

CHURCH OF HOPE

EVANGELISM AND

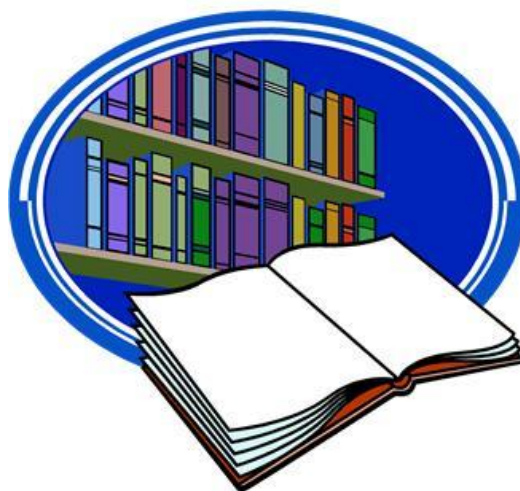
MINISTRY TRAINING

COURSE

STUDY GUIDES

(All teachings for these study guides can be individually downloaded from the following website page: www.coh.org.au/ministry_course)

www.coh.org.au



Notes compiled by Pastor Conrad Fenton

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CHURCH OF HOPE EVANGELISM AND MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE BY EMAIL AND WEBSITE

STUDY GUIDE: WEEK ONE

TOPIC ONE: THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A LIFESTYLE OF PRAYER

INTRODUCTION TO COURSE: This is the first week's study guide for the Church of Hope 17-week Evangelism and Ministry Training Course that is also on their website page: www.coh.org.au/ministry_course The first week's study is on the importance of having a lifestyle of prayer. On this website page there are also other teachings that form part of the first week's reading materials for topic one. Each week of this course we cover a new topic that relates to evangelism, making mature disciple and leaders, or keys to having healthy community changing churches. Each week's topic will have a study guide and related teachings. To minimise printing costs, the Study Guides are mainly 2-4 pages (One or Two Double Sided pages) in size.

Due to the importance of winning souls, we will be sharing much early on in the course on equipping Christians to become soul winners.

We will begin this course by looking at a passage of Scripture in Colossians. The Apostle Paul wrote, **“Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labour, striving to His working which works in me mightily.” (Colossians 1:28-29)**

In this passage of Scripture, we see the Apostle Paul emphasising the importance of preaching the gospel to all people and the importance of seeing Christians coming to maturity in their faith. The whole purpose of this course is to help equip and to encourage all Christians to become strong in their faith and soul winners. To achieve this end, each week's study will contain a number of key areas and points to focus on and related bible Scriptures to meditate on. Studying the Word of God is a key to growing strong in our walk with the Lord. **(2 Timothy 3:16-17) (John 8:31-32) (Joshua 1:8)**

We will now begin this study on prayer by looking at the overview in the Pastors Workshop Guidelines and Teachings Manual for the topic: Building our lives on the Word of God and Prayer. (Page 5) This manual can be downloaded from the following website page: www.coh.org.au/downloads

“All Christians need to build their life on the Word of God and prayer... Prayer is also a key to seeing God's plan and purpose unfolding in our lives and churches. Jesus often withdrew to spend time praying to His Father in Heaven. **(Luke 5:16)** We need to have a lifestyle of prayer **(1 Thessalonians 5:17)** and continually seek God for His direction for our lives, **(Proverbs 3:5-6)** and to make our needs known to Him. Prayer is simply communing with God. When we live a lifestyle of prayer we will not be overcome by anxiety **(Philippians 4:6-7)** when confronted by needs and challenging situations, but we will learn to cast our cares upon the Lord. God promises in His Word that He will answer all of our prayers which are in line with His will for our life. **(1 John 5:14-15) (Mark 11:22-24) (John 14:12-14) (John 16:23-24)**

At times God will lead Believers into times of fasting and prayer, often just prior to a new season in their life. Fasting helps us to humble ourselves before God **(Ezra 8:21)** and to get closer to God. This is why Jesus told His disciples that in the days when He was no longer physically with them, then they should fast. **(Luke 5:35)** During times of fasting God will often speak very clearly in terms of future direction and at the same time bring about an increased hunger for spiritual things. During times of fasting, it is often far easier to discern the voice of God. During these times we also experience increased spiritual power as His strength is made perfect in our weakness. **(2 Corinthians 12:9)** Jesus Himself fasted for 40 days before commencing His ministry. **(Luke 4:1-2) (Mark 1:13-15)** Those in the early church often fasted and prayed. **(Acts 13:2-3)** Fasting and prayer also helps people to be set free of addictions and demonic strongholds. **(Matthew 17:18-21)**”

The study outline and related Scriptures on page 2 of this study guide can be read and studied in conjunction with the following two additional teachings for this topic, “SOME KEYS TO ANSWERED PRAYER” and our Christian Growth Key No. 2 for those who would like some additional teachings on prayer.

14 AREAS AND RELATED SCRIPTURES TO LOOK AT AND STUDY IN RELATION TO LIVING A LIFESTYLE OF PRAYER

- 1) Prayer helps us to examine our hearts and to deal with any wrong attitudes quickly. It is crucial that we keep a soft and right heart. **(Proverbs 4:23) (Luke 6:45)** We must learn to be open before the Lord and quickly deal with any hurts and disappointments and wrong attitudes by surrendering them to the Lord **(Psalm 51:1-10)**
- 2) The importance of listening to God when we pray. **(Jeremiah 23:18)** Prayer is a two way communication with Him. **(Jeremiah 33:3)** The Holy Spirit will speak to us clearly in prayer when we are still **(John 16:13)**
- 3) The importance of making time to spend with the Lord to pray to Him. **(Psalm 34:4-6) (Psalm 63:1)** We must never get too busy to pray. Non Praying people are powerless. Our prayers can remove the hindrances and mountains in our life. **(Mark 11:22-24)** The enemy will try and keep us too busy to pray. **(Luke 10:38-42)**
- 4) The importance of committing our weekly and daily plans to the Lord in prayer, **(Proverbs 16:3)** so that we remain in the centre of God's will for our life. Prayerfully involving God in our plans helps us to be fruitful in life. God's plan for our life unfolds one step at a time. **(Psalm 37:23)**
- 5) The importance of involving the Lord in all that we do. (Having a lifestyle of prayer). **(Proverbs 3:5-6) (1 Thessalonians 5:17)** God's ways are far higher than our ways. **(Isaiah 55:8-9)** WE NEED CONTINUALLY GOD'S GUIDANCE AND WISDOM in life and in all that we do. God promises to give us wisdom when we ask of Him. **(James 1:5)** Life is full of choices. Some wrong choices can impact us for a lifetime
- 6) The importance of praying with an open Bible. God will speak through His Word to us to give us clear direction in life when we commit our needs to Him and seek Him for wisdom and guidance. **(Psalm 119:105) (Psalm 119:133)** God will often give us a Rhema word of encouragement through His Word when we are seeking Him for help and encouragement during times of trials and challenges
- 7) The importance of being led and empowered by the Holy Spirit in our prayers. This is a key to praying in line with the will of God for our life and according to His Word **(Romans 8:26-27) (1 John 5:14-15)**
- 8) The importance of being persistent in our prayers. Praying until we get the breakthroughs. We must not allow temporary circumstances to stop us from being fervent in our prayers. **(Luke 18:1-8) (James 5:16-18)**
- 9) We need to pray believing already for the answered prayer WHEN WE PRAY. We must always pray in faith. **(Mark 11:24) (Hebrew 11:6)**
- 10) Committing our cares continually to the Lord in prayer is a great key to maintaining a heart of peace and hearing God's voice. We must refuse to continually talk about our problems but learn to instinctively give them to Jesus in prayer. **(Philippians 4:6-7) (1 Peter 5:7)** God both hears and answers our prayers
- 11) Prayer in the secret place (in isolation) with the Lord is a key to gaining revelation knowledge from God and growing in intimacy with Him. We must frequently draw aside to a quiet place to pray **(Luke 5:16) (Matthew 6:6)** Those who wait upon the Lord renew their strength and in His Presence is fullness of joy
- 12) We need to learn to be specific in our prayers and never forget that "For with God nothing will be impossible" **(Luke 1:37)** The prayer of agreement is powerful **(See Matthew 18:19)**
- 13) Worship and Prayer go together. When we worship the Lord we connect with God's heart for people and have a greater sensitivity and passion as to what to pray about **(Psalm 37:4)** Worship helps to usher God's presence into our circumstances. **(Psalm 22:3)** Chains were loosed when Paul and Silas were praying and singing Hymns to God after they had been beaten and thrown into prison. **(Acts 16:25-26)**
- 14) For Pastors we need to ensure that our corporate prayer meetings are focussed and Spirit led as we pray for our community, the nation and those in our church and that we encourage all believers in our churches to develop and cultivate a lifestyle of prayer themselves

SOME BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF ANSWERED PRAYER: (James 5:17-18) (Acts 12:5-12) (Acts 3:1-10)

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AND DISCUSS IN RELATION TO PRAYER BASED ON THIS WEEK'S READINGS

- i) *What can stop us from having a vibrant prayer life and involving God in all that we do?*
- ii) *How can we maintain a strong faith that we always believe for answered prayers when we pray?*
- iii) *As a pastor do I encourage those in our church to develop an active prayer life and God dependency?*
- iv) *Is prayer an important part of our church life and in my own walk with the Lord?, and*
- v) *What can be some of the hindrances to our prayers being answered?*

CHURCH OF HOPE EVANGELISM AND MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE BY EMAIL AND WEBSITE: **STUDY GUIDE: WEEK TWO**

TOPIC TWO: THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING OUR LIFE ON THE WORD OF GOD

INTRODUCTION TO WEEK TWO: This is the study guide for week two of our 17-Week Evangelism and Ministry Training Course that is also on the Church of Hope website: www.coh.org.au. Our main teaching to accompany this study guide is “Building your life on the Word of God” which is again from the Pastors Workshop Guidelines and Teachings Manual which can be downloaded from the Church of Hope website.

It is so important, especially given the lawless times that we are now living in, that all Christians feed themselves spiritually with the Word of God on a regular basis. For pastors and leaders who have been entrusted with the wonderful responsibility of nurturing and equipping other believers, **(Acts 20:28) (Ephesians 4:11-16)** being diligent in the study of the Word of God is crucial if we are to be faithful in feeding those who have been entrusted to our care with the Word of God. The Lord said to Peter when commissioning him, “Feed My lambs”, **(John 21:15)** “Tend My Sheep”, **(John 21:16)** and “Feed My sheep.” **(John 21:17)** Spending much time with the Lord and in His Word empowers a pastor to be more effective in the preaching of the Word.

Every Believer has an important ministry from God and we all need one another. The Apostle Paul wrote, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” **(Ephesians 2:10)** It is within the workforce that we have opportunities to flow in our spiritual gifts such as a salesman also flowing in the gift of evangelism. For believers ministering in the secular world, (which has many ungodly influences), continually feeding on the Word of God, both at church and at home, is vital if they are to be truly a light in this world. **(Matthew 5:16)** As pastors we need to encourage those in our meetings to build their lives on the firm foundation of the Word of God, so that they remain strong in their walk with the Lord and have good success. **(Matthew 7:24-27) (Joshua 1:8)**

The Apostle Paul wrote, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” **(2 Timothy 3:16-17)**

As pastors and leaders have responsibility (and accountability – **James 3:1**) for overseeing the spiritual walk of many other believers, they are often under greater attack than other Christians as the enemy, (the Devil) knows that if he can smite the Shepherd, he can scatter the sheep. When we look at Colossians 3:16 we see the importance of feeding on God’s Word. This is crucial for all believers given the lawless times that we are now living in. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” **(Colossians 3:16) Psalm 119 contains meditations on the Excellencies of the Word of God**

As Pastors and leaders, we need to allow the Word of God to change us, so that we can model what it is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. **(1 Peter 5:1-4)** Jesus Himself said, “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.” **(Matthew 10:24)** For some people we may be the only bible that they read.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the young pastor Timothy, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” **(1 Timothy 4:12-16)**

It is so important that we continually build our life on the Word of God so that we:

- i) Will be effective in the ministry that God has called us to, whether in the five-fold ministry or secular world,
- ii) That we will shine out as believers in this world by being truly salt and light **(Matthew 5:13-16)**, and
- iii) That we will remain strong in our walk with the Lord. **(Matthew 24:12-13)** Like the Apostle Paul we want to finish our walk with the Lord strongly **(2 Timothy 4:7)**

Building our life on the Word of God is a key to being productive and fruitful in our walk with the Lord.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

Studying the word of God will be a big part of each topic in this course. We will also be doing a thorough reading of the bible when we go through the foundations of our faith a little later in this course. We will now look at a number of things to consider and discuss in relation to building our life on the Word of God

- 1) The importance of making time to spend in the Word of God. (Joshua 1:8) There is life in the Word of God. (Hebrews 4:12) Revelation from God’s Word comes in isolation. The enemy will try and keep us too busy to spend time in the Word. The bible is God’s love letter to us
 - 2) The importance of being consistent in our reading of the Word of God. Daily reading something from the Word of God is better than reading for two hours one day and then nothing for a week. *Daily God will give us direction and encouragement through His Word. (Psalm 119:105)* Just as one meal a week is not sufficient to keep us physically strong, (each day we need something to eat), so too daily we need to be built up in our spirit by MEDITATING on the Word of God, even if on some busy days it is only one or two key Scriptures (Psalm 1:1-3)
 - 3) Praying for God to direct your reading of the Word (We need to have an expectation that God will speak to us every time we open the Word of God) God will often give us a word of encouragement through His Word. A Rhema word in season (Proverbs 15:23)
 - 4) The importance of being both a hearer and DOER of the Word. The Bible is full of Wisdom. We can build our life on God’s unchanging word. (Psalm 119:89) Being a doer of the Word gives us great stability during our trials and helps us to make right choices in life. Obedience to God’s Word is a key to being blessed by God (Luke 11:28)
 - 5) There is power in the spoken Word. The Apostle Paul wrote, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” (Romans 10:17) We need to speak God’s promises over our life and future to create a faith filled atmosphere in our churches, homes and workplaces. Attaching Scriptural promises to our prayers helps us to believe as we pray (Mark 11:24) for the answers to our prayers. The Apostle Paul wrote, “For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.” (2 Corinthians 1:20)
 - 6) The importance of *not* reading and interpreting individual scriptures in isolation, but rather in the context of the entire bible teachings and the passage of Scripture from which they come. For example, in the book of James we read, “But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead.” (James 2:20) This Scripture must however be read in light of what other Scriptures in the bible also say. i.e. (Ephesians 2:8-10) (John 3:16) (Philippians 3:9) (James 2:14-22). When reading all these Scriptures together we see clearly that it is not our works that save us, for by Grace are we saved through faith and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, but our good works show the genuineness of the faith that we profess - that our faith is alive and real.
 - 7) The importance of preaching the Word of God in our sermons and messages (2 Timothy 4:2) (Isaiah 55:11)
 - 8) Nothing that we believe the Holy Spirit is speaking to us will ever contradict God’s Word. The Bible is a good check and balance for us when we are praying and seeking the Lord for wisdom and guidance in life (James 1:5)
 - 9) We must always minister the Word of God in truth and love and in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:15)
 - 10) Spending time in parts of the Word of God that relate to areas in our life in which we have need of growth Renewing our mind with the Word of God helps us to develop Kingdom attitudes (Romans 12:2) and to grow in Christlike Character. There are Scriptures in the Word of God that help us to gain victory in every area of our life
 - 11) WE NEED TO BUILD OUR LIFE BASED ON WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT OUR FUTURE IN HIS WORD (Ephesians 3:20)
Studying and meditating on the Word of God helps us to realise our full potential in life. When we look at God’s faithfulness in the past (The Red Sea parting for the Children of Israel to make a way of escape, Joseph’s promotion from the prison to the palace in one day and God protecting Daniel in the lion’s den for example) and when we look at all of God’s promises to all believers in His Word, we can confidently step out by faith into the future that God has planned for our life based on what we read in the Word of God, (Hebrews 13:8) and
 - 12) Having a good study bible such as the “New Spirit Filled Life Bible” helps in the reading of the Word of God
A good Bible reading plan or daily devotional can also help us to be more disciplined in reading the Word of God
- Questions:** Please refer to email for Week Two questions

CHURCH OF HOPE EVANGELISM AND MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE BY EMAIL AND WEBSITE: *STUDY GUIDE: WEEK THREE*

TOPIC THREE: THE GREATEST IS LOVE

INTRODUCTION TO WEEK THREE:

We will begin this week's teaching by looking at the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3:

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing." (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

In this passage of Scripture, the Apostle Paul emphasised that no matter what we do in our walk with the Lord and for God, if it is not undergirded by love it will profit us nothing and we will not make an impact on the lives of others. (We have become sounding brass or a clanging Cymbal.) We are now living in a world that is crying out for genuine love in many ways. We are now also seeing wars and acts of terrorism impacting our world in a great way and people becoming more and more caught up in accumulating things and possessions rather than developing loving relationships with others. I heard someone once say, that in the world "people love money and use people" but as Christians we need to "use money and love people." Given the world that we are now living in, both as a Body of Believers (the church) and individually we can make a great impact in this world for eternity.

Jesus Himself said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see you good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

So especially given the lawless times that we are now living in it is crucial that we have a genuine love for others. To complement this week's study guide, the Christian Growth Key No. 26 – The Greatest is love (One double Sided Page) can be downloaded from the following page: www.coh.org.au/Growth_Keys

This topic is very important as a great key to the last great revivals will be the love and presence of God in our lives and churches being so evident that people will be drawn to Christ in us the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27) There is another saying, "People do not care about how much we know, but they do want to know about how much we CARE" "... and a word spoken in due season, how good it is! (Proverbs 15:23)

As believers if we have Christ's compassion in our heart, we will be passionate about loving others into the Kingdom of God. If we truly touch the heart of God we will be radically changed and our lives will be characterized by: i) a burden to pray for others, ii) an urgency to share our faith with others as God gives us opportunities, iii) it will change the way we live our lives. We will be more others focused and generous in our giving and more prepared to make sacrifices for others and iv) we will live our lives with eternity in mind, (being more focused on storing up treasures in heaven - helping to see precious souls coming to Christ and fulfilling God's plan for their lives) than on pursuing the things of this world. (Matthew 6:19-21) and (Matthew 6:24) The Parable of the Sower – (Mark 4:1-9 and Mark 4:13-20) (Colossians 3:2)

Some Christians out of a desire to please God try and work out and intellectualise how they should live their lives as Christians. However, Jesus made it plain and simple as to how we should live our lives. "We are to just love God and love others." It is in simply applying these two commands to our life that we can be set free from striving to live out the Christian Walk. Jesus Himself said in the Gospel of Mark,

"'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. 'And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.'" (Mark 12:30-31)

It is in the doing of the first command and abiding continually in Christ (John 15:4-5) that we have the ability to live out the second command to love others as ourselves. Because of our relationship with Jesus Christ, we have the ability to love others with the agape love of Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Romans 5:5) As a church we need to realise the importance of CARING for people one person at a time.

WE WILL NOW LOOK AT SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER IN RELATION TO CONSISTENTLY LOVING GOD AND OTHERS AND HOW OUR CHURCHES CAN BETTER LOVE OUR COMMUNITIES TO CHRIST

1) Jesus is our role model as believers of what it is to live for Him and what true love is. Jesus,

- Went out of his way to help people (John Chapter 4:1-42) – The woman from Samaria
- Took off His glory in heaven to enter this world to reconcile us back to God. He first reached out to us. He became poor that we through His poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9)
- Came to serve others and to give His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28)
- Was prepared to make sacrifices to see people come into the Kingdom of God (Luke 9:57-58)
- Was concerned also about the practical needs of others (Matthew 15:32)
- Never gave up on people. Though Peter denied Christ, Jesus never rejected him
- Was full of love and compassion for others and forgave his persecutors (Luke 23:33-35)
- Never rejected those who came to Him (and had a great love for the lost. Every single person is important to God (Luke 15:4-7) The world is full of hurting individuals
- Prayed for His Disciples and all who would believe in Him for protection and unity (John 17:6-26)

2) A loving local church has the potential to transform a community. As a church we need to:

- Warmly embrace all new comers (James 2:1-5) The importance of creating community and family
- Ensure that relationships and people take precedence over programs and traditions
- Actively reach out into the community with the practical love of Christ – Sharing bread with the hungry, clothing the naked, bringing in the poor (Isaiah 58:6-7) (James 1:27)
- We need to encourage all members to USE their God given gifts (To give of themselves)
- Cultivate an atmosphere of love and acceptance in all of our meetings
- Create a hunger for God's presence as we create an atmosphere of worship in our meetings
- We need as pastors to preach the word to help people grow in Christlike character
- We need to help all believers to be connected to small groups to have their pastoral needs met. It is within the context of small groups that Christians can be loved and encouraged to become strong in their walk with the Lord and to grow in their love for others. Small groups help to connect people to the life of a local church. (Matthew 20:19-20) (Hebrews 10:23-25)
- Making mature loving disciples is a key to having a healthy loving church

3) As a leader (and all Christians are called to reign with Christ here on earth) – Revelation 5:10 we need to model what it is to live the Christian life. As leaders,

- We need to make our primary focus one of getting to know Christ is a deeper way ourselves
- We need to spend much time with the Lord so that we not only preach the message but live it out in the way that we love and relate to others. We must never get too busy to spend time with the Lord. We need to be an example to those who have been entrusted to our care (1 Peter 5:1-4)
- As parents, how we live our life will have a greater impact on our children's lives than what we say. If we want our children to grow up loving the Lord we too must be in love with the Lord
- As pastors and leaders, we need to pour our lives into our key leaders and mentor them so that they have the right heart to also train up others for ministry. (2 Timothy 2:1-2) What is in the hearts of the key leaders of our church will influence the culture and atmosphere of our church. Mentoring others matters and is a key to seeing churches growing healthy.

4) Some Biblical things to consider regarding keeping our love for Jesus and for others strong

- Always making our relationship with Jesus our highest priority in life (Psalm 63:1-5)
- The importance of continually renewing our mind with the Word of God (Rom 12:2) (Joshua 1:8)
- The absolute importance of CONTINUALLY forgiving others (Mark 11:25)
- We cannot say that we love and know God if we don't love others (1 John 4:7-8) (1 John 3:14-15)
- Love is also practical (Acts 4:32-35) (1 John 3:16-19) and others focussed (Philippians 2:3-4)
- Love means that we are also prepared to be inconvenienced (Mark 6:30-34)
- We need to learn to love unconditionally – When we choose to love others the feelings follow
- Our love for other believers is what makes the world know that we are Christ's disciples
- We need to always do all things as to the Lord and then we will not become discouraged when we do not feel appreciated by others (Colossians 3:17) (Colossians 3:23-24)

CHURCH OF HOPE EVANGELISM AND MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE BY EMAIL AND WEBSITE: **STUDY GUIDE: WEEK FOUR**

TOPIC FOUR: THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A CLEAR GOD GIVEN VISION AND BEING CONTINUALLY FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION TO WEEK FOUR:

Over the past three weeks we have looked at the importance of having a lifestyle of prayer (week 1), building our life on the Word of God (week 2) and last week the importance of all that we do in life and ministry being undergirded by love (week three). This week's teaching will focus on two very important aspects of our life and ministry that will help us to live fruitful lives in the times that we are now living in. **(2 Timothy 3:1-5)**

Like never before there is a great urgency to equip and empower all Christians to be strong in their walk with the Lord and to become soul winners. The gospel is good news and there are many people that need to be reached with the gospel. The two areas that will be covered in this week's study guide are keys to helping us to remain FOCUSED and EMPOWERED in our walk with the Lord. For this week's topic the following teachings can also be read: **i)** Every great Christian leader has a clear God given vision for their life and Church, **ii)** An overview of what is important for all church leaders, **iii)** The importance of setting goals, and **iv)** Being continually filled with the Holy Spirit. These teachings come from the Pastors Workshop Guidelines and teachings manual that can be downloaded from the following website page: www.coh.org.au/downloads
We will begin by looking at why having a clear God given vision for our life and church is so important, as well as some things to consider in relation to knowing God's will and plan for our life so that His destiny and plan for our lives and churches comes to pass.

