

Christian Foundations

Building on the Truth

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Foreword

I have written this book primarily for those who have recently become disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is brief, to the point, and it has a narrow focus. It is about foundations – the basic building blocks of the Christian Faith.

In the New Testament, the analogy of a building's foundations are used a number of times. In Ephesians 2:19-20 Paul refers to the church as '*God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.*' In his letter to the Corinthian church, he wrote that God had given him grace to lay '*a foundation as an expert builder*' and that '*no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ*' (1 Corinthians 3:10-11). The point is clear – Jesus Christ is the foundation and cornerstone of the church. It surprises me therefore that Christian teachers often use the passage in Hebrews six as a basis for describing the foundations of the Christian Faith. The passage in question reads as follows;

'Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so' (Hebrews 6:1-3).

Based on this text, the teachers identify the six foundation stones of the Christian Faith as Repentance from dead works, faith in God, baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection, and

judgement. Doesn't it seem strange that anyone would select *these* as the foundational teachings of Christianity? Indeed they should seem strange because they are the basic tenets of Judaism, not Christianity. The Holy Spirit initially addressed Hebrews to a group of converts from Judaism. These folk were under extreme pressure to revert to their former faith, and the letter was to instruct and warn them. A loose paraphrase of the text will make the point clearer – 'You need to move on from the elementary teachings about Christ Jesus and, God permitting, I will help you do this. Don't revert to the foundations of your former faith, such as repentance from acts that lead to death, faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgement. Instead, move forward to mature Christian doctrine'.

To attempt to build a house of faith and practice on these supposed foundations is to build on sand, not solid rock (Matthew 7:26). So, instead, I have selected nine teachings that I believe to be true foundations for the Christian life. They are salvation (covenant, new birth, assurance, water baptism, and being filled by the Holy Spirit), the Bible, the Kingdom of God and spiritual warfare, stewardship, prayer and worship, ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit, fellowship and the church, witnessing and making disciples, and the Christian family.

However, before stating in on the nine foundations, I want to give you some input on God's purpose and plan, and on the centrality of Jesus Christ.

1. Alpha and Omega

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the focal point of the triune God's plans and purposes. Three times in the book of Revelation he refers to himself as '*...the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.*' (Revelation 22:13 See also 1:8 and 21:6).

The question is though, where do you and I fit into his grand design for time and space?

1.1 God's Purpose and Plan

Let me ask you three simple questions. Please answer them and then I will comment on each.

Does God have a purpose for His Creation?	Y	N
Does God have a purpose for human beings?	Y	N
Does God have a purpose for you?	Y	N

All three of these questions probes one central issue – does God have a purpose for life, as we know it, or are we just a part of some evolutionary process or experiment? Well, the psalmist certainly affirms that God has a plan and a purpose for his creation; '*...the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations*' (Psalm 33:11). The Bible contains many references to God's sovereign purposes, so the answer is 'yes' God does have a purpose for his creation, and

that includes us human beings. The third question, though, is more specific; does God have a purpose for your life here on Earth?

Another little quiz might help you to answer this. Which of the following statements most closely match your understanding of God's great eternal purpose? Mark your first choice with a "1", your second choice with a "2", and so on through to your fourth ranked choice.

- a. To build a place, the Church, where he can dwell and fully express himself.
- b. To produce and prepare an eternal companion, a bride, for his Son.
- c. To bring all things in heaven and on earth together again under one head.
- d. To produce sons and daughters who are in the image and likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is easier to consider the general before the specific, so these questions relate to God's general purpose and not specifically his purpose for you. All four are expressions of God's great purpose for his creation, yet one strikes to the very heart of the issue.

The church is the 'place' of God's dwelling with humanity. 1 Corinthians 3:16 has, *'Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?'* The 'you' here is plural, indicating that the body of believers forms the church in which the Holy Spirit lives. Ephesians puts it even more clearly; *'Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the*

chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.' (Ephesians 2:19-22).

There is also a sense where the church is likened to a bride in the process of preparation and perfection. In Revelation the great multitude shout out that '*...the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready* (Revelation 19:7). In chapter twenty-one of Revelation, an angel shows John the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven prepared as a bride. This has to do with the consummation of the ages. Every time a disciple of the Lord Jesus dies, he or she joins the heavenly company pictured as a bride. At the very end of earthly history, as we know it, the bride will descend from Heaven and join the believers still on Earth (the body of Christ), and the two will become one.

God's plan, in the final analysis, is to bring all things together under his headship. He will only achieve this in full at the culmination of the age, when he creates a new Heaven/Earth. Ephesians 1:9-10 puts it like this; '*...he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment — to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.*'

Whilst these three options certainly express aspects of God's plan and purpose, it is the fourth option that is most relevant to us, here and now. Ephesians 1:5 states that '*...he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will...*' 1 John 3:1 has, '*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!*'

With this in mind, which of the following statements most closely matches your understanding of Gods purpose for you as an individual (rank items from “1” to “3”)?

- e. To be a faithful servant and obedient to whatever he calls upon me to do, at whatever time, and for as long as he chooses.
- f. To find and fulfil my special ministry in and through the Church.
- g. To become as much like Christ Jesus, in both character and ministry, as is possible in this life.

Of course we are expected to be obedient, and to serve God and each other. However, servanthood defines what we do, not who we are. We are sons and daughters who serve. Equally, he expects to serve in an area of ministry in and through the church. Jesus is our supreme example in all things. Although he was the Son of God he chose to serve both his Father, his disciples, and the world. So, the third option really sums up God’s specific purpose for each of us – to become as much like Christ Jesus, in both character and ministry, as is possible in this life.

So far so good. However, some believe that God’s purpose for us extends to every detail of our lives. The idea is that he has preordained all things, both good and bad. In this scenario, we are more pre-programmed servants than we are sons and daughters. I don’t agree with this teaching at all and so I need to take some time to address it. The best place to start is with the scripture most often quoted to support the predestination view.

Romans 8:28-30

This text states the following, ‘*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those whom God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brothers - and those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*’

Now, how would you answer the following questions, based on Rom. 8:28-30?

- a. Who are the subjects of the text? Those who *love him* and those who have been *called according to his purpose.*
- b. What is God's purpose for those who love him? It is to be *conformed to the likeness of his Son* so that Jesus might have *many brothers.*
- c. Do you love God the Father? Then God has called you to be conformed to the likeness of his Son.

Now please read the following additional Scriptures.

Ephesians 1:3-6 ‘*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will — to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.*’

John 1:11-13 *He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God —children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.'*

Phil 2:14-16 *'Do everything without complaining or arguing, 15 so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe 16 as you hold out the word of life...'*

It is obvious from the texts I have cited so far that Jesus Christ is at the very centre of the divine plan for humanity. However, let me elaborate a little.

1.2 The Centrality of Jesus Christ

Which of the following statements most closely matches your understanding of who Jesus is? (No need to rank these, just ✓ ONE statement)

- a. Jesus was a Prophet who pointed towards the way of truth/salvation.
- b. Jesus is God the Son, an eternal member of the tri-unity of God.
- c. Jesus was an anti-Roman revolutionary later deified by his zealous supporters.

I am sorry to have had to ask such questions as (a) and (c) but there are some people who hold that Jesus was either just a prophet or the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier. Even a cursory reading of the New Testament denies those beliefs.

Take John 10:30-33 for example. *‘(Jesus said) “I and the Father are one.” Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?” “We are not stoning you for any of these,” replied the Jews, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”* Jesus claimed to be equal to God the Father. His Jewish hearers understood this because they responded with the words, "You, a mere man, claim to be God".

This is by no means an isolated instance in the Bible of Jesus' claims to be God. In John 14:8-9, Philip, a disciple, is recorded as saying to Jesus, *"Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us". Jesus replied to this with the words, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father ..."*

How are we supposed to understand claims like this? Either his claims are true or they are false. If they are false and he knew it then he was a blatant liar. If they were false but he didn't know this then he was seriously deluded. If his claims were true then HE IS GOD!

Now please read the whole gospel of Mark - yes the whole book! Actually, it will only take you about 45 minutes to read! After you have read it all then please answer the following questions.

- Does anything in the life and teaching of the Lord Jesus indicate that he was purposefully deluding his followers?
- Does he give evidence of low moral values?
- Is he ever shown to be lying?
- Does he display any reason to lie?
- Does his teaching indicate delusions of any kind? Is he irrational?

- Does his behaviour show any trace of delusional grandeur?

If you answer 'No' to the above questions, then you must honestly admit that the only other possible alternative is that Jesus Christ is indeed God the Son. Just consider for a moment what this means:

- a. It means that what he taught is **truth** and is to be trusted.
- b. It means that he is our perfect **example** in all things.
- c. It means that he is the full revelation of the eternal God.

The Lord Jesus Christ is our key to understanding the Bible, our standard of excellence and truth, and our model for living. He is at the very centre of God the Father's purpose. He is the proto-type Son, the Alpha (the first letter in the Greek alphabet). He is also the object, the Omega (the last letter in the Greek alphabet). He is the beginning of 'Salvation' and the end of it.

2. Foundation One - Salvation

Strictly speaking, the word 'salvation' encompasses our life in Christ from the moment we are born-again of the Holy Spirit, to the moment we enter the new Heaven/Earth. However, when we use the word we are usually referring to the beginning of that great journey, the start of our new life in Christ.

Our salvation stands on both a legal and a metaphysical basis. The legal basis is the contract, the covenant, between God and humanity, and the metaphysical basis is the new-birth.

2.1 Covenant

The word Covenant crops up all over the place in the Christian faith. What we now call the Old and New Testaments some people used to call the Old and New Covenants. Some churches nowadays even have the word 'covenant' somewhere in their names.

