

# **BASIC FOUNDATIONS OF A CHRISTIAN**

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## **SPECIAL DEDICATION**

To all those who prefer to look inward in dealing with their problems.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

## **FOREWORD**

### **CHAPTER 1**

#### **WHAT IS DOCTRINE**

Doctrine is a body of teaching or belief system. It is the sum total of what message God has for man and what man ought to follow to go back and meet God. The entire bible is profitable for doctrine - 2Tim. 3:16-17.

Within the pages of the Bible, the Christian doctrine is severally called the doctrine of God or the doctrine of Christ, the Apostle's doctrine or simply put My doctrine - Deut. 32:2, Job 11:4, Heb. 6:1, Acts 2:42, Tit 2:10.

Those who taught contrary things to the command of God had their own doctrines:

1. Doctrine of the Nicolaitans - Rev. 2:15
2. Doctrine of Balaam - Rev. 2:14
3. Doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees - Matt. 16:12

The body of teaching Jesus did was ascribed as His doctrine - Matt 7:28, Mk. 1:22, 27; Matt. 22:33. The teaching Jesus did was direct from God and so he taught with authority.

## **IS THERE ONLY ONE DOCTRINE**

Any sincere child of God who studies the scriptures well will have a difficult time answering this very simple question. Within the limit and confines of the scriptures, the answer could be yes and no.

**Yes**, because as long as there is One God, One Faith, One Lord - Eph. 4:4, then certainly there is only also One Doctrine.

**No**, because, the Bible even identified more than one doctrine within its pages such as:

- Doctrine of the Nicolaitans - Rev. 2:15
- Doctrine of Balaam - Rev. 2:14
- Doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees - Matt. 16:12

Maybe the real question would have been, is there only one doctrine approved by God?

If that is the question, then the answer is a resounding yes with the following points:

- Christ is the foundation of the doctrine and set the doctrine in motion even while on earth in his bodily form, Matt. 7:28; 22:33, Mark 1:22,27; 4:2; 11:18.
- Jesus affirms that even His doctrine did not originate from Him but from the father – John 7:16,
- The apostles were under strong directives to teach only this doctrine - Matt. 28:20,
- Luke referred to it as the apostles doctrine - Acts 2:42,
- This doctrine landed the apostles in trouble - Acts 5:28,
- The men of Athens referred to it as “new doctrine” - Acts 17:19,
- This particular doctrine has a form and has been delivered to mankind - Rom. 6:17,
- This doctrine is to be strictly followed and guarded because it is possible that men shall twist it or worse still depart from it - Rom 16:17, 1Tim1:3 ; 4:16, 2Tim.4:2-3,
- Only this single doctrine was considered **GOOD, SOUND AND TRUE** - 1Tim.1:10; 4:6.

### **SUMMARY:**

1. Man is to live by the doctrine of Christ which came from God.
2. The apostles followed that doctrine and even prophesied that a time is coming when men shall depart from that doctrine and follow doctrines of demons - 1Tim.4:1-3.
3. Christians were admonished to mark those who teach contrary to the doctrine – Rom.16:17.
4. Any religious group that modifies this doctrine is negotiating hell fire with the devil - 2 John 9.

The concept of “it is our doctrine” “That is how we have chosen to do” is far from the scriptures.

## **HOW DOES GOD VIEW DEVIATING FROM THE DOCTRINE?**

It has been man's attitude to slightly modify God's law from creation. The first modification can be traceable to Lev. 10:1-2 where Nadab and Abihu offered unapproved fire. Fire not commanded by the Lord.

In 2 Sam. 6:1-23, we read of a man Uzzah who attempted to employ his emotions into the commands of the Lord by "helping God" but was struck dead. Till date, so many people have difficulties understanding why God struck Uzzah dead.

When Saul in 1 Sam.15:1-25 modified God's command of utterly destroying the Amalekites, but spared Agag the king and fine animals purportedly for sacrifice unto the Lord, he lost favour from God and his throne was taken from him.

So when a man deviates from the teachings of the Lord, His doctrine, then he is looking for spiritual trouble and a complete loss of God's favour.

- Brethren are to mark them that deviate from the doctrine - Rom. 16:17
- Those who deviate do not have God - 2John 9-10
- It is the basis of vain worship - Matt. 15:9 "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men". Mk 7:7 "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men".

God knew that men will deviate from the doctrine.

**2Tim. 4:3** "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;"

**1Tim. 4:1** "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;"

**Heb. 13:9** "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein".

## **SUMMARY**

Christ is the owner of the doctrine of the church. Man has no right to form his own doctrine. Replacing the doctrine of God with man's wisdom leads to vain worship. Those who do such have no God at all.

**Isa. 55:8** "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts".

Don't go beyond what is written for even if an angel were to teach anything different, a curse shall be upon him – Gal. 1:6-8, 1Cor. 4:6.

## **MATTERS OF OPINION**

Today we shall attempt to come with some critical issues which when tested within the framework of the scriptures we completely see that they are matters of opinion and as such should not be held as if God has directed it that way. It is not a salvation issue.

1. The stream where one is baptized. (Bible only states the need for much water) - John 3:23
2. The size and quality of the worship hall.
3. The time of worship (it becomes sin once the church have chosen a time and we come late).
4. The colour of the fruit of the vine (Some grape produce white juice, while others produce red juice)
5. The arrangement of the order of worship (any item can come first but things must be done orderly - 1Cor. 14:33)
6. The organization of wedding after a valid marriage.
7. The evangelism methods of a congregation.
8. The closing of the eyes while prayers are going on.
9. The use of song books or hymn books or choruses only.
10. The method of collecting collection for the saints, in trays or bags or envelops.
11. The sitting arrangement in an assembly.
12. The age difference between a man and woman in a marriage etc.

The disagreement between Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:35 is purely on an issue of opinion. The real issue of evangelism was not neglected. The quarrel was purely about who to carry for the work.

Christians may disagree on issues of opinion, but the spirit of love ought to guide us all. In matters of opinion, majority may win, if they like that style, but in matters of doctrine, if only one man is right, God is with him.

May God open our eyes to follow His pathway.

### **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DOCTRINE AND OPINION?**

**DOCTRINE** is a body of teaching or belief system. It is the sum total of what message God has for man and what man ought to follow to go back and meet God.

The entire Bible is profitable for doctrine - 2Tim.3:16-17.

Within the pages of the bible, the Christian doctrine is severally called the doctrine of God or the doctrine of Christ, the apostle's doctrine or simply put My doctrine. Deut 32:2, Job 11:4, Heb 6:1, Act 2:42, Tit. 2:10.

**OPINIONS** are disagreements that do not involve doctrine. This dissension between Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:39 were not over a *doctrinal* issue. The rupture involved a personal dispute based upon a judgment call. To their credit, neither Paul nor Barnabas allowed the conflict distract them from their respective efforts of spreading the gospel.

	<b>DOCTRINE</b>	<b>OPINION</b>
	Doctrine comes from biblical truth	Opinion comes from human reasoning
	Doctrine is bothered on salvation	Opinion is bothered on methods
	Doctrine is vital for a heaven bound individual	Issues of opinion are usually optional and not taken seriously
	Doctrine comes from God and as such affects our faith	Derived from human perception of biblical issues
	Doctrine leads the church aright and reduces much friction in the church	Usually tears the church apart as each individual wants his opinion to stands as if it is doctrine.
	Following doctrinal position saves	Following opinion may land one in trouble.

Making application to Christians today, there will always be times when good brethren will disagree in matters of opinion. The important thing is to keep focused on doing the will of Christ. That was what Paul and Barnabas both did. As a result, perhaps even *more work* was accomplished for the Lord because of the manner in which their disagreement was handled.

To worship on Sunday is doctrinal but the time of worship is a matter of opinion. A congregation may choose 7am, yet other 9am and others 10am. It does not affect their faith.

May God help us to draw a dividing line between what is doctrine and what is opinion because some brethren because of their much learning tend to speak their opinion sometimes as if it is doctrine and some unsuspectingly follow suit.

**A LIST OF DOCTRINAL ISSUES**

Today, we want to come out with a list is critical issues that are doctrinal and can determine the faith of the individual if he/she does not take them seriously.

1. God is all in all and exist - Gen. 1:1-26
2. The inspiration of the bible - 2Tim. 3:16-17

3. The bible as the only authority in religion - Rev. 22:19
4. The gospel (death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ) - Gal 1:6-9
5. The church which Christ built and purchased with his own blood - Act 20:28-29
6. The place of the church in salvation - Eph. 3:10
7. The plan of salvation - Acts 2:36-39
8. The place of baptism in salvation - 2 Pet. 3:20
9. The work of the church
10. The organization of the church - Eph. 4:11-14
11. The worship of God - John 4:28
12. Items of worship
13. How the church raises and uses money - 1Cor. 16:1-2
14. The Christian lifestyle - Phil. 1:27
15. The Christian marriage - Matt. 19:1-5
16. The Christian home - 2Cor. 3:2
17. How the word of God is handled - 2Tim. 2:15
18. The role of women in the church - 1Tim. 2:9-14
19. Instrumental music in worship - Eph. 5:19
20. The 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus Christ - Acts. 1:11

## CHAPTER 2

### CAN WE IMPROVE UPON THE DOCTRINE?

Our lesson today is to use only the scriptures to answer this multi-billion naira question. Can we honestly improve upon the doctrine by adding our own thoughts in areas where God is silent, or modify it slightly or de-emphasize some areas as concerning His teachings? The answer is a resounding No.

The answer lies within the bible:

**Isa 55:8-9** *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

**No man can improve upon what has been given. God knows all.**

**Deut. 4:2** *Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.*

**Prov. 30:6** *Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.*

**Gal. 1:6-9** *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be*

*accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*

**Col. 2:8** *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

What if we stubbornly go ahead and improve upon the doctrine to suit our age and time?

- It leads to vain worship - Matt. 15:7-9
- A mark is to be placed on any who do such - Rom. 16:17.
- Those who do such have no God even though they may be worshipping Him - 2John 9

Our doctrine today is a product of God, taught unmodified by Jesus Christ, handed down to the apostles (Matt. 28:20), practiced by the apostles (Acts 2:42) and to be followed by us today unmodified (Gal. 1:6-9).

No church or religious group has a right to make her own doctrine and still be a church of Christ. Once you have your doctrine, you are on your own and heading to your own heaven.

If you are facing the heaven of Christ, then you must follow and remain only in His doctrine once and for all delivered.

### **WHO IS A FALSE TEACHER?**

1. A false teacher is a Christian who fails to listen to Christ and His instructions and when he speaks, he speaks his opinion in place of the plain teachings of God - 1 Pet. 4:10-11
2. A false teacher is a Christian who seeks to distort, pervert, or modify the doctrine of Christ - Gal 1:6-9
3. A false teacher is a Christian who devotes his time and teachings to please men - 1Thess. 2:4
4. A false teacher is a Christian who causes division by his teaching which unsuspecting brethren fall prey to – Rom. 16:17-18.
5. A false teacher is a Christian who teaches with his own wisdom and vision. Jer. 14:14, 2Tim. 4:3
6. A false teacher is a Christian who selects minor aspects of God's command to obeys, neglecting the real issues of life and salvation. – Matt. 23:1-23
7. A false teacher is a Christian who mounts the pulpit and speak so eloquently with intimidating credentials, but whose teachings are but rules made by man. - Col. 2:8, Matt. 15:7-9, Acts 18:24-28
8. A false teacher is a Christian who is interested in his own belly and as such is prepared to criticize and fight against the truth. - 2Pet 2:1-3
9. A false teacher is a Christian who is a hypocrite ( do what I say not what I do) – Matt. 23:2-4

False teachers are found both in the church and in denominations. Their modus operandi is the same. - Acts 20:29-30

### **HOW DO WE TREAT THE FALSE TEACHER?**

It is certain that once the truth arrives a location, false teachers are immediately recruited to counter it such a fashion that the unsuspecting will not know the difference between the truth and error.

If you study their modus operandi in Romans 16:17-18 and 2Peter 2:1-3, you will agree that it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of false teachers. They teach error with vigour and vitality and carefully select words that can easily deceive the heart of the simple.

So what are we to do?

1. Mark them, identify them, spot them, and take note of them - Rom. 16:17, 2Thess. 3:14
2. Avoid them - Rom. 16:17
3. Have no company with such a one - 2Thess. 3:14
4. Withdraw yourself from such a one - 1Tim. 6:3-5
5. Reject such a person -Tit. 3:10
6. Receive him not - 2John 1:10
7. Don't Bid him good speed - 2John 1:10
8. Don't allow them deceive you - Col. 2:8
9. Stop their mouth - Titus 1:11
10. Pray for them to see their sad condition and repent - 1Tim.2:1-2

Let those who have ears hear and those who read decode the plain teaching of the bible.

All who amend and fine-tune Christ commands are on their way to hell fire.

He is the owner of all authority and only those things he had commanded should be taught. - Matt. 28:18-20.

### **PLAN OF SALVATION**

We are worshipping a God that is very clear on issues that concern how we ought to come to Him. Jesus openly acknowledges His total dependency on the directive of the father when it concerns doctrinal issues - John 8:28.

Today we want to scout round the pages of the scriptures to find out a concrete plan of salvation. How does man come to God? Is there a plan at all or man is free to come to

God in his own method? How about the sinner's prayer? We often hear powerful men of God tell their believing audience to pray after them and they will be declared save.

To kick off our lesson today we will like to start where Christ left off for the apostles to take over - Mark 16:15-16 and Matt 28:18-20 are handy.

The first day of implementation of Christ model for salvation came on the Pentecost day.

When the people asked for the way forward after being pricked and convicted of their sins, Peter had a Christ model answer - Acts 2:36-39. From that moment till date, those coming to Christ followed that pattern.

First the gospel was to be preached and the prospect must hear it - Matt. 28:19, Rom. 10:17. Secondly, the words so preached shall generate a belief in the heart of the hearer - John 8:24, Heb 11:6. The third step here is a change of heart based on the conviction of the word of God - Acts 17:30, Luke 13:5. Of a truth, this step will propel us to make an open confession of the deity of Christ. - Rom.10:9-11, Matt. 10:32. After confessing, there is still the "DO" component - Acts 16:30; 9:6. The one desiring to be saved then submits himself/herself to water baptism - Acts 2:38; 22:16. In verse 47 of Act 2, we read that it was God who added people to his church.

So in God's plan all the saved shall be gathered in one location so that they can tap from the manifold wisdom of God, Eph 3:10 and Christ can present her holy and blameless to the father - Eph. 5:27.

**No outside the ark was saved, just as no one outside the church will be saved.**

The steps above were followed by all the great actors of the New Testament. Paul, Cornelius, the Ethiopian Eunuch, The Philipian jailor and even Simon the sorcerer.

Any plan short of this simple plan is from the devil and should be discarded.

## **THE VITALITY OF BAPTISM TO SALVATION**

Baptism is one very important step in the bible plan of salvation. After hearing the gospel, believing its message and the repentance of your sins propelling a confessing of your faith in Christ, baptism is the last thing to do (Acts 9:6) before the conversion exercise is completed.

Although not given prominence by others, the bible is very concerned about the believer knowing the relevance of baptism to his eternal salvation.

The command for baptism came days after the thief on the cross had a miraculous victory ticket to paradise. Even Apostle Paul that met Christ on his way to Damascus was still told to “do” something - Acts 9:6-17.

Baptism is vital because:

- It is for the forgiveness of our sin - Acts 2:36-38
- At baptism, we put on Christ - Gal. 3:27
- Baptism puts us into Christ’s body - the church - 1Cor. 12:13
- It allows you free access to call on his name - Acts 22:16
- It afford us the opportunity of sharing a glimpse of his death, burial and resurrection – Col. 2:12, Rom 6.:3
- It now saves us - 1Pet. 3:20-21

In the early beginning of the church, all who came to be known as Christians were all baptized.

- 3000 souls on the day of Pentecost - Acts 2:41
- Converts in Samaria - Acts 8:12
- The Ethiopian eunuch - Acts 8:26-38
- Saul of Tarsus - Acts 9:18
- Cornelius and his household - Acts 10:47-48
- Lydia of Thyatira - Acts 16:15
- Philippian Jailer and Household - Acts 16:33
- Believers in Corinth - Acts 18:8
- Ephesian Disciples - Acts 19:5

*There was no exception then and will not be today. Don’t be deceived to think of a replay of the scenes like that of the thief on the cross.*

*Mark 16:15-16 summarizes it thus: He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.*

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **AN OVERVIEW OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN THE SCRIPTURE**

Recognizing and comprehending figurative language is essential to understanding the Bible. By correctly assessing figures of speech in scripture, false doctrines can often be exposed, and apparent contradictions can be explained.

At first, we might wonder why so much scripture is laced with symbolism. In fact, more than one form of figurative language often appears in one statement. Why did the Holy Spirit not just come out and plainly state His revelation? We can easily sympathize with the apostles who were often confounded by some of our Lord's expressions.

John 16:17-19 Some of His disciples then said to one another, "What is this thing He is telling us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'?" So they were saying, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is talking about." Jesus knew that they wished to question Him, and He said to them, "Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me'?"  
vs 25 "These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father.

Our study will show that the figurative language of the Bible is very much like what we use in common speech for highly descriptive or emphatic communication. The Holy Spirit wrote the same way we speak. Nevertheless, figurative language sometimes requires insight to comprehend. This review examines some figures of speech found in scripture.

## **1. SIMILE**

A simile is a word or phrase by which one thing is likened to another so that the characteristic of one is revealed by comparison to the other.

Matthew 23:27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

A feature of the simile is that "as" or "like" or some similarly functioning word makes the connection between the things compared.

## **2. METAPHOR**

Similarly, a metaphor is calling one thing by another term intending to thereby reveal its true character.

Matthew 26:26 While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

While the simile would say, "life is like a song," the metaphor says, "life is a song." The statement is more biting, so the implication is more forcefully presented. In the above example, Jesus is not revealing the doctrine of transubstantiation. The bread is not literally His body, but a communion with Christ is implied, which emphasizes the personal and intimate characteristic of the servance (1 Cor. 10:16).

The metaphor is a powerful figure of speech easily used, recognized, and understood. Some of the most compelling metaphors are found in Jude 1:12, 13.

However, a metaphor can also be confusing if the hearer is not of the same mindset. For example, Jesus says euphemistically of dead Lazarus, "he is sleeping." Lazarus was not literally sleeping, but those hearing did not understand; Jesus had to explain it to them (John 11:11-14).

### **3. PARABLE**

A parable is a statement or story about real or possible every-day life from which a moral or heavenly message is presented.

Matthew 7:19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. This presents what farmers in real life actually do with non-producing orchard trees. Jesus is not trying to teach us about farming but that punishment is reserved for worthless people. Unlike the simile and metaphor, a parable contains no mention of the application; it is left to the hearer alone to draw the intended conclusions. For example, consider how Matthew 13:31 would be expressed by these three figures.

The simile (the form used by our Lord) says, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed." As a metaphor, it would have been, "the kingdom of heaven is a grain of mustard seed." However, as a parable, it would have been simply, "A grain of mustard seed... becomes a tree." The hearer would have to deduce on his own that the kingdom of heaven is the figurative subject matter, not the literal grain.

This figure is particularly both revealing and concealing: revealing to the spiritually minded, concealing to the carnally minded. Jesus' parables were therefore often misunderstood. When Jesus warns of the "leaven of the Pharisees," the carnally-minded disciples thought He was

talking about literal bread (Mark 8:14-21).