- 1) HAVING A CLEAR GOD GIVEN VISION FOR OUR OWN LIFE HELPS US TO STAY FOCUSED IN OUR WALK WITH THE LORD.** The enemy will continually try and distract and discourage us from following God's plan for our life. Having a clear God given vision for our life is crucial when we are going through the storms of life. With a clear vision for our life and churches, we get up each day with a clear focus and purpose. Without a clear God given vision for our lives, people can make wrong choices in life and live undisciplined lives. **(Proverbs 29:18)** Each day once gone can never be regained.
- 2) HAVING A CLEAR GOD GIVEN VISION FOR OUR CHURCH WHICH THOSE IN OUR CHURCH CAN READ AND PARTNER WITH.** As leaders of churches, we need to spend time with the Lord to seek His strategy for our churches in reaching our communities with the gospel. Having a clear written down vision for our churches helps to attract people to be a part of the church's mission. Leaders of successful and active churches have the ability to clearly communicate the vision of the church to those who attend and to encourage people to become CONNECTED TO THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH. When God puts a vision on a leader's heart, it is easy to communicate that vision to others. God's work done in His way will bear much fruit. This is why seeking the Lord for His vision and direction for our churches is crucial. "Unless the LORD builds the house, They labour in vain who build it; ..." (Psalm 127:1) The LORD said to the prophet Habakkuk, "Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry." **(Habakkuk 2:2-3)**
- 3) AS A CHURCH WE NEED TO HAVE A CLEAR VISION FOR REACHING THE LOST IN OUR COMMUNITY (Mark 16:15), FOR MAKING MATURE DISCIPLES (Matthew 28:19-20), FOR TRAINING AND RAISING UP LEADERS WHO CAN TEACH OTHERS ALSO (2 Timothy 2:2) AND FOR HELPING TO ENCOURAGE ALL CHRISTIANS TO FLOW IN THEIR MINISTRY GIFTS AND CALLINGS (Ephesians 4:11-16)** The role of the five-fold ministry is to help equip and to edify all believers to be fruitful in their walk with the Lord and to use their gifts to help see God's Kingdom advanced here on earth. Every believer has a unique ministry. **(Ephesians 2:10)** Having a clear vision for the above areas of church ministry enables us to **i)** Preach relevant sermons and messages, **ii)** To set up small groups for leadership development and to meet the pastoral needs of those in our church, **iii)** To set up ministry initiatives to reach out to the community with the gospel and **iv)** To establish ministries for the children and youth in our church **(Proverbs 22:6)**

- 4) **WE MUST PRAYERFULLY MAKE PLANS TO SEE THE VISION COME TO PASS (Proverbs 16:3) (Proverbs 3:5-6) MAKING PLANS AND SETTING GOALS HELPS TO SEE THE VISION COME TO PASS IN GOD’S TIMING**
 Making plans and setting goals helps us to achieve more each day and to be fruitful in our life. Making plans and setting goals helps us to see God’s vision and purpose for our life and church unfolding and coming to pass. **In the book of Proverbs we read, “The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty.” (Proverbs 21:5)**
- 5) **THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF GOD’S WILL FOR OUR LIFE IN EACH SEASON OF OUR LIFE**. Maintaining an intimate walk with the Lord is crucial in knowing the will of God for our life and in seeing God’s plan for our life unfolding. King David wrote, **“*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD and He delights in his way.*”(Psalm 37:23)** The Apostle Paul wrote, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” (Ephesians 5:15-17)
KNOWING THE WILL OF GOD FOR OUR LIFE IS CRUCIAL FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS;
- i. God’s ways are higher than our ways.
 - ii. Fruitfulness comes from following God’s plan for our life (There are different seasons in our life and ministry)
 - iii. We will not waste our time in doing unproductive activities and we will delegate tasks that others should do
 - iv. We are most anointed when we flow in our gifts and callings
 - v. We see God opening up doors that no man can close and ministry is done without striving
 - vi. Provision and favour come from being in the centre of God’s will for our life. God’s will, God’s bill
 - vii. We will be the greatest blessing to the wider Body of Christ as we remain positioned where God has placed us in the Body of Christ (We all need one another and our God given destiny will always be worked out in relationship with others who God connects us with for His plan and purpose for our lives), and
 - viii. We will ultimately be rewarded for how faithfully we have done what God has called us to do for Him (Isaiah 55:8-9) (John 15:16, Isaiah 1:19) (Romans 12:4-8) (1 Peter 4:11) (Matthew 16:27) (1 Corinthians 3:13-15)
- 6) **THE IMPORTANCE OF JOURNALING WHEN GOD SPEAKS TO US**. To see God’s vision and plan for our lives and churches coming to pass, we need to continually seek the Lord for His ongoing directions and counsel (Jeremiah 23:18) so that we can gain His wisdom (James 1:5) and strategies to see the vision becoming a reality. It is so important that when God speaks to us that we journal what He speaks to us so that we do not forget what He has spoken to us. When written down, we can remind ourselves of what God has spoken to and promised us, particularly when we are going through the more challenging times of life.
- 7) **THE IMPORTANCE OF ENCOURAGING ALL THOSE IN OUR CHURCHES TO KNOW GOD’S WILL AND PLAN FOR THEIR LIFE AND TO LIVE WITH ETERNITY IN MIND – True joy and purpose for a believer only comes from them knowing Christ intimately and from pursuing God’s plan for their life. (John 10:10) (Matthew 25:14-23) AS A TEAM OUR CHURCHES CAN MAKE A GREAT IMPACT IN OUR COMMUNITIES FOR CHRIST** As each believer uses their gifts we see growth in the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:16) and communities being changed by the love of Christ as believers work together to serve the community.
- 8) **A GOD GIVEN VISION HELPS OUR LIVES AND CHURCHES TO MAKE A GREAT DIFFERENCE IN THIS WORLD**
In pursuing God’s vision and plan for our life and churches, we will see God do incredible things in and through our lives and churches. Every God given idea and plan has the potential to transform the lives of many. We must not limit what God wants to do in and through our lives and churches. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.” (Ephesians 3:20) The LORD said to the Prophet Jeremiah in prison, **“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” (Jeremiah 33:3)**

We will finish this week’s study by secondly emphasising the importance of being continually filled with the Holy Spirit. As we give out to others, we ourselves need to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul wrote, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,” (Ephesians 5:18) In the book of Jude we read, **“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,” (Jude 20) The Disciples were Baptised in the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) but after persecution (Acts 4:14-21) following the healing of a lame man (Acts Chapter 3) they prayed for boldness and were again filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:29-31)**
 The Apostle Paul prayed for the Holy Spirit’s power to fill every believer. (Ephesians 3:14-21)

CHURCH OF HOPE EVANGELISM AND MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE BY EMAIL AND WEBSITE: **STUDY GUIDE: WEEK FIVE**

TOPIC FIVE: THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING INTIMACY WITH THE LORD AND GOD'S HEART FOR THE LOST

INTRODUCTION TO WEEK FIVE:

This week we will be focusing on two areas in our studies, 1) the importance of maintaining an intimate walk with the Lord and 2) God's heart to reach lost souls. These two areas of study go hand in hand because having an intimate walk with the Lord is the key to having God's heart for the lost. We are now living in a time when there are multitudes in the valley of decision (**Joel 3:14**) that need to turn to Christ. How we need revival in our own lives and churches so that we can see those living in our cities and nations turning to Christ on mass! (Other teachings for week five are in the TEACHINGS for weeks 1 to 5 manual that can be downloaded from the following page: www.coh.org.au/ministry_course)

We will begin by looking at a passage of Scripture in 2 Chronicles. The LORD said to King Solomon,

"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Given the lawless and perilous times that we are now living in, (**2 Timothy 3:1-5**) how important it is that we are intimate in our walk with the Lord and that we delight in spending time in His presence. Jesus Himself said in relation to those times just prior to His return, **"And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved." (Matthew 24:10-13)**

Jesus also said in the Parable of the Persistent Widow, "Hear what the unjust judge said, "And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. ***Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8)*** Our intimacy with the Lord and hunger for the Word (bible meditation) is a key to seeing revival in our hearts. (**Psalm 119:36-40**) King David in a prayer of repentance wrote, ***"Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit."*** (Psalm 51:10-12)

In the midst of all our church ministry, programs and activities, we must never lose our passion to spend time with the Lord and to know Him intimately. We only get to know anyone by spending time with them. The Apostle Paul wrote, ***"that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:17-19)***

Jesus rebuked the church at Ephesus, though it was full of good works and could not bear those who were evil, because they had left their first love for Him. (**Revelation 2:1-4**) **Jesus said to this church "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place- unless you repent." (Revelation 2:5)** A congregation may continue to exist without being a light in the darkness. How as a church we need to seek God's presence in all of our meetings, that we are truly the salt of the earth and the light of the world. (**Matthew 5:13-16**) Churches that are filled with worshipping believers who passionately love the Lord will make a great impact in their communities for Christ. So as leaders we need to lead by example and have a great passion to know Christ in an intimate way ourselves. We need to be like the Apostle Paul who was a lover of God and not a user of God. He wrote in the book of Philippians, ***"But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ." (Philippians 3:7-8)*** We will now look at a few things to consider in relation to the importance of maintaining an ONGOING intimate relationship with the Lord before finishing with some brief thoughts on God's heart for the lost as part of our Evangelism teachings.

- 1) INTIMACY WITH THE LORD HELPS US TO BE NOT AFFECTED BY THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD** (As we turn our eyes upon Jesus the things of this world grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and Grace) (Psalm 37:4) (Colossians 3:1-4) (Matthew 6:19-21 – Especially verse 21) (James 4:1-10) (1 John 2:15-17)
- 2) The importance of MAKING time to spend with the Lord** (Psalm 63:1-5) (Psalm 37:7) (Jude 21) (Psalm 27:8)
- 3) The importance of having a place where you can meet with God alone.** (Matthew 6:6) **Revelation comes in isolation as you seek the face of God.** (Jeremiah 23:18 & 22) **The enemy will continually try and bring distractions into our life to stop us from being still before the Lord.** (Psalm 46:10)

- 4) **The importance of INVOLVING the LORD in all that we do in life** (Proverbs 3:5-6) (Psalm 37:3-5) – **God’s ways are far Higher than our ways.** (Isaiah 55:8-9) (Jeremiah 33:3) (Ephesians 3:20) **God’s plans for our life and churches unfold progressively over time.** (Psalm 37:23) Staying close to the Lord helps us to stay on the narrow path that God has planned for our life, the “... good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10) and to remain in the centre of His will for our life and churches. The Apostle Paul wrote, “**See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.**” (*Ephesians 5:15-17*) **Being CONTINUALLY in the centre of God’s will for our life is the key to seeing much fruit in our life. (John 15:16) We need God’s strategies for our lives and churches. Amen**
- 5) **Our Greatest priority needs to be Jesus ministering to us.** (Luke 10:38-42) Spending time in the Word of God and in His presence and being continually guided by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13) helps us to remain strong and focussed in our walk with the Lord. In the book of Isaiah we read, “**He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.** (*Isaiah 40:29-31*)
- 6) **Spending time in God’s presence helps us to be more sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and to knowing and heeding the voice of God, which is a key to experiencing God’s blessings in our life.** (Deuteronomy 28:2-8) Being sensitive to the promptings and guidance of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26) helps us to make good choices in line with God’s will for our life and to avoid unnecessary pain. We see the consequences of disregarding the cautioning of the Holy Spirit in Acts Chapter 27 where Paul perceived that the ship would come to disaster if they were to sail. (Acts 27:10) This did indeed happen shortly after they chose to set sail. (Acts 27:41) In this account we see that the majority can at times be wrong (Acts 27:12) and even circumstances may appear right to pursue a course of action (Acts 27:13) but whenever we go against the cautioning of the Holy Spirit there will invariably always be repercussions.
- 7) **As leaders our love for and dependence on the LORD is crucial. We are in a very real Spiritual Contest. (John 10:10) (2 Timothy 3:12) (1 Peter 5:8-9) (John 16:33)** Sometimes we may have to stand alone in times of trials, when pioneering new things or when experiencing persecution for our faith. The enemy will always try to smite the shepherd to scatter the sheep. As leaders we need to “**be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.**” (*Ephesians 6:10*) When the people were speaking of stoning David at Ziklag after the Amalekites had invaded and carried away all of their family members, David strengthened himself in the LORD his God. (1 Samuel 30:6) After overcoming this trial, David was shortly after appointed King of Judah (2 Samuel 2:4) before he went on to become King over all of Israel (2 Samuel 5:1-3)
- 8) **We must not allow pride, wrong and critical attitudes or unforgiveness to affect our intimacy with the Lord.** We must be quick to deal with wrong attitudes and offences. (1 John 1:9) (Mark 11:25) (James 4:6)
- 9) **Intimacy with the LORD is also a key to:**
- i) God’s perfect love flowing through our lives to minister to others (Romans 5:5) (2 Timothy 1:7) (1 John 4:18)
 - ii) Maintaining our joy. (Psalm 16:11) The joy of the LORD is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10)
 - iii) Maintaining God’s peace in our hearts and lives (Isaiah 26:3-4) (Philippians 4:6-7)
 - iv) Avoiding burnout as we continually minister in the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:3-5) (1 Peter 4:11)
 - v) Preaching a word in season to those that we minister to (Proverbs 15:23), vi) Believing for revival (Luke 1:37)
 - vii) To having a boldness in sharing our faith with others (Acts 4:13) and vii) Keeping a right heart (Proverbs 4:23)
- 10) **WORSHIP IS A KEY TO HAVING INTIMACY WITH GOD. God is raising up worshippers in this hour who have a great desire to worship Him in spirit and truth. (John 4:23-24) Heart Felt Worship is a key to seeing revival in our churches and cities and nations. (Psalm 22:3). It is so important that we never lose our passion to worship the LORD. Worship connects our heart with God’s heart of compassion and helps to create an atmosphere in our meetings in which the Holy Spirit can move. Worship helps to open up people’s hearts to receive the gospel. WORSHIP HELPS TO GIVE US GOD’S HEART FOR LOST SOULS**

GOD’S GREAT LOVE FOR THE LOST (John 3:16) - The urgency to evangelise – The value of every soul (Luke 15:1-7) Evangelism is more caught than taught. Church leaders need to seek God’s heart for the lost. (**Matthew 9:35-38**) The role of the five fold ministry is to equip the saints for the work of ministry. (**Ephesians 4:11-12**) **The importance of equipping and encouraging all Christians to become soul winners: THE HARVEST IS RIPE NOW (John 4:35)**

CHURCH OF HOPE EVANGELISM AND MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE BY EMAIL AND WEBSITE: *STUDY GUIDE: WEEKS SIX AND SEVEN*

TOPIC SIX: THE URGENCY TO EVANGELISE AND GOD'S HEART FOR EVANGELISM

INTRODUCTION TO WEEKS SIX AND SEVEN:

The next two weeks we will be focusing on the important topic of evangelism and the urgency to reach out to the lost now. For topic number six we have a four-page study guide which covers the next two weeks. Jesus Himself emphasised the urgency to reach out to the lost and to make the message of the gospel known to all people. Jesus said, "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" (John 4:35)

"And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15)

"And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen" (Mark 16:20)

With the world now in great turmoil we now have a great opportunity to share the hope that we have in Christ with the unsaved in our community (*the glorious message of the gospel*). The Apostle Paul wrote, "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you – unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures," (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

In this passage of Scripture, we see the four basic facts of the gospel which we need to preach and share with others: 1) Christ was delivered by God the Father to the punishment of death on account of our sins, 2) Christ was buried, 3) God raised Him from the dead on the third day, and 4) Righteousness is received from God through believing these facts

It is as we preach the gospel, (the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ), that the Holy Spirit moves upon people's hearts to convict them of their need to come to Christ (God's saving Grace) so that they can receive Christ as their Lord and Saviour (Romans 1:16) FOLLOWING IS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

"Jesus Christ bled and died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, but death could not hold Him down. Three days later He arose from the grave triumphantly and is now back in Heaven. He died that we may live forever. Because He lives, we can all have a hope and a future. Because He conquered the grave, we can be free indeed, we can live a life that is full of purpose and meaning and we can have eternal life. God has a great love for you. You matter to God. Today Jesus is knocking at the door of your heart. Today you can turn from your sins and open your heart to Him and receive the gift of eternal life." (SINNERS PRAYER)

With such a harvest of lost souls needing to be brought into God's Kingdom at this time, how important it is that we equip all believers to be able to share the gospel and become soul winners. GOSPEL TRACTS ARE A GREAT TOOL FOR ALL CHRISTIANS TO USE TO COMMUNICATE THE GOSPEL MESSAGE TO UNBELIEVERS.

In the book of Proverbs we read, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who wins souls is wise." (Proverbs 11:30)

***The role of the five-fold ministry is for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.* (Ephesians 4:11-12)**

Given the late hour that we are now living in when we can see the imminent rapture of all true believers there is no better time than NOW to equip and mobilise as many Christians as possible to be active in sharing their faith with others.

This four-page study guide is to be read in conjunction with six other teachings in the TEACHINGS for Weeks 6 to 11 manual which can be downloaded from the following page: www.coh.org.au/ministry_course This study guide also has several discussion points which can be studied in a small group type setting. i.e. Those involved in a Bible Class could break up into smaller study groups for several of the discussion points.

Throughout this study guide references are made to the appropriate attached readings to look at and to study in relation to each of the discussion points. There are also many scripture references that relate to each of the discussion points.

AGAIN, NOW IS THE TIME TO BRING IN THE HARVEST OF LOST SOULS. The coming of the Lord is at hand.

We need to make the most of every God given opportunity to reach the lost with the gospel message. We will begin this study for the next two weeks by looking at “Attachment one – the First Two Foundations of our Faith” (Repentance from dead works and of faith toward God per Hebrews 6:1).

Jesus Himself preached repentance and faith. Without true repentance there is no real faith. Jesus Himself clearly emphasized this in Luke 13:1-5. In Luke 13:5 we read the words of Jesus, “I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” In the gospel of Mark we read, “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel.”” **Attachment one clearly outlines what True Repentance is.** In short TRUE REPENTANCE has two compulsory components; FIRSTLY, A recognition of our sins (confessing our sins) and SECONDLY, A turning from our sins to live for God. (This involves a turning from sin and dead works, a turning to God, and an intention to serve Him and to obey His commands.) I will now begin going through the discussion points for topic number six: The urgency to evangelise and God’s heart for Evangelism.

DISCUSSION POINTS (AND TEACHINGS) FOR TOPIC SIX THE URGENCY TO EVANGELISE AND GOD’S HEART FOR EVANGELISM

1) The importance of always preaching the uncompromised pure gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) (Romans 1:16-17) **REFER TO ATTACHMENT TWO – THE SIMPLE GOSPEL MESSAGE (Key Teaching)**

- **There is only one Gospel which we must preach** (Galatians 1:6-9)
- **Only through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ can anyone be saved.** (Acts 3:19) (Acts 20:21)
- **Only Jesus Christ can take away our sins** (John 1:29) (Isaiah 43:25) **that separate us from a Holy God and save us.** (Acts 4:12) (John 10:9) (John 3:16)
- **When we come to Christ in repentance and faith all of our sins are washed away by the Blood of Jesus** (1 Corinthians 6:11) (Ephesians 1:7) (Isaiah 1:18) **and we receive the gift of eternal life.** (John 3:15)
- **It is only through entering into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that a person can be forgiven of their sins and get to heaven. There is only one way to be reconciled to God and that is through Jesus Christ.** (1 Timothy 2:5-6) (John 14:6)
- **Jesus Himself made it clear that a person must be born again (have a spiritual birth from above) if they are to enter the kingdom of God** (John 3:3-7) **and receive the free gift of eternal life.** (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- **ALL people need to make a personal response to the gospel message to be saved.** (John 1:12) **(REFER TO ATTACHMENT ONE AGAIN)**
- **When we enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ we are justified and declared righteous in God’s sight** (Romans 3:24) (Romans 3:28), **and we are “...holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight –”** (Colossians 1:22)
- **We must never deviate away from the TRUE Gospel when sharing our faith.**
- **God’s desire is that all would be saved.** (2 Peter 3:9)
- **He who the Son sets free is free indeed.** (John 8:36) **There is power in the gospel to liberate lives. God is able to resurrect broken lives.** (Psalm 103:2-5)

2) We need to have a clear understanding of the pure gospel message and be able to communicate it in a clear and simple way to all people, so that all can understand the message, irrespective of their educational level. As pastors and leaders, it is also important that we teach other Christians to have a clear understanding of the simple gospel message as well so that they can share their faith with others. **WE NEED TO BE PREPARED TO PREACH THE GOSPEL IN SEASON AND OUT OF SEASON – That we are always ready to share our faith with others.** (1 Peter 3:15) (2 Timothy 4:1-5) **REFER TO ATTACHMENT TWO FOR A CLEAR AND THOROUGH STUDY ON THE SIMPLE GOSPEL MESSAGE which can be used to teach others.**

3) We need as pastors and leaders to be actively encouraging, EQUIPPING and mobilising all Christians to share their faith. (Ephesians 4:11-12) For many the thought of evangelism puts apprehension in their hearts. So, in many ways we need to help them to develop a new mindset by saying that Evangelism is really “just sharing good news (the gospel) with new friends”

4) THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING SOME PRACTICAL KEYS TO HELP US TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN WITNESING TO OTHERS. There are many practical keys that can help us to share our faith more easily and effectively with others. As Christians the more prepared we are to share our faith and to lead others to Christ, the more we will be able to populate heaven and plunder hell. As every person is so precious to God, our focus on becoming good at sharing our faith should be a major priority in our life. **(Proverbs 11:30) (2 Timothy 2:15) Refer to ATTACHMENT THREE – “Some keys to being effective in witnessing to and preaching to others” This teaching has many practical keys that can help Christians to become more effective and confident in witnessing to others. In this four page teaching we cover; i) The absolute importance of prayer, ii) Some things to consider when approaching people (including some good ice breakers), iii) Some keys to overcoming fear, iv) God’s desire that all would be saved, and v) Some other practical considerations that can help us to share our faith more effectively**
THIS TEACHING INCLUDES MANY POINTS THAT WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN COVERED IN THIS STUDY GUIDE OUTLINE – for this reason this teaching is very important to read.

SOME FURTHER BRIEF DISCUSSION POINTS IN RELATION TO LEADING OTHERS TO CHRIST

- 5) All that we do must be motivated by love. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3) We need to have a genuine love for those we are sharing our faith with and have an interest in their life.**
- 6) The importance of being led by the Holy Spirit in all that we do. (John 16:13) The Lord will give us divine appointments with people who are open and receptive to the gospel message**
- 7) How we live our life is important. (Matthew 5:13-16) We must not discredit our witness by the way that we live our life. We will never be perfect but if we allow the Lord to change us, we will shine brightly for Him. For many people we are the only bible that they will ever read. As Christians we have the potential through the Holy Spirit to make a great difference in the lives of those around us. Our witness is far more effective if our life reflects the message that we are preaching.**
- 8) The importance of seeking God for His outreach strategies for our church. His ways are far higher than our ways. (Isaiah 55:8-9) Obedience to His ways is a key to having successful outreaches.**
- 9) Planning helps to make things happen – We must purposely make plans as a church to reach out into the community on a regular basis (Proverbs 21:5) It is also importance that we schedule in regular training sessions to help equip believers to become soul winners. Have monthly or Bi-monthly Evangelism training workshops helps to equip Christians to share their faith and to be encouraged.**
- 10) The importance of consistency and commitment – As we continually reach out into our community and share the gospel message, we will eventually see a harvest of souls. (Galatians 6:9) Being consistent in our outreaches is a key to our churches making a difference in our community. Having regular weekly or fortnightly outreaches in the same place helps to build bridges into the community so that we can help people to progressively come to faith.**
- 11) The importance of preaching the Word of God – Memorising Scriptures helps us to share the word of God in season and out of season. (2 Timothy 4:2) “...faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. (Romans 10:17) See also Hebrews 4:12 and Isaiah 55:11**
- 12) We must never forget the reality of their being a heaven to gain and a hell to shun and that all people will spend eternity in one of these two places – The value of every single person to God (Luke 15:3-7) As Christians we need to always live our lives with eternity in mind (Proverbs 24:11)**

- 13) The importance of being continually filled with the Holy Spirit.** Being baptised in the Holy Spirit is a key to being empowered to witness to and preach to others. It is as we allow the Holy Spirit to minister through us that people are convicted of their sins and need to come to Christ. We need to minister the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit **(1 Corinthians 2:4-5) (1 Peter 4:11)**
REFER TO ATTACHMENT FOUR – RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT
- 14) Worship and Evangelism go hand in hand.** God inhabits the praises of His people **(Psalm 22:3)** Worship changes the atmosphere and ushers in God’s tangible presence which makes people open to receiving gospel tracts and to responding to the gospel message and experiencing miracles. **(Luke 5:17)**
- 15) Worship helps us to touch God’s heart for lost souls.** As a church creating an atmosphere of praise and worship in our meetings is crucial. A church full of worshipping Christians will make a great impact in their community. Worship connects our heart to God’s heart of compassion. **(Psalm 37:4) (Luke 4:18)**
- 16) The importance of being a 24/7 Christian** – God will often give us opportunities to share our faith, even sometimes when it is inconvenient. We need to be always open to being used of the Lord to help people come to Christ, not just when it suits us. I have met people that were about to take their life
- 17) As pastors and leaders, we need to lead by example. (1 Timothy 4:12)** As Pastors we need to also have an evangelist’s heart. As Evangelists we also need to have a pastor’s heart. That we see what God can do in a person’s life when they come to Christ (saved for a purpose). We must never see a person’s commitment to Christ as just another notch in our evangelistic belt. A major pastor in Melbourne was challenged by the Lord to have a greater focus on evangelism. In response to this he began sharing personally in a greater way and through his new passion for winning souls the church grew rapidly as his heart for evangelism was caught by others in his church. Evangelism is more caught than taught.
- 18) THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUALLY GROWING IN OUR OWN WALK WITH THE LORD AND SPENDING QUALITY TIME WITH THE LORD.** The more we are on the front-line winning souls to Christ the greater the spiritual warfare we will also encounter. **(2 Timothy 3:12)** We need to be strong in our own walk with the Lord to finish the race. **(1 Corinthians 9:27) (Ephesians 6:10) (2 Timothy 4:7-8)**
- 19) The more REAL Jesus is in our own life the easier it is to spontaneously share our faith with others.** Our own love and passion for the Lord will make it easier to share our faith with others. If our heart is full of a love for God this will be reflected in the way that we share our faith
- 20) We need to pray for and believe for miracles of healings in our outreaches and as we reach out to others.** (Mark 16:15-18) **Miracles help to lead people to Christ (REFER TO ATTACHMENT FIVE)**
- 21) Having a continual abiding (intimate) relationship with Christ gives us a great love for people.** This is a great key to overcoming any fears about sharing our faith with others **(2 Timothy 1:7) (1 John 4:18)**
- 22) Having outreach teams helps to empower more timid Christians to share their faith with others as they receive support and encouragement from other team members.** MAINTAINING UNITY is a key to having effective outreach teams. **(Psalm 133) (John 13:34-35)** Having a time of prayer and worship together prior to an outreach helps to create unity in a team. As a team we can achieve much
- 23) There are many things that can make our outreaches more effective such as serving people with tea and coffee and meeting first the practical needs of those that we are reaching out to**
- 24) The IMPORTANCE OF MAKING DISCIPLES AND NOT JUST CONVERTS. (Matthew 28:19-20)** People are saved for a purpose (Ephesians 2:10) When a person comes to Christ it is just the beginning of their walk with the Lord. As pastors we need to help them to grow in their faith, **and**
- 25) Choosing to live a consecrated life for the Lord. (John 12:24) (Luke 9:23-24)** This is a great key to living for the cause of Christ and becoming an effective soul winner (evangelist). Like Isaiah we need to say continually, “Here am I! Send me.” REFER ATTACHMENT SIX – John Harper (his heart for the lost)

CHURCH OF HOPE EVANGELISM AND MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE BY EMAIL AND WEBSITE: *STUDY GUIDE: WEEK EIGHT*

TOPIC SEVEN: THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING DISCIPLES (INTRODUCTION)

INTRODUCTION TO WEEK EIGHT:

In this week's study we will be looking at the importance of making disciples. Every believer has been saved for a God given purpose and destiny. The Apostle Paul wrote, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (**Ephesians 2:10**)

For this reason, it is so important to help all new believers to be connected to the life of a healthy bible-based church (**Psalm 92:13-15**) where they can be encouraged to grow in their walk with the Lord and to fulfil their God given destiny. (**Hebrews 10:23-25**)

When a believer comes to Christ it is just the beginning of their walk with the Lord. Jesus Himself also emphasised the importance of not just making converts but disciples when He shared about the church's "Great Commission." Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen" (**Matthew 28:19-20**)

As pastors our heart must be both to see people coming to Christ and to see them also walking in victory and leading fruitful lives as they fulfil God's plan and purpose for their life. For this reason, making disciples must be an important part of every church's vision.

