



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



---

# The CCP (Community Church Planting) Pastoral Training Course Book 2

*Reaching all the Nations for Jesus Christ*

*Bereik al die Nasies vir Jesus Christus*

OMS INTERNATIONAL (South Africa) T/A OMS INTERNASIONAAL (Suid-Afrika) H/A

(Reg no/nr 1982/094-95/08)

Formerly/Voorheen The Oriental Missionary Society

(Association incorporated under Section 21/Vereniging ingelyf kragtens Artikel 21)



*One Lord. One Life. One Calling.*

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 2.5 South Africa License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/za/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 171 Second Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA.

## *Omega Course:*

### Practical Church Planter Training

## Manual One

By

*The Alliance for Saturation Church Planting*

In cooperation with

Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries

---

CCP Pastoral Training Course

**Omega Course:  
Practical Church Planter Training  
Manual One**

Published by  
The Bible League, 16801 Van Dam Road, South Holland, IL 60473 USA  
Tel: (800) 334-7017 E-mail: [info@BibleLeague.org](mailto:info@BibleLeague.org) [www.bibleleague.org](http://www.bibleleague.org)

Copyright ©1999 by *The Alliance for Saturation Church Planting*.  
This material was prepared in cooperation with Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries, Project 250.

You are **permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material** in any format provided that:  
(1) you credit the author, (2) you indicate if modifications are made, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, and (4) you do not make more than 1,000 copies.

If you would like to post this material to the Internet or if your intended use is other than outlined above, please contact  
*The Alliance for Saturation Church Planting*, H-1111 Budapest, Budafoki út 34/B III/2, HUNGARY,  
Tel: +(36-1) 466-5978 and 385-8199 Fax: +(36-1) 365-6406 E-mail: [SCPAlliance@compuserve.com](mailto:SCPAlliance@compuserve.com).

Translations and adaptations for your context are also encouraged. Again, please contact *The Alliance* so that we can encourage and inform others who may also be interested in your language or intended use.

For more information about their respective ministries, please contact:



P.O. Box 843  
Monument, CO, USA 80132-0843  
Toll-free: (800) 649-2440  
E-mail: [Contact\\_USA@AllianceSCP.org](mailto:Contact_USA@AllianceSCP.org)  
[www.AllianceSCP.org](http://www.AllianceSCP.org)  
Europe Field Office E-mail: [SCPAlliance@compuserve.com](mailto:SCPAlliance@compuserve.com)



*Peter Deyneka*

**Russian Ministries**

Project 250  
P.O. Box 496, 1415 Hill Avenue  
Wheaton, IL, USA 60189  
Tel: (630) 462-1739 Fax: (630) 690-2976  
E-mail: [RMUSA@ASR.ru](mailto:RMUSA@ASR.ru)  
[www.russian-ministries.org](http://www.russian-ministries.org)

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers. All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America



---

Published in South Africa by OMS International South Africa  
P.O Box 560 Florida Hills 1716 SOUTH AFRICA

Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 Biblica. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

“Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960,1962,1963,1968,1971,1972,1973,1975,1977,1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.”

“Scripture taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.”

Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright 1996, 2004. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

Scripture is taken from GOD’S WORD®, © 1995 God’s Word to the Nations. Used by permission of Baker Publishing Group.

Scripture taken from The Message. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group

---

# **BIBLE STUDY METHODS**

---

BIBLE STUDY  
METHODS

1

LESSON

# Introduction to the Inductive Bible Study Method

## LETTING THE BIBLE TEACH US

### ☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the inductive Bible study method, and explain why it is superior to other methods of Bible study.

### ☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Understand the difference between deduction and induction.
- Be convinced that the inductive method is a better method than the “common” approach to studying the Word.
- Know the three stages of the inductive method.

### ☞ Main Points

- Deduction and induction move in opposite logical directions.
- The inductive method is the best method for learning something new from the Word.
- The steps of the inductive method are: Observation, Interpretation, Application.
- When the inductive method is not rushed, it provides a solid foundation for understanding the Bible.