In Luke 10:30-37, Jesus presents a classic parable in the story of the good Samaritan. Unlike an allegory (explained later), this story contains no clear types and anti-types. Though we may be able to see the application to the original audience or even to ourselves, neither the victim, the highway, the thieves, the mugging, the by-passers, nor any other thing in the story needs to represent anything else in order to understand the message.

#### **4. ALLEGORY**

An allegory is a special form of parable where characters, objects, and events portrayed in the story represent other things in an analogous but totally unrelated story. The portrayed story can be from actual history or from supposition. The moral message is derived by the similarities between the types and anti-types. The hearer is expected to figuratively apply to one what is literally and intuitively understood about the other. In Luke 8:5-9, Jesus presents the so-called parable of the sower. As usual, the disciples do not understand, and our Lord's explanation reveals the allegorical nature of the parable:

Luke 8:11-15 Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. "Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. "Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. "The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity. "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

Notice that the explanation of the allegory is a connective string of metaphors. Not all parables have this exact feature of type and anti-type representation; those that do are allegories. For additional examples, see 2 Samuel 12:1-7 and Galatians 4:22-31.

#### **5. FABLE**

A fable is a whimsical imaginary story of events impossible in nature but through which a moral or ethical message is delivered. While the parable is taken from real life possibilities, in a fable, trees can talk or horses can fly.

Luke 19:40 But Jesus answered, "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!"

Jesus is not suggesting that stones can literally speak. This fictitious notion teaches us that nothing can prevent God from manifesting His glory on earth. Additional examples are found in Judges 9:6-21; 2 Kings 14:8-10; and Isaiah 14:7-10.

## **6. IRONY**

Irony is a statement that implies something different or especially completely opposite of what is literally stated. In common use, we might say, "It's very nice to start the day with a tree falling on my house." Irony exposes error by seemingly defending or approving it.

1 Corinthians 4:8,10 You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you.... We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor.

By pretending to claim that the Corinthians were wealthy, kingly, prudent, strong, and distinguished, Paul pungently affirms that they were actually none of those things.

## **7. SARCASM**

Sarcasm is a sharp form of irony delivering a rebuke through scorn, mockery, or taunt. When developed into a story, like a parable, it is called satire.

1 Kings 18:27 It came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened."

Elijah is not literally defending that Baal is an actual god but rather exposing the falsehood of the notion. Further examples of sarcasm are seen in Matthew 27:29 and Acts 2:13.

## **8. METONYMY**

In metonymy, one word or thing is put for another. An instrument is put for its effect (Eph 2:16); a possession is put for its owner (Matt 25:35-40); an author is put for his writings (Luke 16:29, 31); a container is put for its contents:

1 Corinthians 11:25-28 ...For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes...

Paul did not intend to say that the container itself is consumed by drinking but only its contents. Division exists in the church today because some adamantly defend that, since "cup" here is singular, Paul is hereby ordaining that only one container must be shared in an assembly of Christians observing the Lord's Supper. To the contrary, by metonymy, Paul is not even actually talking about the literal container but the wine.

## **9. SYNECDOCHE**

Synecdoche is a special form of metonymy where the whole is put for a part or a part is put for the whole.

Matthew 13:31 ..."The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed,... leaven (vs 33),... a treasure hidden (vs 44),... a dragnet (vs 47)...., a head of a household (vs 52)."

It would be folly to try to understand how the kingdom as a whole is like any one of these things. The intent is that a particular feature of the whole kingdom is like this or that.

Acts 2:44 And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; Here and throughout the book of Acts, Luke identifies some individuals as believers. However, they were not believers only, but their belief is put for their whole submission process. We understand that salvation is not for those with faith alone (Jam 2:24) but for those who, in faith, are also willing to repent, confess, and submit to baptism. Failing to recognize Luke's use of synecdoche, Calvinism cites these passages to suggest that baptism is not necessary, since it is not always literally mentioned.

Other forms of this figure include the plural for the singular (Gen 21:7 "children"), the singular for the plural (Gen 2:24 "a man"); the definite or specific for the indefinite or general (1 Cor 14:19 "five," "ten thousand"), and the indefinite or general for the definite or specific (Mark 16:15 "creature").

## **10. ELLIPSIS**

In ellipsis, some words are intentionally omitted in a statement. In many cases, this is not to exclude one thing to the inclusion of another, but only to emphasize a more important thing

over another. The understood missing words must be added for construction of the literal. To illustrate, the figure might state, "Not this but that;" the understood literal construction would be, "Not only this but also that."

1 Corinthians 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.

Some today argue that Paul here declares that baptism is not essential to salvation. However, the preponderance of scripture indicates that baptism is certainly necessary. To harmonize scripture and understand the literal, Paul's use of ellipsis must be recognized. Without ellipsis, (that is, by inserting the missing words) Paul is literally saying, "Christ did not send me merely to baptize, but particularly to preach the gospel." The emphasis is not on simply getting people wet but on persuading men. Do that, and the baptism will follow naturally.

Additional examples of ellipsis are found in Matthew 12:7 and 1Timothy 2:9,10.

## **11. HYPERBOLE**

Hyperbole is the use of exaggeration to form a description of things or a comparison between them which more vividly brings to light certain features. We often use this figure when we speak of an event occurring a million times. The intent is to intensify the truth, not misrepresent it.

Numbers 13:33 "There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

Matthew 5:28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Adultery is concisely defined as unlawful sexual intercourse with the spouse of another. It is the special case of fornication involving at least one married person. Fornication is unique to other sexual sins, such as lust, lewdness, or vulgarity, in that physical sexual contact is always involved (1 Cor 6:13, 18; 7:1, 2). Since God's law permits divorce for the cause of fornication, some preachers declare that divorce is lawful for the cause of lust, that is, so-called fornication in the heart. However, imagined fornication is a contradiction, since fornication always involves outward bodily action. Jesus is not here redefining terms; by hyperbole, He is emphasizing the

seriousness of the inward sin over the outward. Avoid the former, and the latter is already averted. The lustful man is no more literally a fornicator than the hating man is literally a murderer (1 John 3:15).

In Matthew 5:29,30, Jesus continues further with additional examples of hyperbole.

## **12. PARALLELISM**

Parallelism is a form of speech where two or more statements follow each other saying essentially the same thing with different expressions or in different viewpoints for embellishment. The words match to words and the things match to things in contrast or comparison, as if fitting together in measures of a chant. This figure is often utilized in the poetic verbalization of deep emotions coming out of dire or elating circumstances. This is most easily understood by examples.

Isaiah 1:3 An ox knows its owner, And a donkey its master's manger, But Israel does not know, My people do not understand.

There are no intended differences between the ox and the donkey, the owner and the manager, Israel and the people, or knowing and understanding. We miss the point if we seek for such. This figure is found in many of the psalms and proverbs (e.g. Ps. 27:1; Prov. 1:8).

1 Corinthians 7:10,11 Let not the wife depart from her husband:... and let not the husband put away his wife.

There is no intended difference between the specific instructions for the wife and for the husband. It is essentially the same message but from two different perspectives. We miss the point if we seek to determine some literal gender distinction in this ordinance.

## **13. APOSTROPHE**

Apostrophe is where the one speaking turns aside from the real audience and addresses an imaginary or absent one.

Matthew 23:1-3 Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples, saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them."

vs 13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in."

vs 37 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling."

It is possible that there are not actually any scribes and Pharisees in the crowd at this time but that Jesus turns to address them directly in verse 13 by the use of apostrophe. Without doubt, apostrophe is employed in verse 37 where His words are redirected to the whole of Jerusalem's inhabitants throughout all time, though they are not literally in His audience. Additional examples of this figure are found in Jeremiah 47:6 and 1 Corinthians 15:55.

#### **14. PERSONIFICATION**

Personification includes applying the characteristics of animated things to the inanimate. For instance, personification will attribute human traits to other things or even to abstract concepts and ideas.

This figure finds its way into common English phrases as "the hand of fate," "the long arm of the law," and "mother nature."

Numbers 26:10 And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up along with Korah, when that company died, when the fire devoured 250 men, so that they became a warning.

Here are two instances of personification in one verse. First, it suggests that the earth has a mouth like a man with a throat for ingestion and the volition to consume. Second, it suggests that fire has the ability to eat flesh like a wild animal. Of course, earth and fire do not literally have mouths for feeding. Many other examples of personification appear in scripture (Psa 114:3-7; Hab.3:10, 11; Matt. 6:34; Jas. 1:26).

#### **15. INTERROGATION**

Interrogation is the use of a rhetorical question: an inquiry about a matter so unquestionably pre-accepted that the answer is understood, and no response is actually expected. The speaker is not literally seeking to know but presenting a conclusion with such force as to bring an end to

any further investigation. This figure is so commonly utilized that its occurrence often goes unnoticed. A most profound use of this appears in Paul's epistle to the Romans:

Romans 8:32-35 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, and who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

The rhetoric question is often used as a rebuke. In fact, the Lord's rebuke to Job (chapters 38-41) is put almost completely in this form.

Jesus uses it frequently both in gentle instruction (Matt. 5:46,47; 6:25,27,28,30; 7:3,9-11,16) and in scathing rebuttal (Matt. 23:17,19,33).

## **16. PROLEPSIS**

Prolepsis is an intentional error in chronology to facilitate the passing of information. By this we might speak of "the conversion of the apostle Paul." However, at the time of his conversion, he was not

yet an apostle nor called Paul, but by this figure, we legitimately and conveniently express it rather than laboriously and literally: "the conversion of Saul who was later known as Paul and became an apostle."

John 11:1,2 Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. And it was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair,  
whose brother Lazarus was sick.

At the time Lazarus was sick, Mary had not yet performed this anointing (Jn.12:1-3). By prolepsis, John further identifies the Mary about whom he is speaking, as if the action has already taken place. We understand that John's record contains no contradiction here. Prolepsis will be the explanation for many apparent contradictions in scripture. Inversely, we ought to be very careful about not readily assuming a time record to be proleptic, or else we might be constructing a contradiction.

Further examples are noted. Bethel is mentioned in the record of Abraham's journeys before it was actually known by that name (Gen.12:8; 28:19). Judas is recorded as the betrayer of Jesus more than one year prior to the event in Matthew's narrative (Matt. 10:4). Jesus speaks of the condition of those after the resurrection in the present tense: "they... are like angels."

## **17. PARADOX**

Paradoxes include a very broad range of word puzzles and absurdities that cannot be entirely examined in this brief presentation. For example, the statement "I never speak the truth" is a type of paradox.

If the statement is true, then it must be a lie, but if it is false, then it is evidently true. This kind of paradox is not common to scripture, except that it is warned against (1Tim. 6:3-5).

Another form of paradox involves a dilemma which has no obvious explanation at first consideration. Resolution comes only by deeper contemplation. For examples, we are saved by faith, yet the kind of faith that saves is never alone. We are saved by grace yet judged by our works. God is three, yet He is one.

The literary paradox is the most common form in scripture. It is a statement of apparent contradiction yet true. Most paradoxes are easy to recognize, since the perceived inconsistency immediately demands an explanation. The power of this paradox is that it forces the hearer to think. The teachings of Jesus are nowhere more full of such paradoxes than in the beatitudes (Matt 5:1-12). Further examples are, "The first shall be last," (Matt. 20:16) and "when I am weak, then I am strong" (2Cor. 12:10). Faith is paradoxically described as possessing that which we only hope to possess and seeing that which cannot be seen (Heb. 11:1).

2 Corinthians 6:8-10 ...by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true; as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

## **18. OXYMORON**

An oxymoron is simply a condensed literary paradox, usually consisting of only a couple of words in apparent conflict. Examples in our common speech include "old news," and "sweet sorrow." A scriptural example of oxymoron is "living sacrifice." To the Hebrew mindset, an animal offered in sacrifice typically dies. Paul gives the concept of sacrifice a new twist:

Romans 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

## **19. IDIOM**

An idiom is a common way of expressing thoughts by words and phrases having an understood meaning that is different from the literal meaning. The intended meaning cannot be comprehended by inspection of the words alone but also by investigation of ordinary usage. Idioms of one's own native language are difficult to detect because they are simply the way we normally put words together. English is full of idiomatic expressions; examples include "real estate," "give way," "take your time," "come up with an idea," "come down with a cold," "work out," "dead even," "level best," "of course," and "how do you do."

Idioms are often lost when translating, because they differ from language to language. For example, the way to say "good bye" in German is literally "on again to see." The same is true when the Bible is translated into English or any other language. An actual word-for-word idiom translation is difficult to follow. However, some so-called translations today are considered "thought" translations, which are essentially commentaries more than true translations. There are modern English translations available which do a very good job of bringing the original idioms of scripture into our common terminology.

A word of caution needs to be noted on making casual reference to Greek and Hebrew lexicons. Looking at word meanings alone without understanding their common usage and idiomatic forms can become a pitfall for false doctrine. For example, in Titus 1:6, "husband of one wife" is translated from the literal idiom "one woman man."

Unsound teaching on elder qualifications can easily result if those not deeply understanding Greek language begin to over-analyze this phrase. The most reliable translators have consistently rendered this in simple terms of our ordinary speech.

## **20. PARONOMASIA**

Paronomasia is a pun: a play on words. An English example is "walk the walk and talk the talk." Here both the noun forms and verb forms of words are cleverly put together to convey the idea of doing and saying things the way they ought to be done and said.

In 2 Thessalonians 3:11, the opposing words for "work" and "busybodies" are related. Young's literal translation reveals the pun: "nothing working but over working," However, it is lost in the traditional translations.

2 Thess. 3:11 For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.

Other plays on words lost in translation are noted:

Exodus 16:15,31 The sons of Israel named the bread which the Lord gave them "manna" (literally, what is it?). In English, it might have been "whatzit."

Romans 12:2 Not thinking too highly (literally, thinking over) but having sound judgment or sobriety (literally, thinking soundly).

Philippians 3:2,3 "mutilate" (literally, cut up) and "circumcision" (literally, cut around).

## **21. PROVERB**

A proverb is a convincing, concise, pointed, and elegant statement of truth. It is often constructed as a condensed parable in a single sentence. However, due to its brevity, it may have some unstated but understood limitation of applicability. A proverb hence might not be true in every case but true only typically or as a general rule.

An example proverb is "he who laughs last laughs best." In scripture, a remarkable proverb is stated by Ahab, king of Israel, to Benhadad, the challenging king of Syria.

1 Kings 20:11 So the king of Israel answered and said, "Tell him, 'Let not the one who puts on his armor boast like the one who takes it off.' "

The typification of truth often found in a proverb is best explained by illustration. Consider the following proverbial statements from scripture:

Ecclesiastes 7:1 A good name is better than precious ointment, And the day of death than the day of one's birth;

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

Ephesians 6:2,3 "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."

By investigation, these things are clearly true only as a rule. The terse statements are not intended to deal with every specific circumstance. To explain, the day of one's death is better only if he is prepared for judgment. Well-trained children sometimes later go astray; else Paul would not have admonished Timothy to guard himself.

Furthermore, though disobedience can often result in an early death, sometimes obedient young people die and the disobedient live long. If we fail to recognize this figure of speech, we might unjustifiably claim that scripture is self-contradicting.

On the other hand, an easy argument for a false teacher is to say that some clear statement or command in scripture is only generally true, not absolutely true in every circumstance. Be careful; remember that a statement in scripture ought to be taken literally unless we are forced to take it figuratively due to the rules of context, impossibility, contradiction, absurdity, or revelation, covered in a study of hermeneutics.

*The following references are utilized in the preparation and are recommended for further study:*

"Hermeneutics, The Science of Interpreting The Scriptures," D. R. Dungan, Gospel Light Publishing Company.

"A Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament," Joseph Henry Thayer, Zondervan Publishing House, 1979

"Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words," W. E. Vine, Fleming H. Revell Co., 1966

"Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary," Eleventh Edition, 2008, Merriam-Webster, Incorporated

## CHAPTER 4

### WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

By traditional definition, a Christian is an individual who is baptized into Christ and added to His body, the Church with a desire to walk in newness of life - 1Cor. 12:13, 2Cor. 5:17.

Technically, we can look deeper and define a Christian as follows:

1. A Christian is a slave of Christ bought wholesale to serve him perpetually - 1Cor 6:19-20, 1Cor. 7:23, 1Pet. 1:18. Our liberty to a large extent is defined and moderated by Christ, our new Owner. His leadership and ownership will define our speech, dressing, choice of friends and even our general attitude to life. Just picture a slave and put yourself in that framework. Paul captures it well in Gal. 2:20.
2. A Christian is the light and salt of his community - Matt 5:13-16. His shining light will bring glory to God as men will appreciate God for giving them such a person. He is the needed light in a dark world. Phil. 2:15 exposes the basic ingredients of being a light to the world. ***Shine! Shine!! Shine!!!***
3. A Christian is a member of the kingdom of light - John 8:12, Col 1:13. He is even referred to as light (Eph. 5:8). He should therefore walk as children of light. There is no longer any business of such with darkness.
4. A Christian is an open Bible for the busy world to read - 2Cor. 3:2. From how you coordinate your wife to how you speak to others, all form the basis of each of your chapters. No wonder Paul said, a Christian's speech should be seasoned with salt and capable of ministering grace to the hearer – Col. 4:6, Eph 4:29.
5. A Christian is a model for the world to copy - Rom. 12:2, 1Tim. 4:12. His family is a model. His business is a model. His lifestyle is a model. His dressing is a model. His music is a model and his recreation is a model. This is because he is a servant of the Most High.
6. A Christian only listens to the voice of his Master at all times and continues in His teachings - Matt. 17:3-5, 1Tim. 4:16, Gal. 1:6-9, Heb. 1:1-2, 2 John 1:9. He does not plan to improve upon the doctrine for fear of eternal damnation. When God is silent, He is silent too.

*However, it is pertinent to note that an unbaptized individual that is good is not a Christian! Cornelius was not a Christian until he was baptized, even though he was a good man - Acts 10:2-6, 47-48.*

Anybody who simply believes, perhaps only confesses his faith in Jesus Christ and is very active in the church is not yet a Christian. The Devil believes and trembles - James 1:22.

Anybody who is not added to the Church is outside of the Church - Acts 2:47. Hence, the person does not have Christ. He is therefore not a Christian. The name *Christian* comes from a lifestyle of those early believers who behaved like Christ, their Master and the name was coined by observers of the lifestyle of those early believers in Antioch - Acts 11:26.

## **SUMMARY**

A Christian is a slave of Christ who has been redeemed from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13) to be a light unto the world and shines with his life for the world to read knowing that he is a model for the world to copy. If this description does not match your personality, then I am afraid, you are yet to be a Christian.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **THE CHRISTIAN MAN AND HIS NUCLEAR FAMILY**

A Christian man is a male Christian whose life is hidden in Christ in God - Col 3:1-2. He is an adult that understands the meaning of being in Christ and knowing that old things have indeed passed away - 2 Cor. 5:17. He is aware of the concept of being a light for the dark world and a force to be reckoned with as a shining example - 1 Tim. 4:12. A Christian man is a steward that knows what it takes to render account of his stewardship.

A nuclear family can be defined a family made up of father and mother only (as in a young family or a yet to be blessed couple) or a family made up father, mother and children.

The family started first when the two became one - Gen 2:18. So we must note that how well it began will affect other things after. If the setting out of the foundation of the marriage is ok, then there is hope that the family will start on a strong footing.

The arrival of children is a result of an intimate interaction between the couple. Most family analyst look at children as business firm or store or shop given to the couple to run for a fix period of time after which, the store is handed over back to God.

So we see the couple stay alone first, then the kids arrive, then they stay and grow under their supervision and after they become heavy men or women and stand on their own, then the couple return to their status quo ante.

So how does these team work together in a manner that will be pleasing to God.

