

PREACH THE WORD

BASIC TRAINING
IN

GOSPEL PREACHING

DISCIPLESHIP

CHURCH WORK

STEVE PHILLIPS

Preach
The Word

by
Steve Phillips

Illustrations
by
Patricia Phillips

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Freely you have received, freely give [Mt.10:8]

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1

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

**I am not ashamed of the Gospel,
for it is the power of God for salvation
to everyone who believes
[Rom.1:16]**

There is no other means nor any other power to deliver men from the slavery of sin. It is through the preaching of the Gospel that God is well-pleased to save men [I Cor.1:21].

It is therefore the Gospel that we must preach. But not everything that is preached is gospel. We must examine the Word of God afresh on this vital subject. Its truths cannot be neglected except to the ruin of the hearer and speaker alike.

Pay close attention to yourself and to the doctrine; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will save both yourself and those who hear you [I Tim..4:16].

There are 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 [Gal.1:7,8].

THE 4 ASPECTS OF THE GOSPEL

There are 4 parts that make up the Gospel message, apart from which, the Gospel has not been preached. The 4 aspects are these:

THE:

PROBLEM	SOLUTION	RESPONSE	RESULT
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The Problem facing all men has is that [1] Man is sinful, [2] God is Holy, and [3] Hell is Eternal. Though each of us face many other problems in this life, this is the true Problem.

The Solution to man's true Problem is Jesus Christ the Lord; His life, death, and resurrection. Trusting a church, mosque, or native doctor to solve the Problem we all face, is seeking solutions in the wrong places: Only Jesus Christ the Lord Himself is the Solution to our Problem.

The Response to God's Solution to man's Problem is to repent, believe, and receive Jesus Christ as Lord. Trying to improve your actions by your own efforts, or by increasing religious devotion and duties, is a false response. Turning to the living Christ of God in faith with a humbled repentant heart is the true Response.

The Result of Responding to God's Solution to man's Problem is salvation, forgiveness, and eternal life. God's promised Result is not that all of your problems in this life will end. In the Bible, some true believers continued sick [I Tim.5:23], many remained poor [2 Cor.8:1-5; Jas.2:5], but all had the true Result of eternal life.

Let us now consider each part of the Gospel message in more detail. A Gospel worker should MEMORIZE at least one verse of Scripture in each of the categories in the following discussion. These will be like useful tools in presenting the Gospel to every man.

THE GOSPEL: THE PROBLEM

The basic Problem of man is that [1] Man is Sinful, [2] God is Holy, and [3] Hell is Eternal. Let us first look at the sinfulness of man.

THE PROBLEM: MAN IS SINFUL

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God [Rom.3:23]

ALL MEN ARE:

GUILTY All men's actions, thoughts, and words have made them worthy of punishment before God, the Judge of all men.

Who can say, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin"? [Prov.20:9].

Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself, for you who judge practice the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things [Rom.2:1,2].

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he is guilty of all [Jas.2:10].

CORRUPT Sin has defiled man's mind, desires, conscience, and practices to the extent that all is evil and rotten.

What is man that he should be pure, or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, He puts no trust in His holy ones, and the heavens are not pure in His sight; How much less one who is detestable and corrupt, Man, who drinks iniquity like water! [Job 15:14-16].

There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one...With their tongues they have practiced deceit...whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways [Rom.3:10-16].

[See also Gen.6:11,12; Ps.14:13; Mk.7:20-23; Rom.1:24; Gal.6:7,8; Eph.2:3; 4:17,19,22].

In BONDAGE Sin has made man a slave to it as his master.

Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin [Jn.8:34].

Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? [Rom.6:16].

[See also Rom.6:16-23; 7:7-24; Eph.2:3; 2 Pet.2:19].

In MISERY Sin brings man into a state of sorrow, suffering, and problems.

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest [Mt.11:28].

When I kept silent [about my sin], my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity [Ps.32:3-5].

The wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud. “There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked” [Isa.57:20,21].

Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another god [Ps.16:4].

POWERLESS Sinful man is not able to deliver himself from sin and its effects. He has neither the wisdom, ability, or desire to do so.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly [Rom.5:6].

Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to do evil [Jer.13:23].

The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God [Rom.8:7,8].

No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him. The ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough [Ps.49:7,8].

[See also Job 14:4; Ps.16:2; Isa.64:6; Jn.6:44,45].

In DEATH Sinful man is spiritually dead in sins and will be paid for his service to sin in the lake of fire which is the second death [Rev.20:14].

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord [Rom.6:23].

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins [Eph.2:1].

It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment [Heb.9:27].

[See also Rom.5:17; Eph.2:5; 4:18; Rev.20:13-15].

ENEMIES Man hates, resists, and fights against God.

While we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son [Rom.5:10].

And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death [Col.1:21,22].

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God [Jas.4:4].

In DARKNESS The understanding of man’s mind in sin cannot see the truth of God.

Men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed [Jn.3:19,20].

Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light [Jn.12:35,36].

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned [I Cor.2:14].

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God [2 Cor.4:4].

[See also Rom.1:21; Eph.4:18; I Jn.2:11].

CAPTIVES All men are under the influence of the ruler of this world, the prince of the power of the air who is the devil and Satan.

We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one [I Jn.5:19].

I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me [Acts 26:17,18].

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son of His love [Col.1:13].

You once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience [Eph.2:2].

[See also Jn.8:44; I Jn.3:8-10].

THE PROBLEM: GOD IS HOLY

The very nature of God prevents sinful men from being accepted in His presence.

Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil, and Thou canst not look on wickedness with favor [Hab.1:13].

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness [Rom.1:18].

But in accordance with your hardness and your unrepentant heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but

to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness – indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil [Rom.2:5-9].

...When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power [2 Thess.1:7-9].

It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment [Heb.9:27].

For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The Lord will judge His people.” It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God [Heb.10:30,31].

[See also Ps.11:4-7; 90:11; Ezek.7:8,9; Nah.1:6; Heb.12:29].

THE PROBLEM: HELL IS ETERNAL

Conscious eternal torment awaits every man.

The wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations who forget God [Ps.9:17].

Then He will say to those on His left hand, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels...And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” [Mt.25:41,46].

The rich man also died and was buried; and being in torments in hell, he...cried out and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me...for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said...between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us [Lk.16:22-26].

He himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy

angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night... [Rev.14:10,11].

[See also Mt.3:7-12; Jn.5:28,29; 2 Thess.1:8,9; Rev.20:11-15].

THE GOSPEL: THE SOLUTION

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Lord Jesus Christ is God's solution to the Problem of man. He has satisfied the wrath of God against sinful men and delivers from hell. Everything outstanding against man that hindered his being accepted by God has been cleared away by the Lord Jesus.

The Solution is not in religious ceremonies or systems, external practices or techniques to improve one's behavior. No, Christ Himself provides all that we never could do and is to us all that we could never be. Christ has solved every aspect of man's Problem before God.

He is the justifier of the condemned and guilty. His fulness of resurrection life cleanses the corrupt and relieves the miserable. Slaves to sin are set free from their bondage by the redemption of Christ.

Those without power are strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man. His life replaces sin's death. Enemies are reconciled and made friends and servants. The Light of Christ scatters the darkness of sin and the captives of Satan are delivered and translated to the kingdom of God's beloved Son.

Righteousness, once hated and feared, now can be our portion and delight. Hell's horrors no more await to swallow in its ruin and destruction, but instead, the bright joys of heaven have been secured and opened as an eternal hope.

Yes, it is Christ Himself that we need; not religious codes and practices. **For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life** [Jn.3:16]. This is a glad Gospel indeed. Let us now consider the most important ways in which Christ is our Solution to the Problem of sinful man before the holy God.

PROPITIATION The Lord Jesus satisfied every righteous demand of the holy God against sinful man.

Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus [Rom.3:24-26].

[See also Heb.2:17; I Jn.2:2; 4:4].

SUBSTITUTION The Lord Jesus suffered in our place the judgment deserved by all. He was the holy sinless substitute for sinful man.

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

Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed [I Pet.2:24].

[See also Rom.8:3; Heb.2:14,15; I Pet.3:18].

REDEMPTION The death of the Lord Jesus has fully paid the price to purchase us for God and to pay for our sins against God.

Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your empty way of life received by tradition from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot [I Pet.1:18,19].

[See also Jn.19:30; I Cor.6:19,20; Col.1:14; Rev.5:9].

INTERCESSION Christ Jesus Himself now represents us forever before the throne of God.

But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them [Heb.7:24,25].

[See also Heb.9:24; I Jn.2:1].

RECONCILIATION God has made His enemies into servants and friends through the death of Christ.

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: We beg you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God [2 Cor.5:18-20].

And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight [Col.1:21,22].

[See also Rom.5:10,11].

JUSTIFICATION God declares righteous all who put their trust in Christ and His righteousness.

Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus...Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law...But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness [Rom.3:22-28; 4:5].

[See also Rom.4:1-9,16; 5:1,9; Gal.2:16,21; 3:8-14; Phil.3:8,9].

REGENERATION God imparts His life by His Spirit through being spiritually born again.

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior [Tit.3:5,6].

[See also Jn.3:3-7; I Pet.1:23].

RESURRECTION The bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus proves His teaching, provides us with His life, and is the reason we are accepted

before God.

[Jesus was] declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead [Rom.1:4].

If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty...And if Christ is not risen, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins!...But now Christ is risen from the dead...And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam [Jesus] became a life-giving spirit [I Cor.15:14,17,20,45].

[Jesus] was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification [Rom.4:25].