A covenant is a contract, a binding agreement, between two parties. In biblical terms, the covenant is the contract between God and man.

The Terms

Have you ever entered into a Hire Purchase contract? If you have, you will know that such a contract has three main clauses. First, there is a **benefits** clause. This spells out what you will get i.e. the motorcar, or furniture, or whatever is the

subject matter of the contract. Then there is the **obligations** clause that details what you have to do to obtain the benefits, i.e. pay a certain sum every month, keep the goods insured, and so on. Lastly, there is the **penalty** clause that states that should you violate the contract, fail to meet your obligations, e.g. to your instalments, then certain unpleasant things will happen to you. For instance, the goods will be re-possessed and you will have to pay penalty interest and legal costs.

When God created man and placed him on Earth, he entered into a solemn and everlasting covenant with him. The benefits were eternal life in God's company. The obligations were to trust God and to obey him. The penalty was death.

The Broken Covenant

The obligations clause of the Covenant between God and man simply reads, "Trust and obey me". To make this a real condition, and not just a theoretical concept, God put man to the test. He set two trees right in the middle of Eden, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of all things. (By the way, I think these trees were real and actual not just symbolic images. Adam and Eve lived in a rural environment, in a garden, and so trees would be both natural and appropriate). The test was this: "If you eat from the tree of life you will be displaying your dependence and your trust in me, and you will be acting in obedience to my command. You will therefore enjoy the benefits of the covenant. However, you must not eat from the other tree, for by doing so you will be demonstrating your desire to be independent of me. By eating its fruit you will be displaying your lack of trust in my judgement and you will be directly disobeying my command to you."

Gen. 3:1-13 reads, *'Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God*

really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Adam failed the test. He violated the covenant. As a result, he lost the benefits and incurred the penalty. He no longer enjoyed eternal life, and he ceased to enjoy the close companionship of Almighty God. Spiritually, he was cut off from the presence of God. Mentally he was cut off from the truth of God. Physically he was cut off from the life of God. From that moment on, humankind started to age physically, to become mentally corrupt, and to be spiritually alienated from the Creator.

The Scope of the Covenant

So what's all this to me? Well, if the prime minister of your country committed the nation to war, would you not be bound by that commitment? If you contracted a genetic disease, would your children and their children not be subject to the

Federal headship refers to the view that when Adam sinned, he was acting as the representative of the human race. Therefore, the whole race suffers the consequences of Adam's sin.

same ailment? Adam was the federal head of the human race. When he violated the covenant, he disqualified all of humankind from enjoying its benefits, and he subjected all his descendants to its penalty. That includes you and me!

'For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive'
(1 Corinthians 15:22)

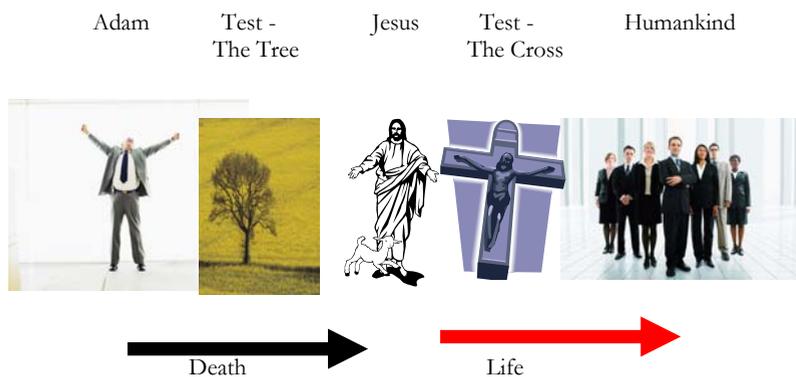
Covenant re-instated

Things could have ended right at this point but for the fact that God's purpose was to have a family. Humankind, his children, were now separated from him. What could he do? He could find a new federal head for the human race. He could provide someone who would pass the test of perfect trust and obedience; someone who would fully satisfy the penalty clause. But who could such a person be? Only one who was a human could represent humans, and only one who was divine could substitute his life for the forfeited lives of millions. There was only one solution - God himself would have to become a man!

John 1:1-14 reads, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The*

light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.'

Now add to that wonderful passage the hymn of praise found in Philippians 2:6-8 *'Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross.'*



The Tree (of the knowledge of all things) stood as a test to the first Adam. He violated the covenant by failing to trust and

obey God. As a result of this failure, he, and through him all of mankind, lost the benefits (eternal life and God's companionship) and incurred the penalty of separation from God at the spiritual, mental, and physical levels of his being. The Lord Jesus Christ was born of a human mother and as a result was fully human, yet he was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and as a result was fully God. He fulfilled the obligations of the covenant by perfectly trusting and obeying God the Father, and he paid the full penalty by dying on the cross as a substitute for all mankind. As the tree was a test set before the first Adam, the cross was the test set before the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. The result of his self-sacrifice is that the covenant is re-instated for all. Any man or woman may now enjoy its benefits if he or she will only assume the obligations of trust and obedience.

OK, here are some more questions. Please answer them and then read my analysis of your answers.

- | | | |
|----|---|-----|
| a. | Could anyone other than Jesus Christ, God incarnate, have paid the penalty of the broken covenant? | Y N |
| b. | If he had not re-instated the covenant, would humankind still be cut off from God the Father? | Y N |
| c. | Can a person benefit by this re-instated covenant without associating himself fully with (thrusting in) the sacrifice of Christ Jesus on the cross? | Y N |
| d. | Can one continue to live in disobedience and independence from God and still enjoy the benefits of the covenant? | Y N |

If you answered 'Yes' to 'a', then you have not yet fully grasped the uniqueness and centrality of the Lord Jesus Christ. May I suggest that you read the book of Romans before going any further?

If you answered 'No' to 'b', then you do not understand the nature of sin and man's condition apart from the saving work of Christ Jesus. Here too the book of Romans will help you a lot - read it.

If you answered 'Yes' to 'c', then you need to re-examine your understanding of Repentance and Belief. In terms of covenant, to 'repent' is to acknowledge that you are living under the penalty of a broken covenant, independent of God, and trusting in your own knowledge and strength. It means further that you choose to reject that as a way of life, and that you turn instead, in trust and dependence, to God. To 'believe', in terms of covenant, is to accept that Jesus Christ has paid the penalty on your behalf, and to trust him to help you live a life of dependent obedience.

If you answered 'Yes' to 'd', then it is possible that you are under the impression that you can accept Jesus as **Saviour** whilst at the same time rejecting him as **Lord**. For you to obtain the full benefits of covenant, not only does the penalty have to be paid (Jesus has done this), but you must assume the obligations. You do this by obeying the Word of God, and by living in dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

Reinstatement of covenant requires only one thing from our side – commitment to the obligations. Jesus Christ settled the penalty clause and only he could do that. Our response to his act of grace is to accept what he has done on our behalf, and to commit to trusting and obeying him. This is why we refer to the Christian *commitment*.

2.2 New Birth

Some church-goers think that the need to be 'born again' is an invention of the Charismatic movement. However, Jesus Christ coined the phrase when he said to Nicodemus "You must be born again".

John. 3:1-21 reads as follows; *'Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven — the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does*

evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."

Why do we need to be 'born again'? The answer is that when Adam violated the contract with God, something more than just a legal contravention took place. Something changed within his spirit. He was no longer able to relate to God the Father. Something 'died' within him, and that condition has been passed down to the whole human race. Every person since Adam is born into this world with defective 'spiritual genes' (I mean this figuratively of course), dead to God. Therefore, Jesus Christ came into the world not only to settle things at a 'legal', covenantal level, but also to provide humankind with a new start, a new hereditary line. Don't forget that Jesus did not only die, he rose again. He is alive, a new and eternal 'Adam'! When a person repents (turns their back on a life of independence and rebellion), and believes in Jesus Christ as saviour, then in that moment he or she dies to the old Adamic line and is born again as a child of God. Adam is no longer his 'father', but God is! (Isn't that wonderful?)

Being born again is not a modern frill to the old gospel, but rather an absolute and fundamental essential. Jesus' words to Nicodemus are true for all of us, "*I tell you the truth, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*"

The cross stands as the symbol for the settled penalty clause of the broken covenant. It is the eternal reminder of the legal aspect of salvation. The empty tomb stands as the symbol of new-birth. It is the eternal reminder of the metaphysical aspect of salvation.

If, at this point, you are not sure if you actually are 'born again' then just be patient for a short while - you will find the answer in the next section.

Fact, Faith and Feelings

Some new Christians think that they have not truly been born again because they don't FEEL any different. What about you? But since when were feelings accurate indicators of reality? We all know that feelings are notoriously fickle. They often depend on the state of our stomachs, the amount of sleep we've had, or the time of the month. So don't rely on your feelings. The FACT of the matter is that you complied with what the Bible sets out as the way of Salvation. Right? Let's run one last check on this. (I have quoted the following Scriptures from the Good News version of the Bible for a little variety):

Romans 3:22-26 'God puts people right through their faith in Jesus Christ. God does this to all who believe in Christ, because there is no difference at all: everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence. But by the free gift of God's grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free. God offered him, so that by his death he should become the means by which people's sins are forgiven through their faith in him'.

Acts 4:12 'Salvation is to be found through him (Jesus) alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us'.

Romans 10:9-10. 'If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from death, you will be saved. For it is by our faith that we are put right with God; it is by our confession that we are saved'.

Ephesians 2:8-9 'For it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not all the result of your own efforts, but God's gift ..'

These then are the FACTS as stated in the Bible.