The role of the five-fold ministry is to help equip all Christians for the work of the ministry and for the edifying and building up of the Body of Christ so that all Christians walk in victory and lead fruitful lives. The Apostle Paul wrote, "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the **EQUIPPING** of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the **knowledge of the Son of God.**" "that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, **but, speaking the truth in love**, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-Christ" (**Ephesians 4:12-15**)

It is when we see all Christians working together in love and unity and flowing in their God given gifts and callings, (**Romans 12:3-8**) (**1 Corinthians 12:4-11**) that we see our churches making a great difference in our communities and that we see the Kingdom of God growing here on earth. The Apostle Paul wrote, "from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself IN LOVE." (**Ephesians 4:16**)

As every Christian is in a constant spiritual warfare, making disciples of all believers is crucial. Jesus Himself said in His explanation of the Parable of the Sower, "But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles."

"Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful."

"But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." (**Matthew 13:20-23**)

In this passage of Scripture, we see Jesus emphasising the fact that when new believers are not securely established in their faith, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, they quickly stumble and fall. We see also in this passage of Scripture Jesus emphasizing the fact that many believers never bear much fruit in their lives because of the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choking the word in their hearts and lives. As pastors and leaders, we need to be committed to developing good ground disciples who will bear much fruit.

We are also living in those perilous times that the Apostle Paul wrote about (2 Timothy 3:1-5) and which Jesus Himself alluded to.

Jesus said in relation to the times just prior to His return, “And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

“And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” (Matthew 24:10-13)

The Apostle Peter also referred to the devil’s constant desire to destroy the lives and faith of all believers. The Apostle Peter wrote, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” (1 Peter 5:8-9)

In the book of Acts we see some great keys that helped people to grow in their walk with the Lord and in seeing the early church making such a great difference in the world. In chapter two of the book of Acts we see a vital church growing.

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:42-47)

HERE WE SEE A NUMBER OF GREAT KEYS THAT WE CAN LEARN THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE SUCCESS OF THE EARLY CHURCH AS BELIEVERS WERE DAILY ADDED TO THE CHURCH. In this passage of Scripture, we see:

- That the ministry of the Word of God (the apostles’ doctrine) was greatly emphasised
- Having fellowship with other believers on a regular basis was the normal thing
- Prayer was greatly emphasised in all meetings
- The taking of the Lord’s supper was done on a regular basis to remember what Christ had done at Calvary
- There was a genuine loving Christian community which helped to see new believers being added to the church daily,
- The believers had a great passion to praise the Lord (They had a genuine love for the Lord)
- House group fellowships were also a big part of the early church in addition to the daily temple worship, and
- There was a great spiritual unity as they continued meeting together daily with ONE ACCORD in the temple

The Apostle Paul also clearly emphasised the importance of making disciples when he wrote to the young pastor Timothy, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2)

The Word of God is a great key to seeing the lives of Christians being transformed and to people coming to faith. Jesus Himself said, “If you abide in My word you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32)

The Apostle Paul wrote, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Romans 12:2)

In a world full of ungodly influences, continually meditating on the Word of God (Joshua 1:8) to renew our mind with God’s ways of thinking and living is crucial if we are to fully embrace all that God has planned for our life. Meditating on and speaking out God’s promises in His Word also helps to build up our faith.

The Apostle Paul also wrote, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” (Romans 10:17)

In the book of Hebrews we read, “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

Given the power of God's word to change lives, the following things are important to consider in relation to making disciples;

- Encouraging all believers to meditate on and to study the Word of God themselves **(2 Timothy 3:16-17)**
- Giving all Christians the opportunity of being part of a mid-week small group bible study, and
- The importance of pastors preaching and teaching the Word of God in all of their sermons. **(2 Timothy 4:1-2)**

I WILL NOW LOOK AT A NUMBER OF THINGS TO CONSIDER IN RELATION TO MAKING MATURE DISCIPLES

- 1) The importance of love and encouragement in the discipleship process. (1 Thessalonians 2:5-8)** It is so important that we have a genuine love for those that we are mentoring and ministering to. We all need to be encouraged in our walk with the Lord. Encouragement helps people to get through the tests and trials of life. All who live for the Lord will invariably experience persecution and rejection at times for their faith. **(John 16:33) (John 15:19-20) (2 Timothy 3:12)** It is our ongoing encouragement and support that will be most appreciated by those that we are mentoring when they are going through trials. (Being there for them)
- 2) Making disciples is a longer-term commitment.** Even Jesus took 3 years to train up His twelve disciples. We need to be committed to hanging in with those that we are discipling. We must not give up easily on people
- 3) The importance of God's Word becoming incarnate in all believers. (Galatians 4:19)** Being fed the Word of God is a key to seeing believers growing in Christ likeness **(Romans 8:28-29)** The Word of God has power to change and transform lives. Meditating on the Word of God helps us to grow strong in our faith. **(Joshua 1:8)**
- 4) A key to helping Christians to become mature disciples is encouraging them to develop a love for God's presence.** In His presence is fullness of joy. **(Psalm 16:11)** Worship is a great key to helping people to develop an intimate love for the Lord and to knowing God's will for their life. **(Psalm 37:4)** King David was a worshipper and also a man after God's own heart. **(Acts 13:22)** Jesus rebuked the church at Ephesus because they had left their first love for Him. **(Revelation 2:1-5)** **The Apostle Paul wrote,**
"that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." **(Ephesians 3:17-19)**
Those who love the Lord will naturally want to obey His word. (John 14:23) We want to encourage people to be always relational and not religious in their walk with the Lord. To simply love the Lord and to love others (Mark 12:30-31)
- 5) The importance of Christians being connected in small groups.** Particularly in large churches the small groups are where people have their pastoral needs met. Small Groups provide a means for people to be accountable to other believers which is a great key to maintaining a strong spiritual walk **(Hebrews 3:12-14)**
- 6) The importance of training up leaders. (2 Timothy 2:2)** For a church to have a greater impact in the community it is important to train up leaders who can run a range of ministries and small groups. We must now also be investing in the lives of the next generation of young leaders and Christians so that our faith will be passed on to the next generation
- 7) The importance of mentoring others.** All believers need to be encouraged in their walk with the Lord. Mentoring is spending quality time with other less mature believers to help them to become more established in their walk with the Lord and to grow in their faith. It is great for all pastors to invest their lives in other future leaders by mentoring them. **(Acts 16:1-5)** This is a key to seeing growing healthy churches.
- 8) The importance of giving guidance to others but allowing the Lord to do the work of change in their lives**
- 9) The importance of having Sunday School classes for children and youth groups for teenagers as part of our church ministries.** If children are taught the Word of God at an early age in a manner which is understandable to them, they will not depart from the ways of the Lord as they grow up **(Proverbs 22:6)**

- 10) The importance of encouraging all Christians to develop their own personal walk with the Lord.** We need as pastors to help all believers over time to develop and grow strong in their faith. That we encourage them to develop an active prayer life (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**) (**Philippians 4:6-7**) and to spend time in the Word of God during the week themselves to build up their faith and knowledge of God. (**Joshua 1:8**)
- We also need to encourage all believers to learn to be led by the Holy Spirit so that they can continually make right choices in life at all times. (**John 14:26**) (**John 16:13**) We must point people to having a dependence on God
- 11) THE IMPORTANCE AS LEADERS AND MENTORS IN MODELLING WHAT IT IS TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.** (**1 Peter 5:1-4**) (**1 Timothy 4:12**) As leaders it is so important that we spend quality time with those that we are mentoring. Jesus Himself modelled to His disciples what it was to live a God glorifying life. (**Mark 1:38-42**) The Apostle Paul emphasised the need for more fathers of the faith. (**1 Corinthians 4:15-16**)
- 12) The importance of creating healthy Christian community in our church meetings in which all Christians can be loved and encouraged to be all that God has planned for their life** (**Acts 4:32-35**) (**Hebrews 10:23-25**)
- 13) The importance of all new believers having a clear understanding of the foundations of their faith.** Monthly New Believers Classes can help all new Christians to have a good start in their walk with the Lord. It is crucial that all new believers have a clear understanding that the moment they give their life to Jesus they are totally forgiven of all of their sins and have been justified and declared righteous in God's sight. (**Ephesians 2:8-9**) (**Philippians 3:9**) (**2 Corinthians 5:21**) (**Romans 3:20-28**)
- On the Church of Hope website DOWNLOADS page: www.coh.org.au/downloads there is a 6-page New Believer's Guide to help new Christians to get started in their Christian Walk and an 86-page New Believers Training Manual to disciple new believers. There are also 28 practical bible based Christian Growth Keys on the following page: www.coh.org.au/Growth_Keys to help get all new believers established in their faith.
- 14) The importance of encouraging all Christians to follow the Ephesians 2:10 plan for their life.** We were all saved for a purpose. A key to experiencing the abundant life that Jesus spoke of, (**John 10:10**) is for believers to follow God's plan for their life. Joy comes from living wholeheartedly for the Lord. (**Matthew 25:14-23**)
- 15) As pastors it is to feed on the Word of God ourselves so that we have a word in season to preach each week to those in our congregations.** As pastors we need to first nourish our own soul in the words of faith and good doctrine (**1 Timothy 4:13-16**) and then teach the people the essentials of the faith. The more that we study the word ourselves the more we will be able to impart into the lives of others. "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master." (**Matthew 10:24**)
- 16) The importance of prayerfully seeking the Lord for His Discipleship strategies for our church.** **Unless the LORD builds the house, they labour in vain who build it...** (**Psalm 127:1**) Every community and every church is different, so we need to seek the Lord for His strategies for both reaching out into our community with the gospel and love of Christ and for how to best disciple those in our church. God's ways are higher than our ways. (**Isaiah 55:8-9**)
- 17) The importance of helping all Christians to identify their spiritual gifts.** A church full of believers that are actively flowing in their gifts and callings will make a great difference in the community. As pastors we need to help encourage all believers to identify their unique gifts and callings and to use them for the expansion of God's Kingdom. Spiritual Gifts workshops help believers to identify their spiritual gifts. The spiritual gifts questionnaire form which forms part of this week's readings will help believers to identify their spiritual gifts.
- 18) Encouraging all believers to mentor at least one other Christian who is younger in their faith** Encouraging all Christians to develop a mindset of helping other younger believers to grow strong in their faith is a key to seeing strong and healthy churches developing. As we mentor others we also grow in our own faith as well.

- 19) **The IMPORTANCE of praying for those who have been entrusted to our care as pastors. (Acts 20:28)** The Apostle Paul prayed much for other believers to grow strong in their walk with the Lord. As a church and as a pastor it is important to pray for those in our church to grow strong in their walk with the Lord. Prayer moves the hand of God and helps to see lives and circumstances being transformed by the love and power of God. "For with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37) In the Epistles we see a number of ways in which we can pray for those in our church. (Colossians 1:9-11) (Ephesians 1:15-23) (Ephesians 3:14-19)
- 20) **The importance of all believers being Baptised in the Holy Spirit to be empowered to witness to others and to fulfil their ministry callings in the power of the Holy Spirit** (Acts 1:8) (1 Thessalonians 1:5)
- 21) **The legacy that we leave when we go to be with the Lord is all the Christians and Ministries that we have helped to raise up through DISCIPLING others.** Making disciples is a key to seeing growing healthy churches.
- 22) **The importance of following up new believers and those who have drifted out of fellowship** Part of being a loving local church is that we follow up with those who have drifted out of fellowship or who are struggling with things in their life. Establishing a follow up team which contacts people who are out of fellowship is one way of showing people that we care for them as a church family. Just a simple text message letting people know that we are thinking about them is a great comfort to those who are going through personal struggles. As we do this people will be encouraged to reconnect again in fellowship with other believers. Consistently following up new believers is also important until they become connected to the life of a healthy local church
- 23) **We must never neglect our ministry at home. Our family needs to be our most important ministry. As parents we have the ability to disciple and to demonstrate what it is to be a Christian to our children every single day.** It is important that we do not neglect this responsibility in the busyness of our ministry activities
- 24) **The importance of ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit and being led by the Holy Spirit in our Bible Study Groups and Home Fellowship meetings.** When our small group meetings have a worship focus and the teachings are anointed and Spirit directed, the meetings will be encouraging and life giving to all those who attend. For this reason, equipping and preparing small group leaders to run meetings in this way is also very important.

The Apostle Peter wrote, "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 4:11)

The Apostle Paul wrote, "And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." (1 Corinthians 2:4-5)

SMALL GROUP MOVEMENTS are now becoming more and more common in many countries where small groups are run in such a way as to also train up and equip the members in the groups to also run small groups themselves. Small groups are great for helping to connect new believers to the life of a church and for increasing the pastoral care side of the church as people have their pastoral needs met in their small groups.

And

- 25) **We will finish by emphasising again the importance of all that we do in ministry and when discipling and mentoring others being undergirded by love.** Continually loving and encouraging those that we are ministering to and discipling is a great key to helping Christians to grow strong in their walk with the Lord. Nurtured people will become strong in their walk with the Lord

The Apostle Peter wrote, "But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." Be hospitable to one another without grumbling." (1 Peter 4:7-9)

To complement this study guide, I have included as part of the readings for this week a teaching on “A good leader mentors others” as well as a Spiritual Gifts Questionnaire Form which can be used to help other Christians to identify their spiritual gifts. Both of these teachings are in the TEACHINGS for Weeks 6 to 11 manual which can be downloaded from the following website page: www.coh.org.au/ministry_course

Some Questions just for Self Evaluation:

- 1) Do most of those in our churches have a strong devotional life in which they regularly pray and read the word?
- 2) Do we have a strong focus on connecting believers into mid week small group fellowships?
- 3) Are those in our church actively encouraged to use their spiritual gifts and to follow God’s plan for their life?
- 4) Would those attending our church for the first time feel welcome and accepted when arriving at our church?
- 5) Do we cater for the children and youth in our church meetings?
- 6) As a pastor am I investing my life in mentoring and training up other future leaders?
- 7) Do I spend enough time in the word to nourish my own soul and do I include enough scriptures in my sermons?

CHURCH OF HOPE EVANGELISM AND MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE BY EMAIL AND WEBSITE: *STUDY GUIDE: WEEK NINE*

TOPIC EIGHT: BECOMING A LEADER OF INFLUENCE

INTRODUCTION TO WEEK NINE:

This week we are continuing in the making of mature disciples' segment of the Evangelism and Ministry Training Course as we look at the topic of "Becoming a Leader of Influence." Every believer has been called to reign with Christ here on earth and to make a difference in this world for eternity, to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. As believers we have the ability to bring a godly change to our workplaces and schools and communities as we live for the Lord. **(Matthew 5:13-16)**

In the book of Revelation we read,

"And they sang a new song, saying:

"You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe, tongue and people and nation, **And have made us kings and priests to our God; AND WE SHALL REIGN ON THE EARTH.**" **(Revelation 5:9-10)**

As parents we also have the responsibility of raising up and leading our children in the ways of the Lord (Leading best by example), so in many ways learning how to become a more effective leader is crucial if we are to maximise what God can do in and through our lives as believers.

Within the Body of Christ, God also calls certain believers into the five-fold ministry to help equip other believers for the work of ministry. The Apostle Paul wrote, "*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the **EQUIPPING** of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the **knowledge of the Son of God.**" **(Ephesians 4:11-13)***

As pastors and leaders in the five-fold ministry, it is so important that we model what it is to live a God glorifying life and what it is to be a leader of influence. **(1 Timothy 4:12)** This study is to help all Christians to become better leaders and to help those in the five-fold ministry to be more effective in leading their churches and ministry team members.

As leaders we have the potential to inspire many believers to fulfil their God given destiny but also the capability of negatively impacting the lives of others if we have poor character and inadequate leadership skills. As leaders we will receive a stricter judgement when we stand before the Lord. For this reason, having a teachable spirit and learning how to be a better leader and role model for those entrusted to our care is very important. In the book of James we read, "**My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.**" **(James 3:1)**

Jesus Christ was a great leader who trained up a group of disciples who would help to see the church being established and which now numbers over two billion believers. We can learn much from His life here on earth.

When we look at the life of Jesus Christ we see that; **i)** He only did what His Father told Him to do **(John 4:34) (John 17:1-4)**, **ii)** He was focused on seeing God's Kingdom being established here on earth **(Mark 1:14-15)**, **iii)** He had a great love and compassion for all people **(Matthew 9:36)**, **iv)** He lived to serve others **(Matthew 20:28)**, **v)** He spent much time in prayer **(Luke 5:16)**, **vi)** He ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit **(Luke 4:14-19) (Acts 10:38)**, **vii)** He continually ministered the Word of God, "...teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom"... **(Matthew 9:35)**, **vii)** He modelled what it was to live a God glorifying life **(Mark 1:38-41)**, **ix)** He was prepared to make sacrifices for others **(Luke 9:58) (Hebrews 12:2)**, and **ix)** A key focus of Jesus was on raising up leaders (disciples) that would help to train up other believers to fulfil the Great Commission. **(Matthew 28:16-20)**

Self Leadership is also a very important part of being a great leader. We must also focus on developing our God given gifts and talents through the study of the Word, reading good bible-based books on leadership and allowing godly Christians to speak into our life and to mentor us. There is a saying that "Leaders are Readers." Self leadership also involves being disciplined in the use of our time and in following the will of God for our life.

We can also learn much from other great leaders in the Bible. I will now just look briefly at some of the traits of four great leaders in the Bible before we begin looking at some key things to consider in relation to being a leader of influence and what are some of the attributes of great leaders.

THE APOSTLE PAUL

- Had a great love and concern for all the churches and had a heart to make mature disciples (**Galatians 4:19**) (**1 Thessalonians 2:7-8**) (**2 Corinthians 11:28**) (**Acts 19:1-10**)
- Had a great love for the lost and a great passion for seeing people come to faith (**1 Corinthians 9:19-23**)
- Would not allow trials and even imprisonments to stop him from fulfilling God's plan for his life (**Acts 20:23-24**)
- Had a great trust in God's faithfulness and ability to deliver him from all trials (**2 Corinthians 1:9-10**)
- Lived a life totally consecrated to the Lord and was a man of prayer (**Philippians 3:8**) (**Acts 16:25-26**)
- Was a father of the faith (**1 Corinthians 4:15-16**) and mentored many disciples such as Timothy (**Acts 16:1-5**)
- The way He lived his life was an example to others (**1 Thessalonians 2:4-10**), and
- He used his time wisely in living for the Kingdom cause. The apostle Paul achieved much in his life here on earth. He wrote around one third of the New Testament, planted many churches and went on three lengthy missionary trips (**Acts 12:25-14:28**) (**Acts 15:36-18:22**) (**Acts 18:23-21:14**) before his journey to Rome after he had ministered again in Jerusalem. (**Acts 21:15-23:35**) (**Acts 27:1-28:31**) The Apostle Paul wrote, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." (**Ephesians 5:15-17**)

KING DAVID

- Was a man after God's own heart and a worshiper (**Acts 13:22**) (**Psalms 63:1-5**)
- He had a great desire to do the will of God. (**Psalms 143:9**)
- He learned to strengthen Himself in the LORD when going through trials (**1 Samuel 30:6**)
- King David was a man of great courage and led Israel to many victories against enemy armies.
- He had great faith in God's ability to deliver him from his enemies and he knew that with God on his side nothing was impossible. (**1 Samuel 17:1-11**) (**1 Samuel 17:32-51**)
- He was a great role model and inspiration to others. King David's mighty army began with people who were unmotivated and down on life, people who were distressed, in debt and discontented. (**1 Samuel 22:1-2**) Through King David's influence they became mighty men of valour who did great exploits (**2 Samuel 23:8-39**)

NEHEMIAH

- Had a great heart for God's people (His brethren) and was motivated by compassion (**Nehemiah 1:2-4**)
- Was prepared to make sacrifices and to leave a comfortable lifestyle in the Kings Palace to pursue his God given passion to see the wall around Jerusalem being rebuilt
- Was a man of prayer and intercession (**Nehemiah 1:4-11**)
- Was a leader of vision - God had put on his heart (**Nehemiah 2:12**) to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem
- Was able to attract others to work together in unity to see the vision come to pass (**Nehemiah 2:17-18**)
- Completely trusted in God's faithfulness (**Nehemiah 4:7-9**) (**Nehemiah 4:14**)
- Was focused and would not be sidetracked from his God given assignment by opposition (**Nehemiah 6:1-4**)

JOSEPH

- Had a clear vision (dreams) for his life (**Genesis 37:5-11**)
- Was a man of Godly character and would not compromise when faced with temptations to sin (**Genesis 39:7-12**)
- Grew better and not bitter when he went through many years of trials, betrayals and injustices
- Had favour wherever he found himself (**Genesis 39:23**)
- Was committed to seeing God's plan for his life come to pass and knew that God was sovereign in all things
- He became a man of great humility and compassion as a result of all the trials that he went through (**Genesis 45:1:11**) Overcoming trials is an important part of being prepared for greatness in God's Kingdom