[See also Rom.5:10; 8:11; Eph.1:19-23; 2:5,6; Col.3:1-4].

THE GOSPEL: THE RESPONSE

The essential Response to the gospel is Repentance. This is the common element in all of the following responses noted in the Bible. Without repentance, all other responses are cancelled.

Demons believe but lack repentance [Jas.2:19] as do many men [Jn.2:23-25]. Multitudes received Jesus as King, shouting "Hosanna" one day and "Crucify" almost the next, because they lacked repentance [Mt.21:9-11; Lk.23:20-23].

Many confessed Jesus as Lord, but did not do what He said [Lk.6:46] because repentance was absent. Others came and soon after left for the same reason [Jn.6:24-26, 66]. Judas followed Jesus for gain [Jn.12:6], betrayed Christ, and then felt remorse [Mt.27:3-5], but he never repented. Sorrow for consequences of sin is not the same as repentance from the evil itself [Ps.78:34-37; 2 Cor.7:8-11].

True love obeys because the heart has been changed [I Jn.5:3]. Repentance leads to abiding [Jn.15:4,5], and abiding to fruitfulness.

Repentance was the heralded declaration of John [Mt.3:2] and the first message of Jesus [Mt.4:17]. It is what Jesus commanded that should be preached in all the world [Lk.22:46,47] and was the message of response voiced by Peter [Acts 2:38] and Paul alike [Acts 17:30].

REPENT Repentance is a change of mind and direction of life so that

the old is forsaken and the new pursued.

[Jesus said] **Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish** [Lk.13:3,5].

Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” [Acts 2:38].

In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent [Acts 17:30].

Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” [Lk.24:46,47].

[See also Mt.3:1-12; 4:17; Acts 3:19; 26:20; 2 Cor.7:9,10; Rev.2:5].

BELIEVE Biblical belief is to trust, put confidence in, and agree with truth so as to obey. Faith and belief are synonyms in the NT.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life [Jn.3:16].

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved [Acts 16:31].

[See also Jn.1:12; 3:36; 5:24; 8:24; 20:31; Acts 10:43; Rom.4:4,5; 10:4, 9-11; Eph.2:8,9; 2 Thess.2:11,12; Heb.11:6; I Jn.5:11-13].

RECEIVE To receive Christ is to welcome Him to abide in one’s life as Lord, Savior, and Life-giving source of godliness.

As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name [Jn.1:12].

...among those who perish because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved [2 Thess.2:10].

CONFESS Confession is to say the same thing that God does. It is to agree with God with conviction of heart about a matter.

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation [Rom.10:9,10].

[See also Mt.10:32; I Jn.2:23; 4:15].

COME To come is to abandon one’s old ways and walk with Christ on the narrow way unto eternal life.

Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest [Mt.11:28].

[See also Jn.5:40; 6:35; 7:37; I Pet.2:4,5].

FOLLOW With Christ as our Example and His Word as our only command, we are led to deny self and follow Him in obedience.

Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me [Lk.9:23].

[See also Mt.4:19; 8:22; 16:24; Jn.10:4,5,27].

LOVE Love is affectionate devotion that is evidenced by obedience to God’s commandments.

Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words [Jn.14:23,24].

If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? [I Jn.4:20].

[See also Mt.22:37,38; I Cor.16:22; I Jn.4:8].

ABIDE Abiding is to remain in that fulness of living fellowship that comes by being united to Christ by faith.

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and

I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing [Jn.15:4,5].

BAPTISM Baptism is the outward testimony of the inward reality of having died to sin and then being made alive in Christ. It shows others that the old life is dead and gone, buried never to be brought up again, and from now on that the person will walk in newness of life.

Baptism is for those who have repented and believed the gospel [Acts 2:38; 8:36,37]. Infants have neither repented nor believed. There is no command in the Bible to baptize infants. There are no examples of baptizing infants in the Word of God.

Baptism does not save a person, for it is the gospel that is the power of God for salvation [Rom.1:16]. Christ did not send Paul to baptize, but to preach the message of the cross; that is what saves [I Cor.1:17,18].

Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him [Acts 8:36-38].

[See also Mt.28:18-20; Mk.16:16; Acts 2:38,41,42; 8:12,13; 9:17,18; 10:43-48; 16:14,15, 31-34; 18:8; 19:4,5; 22:16; Rom.6:3-6; I Cor.1:14-17; I Pet.3:21].

THE GOSPEL: THE RESULTS

Salvation is the Result of Responding to the Solution to our real Problem. Salvation is complete and removes all the effects of sin, both from the past, in the present, and in the future.

With respect to the past, God, the Righteous Judge, has declared the true believer Justified from his guilt and has thus saved him from the penalty of sin. In the present, the Spirit of God is transforming the true believer into the image of Christ and saving him from the power of sin [2

Cor.3:17,18]. The future will rescue the believer's body from all effects of sin [Rom.8:23-25] and from its very presence [Rev.7:15-17].

SALVATION God rescues and delivers the true believer from all aspects and effects of sin. It is the widest description of the Results of believing the Gospel.

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved [Acts 4:12].

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age [Tit.2:11,12].

[See also Rom.1:16; Rom.10:9,10; 2 Cor.6:2; I Thess.5:9; 2 Tim.3:15; I Pet.1:5, 7-9].

FORGIVENESS God no longer holds our sins against us but has sent them away, never to be called into account for judgment.

I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you [Isa.44:22].

Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea [Mic.7:18,19].

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace [Eph.1:7].

[See also Acts 26:18; Col.1:13,14].

ETERNAL LIFE This is not simply life that will never end, but it is the quality of a life that is everlasting; God's own life, life that comes from Him and conforms to His character.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment,

but has passed out of death into life [Jn.5:24].

[See also Jn.3:16, 36; 4:14; 17:3; Rom.6:3; I Jn.5:11-13].

CLEANSING The blood of Jesus cleanses from the guilt of sin and the Holy Spirit cleanses the heart and mind from its defilement through the Word and grace of God.

“Come now, and let us reason together,” says the Lord, “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool” [Isa.1:18].

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [I Jn.1:7,9].

[See also Ezek.36:25-27; Jn.15:3; Eph.5:26].

NO CONDEMNATION No judgment awaits the true believer for the guilt of his sin. Jesus Christ paid the full price to redeem us to God.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus [Rom.8:1].

[See also Jn.3:18; 5:24; Rom.8:34].

POWER God in His might is at work in the true believer both to will and to do for His good pleasure [Phil.2:13].

But you shall receive power when the Holy spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth [Acts 1:8].

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us [2 Cor.4:7].

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind [2 Tim.1:7].

[See also Rom.1:16; I Cor.1:18; 2 Cor.12:9; Eph.1:19; 3:20; Col.1:11; I Thess.1:5].

THE GOSPEL: BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATIONS

THE ARK

By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith [Heb.11:7].

Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord and was thus delivered from the judgment which came upon the whole world. The judgment fell upon the Ark, the means of his salvation, but not upon him who was saved by abiding in his “deliverer.” He passed through the judgment into a new creation and came forth in newness of life where he worshiped in Spirit and truth. [See Gen.6 - 9].

ISAAC

By faith Abraham...offered up Isaac...his only begotten son...concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense [Heb.11:17-19].

[1] Isaac, the only begotten loved by his father, voluntarily submitted himself to become a sacrifice by the will of his father. He was, in picture, slain, yet became alive again.

[2] Isaac, though obedient to all his father’s will and submissive in every way, nevertheless, was under judgment from his father’s hand that no obedience could prevent. It was only as the eyes were opened to see the lamb provided by the Lord that he was spared from wrath. The lamb was substituted in his place and died in his behalf: That set him free, never to face condemnation again. [See Gen.22].

PASSOVER

For indeed, Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us [I Cor.5:7].

The only means of deliverance from the judgment of God coming

upon the whole world was in the shed blood of the lamb. It must be applied by faith to the very place in which we dwell and live. The spotless lamb was slain to save those sheltered by its blood. The lamb then became the very food of the people of God which provided strength to depart from the world and its ways. [See Ex.12].

MANNA

And Jesus said to them, “I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst... I am the Bread which came down from heaven” [Jn.6:35, 41].

The bread of God came down from heaven and gave life to the world. All who by faith will receive this bread and feed upon it will never hunger. Christ is the daily portion that sustains the life of the people of the Lord. [See Ex.16].

SERPENT

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life [Jn.3:14,15].

The brass serpent had no poison of its own and was able to withstand the fire to which it was subjected. It was made in the likeness of that which afflicted people in order to deliver them from the certain death awaiting them due to their sin. Salvation was obtained by believing the Word of God about their only means of deliverance. The simple salvation message was, “Look and live!” [See Num.21:5-9].

DAY OF ATONEMENT

Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation [Mercy Seat] by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness [Rom.3:25].

Our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, has entered the presence of God, once and for all. There He presented His own blood

that has satisfied the righteous demands of the Holy One. The blood on the Mercy Seat covers all remembrance of our transgressions symbolized by Aaron’s rod, the tables of the Law, and the jar of manna [Heb.9:3-5]. These show our rebellion against His authority [Aaron’s rod: see Num.16,17], the breaking of His Law [the Ten Commandments: see Ex.31], and the despising of provision [the manna: see Num.21:5]. Our sins laid upon the live goat on the Day of Atonement, removes them forever from God’s sight. It is the work of the high priest alone to provide atonement. Ours is to humble our souls. [See Lev.16].

THE GOSPEL: PREACHING TO THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS

Unless a man sees his need, he will seek no remedy; unless he acknowledges a Problem, no Solution will interest him. With the Self-Righteous, the great task of the gospel worker is to awaken a sense of concern about his sinful condition before God. The following passages are most helpful to do so. Those references that have already been quoted previously will not be written out here.

Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others [Eph.2:3]. Though you may not be as bad outwardly as other men, can you honestly say that your inner thought life is free from sin? That secret sinfulness of mind alone is enough to make all men objects of God’s wrath.

[Prov.20:9]. Are you the only exception to what God says is true of all men; that all are infected with sin from which no man can cleanse himself?

[Rom.3:8-19]. It is the Lord who has told us that none are righteous, good, or seek after Him. He Himself says that all are useless. Will you then tell God that it is not so with you?

[Rom.3:23]. The standard is not our own ideas about goodness

or righteousness, but His very excellence of Character that we have all fallen short of.

[Rom.5:6,8,10]. Christ died for the helpless, ungodly, and His enemies. Unless you agree that this is your own condition, Christ's death will be of no purpose for you.

We are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away [Isa.64:6]. It is not only our worst deeds that are rejected by the Lord, even the very best we can do are filth in His sight. Will you then set before the King of heaven your offering of smelling filthy rags? Will He accept you then? Will He not rather cast you out of His presence in fury and rage?

[Jas.2:9,10]. Though you may imagine yourself to have kept the whole of God's Law, yet even one slip will make you guilty of all. What then is your hope in your own righteousness?

Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" [Lk.5:31,32]. It is not the well who need a doctor, it is the sick. But if you imagine yourself to be well when you are not, you will perish. Ignored, denied, or undetected, the disease of sin within your heart will destroy you.

THE GOSPEL: PREACHING TO THE IDOLATER

THE FOLLY OF IDOLATRY

The foolishness of idolatry is mentioned in several places in the Word of God. Even the idolater will recognize the manifest folly of idolatry when these passages are brought before him.

Our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases. Their

idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see; They have ears, but they do not hear; Noses they have, but they do not smell; They have hands, but they do not handle; Feet they have, but they do not walk; nor do they mutter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; So is everyone who trusts in them [Ps.115:3-7]. Idols have no life; they do not exist. They are only the work of men's hands. Why should a man who can walk and speak and reason and see and hear bow himself and serve a piece of stone or wood that can do nothing?

"Present your case," says the Lord, "bring forth your strong reasons," says the King of Jacob. Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; Let them show the former things, what they were, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare to us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods; Yes, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed and see it together. Indeed you are nothing, and your work is nothing; he who chooses you is an abomination [Isa.41:21-24]. The Lord not only exposes the nakedness of idols, He mocks the complete emptiness and stupidity of it. Any who would choose to follow the nothingness of idolatry is an abomination.

Those who make an image, all of them are useless...Who would form a god or mold an image that profits him nothing?...The blacksmith with the tongs works one in the coals, fashions it with hammers, and works it with the strength of his arms...The craftsman stretches out his rule, he marks one out with chalk; he fashions it with a plane...He cuts down cedars for himself...Then it shall be for a man to burn, for he will take some of it and warm himself; Yes, he kindles it and bakes bread; Indeed he makes a god and worships it; He makes it a carved image, and falls down to it. He burns half of it in the fire; With this half he eats meat...and the rest of it he makes into a god, his carved image. He falls down before it and worships it, prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!"...And no one considers in his

heart, nor is there knowledge nor understanding to say, "I have burned half of it in the fire...and shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?" He feeds on ashes; A deceived heart has turned him aside; and he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?" [Isa.44:9-20].

THE TWO WAYS

Though a man has two eyes, he can only look in one direction. His two legs can only walk upon one trail. Only one voice can be listened to at a time though his ears are two. Serving two masters is an impossibility.

There must be repentance from all aspects of idolatry if the Gospel is to be received unto salvation. There can be no compromise between God and Satan. Light immediately scatters darkness so that it disappears altogether. It must be one or the other, not both.

Therefore my beloved, flee from idolatry...What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He? [1 Cor.10:14, 19-22]. Will the Lord not be provoked to jealousy and wrath if we worship Him one minute and the next turn aside to serve idols?

You turned to God from idols to serve the living God [1 Thess.1:9]. Their backs were turned upon their idols when they turned to face the living God. A man cannot face both ways.

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

Therefore, "Come out from among them and be separate," says the Lord. "Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.

"I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters," says the Lord Almighty.

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God [2 Cor.6:14 - 7:1].

Beware that you are not ensnared to follow them...and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, "How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?"

You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods [Deut.12:30,31].

When you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations.

There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer,

or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.

For whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord; and because of these abominable things the Lord your God will drive them out before you.

You shall be blameless before the Lord your God.

For these nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do so [Deut.18:9-14].

No man can serve two masters... [Mt.6:24].

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it [Mt.7:13,14].

THE GODS OF OUR FATHERS

Many fear ancestral covenants and sins of their forefathers coming upon them. Others are fearful that the gods they abandon will harm them or their families if they forsake them for the sake of Christ.

Persecution from the family and tribe often will result as it did in NT days. The Thessalonians who turned to God from idols suffered affliction because of it [I Thess.2:13,14; 3:3,4]. The temptation is to compromise between idolatrous practices and the Gospel of Christ; trying to maintain traditional practices to not offend the ancestral traditions while vainly holding onto a hope of eternal life from Christ.

Here are passages from the Scriptures that deal with the gods of our fathers and ancestral traditions.

Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your empty way of life received by tradition from your forefathers; but with the precious blood of Christ [I Pet.1:18, 19]. Ancestral traditional ritual and practices are wholly based upon instructions passed down from the spirits of the ancestors. The Word of God says that they are empty ways of life. These are the very things that the blood of Christ has been shed to redeem us from; false practices of false gods. They must therefore be abandoned.

The Lord had made a covenant [with His people] and charged them, saying: “You shall not fear other gods, nor bow down to them nor serve them nor sacrifice to them; but the Lord, who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and an outstretched arm, Him you shall fear, Him you shall worship, and to Him you shall offer sacrifice. And the statutes, the ordinances, the law, and the

commandment which He wrote for you, you shall be careful to observe forever; you shall not fear other gods. And the covenant that I have made with you, you shall not forget, nor shall you fear other gods. But the Lord your God you shall fear; and He will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies” [2 Kings 17:35-39]. Other gods are not to be feared by the true believer. They are powerless before the one true and living God. The Lord protects those who fear Him from all enemies, including the false gods of earth.

Therefore hear the Word of the Lord...because you have said, “We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol/hell we are in agreement. When the overflowing scourge passes through, it will not come to us, for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood we have hidden ourselves.”

Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily...Your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol/hell will not stand; When the overflowing scourge passes through, then you will be trampled down by it” [Isa.28:14-18]. Ancestral curses and covenants are not to be feared or trusted. They will prove to be a false and empty protection from the sure wrath of God coming upon all who follow other gods. Only those will escape who are resting upon the sure unmoving Foundation laid by God Himself, which is Christ Himself [I Pet.2:4-6].

Keep on, then, with your magic spells and with your many sorceries, which you have laboured at since childhood. Perhaps you will succeed, perhaps you will cause terror. All the counsel you have received has only worn you out! Let your astrologers come forward, those stargazers who make predictions month by month, let them save you from what is coming upon you. Surely they are like stubble; the fire will burn them up. They cannot even save themselves from the power of the flame. Here are no coals to warm anyone; here is no fire to sit by. That is all they can do for you – these you have laboured with and trafficked with since childhood. Each of them goes on in his error;

there is not one that can save you [Isa.47:12-15]. All sorcerers, oracles, and herbalists cannot save even themselves from the wrath of the living God. Their power is weak, evil, and false. They and all who follow their directives, prophesies, and rituals will be destroyed along with them.

CURSES

Many times a traditional worshiper will fear curses coming upon him if he abandons the old ways for the Narrow Way of Christ Jesus the Lord. He may know very well that he is a sinner and in need of salvation, but fear may keep him from truly repenting and confessing Christ. The following passages from the Scriptures address curses and true believers.

Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow, so a curse without cause shall not alight [Prov.26:2]. There is no cause for a curse to come upon a true child of God. No matter what the curse, the power of God is greater to protect His child from that evil.

They hired Balaam...to pronounce a curse on you. However, the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam but turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loves you [Deut.23:4,5]. Here was a professional sorcerer hired to curse the people of God. God is in control of all, not the devil. The Lord turns even the curses of evil men to good for his people, to those who serve him alone apart from compromise with idolatrous ways.

He has blessed, and I cannot change it...The Lord their God is with them...There is no sorcery against Jacob, no divination against Israel. It will now be said of Jacob and of Israel, "See what God has done!" [Num.23:20-23]. Here is Balaam himself who was hired to curse Israel admitting that his curses are powerless against the true people of God. Though he wanted to curse them, he could not. There is no sorcery against the true people of God, for the Lord God is with us.

Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; Speak the

word, but it will not stand, for God is with us [Isa.8:10]. Here the schemes and incantations spoken against the true people of God fall to the ground harmless. Why? God is with us.

Let them curse, but You bless; When they arise, let them be ashamed, but let Your servant rejoice [Ps.109:28]. The curses of men and of the ancestors do not fall upon the true servants of God. Rather, they rejoice and are blessed.

ABANDONING THE GODS OF OUR FATHERS

Believers in the true and living God are always called upon to completely abandon their traditional idolatrous practices. There can be no mixture between the two. The following passages will show different situations in which this was done.

And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone." So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hands, and the earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem [Gen.35:2-4]. A true believer cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons at the same time [I Cor.10:14-22]. Idols must be abandoned before one can truly sacrifice to the Lord God.