### ☞ Appendix

1A How We Got the Bible

## INTRODUCTION

The Bible is the most important book ever written. It claims to be the very words of the almighty, infinite God, given to reveal Himself to finite man. The Bible is also the most important tool for the modern church planter or pastor. The “living and active” Word of God is able to penetrate the hearts and souls of those whom we seek to win for the Lord. It equips us for every good work, which certainly describes our ministry of multiplying churches across the land. It serves as a standard by which we measure and evaluate every doctrine, practice, tradition, and every other book. History, tradition and the human intellect may lead astray, but the Bible stands firm as the truth of God. Its teaching is always correct. Its prophecies always come to pass. Its words help us to win the lost and to resist the devil. The Bible is indispensable to our Christian life and ministry.

Since we believe that the Bible was given to us by God for our instruction, we need to approach it carefully and handle it accurately (2Ti 2:15). The divine nature of the Scriptures demands that we read it with the intent of *learning from it*, rather than *making it say what we want to hear*. How can we be sure we rightly understand the Word? The inductive Bible study method is designed to help every believer—whether layman or pastor—better understand the teaching of the Word of God. This lesson will introduce this simple and effective method, and following lessons will describe each step in more detail.

The inductive Bible study method is designed to help every believer—whether layman or pastor—better understand the Word of God.

## I. INDUCTIVE VS. DEDUCTIVE

Deduction and induction are two kinds of logic or reasoning. Both deal with the general and the specific. They are both methods of arriving at a conclusion. However, they do so in exactly the opposite manner. Deductive reasoning moves from the general to the specific, and inductive goes from the specific to the general. Both methods are used by Christians to study the Bible, but usually they are not aware of how each method affects their study and conclusions.

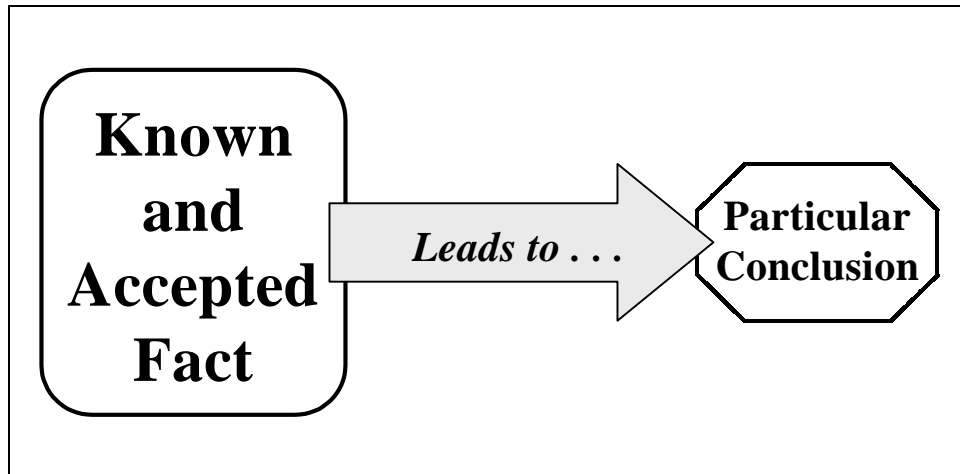
### A. The Deductive Approach

Deductive reasoning is used by people in wide variety of professions. Deduction is a valuable skill, and many books have been written on the subject. The intent of this lesson is not to minimize the validity of deduction, but to suggest that it is an inferior method of Bible study.