You exercise FAITH by choosing to believe that what the Bible says is true, and that something has changed eternally in you, despite the fact that you may not 'feel' anything. Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as follows; *'Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see'*.

2.3 Repentance

It is true that feelings are not reliable, and so the statement "But I don't feel any different" is irrelevant. However, if you were to say to me, "It's a year now since I accepted Jesus Christ as my saviour and I haven't CHANGED at all" then I would be concerned. You see it is impossible to be a 'new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) and remain the same! Surely there must be some sign of new love, hope, faith, patience, understanding, spiritual insight, power, or any of the other qualities that characterise the Lord Jesus Christ?

If there truly is no change in your life, after some time has passed, then I suggest you speak to your mentor about 'Repentance'. (By the way, we sometimes are not aware of changes within ourselves - so ask someone close to you before you decide that you haven't really changed). Repentance is the pre-condition to re-birth. It consists of an acknowledgement that you are a sinner separated from God and that there is nothing you can do to earn righteousness. This realisation then evidences itself in an actual turning away from self-reliance, to real obedience to the Word of God (the Bible), as well as trust and dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life. This change in life status and condition requires expression, and the biblical mode of such expression is water baptism.

2.4 Water Baptism

Water baptism, and particularly believers baptism, is a controversial subject. I do not want to undermine the teaching of your particular church, yet I must express my own belief in this matter. Some churches are very much opposed to 'rebaptism' and regard infant baptism as sufficient. If what I teach in this section is contrary to what your minister teaches, then please submit to him and ask him to explain to you from scripture the particular stance of the denomination or group he represents.

If you were brought up in a traditional Christian home, it is likely that you were 'christened' as a baby. Maybe you also attended 'confirmation' or 'catechism' classes during your teens? Now you are a born again disciple of the Lord Jesus and it's quite likely that by now someone has told you that you need to be baptised by total immersion in water. Perhaps you have come into the Christian Faith without any previous christening or confirmation and so water baptism is no problem for you. After all the Bible says in Acts 2:38, "*Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven ..*" However, if you have been baptised as a baby, then things might be a little less straightforward. For one thing, your parents may well object because they feel that by seeking 're-baptism' you are spurning what they did for you. They might even feel that you are slighting their church. For another, you might feel, that because baptism is a one-off thing, that you have already been 'done' as a baby.

So do you need to be baptised as a believer? I believe you do need to be baptised as a believer, for the following reasons:

Firstly, believer's baptism is the norm and baby baptism the anomaly. There is no explicit record of the baptism of a baby in the New Testament. There is also no record of baby baptisms in the first two centuries of church history. It appears that church leaders introduced baby baptism as a means of assuring parents that their children were not destined for Hell. Even a cursory examination of the scriptures, and the biblical symbolism of believer's baptism by immersion, shows just how inappropriate it is to apply the sacrament to babies who have opportunity neither to die to self nor to believe.

The scriptures do not refer to people who die before they reach an age when they can be expected to respond to the Gospel. We should pray for God's grace and mercy for our young ones, and we should trust in God's goodness. However, we must not create assurances where no such biblical assurances exist. Baby baptism is a rite designed to provide parents with just such an extra-biblical assurance.

Another reason for baby baptisms arose just after the reformers split from the Roman Catholic Church. In those days, national citizenship was linked with church membership. In Germany, one became a member of the national church simply by virtue of your birth in that country. At first, the reformers rejected the concept of baby baptism, but later succumbed to political pressure and endorsed the practice.

The symbolic significance of adult believer baptism is evident in the scriptures. Romans 6:4 reads, *'We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.'* Colossians 2:12 has, *'having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.'*

Believers baptism is also a practical testimony to others that you have committed your life to Jesus. The essence of sin is disobedience and self-centredness. You have repented of this and covenanted with God to trust and obey him. The very first thing he asks of you is to be baptised - how can you then refuse on grounds of offending tradition or the theology of men?

I quoted Romans 6:4 earlier but it would be good to read the whole passage. *‘What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin — because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.’*

Jesus himself set the standard. Matthew 3:13-15 records that *‘Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness." Then John consented.’* Can you do better than follow Jesus' example?

Bye the way, Jesus not only modelled baptism, he also instructed that those who believe in him be baptised. Matthew 28:18-20 records that *‘Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples*

of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

If you are still unsure, or if your particular church teaches and practices baby baptism, then have a chat with your minister. Ask him to advise you from scripture.

There is another important aspect of baptism that you need to understand. When you were born again, the Holy Spirit introduced you into the family of the church. An analogy would be that of a baby brought both into life and into a human family. Water baptism is the prescribed rite of initiation into the family of God; it is the sign and symbol of the spiritual reality of being born of the Spirit into the church. This is why it says in 1 Corinthians 12:13 that *'we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.'*

This is a very important point. Many people are under the impression that Christianity is a private thing..... it isn't! You have been born into a new family, the family of God, the church, and your life now intertwines with the lives of many others.

2.5 Assurance

In theological parlance, 'assurance' is about knowing that you are saved. Let's read some Scriptures and then answer a few simple questions.

John 3:16-18 *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal*

life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.'

Do you believe in Jesus? Do you believe that he is in fact God incarnate and the saviour of humankind from the penalty of death?

John 11:25-26 *'Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"'*

Do you believe that Jesus Christ is capable of granting you eternal life?

Romans 8:1-2 *'Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.'*

Do you believe that by associating yourself with (trusting in) Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross, you are forgiven and acceptable to God the Father?

Atonement refers to that aspect of the work of Jesus Christ, and particularly his death, which makes possible the restoration of fellowship between individual believers and God.

Romans 10:13-18 *'...For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our*

message?" Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.'

Have you prayed to the Lord Jesus and said words to this effect; "Lord Jesus, please forgive me for ignoring you and living my life without you. I turn my back on that life and ask you now to give me a new start. I undertake to live, as best I can, in obedience to your word and in dependence upon the Holy Spirit?"

If you answered 'Yes' to the first three questions but are not sure you can answer 'Yes' to this last question then why don't you pray out aloud right now. It is quite acceptable for you to read out the prayer I have provided above as long as it represents what you believe, and comes from your heart.

Ephesians 1:4-8 'For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will — to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.'

Do you realise that you are now a child of God?

Ephesians 1:13-14 'And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.'

Do you accept that you are forgiven, accepted, and destined to live in God's company forever (I assume here that you can now answer 'Yes' to the fourth question above).

Repentance, covenant commitment, and rebirth form the entry into the Christian life. The Holy Spirit helps us through this process but he does more, he fills us with spiritual power so that we can live and ministry as Jesus did.

2.6 Being filled by the Holy Spirit

Being filled by/with/in the Holy Spirit is another area of controversy. Some say you receive the Holy Spirit when you put your faith in Christ Jesus for salvation. Others say that you need to be baptised with/by the Holy Spirit as a distinctly separate experience, and that the evidence of this experience is that you will talk in tongues. What are you to make of all this?

Let's start with the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke. 1:35). Some thirty years later he began his ministry when the Holy Spirit descended on him (Mark. 1:9-11 and Luke. 4:1-14). Then there is evidence of the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in his ministry (Luke. 5:17, 6:19 Mark. 5:30).

So Jesus Christ was given life by the Holy Spirit (we too are born-again of the Spirit) and was later anointed by the same Holy Spirit for ministry. Why should we be any different? The truth is that Christians have no power to minister or witness apart from that which the Holy Spirit gives. What applied to the early Christians is true for us as well, and Christ's words to them are also words to us; "*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you ..*" (Acts 1:8)

Here is a little exercise. Read each of the following Scriptures. Then ask one of your church Elders, or your Pastor, to lay hands on you and to pray for the anointing of power from on high.

START: LUKE 3:16

LUKE 4:1

LUKE 4:14

LUKE 4:36 LUKE 4:40 LUKE 5:17 LUKE 6:19

LUKE 8:42-46 LUKE 9:1 LUKE 11:9 LUKE 24:49

ACTS 2:1-4 ACTS 3:6 ACTS 4:31 ACTS 8:4

ACTS 8:14-17 ACTS 10:38 (END)

2.7 Recap

Adam violated the covenant by failing to trust and obey God. As a result he, and through him all of mankind, lost the benefits of eternal life and Gods companionship. He incurred the penalty of separation from God at the spiritual, mental, and physical levels of his being. The Lord Jesus Christ was born of a human mother, and as a result was fully human. However, he was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and as a result was fully divine. He fulfilled the obligations of the covenant by perfectly trusting and obeying the Father, and he paid the full penalty by dying on the cross as a substitution for all humankind. The tree was the test set before the first Adam, the cross was the test set before the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. The result of his self-sacrifice is that the covenant is re-instated, and anyone may now enjoy its benefits, if they will only assume the obligations of trust and obedience.

Being born again is not a modern frill to the old gospel but rather an absolute and fundamental essential. Jesus' words to Nicodemus are true for all of us, "*I tell you the truth, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*".

You exercise faith by choosing to believe that what the Bible says is true and that because of your faith in Christ something

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has changed eternally in you, despite the fact that you don't necessarily 'feel' anything. Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as "... *being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*"

Christians have no power to minister or witness apart from that which the Holy Spirit gives. What applied to the early Christians is true for us as well: Christ's words to them are also words to us "*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you ..*".

3. Foundation Two – the Bible

This is just a short introduction to the topic and a motivation for your personal reading and study of the Word of God.

3.1 The Inspiration of the Bible

2 Timothy. 3:16 states that, "*All Scripture is God-breathed ..*" or in other words "inspired". But what does that mean to you?

Which of the following statements comes closest to your understanding?