Then I took your sin, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it and ground it very small, until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that descended from the mountain [Deut.9:21]. Moses broke, crushed, and burned the golden idol that the nation of Israel had made under Aaron's direction. He so completely destroyed it that no traces of it could ever be found again.

Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in

truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord...If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good [Josh.24:14,15, 20]. No compromise can exist between idols and the living God of heaven. We must choose whom we will serve. Both cannot be served.

Gideon built an altar there to the Lord, and called it The-Lord-Is-Peace...Now it came to pass the same night that the Lord said to him...tear down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the wooden image that is beside it...Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the wooden image that was beside it." But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him?...If he is a god, let him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down!" [Jud.6:24-31]. If these gods are truly gods, let them arise and do anything against the God of heaven or His servants. The testimony of the servants of the living God is that the small gods of the land are powerless before the God of heaven.

When they left their gods there, David gave a commandment, and they were burned with fire [I Chron.14:12]. The everlasting portion of gods and those who serve them is fire. Often idols are burnt by those who have repented from the folly of idolatry.

And the king commanded...to bring out of the temple of the Lord all the articles that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem...And he brought out the wooden image from the house of the Lord...burned it at the Brook Kidron and ground it to ashes...Moreover Josiah put away those who consulted mediums and spiritists, the household gods and

idols, all the abominations that were seen in the land...that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the Lord. Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him [2 Kings 23:4,6,24,25]. Here was a man who had one of the highest commendations ever given to a man. He made no compromise with idolatry. The temple of God and idols have nothing in common.

And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the Word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed [Acts 19:18,19]. There can be no mighty work of God when idolatry in all of its forms is not utterly rejected. When it is, the believers are protected by the Lord from spiritual assault and their testimony prevails in the land.

SUMMARY OF A SIMPLE GOSPEL MESSAGE

From John 3:16 a simple Gospel message can be spoken that includes all four aspects of presenting the Problem, Solution, Response, and Result. From this verse, man's Problem is that he is about to perish. The Solution is that God gave His Son. The Response is that man might believe. And the Result is everlasting life.

The same can be done from Romans 6:23. The Problem is that death awaits every man because of sin. The Solution is the gift of God in Christ Jesus the Lord. The Response is to receive the gift. And the Result is eternal life.

Many other single verses from the Scriptures present the entire Gospel message in themselves. The following is another simple Gospel presentation taken entirely from the words of the Scriptures themselves. As you read through it, take note of the four aspects of the Gospel that it presents.

People did not think it was important to have a true knowledge of God. So God left them and allowed them to have their own worthless thinking. And so those people do the things that they should not do. They are filled with every kind of sin, evil, selfishness, and hatred. They are full of jealousy, murder, fighting, lying, and thinking the worst about each other. They gossip and say evil things about each other. They hate God. They are rude and conceited and brag about themselves. They invent ways of doing evil. They do not obey their parents. They are foolish, they do not keep their promises, and they show no kindness or mercy to other people. They know God's law says that those who live like this should die. But they continue to do these evil things and approve those who do them [Romans 1:28-32].

The wrong things the sinful self does are clear: taking part in sexual sins, worshiping false gods, doing witchcraft, making trouble, being angry, being drunk, and doing other things like this. I warn you: Those who do these things will not be in God's kingdom [Galatians 5:19-21].

The Lord Jesus said, "I tell you, if you don't repent [change your hearts and lives], then you will all likewise perish!" [be destroyed too] [Luke 13:5].

Jesus is the only One who can save people. His name is the only power in the world that has been given to save people. And we must be saved through Him! [Acts 4:12].

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son. God gave His Son so that whoever believes in Him may not be lost, but have eternal life. He who believes in Him is not judged guilty. But he who does not obey the Son will never have that life. God's anger stays with him [John 3:16,18,36].

Christ Himself died for you. And that one death paid for your sins. He was not guilty, but He died for those who are guilty. He did this to bring you all to God. His body was killed, but He was made alive in the Spirit [1 Peter 3:18].

Christ died for all so that those who live would no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf [2 Corinthians 5:15].

If you use your mouth to say, "Jesus is Lord," and if you believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from death, then you will be saved. We believe with our hearts, and so we are made right with God. And we use our mouths to say that we believe, and so we are saved. As the Bible says, "Anyone who trusts in Him will never be disappointed" [Romans 10:9-11].

2

DISCIPLESHIP

THE TEACHING AND EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

Disciples are yoked to Christ as learners who walk with Him in meekness and lowliness [Mt.11:29]. By definition, a disciple is a learner and pride spoils the process. The goal of such association is conformity to the Master [Lk.6:40] through denial and even hatred of self [Lk.9:23; 14:26] by willingly suffering all for His name's sake [Lk.14:27].

Apprenticeship was ever Christ's method to instruct, train, and equip disciples. His practice was that His followers would learn spiritual principles by observation and participation. His life and teaching both in public and private were observed by them and later explained apart from the multitudes [Mk.4:34]. They also participated in serving men by way of preaching, teaching, healing, and giving to the poor.

For them to be able to repeat mechanically memorized information gained in a classroom setting was never His purpose. Rather, on the shores of Galilee or along the highways and in the marketplace, His school required men to reason about spiritual issues for themselves.

By encountering life situations with the Word of God and by the use of repeated questions, disciples' inner character was developed. The barrenness of a mere academic exercise of mind was not His aim and could never be thought of as training. Paul followed this example of developing men [2 Tim.3:10,11].

Jesus brought no gold from heaven to fund the work committed

into their hands. As He trusted in His Father, so must His disciples. He built no temples, established no ceremonial procedures, and founded no institutions; a maximizing of power with a minimum of machinery. None of these external things can ever maintain godliness, only men who have been transformed by the Son of God.

No human means, entertainment, or enticements were used to attract men to Himself. Christ alone is the single desire of a disciple, not the bait of gain or interests of any other kind.

Jesus Himself was the Apostle [Heb.3:1] and knew what was required to be one. The word “apostle” means “sent forth.” It describes one who by character and understanding can represent the interests of the one who sent him.

Christ did nothing except what He saw and heard from His Father, therefore apostles must go forth with no novelty of message and representation. They are ambassadors, and an ambassador dare not speak or act beyond what he has been authorized to do.

As the Apostle, He only did what He had authority to do from His Father. No independent message and judgment is fitting in an apostle.

I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me [Jn.5:30].

I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak [Jn.12:49].

This is the apostolic process: Men are chosen to first be with Him, separated from the unbroken tradition of their customary life until transformed. They then could be sent forth back into that culture without being overtaken by it when conformity to Christ’s character and message was consistent with His own [Mk.3:14]. This explains why laborers are yet few. The Father does not send just anyone into His vineyard.

In the extension of the kingdom of heaven, Wisdom dictated to perpetuate life by life, not by pen or sword; the number of trees in one pawpaw cannot be counted. Grace dictated that those chosen be from

the mainstream of common humanity and not from the exceptional or elite, that no flesh may boast in His presence.

And thus it was that unlearned fishermen [Acts4:13], a tax collector, a political zealot, and volatile sons of thunder became chosen vessels of worldwide blessing. It was a grassroots endeavor so that whatever noteworthy and commendable would be attributable to Christ and not to man.

Christ’s prayer summarizes His apostolic work, **I have given to them the Words which You have given Me; and they have received them [Jn.17:8].** Two by two they were thus sent forth, vindicating the wisdom of a three stranded strength entwined together with His own [Eccl.4:9-12].

DISCIPLES ARE LEARNERS

Every disciple begins as an ignorant learner; that is what a disciple is. He does not know as he ought, and dare not therefore lean on his own understanding [Prov.3:5,6]. This is a condition that a disciple never grows out of.

Paul himself pressed on **that I might know Him [Phil.3:10].** He admits that **I know in part [I Cor.13:12].** Even when in prison at the end of his days, he was eager to pursue the knowledge of Christ. **The time of my departure is at hand...bring...the books, especially the parchments [upon which the Scriptures were written] [2 Tim.4:6,13].**

It is therefore a life-long process of becoming increasingly conformed to the image of Christ [Lk.6:40]. We become like Him when we are yoked to Him and walk in His path, learning from His meekness and lowliness of heart [Mt.11:28-30].

The Lord Jesus Himself followed in this process of discipleship. Every morning His ear was open to hear from His Father [Isa.50:4-7]. What He heard, He obeyed and did not turn back. Having heard and learned, He could sustain the weary with a Word. This is discipleship.

It requires hating all the influence of natural associations that would draw the heart from Christ as Lord; even, and especially, that of

our own soul [Lk.14:25]. We must distrust our own desires and own assessment. If we are relying upon these, we are not listening to and learning from Christ: We are not disciples.

If we turn back because of the scorn and rejection of men; if we abandon the cross, we shall never die to self: We are not His disciple [Lk.14:26]. And there is no such thing as a disciple who has not lost his life for the sake of Christ [Mt.16:24,25].

All reliance upon our own resources must be given up: Discipleship is relying upon the strength, wisdom, and life of Christ alone. Trusting our own natural abilities, wisdom, and desires simply shows that we are not His disciple [Lk.14:33].

Disciples trust Christ to provide all that is needed to build a tower which will ensure a fruitful harvest in the coming Day [Lk.14:28-30. See Isa.5:1-4]. Disciples rely on Christ for all fruitful results.

How shall victory be secured when our might cannot match that of the enemy? [Lk.14:31-32]. The battle is the Lord's and He alone can defeat the hosts set round about against us [2 Chron.20:12, 15, 17; Prov.21:31]. Disciples do not look to self for victory and power.