SOME IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER IN RELATION TO BEING A LEADER OF INFLUENCE

- i) **All Great Christian Leaders have lived a life that has been set apart for God and for others. Jesus Christ was our example of living for others (Matthew 20:28) The Apostle Paul wrote,**
“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)
Those that have made a great difference in this world for God’s Kingdom such as Mother Therese, William Carey, William and Catherine Booth who pioneered the Salvation Army, William Tyndale and Reinherd Bonnke to name just a few, have all made incredible sacrifices for the cause of Christ.
William Booth was quoted as saying “The greatness of the man’s power is the measure of his surrender.”
Jesus Himself said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of what falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honour.” (John 12:24-26)
- ii) **The importance of allowing the LORD to develop Christ-like character in our life (Romans 8:28-29)**
It is so important that we continually yield to the work of the Holy Spirit in our life so that we become more Christ-like over time. As leaders influence many lives, we need as pastors and leaders to have a great desire to continually grow in godly character and in the fruit of the Spirit, (Galatians 5:22-23) so that our lives become greater role models for others. (1 Timothy 4:12) *MAINTAINING an intimate abiding relationship with the Lord is the key to growing in Christ-like character (John 15:4-5) (Psalm 63:1-5) (Psalm 37:4)*
- iii) **The importance of being a leader of vision** (Someone who seeks God for His vision and plan for their life and church or ministry) and who is able to communicate the vision to others clearly (Habakkuk 2:1-3) (Please refer to “Being a Leader of Vision” teaching in the TEACHINGS for Weeks 6 to 11 manual) A church which has a clear written down vision will see people being attracted to the life and vision of the church. Regularly sharing the church’s vision helps to keep the church thriving and active. Loving, outreach focused local churches have the potential to help see their communities being transformed by the love of Christ.
- iv) **The importance of seeking Godly wisdom** (We continually need God’s wisdom to make right choices in life) King Solomon asked for wisdom to lead Israel when asked by God what he wanted in a dream. (1 Kings 3:5-13) The book of Proverbs is full of references to the importance of gaining Godly wisdom. (Proverbs 3:13) (Proverbs 16:21) (Proverbs 19:8) Having Godly mentors in our life is also a key to gaining greater wisdom to continually make right choices in life. Being accountable to other mature Christians is a real safeguard that helps to prevent us from making wrong choices in life. (Proverbs 11:14) (Proverbs 15:22)
- v) **THREE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF LEADERSHIP**
- Godly **WISDOM** to know what to do at any given time
- **COURAGE** to do what is right no matter what the consequences
- **STRENGTH** to actually have the capacity to do it, and to STICK with it until it is done
- vi) **Good leaders raise up and disciple many other leaders to leave a legacy that lasts beyond their own life**
The Apostle Paul wrote to the young pastor Timothy,
“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2)
- vii) **We need to be strong in every area of our life.** We will only rise to the lowest ceiling in our life. A leader will only rise to the **LOWEST** of the following ceilings,
- **PHYSICAL** (Diet, Rest, Sleep, Exercise, Health)
- **EMOTIONAL** (Healthy relationships, ability to deal with negative emotions, stability)
- **MENTAL** (Ability to deal with stress, ability to **TRUST** God, ability to prioritise, delegate)
- **SPIRITUAL** (Prayer life, Worship life, Knowledge of God’s Word, **FAITH** / Resting in God)

THREE KEY AREAS OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER TO DEVELOP (A more in-depth teaching on these three important attributes of great leaders can be found in the TEACHINGS for Weeks 6 to 11 manual which can be downloaded from the following website page: www.coh.org.au/ministry_course)

- **Humility**

Moses, who was raised up by God to lead the Children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt, was referred to as being the humblest man on earth (**Numbers 12:3**) In God's Kingdom people descend to greatness. The more we humble ourselves the more God can raise us up to do great things for His glory. (**James 4:10**) The bible makes it clear that pride always precedes a fall. (**Proverbs 16:18**) God will never share His glory with any man. (**1 Corinthians 1:26-31**) (**1 Corinthians 10:31**) Great leaders acknowledge their humble dependence on God but also know that they can do all things through Christ Who strengthens them. (**Philippians 4:13**) *The Apostle Paul wrote,*

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (**Philippians 2:5-11**)

- **Having a Servant Heart**

Jesus was referred to as being the Servant King. If we are to develop a culture of serving in our churches we need as leaders to follow Jesus' example of living for and serving others. In God's Kingdom greatness comes from serving others. (**Matthew 20:20-28**) The great leaders in the bible all first served others before God then raised them up into positions of leadership themselves. King David first served King Saul, (**1 Samuel 18:5**) Moses first served his father-in-law Jethro, (**Exodus 3:1**) and Joshua was Moses' faithful servant before God raised him up to lead the Children of Israel into the Promised Land. (**Joshua 1:1-9**) Jesus Himself said, “And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? (**Luke 16:12**) **Great leaders have a servant heart and live for others.**

- **Having a teachable spirit**

To fulfil all that God has planned for our life we need to develop a teachable spirit. We all come into this world knowing nothing. The more teachable we are, the more we can learn and grow in our walk with the Lord and the fewer mistakes we will make in life. The book of Proverbs makes it clear that having a teachable spirit is vital to living a life of fruitfulness and to walking in victory. (**Proverbs 9:9**) (**Proverbs 12:1**) (**Proverbs 19:20**) In the book of Hosea we read, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...” (**Hosea 4:6**)

There are three types of people. There are people who learn from other people's mistakes and from the godly counsel of others (those who have a teachable spirit), those who learn from their own mistakes (those who are harder to teach) and those who never learn (unteachable). Great leaders have a teachable spirit and are open to receiving loving correction from others and to having people speaking into their lives. Having a teachable spirit is a great key to fulfilling our God given destiny.

When appointing leaders, it is so important that we see a teachable spirit in those that we are placing into leadership roles. Typically, those who suffer from rejection are more likely to be defensive when there is a need to speak correction into their life. So, for this reason it is not good to hastily appoint new believers into positions of leadership. (**1 Timothy 5:22**) (**1 Timothy 3:6-7**)

It is vitally important as pastors to continually encourage all believers to grow in their walk with the Lord and to become secure in Him before seeking to be placed in leadership roles. (Character First) The greater the responsibility, the greater the warfare and temptations we also experience. (**1 Peter 5:8-9**) It is therefore important for all believers to be encouraged to grow strong in their faith and to become complete in Christ and to learn how to walk in the Spirit and in love towards others first. For this reason, as leaders, we should only appoint people into leadership roles as the Lord directs us to. (**Acts 13:2**)

OTHER ATTRIBUTES OF GREAT LEADERS (With Scripture References)

- 1) They have a close and INTIMATE relationship with the Lord which enables them to know the heart of God and His will for their lives (*Psalm 37:4*) (*Jeremiah 23:18*) (*Jeremiah 23:22*) (*Isaiah 28:29*) (*Proverbs 3:5-6*)
They are:
 - i) Worshippers (*John 4:23-24*)
 - ii) Prayer Warriors (*2 Chronicles 7:14*) (*Ezekiel 22:30*) who lead a lifestyle of prayer (*Philippians 4:6-7*) (*1 Thessalonians 5:17*)
 - iii) People who regularly meditate on the Word of God (*Joshua 1:8*) (*John 8:31-32*) (*Psalm 119:105*)
 - iv) People who have God's heart and compassion for lost souls (*Matthew 9:36*)
 - v) They have been baptized in the Holy Spirit (The gifts of the Spirit include: the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, the gift of faith and discerning of spirits) (*1 Corinthians 12:7-10*)

The Apostle Paul wrote, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (*Ephesians 3:17-19*)
- 2) Great leaders have a clear vision for their life and church and are able to effectively communicate that vision to others (*Habakkuk 2:2-3*)
- 3) They are STRONG and COURAGEOUS - They never give up on God's plan for their life (*Joshua 1:6-9*)
- 4) They have a great LOVE for and COMMITMENT to those they are leading or shepherding (*John 21:15-17*)
- 5) They are TOTALLY GOD DEPENDENT and lead a life of obedience. (*Proverbs 3:5-6*) (*Jeremiah 17:7-8*) (*Psalm 37:3-5*) They are people of great faith. (*Hebrews 11:1*) (*Hebrews 11:6-12*) They believe that nothing is impossible with God. (*Luke 1:37*) They are people who believe that God is able to turn their city around and to bring healing and deliverance and salvation to their community. (*Acts 8:4-8*)
- 6) They are great encouragers (*Acts 11:22-24*) (*Hebrews 10:24-25*)
- 7) Great leaders have a willingness to delegate authority and responsibilities to others. They are secure in their leadership role and in who they are in Christ. They delegate tasks to others so that they can focus on doing things that others cannot do (*Exodus 18:14-24*) (*Acts 6:1-7*)
- 8) They complete tasks (They are committed to finishing what God has called them to do) Moses was faithful to the end. Jesus finished what His Father had given Him to do here on earth (*John 4:34*) (*John 17:4*) (*Galatians 6:9*) (*Hebrews 10:35-36*)
- 9) They are honest and have integrity in all that they do. They are people of good character (*Titus 1:5-9*)
- 10) They live and model what it is to lead a God glorifying life and are great examples to others (*1 Peter 5:1-4*)
- 11) They manage their time well. They are well organised and make plans with deadlines (*Proverbs 21:5*)
- 12) They are committed to mentoring the next generation of leaders (*2 Timothy 2:2*)
- 13) They see the POTENTIAL in others. They never give up on people. They continually speak destiny and vision over people's lives (*Jeremiah 29:11*) (*Proverbs 15:23*)
- 14) They have a healthy reverential fear of the Lord which is the beginning of all wisdom (*Proverbs 1:7*)
- 15) They are team players and get involved in tasks that need to be done
- 16) They are responsible for their actions and will acknowledge when they have made a mistake (*1 John 1:9*)
- 17) They are open and transparent and very approachable. People feel at ease in their presence
- 18) They have a generous love and compassion for others. (*John 13:34-35*) Ministry is all about people. Having a genuine love for others is a key to helping see people coming to Christ and fulfilling their God given destiny. ALL THAT WE DO IN MINISTRY AND LIFE NEEDS TO BE UNDERGIRD BY LOVE
- 19) They have fully surrendered their lives for the cause of Christ (*Luke 9:23-24*) (*John 12:24-26*) (*Isaiah 6:8*) They have an excellent spirit and they give their best for the cause of Christ (*Daniel 6:3*)

CHURCH OF HOPE EVANGELISM AND MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE BY EMAIL AND WEBSITE: **STUDY GUIDE: WEEKS TEN AND ELEVEN**

TOPIC NINE: DOCTRINES OF OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH AND SOME KEYS TO GROWING IN MATURITY IN OUR WALK WITH THE LORD

INTRODUCTION TO WEEKS TEN AND ELEVEN:

Topic number nine is very important as it is so essential that all believers grow strong in their faith and that they have a clear understanding of the doctrines of the Christian faith. For this reason we will be spending two weeks on this topic as we continue in the segment of this course relating to the importance of making mature disciples.

In this study guide we will be: **i)** Looking at our doctrinal beliefs as a Christian church with references being made to the bible scriptures relating to these beliefs, and **ii)** We will conclude with some important keys that can help Christians to grow in maturity in their walk with the Lord and some related Scriptures.

An important part of Topic Nine is a teaching on the six foundations of our faith as outlined in Chapter six of the book of Hebrews. *This teaching is our primary reading for topic nine and is found in the TEACHINGS for Weeks 6 to 11 manual which is on the following website page: www.coh.org.au/ministry_course*

In the book of Hebrews we read,

“Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” **(Hebrews 6:1-2)**

In the above passage of Scripture, we see the six foundations of our faith; i) Repentance from dead works, ii) Faith toward God, iii) The Doctrine of baptisms (There are two Christian Baptisms. One is the Water Baptism and the other is being Baptised in the Holy Spirit by Jesus), iv) Laying on of hands, v) Resurrection of the dead, and vi) Eternal Judgment

In our attached teaching on the six foundations of our faith, each of the above foundations is fully explained. **In Hebrews 6:1 we ALSO see the importance as a Christian of growing in maturity as a believer once we have come to Christ, “...let us go on to perfection...”** In the last part of this study, we will look at some practical bible-based keys to help Christians to grow in their faith.

AT THIS POINT YOU MAY LIKE TO STUDY THE TEACHING ON THE SIX FOUNDATIONS OF OUR FAITH

True Spiritual Growth requires meditating on and studying the Word of God. (Joshua 1:8) (2 Timothy 2:15) In 1 Corinthians 2:9-11 the Apostle Paul emphasised our need for Holy Spirit-given wisdom and revelation,

“But as it is written:

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes the deep things of God. For what man know the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? **Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.**”

In 1 Corinthians 2:13 the Apostle Paul emphasised the need to speak the words that the Holy Spirit teaches, “These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” **(1 Corinthians 2:13)**

In 2 Timothy 3:16 the Apostle Paul wrote that “ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” Here the Apostle Paul was emphasising that each writer involved in the production of the Holy Scriptures was “moved by or inspired” by the Holy Spirit. So, to grow in Spiritual Wisdom and maturity involves growing in our knowledge of God’s word. In order to experience true spiritual growth, we must spend time in the Word and separate ourselves from the hindrances of lovelessness, competitiveness, and strife. When Paul was confronting the carnality of the Corinthians, he attributed this to the shallowness of their intake of God’s word (Not able to take solid food). **(SEE 1 Corinthians 3:1-3)**

The Apostle Paul emphasized the importance of feeding on the Word of God when he wrote,

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Before we get into the study of the doctrines of our Christian faith (and what we believe) we will begin by looking at some of the bible Scriptures in relation to maintaining correct doctrine in our churches and in adhering to correct beliefs as a Christian. Obviously as Pastors and Leaders we have a great responsibility in ensuring that all of our teachings and the messages that we preach are doctrinally correct.

Maintaining a pure heart as a pastor, teacher or leader is very important as what we teach influences the lives of many others with eternal ramifications. As pastors and leaders, we are responsible for the spiritual well being of many. In the lawless times that we are now living in, it is so important that we do not allow the influences in the world and wrong input from other people to cause us to deviate away from the foundational truths contained in the Word of God, but that we continually declare to others the whole counsel of God. (Act 20:27)

As leaders we will receive a stricter judgement. (James 3:1) For this reason heeding the wisdom in the book of Proverbs ““Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.” (Proverbs 4:23) is very important. In 2 Peter verses 1-3 the Apostle Peter warns of immoral and greedy false teachers who will use people as a means of reaching their own selfish goals.

“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.” (2 Peter 2:1-3)

The New Testament indicates that deceptive teachers will characterize the church age and that their activities will increase “in latter times” (1 Timothy 4:1) (Matthew 24:11)

I will now just look at a few things to consider in relation to maintaining correct Doctrinal Beliefs.

- 1) We must always preach the one true gospel (Galatians 1:6-9) (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) We must never add to or preach another gospel. We are justified by faith alone. The Apostle Paul wrote, “But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” (Galatians 3:11)

The Apostle Paul also wrote, “knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” (Galatians 2:16)

- 2) All that we need is found in Christ. (Colossians 1:28) (Matthew 6:25) (Matthew 6:31-33) The Apostle Paul wrote, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height-to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:17-19) **The Apostle Paul also wrote,** “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” (Ephesians 1:3) **In Christ we have been chosen, we are blameless, we have been predestined to adoption into God’s family as sons [children of God – John 1:12], we have been accepted, we have been forgiven and we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise (which is a down payment or first instalment for God’s title to possess us entirely forever) (Ephesians 1:4-14)**

In response to false teachers at Colosse undercutting the major doctrines of Christianity, the Apostle Paul again reinforced the deity and absolute lordship and sufficiency of Christ:

- Not Philosophy but Christ (COLOSSIANS 2:1-10) - Not Legalism but Christ (COLOSSIANS 2:11-23)
- Not Carnality but Christ (COLOSSIANS 3:1-11) The Apostle Paul wrote, “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 3:11) (See also 1 Peter 2:4-9)

- 3) **Christ is head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.** (*Ephesians 1:22-23*) The church, which is made up of all born again believers, is the present, physical presence of Christ. The church (the body of Christ) is filled with Him by the Holy Spirit
As believers we are living stones (1 Peter 2:5), temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19) and TOGETHER we make up the church with Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone. (*1 Peter 2:6-7*) The church is the new spiritual Israel. (*1 Peter 2:9-10*) As we are all part of the body of Christ, we all need one another. (*1 Corinthians 12:12-28*) Every believer has an important ministry and part to play in the Body of Christ. **As Christians we are all called to represent Jesus Christ in our community by ministering His life, love and power to others. Allowing the Holy Spirit to direct our church meetings is also a key to seeing people experiencing the love of Christ in our meetings in a tangible way.**
- 4) In the early church they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (the Word of God) (Acts 2:38) and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. (*Acts 2:47*) Preaching sound doctrine was one of the keys to the rapid growth of the early church
- 5) The Apostle Paul emphasised the necessity of sound doctrine and that all teaching is to be judged by its agreement with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote,
"If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome word, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions," (*1 Timothy 6:3-4*) **AND**
- 6) The importance of all pastors and leaders studying, expounding and also applying the Scriptures to their own life. The Apostle Paul wrote to the young pastor Timothy,
"Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." (*1 Timothy 4:12-16*)

I will now list the Doctrinal Beliefs for Church of Hope (which are the Assemblies of God beliefs) with related Scripture references. These could be studied in small groups with a leader getting each group members to look up and read out different Scriptures that relate to these Doctrinal Beliefs. These Doctrinal Beliefs are on the following page of their church website: www.coh.org.au/beliefs and also in the Church of Hope Pastors Workshop Manual.

THE BIBLE: We believe that the Holy Bible, and only the Bible, is 100% the Word of God. It, alone, is the final authority in determining all doctrinal truths.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17) (Proverbs 30:5), (Psalm 1), (Psalm 119:105)

(THE TRINITY (The Eternal Godhead): WE BELIEVE in the unity of the true and living God who is the ETERNAL, self-existent one, who has revealed himself as ONE BEING in THREE PERSONS – THE FATHER, THE SON (*Jesus*) AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, and Who is the Creator and preserver of things visible and invisible. (*Deuteronomy 6:4*), (*Mark 12:29*), (*Matthew 28:19*), (*Genesis 1:1*), (*Psalm 86:9-10*), (*Isaiah 43:10-11*), (*John 1:1-3*)

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST: WE BELIEVE in the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity (Triune Godhead), who was and is the eternal Son of God; that he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary. (Jesus Christ was conceived by God the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary's womb) On earth He was 100% God and 100% man. (*Isaiah 7:14*), (*Matthew 1:23*)

WE BELIEVE in His sinless life (He was the only man to ever live a sinless life) (*Hebrews 7:26*, *1 Peter 2:22*, (*2 Corinthians 5:21*), *miraculous ministry (Acts 2:22 and Acts 10:38)*, substitutionary *atonement* death (*Hebrews 9:12*), *bodily resurrection (Luke 24:39, 1 Corinthians 15:4)*, glorious ascension (*Acts 1:9*) and *abiding intercession (Hebrews 7:25)*.

THE HOLY SPIRIT: WE BELIEVE in the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity (Triune Godhead), who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is ever present and active in the work of convicting (John 16:7-11) and regenerating the sinner, and sanctifying and guiding (Romans 8:14) the believer into all truth (John 14:26, John 16:13). (Sanctification is the ongoing process of yielding to God in order to become more and more like Christ) (Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Romans 8:29, 1 Thessalonians 5:23)

THE ATONEMENT: WE BELIEVE that God's answer to man's sinful state is in the death of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, whose sufferings and shed blood have made full atonement for the sins of the whole world, both original and actual, and that *there is no other ground for salvation*. (2 Corinthians 5:18-21, Galatians 1:4, Colossians 1:20, Romans 5:9, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, Hebrews 9:25-28, 1 Peter 1:18-20, 1 John 1:7)

The blood that Jesus Christ shed on the cross of Calvary was sinless and is 100% sufficient to forgive man of all sins. Jesus allowed Himself to be punished for the sins we had committed, giving all mankind the opportunity of being free from the penalty of sin, (which is death). Each person after reaching an age of reasoning must however make a response of repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ to receive God's forgiveness and gift of eternal life. (John 1:29, Revelation 1:5 & 5:9)

SALVATION OF MAN: WE BELIEVE salvation is received through **repentance** toward God and **faith** in the Lord Jesus Christ. This experience is also known as the new birth {Being Born Again} (John 3:3) and is an *instantaneous* and complete operation of the Holy Spirit, whereupon the *believing* sinner is regenerated, justified, and *adopted* into the family of God, and becomes a *new creation* in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17) and *an heir of eternal life*. (Titus 2:11, Titus 3:5-7, 1 Peter 1:23)

REPENTANCE is a commitment to turn from sin in every area of our lives and to follow Christ. (Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19)

SALVATION is a gift from God and cannot be earned. It is not based on our good works or human efforts. "For by grace you have been saved through faith (in Jesus Christ and His death burial and resurrection), and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

THE DEVIL: WE BELIEVE in the personality of the devil, who, by his influence, brought about the downfall of man, and now seeks to destroy the faith of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Genesis 3:1-15, Matt. 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13, James 4:7, John 13:2, 1 Peter 5:8)

THE FALL OF MAN: WE BELIEVE that man was created by God by a specific immediate act and in His image and likeness, morally upright and perfect, *but fell by voluntary transgression*. Consequently, all men are separated from original righteousness, being depraved and without spiritual life. (Genesis 1:26-28, Genesis 3:1-7, Romans 5:12-21)

THE CHURCH: The church is the *body of Christ*, the habitation of God, through the Spirit, with divine appointments for the fulfilment of her great commission. *Each believer*, born of the Spirit, is an *integral part* of the *general assembly and church* of the first-born, which are written in heaven. (Ephesians 1:22-23, Ephesians 2:19-22, Hebrews 12:23)

WATER BAPTISM: WE BELIEVE that baptism, by single *immersion*, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is required of all who have repented and believed in Christ as *Saviour* and *Lord*, and that it is symbolic of our identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. Following believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, the new convert is commanded by the Word of God to be water baptized by full immersion. The Christian Water Baptism is an outward act of obedience by which a *believer* confesses and confirms, the *inward righteousness* he already enjoys in his heart through faith in Christ's atoning death and resurrection, by openly acknowledging their allegiance to Christ. (Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 10:47-48, Acts 2:38-39, Romans 6:4-5, Colossians 2:12, Mark 16:16)

THE LORD'S SUPPER: WE BELIEVE the Lord's supper, consisting of the elements of bread and the fruit of the vine, is the symbol expressing our sharing the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ (**2 Peter 1:4**), and a memorial of His sufferings and death (**1 Corinthians 11:26**), and is enjoined upon all believers "until He comes". (**Luke 22:14-20, Acts 20:7, Matthew 26:26-28**) The Lord's Supper is a unique time of communion in the presence of God when the elements of bread and wine (representing the broken body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ), are taken in remembrance of His sacrifice on the cross for us. (**1 Corinthians 11:23-25**)

SANCTIFICATION: Sanctification is an act of *separation* from that which is *evil*, and of *dedication unto God*. WE BELIEVE it is the glorious provision for *every* believer in Christ to be made *pure in heart* and wholly sanctified, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, by the Blood of Jesus and the Word of God. (**1 Thessalonians 5:23-24**)

(**John 17:15-19, Acts 15:8-9, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, Hebrews 2:11, Hebrews 10:16-19, Romans 12:1-2**)

THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT: WE BELIEVE that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is the bestowing of the believer with power *to be an effective witness for Christ*. This experience is **distinct** from, and **subsequent** to, the new birth; *is received by faith*, and is accompanied by the manifestation of *speaking in tongues* as the spirit gives utterance, as the initial evidence. (**Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4-5, Acts 1:8, Joel 2:28-29, Acts 2:1-4, Acts 2:17-18, Mark 16:17, Acts 8:15-19, Acts 11:14-17, Matthew 3:11 Acts 19:1-7**)

Given at Pentecost, it was the promise of the Father, sent by Jesus after His ascension, to *empower* the Church to preach the gospel throughout the whole earth, to edify believers (**1 Corinthians 14:4**), to enhance the prayer life of believers and as a sign to unbelievers. (**1 Corinthians 14:22**)

GIFTS: WE BELIEVE in the **present-day** operation of the **nine** *supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit*, as recorded in **1 Corinthians 12:7-11**. (*The word of wisdom, The word of knowledge, The gift of faith, Gifts of healing, The working of miracles, Prophecy, Discerning of spirits, Different kinds of tongues and Interpretation of tongues*). We also believe in the **five** ministry gifts of Christ, as recorded in **Ephesians 4:11-13**. (*Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers*)

OTHER GIFTS FROM THE FATHER INCLUDE: Prophecy, Exhortation, Giving, Leadership, Mercy, Ministry and the gift of Teaching (Regardless of Public Office) (**Romans 12:3-8**) Helps and Administrations are two other gifts. (**1 Corinthians 12:28**) **WE MUST HOWEVER NEVER FORGET THAT WHATEVER WE DO IN LIFE MUST BE DONE IN LOVE.** (The Apostle Paul emphasised this in chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians) (See also Romans 12:9-21)

DIVINE HEALING: In accordance with the teachings of the Scriptures, we trust our heavenly Father to protect and heal our bodies from sickness and disease. (**Isaiah 53:5**) WE BELIEVE that divine healing for the body, as with all *redemptive blessings of God*, has been provided for us by the *atoning death and victorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ*; it is the privilege of *all* believers and it is *appropriated by faith* in our heavenly Father's unfailing promises. (**Exodus 15:26, Psalm 103:3, Matthew 8:16-17, 1 Peter 2:24, James 5:14-15, Mark 16:17-18, John 14:12-14**)

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST: WE BELIEVE in the *premillennial*, imminent and personal return of our Lord Jesus Christ to gather his people unto Himself. Having this glorious hope and earnest expectation, we purify ourselves, even as He is pure, so that we may be ready to meet Him when He comes. (**1 Thessalonians 4:15-18**)

Jesus Christ will physically and visibly return to earth a second time to establish His Kingdom. This will occur at a date undisclosed by the Scriptures. (**Matthew 24:36**)

THE RAPTURE (PROPHECY): There are several different theological views on the timing of the rapture of *true* believers.