- a. The writers of the Bible were inspired in the same sense that Shakespeare was inspired when he wrote "Much ado about nothing"
- b. God dictated the Bible word for word
- c. The thoughts of the Bible are inspired but not the words
- d. Only certain parts of the Bible are inspired
- e. All of the Bible is inspired by God. The Bible is exactly as God wants it to be and it is all we need for faith and life

Belief in the Bible as fully and uniquely inspired of God is ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL. How do you get to know the Father, or Jesus, or the Holy Spirit, except through his self-revelation in scripture? How do you judge what is true and what is false?

Let me examine the alternatives with you:

If you believe that the Bible is no more inspired than Kalil Kibran's "*The Prophet*", or Shakespeare's works, then you are on dangerous ground indeed. Everything becomes subjective and you will find yourself selecting all sorts of books and philosophies as building blocks for your faith. In the end, you will have a belief system of sorts that might even resemble Christianity, but it will be something quite different. Evangelical Christianity is founded on a belief in the absolute and unique inspiration of the Bible.

The belief that God dictated every word of the Bible indicates acceptance of its divine origin but will lead to difficulties. For instance, if God dictated the Bible then what do we make of the obvious anomalies we find in scripture, and how do we deal with the sometimes negative characteristics of the human authors.

Belief that the thoughts expressed in the Bible are inspired but not the words raises an obvious question - How does one express a thought if not in words? Surely, the choice of words profoundly influences the meaning of the thought one seeks to express.

The second last option is known as the 'partial' theory of inspiration. If only parts of the Bible are inspired, how do we know which parts are and which parts are not? Either we become the judge of scripture, or we have to rely on church theologians to tell us which parts are inspired. Either way, we become the judge of scripture rather than scripture being the judge of our thoughts, words, and actions.

I believe that the last option is the only viable view of scriptural inspiration. However, to accept the full inspiration of the Bible does not mean that you must accept all parts of it as equally important. It just means that you believe that the entire Bible is exactly and completely what God wants it to be, and that it is

the only written revelation of and from him. We don't know just how God inspired the scriptures. The evidence suggests that he allowed the human authors to collaborate with him in the process, and that he superintended the process rather than controlled it.

3.2 Which Translation to Use

All the major modern translations of the Bible are good to read. The King James Version is fine but many of the words are archaic and the expressions are often difficult to understand. I suggest that you get yourself a copy of the New International Version (NIV) or the New Living Translation. The Study Bible edition of the NIV is excellent and gives you notes, commentary, and study aids that you will find invaluable. The New American Standard Version is good, as is the New King James Version, but you might find them a little hard to read. The Good News Bible is very readable.

Some translations are somewhat sectarian and interpretative. I would avoid the Jerusalem Bible and the New English Bible for this reason. The Message is a loose paraphrase and is also very interpretative.

Bible translators tend to take one of two basic approaches to their task. Either they seek to convey the idea as accurately as possible in the receptor language (Dynamic equivalence), or they seek to preserve the word use and order of the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts (Formal equivalence). Some try to find a middle ground between these two approaches.

3.3 Why and how you should read and study the Bible

I used to believe that the human brain was only capable of storing a limited amount of data. However, the latest thinking is that our minds store everything we do, say, see, hear, or think in our entire lifetimes! If this is so, then it means that by merely reading the Bible through once from cover to cover you are storing its contents permanently in your brain. The written Word of God will then be readily available to you and the Holy Spirit will be able to retrieve what you need, when you need it. Sadly, few Christians have read the entire Bible. What a shame! What a wasted growth opportunity!

Why don't YOU commit yourself right now to reading the entire Bible? You can do it in any number of ways and your Study Bible will undoubtedly give you a yearly reading plan. When I read the Bible through for the first time I started with the Gospels and then the first five books of the Old Testament, and then back to the book of Acts in the New Testament, and so on. Each time I completed a book I ticked it off on the index in the front of my Bible.

Reading God's Word is great but it's not enough, you must also study it. 2 Timothy 2:15 says.... (why don't you look it up and read it for yourself?).

I recommend that you follow this simple procedure:

Step 1. Select a book (I recommend you start with John's Gospel). Read a chapter or a smaller portion (in two translations if possible).

Step 2. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand and apply the portion you have just read. (Psalm 119:18, 34, 130). Continue to dialogue with God as you read.

Step 3. Try to identify the key verse or verses. These are the verses that contain the essence of the portion of Scripture you are reading. Break the essential message down into portions. Isolate at least the subject, the object, and the action. Ask the questions WHY? HOW? WHEN? WHAT? and WHERE?

Step 4. Read the notes and commentary contained in your Study Bible and look up the cross-references.

Step 5. Summarise your findings in writing (it's a good idea to keep a special note book for this purpose). What is God saying to YOU through this portion?

Step 6. Try to visualise the passage of scripture. See, hear, and feel. Put yourself into the scene, and allow yourself to sense and feel the truth presented. Ask Jesus to reveal something of himself to you.

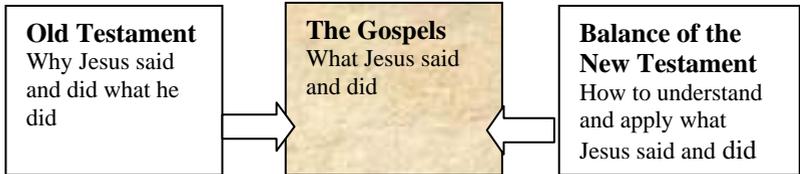
Step 7. What are you going to do about what you have studied? Do you need to pray about it? Do you need to apply it in your life? Do you need to share it with someone else?

3.4 What Jesus Said and Did

As Christians, we acknowledge Jesus Christ as both saviour and lord. This means that HE is our model, example, and standard of truth. Your understanding of scripture must therefore revolve around what Jesus said and did. Whatever portion of the Bible you are studying, always refer back to the

Gospels to check on what Jesus taught or modelled. The index at the back of your Study Bible will help you.

Here is a simple model. This is very important!!!



4. Foundation Three – The Kingdom of God and spiritual warfare

At this stage of your growth into a mature disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ you do not need too much detail about this subject, but you do need to grasp some very important principles.

4.1 The Nature of the Kingdom

The ancient Gnostics believed that there were two equal and opposite forces in the Universe, one good and the other bad. Much of the Charismatic Church of today believes in a ‘Christianised’ version of the same thing. They see the Kingdom of God as locked in mortal conflict with a dark satanic kingdom. They see Satan as the general of the evil army who stands in direct opposition to Almighty God. So how many kingdoms are there - one or two? Please look up and read the following Scriptures and then decide for yourself:

PSALM 103:19; 145:11-13;
DANIEL 4:17; 5:21; 6:26-27

So, are there one or two?

I believe that there is only one King and one Kingdom, that the influence of Satan is considerably less than what we understand as a ‘kingdom’, and that he has no right to rule. The Kingdom of God occupied a position of great importance in the teaching and mission of the Lord Jesus. His ministry began with the announcement that "*the time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news*" (Mk.1:15; Matthew 4:17). The Gospels reveal that '*Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the Kingdom ...!*' (Matthew 9:35; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:1). He also

instructed his disciples to preach the gospel of the Kingdom (Matthew. 10:7; Luke. 9:2; 10:9,11).

But what is the Kingdom of God? Which of the following statements comes closest to your understanding?

- a. Certain nations and geographical areas where Christianity predominates.
- b. The hearts of those who believe in God.
- c. The realm in which God's values, principles, and priorities predominate.
- d. The whole of creation, both physical and spiritual.

If there is ONE God and ONE true kingdom, then only the last proposition is correct. It is of course true that sin and corruption have been allowed to enter the kingdom, and that as a result, good and evil, saved and unsaved, angels and demons, exist side by side within it. But remember, there is only ONE true kingdom, and Jesus Christ is Lord over ALL. However, in purely practical terms, it is obvious that although God is Lord of all there are dimensions of his creation that are under the sway of either Satan or unregenerate men and women. So we find references to *'the kingdoms of the world'* (Matthew 4:7) and to *'the ruler of the kingdom of the air'* (Ephesians 2:1), and so on. In these instances Jesus seems to use the word 'kingdom' to refer to a lesser and temporary usurped dominion. In this sense, answer 'c' would also be suitable. Perhaps the way to avoid semantic confusion is to refer to one Kingdom (capital K) within which exist many kingdoms (small k). Jesus' references to 'kingdom' indicate the coming of his Kingdom into its enemy occupied areas (kingdoms). In Revelation 11:15 it states that *'the kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord'*.

Satan's Rights and Status

Some teach that Satan has right and title to the Earth and to all unregenerate men, women, and children. They say that when Adam violated the covenant he forfeited his rights over the Earth and handed the title deeds to Satan. Because of this, there is a present spiritual conflict between Satan and the God. Jesus has commissioned the church to grab these rights back on behalf of humanity.

Please look up and read the following Scriptures:

COLOSSIANS 1:16; 2:14-15; MATTHEW 28:18

Who has ALL authority?

Jesus

Satan has no rights! He is a squatter on planet Earth! He is a created being, corrupted through his desire for power and glory. He is a servant of the Most High God and is still subject to divine authority.

4.2 Spiritual Warfare

Nowadays much is said and written of ‘Spiritual Warfare’ but I am afraid that much of what is taught is extra-biblical and has its roots in the occult rather than in the Kingdom of God. Please be warned!! Much, if not most, of what I have read on this subject plays fast and loose with the scriptures, and results in fear and bondage rather than truth, hope, and love. I suggest you check with your Pastor before reading books or enrolling on courses on ‘Spiritual Warfare’.