Picture the man as the head of the house and the driver of a car. Picture the woman as the car and the children as the passengers. Picture the woman's character as the engine. Picture love as the petrol, and knowledge and fear of God as the tyres of the car. Also picture proper communication as the engine oil. Finally, picture family devotion as water in the radiator.

Just imagine if there is no fuel. What will happen to that car? Assuming the engine is bad or having overheating? What if the passengers are not happy with the way the car is moving? We all know the result.

So here is my summary:

**The Christian man should provide for his family always** (I Tim. 5:8; Eph. 6:4)

- Physical needs of the family
- Spiritual needs of the family
- Emotional/Health needs of the family
- Recreational needs of the family
- Evangelical direction for his family

**The Christian man should lay:**

- Solid Christian example in all areas of life.
- Solid footing for his offspring to carry on even after his demise.
- Solid training legacy, rich enough to sustain the family even in your absence - Prov. 22:6

**The Christian man should be:**

- Transparent and truly seen to be transparent in all his dealings especially financially.
- Honest and truly seen to be honest to his family.
- Love his wife so dearly to the envy of his children - Eph. 5:23

**Please Note:**

The picture of your family is a reflection of your input. Start early when the block is wet and the mixture not strong. It is only then you can truly say, for me and my family, we shall live for Christ.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CHRISTIAN AND FAMILY FINANCES**

The family is made up principally of the husband and wife. The children are visitors of the house that God blesses the family with. As the family needs increase and become wide, there is need for us as Christians to critically study how the finances of the family are managed.

We will look at it from three perspectives;

- Man alone is working
- Both husband and wife are working
- Woman alone is working

#### **MAN ALONE IS WORKING**

It is the responsibility of the man to provide leadership, and the basic necessities for the entire family - 1Tim. 5:8.

The wife as his partner and friend should have a good knowledge of the monthly take home.

His vision and plans must be made known to the entire family. The wife ought to be carried along in the execution of the plans as some of the family contracts can be handled by the wife who shall give account at the end of the day - 1Cor. 4:2.

The husband should not look down on the wife at all. Research has shown that there is no need for the man to hide his take home from the wife.

*The money is our money, not my money and we are friends forever.*

#### **BOTH HUSBAND AND WIFE ARE WORKING**

The husband is still the main provider of the family - Gen 3:16. God has empowered the woman to be a helper, supporter and a friend of the man – Prov. 31:13. So both of them ought to pull their resources together in the spirit of love and understanding and move the family forward.

In some cases, some women extend submission to even their take home and let their husbands have control over it and direct how it shall be applied. Others give maximum support in the area they see the family having a need and the husband is handicapped financially.

In some families, the entire family needs are put together and the resources applied in each area.

In some families too, the man becomes more interested in the woman's take home alone and the woman resists such interest and declares that her take home is hers.

I recommend that each family apply what formula suits them, but transparency and accountability must be the watch word - Luke 16:1-2.

*The money is our money, not my money and we are friends forever.*

## **WOMAN ALONE WORKING**

The man may be temporary out of Job or incapacitated. He is still the head of the house and should command a lot of respect.

The woman should carry him along in the planning and execution of family projects bearing in mind that the man may bounce back soon.

The family should be strong in prayers for the head to get a job and reclaim his responsibilities fully.

It is here that the humility profile and submissive level of the woman is known.

*The money is our money, not my money and we are friends forever.*

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CHRISTIAN AND WEALTH PURSUIT**

Wealth pursuit is simply explained as the process and desire of trying by all means to get rich. It is believed in some quarters that riches or wealth is sign of being close to God and poverty is a sign of not relating well with God. See Abraham, Job and even Barnabas. They were all rich men of God. This position has deceived a lot of young people.

Our focus today is simply to answer the question: what is the bible position on wealth acquisition?

WEALTH...

*Wealth does have its advantages:*

- a. A degree of security – Prov. 10:15; 18:11; 13:8
- b. Companionship of 'friends' – Prov. 14:20; 19:4, 6-7
- c. Power or influence – Prov. 22:7
- d. The ability to speak more freely – Prov. 18:23

*But wealth does not provide everything:*

- a. It does not deliver us from death – Prov. 10:2; 11:4
- b. Those who trust in their riches will fall – Prov. 11:28

### **THE ACQUISITION OF WEALTH...**

- a. Must be gained honestly, such as through labor – Prov. 13:11
- b. Best if by labor, not inherited – Prov. 20:21
- c. Best if gained gradually, not with haste – Prov. 28:20,22
- d. Wealth acquired unscrupulously is temporary and bitter – Prov. 20:17; 21:5-6; 28:8

*Keeping wealth in perspective:*

- a. Do not overwork to be rich – Prov. 23:4
- b. Riches easily disappear – Prov. 23:5

Wealth can be blessing, but it can easily become a curse; wisdom makes the difference!

## SUMMARY

The bible shall speak for itself:

**Luke 12:15** *And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

**1Tim 6:6-11, 17-19** *But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*

**Prov. 22:2** *The rich and the poor have this in common, The LORD is the maker of them all.*

**Prov. 14:31** *He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy. –*

## CHAPTER 8

### CHRISTIAN AND DRESSING

The bible is dotted here and there with issues related to the dressing of God's children. Our attention in this lesson shall be the application of what it means for the child of God to be said to be well dressed that can meet the pass mark of other children of God.

Once dressing is mention, the main focus usually is on the female gender because it is widely believed and rightly so that their dressing can trigger emotions in the hearts of men. However, it does not mean that the dressing of men cannot also portray them wayward. A well-dressed male with a *Ballotelli-like hair cut* is likely to call attention to himself and thus affect the light in him.

One basic principle of dressing found in the bible in 1Tim.2:9-11 is modesty. So in our lesson we shall struggle to define what modesty is. In describing, the mode of dress appropriate for women in church, the apostle Paul exhorts them to dress "modestly" with "decency and propriety" then goes on to contrast immodest dress with the good

deeds which are appropriate for those who profess to be true worshipers of God (1 Tim. 2:9-10).

Modesty in the way we dress is not just for church; it is to be the standard for all Christians at all times. The key to understanding what constitutes modesty in dress is to examine the attitudes and intents of the heart. Those whose hearts are inclined toward God will make every effort to dress modestly, decently, and appropriately. Those whose hearts are inclined toward self will dress in a manner designed to draw attention to themselves with little or no regard for the consequences to themselves or others.

A godly woman endeavors to do everything with a “God-ward” perspective. She knows that God wants His people to be concerned for His glory and the spiritual state of their brothers and sisters in Christ. If a woman professes to be a Christian yet she dresses in a way that will unduly draw attention to her body, she is a poor witness of the one who bought her soul by dying for her on the cross. She is forgetting that her body has been redeemed by Christ and is now the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20). She is telling the world that she sees her own worth as purely physical and that her attractiveness to others depends on how much of her body she reveals to them.

Furthermore, by dressing in an immodest fashion, displaying her body for men to lust after, she causes her brothers in Christ to sin, something condemned by God (Matt. 5:27-29). Proverbs 7:10 mentions a woman “dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent.” Here we see the description of one whose heart condition is displayed by her manner of dress.

The Scripture says that a woman is to dress modestly, but what exactly does that mean in modern society? Does a woman have to be covered from head to toe? There are cults and religions in the world that demand this of women. But is that the biblical meaning of modesty? Again, we have to go back to the matter of the attitudes of the heart. If a woman’s heart is inclined toward godliness, she will wear clothing that is neither provocative nor revealing in public, clothing that does not reflect negatively upon her personal testimony as a child of God. Even when everyone else in her circle is dressing immodestly, she resists the temptation to go along with the crowd. She knows these types of clothes are designed to draw attention to her body and cause men to lust, but she is wise enough to know that type of attention only cheapens her. The idea of causing men to sin against God because of her dress is abhorrent to her because she seeks to

love and honor God and wants others to do the same. Modesty in dress reveals a modesty and godliness of the heart, attitudes that should be the desire of all women who live to please and honor God.

### **But What About Trousers?**

This is a thorny issue and I will address it technically. Now that we have an idea about modesty, it will not be difficult to address another principal issue called "Motive".

Our dressing is determined by the motive of our heart. Proverbs 16:1-3 comes into mind. In a man's eyes, all is well with what he or she wears, but God analyses the motive behind the dress and the Christian wearing that dress. Most argue that based on Deut. 22:5, it is wrong to wear trousers completely. That argument is faulty.

Firstly, the wearing of trousers to a large extent is a cultural thing moderated by the weather and climatic condition of the area.

If you live in Jos and wear trousers because of cold, I am having difficulties to see where you have sinned against God with your dressing. Sin is sin. So if a thing is sinful and inherently sinful, then there is no justification for it to be moderated by weather and climatic condition. Why will a sister in Poland and Norway wear trousers and it is ok and a sister in Nigeria wearing trousers will go to hell?

Secondly, true Christian females know there is no sin in wearing trousers but shun it because of the negative view our culture for now view those who wear trousers. Our light is to shine before men and a Christian woman on trousers may likely repel evangelism especially among mature responsible women.

But wait a minute, is it how the woman wears the trousers or the trousers itself or the type. While researching for this work, I discovered that even among trousers, there are modest and immodest ones. Any trousers that is tight and fitting and exposing the contours of the woman anatomy is considered immodest. So can a Christian sister wear the modest ones like the banker's suit on trousers? Yes provided she has right motives.

It is illogical criticism for a sister to wear trousers at night to sleep and frowns at those who wear it to the market. Again, that makes it clear that the trousers are not the issue but where it is worn to. The house is ok, but the market is sin. It will lead to double standard.

How about supporting your trousers with a wrapper? Most argue it is modest. I personally subscribe to that. But the challenge here is why not just choose one. Either you tie a wrapper or wear a trouser. The central goal is modesty driven by your motive.

Lastly, the latest argument is that wearing trousers makes a person highly protected from rape. But again that argument is shaky because, our today trousers make a woman half naked if not fully naked when relieving herself.

My opinion on this subject matter is simple. Dress modestly with a divine motive. If you can, completely avoid wearing trousers because of sending a wrong unintentional message to the world.

***Basic principle of dressing as a Christian***

1. Know who you are always.
2. Screen your clothes before they enter your wardrobe.
3. Look at the mirror before leaving the house. Let your heart define how your clothes will impress upon those that see you on them.
4. Will your clothes project the gospel or thwart the gospel?
5. How bright is my light with his clothes on me?

Phil 1:27; 2:15, Rom. 12:2 comes clearly into mind.

May your dressing always be filled with grace capable of speaking even before you speak about the faith that you have in Christ.

Christians, wear what even Christ will not be ashamed of you.

## CHAPTER 9

### CHRISTIAN AND BRIBERY

Dear Christians, It is not difficult for us to simply discuss this topic of bribery as Christians. Our challenge is that it has taken so many dimensions that it becomes increasingly difficult to honestly handle this lesson of bribery.

A bribe is anything given to gain a fair advantage over others which ordinarily one does not merit. Marriam webster's online dictionary defines it a "verb" - To persuade (someone) to act in one's favor, typically illegally or dishonestly, by a gift of money or other inducement. As a "Noun" - A sum of money or other inducement offered or given in this way.

Let us first here from the bible before making applications;

**Exo. 23:8** - And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.

**Prov. 15:27** - He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live.

**Prov. 17:23** - A wicked [man] taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

**Ps. 26:10** - In whose hands [is] mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.

**Amos 5:12** - For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate [from their right].

**Prov. 21:14** - A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath.

**Isa. 5:23** - Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!

**Eccl. 7:7** - Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart.

**Prov. 17:8** - A gift [is as] a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.

**1 Tim. 6:10** - For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

**Prov. 11:1** - A false balance [is] abomination to the LORD: but a just weight [is] his delight.

**Prov. 10:2** - Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death.

**Isa. 1:23** - Thy princes [are] rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

**Prov. 29:4** - The king by judgment establisheth the land: but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.

From the scriptures, we can make the following useful deduction:

1. A *bribe* is bad in the eyes of God.
2. It has powerful negative influence.
3. It can change the heart of man and
4. Justice can be distorted once a bribe is given.

## **APPEARANCES OF BRIBERY**

I will in this section do a sector by sector analysis of bribery and bribe tendency that is visible today.

### **1. EDUCATION:**

A bribe is given to blind the eyes of inspectors not to do their work of inspection especially during accreditation.

A bribe is given when students coordinated by a teacher to service the examiner to look the other side as cheating is activated.

A bribe is given to the teacher by the student to inflate the scores from an "F" grade to a "B" grade. At the tertiary level, it is called "Sorting". It gets worse when females offer themselves as bribe to pass "tough courses".

The list is long...

### **2. AGRIC SECTOR:**

A bribe is given to secure Agric loan and Agric inputs. If you dare not to give, you will be stranded.

### **3. EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURES:**

A bribe is given to the recruitment officer to secure appointment. Some jobs in Nigeria are priced at N200,000 or more.

### **4. SECURITY SECTOR:**

Once a bribe appears, procedures are adjusted. A truck load of contraband goods pass easily through the check points so long as a bribe is given.

A bribe is given to get lucrative posting to areas where illegal money is generated. In fact the one sent must make "returns" to the one that sent him and shockingly, the one that sent him is willing to deny not sending him should any problem occurs.

### **5. CIVIL SERVICE:**

For a file to move from one table to another, a bribe will be required to facilitate it. Sometimes your file will be missing, but once a bribe appears, that same file will be found.

In fact recent finding show that civil servants are chief bribe collectors in the entire country.

### **6. CHURCH/RELIGIOUS GROUPS:**

A bribe here is christened appreciation and given far ahead of an intended request. An appreciation ought to be given far after a thing is done in one's favour. That

“appreciation” now influences discipline, appointment and placement in the church caucus.

Time and space will limit us if I continue running this sectorial analysis.

### **THE WAY FORWARD**

So how ought we live now as Christian in a country where bribery is washed and christened with several good names; *Facilitation Fee, Cooperation Fee, Oiling Material, Public Relation Builder, Settlement, and in our rotten language, Egunje, Roger, Cola and Peppers.*

Bribe and bribery are common sins that easily entangle us (Heb 12:1-3). Christians have made light about it and think God is pleased with us in that act. Be not deceived, God is not mocked, any one engaged in bribery should immediately withdraw or one day faces the wrath of the Lord and the law. One will certainly come first.

The Christian prayer is “Lord lead us not into temptation”. In fact, the way unemployment is biting hard, bribing your way into a job is no longer seen as a sin. It is just a way to arrive there. It takes courage to stay unemployed by refusing to give a bribe to the recruitment official.

Some people’s Christianity does not reach bribery. It is not a sin.

May the lord open our eyes to help us understand that He has no optional commandments - John 15:14; 14:15.

## **CHAPTER 10 CHRISTIAN AND POLITICS**

Politics is usually strongly associated with strategies of gaining and controlling power of leadership in all of human endeavours.

Man being a political animal, it logically follows that politics is virtually where resources are found and there is a need for someone to manage these resources. No wonder God left us with a well-defined hierarchy even in the home - 1Cor. 11:3.

In our lesson today, our attention shall be focused on politics as it concerns leadership of the state (Country), be it at any level. The reason behind this focus is that there is this growing concern to know what the Bible says about a Christian venturing into politics. Some argue that a Christian cannot, or ought not to venture into politics at all, while others argue that when the righteous are on the throne, the people will rejoice (Prov. 29:2), therefore a Christian can participate in politics and still be in tune with God.

We will only bring out the principles and each Christian will determine whether or not he can participate in active or passive politics.

### **LAYING THE FOUNDATION**

There are four known participation points in all of political leadership. These includes:

#### **1. Political Discussion Level:**

This usually carry a lot of followership. Those involved here talk about politics as analysts, party faithfuls and concern citizens. In this participation level, so many lies are peddled and heavy sentiments are wept in favour of, or against, a perceived opponent.

Quarrelling and even fighting occur here. During the 2011 presidential elections in Nigeria, friends and brethren threw caution to the wind and engaged in verbal war against each other all in the name of supporting GEJ or MB. Can a Christian participate in this level and still be in tune with God? Only recently, a powerful brother rebuked me for turning the Facebook page I usually use for evangelism into a political platform, yet I say 'I am not a politician.' Christians have to be careful. Even 'talking' politics can land you in sin not to talk of entering full scale.

#### **2. Sponsorship Level:**

Most individuals prefer to be in politics at the background. Here they sponsor candidates and aspirants to positions of authority. This is not done for free. Usually there is an understanding. Research has shown that the Ngige Saga in Anambra State brought to fore participants at this level. Corruption in Nigeria can be traced to this group popularly called "God Fathers". The sponsorship covers all electoral activities even up to the arming of youths called thugs. So can a Christian participate here and still be pleasing to God? During the subsidy probe, some analysts have argued that why some people were dragged to court was because it was they that sponsored the President.

#### **3. Submitting Yourself for Service Level:**

Here is the actual point of standing to be voted for in an election. First you aspire, and then you get nomination; proceed to contest within the party and finally contesting in the general elections. Originally, it is supposed to be service to the people, but honestly we now know it is service to the pocket of the one offering himself for the office. This explains why people fight, maim and kill each other just to get into office.

For the Christian, our attention shall be drawn to the process.

- Can you truly pick a nomination form without soiling your hands in sinful oil?
- Can you win your party nomination in a clean process devoid of sin?
- Can you campaign for your elections without incorporating lies and blackmailing your opponent?

- Can you truly control your “boys” to be orderly because you are a Christian?
- Can you avoid the usual settlement for each pooling boot as is the manner of some?
- Can you truly as a Christian avoid settling the electoral body to favour your candidature?
- Can you overcome the sins associated with electioneering?

If the answers to these questions are yes, then go ahead and enjoy the dividends thereof.

#### **4. Picking up Appointment Level:**

Some enter politics at this level either by being hardworking in the party, sponsorship deal or being a classmate to the one who is in power. Here the politician’s loyalty is 100%. So even in glaring fault or sin of your boss, you are expected to remain loyal.

#### **THE BIBLE POSITION**

Christians are light of the world - Phil 2:15.

The language of a Christian at all times must have salt and minister grace to the hearers -  
- Col 4:6, Eph 4:29.

A Christian is an open letter that all men can read - 2Cor 3:2

A Christian is a citizen of the kingdom of light and as such ought to walk as light - Eph 5:8,  
Col 1:13

A Christian is a slave of Christ 1Cor 6:19-20

#### **SUMMARY**

A person doing well in politics will definitely do poorly as a Christian. The choice is yours.

## CHAPTER 11 CHRISTIAN AND EVANGELISM IN THE ICT AGE

The internet is the greatest technological invention by man in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. One of the key components of the internet is the social media. Social media is a term generally used to describe a group of websites that offer users the opportunity of connecting with friends and loved ones with the goal of sharing information, pictures and emotional feelings. Of recent, some have used it to advertise their wedding and other upcoming social events. Common social media sites include facebook, googleplus, twitter, and youtube. Others like myspace, linkedin and whatapps are gradually gaining grounds.

According to Labaran Maku in the just concluded 2013 National Council on Information meeting in Osun state, Nigeria. Over 40 million Nigerians are on the internet and about 26 million uses the social media actively. There is hardly any chief executive today in Nigeria that does not own either a twitter or Facebook account.

Christians too are not immune from entering the sites. Several Christians and their groups have found themselves on these media and are actively exploiting it to their advantage.