The Premillennial mid-tribulation view: sees all believers being “raptured” after 42 months (1,260 days) of the 7-year Great Tribulation, with the Rapture and Second Coming being separate events.

The Premillennial Pre-Wrath Rapture View: sees all believers being “raptured” during the Great Tribulation, but prior to the “day of God’s wrath” (Rev. 6:17), with the Rapture and Second Coming being separate events. This view states that true believers will be raptured prior to the “day of God’s wrath”, as believers have not been appointed to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, (**1 Thessalonians 5:9**)

If Chapter 24 of Matthew is to be interpreted in light of Chapter six of Revelations, the rapture could take place Mid-Tribulation (**Matthew 24:31**) after the cosmic disturbances mentioned both in **Revelation 6:12** and **Matthew 24:29**, just prior to the great day of His wrath. (**Revelation 6:17**)

The Dispensational Interpretation, (Pre-Tribulation), sees the rapture of all true believers (**Revelation 4:1**) taking place prior to the Anti-Christ rising to power. *This interpretation* sees him as the Conqueror in the First Seal, and the Great Tribulation commencing with the first seal. (**Rev. 6:1**)

The Premillennial Pre-tribulation Partial Rapture View: sees only some believers being “Raptured” before the Great Tribulation. Those who are “unready” must be martyred to verify their faith, with the Rapture and the Second Coming being separate events.

The Premillennial Post-tribulation View: sees all believers being “Raptured” at the end of the Great Tribulation and that the Rapture and the Second coming are the same event. Given that Believers have not been appointed to wrath, but to obtain salvation, this particular view does not appear plausible.

There are also other theological views on the timing of the rapture and which deal with the “last things” (Eschatology)

HOWEVER, for those who are faithful in their Christian Walk, the Bible promises that they will be kept from the hour of trial, which shall come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth. (Revelation 3:10) WE MUST SIMPLY BE READY TO MEET THE LORD AT ANY TIME.

THE MILLENNIUM: WE BELIEVE in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to set up His millennial reign on this earth. (**Zechariah 14:5, Daniel 7:22, Rev. 5:9-10, Psalm 96:10-13, Revelation 20:1-10**)

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED: WE BELIEVE in the everlasting punishment of the wicked (in the sense of eternal torment) who wilfully reject and despise the love of God, manifested in the great sacrifice of his only Son upon the cross for their salvation. (**Romans 6:23, Matthew 25:46, Matthew 13:49-50, Luke 12:47-48, 2 Thess. 1:8-9, Revelation 20:11-15**). We believe that the devil and his angels and whosoever is not found written in the book of life shall be consigned to everlasting punishment in the lake, which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (**Revelation 19:20, Revelation 20:10-15**)

THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH: “We according to His promise look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness” (**2 Peter 3:13, Revelation Chapters 21 and 22.**)

RESURRECTION: WE BELIEVE that Jesus Christ was physically resurrected from the dead in a glorified body three days after His death on the cross. One day all believers who have died in Christ will also be physically resurrected in their glorified bodies and will be judged to determine their eternal rewards in heaven, where they will dwell with God forever. (**Luke 24:36-40, 1 Corinthians 15:42,44, John 20:26-28, John 21:4, Luke 24:15-18**)

The final resurrection at the close of the millennium will be mainly for those who have rejected Christ, and they will be judged for what they did while in the body. Following this judgment, those who rejected Christ will be consigned to the lake of fire (spirit, soul and body). (**Revelation 20:13-14**)

Two categories of people in the final resurrection, who will come forth to the resurrection of life and not condemnation, are people such as the queen of the South (Sheba) and the men of Nineveh referred to by Jesus, who were not granted a revelation of Christ's atoning sacrifice in which they could trust for salvation, (Luke 11:31-32) and the righteous who died during Christ's millennial reign on earth. (One of the purposes of Christ's return is for the national salvation of Israel.)

CREATION: WE BELIEVE that the heavens and earth and all original life forms, including man, were made by the specific immediate creative acts of God as described in the account of origins presented in Genesis, and that all biological changes which have occurred since creation are limited to variation within each species.

I will now finish this study guide for topic nine by looking at a few keys and disciplines to help all Christians to grow in their walk with the Lord, "Let us go on to perfection..." (Hebrews 6:1)

1. It is crucial for *all* new Christians to ***immediately*** gain a clear understanding of the basis of their right standing with God as believers after they come to Christ. They need to know:
 - i) That they were justified by faith and that they now have peace with God, (Romans 5:1-2)*
 - ii) That they were saved by grace through their faith in Jesus Christ and that not of themselves.*
 - iii) That eternal life was a free gift of God which they received when they repented and received Jesus Christ into their hearts and lives as their Lord and Saviour. (Ephesians 2:8-9) (Romans 6:23) (John 1:12) (Romans 3:21-28) and iv) That the moment they believed in Jesus Christ they were declared righteous in God's sight and His righteousness was imputed to them. (2 Corinthians 5:21)*

We must also never as believers get back into trying to earn God's love and approval, by endeavouring to be justified by our own righteous acts. (Isaiah 64:6) (Galatians 3:1-3) (Galatians 5:4) We must simply allow Christ to continually do the work of change in our life as we learn to say no to our fleshly desires and to live a life under the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps to empower us to lead an overcoming life. **SO AS CHRISTIANS WE CAN BE ABSOLUTELY SECURE IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND LIVE A LIFE WITHOUT CONDEMNATION (Romans 8:1)** In the book of

Hebrews we read one of God's great promises to us as believers,

"...For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say:

"The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:5-6)

2. CONTINUALLY RENEWING OUR MIND WITH THE WORD OF GOD (Romans 12:2) – The importance of continually meditating on the Word of God and applying it to our own life. (Joshua 1:8) (Psalm 1:1-3) As we are daily exposed to negative things and as we live in a world full of ungodly influences, more than ever before meditating on the truths and promises in God's Word on a regular basis is crucial. Jesus Himself emphasised the importance of being BOTH a hearer and doer of the Word of God. (Matthew 7:24-27) Speaking out God's Word is a key to growing strong in our faith. (Romans 10:17)
3. Learning to walk in the Spirit. To grow in Christlike character, it is crucial that we learn to walk in the Spirit. We must choose continually to not react out of our old fallen nature (works of the flesh) but to walk in the newness of life that we have in Christ – to put on the new man (Colossians 3:12-14) As believers we have the ability to walk in love towards others "because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Romans 5:5) The Apostle Paul wrote, "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." (Galatians 5:14-18)

4. Continually putting the Lord first in our life. - Choosing to live a lifestyle of obedience (Just doing what Jesus tells us to do) God knows what is best for us. His ways are far higher than our ways. **(Isaiah 55:8-9)** When we put the Lord first place in our life God promises to meet our every need in life. **(Matthew 6:31-33)** Living a lifestyle of obedience is the key to seeing God's blessings in our life as believers **(Isaiah 1:19)**
5. Learning to trust the Lord with a childlike faith. It is the key to maintaining ongoing peace in our life **(Isaiah 26:3-4)** and to seeing God's plan and purpose for our life coming to pass **(Psalm 37:3-5)** **(Proverbs 3:5-6)** When we continually trust the Lord and commit to following His plan for our lives we will bear much fruit in our life **(Jeremiah 17:7-8)** When we take steps of faith, **(Hebrew 11:1)** we will always see God making what is impossible in the natural for us to do possible. "For with God nothing will be impossible." **(Luke 1:37)**
6. Worship is a great key to getting to know the heart of God and to having godly desires **(Psalm 37:4)** King David was a worshipper who wrote many psalms. **(Psalm 63:1-5)** He was the only person in the bible referred to as being a man after God's own heart **(Acts 13:22)** Worship helps us to connect with God's heart and to usher God's presence into our circumstances. **(Psalm 22:3)** Jesus Himself emphasised the importance of true heartfelt worship and worshipping the Father in Spirit and in truth. **(John 4:23-24)** Worship helps to give us Christ's heart of compassion for others. Worship and prayer help to see breakthroughs in our circumstances as we focus on the bigness of our God. **(Acts 16:25-26)**
7. Involving God in all that we do (Having a lifestyle of prayer) **(1 Thessalonians 5:17)** Having a lifestyle of prayer helps us to make right choices in life as we involve God in all that we do and is a key to living a life without anxiety. **(Philippians 4:6-7)** Persevering in prayer is the key to seeing breakthroughs in our life. **(Luke 18:1-8)** God is both willing and able to answer all of our prayers that are in line with His will for our life. **(1 John 5:14-15)** **(Mark 11:22-24)**
8. The importance of continually making time to get to know the Lord in a real and personal way. **(2 Peter 3:17-18)** We need to consistently make time to spend alone with the Lord so that we can get to know Him in a more intimate way. **(Psalm 46:11)** **(John 15:4-5)** Our primary focus as a believer needs to be on getting to know Jesus more and more and to know His love for us in a real and tangible way. When we get too busy to spend quality time with the Lord, we are more likely to get troubled by little things in life. **(Luke 10:38-42)** The Apostle Paul wrote, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." **(Ephesians 3:17-19)**
9. The importance of being PLANTED in a loving local church fellowship
Having fellowship with other believers is crucial if we are to remain strong in our faith. Being planted and connected to the life of a healthy bible-based church is crucial if our lives are to bear much fruit. **(Psalm 92:13-14)** As the devil is continually trying to undermine and destroy the faith of believers, **(1 Peter 5:8-9)** it is important for all believers to have regular fellowship with other Christians who can encourage them in their walk with the Lord. This is especially the case when believers are going through great trials in their life. **(Hebrews 10:23-25)** Our God given destiny will always be worked out in connection with other believers. When connected with other mature believers we can also receive godly counsel to help us to make good choices in life. **(Proverbs 11:14)** Being connected to other Christians also helps to give us accountability which is so important given the lawless days that we are now living in. **(2 Timothy 3:1-5)**

10. The importance of having godly friendships – Not being unequally yoked together with unbelievers

Choosing good friends in life who will encourage us to grow in our walk with the Lord is crucial if we are to fulfil all that God has planned for our life. The bible says much about the importance of associating with the right people and how evil company corrupts good habits. **(Proverbs 12:26) (Proverbs 13:20) (1 Corinthians 15:33) (2 Corinthians 6:14-16)** If we are to soar with the eagles, we need to have good godly friends who are people of vision and purpose.

11. Continually living with eternity in mind knowing that we are only pilgrims in this life here on earth. It is so important that we always live our life with eternity in mind. We have one life to store up treasures in heaven. **(Matthew 6:19-21)** We need to learn to make the most of our time here on earth by consistently seeking to do the will of God for our lives.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “**See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.**” (Ephesians 5:15-17)

We must purposely choose to not allow the cares of this world and desires for other things to enter into our heart to pull us away from what God has called us to do in life. The devil will continually try and get us focusing on the temporary things of this life so that our lives bear little or no eternal fruit. **(Mark 4:18-19)** Living a consecrated life that is devoted to living for the cause of Christ is the key to seeing our lives bearing much fruit. **(John 15:16) (John 12:24-26) (Luke 9:23-25) (Galatians 2:20)** We have all been given one gift of life here on earth to make a difference for eternity. Each day once lived can never be regained.

When we live with eternity in mind it will influence the way we live our life and the choices that we make with the use of our time, talents and resources. It will also give us a greater urgency to reach out to those who are unsaved knowing the reality that there is a hell to shun and a heaven to gain. **(Proverbs 11:30)**

12. Depending on God’s enabling power to do what He calls us to do (2 Corinthians 3:5)

Whatever God calls us to do for Him in life; He will give us the ability to accomplish. We must never limit what God wants to do in and through our lives by looking at our own natural abilities and resources. We need to depend on the Holy Spirit to empower us for the tasks that God gives us to do. Jesus Himself depended on the Holy Spirit to perform His ministry here on earth. **(Acts 10:38)** God’s strength is made perfect in our weakness. **(2 Corinthians 12:7-10)** It is so important that we depend on God’s enabling power in all that we do. In this way we will accomplish more with less effort as we do things in His strength and power **(1 Corinthians 2:2-5) (Zechariah 4:6) (1 Peter 4:11)**

13. Continually yielding to the work of the Holy Spirit in our life to grow in Christlike character (Fruit of the Spirit).

The Apostle Paul wrote, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Romans 8:28-29)

The whole Christian Walk is one of growing in Christlike character over time so that we become the salt of the earth and the light of the world. *Jesus Himself said,*

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavour, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” **(Matthew 5:13)**

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see you good works and glorify your Father in heaven. **(Matthew 5:16)**

The way we live our life often has the greatest impact on the lives of others. For many people the only bible that they will ever read will be our own life. Allowing the Lord to do a work of change in our life over time is therefore important if we are to grow in Christlike character and influence those around us.

Quickly heeding the conviction of the Holy Spirit and having a repentant heart helps us to grow in Christlike character. **(1 John 1:9)** It is so important that we continually respond to the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit so that we grow in maturity in our walk with the Lord. **(John 14:26)** **(John 16:13)**

14. Having a repentant heart (Keeping short accounts with God and with others)

Having a repentant heart helps to keep our line of communication with God clear. Unconfessed sins can be a hindrance to seeing our prayers being answered. **(Psalm 66:18-19)** Jesus Himself also emphasised the importance of forgiving others who have hurt us **(Mark 11:25)** if we want our Father in Heaven to also forgive us our trespasses. Jesus made it clear that if we were not prepared to forgive others that have hurt us then neither would our Father in heaven forgive us our trespasses. **(Mark 11:26)** Having short accounts with both God and others is a key to living an abundant life as it helps us to have an intimate relationship with the Lord (in His presence in fullness of joy) and to have healthy loving relationships with other people.

15. Using our gifts and talents to serve the Lord in what He has called us to do.

Every believer has a unique ministry, “good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” **(Ephesians 2:10)** God has also uniquely gifted each believer with different gifts and talents to be a blessing for others and the wider Body of Christ. It is as we work together in unity with other believers (joined and knit together) that the church makes an impact in the world and we see growth in the Kingdom of God. **(Ephesians 4:16)** As we all need one another in the Body of Christ, it is important that we all faithfully use our gifts and talents for the Lord and follow His plan and purpose for our life. True joy and purpose in our walk with the Lord come from loving the Lord and being faithful stewards of our gifts and talents. **(Matthew 25:14-23)** The Apostle Paul wrote, “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: If prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. **(Romans 12:4-8)**

16. Choosing to continually walk in love and forgiveness towards others (The greatest is love)

As Christians we have the ability to love people with the unconditional agape Love of God which “...has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit...” **(Romans 5:5)** Dealing quickly with offenses, helps us to maintain a soft and loving heart towards others. Jesus warned that many would be offended in the days just prior to His return and would betray and then hate one another. **(Matthew 24:10)** We must always be quick to forgive others and must not allow the sun to go down on our wrath. **(Ephesians 4:26)** We must refuse to “give place to the devil” **(Ephesians 4:27)** by allowing offences to enter into our heart and by going to bed with unresolved anger. Jesus emphasised the importance of loving others, even our enemies and those who spitefully use us, so that we can be an example to those in the world. **(Luke 6:27-28)** **(Matthew 5:43-45)** Jesus also said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” **(John 13:34-35)** The Apostle Paul also emphasised the importance of all that we do for others being undergirded and motivated by love. **(1 Corinthians 13:1-8)**

17. Refusing to dwell on our past failures, regrets and injustices so that we are free to fully embrace the future that God has planned for our life. Life and life more abundantly

We must refuse to allow our past disappointments and failures to stop us from moving on into the future that God has planned for our life. No amount of dwelling on our past failures can change things. But to live in the past will prevent us from embracing the future that God has planned for our life. The Apostle Paul made many mistakes before his conversion to Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." **(1 Timothy 1:12-15)**

But the Apostle Paul knew that he could not live with regrets. He knew that if he was to fulfil God's plan for his life, he would have to put his past behind him to embrace all that God had planned for his future. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, *forgetting* those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." **(Philippians 3:12-14)**

God is able to turn our past messes into messages and to turn our lives around totally if we can let go of our past regrets and failures. King David wrote,

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, And **forget not all His benefits**; Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, **who redeems your life from destruction**, Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." **(Psalm 103:2-5)**

18. Being continually filled with the right spirit, the Holy Spirit

It is so important that we are continually filled with the right spirit, the Holy Spirit so that we are empowered to witness to and minister to others. As we give out to others, we need to be continually filled ourselves with the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul wrote, "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit," **(Ephesians 5:18)**

19. Having a teachable spirit (being open to others speaking into our life)

Having a teachable spirit helps us to grow more quickly in our walk with the Lord and to make fewer wrong choices in life. If we are prepared to have others speak into our life, we have the ability to make better decisions on a more consistent basis.

The book of Proverbs clearly emphasises the importance of being teachable and willing to receive counsel from others. **(Proverbs 11:14) (Proverbs 15:22) (Proverbs 19:20) (Proverbs 23:12)** Having mature Christians as mentors in our life helps us to grow more quickly in our walk with the Lord, as we learn from their experiences and what they have learned while walking with the Lord for many years. **(2 Timothy 2:2) AND**

20. Finally, our Christian Walk is simply one of being in relationship with the LORD. When our love for Jesus is our highest priority in life, we will then also have a great love for people

Out of our relationship with the Lord, His plan and purpose for our life will unfold. **(Proverbs 3:5-6) (Psalm 37:23)** We must be careful that we never become religious in our walk with the Lord, doing things out of obligation and tradition, but that all the good works that flow out of our life and the way we worship the Lord, come from our passion to know Christ in an intimate way. When we do things for others out of obligation, we will never enjoy the fullness of life that God has planned for all believers. **(John 10:10)** But when we are filled with God's love and the fullness of joy that comes from being in God's presence, we have great delight in helping and serving others. **(Matthew 20:28)**

Jesus Himself summarised the simplicity of our walk with the Lord when He said,

““And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.” (Mark 12:30)

“And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:31)

I will finish with what the Apostle Peter wrote in relation to the importance of growing in maturity (in the fruit of the Spirit – Galatians 5:22-23) and in knowledge as a believer; “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is short-sighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;” (2 Peter 1:5-10)

CHURCH OF HOPE EVANGELISM AND MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE BY EMAIL AND WEBSITE: *STUDY GUIDE: WEEK TWELVE*

TOPIC TEN: ATTRIBUTES OF A HEALTHY CHURCH / EXPERIENCING GOD'S POWER IN OUR MEETINGS

INTRODUCTION TO WEEK TWELVE:

We are now beginning the part of this course that relates to the important role of local church fellowships. It is so important for all believers to be planted in a local bible-based fellowship so that they can grow in their walk with the Lord and be encouraged to fulfil their God given destiny. **(Ephesians 2:10)** The bible makes it clear that being connected to other believers is crucial in our walk with the Lord and to bearing fruit in our life.

(Hebrews 10:23-25) (Psalm 92:13-15) (1 John 1:7)

This week we will begin this part of the course by looking at the attributes of a healthy church as well as the importance of experiencing God's power in our church meetings and in our own lives. As believers we have been given great power and authority in the name of Jesus Christ. **(Mark 16:17-18)**. Local churches have the potential to bring transformation to their communities. There is power in the gospel message to transform lives. Churches full of outreach focused loving believers who are mature disciples have the potential to bring hope and transformation to their community.

Having fellowship with other believers was a big focus in the early church which experienced rapid growth.

In Acts 2:42 we see four major features of the early church that contributed to its rapid growth,

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

In this passage of Scripture, we see that in the early church believers;

- i) Continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine (the Word of God),
- ii) Had consistent fellowship with other believers,
- iii) Took communion together (breaking of bread) on a regular basis with other believers, and
- iv) Had a strong and committed prayer life

We see here in the early church that the followers of Christ, who had been baptised in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost **(Acts 2:1-4)**, devoted themselves both to communication and unity with God and with each other. In relationship to God, they “continued steadfastly” in the apostles’ doctrine (the Word of God) and in prayer. In relationship to one another, they devoted themselves to fellowship and to breaking bread with one another. Having fellowship with other believers was therefore an important part of the early church.

In this week's study we will be looking at the importance of fellowshiping with other believers and the importance of being connected to the life of a healthy bible based local church or house group. Being part of a local church family helps us to be loved and nurtured in our walk with the Lord and to remain connected to the body of Christ. Being submitted and accountable to other believers and to those in spiritual authority helps Christians to remain strong in their faith. **(1 Peter 5:5) (Hebrews 13:17)**

Fellowshipping with other believers is crucial if we are to remain strong in our walk with the Lord. The bible makes it clear that there is a very real enemy, the Devil who is out to destroy the faith of all believers. The Apostle Peter wrote, **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” (1 Peter 5:8-9)**

The Church in many ways resembles our natural family like the father as a priest ably assisted by his wife teaching the children the word of the Lord and how to live an overcoming Christian life. For some people their church family is the only family that they may have. Being connected with other believers helps us to grow in our walk with the Lord and to be nurtured and encouraged as we have fellowship with other believers.

It is important for all believers to be connected with other Christians. There is a corporate blessing that comes from meeting together with other believers. Jesus Himself said, **“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20)**

There are churches of all different sizes reaching out to different groups of people and in different cultures. There are different models for church growth such as house group movements but the main focus needs to be on helping all Christians to become mature disciples. **(Matthew 28:19-20)**
(Colossians 1:28) (2 Timothy 2:2)

In next week's Study Guide we will be focusing particularly on training up mature leaders and establishing multiplying small groups which are also a great vehicle through which people can be evangelised. The important thing is that we allow the Lord to build our local church fellowships His way.

The early church experienced great unity **(Acts 2:46)** and growth **(Acts 5:14)** as the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. **(Acts 2:47)** The early church also evidenced miracles on a continual basis **(Acts 5:16)**. The early church was characterized by UNITY, GENUINE LOVE AND GOD'S POWER BEING EXPERIENCED. So, in many ways the early church needs to be our primary model for what is important in the life of a local church or house group fellowship and what constitutes a healthy church.

The keys that I will be looking at in this teaching are relevant for both larger size churches as well as for small house group churches. No matter what size church fellowship we have at present, we need to focus on,

- 1) Winning souls to Christ, 2) Making mature disciples, 3) Equipping and releasing people into ministry, and
- 4) Helping all those in our fellowship to feel connected and cared for. Jesus emphasised the importance of every single person to God in the parable of the lost sheep. **(Luke 15:4-7)**

Being connected to smaller groups is a key to seeing the pastoral needs of believers met. Whilst corporate worship was important in the early church (They continued daily with one accord in the Temple), small house group meetings also enabled believers to have more intimate fellowship with other Christians as they broke bread from house to house. **(Acts 2:46)**

We see that as those in the early church had intimate fellowship with God and with others "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." **(Acts 2:47)** We see here in the book of Acts that it was the Lord who added to the church daily those who were being saved so how important it is that we allow the Lord to direct us in all that we do in our churches. **(Proverbs 3:5-6)** **(Proverbs 16:3)**
(Proverbs 16:9) (Psalm 37:3-5) Because believers had a genuine love for both God and for other Christians, there was great unity in the early church. (They were of one accord and had all things in common). **(Acts 2:46) (4:32)** The bible makes it clear that where brethren dwell together in unity God commands a blessing. **(Psalm 133:1-3)**

I will begin this study now by looking at a number of passages of scripture in the book of Acts that relate to the growth of the early church to help set a foundation for this week's study.

"Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation. "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them."

"And they continued steadfastly in the **apostles' doctrine and fellowship**, in the **breaking of bread**, and in **prayers**. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. **Now all who believed were together**, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with **one accord** in the temple, and breaking bread from **house to house**, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, **praising God** and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." **(Acts 2:38-47)**

“Now the multitude of those who believed **were of one heart and one soul**; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, **but they had all things in common**. And with **great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus**. And great grace was upon them all. **Nor was there anyone among them who lacked**; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.” (Acts 4:32-35)

“Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and **serve tables**.”

Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you **seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business**; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude...Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.” (Acts 6:2-5 & 7)

“Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. **AND THERE WAS GREAT JOY IN THAT CITY”** (Acts 8:4-8)

FROM THE ABOVE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE WE CAN SEE A NUMBER OF KEY PRINCIPLES THAT LED TO THE RAPID GROWTH OF THE EARLY CHURCH

WHEN WE LOOK AT THE EARLY CHURCH WE SEE FROM THESE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE:

1) That the preaching of the gospel with an emphasis on *true repentance* was the norm

It is so important that as a church we are actively involved in the preaching of the gospel to the lost and that we have a focus on equipping all Christians to become soul winners. If we are to see God’s Kingdom expanded here on earth we need to have a passion for fervent prayer, we must confront the demonic, we need to have an expectation of the miraculous and we need to have a burning heart for evangelism. It is so important that as a church we have outreaches into our community in which we preach and share the gospel with those who are not yet saved. Jesus Himself said,

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15)

2) Water Baptisms were an important part of the early church as believers outwardly expressed their new found faith by going through the waters of baptism

“The bible makes it clear that water baptism is not an optional extra. Jesus Himself was baptized, even though He had no need to repent of sin. (Mark 1:9) Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize new believers. (Matthew 28:19) Water baptism is for all believers. (Mark 16:16) ***Water Baptism is an outward expression of what has already taken place in the heart of a new believer.***

When we follow the Lord’s command to be baptized, we identify with Him in this way. The water into which we are immersed is like a “grave” and indicates that we were buried with Christ. As we rise from the water, we testify that we are now a new creation in Christ, rising to newness of life (resurrection power) in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12)

DUE TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE “BELIEVERS BAPTISM” WE NEED TO AT LEAST MONTHLY OR EVERY TWO MONTHS GIVE ALL NEW BELIEVERS THE OPPORTUNITY OF BEING WATER BAPTISED. Water Baptism helps to consolidate a new believer’s decision to come to Christ. Often during water baptisms people also experience God’s presence in a tangible way and come out of the waters of baptism set free from addictions and demonic oppression

3) That the ministry of the Word of God was a great priority in the early church. That they continued steadfastly in the Apostles Doctrine (The Word of God)

Ministering the Word of God as a pastor and leader is crucial to seeing growth in the lives of those who attend our church. **(2 Timothy 4:1-3)** Jesus Himself emphasised to Peter the importance of feeding His sheep the Word of God and tending to His sheep. **(John 21:15-17)** During His time here on earth Jesus spent much time teaching the Word of God to multitudes of people. **(Matthew 9:35)**

In the gospel of Mark we read, **“And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things.” (Mark 6:34)**

So many people’s minds have been tattooed with thoughts of negativity, defeat, wrong thinking, unbelief, fear and anxiety, which have prevented them from embracing all that God has planned for their life. As we minister the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit, wrong mindsets are broken and people are set free. There is life in the Word of God. **(Hebrews 4:12)**

Preaching and teaching the Word of God is a key to seeing people’s minds being renewed, to people being set free from wrong attitudes and behaviours and for building up the faith of believers. The preaching of the Word also helps people to gain instruction and wisdom to lead an overcoming and victorious life and to be equipped for every good work. **(Romans 12:2) (John 8:31-32) (Romans 10:17) (2 Timothy 3:16-17)**

It is so important that people coming to our churches are also encouraged to develop a private devotional life in studying the Word of God themselves, to help them to become established in their faith and to be prosperous and to have good success. **(Joshua 1:8) (Psalm 1:1-3)** Having mid week bible studies and new believers’ classes are also important to help Christians to become strong in their walk with the Lord. It is very important though that we are always balanced in our walk with the Lord and that we are both filled with the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. One well known theological professor wrote, “Too much Word and you dry up and too much Spirit and you blow up but together you grow up”

Church of Hope in Blacktown has Street Church meetings twice a week where they minister the Word of God to those in the community who would otherwise not come to church. Their key focus is on helping people to come to Christ and to then grow in their walk with the Lord as they share keys from the bible to leading an overcoming Christian life. From these Street Church meetings, they have now seen some of these people attending their weekly worship meetings at their centre. In the book of Isaiah we read, **“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:11)**

There is power in the preached word and the gospel to bring transformation to our cities. **(Acts 8:4-8)**

The Apostle Paul also emphasised the importance of those in church leadership spending much time in the Word of God to ensure that they are doctrinally sound in all of their teachings.

The Apostle Paul wrote, **“Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” (1 Timothy 4:12-16)**

Two important epistles for all pastors to read which were written by the Apostle Paul are 1 Timothy and 1 Corinthians, which was written to resolve Doctrinal and Practical Problems within the local church. 1 Timothy has been a handbook for pastors throughout the whole church age and was written to help guide the young pastor Timothy in fulfilling his responsibilities as a church leader.

4) That fellowship with other believers was an important focus - “Now all who believed were together, ...” (Acts 2:44) Given the lawless and ungodly times that we are now living in, **(2 Timothy 3:1-5) (Matthew 24:12-13)** more than ever before it is crucial for all believers to be encouraged to be connected to the life of a healthy bible based church. Being connected to other believers helps Christians to be accountable to others and to receive encouragement in their walk with the Lord. **(Hebrews 10:23-25)** God’s plan for our life will always be worked out in connection with other believers. We all need one another in the Body of Christ. **(1 Corinthians 12:12-28)**

5) That the taking of the Lord’s supper (the breaking of bread), to remember what Christ had done on the cross for them was a regular practice

The taking of communion on a regular basis helps to remind us of the significance of what Jesus Christ did on the cross for us at Calvary, and how we can now enjoy the freedom, forgiveness and fullness of life that comes from being in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Having communion at least on a monthly basis helps us to remember Christ’s sacrificial love for us on the cross. **(1 Corinthians 11:23-26)**

6) That prayer was a great priority in the early church (Acts 4:31)

Prayer is a great key to seeing our church making a difference in our community. Prayerless people are powerless. As a church we need to be praying for our city and for our nation and for those in our church on a regular basis. **(2 Chronicles 7:14) (1 Timothy 2:1-3)** Prayer needs to be an important part of all of our meetings. We need also as church leaders and pastors to encourage all believers to have a lifestyle of prayer. **(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) (Proverbs 3:5-6) (Philippians 4:6-7)**

7) That there was a reverential fear of God among those in the early church as they had an appreciation of the Holiness and greatness of God

In Chapter nine of the book of Acts we read, “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.” **(Acts 9:31)**

Having a healthy fear of the Lord helps us to stay on track in our walk with the Lord and to make right choices in life, so that we see all that God has planned for our life come to pass.

In the book of Proverbs we read,

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.” **(Proverbs 1:7)**

“Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones.” **(Proverbs 3:7-8)**

8) That praying for the sick and for miracles was a common thing. Miracles of healing are often a means by which people come to Christ

Praying for the sick and for miracles needs to be an important part of our church’s ministry. Miracles and healings are often the means by which people come to faith. When we look at the life of Jesus Christ, healing others was a significant part of His ministry. **(Matthew 9:35)** When Jesus sent out His twelve disciples **(Luke 9:1-2)** and the seventy others **(Luke 10:1 & Luke 10:8-9)** part of their mandate was to heal the sick. When people are healed of sicknesses or injuries, their testimonies have the potential to help lead many to Christ. **(ACTS 9:32-35) (ACTS 9:36-42)**

Praying for healings, miracles and deliverances **(Mark 16:17-18)** needs to also be a vital part of our church ministry. We need to also encourage those in our church to pray for those who are sick and who have needs in their life. We need as a church to pray for and believe for the same miracles to happen in our church meetings as happened in the early church. **(Hebrews 13:8)**

9) That there was great unity in the church and genuine community

Maintaining unity in our church meetings is crucial to seeing the power of God operating in our meetings. Where brethren dwell together in unity, God commands a blessing. **(Psalm 133:1-3)** Good leaders have the necessary discernment to keep strife out of their church meetings. It is important to deal quickly with any divisive attitudes that have the potential to bring disunity into our church fellowships. **(Titus 3:9-10)**

Making mature disciples that learn to walk in love towards others is a great key to helping to see unity established in our churches. Jesus Himself prayed that all believers would be one (that there would be unity in the body of Christ) that the world would believe that the Father had sent Him. **(John 17:20-23)**

10) That people had a genuine love for each other and helped out in practical ways as well

Creating a culture of loving acceptance and serving of others is important if a church is to make a great impact in its community. The world is now experiencing greater levels of strife and has become more and more impersonal. Jesus Himself emphasised the importance of loving others when He said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” **(John 13:34-35)** The Apostle John and James in their epistles also both emphasised that our love and faith also needs to be practical. **(1 John 3:16-19) (James 2:14-18)**

As leaders of churches, it is important to both model **(1 Timothy 4:12)** and teach the importance of reaching out to and loving others, so that we have a church culture of love and acceptance in all of our church meetings. The Apostle Paul wrote, “**Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.**” **(Galatians 6:10)**

11) That small group fellowships were a big key to seeing the growth of the early church (Breaking Bread from House to House) – NEXT WEEK WE WILL FOCUS ON SMALL GROUPS

Small groups are crucial for helping all believers to have their pastoral needs met, and to being encouraged in their walk with the Lord. Next week we will be looking at the dynamics of a healthy small group model which can be implemented in any church. In fact, the bigger a church grows the more important small groups are. In larger churches these small groups are often called life groups or connect groups. It is within the context of a small group that believers can be connected to the life of a church and encouraged to use their God given gifts. **(Ephesians 5:19)**

12) That the early church believers had a simple childlike faith (simplicity of heart)

As pastors we need to help encourage all believers to grow in a simple childlike trust in the Lord by preaching bible-based messages that help believers to grow in their understanding of God’s Word. The bible is full of great promises for all believers that we can build our life on. **(2 Corinthians 1:20)** The Apostle Paul wrote, “**So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.**” **(Romans 10:17)** As a church we need to have a pioneer spirit and be prepared to launch out into new things as the Lord directs. We need to encourage all believers to be people of faith and vision

13) That worship and praising God was a big part of the fellowship meetings

Praise and Worship is a great key to helping Christians to grow in their love for the Lord. King David was a worshipper and a man after God’s own heart. **(Acts 13:22) (Psalm 63:1-3) (Psalm 138:1-2)** Many of the fastest growing churches have a great emphasis on worship and evangelism. Worship helps us to touch the heart of God and to get His compassion for others. **(Psalm 37:4)** Worship also helps to usher the presence of God into our meetings and circumstances. **(Psalm 22:3)** Jesus Himself said, “**But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.**” **(John 4:23-24)**

14) That the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. All new believers were immediately connected to the life of the church

It is so important that when people come to faith in Christ that they are connected to the life of a healthy church. Without being grounded in their faith new believers can quickly fall away when persecution arises for the word's sake. **(Mark 4:16-17)**

All believers have an important part to play in the body of Christ so it is important that all new Christians are quickly planted in a local church fellowship, so that they can become fruitful in their walk with the Lord. **(Psalm 92:13-14)** Given the lawless and perilous times that we are now living in, **(2 Timothy 3:1-5)** **(Matthew 24:12-13)** it is so important that all believers, but especially new believers are connected to the life of a healthy Spirit filled, Bible based, local church fellowship. **(Hebrew 10:23-25)**

15) That the meeting of the practical needs of the widows and the poor was also a key focus

The early church was naturally spiritual. Though the early church moved in great power and miracles were common place, there was also a great emphasis on meeting the practical needs of the marginalized and widows. There is a saying that people do not care how much we know, but they do want to know how much we care. James in his epistle wrote what true spirituality meant, "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." **(James 1:27)** Meeting the practical needs of the poor and marginalized in our community is a great key to helping to see the hearts of people being opened to receive the message of the gospel. In the book of Isaiah we read,

"Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh?" **(Isaiah 58:6-7)**

16) That the Apostles delegated the Care Ministry responsibilities (serving of the tables) to seven men of good reputation who were full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom SO THAT THEY COULD FOCUS CONTINUALLY ON PRAYER AND THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

In the early church we see that when the church began to grow the apostles gave themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word to help build up those in the early church spiritually. The early church learned quickly that their prayer had to be continual because spiritual warfare is continual. As the church grew, circumstances required more of the apostles' time. In response to this they appointed seven men to serve as deacons to care for the church whilst they committed themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Although when starting a new church from scratch we often have to do many tasks, it is important that as pastors we focus on the all-important areas of prayer and the ministry of the Word and freely delegate responsibilities to others as God raises up helpers and leaders to perform roles within the church. It is crucial that we do not hold on to roles that others should be doing. Feeding our own soul with the Word of God and ministering the Word of God to others needs to be our primary focus as pastors and teachers.

WHEN WE LOOK AT PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE IN THE BOOK OF ACTS, WE SEE THAT THE EARLY CHURCH EXPERIENCED GOD'S POWER AND THAT MIRACLES AND HEALINGS WERE A COMMON OCCURENCE

"And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch." **(Acts 5:12)**

"And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, **and they were healed.**" **(Acts 5:14-16)**

The church was birthed in power on the day of Pentecost when all around 120 in the Upper Room (Acts 1:13-15) were baptised in the Holy Spirit. We see this in Chapter two of the book of Acts.

“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:1-4)

Almost immediately the Apostle Peter preached a sermon (Acts 2:14-39) which resulted in about three thousand people being saved and added to the church (Acts 2:41)

With the church birthed in power, miracles and healings were common place which resulted in many people coming to Christ and the rapid growth of the early church. (Acts 3:1-10) (Acts 5:16) (Acts 9:32-35) (Acts 9:36-42)

Seeing all believers being baptised in the Holy Spirit was a key focus of the early church. In Chapter Eight of the book of Acts we see many people coming to Christ in Samaria through the preaching of Phillip (Acts 8:5-8). Prior to this Phillip was serving in the distribution of food to the widows (Acts 6:5) but then he was used by God to see multitudes coming to Christ as he preached the gospel in the city of Samaria. Here we see a perfect example of how when we are faithful in the little, God is able to promote us into a major ministry calling. Phillip was a non-Apostle but this was no hindrance to his miracle ministry.

After many people had been converted to Christ through his preaching, we read how the apostles came to Samaria to pray for all those who had come to Christ to be baptized in the Holy Spirit,

“Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might *receive the Holy Spirit*. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they *received the Holy Spirit*.” (Acts 8:14-17)

It is so important in all of our church meetings that we encourage all believers to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and that we have an expectation (faith) that God will perform miracles in our meetings as we pray for people in need of healings and miracles in their life. (Hebrews 11:1) As we do, we will see the same miracles that occurred on a regular basis in the early church.

IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS WE READ, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8)

I WILL NOW ALSO JUST BRIEFLY LOOK AT SOME OTHER KEYS THAT WE CAN SEE IN THE EPISTLES IN RELATION TO HAVING HEALTHY CHURCHES WITH SOME RELATED SCRIPTURES FOR EACH

1) The importance of making mature disciples. (The Great Commission – Matthew 28:19-20)

The role of those in the five-fold ministry is for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry and for the edifying and building up of the body of Christ. As every believer fulfils God’s plan for their life (Ephesians 2:10) we see growth in the body of Christ (the church)

The Apostle Paul wrote, “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the **EQUIPPING** of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;”

“that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, **but, speaking the truth in love**, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-Christ-” “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself IN LOVE.” (Ephesians 4:11-16)

- 2) The importance of training up and mentoring leaders and releasing people into ministry. As pastors we need to be continually investing our lives in other future leaders to help them to be released into other ministry roles and new extension services or church plants.** As pastors we need to imitate the apostle Paul and become fathers of the faith. **(1 Corinthians 4:15-16)** Developing mature leaders will help to see a church growing and making a greater impact in the community. We must always have a Kingdom building mindset as a pastor and leader. It is about seeing His Kingdom being built. The Apostle Paul said to the young pastor Timothy, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” **(2 Timothy 2:2)**
- 3) The importance of appointing Christians of character into leadership positions as directed by the Lord (Holy Spirit) - (Acts 13:2) As Christian leaders, it is important that we model what it is to live the Christian life.** For this reason, appointing leaders with Godly character and integrity is vitally important. As pastors we should not appoint leaders hastily. **(1 Timothy 5:22)** What is in the heart of the leaders will influence the spiritual state of the church. The Apostle Paul wrote, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you - if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” **(Titus 1:5-9)**
Here the Apostle Paul emphasised the absolute importance of leaders (elders) having godly character as a prerequisite for being appointed into leadership roles. (See also 1 Timothy 3:1-7)
- 4) The importance of having programs for children and the youth. It is so important that we minister to the needs of children and the youth in a way that is relevant and understandable to them.** Having Kids Clubs and Sunday Schools for children and separate programs for youth is an important part of seeing a church growing strong and healthy over time. There are many good teaching tools and literature for teaching children that can be downloaded from the internet.
In the book of Proverbs we read,
 “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” **(Proverbs 22:6)**
- 5) The importance of having specialised women’s meetings and men’s fellowship groups**
 Having women’s meetings and men’s fellowship groups gives the opportunity for men and woman to be ministered to in areas relevant to their roles in the Christian family. Having strong families is a key to seeing stability in our communities and in our church fellowships. For this reason, monthly men’s breakfasts and regular women’s meetings can be invaluable to seeing growth in the lives of those in our congregations. Many of the larger churches have regular meetings and events to specifically address the unique issues and spiritual needs of men and women. Hillsong Church has also run a yearly colour conference for women for many years as well as an annual weekend retreat for men. In the book of Titus, the Apostle Paul emphasised the importance of older women training up the younger women in the church in the ways of living the Christian life as a wife. The Apostle Paul wrote, “the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behaviour, not slanderers, not given to much wine, *teachers of good things* – that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.” **(Titus 2:3-5)**

- 6) The importance of encouraging all believers to use their spiritual gifts and to fulfil their God given plan for their life.** As a team we can achieve much. Every believer has a unique calling and gifts which are to be a blessing for the wider body of Christ (**1 Corinthians 12:7**) and for helping others to come to Christ. As we all need one another in the body of Christ, it is good to encourage all believers to use their spiritual gifts. True joy and purpose come from using our God given gifts and talents for the expansion of His Kingdom (**Matthew 25:14-23**) **The Apostle Paul wrote,** “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: If prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. (**Romans 12:6-8**)
- 7) The importance of allowing the Holy Spirit to have His way in our meetings. (Zechariah 4:6) Not quenching the Spirit.** Having the tangible presence of God in our meetings is a key to seeing lives being touched and transformed by the love of Christ. We must not cut meetings short when the Holy Spirit is moving upon peoples’ hearts and lives. **The Apostle Paul wrote,** “Do not quench the Spirit” (**1 Thessalonians 5:19**)
We can also quench the Spirit if we allow an attitude of pride and showmanship to distort the simplicity of God’s workings in our meetings. We must always be careful to give all the glory to God
- 8) The importance of also having Godly order in our meetings.** “...The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.” (**1 Corinthians 14:32**) To preserve balance and to prevent confusion in the worship service, the apostle Paul emphasised the importance of regulating prophecies in that those who function in the gift of prophecy are to judge the authenticity of all prophetic utterances, in relation to their content, alignment with God’s Word and relevancy to the meeting. (**1 Corinthians 14:26-32**)
The Apostle Paul also commented on the importance of not distracting others by talking out of line to people during the middle of church meetings. He addressed this matter in relation to women speaking to their husbands during a church meeting. (1 Corinthians 14:34-35) The Apostle Paul also wrote, “Let all things be done decently and in order.” (**1 Corinthians 14:40**) When the Holy Spirit is free to move in our meetings and people are respectful of others and prophetic utterances are judged as to their authenticity, we can expect God to move in a mighty way in our meetings.
- 9) The importance of the LORD being in control of all that we do in our church.** It is crucial that we continually allow the Lord to guide and direct our steps in all that we do and that we follow **HIS BLUEPRINT FOR OUR CHURCH.** In the book of Psalms we read,
“Unless the LORD builds the house, they labour in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.” (**Psalms 127:1**) and
- 10) The importance of all church pastors being accountable to other mature pastors.** It is so important that pastors of churches are accountable to others and open to people speaking into their lives. Having checks and balances through pastors being accountable to other mature men of God is a great key to a church remaining strong and healthy. It is good for all churches to be affiliated with a healthy movement such as the Assemblies of God, or associated with a network of churches. It is advisable for all pastors to have fellowship with other pastors. Iron sharpens iron.

When pastors become isolated and are not prepared to have people speak into their lives, there is an ever-increasing danger of error and wrong doctrine creeping into their church fellowships. Having healthy relationships with other pastors is a great safeguard to help us remain doctrinally sound in all that we do in our church meetings. Jesus Himself warned that in the days just prior to His return that many would be offended. Jesus said,

“And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.” (Matthew 24:10-11)

We must be careful that we always maintain a soft heart as pastors and are quick to forgive those who may speak against us or offend us. We must always maintain a forgiving heart and be open to letting others speak into our life. There is wisdom in a multitude of counsellors. **(Proverbs 11:14) (Proverbs 15:22)**

There are many Scriptures that warn of the dangers of being isolated from fellowship and from being disconnected from the wider body of Christ and which also warn of the fact that in the last days many false prophets will rise up and lead many believers astray. **(Proverbs 14:14) (1 Timothy 4:1) (Matthew 24:4-5) (1 John 2:18-19) (2 Peter 2:1-3)**

How important it is given the days that we are now living in, that we have healthy checks and balances in our life and that we are in relationship with other pastors and ideally affiliated with a healthy network of pastors or with a movement such as the Assemblies of God.

I WILL NOW FINISH WITH A FEW PRACTICAL THINGS TO CONSIDER IN RELATION TO MAKING OUR FELLOWSHIPS HEALTHY COMMUNITY CHANGING CHURCHES

1) The importance of having a clear God given vision for our church. (Habakkuk 2:2-3)

Having a clear written down vision for our church, helps to attract believers to the life of the church and to take on ministry roles and responsibilities. Having a clear vision for our church fellowship helps us to stay focussed on reaching our community with the love of Christ and the gospel message.

2) The importance of connecting with our community in a relevant way

We need to look for opportunities to engage with the community in a real and meaningful way. Each year Church of Hope holds a special Christmas lunch for the community in Blacktown where they also share the message behind Christmas. In Melbourne, Church of Hope provides every Saturday night a meal for the marginalized which is supplied by other church groups who have a heart to feed the poor. It is so important for all churches to actively reach out into their community in practical ways so that they can engage with people and build relationships which enable them to share the gospel with them.

As pastors we need to encourage all believers to look for opportunities to share their faith with others. Every believer has a mission field and ministry. (Ephesians 2:10)

It is very important as a church in our community, that we also have a focus outside of the four walls of our church and that we have a heart to reach out to the lost and backslidden in our city. In the book of Acts we read,

“Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. Therefore he reasoned in the synagogues with the Jews and with the Gentile worshippers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.” (Acts 17:16-17)

Jesus Himself said, “... ‘Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.’” (Luke 14:21)

As church leaders we need to be always seeking the Lord for creative ways of connecting with our community to help those in our villages and cities come to Christ.

- 3) Responding to some of the needs in our community. We need to seek the Lord for practical ways of connecting with the community such as Teaching English, Cutting Lawns for single mums and pensioners, or setting up Sowing Schools to help build relationships and bridges to share the gospel with those in our community
- 4) As more people become connected to the life of our church, we need to encourage believers in our fellowship to reach into our schools, hospitals and prisons with the love of Christ and the gospel message
- 5) That people sense God's love and acceptance when they enter our church worship meetings. First impressions are very important. Having friendly ushers to welcome people into their church is a key focus for larger churches. We need to make all visitors feel welcome. We only have one chance at a good first impression. Serving tea and coffee after our meetings has the potential to help create a loving Christian community in our church. We need to cultivate an atmosphere of love and acceptance in all our meetings.
- 6) That our church worship centres are clean and tidy (this helps people not to be distracted during the worship time and the preaching of the Word) – We should take pride in looking after God's House
- 7) That where possible we help to resource new Christians with teaching materials and resources to get them started in their walk with the Lord.
- 8) That we help all new believers to be grounded in their walk with the Lord. Providing support and encouragement to new believers is especially crucial during the first month or two of their Christian Walk until they become established in the fellowship, especially if they are the only Christian in their family
- 9) That as a church we have a Kingdom building mindset and look to work with and support other churches in joint initiatives. Every church has a unique calling and different strengths that are also to be a blessing for the wider body of Christ. (In every city we have one church with many congregations)
- 10) The importance of having a sound administrative structure and financial integrity and accountability as a church. Complying with all Government requirements is crucial (Romans 13:1). We must be an example to those in the corporate world. If we have integrity in our church administration, the Lord can entrust to us great amounts of resources to complete His work through our church and ministry and entrust to our care many souls to shepherd and care for (Luke 16:10-11)
- 11) That our churches are safe places for people to come to, and
- 12) That the Senior Pastor needs to be a bigger picture person who looks at training up and mentoring leaders to help see the above church initiatives becoming a reality. It is so important for all senior pastors to prayerfully select a number of Christians to train up and mentor to fill leadership roles in their church.

I WILL CONCLUDE BY EMPHASISING AGAIN THE IMPORTANCE OF ENCOURAGING ALL BELIEVERS TO BE CONTINUALLY FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (**Ephesians 5:18**) AND TO BE ACTIVELY PRAYING FOR OTHERS THAT HAVE NEED OF HEALING OR MIRACLES IN THEIR LIFE. Every Believer can see miracles of healing as they pray for the sick in the name of Jesus. (**Mark 16:17-18**) WE NEED TO CONTINUALLY PRAY FOR AND BELIEVE FOR MIRACLES OF HEALING in our church meetings. The world needs to see again in these times, and especially in the Western world, the demonstration of miracles of healings and God's power in our lives and churches as we pray for the sick. (**1 Thessalonians 1:5**) We need to encourage all believers that God is able to use them in a great way for His glory. (**Ephesians 3:20**)

One final concluding thought. How important it is that we continually allow the Lord to unfold His plan and purpose for our lives, churches and ministries. Because "unless the LORD builds the house, they labour in vain who build it; ..." (Psalm 127:1)

CHURCH OF HOPE EVANGELISM AND MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE BY EMAIL AND WEBSITE: **STUDY GUIDE: WEEKS THIRTEEN AND FOURTEEN**

TOPIC ELEVEN: THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTORING LEADERS AND ESTABLISHING MULTIPLYING SMALL GROUPS WITH AN OUTREACH FOCUS

INTRODUCTION TO WEEKS THIRTEEN AND FOURTEEN:

For this *fortnight's* study guide we will be looking at three important features of a healthy local church that help it to be effective in reaching out to the unbelievers in the community and to seeing those in the church becoming mature disciples. These are; I) The importance of **MENTORING** Christians (leaders), II) establishing **MULTIPLYING** small groups and III) **MOBILISING** all believers to share their faith. This week's Study Guide is in many ways an appendix to last week's Study Guide for Topic Ten – Attributes of a healthy church / Experiencing God's power in our meetings. In this week's Study Guide I will be looking at the importance of mentoring other believers (especially emerging leaders) and the importance of establishing multiplying small groups which also have an outreach focus.