To put the issue of 'warfare' into proper perspective please take note of the following:

- a. Our life on earth is the start of eternity not the end of it. We are in training for higher office and responsibility. The conflict with the dominion of darkness is a means of training and proving the children of God (that's us!). In other words, you are being allowed to contend with evil and the demonic so that you can learn, grow, and become stronger in faith, power, grace, and authority.
- b. God is in the process of developing a family. Once he has done this, he will bring history as we know it to a close and Satan's period of parole will come to an abrupt end. Satan knows this and is trying everything in his power to hinder the completion of the family of God. He has many strategies and tactics. Among others, he blinds the minds of unbelievers to the truth of the Gospel (2 Corinthians 4:3-4), he opposes the work of evangelism (1 Thessalonians. 2:18), he snatches the truth from the minds of the deceived (Matthew 13:19), and he even plants unbelievers in church congregations to deceive and hinder the believers (Matthew 13:24). On the other hand, the Lord Jesus Christ has given us, his disciples, the two-fold task of proclaiming the Kingdom of God (preaching the Gospel and teaching Kingdom principles) and performing the signs that characterise it (healing the sick and casting out demons, etc.). To enable us to do this we have his delegated authority (his name), his word (the Bible), his power (the anointing of the Holy Spirit), and his support organisation (the church).

Please do not misunderstand me. There is a war going on between Satan and his demons and the Church (that means us!). Satan is the aggressor, and his objective is to prevent human beings from becoming mature members of God's

household. Ironically, his very efforts to achieve this have the effect of strengthening the children of God. We become strong by resisting him, by exercising our authority over him, and by ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit through preaching, teaching, healing, and delivering the demonised. We do not wage war as the devil wages war for *'the weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power ...'* (2 Corinthians. 10:4) The weapons of our warfare are love, faith, hope, sound doctrine, and so on. We deploy these 'weapons' through ministering healing, performing deliverance on the demonised, teaching biblical truth, and presenting the Gospel of Salvation to the lost.

Much of what is currently taught as spiritual warfare is, in my opinion, both misleading and potentially debilitating. Instead of taking the Gospel out into our spheres of influence, we intercede until we have a 'clear heaven'. Instead of following the prompting of the Holy Spirit we 'spiritually map' our environment. Did Jesus practice spiritual warfare in this sort of way? Did he teach us to? Did the early church teach or practice it? No, no, and no! Now, if all this substitute activity is necessary for success, and Jesus or the early church neither taught nor practiced it, then either Jesus didn't understand an important key to extending his kingdom, or the Bible is an unreliable record of what he did know. I think not!

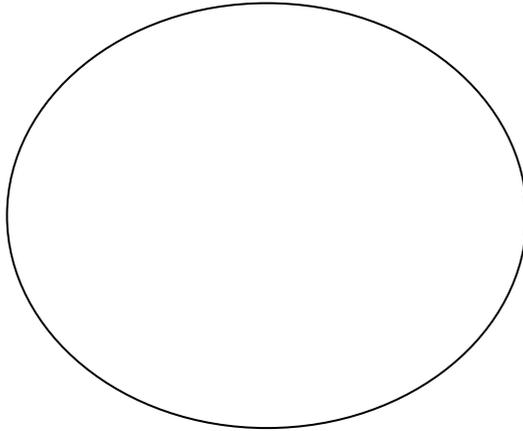
5 Foundation Four – The Stewardship of Time, Money, and Talents

Each of us has a quantity and quality of what I call ‘life energy’. I don't mean anything metaphysical by that term, but I use it rather as a descriptive label for the sum total of our energy, creativity, intelligence, and strength. We expend this ‘life energy’ every day in a number of ways - working at our paid jobs, sport, recreation, study, ministering to others, etc. How we use this energy is a good indication of our priorities and value system.

Three measures of this expenditure of energy are: Time, Talents and Money. **How I use the time at my disposal, what I do with the talents I have, and on what I spend my money, give a good indication of what I think is important.** Is the Kingdom of God important to you? Is serving the Lord Jesus a high priority? Is the church special to you?

Instead of just glibly answering these questions with ‘yes’, why don't you attempt to actually measure the expenditure of your life energy? Use the following pie graphs to assist you. I know it won't be accurate, but it will certainly give you a general idea. If you keep a detailed diary, then look up a typical week and use that to assess your time ‘spend’ during your waking hours. Otherwise, take a piece of paper and reconstruct a typical week.

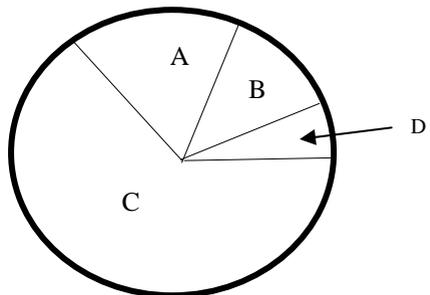
5.1 Use of your time



Divide the above circle into segments reflecting the use of your waking time. (about sixteen hours a day). Create segments for **(A)** Home and Family, **(B)** Personal recreation and sport, **(C)** Business, **(D)** Kingdom of God. (The 'Kingdom of God' segment should represent your time spent in serving the Lord Jesus Christ in Bible study, church activities, witnessing to others, prayer, and ministering spiritually to others).

Here is an example of what your pie chart could look like.

To give you an idea of scale, 'C' in this pie-chart represents 10 hours a day.



Now you need to examine your time usage. Of course you need to work to earn a living, but do you really need to spend **THAT MUCH** time at work and on business related things? Can you convert some of your 'business' time to Kingdom time? For instance, what about a lunchtime Bible study? Or how about chatting to your colleague about Kingdom things before work starts, when you usually read the paper and drink coffee? What do you do when you travel to and from work? Couldn't you listen to Christian teaching tapes or use your hands-free cellular phone to chat about Jesus to a friend? Could you double up some aspects of family time with Kingdom time? In what kinds of Kingdom activities could you and your whole family get involved? What about all that dead time you spend in front of the TV?

5.2 Use of Your Talents

God has gifted you in some area. You may sing like an angel, play the guitar, counsel, count up figures in a flash, make wooden things, cook, - or whatever. Now obviously it takes time to use your talents, and so drawing segments on a pie chart wouldn't really add a new perspective. Perhaps a better way is to answer the following questions:

"Do you use your talents mainly to serve yourself, other people, or the Kingdom of God?"

"Do the church people even know you have talent?"

"How would you answer Jesus if he called you to give an account of the use of the talents which he has given you?"

Now please read Matthew 25:14-29; *“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. "'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.'”*

Once again, please don't rush on to the next section before you have decided what to do about your present situation. The church is not the only place and means of serving the Lord Jesus with your talents, but it sure is a good place to start.

So why don't you

- (a) Find out where you can use your talents. Speak to the Pastor or the church secretary - then get involved.
OR
- (b) Speak to the people at tea after the Sunday service and find out what the needs are - see where your talents can satisfy those needs and then offer your talent and your time to the Elders.
OR
- (c) Join a home fellowship group and get involved - your talents will soon be in demand.

5.3 Use of Your Money

Money has a number of important features. Firstly, it is a store of value. If you store up your money you are placing value on security or on whatever it is you are saving for. Jesus said this; *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* (Matthew 6:19-21)

Secondly, money is the major product of the hours you spend in business. Apart from the odd moments of witnessing, prayer, or study that occur in the workplace, it's almost impossible to devote time to things directly related to Kingdom priorities. What do you have to show for your nine or ten hours a day labour? Money. Therefore, how you spend that money gives value to your hours of labour.

Thirdly, money is the economic facilitator that the church needs to function effectively within this world system.

Missions, pastors, counselling, teaching, worship facilities, feeding schemes, etc., all require money.

I am not going to address the question of 'tithing' here because more harm than good has been done in legalistically applying rules for giving to those new in the faith. I ask you rather to carefully study chapters 8 and 9 of 2 Corinthians. Your Pastor will answer any questions you have.

Make no mistake, stewardship is where the rubber hits the Christian road. The Christian life is giving oriented. God instructed and exhorted to give of ourselves to both himself and to others. *'Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.'* (1 John 5:1-4)

6 Foundation Five – Prayer and Worship

Christianity is not so much a Religion as it is a Relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. To build a relationship requires time and communication.

Prayer constitutes communication from you to God, but reading the Bible provides the setting for God to communicate with you.

Prayer takes place both in private and in the public meetings of the church. Worship can also be a private thing but it has a fuller expression when the body of Christ, the church, comes together. In a typical worship service on a Sunday the preaching of the Word, prayer, and worship all come together to form an experience of the presence of God. In our private devotions, this should also be the case. Instead of having a prayer time and a separate time to read the Bible and a Sunday service to worship God, try to integrate all three into precious times of communion with the Lord.

6.1 Prayer

There are many books on prayer, and most of them set out procedures for praying. They instruct us to first thank and praise God, then to confess sin, then to intercede for others, and lastly to petition God for our own needs. This is probably a good discipline but it does not necessarily constitute heart-to-heart communication with Almighty God. Sometimes I am so anxious about something that I can't help but immediately plead with God for relief. Sometimes my need to know his will for a particular time or situation will so occupy my mind that my prayers will consist of little else. At other times, I will be

reading the Bible and the greatness, wisdom, and grace of God will so impress me that prayers of praise well up from within. The important thing is to realise that you are talking with the Creator God of the Universe and to take seriously, reverently, and joyfully your time together.