TIMOTHY: A DISCIPLE INDEED

Timothy was a disciple indeed. His testimony was recognized and known among the brethren he was in fellowship with [Acts 16:1-3]. He served Paul like a son serving his father; so much so, that sending Timothy was the same as sending Paul, to hear him was to hear the Apostle [I Cor.4:14-17].

There was no one else like him among all the servants of Christ. He was a genuine man of proven character who sincerely cared for the souls of men. **For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel** [Phil.2:20-22]. He is a worthy example of all true disciples.

CHARACTERISTICS

A disciple, a learner, does not know as he ought to know [I Cor.8:2]. He does not lean on his own understanding [Prov.3:5]. He is not a fool, trusting in his own heart [Prov.28:26]. He is quick to hear and slow to speak [Jas.1:19].

Listening to, following, and yielding to reproof give evidence of being a true disciple. **He is on the path of life who heeds instruction, but he who ignores reproof goes astray** [Prov.10:17]. Those who refuse instruction, demonstrate that they are not disciples at all, but rather simply fools. **He who hates correction is stupid** [Prov.12:1].

Many have the outward show of being disciples, but few are genuine. **Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more** [Jn.6:60,66].

A disciple will be like-minded with the one discipling him and will not seek after his own interests: The things of Christ fill his heart and mind [Phil.2:20,21]. He is first of all, a servant of the Lord Jesus and then also of the one discipling him; like a child serving his father [Phil.2:22].

Discipleship is a relationship of love and mutual respect without constraint. Even esteemed fellow-workers do not serve by forced necessity [I Cor.16:12].

A disciple follows the teaching and conduct of the one guiding him [2 Tim.3:10] so that they teach the same things whether together or apart [I Cor.4:17]. During discipleship, the disciple is sent under the direction of the one discipling him: Independence and self-will do not guide his movements [I Cor.4:17; Phil.2:19,23,25,28; I Tim.1:3; 2 Tim.4:12; Tit.2:5].

PROCESS

The one discipling will preach [2 Tim.4:2], speak, exhort, and reprove with all authority [Tit.2:15], and lead [Heb.13:7]. He will prove to be an example [I Pet.5:3], teach [2 Tim.2:24], and correct [2 Tim.2:25].

A disciple will be reminded and solemnly charged [2 Tim.2:14], encouraged [Acts 15:32], and instructed with all patience [2 Tim.4:2]. But the one discipling does not, and must not, lord it over the disciple [Lk.22:25-27; 2 Cor.1:24; 1 Pet.5:3].

Lording it over men makes the disciples to be no longer servants of Christ. It turns them aside to being followers of men and the entire purpose of discipleship has been spoiled [Acts 20:30].

PURPOSE

The purpose of discipleship is to train, instruct, and equip the disciple to become totally dependent upon the Lord Jesus. **Everyone, when he is fully trained, will be like his master** [Lk.6:40].

Conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ is the ultimate aim. **The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith** [1 Tim.1:5]. Development of character and not merely informing the mind is the goal. The Word is to come first to the disciple to instruct, reprove, correct, and train him in righteousness [2 Tim.3:16,17], before he would ever seek to instruct others.

Discipleship's great task is to perpetuate the faith that has been once for all delivered to the saints. **The things you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also** [2 Tim..2:2].

This can only be maintained by faith and love in dependence upon the Holy Spirit of God [2 Tim.1:13,14]. No program, institution, publications, or creeds can ever maintain the true doctrine of God in living reality.

DEMANDS

The demands of discipleship are intense and rigorous [1 Tim.4:15,16]. Diligent watch must be kept over one's own heart, doctrine, and practice [Prov.4:23; 1 Tim.4:12]. Self-discipline is essential [Prov.2:1-5; 1 Tim.4:7,8]. Time is to be redeemed [Eph.5:16; Col.4:5].

Consistent daily reading and study of the Scriptures is mandatory

if one is to be a disciple. **Study to show yourself approved unto God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth** [2 Tim.2:15]. He must be steadfast in the Word in times of departure when men are running after fables rather than sound doctrine [2 Tim.4:1-5].

He is a son who is strong in grace, a soldier disentangled from the affairs of the world, an athlete who strives according to the rules, and a farmer who diligently labors [2 Tim.2:1-7]; for a lazy man should not even be given something to eat [2 Thess.3:10-13].

CAUTIONS

Disciples should aspire to lead quiet lives, mind their own business, and work with their own hands so that they will have a good testimony with those without and not be in any need [1 Thess.4:11,12]. But he shall be free from the love of money [Heb.13:5] which will be the snare to his soul and plunge him into ruin and destruction. This he must flee [1 Tim.6:9-11].

Interaction with the one discipling is to be purposeful, not as a busybody [2 Thess.3:11] nor as wasteful of time [Prov.25:17].

Since the disciple does not wish to give the enemy occasion for reproach [1 Tim.5:14], he will abstain from every appearance of evil [1 Thess.5:22]. Thus the disciple will relate to women in all purity [1 Tim..5:2]. **It is good for a man not to touch a woman** [1 Cor.7:1] nor to be alone with a woman in private so as to avoid temptation and evil suspicion on the part of others [Mt.6:13].

3

THE NT PATTERN FOR THE CHURCH

KEY PASSAGES: NATURE OF THE CHURCH

The church is portrayed in several ways in the NT. Living things cannot be reduced to strict mechanical definitions. They must rather be expressed by illustrations and accurate descriptions. The NT describes who the people of God are as distinct from the world. It also tells of the relationship that exists between these people and their God, and between these people and each other.

In the discussion of the following passages, various NT Greek words will be referred to. They will be identified by writing them in *ITALIC CAPITAL* letters followed by the actual Greek letters themselves.

Foundation [Mt.16:16-19]

No blessing comes to any man who has a deficient view of Christ. Imaginary Christs can do nothing for anyone because they don't exist. Only what is revealed about Christ to the heart of a man by the Father in heaven will result in blessing.

Jesus is the Christ; the Anointed Priest and King. As Priest, there exists no other Mediator between God and man. No other sacrifice will avail to cleanse from sin. He alone is the Priest that can safely represent man before God without rejection.

As King, He rules and governs the heart of His servants according

to the law of His kingdom. No other rulers, no codes or traditions can be accepted by His subjects. His Word exclusively must command His people.

Christ alone is the Rock upon which His church is built. The confession that there is no other King, no other Priest, is the unshakable Rock that all of hell's wisdom and might cannot overcome. Hell cannot undo what has been supernaturally imparted to the heart of a man by the Father in heaven. There is no other means of entrance into this church that Jesus is building.

For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ [I Cor.3:11]. That Rock [PETRA, πετρα] was Christ [I Cor.10:4].

Peter [PETROS, πετροσ] is not that Rock [PETRA, πετρα] upon which the church is built. Peter is a stone [PETROS, In.1:42], like all believers are **living stones** [I Pet.2:5], but he is not the foundational Bedrock [PETRA] upon which the church stands: That is Christ alone.

Keys of the kingdom [Mt.16:19] were placed in his hands by the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter was the initiator, a pioneer, who accessed several new gateways into fresh spiritual realms for the saints of God to follow thereafter.

Pentecost found him unlocking the stiff rusty gate of tradition unto the flooding light of salvation and a New Covenant for the Jew. Three thousand gladly rushed through the opened passageway to eternal life, accessed by the Key of the Gospel in his hand [Acts 2:14-42].

Through him doors of mercy swung wide unto the afflicted and sorrowing. Miracles were first introduced through the church to a suffering world at the Temple's Beautiful Gate [Acts 3:1-10], and Peter held that Key of Compassion.

It was Peter who first passed through the door of persecution, imprisonment, and stripes for the sake of the Name [Acts 4&5]. The Key of No-compromise gained admittance to that prison cell of suffering in behalf of Christ.

Reluctantly, a key was withdrawn from an Israelite's robe to extend salvation's blessing beyond the borders of Judea unto the remotest part of the earth. Peter's narrow thinking required arresting by repeated

visions before that key would be inserted to unlock blessing to the “unclean” Gentiles [Acts 10:9-16].

Yet he yielded to the message from heaven. Peter arose without misgivings and threw open the barred door to the heathen in Cornelius’ house [Acts 11:1-18]. Thereafter, every tribe, people, tongue, and nation have thankfully streamed through it to the glory of God.

This final Key pulled from Peter’s robe, was the golden one of Obedience; Peter’s own obedience, which led to **the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name’s sake** [Rom. 1:5].

Peter, thus, is simply a servant in the kingdom, but not the foundation of it. Christ alone can support the church that He is building. It belongs to Him. He says it is **My church** [Mt. 16:18]. We dare not shift to another foundation, another priesthood, another Christ, another Gospel, or another code of law.

This is the foundation of the church that is Jesus’ possession and is the first mention of the church in all of Scripture. Study it well, the key lies at the door to all that is contained therein. There is no other church membership that will take you to heaven.

Father & Children [2 Cor. 6:18]

The life of the Father is the common portion of all His children. He is exalted over all to whom all owe everything within the family. In this family, all are brothers. None have any place of superiority over others. Love and consideration characterize them all and obedience to a Father’s will is their crowning glory.

Master & Slaves [Rom. 6:15-23]

Slaves are purchased possessions. They have no rights, and their independent opinions and desires are not the concern of the Master. Their one concern is to know and obey the command of their Master [I Cor. 6:19,20].

No man can serve two masters. There exists no place for men to lord it over fellow slaves in the church of Christ. Jesus alone is Lord.