Below are possible ways we can preach the gospel to our teaming audience:

- **Website Evangelism:** This is a platform where both individuals and congregation can tap into and spread the gospel to the world. If one cannot afford a full-fledged website, then one can create a blog at wordpress.com or blogspot.com. This platform will allow the owner to publish evangelical lessons that can be tapped by both believers and unbelievers. Apart from deploying blogs, congregations can employ websites direct which can be powered to be interactive in nature. The World Bible School website is interactive. Below are powerful website that can really be of assistance to those interested in evangelizing via the internet:

[www.bible.ca](http://www.bible.ca), [www.thebible.net](http://www.thebible.net), [www.christiancourier.com](http://www.christiancourier.com),  
[www.gospelway.com](http://www.gospelway.com), [www.biblecalproof.wordpress.com](http://www.biblecalproof.wordpress.com),

- **Email Evangelism:** This type of evangelism requires the man of God to first have a list of recipients who have email accounts and uses these accounts regularly. Here the evangelist prepares powerful sermons each day and send to these recipients who in turn have a right of reply by way of questions. There is a simple way you can build your emailing list. A preacher can ask his members to request and get the email account of

their best friend for him to speak to them issues of salvation. He may also keep a form where all the visitors to that congregation are encouraged to fill for effective follow-up. Alternatively, he can advertise it on his social media platform. For now one brother Dave Hart is sustaining over 2000 email where he sends messages of salvation daily.

- **Social Media Evangelism:** The social media is a wide platform and I shall focus only on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube.
  - a. **Facebook** is fast becoming the major evangelical tool capable of harnessing all the tools of the internet into one platform. On Facebook, all one is required is to make as many friends as possible. Then preach to them on daily basis. This is achieved by posting lessons on your wall and be sure that all your friends will read it and be waiting for excellent replies as the discussion continues. On your wall you can upload pictures with powerful messages and you can as well connect to powerful brothers who post lessons and all you need to do is share the material and all your friends will get that message of that your friend as if you were the one posting the material. It is fun on Facebook.
  - b. **Twitter** is another platform that can be employed for evangelism. All that is required is for one to sign up for account and desire that people follow you. Once you have followers, the sky is your limit. Once you have a message, you can tweet it and all your followers will be alerted. The only limitation here is the length of the words. It cannot go beyond 140 letters. So you must be a person who can compress truth and deliver it brief. But again you can connect with a powerful twitter evangelist and simply be retweeting his tweets. The beauty is that all those following you will get the message.
  - c. **Youtube** is a little bit on the high platform. It require a little bit of technical expertise. This platform allows evangelists to use multimedia like video to speak to their audience. All that is needed is recording a 5 minutes lesson and uploading it online. The whole world can actually view that clip and make comments.
- **Bulk SMS Evangelism:** This is a new and beautiful platform that can be employed by faithful brethren and even congregation at large. Here, phone numbers of all visitors and even new converts are assembled and bulk SMS is bought online. The SMS service has the ability of sending one text message to over 500 persons at a go. A text message like this “wake up, today is the Lord’s Day and we expect you to come and fellowship with us at church of Christ, Ukpagaḁa, Ogoja where Mike Udam shall be ministering on “Our God is alive”. Worship starts by 9am”, can be sent to friends of the church, new

converts and visitors to come for service. It can be a powerful alert and reminder to refocus the soul of men to God.

Brethren, we can do a lot with the social media and the sky is our limit.

## CHAPTER 12

### CHRISTIAN AND THE ABUSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The internet is the greatest technological invention by man in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. One of the key components of the internet is the social media. Social media is a term generally used to describe a group of websites that offer users the opportunity of connecting with friends and loved ones with the goal of sharing information, pictures and emotional feelings. Of recent, some have used it to advertise their wedding and other upcoming social events. Common social media sites include Facebook, Google+, Twitter, and YouTube. Others like MySpace, LinkedIn and WhatsApps are gradually gaining grounds.

According to Labaran Maku in the just concluded 2013 National council on Information meeting in Osun state. Over 40 million Nigerian are on the internet and about 26 millions use the social media actively. There is hardly any chief executive today in Nigeria that does not own either a Twitter or Facebook account.

Christians too are not immune from entering the sites. Several Christians and their groups have found themselves on these media and are actively exploiting it to their advantage. Since the world has shifted to the social media, preachers have shifted their focus there too. Almost all major TV Evangelist and other pulpit evangelist equally have either a Facebook or Twitter account with a huge follower base. Sermons, evangelical stuff and quick tips are regularly published in a free for all social media.

However, a recent research has revealed that some brethren have gradually started to abuse this wonderful opportunity of reaching the lost.

In our lesson today, an attempt shall be made at x-raying the various channels in which Christian abuse the social media sometimes consciously and unconsciously.

1. **PUBLICATION OF FALSE DOCTRINE:** Because the internet is filled with all kinds of junks, some brethren in an attempt to preach lift and publish materials that are contrary

to the plain teachings of the Bible. Most even advocate the teaching of some notable “men of God” and advertised them on their walls. This single act is frowned at by 2Jn.1:9-10

2. **CLICKING “LIKE” OR “RETWEETING” ON A POST WITH FALSE TEACHING:** The way social media platforms are designed, an individual visiting the wall of a friend has several options opened to him. He either just read the post or give approval to it by “liking” it or “sharing” it with his own friends or “retweet it” if on twitter. So it is not only publishing false article that is wrong, liking and sharing it is equally wrong – Rom. 1:32.

3. **ABUSING THE CHURCH:** Most brethren are in the habit of openly abusing the plain teachings of the church. A brother queried why we will continue in the doctrine that was handed down to us by old school missionaries. In his opinion, it is time we think differently and shine our eyes. I wonder if that brother had read Gal. 1:6-9 and 1Tim. 4:16. Some call it “that Una Church of Christ Teaching Self”.

4. **CASTIGATING THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CONGREGATION:** Some brethren have made the social media an extension of their congregation’s family meeting. Issues that led to disagreement in the meeting are brought online and the leadership is ridiculed and brought to disrepute. This is contrary to Bible standards on conflict resolution as stated in Matt. 18:15-18. This even lead to the spreading of false news about certain individuals openly online. Just imagine how evangelism will be impeded by such acts.

5. **PROMOTING IMMORALITY:** When a Christian share a video or picture of a nude woman or that of a poorly clad women, he sends a message to his friend that he is comfortable with that pix or video. It will shock you to know that most posts on the walls of some brethren are not edifying at all. Rather it diminishes the light the individual ought to show to the dying world. Phil. 2:15 captures it all.

6. **QUARRELLING AND DISPUTING:** It is disheartening to see brethren quarrel and disagree fiercely over most of the time matters of opinion. Some have it as a habit to provoke others to anger with damaging comments. A study of Col. 4:6 and Eph. 4:29, when “word” translated to “comment”, we can see the danger of behaving like that. Even if we are contending for the truth, it must be done with humility and meekness.

### **EFFECT OF ABUSING THE SOCIAL MEDIA**

1. The true message is lost as great men promote false teaching.
2. Quarreling leads to hatred and instead of spending time to preach to the lost world, we will rather be seen dissipating energy amongst ourselves.
3. The goal of edification is diminished.

4. The gospel is thwarted.
5. The church is looked down upon by the world.

### **The Way Out**

1. Preachers, Elders and Deacons should all embrace the social media and be active to enable them monitor the activities of their members. It is simple. Just ask them to be your friend and all he does is seen by you.
2. Members should be taught that the church can discipline a member for comments and acts done online.
3. Members should be encouraged to conduct themselves in manner worthy of the gospel of Christ - Phil. 3:27.

## **CHAPTER 13**

### **WHEN AND HOW DO I FLEE FROM SIN?**

Sin is the end product of the devil twisting us. It is the product of temptation. Temptation in itself is not sin; it is yielding to it that is sin.

Today we want to explore ways and avenues to dodge and flee from sin. The timing is very important. Poor timing can lead to being entrapped. Recall that most bombs are timed. Therefore look at sin as a timed bomb. So if you don't notice it on time and flee, you will be trapped by the bomb when it explodes. Like the normal bomb, you may die flat, or sustained multiple injuries that may have a devastating consequence on your life.

#### **BIBLICALLY BASED ADVICE:**

**1. BE ON RED ALERT AND SHINE YOUR SENSES TO FORESEE IT COMING - 1PET. 5:8, PROV. 22:2**

**2. RECOGNIZE YOUR TENDENCY TOWARD SIN.**

[James 1:14](#) explains that we are tempted when we become enticed by our own natural desires. The first step toward avoiding temptation is recognizing our human tendency to be tempted by our own fleshly desires. Temptation is real, so don't be surprised by it. Rather, expect to be tempted. Be prepared for it.

**3. RUN AWAY FROM THE TEMPTATION.**

I love the New Living Translation of 1 Cor. 10:13. It says, "But remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it."

When you are face to face with temptation, look for the way out that God has promised and then run as fast as you can.

#### **4. RESIST WITH THE WORD OF TRUTH.**

[Hebrews 4:12](#) says God's Word is living and active. Did you know you can carry a weapon that will make your thoughts obey Jesus Christ? Read [2 Cor. 10:4-5](#). One of these weapons is the Word of God.

Though it can be helpful to read God's Word when you're being tempted, sometimes that's not practical. Even better is to practice reading the word daily, so that eventually you have so much of it inside, you are ready whenever temptation comes - John 15:7; Col. 3:16. If you are reading [through the Bible](#) regularly, you will have the full counsel of God at your disposal.

#### **5. REFOCUS WITH PRAISE.**

How often have you been tempted to sin when your heart and mind were fully concentrated on worship to the Lord? Praising God takes your focus off of yourself and puts it on God. You may not be strong enough to resist temptation on your own, but as you focus on God, he will inhabit your praise. He will give you the strength to resist and walk away from the temptation. May I suggest [Psalm 147](#) as a good place to start with.

#### **6. REPENT QUICKLY WHEN YOU FAIL.**

In several places, the Bible tells us the best way to resist temptation is to flee from it (1 Cor. 6:18; 10:14; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22). Yet see, we all fail from time to time. We fail to flee. Notice that I didn't say, [repent](#) quickly *if* you fail. Having a more realistic view-knowing that at times you will fail-should help you to repent quickly when you do. It is not the end of the world when you fail, but it is very dangerous to persist in your sin. Going back to James 1:15 which explains that sin "when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."

## **CHAPTER 14**

### **WHEN I AM ANGRY AS A CHRISTIAN**

Anger is an emotion often characterized by feelings of great displeasure, indignation, hostility, wrath and vengeance. Many times, reacting in anger is how we express our dissatisfaction with life. It's defined in the Greek language as the strongest of all passions. Anger begins with a feeling that is often expressed in words or actions. We feel something and it causes a reaction. The emotion of instant displeasure on account of something evil that presents itself to our view. In itself, it is an original susceptibility of our nature, just as love is, and is not necessarily sinful. It may, however, become sinful when causeless, or excessive, or protracted (Matt. 5:22; Eph. 4:26; Col. 3:8).

Anger in itself is not sin, but poor management of it leads us to so many sins.

#### **Roots of Anger Includes:**

- **Injustice** - when people mistreat us but there's nothing we can do about it, we get angry because we feel it isn't fair. As much as we would like to change the situation or the

person who's treating us badly, we cannot. People cannot change people; only God can change people. So it's best to put our energy into praying for the offender.

- **Strife** - which is hidden, repressed anger, begins with judgment, gossip, backbiting and thinking too highly of oneself. Strife is often exhibited in arguing, bickering, heated disagreements and angry undercurrents.
- **Impatience** - often produces anger when we cannot get what we want when we want it. When our progress is hindered or slowed down because of others, it's easy to become impatient. Most of us struggle with impatience on a daily basis simply because of today's fast-paced world.
- **Abuse of any kind** - sexual, physical, verbal, emotional or mental abuse almost always leads to anger. They're all injustices, which eventually leave the abused feeling helpless and angry. Abuse of any kind can't be ignored. We must deal with it and process it before we can get free of it.
- **Unmet needs** - can also produce anger. We all have needs that *can* and *should* be met by those closest to us; however, they don't know and understand our needs unless we communicate with them. But even then they may sometimes fail to meet our needs. Therefore, the answer is to go to God with our needs and not to other people.
- **Jealousy** - anger caused by jealousy was one of the first negative emotions mentioned in the Bible. Genesis 4 tells us that Cain killed his brother Abel because he was jealous to the point of being angry. Although this is one of the more extreme results of jealousy, it reminds us of how dangerous jealousy can be.

Here are four simple but effective things that all Christians need to do in order to be able to overcome. They apply to anger control too. They are:

- (1) Pray to God instantly when you find yourself tempted - before you actually sin;*
- (2) Pray regularly and at length at least once every day, in order to maintain a relationship with your heavenly Father;*
- (3) Study the Bible every day to learn and be reminded of His will; and*
- (4) Meditate often, focusing your thoughts on this specific subject of anger for several minutes, thinking about when you have lost your temper and picturing yourself doing better at anger management.*

Leave revenge in the hands of God – Ps. 94:1, Prov. 20:22; 24:29, Rom. 12:19, Heb. 10:30.

## **HOW DO I SPEAK WHEN I AM ANGRY**

The way and manner a Christian speaks must be consistently different from the way those who don't know Christ speak.

One basic focus in this lesson is to determine to what extent Christ has changed your life for the betterment of your family as you live with your spouse.

Quarrels are part and parcels of life because of our perceived differences and our inability to read each other's mind accurately. Our reaction during a quarrel is human.

1. But to what extent shall we speak?
2. What quality and quantity of words should people hear from my mouth during a quarrel?
3. How Christianly should I speak when I am angry?
4. Who do I resemble when I am speaking during a quarrel?
5. What is the place of a lie in my speech?
6. Is revenge hidden inside my speech?

**Col. 4:4** "That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man".

**Eccl. 10:12** "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself".

**Prov. 10:32** "The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh forwardness".

### **HOW THEN SHOULD I SPEAK?**

My speech should have the **TRUTH** component. Be sure to speak the truth at all times even during a quarrel.

My speech must have the **GRACE** component. Let me try not to hurt people's feeling during a quarrel. Truth hurts, but we must learn the Nathan method. Our listeners must feel the grace component in our speech.

My speech should have the **SALT** component. Even in rebuking, our listener must feel a sense of correction.

May the good Lord help us manage our word when we are angry not to sin against Him and those hearing us.

## **CHAPTER 15**

### **THE CHURCH AND DENOMINATIONS**

#### **SIMILARITIES**

Both use the same Bible with some having a special version or more books added.

Both worship God fervently.

Both claim God is with them and is blessing them.

Both teach and promote morality and respect for human lives.

Both receive members from each other regularly.

So what are their differences? Is the church the same as a denomination?

	THE CHURCH	DENOMINATIONS
1	The church is founded by Christ and he is the head of the church. Since he is in heaven, the headquarters of the church is in heaven - Matt 16:18, 1Cor. 3:11; Eph. 5:23; Col. 3:2	Founded and headed by the visioner or general overseers. It usually has earthly headquarters where the general overseer/founder stays
2	The church listens to Christ only as the law giver for the church. Its doctrine is called doctrine of Christ - Heb. 3:1-6; 2John 9	They usually listen to Christ and their founder who sometimes is seen as speaking for Christ. Sometimes Christ is reduced to second place – Eph. 4:14; 2 Pet. 3:17).
3	The church holds the bible as its ONLY source from which religious authority is derived - 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Pet. 1:3; John 12:48.	They don't completely rely on the bible as the only authority in religious matters. Catechism, manuals, conventions, and canon resolution form a base from which their doctrine is drawn. Sometimes the plain teaching of the bible is rejected and replaced with man's voice - 1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 2:1-4).
4	Each congregation is autonomous and self-governing with elders and deacons - Titus 1:5, Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1-2	Congregations are arranged in a hierarchical system with the headquarters at the top. Then diocese or district or regions. One leader is over a district or zone or diocese in that order
5	Doctrinal error once spotted is immediately corrected in that local congregation - Act 18:24	Doctrinal error even when spotted requires the approval and consent of the church founder/owner before any change can be effected if at all - 1Tim 4:1-3; 2Tim 4:3
6	Worship is in line with God's directives - John 4:23-24	Worships as she likes with man's doctrine taking the center stage - Matt 15:7-9
7	It all started in Jerusalem as prophesied by Christ and other prophets - Dan 2:44, Acts 1:4,8; Mark 9:1	Starts wherever the founder so decides.
8	The church relies much on the New Testament for its guide and doctrine – Rom. 15:4; 1Cor. 10:1-10	Select from both testaments key doctrinal issues that appeals to them.

## **IS ONE CHURCH AS GOOD AS ANOTHER?**

Would you agree that:

1. A church which teaches error is not as good as a church that teaches the truth (John 8:32)
2. A church that teaches part of the truth is not as good as a church which teaches all the truth (Acts 20:27),
3. A church that changes God's plan of salvation is not as good as a church which upholds the plan of salvation (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38).
4. A church that adds or subtracts from God's word is not as good as one that doesn't (Revelation 22:18, 19).

The church is Noah's Ark today; you are either inside or outside.

## **CHAPTER 16**

### **ATTITUDES TO DEVELOP FOR THE CHURCH TO MOVE FORWARD**

The church is one of the institutions created by God that shall last till eternity and is a vehicle for the display and propagation of His manifold wisdom to the world - Eph 3:10. The church is made up of the called out, a chosen people, saints and a royal priesthood - 1Pet.2:9.

So members ought to constantly develop some attitudes that will move the church forward.

It can logically be deduced that if these attitudes are lacking, the church will be moving backward. In this lecture, I shall quickly and briefly pick out essential attitudes that we need to develop compulsorily if we want the church to feel our impact and as a result move to the next level.

A good study of Ephesians 4: 11-14 shows that there is an expected point we ought to attain. A point, according to Paul, we will no longer be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.

It is important to note here that God is the headmaster of the church that will give a church pass mark or failure. We can only observe that the church is moving forward when maybe before God that congregation is standing in one place and vice-versa.

So as young people, our concentration today on taking a quantum leap into the scriptures to see what attitudes we ought to possess and develop to maturity if we want

the church to move forward.

If you already have them, we thank God for you and request that you keep them up. But in case you are lacking, here is a list of attitude we ought to have.

**1. THE ATTITUDE OF STUDYING THE SCRIPTURES DAILY AND INVESTIGATINGLY (Acts 17:11, Ps. 1:1-4, Joshua 1:8-10)**

A Christian youth must make it a priority to study the Bible well because it is the only guide to heaven. The way Stephen spoke of events of some thousands of year ago before the Jews before he was stoned to death suggested that he must have been taught by his dad well in line with Jewish tradition and must have himself been well read in the scriptures. For you to preach convincingly in a world where denominations have modified the truth so much that it is difficult to distinguish truth from error requires additional study skills. An attitude of personal study is a tool needed by everyone.

*Please note this point:* God only reward those who DILIGENTLY seek Him. The Bible itself says we should study to show ourselves approved as workmen not ashamed to handle the word of truth - 2 Tim. 2:15.

**2. ATTITUDE OF GIVING UNTO THE LORD AND HIS PEOPLE - Acts 20:35**

Right from today, please make it a point of duty to give.

- Give your time
- Give your resources
- Give your talent
- Give to humanity for God.

When you truly develop an attitude of giving unto the Lord for His work, and give to the less privileged, He will truly keep you in His good books. Prov.19:17 "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will He pay him again".

**3. ATTITUDE OF SUBMISSIVENESS TO THE WILL OF GOD ALWAYS – Rom. 12:1-2**

The degree of submission to the will of God depends greatly on your attitude towards His directives. Do your best not to conform to the pattern of this world. From the choice of your friends to even your dressing should show an attitude of submissiveness. This submissive attitude will make you truly call Him your shepherd and you a sheep. The Macedonians submitted themselves willingly to the Lord - 2Cor. 8:5 and this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you – Jas. 4:7.