Instead of sticking to a rigid procedure, I suggest that you depend rather on the Holy Spirit to lead you into communication with God the Father. Ephesians 6:18 instructs us to, ‘ .. *pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests*’. As a rule, I recommend that you read a portion of scripture before and during prayers. Sing aloud too. Pray in your mother tongue, or pray in spiritual tongues. Sit, kneel, or stand as you feel it is appropriate. Raise your hands or fold your hands. Bow or reach exultantly toward heaven. But whatever you do, please be real! Avoid clichés and meaningless phrases. Speak honestly and humbly with your God and you will be truly blessed .. and so will he!

Try to spend time at least once a day communicating with the Lord. How will you build up a sound relationship with him without frequent communication?

Now, concerning prayer in public. There is a difference here. In private, it's just you and God. In a fellowship group or Sunday service, it's you, me and our neighbour, and God. Be bold and pray aloud when given the opportunity, but remember that you are seeking to express the group's heart and not just your own. If you remain silent, then how can others say "amen" to your prayer? If you pray out only your private concerns then how can they participate? In corporate prayer, don't be shy about adding to someone else's prayer - God the Father is listening to his church at prayer and the Holy Spirit is prompting all of us and orchestrating everything

into one glorious whole. And, by the way, when you pray out loud, pray out LOUD so that everyone can hear.

6.2 Worship

In church, you might have noticed that the chorus books are often divided into a Praise section and a separate Worship section. Or perhaps the leader of the service habitually says "we will now have a time of praise and then we will move into worship". What he probably means is that the songs will change from fast to slow, and move from being about Jesus to songs directed to him.

My theological dictionary defines praise as 'homage and adoration directed to God', and worship as 'offering of homage, honour, and praise to God'. So perhaps it is better to refer to praise and worship as one co-ordinated response to the glorious presence of God. It is good to testify about God's grace. It is good to sing songs about him and to extol his qualities of character and his power. However, it is important that we also direct our words and music to him and not just each other. There is a great difference between singing "Worthy of honour is he" and "O Lord, you are worthy of all honour". Praise and worship presented before the throne of God, but for the benefit of the other worshippers, can degenerate into a humanistic display. Worship, which flows from us to the one who sits on the throne, can never be other than intimate, real, and personal.

I encourage you most earnestly to participate fully in corporate worship meetings. Sing with all your heart; pray out aloud; give testimony; read aloud from the Scriptures. But, do all of this in good order and under the control of both the Holy Spirit and the leader of the Church service.

‘When you come together, **everyone** has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the **strengthening** of the **church**.’
1 Corinthians 14:26

Now you are a part of the church and so, as you worship and praise God, you strengthen the other believers and you build yourself up.

Just a few more things about praise and worship before we move on. Hebrews 13:15 says, *‘Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of lips that confess His name’*. The Old Testament priests used to bring animal sacrifices to the temple and present them to God. We are the New Testament equivalents of priests, all of us, and so we have the duty of bringing ourselves, as living sacrifices, before God. Romans 12:1 has; *‘Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship’*.

We don't worship God only when we feel like it. He is worthy of our praise whether we feel like worshipping or not. Worship often begins as an act of the will but ends in a wonderful abandonment of love and awe. What do I do with my body when I'm worshipping? Whatever is appropriate. Worship flows from within, but to be real to both others and ourselves it must find expression in physical responses. Which of the following options do you think are most appropriate to the types of worship described below: (You might want to select more than one).

Joy at being with God and His children PROSTRATE
or HANDS IN AIR or DANCING or CLAPPING or
STANDING or KNEELING

Acute awareness of sin and the need to ask forgiveness
PROSTRATE or HANDS IN AIR or DANCING or
CLAPPING or STANDING or KNEELING

Awe and amazement at who God PROSTRATE or
HANDS IN AIR or DANCING or CLAPPING or
STANDING or KNEELING

Exhilaration at realising Christ's total victory
PROSTRATE or HANDS IN AIR or DANCING or
CLAPPING or STANDING or KNEELING

Earnest and heartfelt intercession PROSTRATE or
HANDS IN AIR or DANCING or CLAPPING or
STANDING or KNEELING

The obvious point I am making is that some forms of physical expression are more appropriate than others. My view is that not to give physical expression to praise and worship is seldom appropriate - I just don't get how someone can worship God in song with arms folded across the chest and head swivelling around to see who is entering the church building!

So you're inhibited? So aren't most of us? But do you love God, and do you deeply desire to worship him? Yes? Then I just know that your body will soon come into line with your spirit and you will start to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth. May God bless you!

7 Foundation Six – Ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit

Only in as much as we are filled with power from on high can we minister to others in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Have you had hands laid on you with prayer for the anointing of the Holy Spirit? When last did this happen? Have you ‘leaked’ since? We need to be regularly refreshed. Ephesians. 5:18 says, ‘... *be filled with the Spirit*’. (See also John 7:38) The word ‘filled’ is set in the present imperative tense in the original Greek and so to give full meaning to this we would need to translate the verse something like, ‘I urgently instruct you to be, and continue to be filled with the Spirit’.

Once filled, we minister the power of the Holy Spirit to others through deliverance, evangelism, teaching, preaching, and healing.

7.1 Deliverance

Jesus acknowledged the reality of demons and cast them out of demonised human beings (Matthew 12:43-45; Mark 1:23-26; 5:1-17). He also instructed his disciples to do likewise (Matthew 10:8; Mark 16:17). So we too should minister deliverance whenever called upon to do so.

Demons? Deliverance? Me?... Gulp!. "But surely deliverance is a specialised power ministry?" (you say to yourself) Says who? The book of Acts reveals apostles, deacons, and others driving out demons. You might not be an Apostle, or even a Deacon, but you are definitely 'an other' – in the early church everyone ministered where there was a need.

The basis for deliverance is the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Neither of these two bases is restricted to certain classes of Christians. The problem is though, that some folk within the church have turned deliverance into a specialised ministry. People have written books and run courses on the subject. The whole affair has been clouded in so much mystery and specialisation that ordinary Christians, like you and me, feel that we must call in the 'experts' wherever there is a need. My strong advice to you is (a) Discuss this with your Pastor, (b) Refrain from attending special courses on deliverance and don't go reading the many books that abound on the subject. Most of the material I have seen does more harm than good. (c) Don't go looking for people to deliver and don't think that there is a demon lurking behind every flu symptom or character disorder. (d) When you discern the need to deliver someone from demonic bondage just get on with it, quietly and confidently. Address the demon aloud along the following lines: "Demon, I am a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ and he has given me authority over you. In fact he has instructed me to give you your marching orders. So go right now! Leave this person. Do him/her no harm. I command this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

At this point, it would be good to reflect on your own life. Have you been involved at anything more than a superficial level with things like astrology, yoga, astral projection, fortune telling, heavy metal rock music, or even outright Satanism? If you have, then the possibility exists that you yourself might need to be delivered from the influences and ongoing

oppression often associated with these things. Equally, if you have addictions or uncontrollable compulsions that concern you, then you should consider asking someone to minister to you so that you can be set free. Speak to your Pastor or any mature Christian and ask them to pray with you along the lines indicated above.

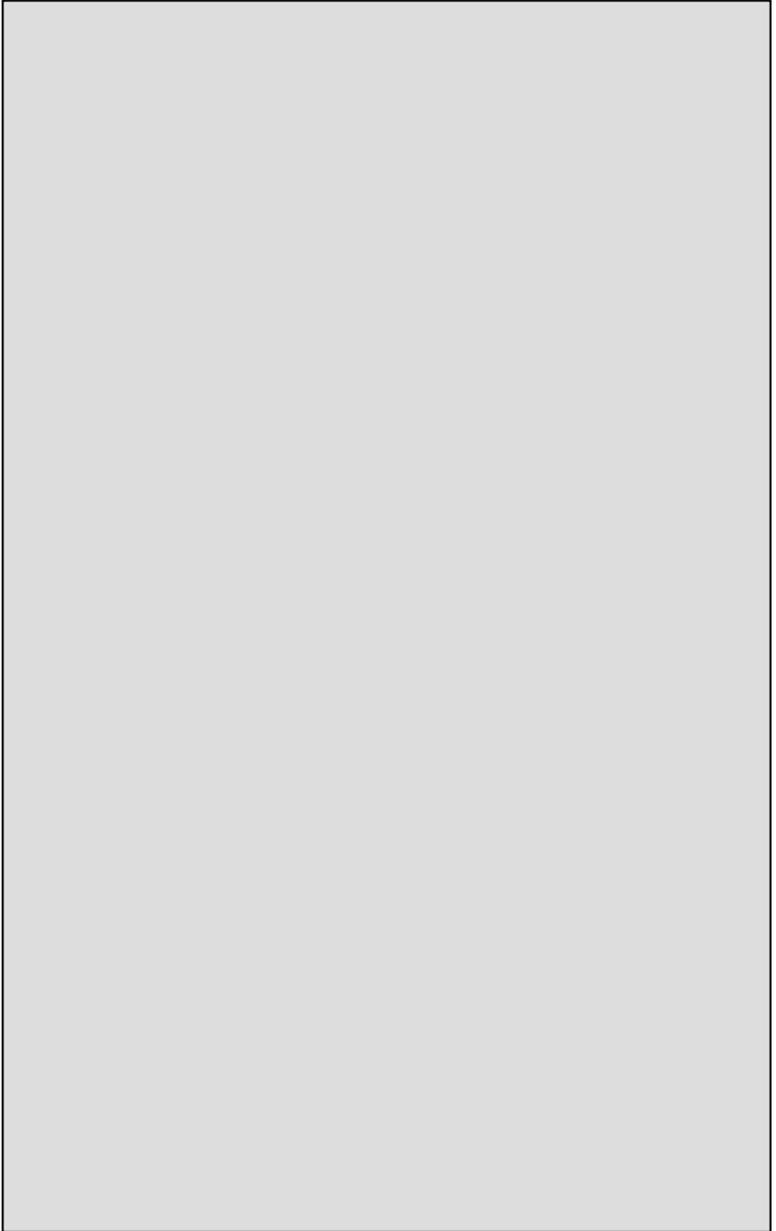
7.2 Evangelism

Making disciples is a basic ministry of all believers (Matthew 28:19) and a ministry we exercise in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

There are literally dozens of evangelism methods in circulation. Do this, don't do that, say this, memorise that, gesture thus, pray as follows ... I have never understood the need! Surely if you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord then you know enough of the Gospel to tell others. If not, then to what Gospel did you respond?