Shepherd & Sheep [Jn. 10:1-28]

There exists but one flock with one Shepherd [Jn. 10:16]. Men are no substitutes for Christ. His voice alone is heard and followed by His flock. The voices of strangers will not be listened to or followed: Rather, the sheep will flee from any not speaking the Word of the Shepherd.

This identifies what true shepherd care is; speaking with the voice of Christ, leading in His paths of righteousness to feed upon His Word. This is what a shepherd is according to the heart of God [Jer. 3:15]. Any who would draw men after themselves, speaking man’s wisdom and tradition, are thieves and robbers [Ezek. 34:1-16; Acts 20:30].

Foundation & Temple [I Cor. 3:10,11,16; Eph. 2:19-22]

In God’s temple, everything says, “Glory!” The outshining of His character is seen, the excellence of His moral perfections shine forth. Truth is dispensed, sacrifices rise, and the Lord dwells in the midst with holiness overshadowing all.

Christ as the Cornerstone is the reference point for all that is built upon Him. He is the foundation that the Apostles and prophets have laid. Everything rests upon Him and He determines the dimensions and scope of the building. Man’s substitutes and carnal contributions are rejected as worthless and not according to the Pattern of Christ.

This is the church that Jesus builds. It is not built with wood and cement. Living stones grow into a holy temple in the Lord. The church of the Lord Jesus is the pillar and support of the truth [I Tim. 3:15], upholding and proclaiming the everlasting Word of God of Him who dwells within His spiritual house.

High Priest & Priests [Heb. 4:14-16; I Pet. 2:5,9]

A throne of grace is open to all who draw near to God through Jesus, the only High Priest who always lives to intercede for His own [Heb. 7:24,25]. Each believer has equal privilege and access to the God of

heaven, for all are spiritual priests.

From every believer without distinction, offerings are brought: Bodies are presented as living sacrifices [Rom.12:1,2], praise rises from grateful and fruitful lips [Heb.13:15], and good deeds of sharing abound [Heb.13:16].

No such thing as clergy and laity exist in the NT church patterned after Christ. No separate class of men officiate and rule over the spiritual life and ministry of the believers. All are priests.

Vine & Branches [Jn.15:1-17]

Apart from Me, you can do nothing [Jn.15:5]; nothing to glorify the Father, nothing to truly benefit man. The life of the True Vine courses through each and every branch to produce the fruit of that Life; fruit of **goodness, righteousness, and truth** [Eph.5:9].

Fruit cannot be imitated as spiritual gifts may. Death has its own odor that cannot be masked. The fruitful fragrance of Christ is what is evidenced in all who are in living union with Him. Life produces fruit that no ceremonies, regulations, associations, or traditions could ever do.

Head & Body [Col.1:18]

One Head governs the one body of Christ. There are not multiple heads in His church. No one's body could live and function with two heads.

The members of the body receive their direction directly from the Head, not from fellow members. The hand does not dictate to the foot. If one suffers, that member sends a message of distress to the Head. The Head then orders the response of the other members to relieve the suffering member.

All is orderly and coordinated because the Head governs all. No imposed structure from without directs the church. Christ is truly the Head.

Captain & Soldiers [2 Tim.2:3,4]

Soldiers do not entangle themselves in the affairs of life. Conflict for the sake of the kingdom is their concern. Commands from their Captain are all that they listen to.

Hardship, self-denial, and discipline are what their lives consist of. Pleasing the Commander and gaining victory over the foe fills their waking moments.

The church fights the good fight of faith, not with carnal weapons and fleshly might, but with the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Error, evil, and hate is fought with truth, righteousness, and love. Only then is victory sure.

Bridegroom & Bride [2 Cor.11:2,3; Rev.19:7-9; Eph.5:25-32]

Affectionate devotion and determined purity are what characterize the bride. She has an eye for none other. Her love is reserved for One alone.

She despises that friendship with the world which would defile her into harlotry [Jas.4:4]. She makes herself ready for the glorious day in which she shall appear spotless and radiant, with no stain or blemish.

Righteous deeds weave the whitened fabric of her beautiful dress while she gladly submits to His good pleasure. And so it is that the true church of Christ can say, **I am my Beloved's, and His desire is for me** [S. of S. 7:10].

KEY PASSAGES: LEADERSHIP

Luke 22:24-27 [Mt.20:25-28; Mk.10:42-45]

Ruling and lording it over the people of God is never to be found in the church of Jesus Christ. He forbids it to be so. Dominating and exercising authority over inferiors is what the heathen do. It is worldliness and completely unlike the Pattern of Christ.

He humbled Himself as the lowliest of servants. This is what

constitutes leadership in His kingdom, in His church; serving as a slave.

Leadership is by performing loving deeds of service, not by exercising authority over others. True leadership, according to Christ, is by an example of humbly serving others, not by having others perform my will. The youngest is the greatest.

In Lk.22:26, the word “**chief**” [KJV], “**he who governs**” [NKJV], “**the one who rules**” [NIV], and “**leader**” [NASB], are all translations of the word *HEGEOMAI* [ηγεομαι]. Jesus here says that the *HEGEOMAI* is a servant. This is the sense in which we must understand the meaning of this term in the church.

Without controversy, servants are not rulers, they are ruled. Therefore, the ideas of chief, ruler, or governor cannot possibly be the proper sense of a *HEGEOMAI* in the NT church. The meanings, “leader, guide,” are correct, as they alone are consistent with being a servant. A servant can lead and guide by an example of devoted care and truthful words. But no servant is a ruler, governor, or chief; that is a contradiction in terms.

Acts 20:28-32

Elders who are equipped by the Holy Spirit to oversee, are capable of shepherding the flock of God. It is the work of God to make a man in this capacity. Man’s appointment and ordination cannot make a man into someone and something that the Holy Spirit has not already done.

Elders [Acts 20:17,18] and Overseers [Acts 20:28] are terms describing the same individuals. An Elder [*PRESBUTEROS*, πρεσβυτερος] is an older man of proven spiritual maturity. An Overseer [*EPISKOPOS*, επισκοπος] describes the work that an Elder performs. That work is watching over and tending to the needs of the flock as a Shepherd would do.

The work of a Shepherd is essentially two-fold: to lead the flock to good pasture and to watch over them so that the wolf does not attack and destroy. The means provided by the Lord to accomplish both of these services are one and the same. The Word of God is what the

believers are led to feed upon by mature godly teachers. That same Word, skillfully used in the hands of Overseeing Shepherds, is their means of protection against error and evil.

I Peter 5:1-6

Once again, it is the Elders who are performing the work of overseeing. Overseer is not a position or office of higher rank than that of an elder. The two words are simply describing the same individual, considered from different aspects of his qualifications of service to the saints.

Leaders, here called Elders, are among the brethren, not over them. Peter himself does not assume a ruling position over the brethren or other elders. He simply calls himself, **your fellow elder**.

Here it is clearly seen that an Overseer who watches over, must not Lord It Over. Overseeing is therefore never legitimately ruling and exercising authority over the brethren. Rather, Elders/Overseers are to be examples, both in loving and humble service as well as in purity of life and of doctrine. They do not dominate, they demonstrate.

Hebrews 13:7,17

NT church Leaders [*HEGEOMAI*] are not rulers. This has already been seen by our Lord Jesus’ use of this same word in the discussion above from Lk.22:26. They are guides; servants who lead by loving godly care while speaking the truth.

Believers are to carefully reflect upon both the godly lives of their Leaders and the Word that they have taught. It is then that they are persuaded to imitate their faith and submit to their guidance and example.

They obey because the Leaders’ doctrine and lives are persuasive to the spiritual hearts of the godly. The church does not obey because Leaders rule over them with authority as lords. Christ’s Leaders follow His Pattern by guiding according to example, combined with the persuasive power of truth.

The most frequent word in the NT for Obey is [HUPAKOUO, υπακουω]. It means TO OBEY, in the sense of submitting to authority; such as a believer to the Lord [Heb.5:9], a child to his parent [Eph.6:1], or a slave to his master [Col.3:22].

However, in Heb.13:17, a different word for Obey is used. That word, [PEITHO, πειθο], means TO CONVINCe, PERSUADE, OBEY. The obedience called for in Heb.13:17 is based upon godly spiritual persuasion, not upon submission to one in authority over others.

Thus, the meaning of the command in Heb.13:17 can better be expressed in this way: **Be persuaded by your Leaders and submit.** Their submission is to the truth of their leaders' teaching from the Word that is also evident in the convincing example of their godly lives.

I Timothy 3:1-7

Oversight is a good and desirable work. It is truly a work of service, not occupying a position or assuming an office. The Overseer must possess essentially two qualifications. [1] He must be blameless in character. [2] He must be able to teach.

Thus the Overseer must be a consistently spiritual example and able to teach the Word; the same qualifications as were seen in Acts, I Peter, and Hebrews.

He must be one who Manages [PROISTEMI, προϊστημι] his own household well. If he is not a good example, leader, and caring helper there, how could he possibly be qualified to help the church?

PROISTEMI is a word that means, literally, TO STAND BEFORE, and is translated as LEAD, ATTEND TO [with diligent care], MANAGE, MAINTAIN, CONDUCT, BE CONCERNED ABOUT, CARE FOR, GIVE AID, DIRECT, RULE.

This wide-range term describes someone who is standing before others as an example of devoted service, help, care, and direction to them. [All NT references are: Rom. 12:8; I Thess. 5:12; I Tim. 3:4,5,12; 5:17; Tit. 3:8,14].

The sense in which Overseers are to "rule" [I Tim.3:4,5 KJV] their household well is explained by the use of the term "take care of" in

I Tim.3:5. The word "take care of" [EPIMELEOMAI, επιμελεομαι], is used in only three verses in the NT; Lk.10:34,35 and I Tim.3:5.