#### 1. *Deductive Reasoning*

In general, deductive reasoning moves from the general to the specific. That is, it starts with a known and accepted idea or premise. That pre-existing understanding is then compared to a particular situation, and a conclusion is formed. The basis for this conclusion is the fact that the *general idea* is true, and that the specific situation *resembles it*. In other words, the *general idea* controls, or at least strongly influences the way we look at the particular situation. For example, since snow-covered steps are usually slippery, we will approach any set of snow-covered steps with caution—even if we have never slipped on that particular set of steps. Our general experience with snowy steps leads us to this logical and reasonable conclusion. Figure 1.1 shows the direction of deductive reasoning.

Figure 1.1 Deductive Reasoning



Deduction has a major weakness. If our general understanding is wrong, so will be our conclusion. For example, suppose a Russian hears someone talk about a doctor. In Russia, most doctors are women. Therefore, it would be logical for him to deduce that the doctor is a woman. Often, however, he will be wrong. There are also *male* doctors in Russia, and in some countries *most* doctors are men. In this case, the influence of our prior experience can often lead us in the wrong direction. We *assume* we know the answer, rather than continuing to look for other clues to the correct answer.

#### 2. *Deductive Bible Study*

The deductive method can be used to study the Bible, but its weakness limits its usefulness. When we study the Bible, it is important to understand what *God is saying*, rather than to impose our understanding on the text. There are occasions when we cannot understand a difficult verse, and we rely on our general understanding of the Scriptures to deduce what it "*probably means*." However, this should be a "last resort." Our first step should be to pray, meditate on the verse, and continually reread it in order to try to understand what it wants to

say. If we quickly “give up” and assume it is “just like the other similar verses,” we may seriously distort the Word of God. For instance, ten of the eleven times the New Testament uses the word “yeast,” it refers to sin. It would therefore be reasonable and logical to assume that the eleventh time (Mt 13:33) also refers to sin. It would, however, be wrong. An examination of the context of Matthew 13:33 shows that in that verse, it refers to the Kingdom of God!

3. *The “Normal” Method*

Unfortunately, deduction is probably the most common method of Bible study. As a result, few learn very much from the Bible. Since they come to the Scripture with their *preconceived understanding of what it means*, they are not able to notice and learn from the details of a particular text.

Bible teachers often know what they want to say, and simply come to the Bible to find a verse that seems to support their understanding.

Bible teachers often know what they want to say beforehand, and simply come to the Bible to find a verse that seems to support their understanding. The Word of God is then used to prop up *our message*, rather than being allowed to communicate the ideas that *the Lord intended* for it to say.

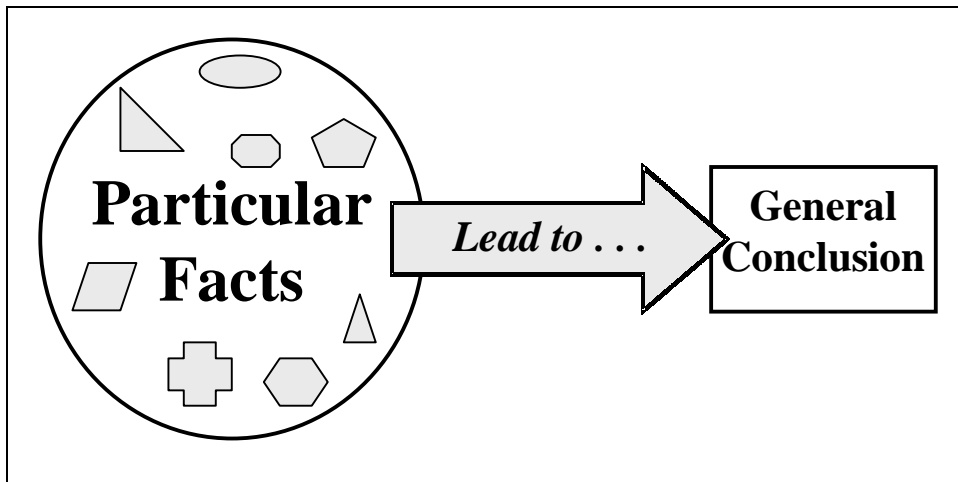
**B. The Inductive Approach**

The inductive method is in many ways the opposite of the deductive method. It examines the particulars of a situation, and then attempts to form a general principle from them. It is normally used in those situations where we do not have a general principle that seems to fit, and are therefore unable to use deduction.