There are now many different religious groups and sects operating in the world today that are actively involved in trying to get people to follow their philosophies and beliefs. If a new believer is not quickly discipled, they can more easily be drawn back into the world and be more prone to being deceived by people who are sharing other religious beliefs and philosophies. For this reason, as a church, we need to have a real commitment to making mature disciples who will remain strong in their faith and helping believers to be connected to the life of a small group fellowship. Jesus Himself warned that in the days just prior to His return that many believers would be offended and then betray one another and that many would grow cold in their faith. In the book of Matthew we read, *“And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”* (Matthew 24:10-13)

We will begin this week's study guide by looking at some important aspects of church life to consider:

- 1) **How as a church we must be actively reaching out to the lost with the gospel message (Ezekiel 33:1-11)**
- 2) **The urgency of the times that we are now living in to share our faith with others, “for the coming of the Lord is at hand.” (James 5:8)** It is so important that we redeem the time and make the most of every God given opportunity to help see people come to Christ. *The harvest of lost souls is ripe NOW. (John 4:35)* *The Apostle Paul wrote; “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” (Ephesians 5:15-17)*
- 3) **The importance of all Christians being connected to other believers in a smaller group setting. (Hebrews 10:23-25)** Close fellowship with other believers is a great safeguard to help Christians to remain strong in their walk with the Lord
- 4) **The importance of mentoring other Christians and for pastors to invest their life in other future leaders**
- 5) **The importance of establishing multiplying small groups which have an outreach focus,**
- 6) **THAT EVANGELISM THROUGH MULTIPLYING SMALL GROUPS is a great means of reaching the masses, and**
- 7) **The importance of equipping and resourcing (with tracts) all Christians to share their faith with their friends, neighbours and work colleagues. (THE IMPORTANCE OF MOBILISING ALL CHRISTIANS IN THE AREA OF ONE-ON-ONE EVANGELISM) – There needs to be an urgency in reaching out to the lost with the gospel message.**

In this study guide we will be looking at the following three areas which are vital to seeing a church growing strong and healthy (both in size and spiritual maturity).

- 1) **Raising up and mentoring leaders** (In particular mature first tier small group leaders who can be mentored in the Senior Pastors Leadership Small Group) These leaders can then in turn train up other small group leaders. As part of this area of study there are some additional teachings in the TEACHINGS for Weeks 12 to 17 manual which can be downloaded from the following website page: www.coh.org.au/ministry_course
- 2) **The benefits of and a model for establishing multiplying small groups** which have an *outreach focus*, and
- 3) **Mobilising all believers to share their faith one on one** (Evangelism Training can often easiest be done by the small group leaders who can also encourage their group members to share their faith)

I WILL NOW LOOK AT THESE THREE AREAS IN TURN

1) RAISING UP AND MENTORING LEADERS (2 Timothy 2:2)

- A church full of mature leaders will grow strong and healthy
- As leaders are raised up, we can establish more ministries and open up more small groups.
- As leaders mature, we can then also prayerfully plant new daughter churches or extension services
- It is important as a pastor to prayerfully select those to mentor. It is so important that we mentor and invest our life in those who have a teachable spirit and a kindred spirit (a heart for the house)
- When we go to be with the Lord, the legacy of our life will be all the people that we have helped to come to Christ and encouraged to embrace God's plan for their life. In training up and mentoring strong leaders we multiply ourselves. Jesus Himself spent much time in mentoring twelve disciples who have helped to see the church now totalling in excess of two billion people. Jesus' model of training up mature disciples and then commissioning and releasing them into ministry must also be our model as pastors. **Some keys to being a good mentor are;**
 - I. **The importance of modelling what it is to live a God glorifying life. (1 Timothy 4:12) Leading by example. (John 13:14-15)**
 - II. **Prayerfully seeking the Lord before spending time with those that you are mentoring. It is good to seek the Lord for a word in season. (Proverbs 15:23)**
 - III. **The importance of always speaking the truth in love. (Ephesians 4:15)**
 - IV. **Spending quality time with those that you are mentoring. Doing life together (1 Thess. 1:7-9)**
 - V. **Being an encourager is a great key to being a good mentor. (Acts 11:22-24) We must continually affirm what God has planned for those that we are mentoring and continually remind them of what God is able to do in and through their lives. (Ephesians 3:20)**
 - VI. **Having a genuine love and concern for those that we are mentoring. We need to be fathers and mothers of the faith (1 Corinthians 4:15-16)**
 - VII. **It is healthy for all Christians to both have a mentor speaking into their own life and that they themselves invest their life into other less mature believers. (Proverbs 19:20)**
 - VIII. **In summary, when mentoring other believers and future leaders we need to:**
 - **Encourage those that we are mentoring**
(The meaning of the word encourage, is to give courage. Encouragement helps people to overcome their failures, fears and insecurities)
 - **Nurture those whom we are mentoring**
(Nurtured people are strong people, whereas neglected people can become weak, picking up wrong mindsets)
 - **Resource people with our knowledge, gifts, talents and abilities as well as providing resource materials**
 - **Invest our life in the lives of other people**
(We need to have a genuine commitment to and love for others)
 - **Coach those whom we are mentoring, (Advising but not Manipulating, Leading but not controlling) and**
 - **Hang in with those that we are mentoring** (We must never give up on people, no matter what is happening to them)
- PLEASE REFER TO THE TEACHINGS FOR WEEKS 13 AND 14 THAT RELATE TO RAISING UP AND MENTORING LEADERS AND THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN PUTTING PEOPLE INTO LEADERSHIP

2) ESTABLISHING MULTIPLYING SMALL GROUPS

(Refer to the teaching on a model for establishing multiplying small groups – The Principle of Twelve)

This teaching is in the TEACHINGS for Weeks 12 to 17 manual which can be downloaded from the following page. www.coh.org.au/ministry_course We will now look at three things in relation to having healthy small groups.

- i) **The benefits of being in a small group** There are many benefits that come from a believer being connected to a loving bible based small group. These include;
- They are connected to other believers who can encourage them in their walk with the Lord
 - They can grow in their knowledge of God’s love for them and how to love Him and others better **(Mark 12:30-31)**
 - There is wisdom in a multitude of counsellors. Believers can get input from other mature believers in their small group when faced with major decisions in life **(Proverbs 15:22)**
 - Within the context of a small group believers can receive prayer and have their pastoral needs met. Particularly in larger churches the smaller connect groups are crucial for believers to have their pastoral needs met. Being nurtured and encouraged by other believers is essential for all Christians, especially during times of trials. We all need each other in the body of Christ. Having fellowship with other believers is a key to remaining strong in our faith. **(Hebrews 10:23-25)**
 - Believers can grow in their walk with Lord as they study the Word of God and have fellowship and a time of prayer with other Christians. **(John 21:15-17)**
 - There is a cleansing effect when believers meet together. When we have fellowship with other Christians, we have accountability both to God and to other believers. The Apostle John wrote, **“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)**
 - Believers become more connected to the life and vision of the church as they develop friendships within their small groups **(Psalm 92:13-15)**
 - Having a multiplying small group model in which every group member *is seen as being a potential small group leader*, is a key to a church having the ability to absorb all new believers into the life of the church. Having the ability to start new small group meetings quickly is important when many people come to Christ during the weekly worship meetings. After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost around 3,000 people came to faith in response to one message preached by the apostle Peter and were added to the church. **(Acts 2:41)** Within a healthy outreach focused small group, all believers can be equipped to run future small groups to help disciple the new believers and members that come to the church. Equipping many Christians to run small groups is a great key to BEING ABLE TO DISCIPLE all those who come to our church.
 - Within a small group believers can be encouraged to use their spiritual gifts **(Romans 12:3-8)**
 - Small groups help to make big churches small at the same time. As Christians we all need fellowship with other believers. Small groups help new believers and visitors to a local church to be connected to other believers and to the life of the church
 - Given the days that we are now living in, having fellowship with other believers is crucial. Small groups are a great vehicle for helping believers to be encouraged and to feel love and accepted.
 - There are also a number of short term special small group activities that can help believers to both grow in their walk with the Lord and to get to know more people in the church such as New Believers Classes, Spiritual Gifts Workshops and Evangelism Training Seminars. Refer to “Things to consider in raising up and Mentoring Leaders” teaching (Pages 10 to 12)
- ii) **One possible format for running a healthy small group meeting could be:**
- **Open in prayer. Invite the Holy Spirit to have his way in the meeting**
 - **Welcome / Time of personal sharing around tea and coffee (10-15 minutes maximum)**
 - **Worship and Prayer (30-45 minutes)**
 - **Sharing of the Word / Teaching and Study (30-45 Minutes) / Communion / Close in prayer**
 - **Light Supper (meal) / Tea and Coffee / Fellowship**

iii) **Evangelism through small groups.** Small groups have a number of advantages in helping people come to Christ. These will be discussed in more detail in point three. But in brief a loving small group provides an opportunity for unsaved friends to be presented the gospel in an environment of love and acceptance. Secondly, as a small group fellowship which has bonded together, it is a great basis on which the group members can pray for and plan together to organise monthly outreaches into places such as hospitals or prisons or into the streets of their local neighbourhood.

3) MOBILISING ALL BELIEVERS TO SHARE THEIR FAITH (Please refer to the teaching “Some brief keys to being effective in witnessing and preaching to others” in the TEACHINGS for weeks 6 to 11 manual to help equip Christians to share their faith) Every believer has the ability to lead others to Christ and to give out gospel tracts to unbelievers. “...And he who wins souls is wise.” (Proverbs 11:30)

- As pastors we need to lead by example. We need to spend time with the Lord to get God’s heart and compassion for the lost. **(Matthew 9:36)** Evangelism is more caught than taught.
- We need to get enthusiastic as pastors about encouraging those in our church to reach out to their unsaved friends and work and school colleagues – Due to the warfare and discouragement that all Christians encounter from time to time, we need to be consistently encouraging all believers to live for the Lord and reminding them of the great value of every soul and the significance of every soul that comes to Christ. **(Luke 15:4-7)**
- Equipping believers to evangelise can be done very effectively as part of the teachings of a small group. Given the late hour that we are living in, it is so important that all Christians are equipped and encouraged to become soul winners. Anyone can give a gospel tract to someone else.
- As a small group, plans can be made to run monthly or even fortnightly outreaches as directed by the Lord to help people come to Christ
- A small group should have both a discipleship and outreach focus. This could be achieved as follows: One week the small group can have a discipleship focus where the bible is studied and prayers made for those in need and the alternate week can have an outreach focus where unsaved friends can hear the gospel in a loving and relaxed manner within the group. As people are saved and added to small groups in this way, new groups can be established to cater for the increased number of believers joining the group. A group of around 12 is about as big as you would want in order to maintain intimate fellowship within the group.
- AGAIN, THE TEACHING “SOME BRIEF KEYS TO BEING EFFECTIVE IN WITNESSING TO AND PREACHING TO OTHERS” – (This teaching is in the TEACHINGS for weeks 6 to 11 manual) WOULD BE IDEAL TO USE TO HELP EQUIP ALL CHRISTIANS TO SHARE THEIR FAITH MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH UNBELIEVERS

QUESTIONS FOR SELF EVALUATION:

- i) As a pastor am I actively involved in mentoring a number of key future leaders?
- ii) As a pastor do I have a leadership small group that I run to help prepare believers for leadership roles within the church?
- iii) Do we have as a church a focus on establishing small groups?
- iv) Are most of the members in our church connected to a mid-week small group fellowship?
- v) As a church do we have leadership training classes to help prepare and equip Christians to run small groups?
- vi) Is the study of the Word of God and prayer a key focus in our small groups? We must always ensure that our small groups have a focus on helping believers to grow spiritually rather than just becoming a social gathering
- vii) As a pastor do, we actively encourage all those in our church to become soul winners?
- viii) Are members of small groups also mentored and encouraged by their small group leaders to become future small group leaders themselves?

CHURCH OF HOPE EVANGELISM AND MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE BY EMAIL AND WEBSITE: *STUDY GUIDE: WEEK FIFTEEN*

TOPIC TWELVE: KEYS TO BUILDING HEALTHY MINISTRY TEAMS (ENCOURAGING ALL BELIEVERS TO USE THEIR SPIRITUAL GIFTS)

INTRODUCTION TO WEEK FIFTEEN:

Building healthy leadership teams and ministry teams is a great key to seeing a church growing healthy and strong and making a great difference in the community. As a team people achieve much more collectively than what they would achieve collectively as individuals. There is a synergy that comes from people working together in unity for a common cause. One will put a thousand to flight but two will put ten thousand to flight.

In this study guide we will be looking at keys to building healthy teams. As part of this week's readings, we will be looking at the following three teachings: 1) Having Effective Ministry Teams, 2) Conflict Resolution, and 3) The Different Spiritual Gifts. These teachings are in the TEACHINGS for Weeks 12 to 17 manual.

Within a team we can receive encouragement from one another as we work together for a common cause. Being part of a healthy ministry team and having a support network, helps believers to be fruitful in their walk with the Lord. Ministering as part of a team is more important than ever for Christians, given the days that we are now living in where many believers are now facing much opposition for their faith. Maintaining unity within a team is crucial if we are to see God's favour and blessing upon our efforts as a team. Particularly in the areas of ministry and the family unit there is great spiritual warfare as the enemy tries to divide and conquer. Jesus Himself said,

“Every Kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.” (Matthew 12:25)

The Bible also makes it clear that when we work together in unity with other believers, we see God's favour and blessing upon our efforts. In Psalm 133 we read,

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing –Life forevermore.” (Psalm 133:1-3)

As Christians working together in unity and having a genuine love for each other helps to see our lives making a great impact on the lives of unbelievers. Jesus Himself said,

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

As pastors and leaders, we need to be visionaries and bigger picture people. Rather than trying to meet all of the pastoral needs of those in our church, as our church grows, we need to be looking at expanding the pastoral care team so that all those in our church can have their pastoral needs met. We mentioned much about this in our last Study Guide which focused on the importance of having small groups.

As bigger picture pastors we need to look at the needs in our church and community and look at raising up leaders to facilitate the running of programs and ministries to see those needs being met. Rather than a pastor seeing his church being full of individual members, as visionary pastors we need to be looking at developing teams within our church which can effectively meet the needs of those in our church and community. Teams for the children's ministry, teams for providing community lunches, ushering teams to make people feel welcome in our church, follow up teams to help connect new believers to the life of the church are just a few teams that are important as a church begins to grow in size.

Carl George in his book “How to Break Growth barriers” shared about the importance of pastors going from being Shepherders to Ranchers as their churches grow in size. The Senior Pastor of the largest church in Sydney, which now numbers around 38,000 across all of its many campuses, has a real heart to see leaders being trained up and church planting teams raised up to pioneer new ministries and church plants. As part of his vision to train up leaders he has established a Bible College. This senior pastor is very releasing and encourages all believers to flow in their ministry gifts and callings. This now global church is Hillsong.

Carl George emphasised in his book that for a church to grow in size, the pastor must go from being a Shepherd to being a Rancher. From trying to be the major care provider for the entire church to assessing the bigger picture and making sure that all those in the church are connected to a pastoral care support group. The Rancher has a greater focus on strategic planning and on identifying areas of ministry that are required in the church and then organising groups and teams to be raised up to meet these needs.

The Rancher is more focused on seeing the pastoral needs of all church members being met through lay pastors (small groups) than providing the pastoral care himself. In this way as a church continues to grow in size all members are still cared for pastorally. It is good also to encourage as pastors all Christians to be actively involved in reaching out to and serving others in their community and workplaces. Every believer has the potential of making a great difference in this world by loving people into God's Kingdom. Visiting people in hospital is one such way of demonstrating the practical love of Christ. A loving Christian fellowship has the potential to make a great difference in the community.

Ranchers focus on the objectives and needs of the church and on what groups and ministry teams are required to see those needs and objectives met. Ranchers have the ability to delegate work to others and to supervise them in a way that is most suited to their temperament and personality type. The Rancher is continually looking at seeing Christians being trained up and released into ministry roles in the church. The Rancher is also continually looking at creating ministry roles and opportunities for Christians to exercise their spiritual gifts. In this way the church continues to grow in size and effectiveness in the community.

Shepherders on the other hand have a reluctance to delegate tasks to people and to release others into ministry roles and responsibilities. Shepherders are invariably needs driven and feel personally responsible to help everyone that requests help in their church. Shepherders work to the limit of their time and energy and they do not ask for a greater vision than what they can do by themselves. For this reason, churches run by pastors with a Shepherders mindset will invariably remain small in size.

As a pastor and leader of a church, it is so important that we regularly draw aside with the Lord to seek God's perspective and direction for our church. By doing this we become aware as our church grows of what ministries are required and which people God is preparing to lead and oversee the new ministry groups and teams that are required. It is so important that as a church we actively encourage all believers to follow God's plan for their life and to be positioned where God would have them be. Every believer has an important ministry and part to play in the Body of Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote,

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (*Ephesians 2:10*)

“from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself IN LOVE.” (*Ephesians 4:16*) The role of those in the five-fold ministry is to help equip those in the Body of Christ for the work of ministry and to see all believers being edified and built up in their walk with the Lord. The Apostle Paul wrote,

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.” (*Ephesians 4:11-13*)

A church with a strong committed core group of leaders with varied ministry gifts will grow strong and become a community changing local fellowship. As senior pastors, it is so important that we invest our lives in a core group of key leaders in our church.

I will now be looking at a number of factors to consider in relation to forming strong teams. A champion team is far better than a team of champion individuals. Working together in unity as a team we can achieve much. The following keys and features to having healthy teams are applicable to all teams and groups but are particularly related to the establishment of strong ministry teams. Again, maintaining unity in teams is crucial as Jesus clearly emphasised the disastrous consequences of disunity. (**Matthew 12:25**) Because the Devil knows that as a team Christians can achieve much, he will try and create strife and discord among its members to bring destruction to the group from within. We must be aware of his devices. (**1 Peter 5:8**) This spiritual warfare increases the more a team or church is making a great impact in the world for eternity.

The following guidelines could be studied by the members of any team in your church to help see the vision and purpose of the team being fully realised.

- 1) **THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A SHARED VISION FOR THE CHURCH MINISTRY TEAM**
 Having a clear vision and purpose for a ministry team or church department is a key to seeing things being accomplished by its members. "Where there is no vision people cast of restraint; ..." **(Proverbs 29:18)** Having specific objectives for a team helps its members to be focused and fruitful in their endeavours. The LORD said to the prophet Habakkuk,
 "Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it." *(Habakkuk 2:22)*
- 2) **The importance of praying together as a team** (Involving God in all that we do as a team)
- 3) **The importance of leaders continually spending time with the Lord to seek ongoing guidance and direction for the operations and activities for the team or church.** For example, as a children's ministry begins to grow the Lord will continue to give ongoing wisdom and direction to the leaders on how best to see the ministry developing in order to make the greatest impact on the lives of the children attending **(Proverbs 16:3) (Jeremiah 23:18) (1 Thessalonians 5:17)**
- 4) **The importance of allowing the LORD to build the team** (That those in the team have been called by God to be part of the team) **(Psalm 127:1)**
- 5) **The importance of prayerful planning and preparation before launching new ministry teams.** We can avoid many problems when commencing new ministry activities if we spend adequate time preparing and equipping the leaders for the new work and thinking through and PREPARING for possible challenges and issues that could arise. By doing this new ministries and church plants start off on a good footing. **(Proverbs 3:5-6)**
- 6) **Each team member having a spirit of excellence (not perfection).** There is a saying that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. It is good to give our best for the Lord. He deserves it. As leaders we must be careful to ensure that there is good morale in our teams and that all team members have an enthusiasm for what they are doing. Purpose and joy come from flowing in our gifts and callings. For this reason, it is important that team leaders ensure that all team members are operating in their area of gifting.
- 7) **The importance of teams having clear plans and goals to achieve.** A vision when implemented by making clear plans and goals which are achieved brings powerful results. **(Proverbs 21:5)**
- 8) **Those in leadership need to have a passion and enthusiasm for the purpose of the group.** This is crucial if they are to effectively communicate the vision to others and to inspire them to commit to the purpose and vision of the team.
- 9) **The importance of being quick to deal with any contention or conflict within a team**
 (See Conflict Resolution teaching) – **Titus 3:10-11**
- 10) **The importance of having adequate training for all team members.** For example, a training session on people skills would be ideal for those involved in the welcoming team, who are responsible for greeting visitors to the church. We only have one chance at a good first impression
- 11) **The importance of spending quality time together with other team members to help develop healthy and strong relationships** – We also need to spend some fun times together from time to time by having a meal or a tea or coffee together to learn to enjoy each other's company
- 12) **The importance of teamwork. It is vital that all members work TOGETHER for the common cause of the team or group.** Members of the group ideally should be prepared to go the extra mile to help other members in the group who may at times be lagging behind. The importance of having an US and TEAM mentality is vital to the success of any group or team initiative.
(Romans 12:16) (John 17:20-23)

- 13) **The importance of leaders of teams and churches involving and seeking INPUT from those in their core leadership team or ministry group when formulating plans and strategies for their groups.** It is good as leaders to get input from those in our team as there is wisdom in a multitude of counsellors. **(Proverbs 11:14) (Proverbs 15:22)** As leaders we need to be mature enough and secure enough to embrace the ideas of others that may be far superior to our own. People are also more likely to be connected and committed to the life of a church or team if they have also been given the opportunity of being involved in the planning process
- 14) **THE ABSOLUTE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING UNITY WITHIN A GROUP: Some keys and attributes that can help to maintain unity within a team or church group are:**
- i) **That people always take precedence over programs.** All ministry activities must focus on helping people to grow in their faith and to live an overcoming and fruitful life. Caring for and loving people must always be the priority. **(1 Corinthians 13:1-3)**
 - ii) **The importance of always thinking what is best for THE TEAM**
 - iii) **That all team members esteem other team members better than themselves. A great key to unity** (Philippians 2:3-4)
 - iv) **That we continually extend grace towards others. None of us are perfect.** (Romans 12:10) We need to continually look for the best in others rather than always fault finding. The Apostle Peter wrote, “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “Love will cover a multitude of sins.” **(1 Peter 4:8)**
 - v) **The importance of continually ENCOURAGING others within the group.** Especially as the leader of a group we need to be continually encouraging everyone to be all that God has planned for their life and OPENLY APPRECIATING the efforts of others **(Hebrews 10:24-25)**
 - vi) **That each team member has a sense of calling to the vision and purpose of the group or team.** For example, that someone has a real heart to be part of the welcoming team and gets great satisfaction from greeting those who enter the doors of our church, or that a person involved in children’s ministry senses a real call to ministering into the lives of children. WE ARE MOST PASSIONATE WHEN WE ARE OPERATING IN THE AREA OF OUR GIFTING
 - vii) **The importance of each member being committed to the vision and cause of the group or team. Team loyalty is a great key to seeing unity within a team or church**
 - viii) **The importance of all team members having a servant heart** (Matthew 20:26-28)
 - ix) **That those in the team have a genuine desire and commitment to growing in Christlike character** (2 Timothy 2:21) (Colossians 3:12-14) (Romans 8:28-29)
 - x) **The importance of leaders mentoring and encouraging members of their team or group to become all that God has planned for their lives and helping to equip and empower them for greater responsibilities in the future** (2 Timothy 2:2)
 - xi) **The importance of all team members having a genuine love for the other team members and that practically there is mutual support for one another** (Romans 12:9-10)
 - xii) **The importance of all team members remaining FOCUSED on seeing the purpose and mission of the team or church group being accomplished,**
 - xiii) **The importance of dealing quickly with any personal differences that may have the potential to create strife and division within the group.** (Matthew 18:15-17)

- 15) **The importance of encouraging all team members to use and to flow in their unique spiritual gifts. (Romans 12:6-8)** A team is most effective when all team members are operating in their area of gifting. Please refer to the teaching on “The Different Spiritual Gifts” in the TEACHINGS for weeks 12 to 17 manual.