In the Luke passage, the good Samaritan did not rule, lord it over, or exercise authority over the man who had been robbed and beaten. Rather, he Attended to, was Concerned about, Cared for, Gave aid, and Directed for the care of the man in need. Provision was made at his own expense for the well-being and blessing of the wounded traveler.

This type of care is what is needed in the church and in the home. If one cannot Attend to, be Concerned about, Care for, Give aid, and Direct the members of one's own family, how could a man ever be of benefit to the church, the family of God? Ruling and exercising authority as a lord does not fit or qualify a man to either lead in his home or in the church.

Titus 1:5-9

Elders [PRESBUTEROS] and Overseers [EPISKOPOS] are addressed as being the same individuals. There exists no hierarchy of one over the other or of either over the brethren.

Any true Overseer must be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict. Such is the work of a Shepherd; to feed with the Word and to defend with the same.

I Timothy 5:17-22

Those Elders who Care For [PROISTEMI] the brethren well are worthy of double honor, not because they are Rulers, but because they Attend to, are Concerned about, Care for, and Give aid to the people of God. They should be worthy, not only of honor, but even of financial support since they are working hard at preaching the gospel and teaching the believers.

I Thessalonians 5:12,13

Leaders are noted for their diligent work of Caring For [PROISTEMI] and admonishing the brethren according to the Word of God. These are the ones that we should draw close to in order to observe, know, and highly esteem their worthy examples and sound doctrine. Because of their good work, we love them dearly.

Here, it is those who are Attending to, Caring for, Giving aid, and Directing the brethren by their laboring in teaching and admonition that the saints are to lovingly esteem. They are not “over you” as ruling authorities, but are Standing Before the church as teachers and examples.

LEADERSHIP: PLURAL OR SINGULAR?

Throughout the NT, leadership in the local assemblies was plural, and not singular. In other words, there was not one man who was the leader of a church or group of churches. There is to be more than one Elder/Overseer/Pastor in a local church gathering.

There is no one “priest,” bishop, reverend, pastor, primate, general overseer, or “man of God” who determines policy or who directs the actions of the believers and affairs of the church. The modern “pastor” as we have conceived him to be from the time of the Reformation, is not found in the pages of the NT.

The following passages show plurality of leadership in the NT church: [Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3,13; 14:23; 15:2,4,6, 7,12,13,22,32,35; 20:17,28; Phil. 1:1; I Thess. 5:12,13; I Tim. 1:3,6,7; 3:1,8; 4:14; 5:17-20; 2 Tim. 2:2; Tit. 1:5; Philemon 1-3; Heb. 13:7,17; Jas. 5:14; I Pet. 5:1-5].

LEADERSHIP: MALE OR FEMALE?

There is no reference in the NT of a woman being a pastor, elder, overseer, or teacher in the church. The command to Christian women is clear: A woman is not allowed to teach or exercise authority over a man [I Tim.2:11,12]. And this is not a command limited to a particular situation or culture, but is the directive of God for all believers in every

place at all times [I Cor.1:2; 4:17; 7:17; 14:37].

By creation, she is a follower, not the leader; a helper, not the initiator; the responder, not the director [Gen.2:18; I Cor.11:9; I Tim.2:13]. She is indeed a fellow heir of the grace of life [I Pet.3:7], but not a fellow minister in the church as men are. Though one in Christ where there is neither male nor female with respect to salvation and its blessings [Gal.3:28], she is not given the same sphere of ministry by God as are men.

Her God-given realm is in the home; loving her husband and children [Tit.2:3-5], raising her children [I Tim.2:15; 5:14], and working at home [I Tim.5:14; Tit.2:5] so that the Word of God will not be dishonored [Tit.2:5]. Her sphere of teaching is in practical instruction in godliness to other sisters and children [Tit.2:3-5]. Doing good by helpful works of service [Lk.8:2,3], giving to the poor [Acts 9:36,39], and kindly hospitality [Acts 16:15,40; I Tim.5:10] are some of her great and needful contributions to the work of the gospel; fellow workers, not competitors or usurpers.

BELIEVERS: INFERIORS OR EQUALS?

Christians are addressed as spiritual equals in the NT. There are no classes or ranks among the brethren. None are inferior to some who supposedly are ruling over others. [Acts 17:11; Rom. 15:14; I Cor. 5:12, 13; 10:15; 12:7, 18-27; 14:26, 29-35; 2 Cor. 1:24; I Pet. 5:1; Rev. 1:9].

CHURCHES: ASSEMBLIES OR RULERS?

The Epistles in the NT that are addressed to assemblies, are not addressed to the “rulers” in those churches. They are addressed to the entire fellowship of the brethren, not to an imagined hierarchy within it. [Rom. 1:7; I Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:2; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2; I Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; I Pet. 1:1].

CHRIST THE PATTERN

Paul wrote so that believers would know how they ought to conduct themselves **in the house of God, which is the church of the living God** [I Tim.3:15].

Throughout the Scriptures, there has always been a pattern for the house of God. The Tabernacle had to be built according to the pattern shown on the mount [Heb.8:5]. Solomon's Temple had a divinely revealed plan [I Chron.28:12,19].

The re-built Temple in the days of Ezra was built according to the absolute standard of the plumb line that measured all from above [Zech.4:9,10]. And Ezekiel's Temple of the future has a carefully revealed and measured pattern [Ezek.40:4; 43:10-12].

There exists a Pattern for the church as well, which has Christ Himself as the standard [I Cor.3:9-17; 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:3, 37, 38; 2 Thess.2:15; I Tim.3:15; 2 Tim.1:13,14].

In the NT church, everything revolves around and is measured by Jesus Christ the Lord. He truly has **first place in everything** [Col.1:18].

All life [Col.3:4], direction [I Cor.2:16], enabling [I Cor.1:24], and gift [Eph.4:7,8] come directly from the Lord Jesus Christ, the HEAD of the Body, His church.

As HIGH PRIEST, He is the one Mediator between God and man [I Tim.2:5] that all believers as Priests have equal access to.

Christ alone is qualified to command and rule His Servants as their KING and LORD. **You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men** [I Cor.7:23].

No traditions of men, rules, codes, ceremonies, or formulas can save or improve our condition. Christ is the TRUE VINE and source of all fruitfulness for every believer abiding in Him [Jn.15:5].

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is built upon nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else than Himself as its FOUNDATION [I Cor.3:11]. With Himself as the CORNERSTONE, the perfect reference point for the church, the whole Building is **growing into a holy Temple in the Lord** [Eph.2:20, 21]. The church is not a literal building made of

cement and wood, and does not depend upon any man, ministry, or denomination for its existence, guidance, or progress.

Sheep in His flock listen to and follow the voice of their one SHEPHERD, Christ Jesus. All other voices and messages are those of thieves and robbers and will be fled from by Christ's sheep [Jn.10:4,5].

Purity from the defilement of the world is evident in His Bride whose devotion and affection is reserved for Christ alone, the BRIDEGROOM of His church.

IN THE NT CHURCH

No man governs and rules. It is the right of the Lord Jesus to have such place among His people.

Christ Jesus dwells in the midst as the focus of every obedient, worshipful, and loving heart [Rev.2:1].

Our Lord leads, commands, directs, and draws out a response of love from those belonging to Him [Rev.19:7, 8].

He is truly honored as Lord as there are no competing "lords" among His people [2 Cor.1:24; I Pet.5:1-3].

Leaders are among the flock, not over them.

Overseers watch over as servants, but do not lord over as rulers.

All is done **decently and in order** [I Cor.14:40] because He is not a God **of confusion but of peace** [I Cor.14:33]. Yet no pre-arranged program is needed to direct the worship of the church. The Spirit of God, whose work it is to glorify Christ [Jn.16:13,14], will lead the people of God [Rom.8:14] to **worship the Father in Spirit and truth** [Jn.4:23].

Unity exists, not by outward conformity and association, but because the Spirit of God joins all to glorify Jesus as Lord [Eph.4:3,4] in a common life of godliness [Jn.17:21-23].

Each one contributes for the edification of all [I Cor.14:26] and all judge what is spoken by any [I Cor.14:29].

Everyone submits to each other in the fear of Christ, whether believer or leader, young or old alike [Eph.5:21].

The Breaking of Bread [Lord's Supper/Communion meeting] is the commanded meeting of the church. **Do this in remembrance of Me**

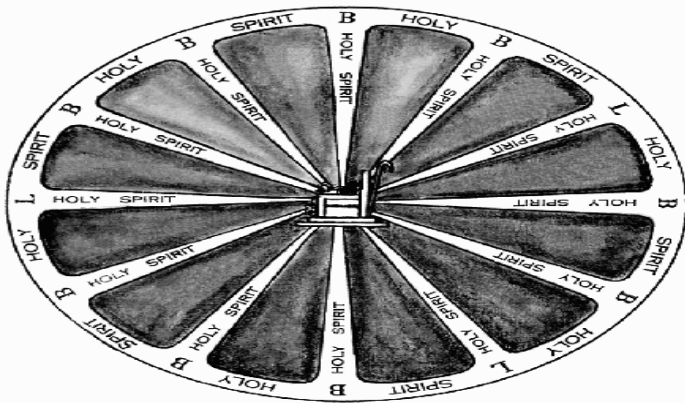
[Lk.22:19]. Other gatherings are secondary or even optional.

Disobedient brethren are lovingly restored back into the way or regretfully removed from the fellowship by the church, not by its leaders alone [Gal.6:1,2; Mt.18:15-18; I Cor.5:1-13].