**4. ATTITUDE OF DEMONSTRATING A WILLINGNESS TO SERVE**

As a young man or woman in the church let the attitude of Isaiah and Paul be your guide.

We should make ourselves available for service.

**Isa. 6:8:** Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

**Eph. 6:7:** With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

**1Cor. 15:58:** Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

## **5. ATTITUDE OF EVANGELISM**

The command in Matthew 28:18-20 should be seen as a personal directive not a group issue or the minister only. The desire to go out for evangelism is propelled by the volume of Bible knowledge at your disposal. We are warned by 1Peter 3:15 to be ready always to give an answer concerning our faith.

There are some other attitudes that bother on our human nature like attitude of loving one another, the attitude of seeing the good of other, the attitude of being a team player and the attitude of thinking ahead in line with the direction of the church.

I will conclude with this summary passage from Peter in 2Pet. 1:2-9:

*“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins”.*

## **CHAPTER 17**

### **MY DUTIES TO THE CHURCH**

The church is different from all other organizations. It was founded by the Son of God; they were founded by human beings. The church is sacred, having cost the blood of Jesus (Acts 20:28). Other institutions and organizations are in no way her equal. My greatest privilege in this life is to be a disciple of Jesus and a member of his church (Matt. 16:18).

*With this privilege come responsibilities:*

**I.** I must appreciate the importance of the church, her sacredness and purity, her destiny. If I fail to do so I will never fulfill my duties to her. God adds all whom He saves to Christ's Church (Acts 2:47). Her price is far above rubies.

**II.** I must understand the church. The only source of certain information I have regarding the church is in the Bible. The Old Testament prophesied of her coming. The New Testament tells of her establishment, organization, worship and doctrine. Thus I will be a serious and diligent student of the Holy Book (2Tim. 2:15).

**III.** I must love the church as I love Jesus her founder, head and savior (Eph. 1:22; 5:23). She is the bride of Christ, His spiritual body, His kingdom and His family. My love must be such that I will gladly give of myself to advance her interests. I will willingly place her above all other earthly concerns (Matt. 6:33)

**IV.** I must be willing to work and serve as a member of the church. The church has a divinely given mission (Matt. 28:19-20; Jas. 1:27) and I will be first to volunteer to help her accomplish it. No task is too lowly for me.

**V.** I will support the church with my material wealth so she can have the necessary means to conduct her business. I will do so without desiring praise or recognition for so doing (2 Cor. 9:6-8; 12:15).

**VI.** I must be willing to defend the church against enemies who assay to do her harm (Phil. 1:16). I will rebuke those who speak evil of her. I will do battle with those who would corrupt her faith or worship (Jude 3). I will not desert her when she is weak or under attack. Her hurts will be my hurts.

**VII.** I must strive never to cause shame or embarrassment to the Lord's church. Just as a responsible person does not wish to bring shame to his family, so the faithful Christian will do his best to live a sober, righteous and godly life that will be a credit to the church (Titus 2:12).

### **SO IT IS POSSIBLE I CAN DESTROY THE CHURCH**

If you would like to kill the work of your local congregation, then I have the perfect plan:

1. Skip services often and encourage others to skip, too.

2. When you do attend, come in late and cause a little disturbance. While there, take a good nap.
3. Always be critical and nit-picky.
4. Never volunteer to help, but always complain about the way the volunteers are doing things.
5. Even though you don't want to volunteer, still act annoyed and pull out when you don't get an important job.
6. If asked directly to give your opinion, act like you don't have one. Later, get on the phone and tell others how things should have been done in the first place.
7. Never do more than absolutely necessary, and then accuse those who are doing the work of being a clique.
8. Withhold your contribution and tell-others why you don't think they should support the work either.
9. When you do volunteer for a job, just do a halfhearted mediocre job.
10. Never compliment or encourage any of the members.
11. Don't bother with converting anyone, but if you do, then make sure that they are as negative and disruptive as you are.
12. Every time you hear some juicy gossip, be sure to tell everyone you can. After all, it is your duty to proclaim the truth. Your brethren have a right to know.

**Mark White**

## **CHAPTER 18**

### **WHAT OF JUST ONE BOTTLE?**

*What of just one bottle? No sir,*

**I Am To Be Filled With The Spirit and Not With Alcoholic Beverages.**

I Corinthians 6:12 tells us that we are not to "be brought under the power" or to be controlled by anything. The only exception is the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 5:18)

Alcohol is clearly a powerful substance (Proverbs 23:35). Because alcohol is addictive, we should choose not to drink alcoholic beverages.

*What of just one bottle? No sir,*

**It will Destroy My Body** - 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19-20

The first effect of alcohol on the brain is to dull the capacity for self-criticism and the sense of caution. A lessening of care and anxiety follows this. The checks on

irresponsibility and unreasonable behavior are also curtailed. Actions follow the impulses, which is dangerous. Reaction time becomes slower; coordination is disturbed; drowsiness follows. Prov. 23:29-33

Alcohol dehydrates (robs) your body of its precious water supply and along with the water goes vital nutrients such as "B vitamins, calcium, magnesium and potassium."

According to Good Housekeeping "Even in moderate amounts alcohol has noticeable effects on the body. Because it enters the blood stream it touches almost every organ, and its effects on feelings and behavior are well known."

Alcohol has adverse effects on your esophagus, stomach & intestines, bloodstream, pancreas, liver, heart, bladder, kidneys, glands and your brain.

"The most drastic and noticed effect of alcohol is the brain. It depresses brain centers, progressively produces incoordination, confusion, disorientation, stupor, anesthesia, coma, death. Alcohol kills brain cells, and brain damage is permanent" (From the Office of Highway Safety, Madison, WI)

As believers, our body belongs to the Lord. We should not knowingly do anything that would harm it. Alcohol harms the body; therefore we should not drink alcohol.

*What of just one bottle* No sir,

**It will Destroy My Influence**

Romans 14:21 says "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to "to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."

The problem is, drinking often sets off a chain reaction of influences that are like tipping over the first domino. Drinking causes some to stumble, others to be offended, and many to be weakened. Studies support my statement.

According to a survey done by the Daily Journal Newspaper, October 26, 1988, one of the top five reasons teenagers drink is because their parents drink. This has proven true time and time again.

Let me take it one step further. Parents, you must remember that whatever you do in moderation your child will likely do in excess.

The Bible clearly defines drinking as an activity that is to be foregone because it causes others to stumble and makes them weak (fall into sin).

*What of just one bottle?* No sir,

**It is the Foundation Block of Drunkenness**

**Isaiah 5:11** - "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!"

**Proverbs 23:20** - "Be not among winebibbers;"

**Romans 13:13** - "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting (drunken partying) and drunkenness (general drunken-ness)..."

**Galatians 5:19A, 21** - "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these...drunkenness..."

**Ephesians 5:18** - "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;"

*Drunkards are among the list of those who will not inherit the Kingdom of God (Heaven) - 1 Cor.6:9-10.*

You cannot get around it, and in fact, all godly men agree that the Bible condemns drunkenness. Drunkenness is a serious matter. One bottle of beer down is one beer drunk.

*What of just one bottle? No sir,*

### **Kings and Royal People were banned from Taking It**

"The prophets, the kings, the Nazarites, the leaders - those who were special in the plan of God were total abstainers" says Dr. Paul Dixon, and he is correct. Kings and public officials were not to drink (Proverbs 31:4-5). Further Dr. Dixon says "the priests of the Old Testament were to abstain totally." The Aaronic priests were not to drink because they ministered in the tabernacle before the Lord (Leviticus 10:9)

**The application:** Believers are a "royal" or kingly priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). We are the temple of God (1 Peter 2:5). We are God's special children and should choose total abstinence.

Drinking, even social drinking cannot be legitimately supported by the Bible. Every drink that is available today, even beer, falls into the category of unmixed or strong drink. Clearly, Christians should not drink alcoholic beverages. Drinking socially is a worldly activity and in light of the fact that believers are neither to be conformed to the world (Romans 12:2) nor love the world (I John 2:15) our choice should be clear. We ARE to be **Separate from the World** (2 Corinthians 6:17) and **Light to the World** (Eph. 5:8; Phil. 2:15). Perhaps social drinking has enhanced the acceptability of Christians in society, but it has not advanced the cause of Christ, and it does not glorify God! Social drinking is simply a means which the devil uses to blunt our testimony for Christ and squeeze us into his mold.

*What of just one bottle? No sir,*

I can do without it. It adds nothing to me but takes away so much. Don't ask me again. If you are not satisfied, do what you like. I believe in Psalms 1:1-4.

## **CHAPTER 19**

### **TAKING THE FIRST STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION**

It is God's desire that his children marry each other - Gen 2:18. Within the limit of the bible, marriage is conducted within the cultural setting of the people. We have it on record that Abraham married for his son Isaac - Gen 24:1-55.

Using that single bible story, we can deduce the following facts:

- Parents are usually interested in their children settling down,
- Parents sometimes have influential powers over the choice of the place or origin of the spouse, vs 37,38
- Everybody can choose his style of selecting a mate, vs 43
- The male family pay the female family for the woman of their choice and possess her forever, vs 53
- Feasting usually is accompanied, whether low or high keyed, vs 54
- The woman for marriage is then prepared and handed over to the man. Vs 55

A critical study of the bible reveals that men paid a lot to get their women to be wives.

1. Adam paid with a rib bone to marry Eve – Gen. 2:21-22
2. Jacob worked for 14 years to marry Rachel – Gen. 29:18,27
3. David paid for Saul's daughter 200 foreskins of men - 2Sam. 18:25-27

Today we are logically bound by the culture of the people we are in but moderated by the scriptures when we want to marry.

All known culture requires a man to pay a token for their beloved bride. I have not yet seen where people in bible days married on credit. Some have hidden in the principle of consent. They argue that if the father of the girl is not worried about receiving anything, then nobody should.

Some started the marriage in cohabitation with the belief that one day they will pay when their hand is strong.

The bible does not seem to know how to classify these people.

- Can we say they are married?
- If the man later decides to marry another woman tomorrow, is this first arrangement binding to prevent him from marrying another?
- What of the children in this marriage? Can the man take bride price if somebody wants to marry them, when ab initio, he had not paid.
- Can the woman benefit from the assets of the man after death of the man?

Brethren, Christians are warned not to conform to the pattern of this world - Rom. 12:2, Phil. 2:15 caps it all.

We are to walk as children of light – Eph. 5:18 and indeed are letters that are read by all mankind - 2Cor. 3:2.

Let us marry as true Christians and not live in fornication and call it marriage. God does not approve trial marriages, testing, cohabitation and credit marriage/Hire purchase.

## CHAPTER 20

### POINTS TO NOTE BEFORE TAKING THE FIRST STEP

Marriage is a beautiful institution designed by God to make man complete here on earth - Gen. 2:18. It is a union of two opposite persons from two different families with two different moral and emotional upbringings. So as young people who may one day or very soon get into it, I have decided to offer you some tips I consider vital to your success in this all important institute.

**1. Weigh the thickness of your moral fiber - 2Cor. 13:5, 1Cor. 11:28.**

Are you firm morally and spiritually to go invite someone else's daughter into your home to accompany you to heaven? By the way, what do you know about the meaning and functionality of marriage? So a good start is to invest your time now to know Christ well and His teachings, so that you can use it later when you finally step in. ***ANY MAN NOT MORALLY STRONG AND STEPS INTO MARRIAGE HAS NEGOTIATED WITH THE DEVIL TO FAIL HIM.***

**2. Weigh the strength of your pocket:**

Weigh the strength of your pocket not to only foot the bill of the marriage ceremony, but to sustain the marriage after all the well-wishers are gone. Do you have enough shoulders to cater for the needs of a woman? Supposing as you enter into marriage, your first 10 months bring forth a baby, can you cope with the increased responsibilities that shall rest on you? Think well before making up your mind. Don't allow the breeze of excitement blow you in. ***ANY MAN WHO GOES INTO MARRIAGE WITH THE HOPE OF HIS FAMILY NEEDS SHALL BE TAKEN CARED OF BY HIS PARENTS OR FRIENDS HAS NEGOTIATED WITH THE DEVIL TO FAIL HIM.***

**3. Define what you want.**

What is the main thing that captivates you in a woman? Most youths don't have idea about what they really want. This story will drive home my point. A friend had actually loved to be married to a tall slim woman who is spiritually sound. He now met a beautiful short and influential singer and was carried away into marriage. A few years later, he now saw a sister that actually fitted his mould of woman he ought to have married. From that day on, his emotions were disturbed and so sad to say, a foundation for extra marital activity was laid. His marriage crashed.

My dear young ones, just sit back relax and tell yourselves the truth. You know exactly what you like and I can assure you it is available. Jacob wanted Rachel and so worked hard for another 7 years to possess her - Gen. 29:18, 20. ***ANY MAN WHO GOES INTO***

***MARRIAGE WITH A WOMAN NOT LIKE HIS ORIGINAL MOULD HAS NEGOTIATED WITH THE DEVIL TO FAIL HIM.***

**4. Weigh the quantity of love you have for your intended.**

Research has shown that most young people have sufficient love for their intended before marriage and soon after marriage; the love disappears or gradually fades away. My findings from a cross section of married people indicates that most people were just “wildly captivated by the beauty of the woman” and jumped into marriage. After enjoying the dividends of marriage and discovered that beauty alone cannot hold, a crack is formed and the devil enlarges the crack day by day till the marriage collapse. ***IF YOU DON'T WANT YOUR MARRIAGE TO FAIL, MARRY A WOMAN YOU LOVE SO MUCH AND WILL LOVE LIKE THAT TILL DEATH SEPERATES ONE OF YOU.***

**5. Run a SWOT analysis of this your intended.**

Are you willing to cope for eternity of some of the unchangeable character that she has now that you have not entered inside? How much of her do you know? Some make the mistake of rushing to know her sexually thus offending God and get their reasons blinded from seeing other vital points to note. From the bible stand point, *SEX IS EXCLUDED IN PRE-MARITAL ANALYSIS*. The reason is given in 1Cor. 6:18. Don't mind the world who advocate for “testing”. Sex is the main hub and lubricant of marriage. If you, while unmarried get involved in it, what will motivate you into marriage seeing you are already in possession of what those inside marriage ought to have exclusive right? So look at the woman again more carefully. *ANALYSE HER SPIRITUAL STATUS FROM A MAN'S EYE VIEW, WHAT IS HER MORAL STAUS, WEIGH HER PURITY LEVEL, ASSESS HER APPEARANCE AND COMPORTMENT, PHYSICAL HEALTH ANALYSIS (HIV, BLOOD GROUP AND GYNOTYPE) AND HER KITCHEN ABILITY*. Can you make this all important journey with her as your companion forever? If your test results are ok, then go ahead - Amos 3:3. ***ANY MAN WHO DOES NOT RUN THE TEST WELL HAS NEGOTIATED WITH THE DEVIL TO FAIL HIM.***

**6. Submit your desire before God and wait patiently as events unfolds.**

Pray and even fast because your journey to heaven can be marred by the choice of life partner. It is one of your major choices you must make in this planet earth. God knows all and shall give us our heart desires if it pleases Him - Prov. 16:1-3.

**7.** For young women, one fundamental issue to consider is if you are willing to go with this man forever, meaning you are ready to submit to his leadership at all times (Gen 3:16, 2 Cor. 11:3). Nothing is wrong in running the above analysis on the man you intend to marry.

*Marriage is interesting. It is more interesting if you marry your friend. It is exciting if you marry a friend who is a Christian. It is captivating and refreshing if you marry a faithful Christian. It is heaven on earth if you sort out things prayerfully before stepping into marriage.*

I wish you good luck.

## **CHAPTER 21**

### **LAYING A GOOD FOUNDATION**

A foundation is a solid basement that supports a structure. A foundation is the lowest and supporting layer of a structure. Foundations are generally divided into two categories: *shallow foundations and deep foundations*. From the biblical standpoint a good foundation is best describes as one that is based on listening and practicing what one hears.

A good foundation is one that is firm and even when pressure comes will be able to withstand - Lk. 6:45-49.

#### **Ingredients of a Good Foundation**

Col.3:16, Acts 17:11, 2Tim. 2:15, 1Pet 2:2, Heb. 5:12-13, Jas. 1:21-25, Rom. 12:1-2, Eph. 5:8, 1Pet. 2:5

- A good foundation will be laid when I make my devotion a regular activity with my family well fed.
- A good foundation will be laid when I change my attitude towards my husband or wife.
- A good foundation is laid when my giving to the Lord and others increase with increased blessing.
- A good foundation will be laid when I set my priorities right.
- What foundation are you laying? Are you like the Bereans (Acts 17:11) who “received the message with great eagerness and examined the scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true”?
- Is your foundation laid on the truth of the scripture or is it upon the philosophies and traditions of men? Col. 2:8
- Are you praying each day that those appointed to preach and teach will not be ‘blind guides’ to you?
- Just remember that our Lord taught that our eternal destiny depends upon a proper response to *His revelation*, not the ‘traditions of men’.

#### **Fundamental Question to Ask When Laying A Good Foundation**

- What am I living for? Spirituality or materialism or a balance remembering there is time for everything? Ecl.3:1
- What prompted God to spare my life?
- What is exactly my goal in life?
- What method am I using to do things?
- Doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result is bad thinking. If you repeat exactly what you did last year, you will arrive at the same result.

May God help us to start well this year by laying a good foundation that will keep us fit for the race we are running in Jesus Christ Name...Amen

## **CHAPTER 22**

### **HOW ABOUT SAME SEX MARRIAGE?**

Same sex relationships involves people of the same sex (man & man/woman & woman) having sexual intercourse and then extending into a marriage relationship. In some countries in the world, it is an approved norm.

So today we want to look at the Bible and see if God had at any time approved or condone same sex marriage.

It is good for us to explore this topic since the breeze of homosexuality is gradually coming into Nigeria and as such there is need to insulate the brethren from the wiles of the devil.

- **Old Testament references**

- a. The Sodom and Gomorrah incident - Gen 19:1-13
- b. The Levitical prohibition - Lev 18:22; 20:13
- c. The Gibeah incident - Judges 19:15-25
- d. The perverted persons (male temple prostitutes) - 1 Kgs. 14:24

- **New Testament references**

- a. Women and men committing acts against nature - Rom. 1:26-27
- b. Practicing homosexuals and sodomites will not inherit the kingdom - 1Cor. 6:9-10
- c. Sodomites (those who practice homosexuality) contrary to sound doctrine - 1Tim. 1:10
- d. Reference to Sodom and Gomorrah, going after 'strange flesh' - Jude 1:7

**Summary:**

1. God determines what constitutes a proper marriage, not man.
2. Marriage throughout the Bible is always between a man and woman.
3. There is not one mention regarding same-sex marriage (though the practice was known among the Gentiles).
4. There is no teaching on how same-sex marriages work (who is the head? Who is to submit?)

5. Same-sex marriage is totally foreign to the Bible, and to the doctrine of Christ...

a. The only marriage approved of God is between male and female - Matt. 19:1-6

b. All mention of same-sex relationships in the Bible are condemned

6. The sanctity of marriage has long been under attack...

Same-sex marriage is only the latest attack; it probably won't be the last.

Our prayers are that we embrace the truth and allow it to set us free.

## CHAPTER 23

### THE CHRISTIAN AS LIGHT

Once a person becomes a Christian, the indwelling Holy Spirit begins to glow from the inside of the new creature and it is seen in the life of the Christian.

As the Christian grows in faith consequent upon his hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17) and deciding to build his faith on it (1Pet. 2:2), the light in him should also grow brightly to be seen by all.

No wonder Christ describes us as the light of the world and consequently demands that our light shine before all men.

