing in Grace Is One Thing. Living it Is, by Charles R. Swindoll

Lesson 2
- Growing Your Soul: Practical Steps to Increase Your Spirituality, by Neil B. Wiseman
- One Hour With God: Weekly Plan for Spiritual Growth, by John C. Maxwell

Lesson 3
- Praying the Bible, by Donald S. Whitney
- Effective Fervent Prayer, by Mary Alice Islieb

Lesson 4
- Water Baptism: A Scriptural Thesis, by Kevin J. Conner
- Foundations of Christian Doctrine, by Kevin J. Conner

Lesson 5
- The Holy Spirit Today, by Dick Iverson
- Foundations of Christian Doctrine, by Kevin J. Conner
- Understanding the New Birth and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, by Kevin J. Conner

Lesson 6
- Manifest Presence: Expecting a Visitation of God's Grace Through Worship, by Jack W. Hayford

Lesson 7
- Tithes and Offerings: Christian Stewardship in the Old & New Testaments, by Kevin J. Conner

Lesson 9
- The Local Church Today: A Biblical Study of Its Purpose and Ministry, by Bill Scheidler
- The Church in the New Testament, by Kevin J. Conner

Lesson 10
- Becoming a Contagious Christian, by Bill Hybels & Mark Mittelberg
- Just Walk Across the Room: Simple Steps Pointing People to Faith, by Bill Hybels

Lesson 11
- Victory Over the Darkness: Realize the Power of Your Identity in Christ, by Neil T. Anderson
- The Bondage Breaker, by Neil T. Anderson
- Kicking it: Eating Disorders, Pornography, Drugs, Alcohol, by David Partington
- The Steps to Freedom in Christ: A Biblical Guide to Help You Resolve Personal, by Neil T. Anderson
- Spiritual Conflicts and Become a Fruitful Disciple of Jesus, by Neil T. Anderson

WHAT'S NEXT?
YOUR DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY

Our Mission: To lead people to become fully devoted followers of Christ

We accomplish our mission through the GABS process to reach the unchurched and unconnected and help them take steps toward a growing relationship with Jesus.

GO TO THE UNCHURCHED & UNCONNECTED

Jesus has commissioned us to GO into the world and make disciples of all nations. As we go, we are called to be witnesses for Christ, to SHINE and SERVE the community God has placed around us.

ASSEMBLE THE CREW

We CONNECT and CALL out those we go to and assemble a crew together for the purpose of knowing, growing and living in Christ. By inviting them to our church services, special events and life groups, we pray that they will encounter God and get assimilated into the church family.

BUILD THE COMMITTED

In life groups, we DISCIPLE and DEVELOP the committed to become fully devoted followers of Christ. We believe that life change happens best in small groups and through experiencing authentic relationships. In life groups, people discuss the issues and challenges of life and study God's Word together. They pray and care for one another, unmask, tell the truth in love, extend grace and hold one another accountable in their relationship with God.

We help people to discover, develop and deploy their spiritual gifts to serve God, one another and the world. By serving, they discover their purpose in Christ and experience fulfilment and fruitfulness.