How do you go about witnessing? The Holy Spirit will lead you and provide you with opportunities if you will just ASK him!

Please use the space on the next page to make a little study of Acts 8:26-29. See if you can identify the elements involved in the process of how the Holy Spirit brought the Ethiopian to salvation.



OK, now what you need to do is pray "Please Lord, lead me to someone today who is open to hearing about you and give me wisdom and sensitivity to share with them how I feel about you."

A favourite word in the Christian vocabulary is 'witnessing', but what do you understand by that term? Write out your own definition here:

.....

.....

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.....

.....

Chances are you wrote something about explaining the way of salvation etc. But what actually is a witness? It is one who tells of what they have personally seen and heard. In a court of law, second-hand evidence is rejected as "hearsay" and only experts are expected to give evidence on technical matters.

Your role as a witness is to tell others what YOU have seen and heard concerning Jesus and the way of salvation. You are not expected to have answers to all the technical questions like "What happens to babies when they die?" or "Where do dinosaurs fit into the creation account?" etc. Witnessing about Jesus should be as natural and enthusiastic as sharing about any vitally important aspect of your life.

7.3 Teaching and Preaching

At this stage, you might not be called upon to be either a teacher or a preacher within the church. You are however, by

virtue of your status as a Christian, a teacher and preacher within your family and circle of influence. This does not mean that you need to 'Bible-bash' everyone within a ten-kilometre radius. It does mean that you need to influence your environment with the truth and purity of the Word of God.

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:13-16)

Here is a little exercise to help you to personalise this idea.

"I (insert your name here) am the salt of the earth. I am the light of the world."

This means that YOU need to have a working knowledge of the Bible...otherwise what is it that you are teaching your family? Start a systematic Bible reading programme today. The simplest method is to read a book, mark it off in the table of contents at the front of your Bible, and then select the next book to read... and so on.

7.4 Healing

This is a huge and complex subject. Is miraculous healing a part of God's normal provision for us today? Yes, in many circumstances I believe it is. John 14:12 records Jesus as saying "I tell the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing". Now Jesus Christ surely healed, did he not?

However, I must make the point that I do not believe that physical well-being is always a high priority of the Lord for his disciples. His highest purpose is to bring us into a family relationship with himself, and then to progressively transform us into his own 'image'. If physical healing serves to further this aim then I believe that it is his pleasure to grant it. In many instances, though, affliction better serves the purpose of sanctification (growing to be more like him) and many lost souls are brought to repentance and faith through infirmity.

Having said all that, I believe that we should assume that God wants to heal rather than assume that he does not. So we should always pray for the sick who request prayer, unless the Holy Spirit places a check in our spirits. Simply pray "Please Father, will you heal my friend". Lay your hand on his or her head, or the problem area (so long as it is decent to do so) and pray. Expect the Holy Spirit to transfer power from you to the sick person or to directly minister powerfully to the one in need. Believe this and act accordingly but do not claim that healing has taken place unless you are absolutely convinced that God has completed the job. Sometimes healings occur, sometimes they don't, and sometimes they take time. We don't know why, but then we aren't God are we?

8. Foundation Seven – Fellowship and the church

First I need to deal with a simple definition of ‘church’. Then I will go on by writing about our function within the church.

8.1 What is the Church?

Which of the following two definitions do you support?

- a. The church is where people come to do the work of God.
- b. The church is the gathered community of God's people, equipped to serve, meeting needs everywhere in Jesus' name.

Before I discuss these two alternatives, please select which of the following, in your opinion, should be the emphasis of the church?

- a. Getting people into the building, being visible, being an efficient organisation.
- b. Producing Spirit-filled people who can meet other's needs in Jesus' name.

Also, what should the church's goals be?

- a. Increase the numbers in attendance, meet the financial budgets, and provide adequate facilities.

- b. Make each member whole, equipped, and released into ministry.

What primary method should the church adopt to achieve its goals?

- a. Professionalism and attractive programmes.
- b. Equipping and encouraging members to minister.

Finally, as you perceive it, what motivates the church leaders?

- a. Getting people in and then keeping them; getting people to serve the church; winning the competition with the world.
- b. To be a healing agency in the community, not a place of refuge from it; to change priorities in the community rather than compete against them.

Now, please review your responses. If you selected the (a) choices, then you probably perceive the church as a field of endeavour; a location where the action needs to take place. If you selected the (b) alternatives, then you probably perceive the church as a force within society rather than an alternative to it.

Perhaps more important than your choices, are the choices of the leaders of your local church. If your leaders perceive the church as a 'field' (thanks to J. Cook and his book *Love, Acceptance and Forgiveness* for these concepts and terms) then you will most likely observe the following within your church fellowship:

- Leadership style will be essentially hierarchical.
- Worship services will be front led with the congregation itself largely passive.
- Ministry will be taking place within the church under control of the leaders: training will be of the formal chalk and talk type.
- Church growth will be through methods, programmes and promotions.

If your leaders perceive the church as a ‘force’ then you will most likely observe the following within your church fellowship:

- Leadership style will be essentially relational: worship services will feature congregational participation.
- Ministry will be within both church and world under the oversight of the leaders.
- Training will be ‘show and do’.
- Church growth will be through spirit-filled ministry and the manifest presence of God.

So what then is the church? **The church is the Family of God, the household in which the children of God grow and function. It is a godly force within society.**

8.2 Your Function within the Local Church

If you see the church as something essentially organisational in nature then you will either see it as a source of education and entertainment, or you will see it as an enterprise. If you see the church as an ‘organism’ controlled and enlivened by its head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and of which you are a part, then you

will see 'its' role as your role, and will seek ministry and functionality within and through it.

'As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him — you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.' (1 Peter 2:4-5)

1 Corinthians 12:27 has, *'Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.'*

Please read chapters 12, 13, and 14 of 1 Corinthians.

You are a member of the household of God, the church. You have a role, a function, a ministry. You are important. Without you, the local church cannot function as it should.

It is vitally important for you, and for the church, that you get involved. But how? Well, a good place to start is with a home fellowship group. Find out from your Pastor where the closest one to you meets, and when, and then go along. You will find that in the company of only a dozen Christians it is easy to learn to pray aloud, to minister to others, and to develop an area of ministry. Please don't delay - do it this week!

There are a number of questionnaires doing the rounds claiming to help you identify your 'spiritual gifts'. I don't recommend that you use these, but I do recommend that you take an inventory of what you are good at and what you enjoy. There should be no artificial division between 'spiritual' and 'natural' giftedness. God equips us for the things we need to do and he gives us joy in doing them. So merely list your aptitudes, talents, and skills and then match them against the needs in your local church..... and then get involved!

9. Foundation Eight – Witnessing and Making Disciples

Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ defines witnessing as ‘Sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God’.

In the next few pages, I am going to use parts of this definition to develop some vital truths.

9.1 Sharing

Perhaps you have asked the question “but why should I share?” There is sometimes a mistaken perception that only Evangelists ‘share’ the Gospel. You may concede that sometimes God calls ordinary ‘lay-people’ to give their testimony in a church service or men's breakfast, but other than that, you believe that God expects you to just get on with the business of being ‘private’ Christians. Is this what you think?

Let me give you some reasons why you should share the Gospel with others. Rom. 10:9 reads, ‘.... *if you confess with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*’ The next verse gives the explanation; ‘*For it is by believing in his heart that a man becomes right with God; and with his mouth he tells others of his faith, confirming his salvation.*’

The catalysts of re-birth, or if you prefer it, the human side of regeneration are -



It's actually obvious isn't it? If you truly believe then you will evidence your belief in word and action. Witnessing therefore becomes a crucial evidence of your faith in Christ Jesus for salvation. This witnessing is with both **words** and **actions**.

God has given SOME in the church to be evangelists but he has commissioned ALL of us to be witnesses. Acts 1:8 reads, *'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and YOU will be my WITNESSES'*

Here is a good reason why all of us need to propagate the Gospel of Salvation.

* If 12,000 evangelists of the calibre of Billy Graham made 1000 converts every single Sunday it would take 250 generations (each of 40 years) to reach the world's present population.

* If just 12 disciples, like you, made just 3 convert every year and taught them to do likewise, the world's population would be reached in less than 1 generation!

Another excellent reason that you and I should make disciples is that the Lord Jesus has COMMANDED us to (Matthew 28:18-20). The essence of sin is a refusal to trust and obey. The conditions of covenant are trust and obedience. How then can we claim to be covenant children of God if we make no attempt to obey this most basic of all his commands?!

9.2 The Gospel

I made the statement earlier that if you knew enough to respond to the Gospel, and thus be born again, then you know enough to tell others about the way of salvation.

I honestly do not believe that we need training courses on how to share the Gospel. Salvation is not a product to be sold! We are saved into a personal and living relationship with Almighty God and into a communal relationship with his family, the church. What's so hard about telling others about these wonderful relationships that you enjoy?