*Matt. 5:14-16 "Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven".*

Apostle Paul equally added flavor to the teaching on Christian being light in *Phil. 2:15: that ye may become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world.*

Writing to the brethren at Ephesus, Paul added another twist of expectation. *Eph 5:8: For ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light.*

So what is expected of me in this light shining lesson?

My life must reflect the entire teachings I have received as I put it into practice.

My family must show our neighbours that we are custodians of the truth, not by being conversant with Bible passages but by being the Bible passages ourselves.

My wife and I must show a consistent picture of the quality of God's word that we have received as we manage our misunderstanding without attracting public disgrace to ourselves and the Church.

My colleagues must see Christ in me well reflected and I being driven by the love of the Gospel to live for Christ alone. *Phil. 1:21 "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain".*

The one carrying a lamp is usually in front. He is the point man in the journey and so must be right at the front leading others to Christ.

Take one minute to evaluate yourself: *AM I TRULY LIVING AS A LIGHT TO MY COMMUNITY? IS MY LIFE A GOOD EYE SIGHT FOR MY COMMUNITY TO SEE AND BEHOLD?*

**1John 2:9** *He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now.*

**1Pet. 2:12** *Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation*

**2Cor. 8:21** *Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.*

May we surrender ourselves to Him so that he will empower us to shine as light around where we live to radiate the beauty of the Christian life to a world confused by the evil one. Amen.

### **Wait a minute! Impediments to shining as light**

1. Bad company - 1Cor. 15:33;
2. Lack of involvement in the things of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).
3. Staining your hands with immorality.

You can either pull your friend to God or they will pull you to the Devil. In other words, if you cannot win them for Christ, you will join them for the devil. Apart from being the light of the world, a Christian is the salt of the earth. Discover this in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 24

### THE CHRISTIAN AS SALT

Matt. 5:13 *Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

To understand the lesson more clearly we will concentrate basically on the characteristics of salt:

1. **It dissolves quickly and easily in water.** Christians ought to easily mix up with fellow humans not looking at themselves as superior or highly placed (Rom. 12:3). *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*
2. **It easily changes the taste of the water it has dissolved to taste like it.** Christians ought to change the people they mix up with to the taste they (Christians) have. This aspect of the salt is vital because the main duty of the Christian is to positively influence his peers for Christ. Luke 14:34: ***Salt is good: but if the salt has lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?*** It is rather unfortunate that most Christians today allow the world to influence them. Instead of showing the way, we are being shown the way by the world.
3. **Salt is a preservative.** Christians ought to preserve the ancient landmark of the truth and follow same till the end of their sojourn here on earth. Christians ought to preserve relationships and sow peace everywhere they find themselves. Rom. 14:19: *Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.* Mk 9:50: ***Salt is good: but if the salt has lost his saltiness, wherewith will ye season it?*** Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.
4. **Salt makes food taste better.** Christians ought to make their friends and neighbours see the need to serve God in the way they conduct themselves. Their life should be a good taste to the admiration of the onlookers. A soup rich in palm oil can be easily noticed, but the one rich in salt requires tasting before coming to conclusion. A Christian life worthy of the gospel is a well-seasoned life. Phil. 1:27 *Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;*

Because salt is hidden internally, it only requires tasting to know its quality. One major way that we will taste the salt in you is how you react to issues in words and in deeds.

*Col. 4:6: Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*

Watch your actions at all times. Be careful what you say when you are angry, you could destroy a solid friendship with one word spoken in a reverse order. *Prov. 12:18 There are some whose uncontrolled talk is like the wounds of a sword, but the tongue of the wise makes one well again.* Be careful what you say when you are excited and happy. Herod got excited and promised half of his kingdom and anything he could do at the request of the dancer, the result was John the baptizer's head on a platter.

*Prov. 25:11 A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.*

Therefore, dear reader, learn to carefully choose your words in every situation, whether in anger or in happiness. Think of the effects which your words will create in your listener and always remember as a Christian, your words must be seasoned with salt, aiming at edification and encouragement. We pause here on this quality of salt to begin that of a public letter. Kindly read on.

## CHAPTER 25

### THE CHRISTIAN AS LETTER

*You yourselves are our letter, whose writing is in our heart, open for every man's reading and knowledge; For you are clearly a letter of Christ, the fruit of our work, recorded not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in stone, but in hearts of flesh - 2Cor. 3:2-3.*

A Christian is a letter that is read by all men.

**They read your character** Phil. 1:27 - your character can easily tell the world the stuff you are made of. By their fruits you will recognise them – Matt. 7:16.

**They read your speech** Col. 4:6 - your speech gives a picture of your personality. You are either taken seriously or lightly based on your speech. *Excellent speech is not becoming to a fool, much less lying lips to a prince – Prov. 17: 7 (Gideon Bible).*

**They read your dressing** 1Tim. 2:9-10 – your dressing tells exactly as you are addressed. It speaks volume about your personality. In Prov. 8:10, a prostitute is easily identified by her attire. By implication, you may not be one, but if your attire depicts you as such, so your readers will interpret you.

**They read your view of life** Col. 3:2 – your view of life is moulded by the volume of the Word of God contained in you - Col. 3:16. *Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it spring the issues of life - Prov. 4:23.*

**They read your interest in God and His precepts** Mark 12:30-33 - your interest level involves them to investigate you. A woman noticed light showers of rain on a Sunday morning and decided to stay away from service. When the son questioned her action, she pointed to the sky. Two days later, that same type of shower started, she demanded that the son accompany her to a farm. Interestingly, the son pointed out to the sky indicating the rain.

Accordingly, people constantly read the changes in your life occasioned by the teachings you have received.

*But be doers of the word, and not only hearers of it, blinding yourselves with false ideas - James 1:22.*

So live your life every day, every moment, knowing somebody is reading you as a letter. You either lead him to heaven or drive her away to hell by your readable letter. Next in our discourse is your personality as a role model. Please discover more on this.

## CHAPTER 26

### THE CHRISTIAN AS A ROLE MODEL AND MENTOR

The moment an individual becomes a Christian, he is an immediate model to motivate others to come to Christ. His lifestyle must reflect the teachings he has received and steadily he will grow to maturity when he will no longer be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine – Eph. 4:14-15.

No wonder Christ refers to him as the *salt* and *light* of his world – Matt. 5:13-16.

But there is another huge responsibility he has requested us to play so that Christianity and leadership will not end in our time. We will need to formally and informally train up somebody to replace us at our death - 2Tim. 2:2.

From the *Old Testament*, we see Moses choose Joshua as his personal assistant. At the death of Moses, Joshua confidently stepped in and led the Israelites to the Promised Land. A good study of Joshua Chapter 1 will reveal how Moses advised Joshua in the area of leadership.

In the *New Testament*, we easily come across Peter and John Mark (1Pet. 5:13), as well as Paul and Timothy (1Tim. 1:2).

So it is important to know from today that it is our responsibility to bring somebody up in the Vineyard of the Lord or submit ourselves to be brought up under the mentorship of someone older in faith than we.

The big question today is how many persons have you positively mentored since you became a Christian?

Your life is either a motivating model pointing people to Christ your own or a dirty example stopping onlookers from seeing the beauty of Christ in you.

What are you waiting for? Choose someone right now in your midst and the programme will start immediately. However, the lessons next chapter will guide you better in this noble and self-imposed-but-very-rewarding adventure.

Just reflect on the wording of this song just for a minute and you will understand the flow of the lesson.

*“Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me, All His wonderful passion and purity, Oh, Thou Spirit divine, all my nature refine, Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.” (Albert Orsborn/Tom M. Jones)*

## CHAPTER 27

### THE TONGUE OF A CHRISTIAN

All Christians must constantly remember that:

1. They are the light of the world – Matt. 5:14;
2. They are the salt of the earth – Matt. 5:13;
3. They are letters read by all men - 2Cor. 3:2;
4. They are models and solid examples - 1Tim. 4:12.

On the strength of these basic foundation blocks above,

**1. The Christian must not be quick to speak.**

*Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath - Jas. 1:19.*

**2. The Christian must control the volume of words he speaks. The lesser the better.**

*In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise - Pr 10:19. And a fool's voice is known by multitude of words – Ecl. 5:3.*

**3. If at all he will want to speak, it must be that which shall minister grace to the hearer.**

*Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers – Eph. 4:29.*

*Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks – Eph. 5:4.*

*But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth – Col. 3:8.*

**4. His speech must be edifying and seasoned with salt.**

*Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man (Col. 4:6). The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious (Ecl. 10:12).*

**5. He must be always in the know that he shall give account of the careless words he speaks**

*But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment – Matt. 12:36.*

**6. His word could land him in everlasting trouble**

*For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned – Matt. 12:37*

## Summary

The greatest Christian on earth is the greatest manager of his words.

**Jas 3:2** *For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body – Prov. 25:11.*

**Prov. 15:23** *A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!*

Knowing what to say, how to say it and when to say it places us higher above all our peers.

**Isa. 50:4** *The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary:*

For me I will say, speak less, speak words seasoned with salt, speak gracefully and right on the point. Do not speak simply because others are speaking and they are speaking about that issue in that manner. Mark you, so many will comfortably go to hell because of their foul tongues. Besides, it is much more beneficial to listen and think well before you speak in all occasions. In line with this truth, Larry King said, ***“I remind myself every morning: Nothing I say this day will teach me anything. So if I’m going to learn, I must do it by listening.”*** So let us prayerfully learn to say in all circumstances what God wants us to say, for the edification of our hearers and to His glory – Exo. 4:12, Lk. 12:12, Jn.12:49.

Now pause and reflect on this, does it pay these days to lead an impeccably honest life? Is integrity your enviable attribute as a Christian? The following segment engages you on this aspect of Christian personality.

## CHAPTER 28

### THE CHRISTIAN AS AN HONEST PERSON

The world is in short supply of honest people. Most who are dishonest attend one church or the other. In all of human transactions from one field of human endeavour to another, the need to have honest people is inevitable. Just imagine how you would react if your bank lied about your account balance. Just imagine how you would react if the hospital lab attendant lied about your lab result. Just imagine how you would feel if you later discovered that you had been deceived all the way by religious business men in the name and guise of a pastor.

If indeed you are prepared to be a Christian, then you must do all at your disposal to ensure that you are honest and indeed seen to be honest. The Bible is not silent at all concerning this vital ingredient necessary for our journey to heaven. Honesty was one of the qualities required for selecting elders in the Old Testament – Exo. 18:21. God commanded the Israelites to be honest – Lev. 19:11,12, 35. God even commanded traders to have accurate measuring instruments – Deut. 25:13, 15-16, Prov. 11:1. Dishonesty, therefore, was seen by God as an abomination – Deut. 25:16.

Besides, kings expected their subjects to deal honestly in all their reports (1Kings 22:16). Dishonest people were an abomination to be seen in the temple of the Lord – (Ps 101:7). An honest person is viewed as a righteous person (Prov. 12:17, 22; 16:8). God spoke against dishonesty through the prophets (Isa. 33:15, Amos 8:5, Micah 6:10-12).

Furthermore, in the New Testament, the principle of honesty in peoples' lifestyle is emphasised. For instance, John the baptizer spoke against dishonesty (Lk. 3:12-13). Similarly, as it was the case in selecting elders in the Old Testament, honesty was one of the qualifications in choosing the deacons of the Church in Acts 6:3:

*Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of **honest report**, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business... (sic) (KJV).*

Accordingly, Apostle Paul wrote a lengthy thesis on honesty (Rom. 12:17; 13:13, 2Cor. 4:2; 8:21; 13:8, Eph. 4:25, Phil. 4:8, Col. 3:9-10, 1Thess. 4:6-7; 1Tim. 2:2).

In sum, Peter caps it all by admonishing Christians to showcase their honesty to outsiders so that they may see their good deeds and glorify God (1Pet. 2:12). By implication therefore, proven and consistent cases of honesty in the personality of a Christian is a successful evangelistic strategy to win ready souls for Christ in our present world devoid of many men and

women of *honest* report. Could you be the only honest person among twenty in your work place? Recall the dramatic incidence in which God needed just one honest man in the entire kingdom of Israel so as to pardon Israel's abominations against Him and unfortunately none was found by Prophet Jeremiah even among the Priests and the elders of the nation – Jer. 5:1. If God repeated such incidence today, would He find you honest in your church, village, family, office, school, organisation, career, etc? Of a truth, God is now seeking someone honest, who does justice and seeks the truth-an incorruptible Christian! If you are not honest in attitude, sometimes living by your wits, then having read this now, make a firm decision to repent completely from your dishonest ways and follow an honest course of life. I assure you, your blessings will surprise you onwards. Will you?

### **Practical Wisdom/Quotes on the Lifestyle of Honesty/Integrity:**

- *Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out – Prov. 10:9.*
- *Better a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his ways – Prov. 28:6.*
- *The integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them – Prov. 11:3.*
- *Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight - Prov. 12:22.*
- *The righteous who walks in his integrity - blessed are his children after him! - Prov. 20:7.*
- *Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil - Prov. 4:25-27.*
- *My lips will not speak falsehood, and my tongue will not utter deceit. Far be it from me to say that you are right; till I die I will not put away my integrity from me. I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go; my heart does not reproach me for any of my days - Job 27:4-6.*
- *To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice – Prov. 21:3.*
- *For we aim at what is honourable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man - 2Cor. 8:21.*
- *The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith - 1Tim. 1:5.*

- *Not by the way of eye-service, as people- pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart – Eph. 6:6.*
- *I am speaking the truth in Christ – I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit – Rom.9:1.*
- *Having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behaviour in Christ may be put to shame - 1Pet. 3:16.*
- *Whatever you do work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men - Col. 3:23.*
- *One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much – Luke 16:10.*
- *And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them - Luke 6: 31.*
- *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things – Phil. 4:8.*

### **SUMMARY**

Anybody who wants to make it to heaven should from this moment embrace honesty or else know that she is on her express way to hell.

God hates dishonest people – Prov. 6:17.

In our world today, people are drawn to you once they know you are an honest person.

Honesty is the best form of evangelism.

May God help us clean ourselves up from dishonest lifestyles and live as His genuine children – Eph. 5:8.

But aside from dishonest personality, one who is unable to manage one's anger easily offends God and fellow men. We now swing to this flaming attribute in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 28**

### **THE CHRISTIAN AS A MANAGER OF ANGER**

Today our attention shifts to the management of anger. It is a fundamental requirement of Jesus Christ that His followers do all at their disposal to manage anger so that it will not land them in trouble. Being angry is in itself not a sin, but the result from the anger is what is sinful. God has not said that we are never to be angry, but He said in the Bible,

*“Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath” Ephesians 4:26.*

Anger is the most violent of human emotions. Because it involves such strong feelings. Anger borders closely on sin. Hence, when we are angry, we are in danger of sinning. We have read in the newspapers several times cases of husbands killing their wives, wives killing their husbands, friends killing or maiming their loved ones as a result of fiery temper which burst out uncontrollably from mere misunderstanding. Perhaps, it was to avoid cases of this nature that someone had advised, "If we are to be angry and sin not, we must be angry at nothing but sin".

Significantly, there are three things we can do with our anger:

1. **We Can Express It** - When anger is out of control, it does great damage. When we become so angry that we want to lash out at someone and hurt them, we are sinning deeply. We call this "losing our temper." Sometimes we think that we show how strong we are when we lose our temper, but losing our temper is a sign of weakness or foolishness, neither strength nor wisdom. The Bible says, "*Do not haste in your spirit to be angry, for anger rest in the bosom of fools*" Eccl. 7:9. Perhaps it might serve a purpose to recall two most flammable characters I have read in literature: Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe's "*Things Fall Apart*" and King Odewale in Ola Rotimi's "*The Gods Are Not to Blame*". In his show of manliness, strength and fearlessness, Okonkwo demonstrates bout of anger against his household, untitled men of Umuofia and the white man who invades his clan. As a result, Okonkwo almost murders his wife in a Week of Peace thereby desecrating that holy week; kills, although inadvertently, a clan's man at a funeral and in consequence he is banished from his community; cuts a white man's head and to avert the punishment he runs and commits a suicide. Similarly, Odewale - given to fist of unbridled anger-pushes himself to commit a patricide (i.e kill his own father and will later marry his mother); and consequently had to remove his eyes in the end. Thus, it is often a regrettable experience or an avoidable tragedy at the end of untamed anger. Would you still yield to the lure of fiery anger in your life, having judged its consequences from the above illustrations?
2. **We Can Suppress It** - Apart from expressing anger, we can suppress it. To suppress anger is to keep it inside. Some people lose their temper and express their anger openly. Others have the same angry feelings but manage to keep them bottled up inside. Anger that is bottled inside hurts and keeps on hurting. It turns to resentment and bitterness, and it can bring depression as well as many kinds of physical illnesses. No wonder, God warns us against the sin of allowing root of bitterness to spring up in us and in the fold:

*See to it that no one fail to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” spring up and cause trouble, and by it the many become defiled... Heb.12:15(RSV).*

3. **We Can Confess It** - Aside from the two approaches to handling anger discussed above, the best way to manage angry feeling is to tell God about them. This is a way to “let off steam” without sinning. God knows us better than we know ourselves, and we will always find Him to be understanding in our circumstances. Just being in God’s presence helps to calm us in moments of anger or depression. It also helps us to see things in their proper perspective.

**Suggestion:** Since the above information is already on the net as you largely present it verbatim, why not credit or reference it properly to give your work the integrity it deserves. Thanks.

#### **FIVE STEPS TO MANAGE ANGER**

1. *Know yourself* - let a man examine himself;
2. *Think before reacting* - quick to hear but slow to speak;
3. *Report the situation to Christ* - tell it to Jesus Alone;
4. *Calculate the effect of your word or action on your relationship, the impact of just one sin on your hearer;*
5. *Leave revenge in the hands of God;*
6. [Psalms 94:1](#), [Proverbs 20:22](#), [Romans 12:19](#), [Hebrews 10:30](#), [Proverbs 24:29](#).

## CHAPTER 30

### THE CHRISTIAN AS TIME MANAGER

*To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; {to be...: Heb. to bear} A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; {to refrain from: Heb. to be far from} A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; {get: or, seek} A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace. What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth? I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. He hath made everything beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. (Eccl. 3:1-11)*

#### VITAL POINTS TO NOTE

- **There is time for everything under the earth;**
- **God is the giver of time because he is the giver of all to mankind;**
- **Some unforeseen circumstances can affect your planning and time;**
- **Time must be planned each day;**

*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom - Ps. 90:12.*

- **Time is non-stop and waits for no one;**
- **Time and goal/purpose must work together;**

*Redeeming the time, because the days are evil - Eph. 5:16.*

*All things have a time for it purpose to be achieved.*

- **Some events depend on time while others are not time dependent.**

*Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth (John 12:35).*

*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them (Eccl. 12:1);*

*Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying (Prov. 19:18).*

- **There is carried-over effect in all of life activities.**

Anything not done in its time will be done in another time's time. And this certainly will cause an unnecessary delay and inferior end product.

- **The ability of a Christian to manage time makes him an honest person in the eyes of all.**  
*Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time (Col 4:5).*
- **Don't cheat God with his time given to you freely.**  
A time used with Christ and for God should be high quality time.

Give us oh Lord the grace to live within the time you give us to please you and you only.  
Timing is everything, Amen.

Kindly follow me on the Christian's day-to-day inter-personal relationship.

### CHAPTER 31 CHRISTIAN TO CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIP

We will today see the huge demands of inter Christian relationship. This will help us see how much we owe each other and immediately start making amends.