In relation to spiritual gifts, it is important to realise that:

- a) Our gifts are heaven sent (God given) – Every good gift and every perfect gift comes from God – So whatever gifts God has given to us are GOOD (**James 1:17**)
- b) It is God’s will to gift us (**James 1:17**) (**Romans 12:3**)
- c) We must not think that the gifts are for us. God gifts us for the benefit of others (**1 Corinthians 14:12**) (**1 Corinthians 12:7**)
- d) God has uniquely created us and gifted us for His plan for our life. We have been perfectly gifted for our calling and purpose for life (**Ephesians 2:10**)
- e) We must never compare ourselves with others
- f) Even our heritage (our background) is perfect for what God has called us to do in life
- g) Our acceptance and self worth must never come from our gifts and calling but from who we are in Christ (Loved and accepted by Him) – (**Ephesians 1:3-14**)
- h) It is important to be faithful stewards of the gifts that God has given us. That we use them to be a blessing for others. (**Romans 12:6-8**) (**Matthew 25:14-30**)
- i) As pastors and leaders, we need to encourage and empower people to flourish in their gifts. (**Ephesians 4:11-12**)
- j) We must never allow pride to creep in when God begins to use us mightily in our area of gifting. Pride always precedes a fall. (**Proverbs 16:18**) All that we achieve is because of God’s grace. (**Romans 12:3**) AND

- 16) **FINALLY, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT ALL TEAM MEMBERS HAVE A GENUINE LOVE FOR CHRIST. When all team members have a genuine love for Christ there will be greater unity and harmony within the group. When those in the team have a genuine love for Christ:**

- **People will be quicker to forgive others when offences arise** (Luke 17:1) (Mark 11:25)
- **There will be a greater sense of love and acceptance within the group as each member reflects the fruit of the Spirit in their lives. The Apostle Paul wrote,**
“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” (**Galatians 5:22-23**)
- **People will work together in greater unity** (Psalm 133:1-3)
- **Those in the group will invariably have a greater servant heart and will as a result have a greater ability to work together as a team**
- **Those in the group will be more effective in carrying out the purposes and plans of the team as the Holy Spirit empowers each team member to be more effective and efficient. The more intimate we are with the Lord, the easier it is to be instinctively led by the Holy Spirit in all that we do in life** (John 16:13) **God’s ways are higher than our ways.** (Isaiah 55:8-9)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- For these many reasons it is good to incorporate in all of our team activities a time of prayer and worship. Those that pray together stay together. |
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CHURCH OF HOPE EVANGELISM AND MINISTRY TRAINING COURSE BY EMAIL AND WEBSITE: **STUDY GUIDE: WEEKS SIXTEEN AND SEVENTEEN**

TOPICS THIRTEEN AND FOURTEEN: LAUNCHING OUT INTO THE DEEP / LIVING IN THE MIRACULOUS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMITMENT

INTRODUCTION TO WEEKS SIXTEEN AND SEVENTEEN:

In this teaching we will be looking at the importance and urgency of reaching out into the harvest field and the importance of taking steps of faith so that all that God has planned for our lives and churches will come to pass. God is never limited by our ability or by our circumstances, only our availability and willingness to pursue His plan and purpose for our life and churches. God is able to meet our every need when we step out by faith to follow His plan for our life and churches. In this concluding study guide, I really sensed the Lord put on my heart to encourage all Pastors and Christians to take steps of faith, so as to fully embrace all that God has planned for their lives and churches.

In the first part of this teaching (Topic thirteen) I will be looking at aspects of launching out into the deep and living in the miraculous that can be studied in God's Word. We must not let our current circumstances determine what we do for the Lord. The whole Christian Walk is one of a walk of faith. When we move out by faith to do what God has called us to do, He moves on our behalf. In the book of Hebrews we read,

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1)

God's desire is that none would perish (**2 Peter 3:9**) (**1 Timothy 2:3-4**) (**Ezekiel 18:32**) so when He puts on our heart things to do to reach the lost, we can be assured that God will meet every need and expense that is required to see these things being accomplished. A great key to living in the miraculous is walking in obedience and doing things God's way. God's work done in His ways will NEVER lack provision. The bible makes it clear that God's ways are higher than our ways. (**Isaiah 55:8-9**)

Now is the time for the church to rise up and to share the hope that we have in Christ with all people. There is power in the gospel message to transform our cities. (**Acts 8:4-8**) There are multitudes in the valley of decision. The early church moved in power and miracles and signs and wonders were the norm. How we need to be praying for God to move in power in our lives and church meetings. In the book of Acts we see after Peter and John had been severely threatened for their faith, that the believers prayed for God's power and miracles to be evidenced in their lives through the Name of Jesus.

“Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, ‘by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the Name of Your Holy Servant Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” (Acts 4:29-31)

Given the imminent return of the Lord and that there is world around us so in need of salvation, how we need to be prepared at this time in history to step out by faith into all that God directs us to do in our lives and churches. We must be prepared to get out of our comfort zones and launch out into the deep as the Lord directs us to.

In the gospel of Luke we read,

“So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” But Simon answered and said to Him, “Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.” And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid, from now on you will catch men. So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him." (Luke 5:1-11)

FROM THIS PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE, WE CAN LEARN MUCH

- 1) In our own ability we are limited in what we can do. Peter had fished all night and caught nothing. For us as believers we need to have the hand of God upon all that we do in life. Jesus Himself said, **"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."** (John 15:4-5)
The Apostle Paul wrote, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13)
- 2) The Lord will sometimes ask us to do things when it is not convenient for us to do so. Peter had toiled all night and would have been tired. However, at the command of Jesus to launch out into the deep and to let down his nets for a catch Peter did so. It is important like Peter that we are always willing to do what God calls us to do, even when it is not convenient for us to do so. God's strength is always made perfect in our weakness. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10) Often it is when we are prepared to make big sacrifices for the Lord that we see the real miracles and blessings in our life.
- 3) When we follow the directions of the Lord we will see the miracles in our life. Fruitfulness and success come from just doing what Jesus tells us to do. How we need to be continually led by the Holy Spirit in all that we do. Peter simply did what Jesus told him to do and then he saw the miraculous catch of fish.
- 4) At times the Lord will tell us to do things that in the natural do not seem logical. The best time to fish is normally at night. But when Jesus tells us to do something there will be success and fruitfulness
- 5) The importance of doing everything that God directs us to do in life. Jesus said to Peter to launch out into the deep and to let down his NETS (plural) but he only let down ONE net. (Partial obedience) Jesus knew that there would be a massive catch of fish for Peter. We can so often limit what God wants to do through our life based on our own human logic (the morning was not the best time for fishing in the natural) and based on our past experiences. (Peter had fished all night and had caught nothing)
- 6) God has so much more planned for us than we could ever imagine. (Ephesians 3:20) "For with God nothing will be impossible." (Luke 1:37) Peter and his fishing partners "were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken" (Luke 5:9)
- 7) When we do things God's way and, in His timing, we see the miracles. How important it is that we allow the Lord to direct our steps in life continually. (Psalm 37:23)
- 8) We see how Peter had to call for his partners in the other boat to help bring in the catch of fish. There were so many fish caught that both boats began to sink. How we need to work together in the body of Christ and to pray for and support one another. Every church needs to be involved in bringing in the harvest of lost souls. How important it is that we all work together at this time to help see the harvest of lost souls coming to Christ. There are multitudes of unsaved people who need to come to Christ, and
- 9) Peter responded immediately to Jesus' command to launch out into the deep for a catch AND then to follow Him to become a fisher of men. It is so important to immediately respond to what God calls us to do. It is so important that we redeem the time (Ephesians 5:16) and that we make the most of every God given opportunity to reach the lost with the message of the gospel. Jesus Himself emphasised the urgency of reaching out to the lost when He said, **"Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!"** (John 4:35)

Given the urgency to reach the masses with the gospel message, how important it is as pastors and leaders that we help to equip and empower all believers to become soul winners. (Proverbs 11:30)

The second area of this study guide (Topic Fourteen) that we will be looking at is the importance of commitment. As Christians we are in a continual spiritual contest in which the enemy, the Devil will continually try to distract and discourage us from fulfilling God's plan for our life. **(1 Peter 5:8-9) (Matthew 10:16) (John 10:10)** If we remain fully committed to following God's plan for our lives and churches we will see God doing great things in and through our lives and churches. Commitment is a key to seeing all that God has planned for our life and churches coming to pass. The Apostle Paul wrote, **"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."** (1 Corinthians 15:58)

For the remainder of this study guide I will be looking at things to consider and study from the bible that relate to living in the miraculous and to the importance of commitment for every believer. As we learn to step out by faith to wholeheartedly follow God's plan for our life and churches, we will see many miracles in our life and God's continual provision. As we focus on reaching out to the lost with the gospel message, which is God's heart (Jesus Himself said that He came to seek and to save that which was lost – Luke 19:10) we can depend on God's faithfulness to meet our every need in life.

LIVING IN THE MIRACULOUS (TOPIC THIRTEEN)

When we read the bible, we can see many keys that can help us to live in the miraculous. These include:

1) Being where God calls us to be. Blessings and favour come from being where God has called us to be

In 1 Kings 17:1-6 we see how the LORD provided for Elijah the Prophet during a time of drought when he *obeyed* the instructions of the LORD and *went to dwell by the Brook Cherith*. When we position ourselves where God has called us to be, the place of blessing, doing what He has called us to do, we will always see God's provision in our life.

"And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word." Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook."

(1 Kings 17:1-6)

2) God is able to provide our needs in many different ways. We must not put God in a box. God will use different people at different times to supply our needs. God knows how to meet our every need.

The Apostle Paul wrote, **"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."** (Philippians 4:19)

We see in 1 Kings Chapter 17 how when the brook dried up that the LORD made another way for Elijah the Prophet to be provided for.

"And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." **(1 Kings 17:7-9)**

(Please read 1 Kings 17:8-16 to see how God supernaturally provided for Elijah through the widow)

3) The importance of continually putting the Lord first in all of our plans. Jesus Himself said,

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' Or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." **(Matthew 6:31-33)**

4) **When we do things God's way we see the supernatural miracles. It is so important that we follow God's plans for our life and churches and allow Him to direct our steps. Following God's blueprint for our life and church is a key to seeing God's ongoing favour and blessing upon our lives and ministries and to seeing miracles of provision in our life.** We see an example of a great miracle in the book of Joshua when the wall of Jericho fell down flat after Joshua, the men of war and the seven priests bearing trumpets of rams' horns had followed completely the LORD's specific instructions as to how to take possession of the city of Jericho which the LORD was giving to them. The LORD gave them specific instructions as to how many times they were to march around the city. **(Please read Joshua 6:1-20)**

5) **The importance of ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is always best to pray for people when the gifts of the Holy Spirit are operating in our lives during our church meetings. Worship is a great key to helping us to flow in the gifts of the Spirit.** *(The teaching "Gifts of the Spirit" is in the TEACHINGS for weeks 12 to 17 manual which can be downloaded from the following website page: www.coh.org.au/ministry_course)*

The Apostle Paul wrote, **"For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake."** *(1 Thessalonians 1:5)*

"I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." **(1 Corinthians 2:3-5)**

JESUS HIMSELF DEPENDED ON THE HOLY SPIRIT DURING HIS MINISTRY HERE ON EARTH.

In the book of Acts we read, "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him." **(Acts 10:38)**

It is so important that we are continually filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and ministering in the power of the Holy Spirit. When we minister in the power of the Holy Spirit we see the operation of the gifts of the Spirit such as the gifts of healings and the working of miracles as the Holy Spirit wills. *(1 Corinthians 12:7-11)*

6) **That we continually put our trust in the Lord to meet our every need. We must always look to God to meet our every need. (Philippians 4:6) (Philippians 4:19) He may then put on our heart to make known our need to others.** George Mueller was a missionary evangelist who all his life only prayed to God in relation to his needs. He was challenged to completely rely on the Lord to meet his every need in ministry and to not make known his needs to others. With this simple dependence on God, he achieved much. Over the course of his lifetime he cared for 10,024 orphans, he established 117 schools and offered education to over 120,000 children (many of them orphans)

7) **The importance of praying in faith and in line with the will of God for our life.** The bible makes it clear that if we pray in faith and in line with the will of God for our life **(1 John 5:14-15)** we can be assured that our prayers will be answered. Praying in faith is very important in seeing our prayers answered. In the book of Hebrews we read, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." **(Hebrews 11:6)**

Jesus Himself said,

"Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them." *(Mark 11:22-24)*

8) God's timing is always perfect. Sometimes there is a timing delay to our prayers being answered. But God always has our best interests at heart and knows what is best for us. When we pray in faith we need to just keep standing on God's promises and faithfulness until we see the answers and breakthroughs in our life. In Psalm 37 we read,

"Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass." (Psalm 37:3-5)

When we look at the Word of God, we can be greatly encouraged that God can do great things in and through our life when we live for Him. When we look at the accounts of God's supernatural help and provision in the bible and all of the many promises in His Word, we can confidently step out by faith to do what God has called us to do.

From God parting the Red Sea to make a way of escape for the Children of Israel, (**Exodus 14:13-31**) to Gideon defeating an army of 135,000 men with just 300 men, (**Please read from Judges 6:11 to Judges 8:11**) to the Lord protecting three young Jewish men (Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego) who were thrown in a fiery furnace for standing up for their faith, (**Daniel Chapter Three**) the bible is full of inspiring accounts of God's faithfulness to His people in the past which can give us great confidence when stepping out to take on new ventures for the Lord. In the book of Acts we see the many healings that were experienced in the early church, (**Acts 5:12-16**) as well as miracles such as an angel of the Lord freeing Peter from his prison chains and opening the iron gate leading to the city to bring him to freedom. (**Acts 12:5-11**)

The bible is full of great promises that we can build our faith on. It is good to continually meditate on the many wonderful promises in the Word of God to keep our faith strong and alive. Just a few of these that are good to meditate on are: (**Mark 9:23**) (**Luke 1:37**) (**John 14:12-14**) (**Romans 4:17**) (**Ephesians 3:20**) (**1 John 4:4**) (**Philippians 4:13**) (**Philippians 4:19**) (**Jeremiah 33:3**) (**2 Corinthians 9:8**)

So, in conclusion we need to be people of faith and action, (who fully embrace every God given opportunity to advance God's Kingdom) who move in God's enabling power and who trust and depend on God to meet every single ministry and personal need.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMITMENT IN THE LIFE OF EVERY BELIEVER (TOPIC FOURTEEN)

Commitment is crucial in the life of every believer if they are to fulfil God's plan for their lives and churches. The bible makes it clear that through many tribulations we enter the Kingdom of God. (**Acts 14:22**) The Apostle Paul wrote to the young pastor Timothy,

"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12)

Vision and commitment are two keys to fulfilling all that God has planned for our lives and churches. Commitment is the key to seeing God's vision and plan for our lives coming to pass. Every believer and every church have the ability to make a great impact in this world for eternity. As pastors and leaders have the potential to influence the lives of many, it is so important that they model the Christian life in the way that they live their own life. (**1 Timothy 4:12**) (**1 Peter 5:1-4**) (**Titus 2:6-8**)

In His explanation of the Parable of the Sower, Jesus said,

Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred." (**Mark 4:18-20**)

In this Parable Jesus made it clear that many things can choke the Word in our heart and cause us to lead unfruitful lives.

The Christian Walk requires discipline and commitment if we are to see all that God has planned for our life coming to pass. The Christian Walk is always one of rowing upstream against the tide of this world that would try and drag us away from God's best. We have a very real adversary, the Devil, who will continually try and prevent every believer from making a difference in this world for eternity. Jesus Himself said, **"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."** (*John 10:10*)

The Devil (1 Peter 5:8), *The World* (the sphere of evil operating in our world under the dominion of Satan – the spirit of this world) (**1 John 2:15-17**) and *The Flesh* (our fallen human nature) (**Galatians 5:19-21**) will all try and oppose and prevent God's plan from being worked out in our life as believers. FOR THIS REASON, COMMITMENT IN OUR LIVES AS BELIEVERS IS CRUCIAL IF WE ARE TO SEE GOD'S PLAN AND PURPOSE FOR OUR LIVES AND CHURCHES UNFOLDING AND OUR LIVES BEARING MUCH FRUIT. God has so much in store for every believer's life. The Apostle Paul wrote,

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us." (*Ephesians 3:20*)

I will now look at some areas in which commitment is so important if we are to live in the fullness of what God has planned for our life and churches and if our lives are to impact the lives of many for eternity.

1) Commitment to living a life set apart for the Lord. This is a continual daily choice. Without this ongoing commitment to living a consecrated life, we are more likely to be distracted and discouraged from fulfilling all that God has planned for our life

Jesus Himself said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it." (**Luke 9:23-24**)

Jesus also said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it *produces much grain*. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honour." (**John 12:24-26**)

2) Commitment to continually doing the will of God for our life

The Apostle Paul wrote, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." (**Ephesians 5:15-17**)

3) Commitment to walking in the Spirit and being continually led by the Holy Spirit

The Apostle Paul wrote, "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." (**Galatians 5:16-18**)

Jesus Himself said, "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." (**John 16:13**)

4) Commitment to meditating on the Word of God. It is important that we continually renew our mind with the Word of God to develop faith filled Kingdom thinking. The real battle ground for all believers is the mind.

The LORD said to Joshua before he was about to lead the Children of Israel into the Promised Land, "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." (**Joshua 1:8**)

- 5) Commitment to a lifestyle of prayer and worship.** This is a key to gaining God’s perspective on things continually, to seeing breakthroughs in our life and ministry, (Acts 16:25-26) and to keeping our faith alive and active. Prayer and worship also help to keep our love and passion for Jesus alive and our focus on living wholeheartedly for Him. (*Matthew 6:19-21*)

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**)

King David wrote,

“O GOD, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for you; My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall praise You.” (**Psalm 63:1-3**)

- 6) Commitment to being accountable to other mature Christians. There is wisdom in a multitude of counsellors. We must never become an island to ourselves.**

In the book of Proverbs we read,

“Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.” (**Proverbs 11:14**)

- 7) Commitment to always wanting to please God rather than men.** We must always choose to do the godly thing rather than the expedient thing. As we continually choose to live a God glorifying life in every area of our life, we will see all that God has planned for our life coming to pass. Our greatest priority should always be to love and please the Lord. We must refuse to compromise our values to gain favour from men. As we continually stand up for what is right, we will see the fullness of what God has planned for our life coming to pass. (**Philippians 1:6**) When we look at the life of Joseph in the book of Genesis, we see how he refused to compromise when continually enticed by Potiphar’s wife to sin. (**Genesis 39:6-13**) After many years of testing and trials God raised Joseph up from the prison to the palace in just one day. (**Genesis Chapter 41**) Promotion in God’s Kingdom comes from above. As we are faithful in the little things God will entrust to us greater responsibilities. (**Matthew 25:14-23**)

- 8) Commitment to living a life of obedience.** This is a key to experiencing God’s ongoing favour and blessing in our life and to seeing all that God has planned for our life coming to pass. God’s ways are higher than our ways. When we live a simple life of obedience, we see God opening up doors that no man can close. (**Revelation 3:8**) Ultimately, we will be rewarded in heaven based on how faithful we have been in doing what God has called us to do during our time here on earth.

In the book of Isaiah we read,

“If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land.” (**Isaiah 1:19**)

Jesus Himself said,

“More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (**Luke 11:28**)

- 9) Commitment to NEVER GIVING UP ON WHAT GOD HAS CALLED US TO DO in life.** It is important that we finish what God has called us to do in life. If we do, many other lives will be impacted for eternity

At the beginning of His earthly ministry Jesus said,

“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.” (**John 4:34**)

Just prior to the end of His time here on earth Jesus said, “I have glorified You on earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” (**John 17:4**)

The Apostle Paul wrote, “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” **(Galatians 6:9)**

In the book of Hebrews we read,

“For God is not unjust to forget your work and labour of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” **(Hebrews 6:10-12)**

Towards the end of his life here on earth, the apostle Paul wrote,

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” **(2 Timothy 4:7-8)**

- 10) Commitment to trusting God at ALL times and in ALL circumstances.** We must simply just take God at His Word and refuse to be moved by our circumstances and what others may say negatively about our life and circumstances. We can be assured that what God starts in our life He will complete if we just keep trusting the Lord and allowing Him to direct our steps in life. **(Philippians 1:6)**

King David was a man who loved God wholeheartedly and who knew God’s character and faithfulness in a real and personal way. He wrote,

“Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God (I will praise His word), In God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me? **(Psalm 56:3-4)**

“In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me.” **(Psalm 56:11)**

“Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. **Delight yourself also in the Lord,** And He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.” **(Psalm 37:3-5)**

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all.” **(Psalm 34:19)**

Proverbs 3:5-6 also gives us some great wisdom on how we should live our life as Christians.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.” **(Proverbs 3:5-6)**

- 11) Commitment to spending quality time with our families.** It is important to keep our home front strong and united. Ministering to our children by example and teaching them to grow up in the ways of the Lord needs to be a great priority in our life as parents. In the midst of the busyness of life and ministry, it is important that we schedule in quality time with our spouses and families. In doing this we will safeguard and protect our marriages and families from the attacks of the Devil. The Devil will always try and divide and conquer Christian families if he can. Jesus made it clear that a house divided against itself will not stand. **(Matthew 12:25)** Having stability in our home life is a great key to being able to effectively minister to others. As Christian parents we have the opportunity of investing our lives in our children so that they will be the next generation of believers who can make a great difference in this world for eternity. Praying together as a family is a great key to keeping families strong and united. There is a saying those who pray together stay together. Some good Scriptures to meditate on in relation to family life are: **(Ephesians 5:19-33) (Ephesians 6:1-4) (Colossians 3:18-21) (1 Peter 3:1-2) (1 Peter 3:7)**

In the book of Proverbs we read,

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

12) Commitment to walking in humility and to having a humble dependence on God. We must always be careful to give all the glory to God, especially when God begins to bless our churches and ministries. The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”
(1 Corinthians 10:31)

Pride can be very subtle so we must always be committed to walking in humility which is a great key to promotion in God’s kingdom. God’s Kingdom is an upside-down kingdom. The lower we get, (the more we humble ourselves) the more God can raise us up to do great things for His glory.

In the book of James we read,

“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” (James 4:10)

Jesus Himself said,

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:25-28)

As Christians and particularly as pastors and leaders, (teachers will receive stricter judgment – James 3:1) we must always maintain a humble dependence on God knowing that apart from Him we can do nothing. (John 15:4-5) We must continually depend on God’s enabling power in all that we do in life and ministry.

The Apostle Peter wrote,

“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:11)

The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” (Ephesians 6:10)

The Apostle Paul also wrote,

“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (2 Corinthians 12:7-9)

13) Commitment to always having a teachable spirit. We come into the world knowing nothing. How important it is that we are always teachable and open to others speaking into our lives. There is wisdom in a multitude of counsellors. **(Proverbs 11:14) (Proverbs 15:22)** It is far better to learn from others than to learn from our own mistakes. If we are teachable, we can prevent much heartache in our life. If we are continually teachable, we will grow in knowledge and wisdom and consistently make good choices in life that are in line with God’s will for our life. The bible says much about the importance of having a teachable spirit. **In the book of Proverbs we read,**

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.” (Proverbs 1:7)

“Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.” (Proverbs 9:9)

“Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, But he who hates correction is stupid.” (Proverbs 12:1)

“Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise in your latter days.” (Proverbs 19:20)

In the book of Hosea we read, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...” (Hosea 4:6), and

14) Commitment to loving others at all times. As Christians our unconditional love for others is our greatest witness. All that we do in ministry and for others should always be undergirded by love

The Apostle Paul made it clear that without love even the most magnificent manifestation of gifts and the most heroic self sacrifice mean nothing. The Apostle Paul wrote,

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.” **(1 Corinthians 13:1-3)**

Jesus Himself emphasised the importance of loving others when He said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” **(John 13:34-35)**

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church of the Thessalonians,

“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure,” **(2 Thessalonians 1:3-4)**

Here we see that those in the church at Thessalonica had to endure persecutions and tribulations. However, due to the great love of all Christians for one another, their faith grew exceedingly. How important it is that we are continually committed to loving one another in the body of Christ and to reaching out to the lost with the love of Christ.

As we remain committed and disciplined in these areas of our Christian Walk and to never giving up on what God has called us to do in our life and churches, God will use us greatly to touch the lives of many.

We can learn much from the Apostle Paul’s great commitment to seeing the gospel being preached to all people. In his farewell address to the Ephesian elders, the Apostle Paul wrote,

“And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” **(Acts 20:22-24)**

To conclude this course, the teaching “An overview of what is important for all church leaders” can also be read. This teaching is in the TEACHINGS for weeks 12 to 17 manual which can be downloaded from the following website page: www.coh.org.au/ministry_course

I will finish this fortnight’s study with some questions for self evaluation for the topics for weeks 16 and 17

- 1) Have there been times when I have ignored the prompting of God to do something due to circumstances not appearing right?
- 2) Am I committed to always stepping out of my comfort zone to take on new challenges as the Lord leads?
- 3) Do I continually look to God first to meet my every need in life?
- 4) Do I actively encourage others to take steps of faith?
- 5) When reflecting back on the past, write down on a piece of paper the times that you have seen God’s supernatural provision for your life and church (You will be surprised how many times God has helped you in the past)
- 6) When confronted by challenges do, I always seek first the counsel of the LORD for guidance and direction?
- 7) Am I prepared to make sacrifices to see God’s plan and purpose for my life and churches come to pass?
- 8) Am I totally committed to allowing the Lord to direct my every step in life? and
- 9) Am I open and accountable to other mature believers? Can people speak correction into my life?