We don't have to know all the answers. Actually, I have yet to see someone saved through an intellectual understanding of God's nature or his attitude towards Hindus etc. However, you do need to be able to articulate the basic elements covered in this little book.

- * Gods Purpose and Plan
- * The Centrality of Jesus Christ
- * Covenant (terms, broken, scope, re-instated)
- * New Birth
- * Water Baptism
- * Being filled by the Holy Spirit

So now you really do know enough of the Gospel to be able to share it with others. Remember though that the key to sharing

your faith is to *'...in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...'* (1 Peter 3:15)

9.3 In the Power of The Holy Spirit

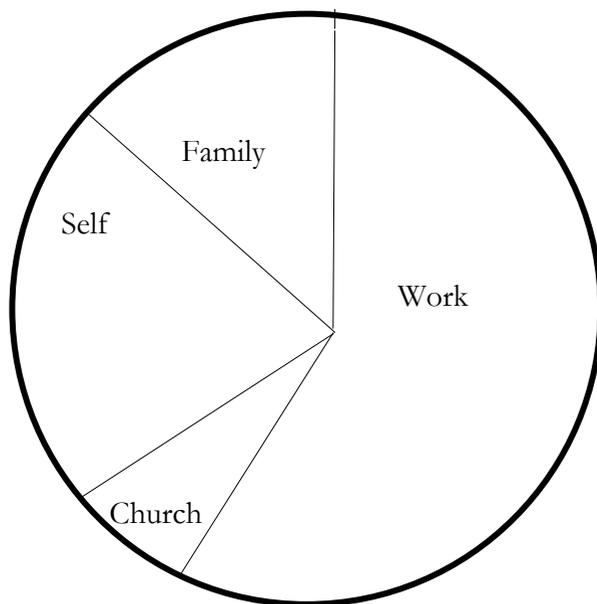
Here is what you do. Start to intercede for those people with whom you want to share the Gospel. Ask the Holy Spirit to create the opportunities. Don't just pray once, pray often and give some constructive thought as to how you can create an environment where they will be receptive to what you have to say.

When you are with them, pray silently asking the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom, grace, and boldness. Be sensitive and don't try to brow-beat them. Be gentle and respectful and TRUST God the Holy Spirit to empower you to work effectively in your friend's life.

Notwithstanding the simplicity, integrity, and relational reality of the Gospel, most folk are hesitant to witness in their place of employment. Here is something to think about.

9.4 Witnessing in the Work Place

I would like to deal here with just one simple principle. Please take a piece of paper and cover the next page just below the dotted line. Please do this now, before reading any further.

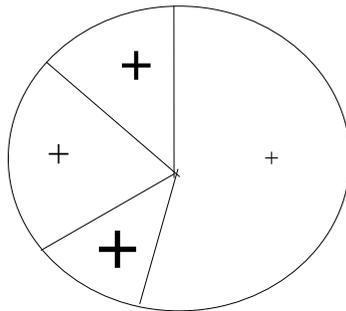


The chart represents the time segments of your day (it doesn't matter for this exercise whether or not the segments are accurate representations). Please draw a cross in each section to represent the influence of Jesus Christ on that part of your life. A large and thick cross (⊕) would indicate dominant influence; a little, thin one (+) would indicate slight influence; no cross would indicate no influence. Please do this now.

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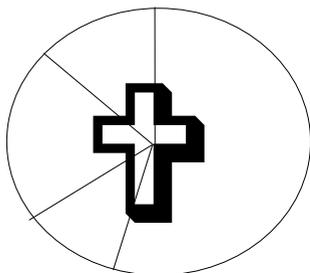
Sorry housewives/mothers - if you don't work outside of the home environment then this little exercise won't help you much. However, to those men and women who do pursue outside careers may I point out that crosses of various sizes and thickness represent a fragmented and compartmentalised life.

Does your chart look anything like this?



Somehow or other we tend to build walls between different aspects of our lives. When we are at church, or about church related business, Jesus dominates our thoughts. Within our families he is strongly influential.... but at work we hardly ever think of him and his Kingdom.

Shouldn't that same chart rather look rather this?



Christ Jesus in the very centre of our lives, influencing every aspect equally.

If you have a problem in this area, particularly with your business/work time may I make a few suggestions?

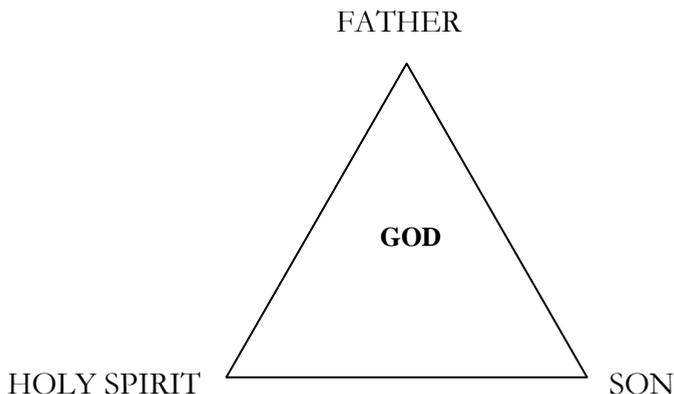
- a. Have a quiet time of Bible study and prayer in your office before work starts every morning (far more valuable than reading the paper)
- b. Use spare lunch hours to talk to other staff members about the Lord and His Kingdom.
- c. Pray before making business decisions.
- d. Pray silently while you are in meetings and include the Lord into the discussions.

In these simple ways, you will start to break down the artificial walls separating your business life from your private life.

10 Foundation Nine - The Christian Family

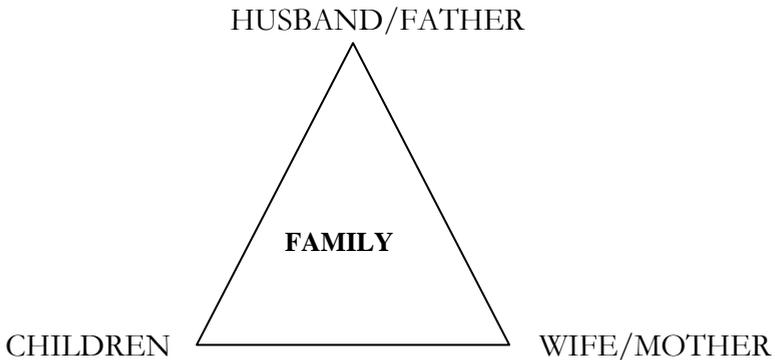
Once again I shall only attempt to introduce this subject here. This is just an introduction to nine foundational concepts. More in-depth treatment will have to come in some other form.

God values order and he has an order for the church and for the family. The Bible uses a peculiar word for this order – ‘headship’. Headship incorporates the concepts of authority, accountability, and love. The model for headship within both church and family derives from the relationship within the Godhead.



God the Father has the place of headship. God the Son is in submission to him, and God the Holy Spirit is in submission to both the Father and the Son.

In the family, this model finds the following expression



Here the man is head of the family. The woman is in submission to him, and the children are in submission to both the father and the mother.

Now before going any further please read Ephesians 5:22-6:4;

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church — for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery — but I

am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother"-which is the first commandment with a promise — "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.'

Organisations can only have one 'head'; a two-headed animal is a monster! Families can only have one head.... and sir, that head is you! Or madam, if you are reading this and you are married, your husband is the head of your family and you are called by God's Word to submit to him. BUT.... submission does not equal 'doormat'. Biblical submission has to do with respect and a willingness to accept final decisions after husband and wife have fully discussed and analysed the matter. A husband has no biblical licence for autocracy, but rather a scriptural commission to be the servant leader of the household. He is to love his wife even as Christ loves the church, and she in her turn is to respect him.

So headship does not include autocracy, or dictatorship! And submission does not include subservience! The true characteristics of family headship are godly authority within the home, accountability before God, and self-sacrificing love for the wife and children.

Disorder and spiritual ill-health sets in when the God-given roles are reversed; when husbands abdicate their responsibility; when wives usurp their husband's authority, or when children rebel against their parents.

This is such an important area that I am going to stop right here and ask you to seriously examine the relationships within your home.

Husband/Father do you:

Assume final responsibility for the major decisions taken in your home, after full discussion with your wife?	Y	N
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Handle the discipline of your children except when your wife has exercised discipline in your absence?	Y	N
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Pray with your children and teach them the scriptures?	Y	N
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Make it your business to find out what your wife's emotional and spiritual needs are, and then try to meet them?	Y	N
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Wife/Mother do you:

Support your husband's decisions in public and in front of the children, even if you have to query them with him in private?	Y	N
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Insist that your husband pray with the children and teach them scriptural values (I assume he is saved)	Y	N
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I did not include a 'maybe' or a 'sometimes' option and so you have to decide either 'yes' or 'no'! If you answer 'no' to any of the questions then I suggest that you speak to your Pastor.

11. Conclusion

These then are nine foundations of the Christian Faith. Perhaps there are more, just as there well may be more than nine manifestations (gifts) of the Holy Spirit. Salvation, (covenant, new birth, assurance, water baptism, and being filled by the Holy Spirit), the Bible, the Kingdom of God and spiritual warfare, stewardship, prayer and worship, ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit, fellowship and the church, witnessing and making disciples, and the Christian family.

Forming these foundation blocks into line and order is the cornerstone of the centrality of Jesus – he is all in all. Rising above the foundations on a strong central pillar is the capstone of God's eternal purpose and plan.

"Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for your word. Thank you for your church. Thank you for your great plan of salvation. It's so good to know that we are part of your family. Holy Spirit, please help us your faithful disciples to grow in grace and power. Father, may your name be exalted and may your will be done in our lives. Amen."