1. *Ever be **BEARING** one another's burdens, and so be fulfilling the law of Christ - Gal 6:2.*
2. *Be **KINDLY AFFECTIONED** one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another - Rom. 12:10;*
3. *Owe no man anything, but to **LOVE** one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law - Rom. 13:8.*
4. *Wherefore **RECEIVE** ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God - Rom. 15:7.*
5. *And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to **ADMONISH** one another – Rom. 15:14.*
6. ***SALUTE** one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you - Rom. 16:16.*
7. *For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love **SERVE** one another - Gal. 5:13.*
8. *And be ye **KIND** one to another, tender-hearted, **FORGIVING** one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you - Eph. 4:32.*
9. ***FORBEARING** one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye - Col. 3:13.*
10. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; **TEACHING AND ADMONISHING** one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord – Col. 3:16.*

11. Wherefore **COMFORT** one another with these words - 1Thess. 4:18s.
12. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and **EDIFY** one another, even as also ye do - 1Thess. 5:11.
13. But **EXHORT** one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin - Heb. 3:13.
14. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but **EXHORTING** one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching - Heb. 10:25.

**OBSERVATION:** Remember to arrange the above lines back. I tried but could not get them arranged.

It is only one side of the coin to obey God in not doing what he says we should not do. This is avoiding *sin of commission*. It is another side of the coin to obey Him by doing what He orders us to do. Failure to do what He says we should do will land us in hell even if we refrain from all the things he asks us to refrain from. It is *sin of omission*. Without neglecting the DONTs let us therefore shift our focus from obeying the DONTs to doing the Dos. By so doing we shall have struck a necessary balance in our daily relationship with our brethren.

## **SUMMARY**

- Bear one another's burden - Gal. 6:2;
- Help restore the weak - Gal. 6:1;
- Be kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiveness - Eph. 4:32;
- Invoke hospitality - 1Pet. 4:8-9;
- Communicate to the needs of the saints - Rom. 12:13;
- Young people respect the older ones - 1Peter 5:5;
- Don't put a stumbling block on another man's way - Rom. 14:13-16;
- The strong to bear the infirmities of the weak - Rom. 15:1;
- Love one another - 1John 2:11, 4:20-21, 3:23;
- It is my duty and I should endeavour to do it with all my heart.

The Christian has challenging responsibilities towards non-believers. The next chapter guides you on this.

## CHAPTER 32

### CHRISTIAN TO UNBELIEVER RELATIONSHIP

The Christian is an individual that was formally living in line with the pattern of this world. He is indeed translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light - Col. 1:13. He has been redeemed by Christ because of His love for mankind - Gal. 3:13.

The major challenge today is how to live with people who are not having the same spiritual orientation like us. Some are actually not ready to let us live our lives. So we will quickly rely on the inspired word of God for direction.

**1. We have to live with them. They will even form the greatest population.**

*1Cor. 5:9-10 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. (John 17:15; 1Cor. 10:27; 1Jn. 5:19).*

**2. We must live at peace with them even in unpleasant circumstances.**

*Rom. 12:18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men ( Mrk. 9:50; Rom. 14:19; Heb. 12:14).*

**3. We must do good to them as we have the opportunity.**

*Gal. 6:10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith (1Thess. 5:15; 1Tim. 6:18).*

**4. We must preach to them in our life and character as well as the spoken word**

*2Cor. 3:2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:*

**5. We must lead them as light and salt to Christ**

*Phil. 2:15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world (1Pe 2:12).*

**6. We must pray for them to come to the full knowledge of Christ**

*Rom. 10:1- 2 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*

**7. We must show them love especially that we are his children**

*Jas. 2:8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:*

**BUT,**

**8. We must not follow their pattern**

*Rom. 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

**9. We must be careful how we mix with them in critical companionship/partnership**

**2Cor. 6:14** Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? (1Cor. 15:33).

Our prayer now is that God help us to live with them in a manner that will please Him and please them. It is not going to be easy, but with Christ all things are possible.

**Phil. 4:13** *I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.*

Nevertheless, it is common in most churches to hear their adherents pour “fire” and “thunder” against their enemies. Thus, “holy-ghost-fire” approach to prayers observably dominates several prayer grounds. Is this pattern ideal when dealing with our enemies?

## CHAPTER 33

### CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIP WITH ENEMIES

In the Old Testament "enemy" and "foe" most frequently refer to national enemies of Israel and her king - 1Sam 29:8; Deut. 20:1; etc., although they also indicate personal enemies – Exo. 23:22; Num. 35:23; Esther 7:6; etc.

In the traditions that characterize God as a "divine warrior," He is spoken of as the enemy of Israel's enemies - Exo. 23:22; Deut.20:4; Isa. 42:13 etc. In His judgment of Israel, however, Yahweh can also be understood as Israel's enemy - Lam 2:5.

In the New Testament, "enemy" and "foe" usually refer to personal enemies - Gal. 4:16; 2 Thess. 3:15; etc., but "enemies" can also be used in the Old Testament sense of the national enemies of God's people - Luke 1:71,74; 19:43; etc. Anyone who is hostile to God and His Son is an enemy - Luke 19:27; Phil. 3:18; and the passages that quote - Ps. 110:1, e.g., Mark 12:36; Acts 2:35; 1 Cor. 15:25; Heb. 1:13.

In the latter sense, it is the devil who is the enemy above all enemies - Matt. 13:39; Luke 10:19; etc. Finally, Paul refers to death as the last enemy to be destroyed - 1Cor. 15:26.

So as Christians today first who is an enemy:

- The devil is our first enemy;
- The one opposing us and seeing nothing good with us is an enemy;
- The one fighting you in your dream spiritually is now perceived an enemy in the physical;
- A member of a sect warring with Christians like Boko Haram;

So, how, as a Christian, should I relate with my enemy, real or perceived?

#### 1. Love and Pray for them

**Matt. 5:43-45** *You have knowledge that it was said, Have love for your neighbour, and hate for him who is against you: But I say to you, Have love for those who are against you, and make prayer for those who are cruel to you; So that you may be the sons of your Father in heaven; for his sun gives light to the evil and to the good, and he sends rain on the upright man and on the sinner.*

#### 2. Bless them

**Luke 6:28** *Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.*

#### 3. Show kindness to him and his property

**Exo. 23:4** *If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.*

#### 4. Don't rejoice when he falls

**Prov. 24:17** *Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth.*

#### 5. Feed them if the need arises

**Rom. 12:20** *Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*

**Prov. 25:21** *If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink.*

#### 6. Live in peace with them

**Rom. 12:18** *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

#### 7. Forgive them

**Luke 23:34** *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.*

**Acts 7:59** *And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

#### 8. Do not plan revenge

**Rom. 12:19** *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

***Back to sender, Holy Ghost fire, and Die by fire*** are human theological developments not included in the framework for Christian today. Anybody engaged in those acts is ignorant of the position of the entirety of the scriptures on this subject matter - Luke 9:52-54.

However, the scripture assures Christians of the Lord's commitment in His care, protection and preservation of His children as the following passages reveal:

**Prov. 16:7** *When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.*

**Prov.2:9** *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgement to be punished.*

**Isa. 54:13-17** *And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established: **thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.** Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me: **whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake.** Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; **and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgement thou shalt condemn.** This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.*

**Isa. 41:11** *Behold, all those who were incensed against you shall be ashamed and disgraced; they shall be as nothing, and those who strive with you shall perish. You shall seek them and not find them- those who contend with you. Those who war against you shall be as nothing, as a*

*nonexistent thing. For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, Fear not, I will help you.*

**Esther 6:13** *His advisers and his wife Zeresh said to him, “ Since Mordecai, before whom your downfall has started, is of Jewish origin, **you cannot stand against him- you will surely come to ruin!***

**Ps. 91:1-16** ... *7 A thousand may fall at your side. Ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. 8 You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. 9 If you make the Most High your dwelling- even the Lord, who is my refuge-then no harm will come near your tent. For He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways...He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation.*

**Prov. 20:22** *Do not say, “ I will recompense evil,” wait for the Lord, and He will save you.*

**Prov. 24:17** *Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; lest the Lord see it, and it displeases Him, and He turn away His wrath from him.*

**2Thess. 1:6** ... *since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you.*

**2Cor. 10:6** *And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.*

From the above passages, we realise that God is relentlessly committed to preserving the lives of His children against attacks from the enemy. Like a caring father who does everything to secure the lives of His Children, God neither sleeps nor slumbers even at nights to ensure the safety of His obedient sons and daughters - Ps 121:4. It is not necessary for the beloved of God to bother himself or herself to invoke curses upon his enemy to warrant God to act against such an enemy. The duties of a Christian are rather to be obedient and completely loyal to God in every situation, for God will punish the wicked when your own obedience is complete; pray for the good of your enemy and do good to any who offends you when you have an opportunity to do so. It is the Lord's duty to revenge on your behalf – Rom. 12:19-21. He knows how and when to deal with your adversary, just as He did with Haman, Pharaoh and other enemies of God's people. Let us therefore do our best to obey God even when it involves our enemies.

Now wait a minute. Is there any relationship between a Christian and the government of his nation? Learn of your responsibilities to your government in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 34

### CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT

**Romans 13:1-5** *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*

As a Christian, your personality is defined in terms of your total obedience in following God's laid down principles and responsibilities which, in this aspect, include but not limited to the following:

1. Obey the government;
2. Pay your taxes regularly and as at when due;
3. Renew your documents regularly;
4. Follow due process ;
5. Live within your income and;
6. Be honest in all you do;
7. Pray for those in government or authority.

**1Pet. 2:13** *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme.*

**Matt. 22:21** *They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.*

**Rom. 13:7** *Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.*

**Titus 3:1** *Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,*

**Col. 1:10** *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

**1Tim. 2:1** *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.*

However, the doctrine of submission and obedience here must be in line with God's laws and commandments. No government's injunction should be obeyed if it is inconsistent with God's orders. In other words, Christians are not bound by Christ's law to obey any rule that is contrary to the will and commandment of God. Loyalty to civil authorities, it must be stressed, is never an unqualified one. In the Old Testament, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego received God's approval and encouragement in their refusal to obey King Nebuchadnezzar's commandment to worship the *golden image*.

*...But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up - Dan. 3:18.*

The disobedience of these Hebrews further presupposes the admonition that if Caesar (any ruler) demands to be called "Lord and God" (as Domitian did in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD), Christians should disobey, even at risk of their lives. Trust that God will preserve your life as He did the Hebrews!

Again, children are to obey their parents *in the Lord* - Eph. 6:1. This implies any parental order that violates any section of Christ's commandments, must be wisely turned down by children who want to please Christ.

Furthermore, in response to the civil and religious authorities of Israel in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (the Sanhedrin) who ordered the Apostles not to preach any longer in the name of Jesus Christ, Peter and John replied, "*Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God*" - Acts 4:19.

Meanwhile, although it is not scripturally wrong to resist dictatorial or governmental injustices and evil, it is biblically wrong to rebel or incite civil unrest against a God-ordained authority, for those who do such "*will bring judgement on themselves*". Civil government is temporary, but it has been established by God - Dan. 4:17, John 19:11, Rom.13:1-2.

Finally, since a Christian is duty-bound to obey those in authority, it is therefore wrong not to sing the national anthem, say the national pledge, and stand at attention at parade grounds or a school assembly, etc, as most religious adherents are often observed not to obey this government directive. There is no evil in observing these or other civic responsibilities. Rather it is a mark of respect to the nation or our civil authorities as Christ commands Christians through Apostle Paul:

*Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor - Rom. 13:7.*

The next chapter defines the Christian personality with regard to suffering. Please read on.

## CHAPTER 35

### CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO SUFFERING

Suffering is a major obstacle to so many people believing in God. Most people argue that why would a loving and merciful God allow suffering to be a part of his creation. Some “Pastors” go as much to emphasise that when once one is born again, one does not suffer anymore whether in form of sicknesses, spiritual attacks, temptations, lack and such like. That when one experiences suffering, it means one is a sinner. So there is need for us to critically look at God’s word to understand this misunderstood topic of suffering in order to be well equipped to overcome it when it comes our way.

*Firstly, suffering is part of a Christian experience while on earth. Paul tells us, “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him” Phil 1:29.*

**Rom. 8:17** *And if children then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him so that we may be also glorified together.*

**2 Cor. 1:5-6** *For as the suffering of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abound by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.*

**1 Thess. 3:2-4** *...that no man should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we were appointed to this...*

We learn from the above scriptures that it has been granted unto Christians to share in Christ’s sufferings on the cross so as to be glorified with Him at His second advent.

*Secondly, our faith is tested and refined and our character as Christians proven by God through sufferings:*

**Rom. 5:3 - 4** *Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope...*

**Jas. 1:2 - 4** *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

*Thirdly, God is compassionate and faithful as to provide a way of escape for a suffering Christian and the extent to which a Christian should suffer is proportionate to the level of her faith and forbearance.*

**1 Cor. 10:13** *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

Therefore, in addition to being very resilient, strong, faithful, prayerful and hopeful when suffering, you need to open your spiritual eyes to behold and appreciate the ways of escape often provided by God at such times. **Remember, in every wilderness of man, there is always an angel of respite!** The case of suffering Hagar and her child, Ishmael comes in handy - Gen. 21:14-20. Hagar, after her success in pregnancy and child birth, despised Sarah, her mistress. As a result, she and the innocent child were sent away by the couple. She wandered in the Wilderness of Beersheba. When all her food and water ran out, she went a distance and abandoned her child and said, *“Let me not see the death of the boy.”* She lifted her voice and wept alongside the lad. God heard the voice of the lad and sent His angel out of heaven to console her:

*Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink...*

Notice here that in Hagar’s wilderness, God did not abandon her. To her, it appeared a hopeless situation, for, lacking any means of survival; she threw her child away, thinking that he would die any time. **But, she knew how to lift her voice to God, symbolising prayer.** Her voice attracted the intervention of a God-sent angel to open her eyes to behold the water of life (*a way of escape*), which she did not see until when her eyes were opened. Learn from Hagar’s example.

Furthermore, we should realise that suffering comes in diverse forms and styles. It could be during child birth, loneliness, rejection and neglect, poverty and hunger, disappointment in life, direct infliction of pain on someone, and even death of a loved one, etc.

## **TYPES OF SUFFERING**

A critical examination of the scriptures reveals that there are four basic types of suffering:

1. Suffering for doing wrong;
2. Suffering for doing good;
3. Suffering for no just cause and

4. Suffering for the sins of others.

#### **SUFFERING FOR DOING WRONG**

1Pet. 4:15 ***But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.*** Here we see that a person could suffer because of the place he puts his hands and thus reaps the consequences thereof. The Bible even frowns at such suffering, 1Pet. 3:17 ***For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.***

#### **SUFFERING FOR DOING GOOD**

1Pet. 3:14 ***But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;*** 1Pet. 3:17 ***For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.*** 1Pet. 4:14 ***If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God rested upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.*** 2Tim. 3:12 ***Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*** Acts 14:22 ***Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.***

No wonder in 1Pet. 4:1, we are advised to be prepared that we will suffer unjustly.

#### **NO FAULT SUFFERING**

In this case the Christian is made to pass through suffering that he knows nothing about. ***John 9:1-3 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. Luke 13:- 5 There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.***

Several actions and inactions of man could indirectly affect us and make us suffer when we know nothing about the problem.

## **SUFFERING AS A RESULT OF SOMEONE'S SIN**

Sometimes, Christians are made to suffer the effects of another person's sin; for instance, a stray bullet targeted at a thief that hits another individual. Similarly, the family of Achan suffered for his theft of silver in Jericho. Another example may be a family being crushed to death by a drunken driver.

It could as well be a Christian who is beaten and arrested alongside with other tenants for the sin of one tenant who insulted the wife of an army officer. Other forms of suffering abound in peoples' lives.

## **WHERE DOES SUFFERING COME FROM?**

Suffering is a product of Satan and sin. Since the fall of man, God in Gen 3:16-17 pronounced some specific punishment that mankind must go through as a daily reminder that man destroyed the golden opportunity given to him by God.

Our approach to suffering should be more of how to manage suffering and make the best out of it than trying to find out the root cause and who to blame about the suffering.

The best frame work for Christians is to try not to be responsible for the suffering he is passing through.

## **BENEFITS OF SUFFERING**

Interestingly, the Bible clearly shows that there are some positives we can derive from suffering:

1. Suffering can be a disciplinary tool aimed at drawing your attention to God if indeed you have looked elsewhere.

Heb. 12:5-8 ***And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.***

2. Suffering is viewed here as a purifying tool aimed at building up the Christian to be able to advise and encourage others who face the same challenge in future.

1Pet. 1:6-9 ***Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen,***

***ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.***

3. Suffering helps in building my spiritual insight and my spiritual quality. 1Pet. 5:10 ***But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.***
4. Suffering exposes the Christian to so many lessons in life that he cannot learn when he is well.

Accordingly, the *good news* is that the suffering Christian should be of good cheer and demonstrate much greater faith while in trial, for Christ had overcome the world with its suffering and temptations for him or her:

***These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world - John 16:33.***

Likewise, a Christian is an overcomer even in suffering. *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith - 1Jn. 5:4. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world - 1Jn. 4:4.*

Our prayer is that God help us make the best out of the very many sufferings that we may pass through as we journey cheerfully, hopefully, prayerfully and faithfully to heaven.

But, do not drop the book yet! You need to learn, in the following chapter, about how to stabilize your faith in your wilderness wonderings here on earth.

## CHAPTER 36

### FAITH STABILIZERS

Once a person becomes a Christian, it is not the end of the journey. There is still need to maintain that faith because the devil was not happy the day you declared for Christ.

So, we shall deal with seven items that can truly stabilize your faith and make you a delight of God and consequently an enemy of Satan.

1. **Take time out to study the word of God.** A close look at Ps.1:1- 4 and Joshua 1:8 reveals that success in life is tied to a dedicated study of God's word. Paul instructed Timothy to study to show himself approved of God - 2Tim. 2:15. No wonder prophet Hosea exclaimed that his people perished for lack of knowledge - Hos. 4:6. If you study God's word sufficiently, you will be firm and not tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine – Eph. 4:14. The Bible even expects us to have its words richly dwelling in us - Col. 3:16. This is because our faith is developed by hearing the words of God - Rom. 10:17.
2. **Don't miss the fellowship of the saints together.** Heb. 10:24-25. When brethren stay together, the warmth of fellowship is felt and a sense of belonging is activated. The church is the pillar and ground of truth and God's own orientation agency where His manifold wisdom is made known to man - Eph. 3:10. In fellowship, we share each other's burden and exhort one another. Once you are not in the midst of brethren, you are far from God's network region of greater influence.
3. **Share with the burdens of others** - Gal. 6:2. The little we have can still be shared if covetousness is not thriving within us. Gal. 5:13 and 1Thess. 5:14 open our eyes to added responsibilities as Christians. As you sow a seed of assistance to the less privileged, you gradually build your faith in Christ who is a perfect example for us to follow.
4. **Share the good news with others** - Matt. 28:19. It is the duty of all Christians to share the good news of their redemption from the kingdom of darkness to that of light. You can preach with your lifestyle - 2Cor. 3:2; you can speak to people like Peter and Paul. You can visit those backsliding members - Gal. 6:1; you can invite someone to worship like Philip called Nathaniel to Jesus - John 1:45-46. You equally can visit and extend a helping hand to the sick, the prisoners, the poor, the widows, the orphans, the lonely, the hopeless and the rejected - Isa. 61:1-2, Matt. 25:34-46, Jas. 1:26. You will all be building your faith.

5. **Put on the whole armour of God** - Eph. 6:10. This will fortify you against the devices of the devil.
6. **Flee immorality** - Isa. 59:1.
7. **Pray always** - 1Thess. 5:17. Prayer draws the Christian closer to his master. In drawing close, the faith and confidence is developed - Heb. 11:6, Rom. 12:12, Eph. 6:18 and 1Pet. 4:7 all empower us to pray to keep us connected with the mainstream of divine power.