The following diagram illustrates the relationship of Christ to His church and of the believers [B] to Him, one another, and to leaders [L]. Christ is in the midst as Lord represented by the throne. His life extends to every member of His body through the Holy Spirit, the only light amidst the darkness of this world.

Leaders are among the believers, not over them. All have equal access to the Lord Jesus as the Great High Priest over the house of God apart from human mediators. As Head, He directs the members of His body. Since He is the Bridegroom, all devotion and affection is focused upon Christ without rivals. And as Lord, His Word commands His servants, not the commandments and traditions of men.

Believers live in harmony and love one another as brothers since they share a common life in the Spirit of God being joined to Christ as the True Vine. In the church that Jesus is building, He has **first place in everything** [Col.1:18].



BREAKING OF BREAD

Do this in Remembrance of Me

[Lk.22:19; I Cor.11:24]

In this simple request is contained the only command from our Lord regarding the meeting of Christians. All other purposes for gathering, however beneficial they might be, are secondary or even optional. This one is not. Several profound truths are contained in this text.

[1] **Do this in remembrance of Me.** The Lord Jesus is the central object and reason for the gathering. The focus is upward, upon Him. While there is undoubtedly benefit and blessing to the brethren, Christ is to have **first place in everything** [Col.1:18]. In our remembrance of the Lord Jesus with thanksgiving the assembled brethren are stirred up to love and good deeds [Heb.10:24,25].

[2] **Do this in Remembrance of Me.** One cannot remember someone he has never known. It is a meeting for true believers. Its purpose is not for other reasons. It is not a teaching meeting, though teaching is there. It is not a prayer meeting, though prayers are surely offered. Evangelism is not the focus though the gospel of the death of Christ must certainly be mentioned. If unbelievers happen to be present, the church's devoted reflection upon Christ will surely bring conviction to their hearts as His person and work is remembered [I Cor.14:23-25; 11:23-26].

[3] **Do This in remembrance of Me.** Do this refers to something. The Lord Jesus said these words after He had done something: He had just given thanks. We are to do as He did: We are to give thanks for all that the bread and cup represent. They are symbols of His person, His body, and of His work of redemption, His blood. Who He is and His work at the cross to secure salvation are the cause and focus of our thanks.

[4] **Do this in remembrance of Me.** The command is plural. It is not a

directive for one only to do this while others sit passively by. Each one is to have something to contribute to the collective giving of thanks in the remembrance of Christ [I Cor. 14:26].

In that first meeting recorded in the Gospels, the Lord Jesus was the central focus in their midst [Lk. 22:15-20]. Prayers of thanks were offered [Lk. 22:19,20], teaching occurred [Mk. 14:22-25], exhortation was given [Lk. 22:21-23], hymns were sung [Mt. 26:30], and they shared a meal together [Mt. 26:26].

These are the key elements in our remembrance of the Lord Jesus. No formula or ceremonial pattern was laid down by our Lord to dictate our expressions of love to Him, though these elements will surely be present.

This gathering is actually an acted-out parable of sorts, expressing the life in Christ that is among believers collectively. Jesus Christ has first place in the midst as the adoring object of every worshiping heart. Love to Him as the Bridegroom and obedience to Him as Lord are the basis of unity among the saints.

Each are guided by the Good Shepherd and share a common life received from the Head of the body. Through the one Great High Priest, their sacrifices of praise ascend unto the throne of God. Fellowship and harmony prevail among the children of the one family of God.

Christians did meet for other reasons as well, but we must not neglect what is commanded for that which we think is beneficial. The types of meetings in the NT are shown in the following.

[1] Breaking of Bread [Acts 2:42-47; 20:7-11; I Cor. 10:16-22; 11:17-34].

[2] Prayer [Acts 1:14,15; 4:23-31; 12:12; 21:5].

[3] Fellowship [Acts 2:42-46].

[4] Teaching [Acts 5:42; 8:25; 11:26; 13:1-3, 42,43; 14:21-23; 15:32-35; 16:40].

[5] Mission Report [Acts 14:26-28; 15:3,4; 21:19].

[6] Elders Meeting [Acts 20:17-37; 21:18].

[7] Church Discipline For Doctrine [Acts 15:1-30]. For Morals [I Cor. 5:1-13].

[8] In General [I Cor. 14:1-40; Heb. 10:23-25].

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Christianity is a fellowship of love; love to God and love to the brethren [I Jn. 4:7,8]. Love to God requires obedience or it is not love at all [Jn. 14:21; I Jn. 5:3]. Love can never be pleased with unrighteousness, but ever and always rejoices with the truth [I Cor. 13:6].

Love therefore is always concerned about and cannot be content when sin is present in its own or another's life. Obedience to truth is to be the characteristic of all believers. The Lord has so composed the body of Christ that **there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it** [I Cor. 12:25,26].

The fellowship of the brethren is maintained only while we walk in the light as Christ is in the light. If sin enters in, that fellowship is spoiled. **If we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin** [I Jn. 1:7].

Filled with both goodness and knowledge, mutual admonition maintains that purity among brethren in loving fellowship [Rom. 15:14]. Those who are overtaken in a fault, are to be restored in gentleness by those who are spiritual [Gal. 6:1]. In this way the burdens of brethren are borne and the law of Christ is fulfilled [Gal. 6:2].

But there are times when erring brothers do not heed loving correction to forsake their folly and live. It is always a serious matter when brethren harden their hearts when reproved. Severe warnings are given against this. **Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God...Today, if you will**

hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion [Heb.3:12, 15].

Such refusal to repent and return to walking obediently on the way of life calls for further correction. If a brother does not heed the first attempts at correcting his sin in private [Mt.18:15], it becomes necessary to bring one or two more along to confirm the mis-deed and impress upon the brother the seriousness of his actions [Mt.18:16].

Some still will not listen. It then must be brought before the entire church that unitedly they might speak to the brother to turn him from the error of his way [Mt.18:17; Jas.5:19,20]. If he will not listen to the admonition of the church itself, he has rejected the Word of Christ who is speaking in the midst of His people [Mt.18:18-20]. He is then to be put out of the fellowship of the brethren until such time that he repents [Mt.18:17; 2 Thess.3:6,14; 2 Cor.2:6-11].

The Lord Jesus says this is a matter finally for the church to decide, not for the leaders only. **And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector [Mt.18:17].**

All believers are to say the same thing with one voice about sin that has not been repented of. **Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment [I Cor.1:10].** It is the church itself that is the final decision making body in these matters, not the leaders alone.

Paul speaks to the entire body of believers at Corinth as being responsible to exercise this type of discipline. **For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person” [I Cor.5:12,13].**

Sin that is not repented of, whether moral [I Cor.5:1-13] or doctrinal [Rom.16:17,18; 2 Thess.3:14; Tit.3:9-11; 2 Jn.9-11], is a serious matter. God takes up discipline of a believer when that of Christ through the church is rejected. **He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy**

[Prov.29:1].

Discipline and correction is designed to lovingly restore the erring brother to fellowship and blessing. It is also designed to prevent corruption from spreading within the fellowship of the brethren who might be tolerating its presence rather than disciplining the transgressor.

You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst...Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Clean out the old leaven...I have written to you not to keep company with any so-called brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner – not even to eat with such a person...put away from yourselves the evil person [I Cor.5:2,6,7,11,13].

LEADERS WHO BECAME LORDS

Jesus Christ the Lord, who has the central place among the lampstands [Rev.2:1], hates **the deeds of the Nicolaitans [Rev.2:6].** He hates it because they attempt to take over His rightful place as Lord.

Nicolaitan is a compound word in Greek. It comes from joining the words *NIKAO* [νικαω] TO OVERCOME and *LAOS* [λαος] THE PEOPLE.

Jesus hates the deeds of those who “Overcome the People.” Great men ruling the common people [Laity in English comes from this word] and exercising authority over them is what the rulers of the Gentiles do.

It is what the rulers of the churches do. And it is hated by Christ.

There is a man in the NT who ruled in the church. He was a wicked man. He did not accept the Word of God. He oppressed the brethren who wished to follow the Scriptures. Those who loved the brethren were forbidden by him to do so. And those who would not obey his rule were thrown out of the church [3 Jn.9,10].

The root cause of his evil exercise of authority was that he **loved to be first among them [3 Jn.9].** He is chief of all church rulers who follow in his steps, loving positions of power and authority .

The Scriptures state that Christ is **to have first place in everything** [Co].1:18]. But Diotrephes loved to have that first place. Yet two cannot possibly both have the honor of being first. One must of necessity occupy second rank.

There cannot be two heads in one body. Two kings have never sat together on one throne. If Diotrephes and the church rulers walking his crooked path would have first place, Christ must be pushed aside to make room for them.

This is the heart of the matter.

4

THE SUPPORT OF THE GOSPEL WORKER

THE PRINCIPLE

*God's Work , Done in God's Way,
Will Always Have God's Supply*

And He said to them, “When I sent you out without purse and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?” And they said, “No, nothing” [Lk.22:35].

Who at anytime serves as a soldier at his own expense? [I Cor.9:7].

The worker is worthy of his support [Mt.10:10].

If the Father in heaven feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies, how much more will He do so for His own children? [Mt.6:25-32]. **Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you** [Mt.6:33].

If workers in the vineyard are paid their wage, how much more those laboring in the Lord's vineyard? [Mt.20:1-6]. Can it be that the God who commands that a particular work be done for Himself not provide what is needful to accomplish that work?

If evil fathers give a loaf rather than a stone in response to their children's requests, how much more will the Father in heaven give what is good and needful? [Mt.7:7-11].