SEND THE CORE

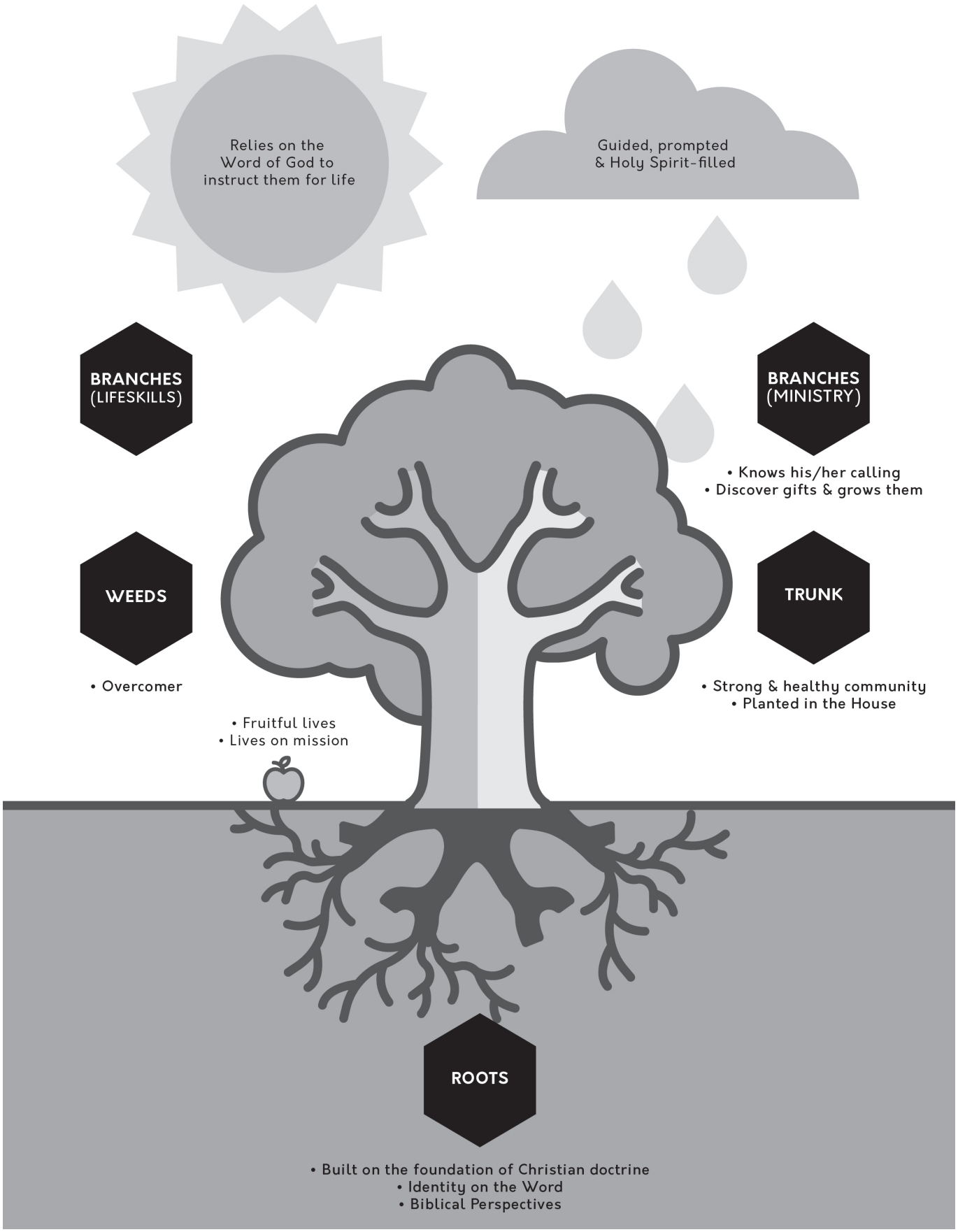
We Mentor and Mobilise the Core to Go, Assemble, Build and Send.

MINISTRIES

Every believer is equipped with unique spiritual gifts and abilities and everyone has a role to play in the body of Christ. In this environment, we help every partner in our church family to discover their spiritual gifts and abilities through Know Your Shape classes. One of the best ways to get plugged into the life of the church is to serve. Whether it's ministries to reach out to people outside of Church or serve within church, we have a range of ministry teams that our partners can be part of. Visit our website *fgasingapore.org* for the list of ministry teams we have at FGA.

TREE DIAGRAM

The Tree Diagram is a visual representation of what a fully devoted follower of Christ will look like for us in FGA. There are five areas of growth that we want to develop in order to flourish and bear fruit. We achieve this growth through our equipping classes and through accountable relationships in discipleship groups or life groups.



ROOTS

The health of the tree is determined by the strength of its roots. Strong trees need strong roots. The roots need to be built on the foundation of the Christian doctrine. The Word of God provides us with a biblical worldview and instructions for life. As we dig deep into the Word of God, our identity in Christ and foundation will be strengthened.

TRUNK

The trunk supports the tree. For a tree to grow tall, it needs strong support. The trunk represents the community support in the life of a believer. When a believer is planted in God's house and rooted in strong and healthy community, he/she receives the nurture to grow to his/her fullest potential. This is achieved through our life group network in FGA.

BRANCHES (LIFESKILLS)

We are called to be a witness and representation of Christ on earth. This means that we are to be skilful in our different roles as a student, single, wife/husband or parent. Money management, building strong marriages and parenting are lifeskills that we need to learn in order to be a testimony for God in the world.

BRANCHES (MINISTRY)

Every believer possesses natural talents and spiritual gifts for a purpose. As stewards, we are called to discover, develop and deploy our gifts to serve God, one another and the world. The Holy Spirit is the giver of gifts and we need to be guided and be filled by the Spirit. As we exercise our gifts, we grow in the process. We discover meaning and purpose in life and as a result, experience a deep sense of fulfilment and fruitfulness.

WEEDS

The weeds in our lives could be addictions, past hurts or offences, negative thoughts or emotional baggage. These weeds hinder the growth of the tree and even make it unhealthy. To remove the weeds in our lives, we need to yield to the Holy Spirit and be obedient to God's truth. When we gain freedom, we are able to share our victory and testimonies with the community around us. People will see God's transforming power in our lives.

FEEDBACK

We value your feedback on how we can improve on this material. Please write down your input here, collate and email it to classes@fgasingapore.org.

Chapter 1: Salvation

Chapter 2: The Bible

Chapter 3: Prayer

Chapter 4: Water Baptism

Chapter 5: Life in the Spirit

Chapter 6: Communion

Chapter 7: Tithing & Offering

Chapter 8: Biblical Worship

Chapter 9: Family of God

Chapter 10: Share Your Faith

Chapter 11: Spiritual Warfare

Chapter 12: Biblical Marriage & Sexuality