Beloved in the Lord, a stagnant faith is a lost faith, just as a *prayerless* Christian is a dead Christian. God expects our faith to grow from one degree of glory to another. Our emphasis today is on what we can do personally to improve our own faith. No wonder, Paul told the Philippian brethren to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, - Phil 2:12, knowing that some shall shipwreck their faith - 1Tim. 1:19. No wonder that the Apostles prayed Christ to increase their faith (Lk 17:5). It is only those who die in faith that will resurrect to live again in endless bliss in heaven: *Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life* - Rev. 2:10.

Being faithful or prayerful is not enough. Abounding in acts of kindness is more definitive of your personality as a Christian.

## CHAPTER 37

### SHOWING KINDNESS AS A CHRISTIAN

Kindness is an integral part of Christian character. It is linked strongly to our Lord and our God. The kindness of God is mentioned hundreds of times in the Old Testament. Jesus said of our Father, "He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked" - Luke 6:35.

Paul's deep analysis of love tells us "love is kind" 1 Cor. 13:4. And again, Paul reminds us to be "kind and compassionate to one another" Eph. 4:32. In another instance, Paul warned Timothy that the Lord's servant must be "kind to everyone... not resentful" 2 Tim. 2:24.

He instructed Titus to tell the older women to teach the younger women to "be kind so that no one will malign the word of God" Titus 2:5.

### PRACTICALS

Acts 16:14-16: *Kind in words; Kind in deeds; Kind in actions.*

Our lives must reflect kindness in all ramifications.

## CHAPTER 38

### CHRISTIAN AND SEED SOWING

The Bible is a very wonderful book designed to serve as a guide for man in his quest to know God and live only for him. It contains several principles which are implicit or explicit in nature and workings.

Today our attention is shifted to seed sowing within the confines of the scriptures. We want to examine what is the biblical position on this subject matter.

*In the realm of the Spirit,*

1. God is the first person to sow a seed of His word in our life - Matt. 13:3.
2. The enemy is interested in sowing exactly where the Master has sown - Matt. 13:24.
3. The seed sown by the evil one is designed to weaken, choke and kill the seed sown by the Master - Matt. 13:25-26.
4. How we relate with the seed sown will also point to our relationship with the one who sowed the seed.
5. Some seed will flourish while others will fail because of several factors ranging from personal to environmental - Matt. 13:19-23.

*In the physical realm,*

1. A Christian can sow a seed of kindness into the life of any individual he comes across in his life journey - Lk. 10:30-35.
2. A good deed to a servant of the Most High God in all genuine intent, not forced or lured is a seed sown in the right direction - Matt. 10:42, Heb. 6:10.
3. When a Christian feeds the poor, she is sowing a seed into the life of the poor on behalf of God - Matt. 25:40.
4. Seed sowing in the life of the poor is a core component of what is called pure religion - Jas. 1:27.
5. You can even sow peace, love and fellowship to clearly prove that you are a renewed person altogether - Rom. 12:2.

The basic principle of sowing this seed is found in 2Cor. 9:6-7 *But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

1. You must propose and purpose in your heart alone uninfluenced by anybody.

2. You must sow the seed without grudge in your heart.
3. You must not sow the seed because someone is setting a target for you to do so.
4. You must sow the seed cheerfully knowing that God will reward you for what you have done - Prov. 19:17; 22:9, Tit. 3:8.

May the good Lord open our eyes to see the beauty of sowing seed with a right heart.

While sowing good seeds in peoples' hearts, a Christian must be careful not to sow bad seeds in her heart through what she watches, reads and hears. Our focus now shifts to the personality of a Christian with respect to movie and entertainment.

## **CHAPTER 39**

### **CHRISTIAN AND HIS CHOICE OF MOVIE/ENTERTAINMENT**

A movie is a story or event recorded with sound by a camera as a series of moving images and shown at a cinema, theatre or on television; a motion picture or film.

Christians are free to see or watch movies but will try to cross check these guidelines because living in the world, whose value system is of the devil, we are faced with choices all the time. TV, Internet, books, conversation, food, clothes, and cars - the list is endless. We will not be free from temptation that comes from our sinful flesh, the world, or the devil - nor the sin that we all too often fall or jump into - until the Lord returns to take us home.

1. What is the theme of this movie or drama or play (war, espionage, love, etc)?
2. What message is the movie sending into your heart?
3. How do you feel after the movie (hatred, fear, distrust, sensual love, etc, coming over you for a person or tribe)?
4. Will Jesus commend you for spending time watching that movie?

For a Christian, the question is not so much "is watching this movie a sin?" but "is this something that Jesus would want me to do?" The Bible tells us that many things are permitted, but not all things are beneficial or constructive - 1 Cor.10:23. It also says that whatever we say or do (or watch) should be done to the glory of God 1 Cor.10:31. We are to set our minds on things that are noble and pure - Phil. 4:8. If—and this is a big if—we can watch a movie or TV program that contains questionable content AND still be in agreement with these commands from the Bible, then it's hard to see the wrong in this.

The danger lies in (1) how what we are watching affects our heart and (2) how it affects others as well. For ourselves, if the scene we see brings a feeling of lust, anger, or hatred, then we have sinned (Matt. 5:22, 28), and we must do whatever we can to avoid that happening again. Often that means not watching that type of movie/scene again. Also, it can be a stumbling block to someone who is struggling with a habit or behaviour that is coming between him and God - 1 Cor. 10:25-33; Rom. 14:13. As members of the Body of Christ, we are to be a light to the world (Matt. 5:14) and a holy example of what God has done in our lives 1 Pet. 2:11-12. If we are seen by others going into an “R”- rated movie, it could send the wrong message to them - that we enjoy and/or condone illicit sex and violence. That is not conducive to being a light in a dark world.

So, how do we know for sure whether what we are watching is beneficial? When we become followers of Christ, we are given His Holy Spirit to live in us - Acts 2:38; 2 Tim. 1:14. Jesus tells us that this Spirit will guide us in all truth - John 16:13. One way God's Spirit guides us is by our conscience - Rom. 1:12; 9:1. If your conscience is telling you that what you are watching is wrong, it probably is.

*Ps. 101:3a – I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless.*

*Ps. 26:4-5 – I do not sit with men of falsehood, nor do I consort with hypocrites. I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked.*

But let us note here that the conscience not trained with the Word of God will lead you to wrong conclusions on several matters.

Meanwhile, the face of a Christian means a lot to those around him or her. This is because one's face communicates some positive or negative meanings which are interpretive of one's intent, attitude and personality. This, in linguistic parlance, is referred to as *positive or negative politeness or face-threatening or face-saving acts*. Thus, politeness is a face-defining mark of a Christian. Learn great lessons on politeness in the next segment.

## CHAPTER 40

### THE POLITENESS OF A CHRISTIAN

Politeness is an attribute of a Christian that makes him qualified to live and interact freely with people around him. The dictionary defines politeness as 1. Marked by or showing consideration for others, tact, and observance of accepted social usage. 2. Refined; elegant: **polite** society. In other words, it is doing things in a socially acceptable manner without any threat of deceit, embarrassment or disdain to oneself or someone around you.

#### **Application of Politeness to Real Christian Lifestyles:**

A polite Christian has a soft voice but with truth on his lips always - Eph. 4:29.

A polite Christian knows how to tell the truth in love - Eph. 4:15.

A polite Christian knows how to live at peace with all men - Rom. 12:18.

A polite person does not see himself/herself higher above others - Rom. 12:3.

A polite Christian listens quickly but is late in speaking - Jas. 1:19.

A polite Christian is one whose dressing is not offensive to the faith of others - 1Pet. 3:3-5.

A polite Christian is calm and appreciative when his fault is brought before him - 1 Cor. 5:2.

A polite Christian displays a humble disposition at all times - Jas. 4:10.

A polite Christian is willing to explain his position at all time - 1Pet. 3:15.

A polite Christian is one who is not willing to offend his master - John 15:14

A polite Christian is one who is not ready to retaliate or avenge any wrong done him - Rom. 12:14.

A polite Christian concerns himself/herself with heavenly issues - Col. 3:1-2.

A polite Christian is bothered with the growth of his family and the image the family makes outside. His family light ought to shine - Matt. 5:13-16.

A polite Christian is one ready to meet with Christ in case he comes now - Lk. 12:35-48.

May the good Lord help us to wear a polite disposition always so as to draw all to Christ, Amen.

It must be brought to view at this juncture, the essentiality of a Christian's nuclear family. The family is our focus in the subsequent chapter.

## CHAPTER 41

### THE CHRISTIAN MAN AND HIS NUCLEAR FAMILY

A Christian man is a male Christian whose life is hidden in Christ in God - Col. 3:1-2. He is an adult that understands the meaning of being in Christ and knowing that old things have indeed passed away - 2 Cor. 5:17. He is aware of the concept of being a light for the dark world and a force to be reckoned with as a shining example - 1Tim. 4:12. A Christian man is a steward who knows what it takes to render account of his stewardship.

A nuclear family may be defined as a family made up of a father and a mother only (as in a young family or a yet to be blessed couple) or a family made up a father, a mother and a child or children.

The family started first when the two became one - Gen. 2:18. So we must note that how well it began will affect other things after. If the setting out of the foundation of the marriage is okay, then there is hope that the family will start on a strong footing. Remember, God is a witness between the Christian man and his wife - Malachi 2:14.

The arrival of children is a result of an intimate interaction between the couple. Most family analysts look at children as business firm, store or shop given to the couple to run for a fixed period of time after which, the store is handed over back to God.

So, we see the couple stay alone first, then the kids arrive, then they stay and grow under their supervision and after they become great men or women and stand on their own, the couple return to their status quo ante.

So, how does this team work together in a manner that will be pleasing to God?

First, *God is very much interested in the family*. He established the family as the first of all institutions on earth. From the first family, God began to create other human beings after their likeness. Thus, God ended His word-spoken style of creation, but set in biological creation through a family.

Besides, the Lord made man the head of the family. His intent was/is for man to lead his family to know God and His ways. By so doing, God will in turn bring His promises to fulfilment in that family. Take the case of Abraham as an example:

*For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him - Gen. 18: 19.*

From the foregoing, how a Christian man relates with members of his household and succeeds in driving the car of his family to God in heaven is both crucial and definitive of him and his people as Christians.

**Therefore, Picture the man as the head of the house and the driver of a car. Picture the woman as the car and the children as the passengers. Picture the woman's character as the engine. Again, picture love as the petrol; then knowledge and fear of God as the tyres of the car. Also, picture effective communication as the engine oil. Finally, picture family devotion as water in the radiator.**

Just imagine if there was no fuel. What would happen to that car? Assuming the engine was bad or overheating. We all know what the possible result would be.

*Here is the summary:*

The Christian man should provide for his family always - 1 Tim. 5:8; Eph. 6:4.

- Physical needs of the family;
- Spiritual needs of the family;
- Emotional/health needs of the family;
- Recreational needs of the family;
- Evangelical direction for his family.

The Christian man should lay:

- Solid Christian example in all areas of life;
- Solid footing for his offspring to carry on even after his demise;
- Solid training legacy, rich enough to sustain the family even in your absence - Prov. 22:6.

The Christian man should be:

- Transparent and truly seen to be transparent in all his dealings especially financially;
- Honest and truly seen to be honest to his family;
- Love his wife so dearly to the envy of his children - Eph. 5:23.

*Please note that:*

The picture of your family is a reflection of your input. Start early when the block is wet and the mixture not strong. It is only then you can truly say like Joshua, as for me and my family we shall live for Christ.

## **CHAPTER 42**

### **THE CHRISTIAN MAN AND ROAD BLOCK TO HEAVEN**

The devil is aware we are God's divine heritage and is interested in making us His disciples by all means. This is brought to fore when we recall Paul saying he has "fought a good fight"- 2Tim. 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

Oh so it was a fight after all. But who was he fighting with? At some point too he admonishes Timothy to be a good soldier of Christ and fight equally. 1Tim. 6:12: Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier - 2Tim.2:3.

But the devil will not fold his hands and watch us walk straight into heaven. He has designed so many road blocks that will hinder us from making it to heaven.

Today we will learn from Nehemiah and apply it to ourselves. In Neh. 2:1-5 we learnt of a request by Nehemiah to the King to allow him return to Judah and rebuild the walls of the city of Jerusalem.

#### **THE FIRST ROAD BLOCK: MOCKERY AND CRITICISM**

But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall - Neh. 4:1-3.

Once the devil realizes that you have a mission and you are bent at it, his first road block is mockery and criticism. The intention here is to weaken your grip upon the faith and demoralize you.

- Oh my God, so you don't drink, you are really missing.
- Must you attend that your church every Sunday?
- Is that the only sin?
- Who told you that being a virgin is still fashionable?
- That your church is old school. It is supposed to move like others are moving.

- Must everything be found in the Bible?
- How can you stick only to your spouse? Once in a while, you go out and take a quickie and return unnoticed.

The list of mockery is endless. Be reminded brethren that it is far better to serve God than serve the devil. Know that Satan is behind those comments. Jesus spotted it out when he call Peter Satan in Mat 16:23: But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

So many Christians have been destroyed by this single road block. Today they belong to the kingdom of the devil just because they were mocked at for doing good.

The Christian response to mockery and criticism is ignore those involved and continue doing what you are doing. Afterall, the examiner is God and he is the only one with the marking scheme. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, **THE LORD KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS**. And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity - 2Tim. 2:19.

#### **THE SECOND ROAD BLOCK: DIRECT THREATS**

Because Nehemiah ignored them and moved ahead and was making real progress, the same group that mocked at him decided to threaten him for making progress.

But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth & And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it - Neh. 4:7.

You could be in the same shoes. Your presence in a group could hinder their plans and as such they may desire that you be eliminated. Sometimes, the position you take on issues whether social or religious could make people openly threaten you.

People generally hate those who stand for something contrary to the general norm. The attack could be verbally or physically or even diabolically. Don't be frightened. Everything is open and naked before God.

**Heb. 4:13** Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

**2Tim. 3:12** Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution

**Ps. 34:19** Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

Don't panic, all of them are under the control of God.

**Prov. 16:7** When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

The Christian response to direct attack and intimidation is prayers and a spirit of moving ahead undeterred. Paul gave us a series of tips in Eph. 6:10-13, because our warfare today is not carnal.

**Matt. 5:44** But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

### **THE THIRD ROAD BLOCK: ENTICING YOU INTO A TRAP**

Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. **BUT THEY THOUGHT TO DO ME MISCHIEF.** And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner - Neh. 6:1-4.

Sometimes, if mockery and direct threats don't yield any good result, Satan will device another friendly attitude with the intention of rubbing your integrity and person. It will come in a subtle, but with very dangerous implication.

- Is that the only sin?
- Is it not just one bottle?
- Ok you are afraid of back seat in your church
- When in Rome behave like the Romans
- It is you that is calling it a sin; the Bible did not call it so.
- It cannot happen in my house and she is still there

The list is long.

Don't give the devil any small opportunity. A man took a sip of palm wine from his friend just to prove to his friend it was not poison even though he is strongly opposed to Christian consuming alcohol. The next day the whole village heard that the same man who would not allow them

rest about drinking being a sin was found drinking at a funeral service. He had no fair hearing and lost his influence just by one innocent sip.

Don't mind the number of times the same question will be asked. Let your answer remain the same. Nehemiah was asked the same question 4 times.

Always be guided that it takes a whole life time to be a Christian worthy of heaven and just a silly moment to be a candidate to hell.

A virgin being mocked at by her room mates for still being a virgin in her final year in the university told them that it will take five minutes to destroy her virginity but none of her friends can be virgins any longer having lost it to a man not their husband. To her surprise all the friends started crying.

It is the devil's work to create road blocks. The goal of any Christian is to jump and pass.

## **CHAPTER 43**

### **DON'T GO THERE**

Running from Genesis to Revelation, God has kept a special place for Himself in the life of mankind. In Gen 11:4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

The sin that provoked God to scatter the people was not their plans to build a city, but the intention to make a name for themselves. God looked at making a name for oneself as an affront to his majesty.

God made Jeroboam a king out of his sheer delight and mercy over his people Israel. He got 10 tribes in the divided kingdoms. Yet Jeroboam offended God the day he made a god and the people bowed down to it.

Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over my people Israel, And rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee: and yet thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes; But hast done evil above all that were before thee: for thou hast gone and made thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke me to anger, and hast cast me behind thy back: Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone - 1Kings 14:7-10 .

History was repeated twice in the land of Babylon when the Jews were in captivity. Despite all the things Nebuchadnezzar did against the people of God, he was spared until the day he took the glory of God.

At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he

was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws - Dan. 4:29-33.

His grandson Belshazzar drank wine with the golden vessels brought from Jerusalem and praised the gods of stone and he was destroyed.

And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified - Dan. 5:22-23:

In the New Testament, Herod killed James in Acts 12:1-3 and God still spared him. But the very day he took the glory of God, he was eaten up by worms.

And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost - Acts 12:21-23.

### **Bottom Line**

**Isa. 42:8** I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

We are the pot and he is the potter. He alone deserves all the glory and honour and dominion forever and ever.

**Acts 10:25-26** And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

That is the attitude to please God.

After all;

**1Cor. 4:7** For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

## CHAPTER 44 REMOVING THE BRIDGE

A story is told of a man who led a team of men to conquer a neighbouring village. The men labored with him to construct a bridge that will connect them to that town in their plan to conquer. After working hard for 3 weeks, the men finally used the bridge so constructed to cross into the outskirts of the town to be conquered. As soon as they alighted from the bridge, their commander stepped forward and destroyed the bridge. They were shocked at his action and kept murmuring in their heart. Then a courageous soldier stepped forward and demanded to know why after 3 weeks of toil to set up the bridge, the commander will destroy it after they have crossed.

The reply he got is that they no longer need the bridge. According to the commander, the bridge being destroyed will make them to be serious in conquering the land since they don't have any route of returning.

Yes we all have bridges in our lives and need to urgently destroy those bridges to enable us focus on the things of the kingdom.

An inspiring account is found in book of Acts of the apostle where the people took a powerful decision to destroy their bridge after their conversion to Christ.

**Acts 19:18-20** And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

They knew that magical books and occultic practice are inconsistent with their new found faith. It was a personal decision and the main aim was to eliminate a possible road that will destroy their faith in Christ.

The idea of combining the two was not there at all. It is like mixing water and grease. The cost of the magical books was not important again. Their love for Christ and his salvation was of utmost importance.

Today it may not just be magical art like the guys in Acts 19, it may be pornography that you were involved before becoming a Christian and you need to destroy it before it will destroy your salvation.

You may be involved in drugs and wild living, just set fire on it.

If what you are doing will cost you your soul, then it deserves to be burnt. Burn it or it will lead you to be burnt eternally.

*Let us take one step further. If you are married, get rid of the pictures, names and contacts of your old girlfriend from your mind.*

*If you know a place you will go and loose your influence as a Christian cut that place off from the list of place you will visit.*

Egypt and the promise land are opposite in direction. You cannot go both direction at the same time.

**Phil. 3:13** Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

**Luke 9:25** For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

Burn the link that is still linking us to the world and dragging our spiritual growth to nullity.

If we must go forward, then the link behind must be destroyed so that they will no longer exist a desire to go back.

We must start today to burn the things that are inconsistent with our faith, capable of destroying our focus on Christ.

**2Cor. 5:17** Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new

**Eph. 5:8** For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

**2Pet. 2:20-22** For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

May the good Lord help us to see the need to burn our bridges in Jesus Christ Name ... Amen.