1. *Inductive Reasoning*

Deduction is essentially the process of using our pre-existing knowledge. Induction, by contrast, is about *learning*. We assume that we do not yet know the answers, and examine the facts closely in order to try to understand *what they mean*. In this method, the emphasis is on the specific details and facts of the situation. Figure 1.2 shows the progression of the inductive method.

**Figure 1.2 The Inductive Method**



2. *Inductive Bible Study*

When we use the inductive method to study the Bible, we come to the Scripture as learners. We acknowledge to God and to ourselves that we do not yet know all the answers. Our purpose is to *gain understanding*. We come with a commitment to carefully examine the text, and allow the Lord to speak to us through it. The deductive method usually leads to a quick sermon—the inductive method leads to spiritual growth.

### 3. *A Better Method*

The inductive method is superior to the deductive method because it makes *the Scriptures* the authority, rather than our understanding. It is also better because it matches the process of understanding and applying biblical principles to our lives. As we study the Bible, we look at how God dealt with people in a particular situation, at a particular time, and in a particular culture. Our task is to take these facts and to form from them a biblical principle. We then translate that principle into our equivalent situation so that we can correctly apply it to our lives. The process of the inductive Bible study method is therefore:

- **Observation** of the facts in the Scriptural context.
- **Interpretation** to find the principle that the passage teaches.
- **Application** of the principle to equivalent situations in our lives.

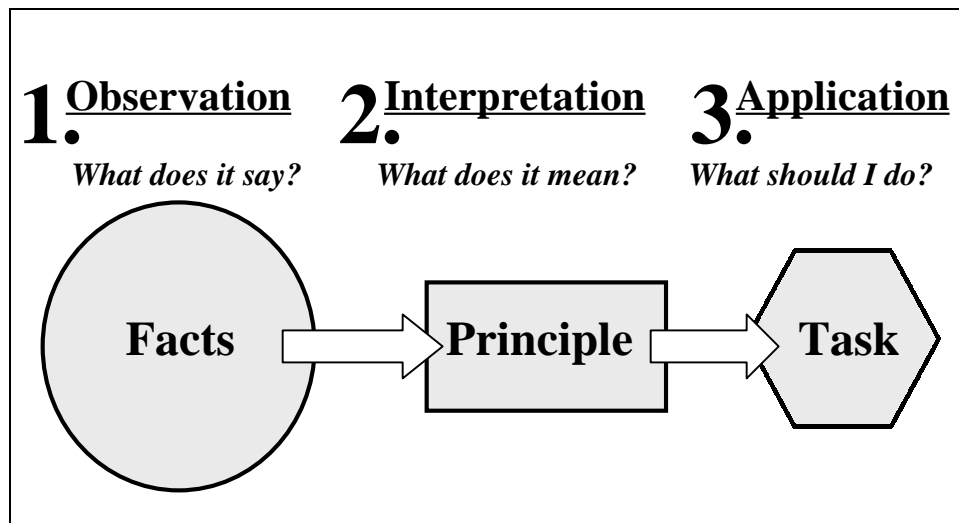
## II. STEPS OF INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

The three steps of the inductive Bible study method are each important. They build progressively on each other to lead us from the Bible text to a correct application to our lives. Essentially, the three steps ask three different questions about the text.

- What does it say? [Observation]
- What does it mean? [Interpretation]
- What should I do? [Application]

The relationship between each of these steps is shown in Figure 1.3. Notice the logical progression through the three steps, beginning with the Bible text and ending with application to our Christian life. If the steps are not completed in the proper order, the result is flawed.

**Figure 1.3 The Three Steps**



### A. **Observation – What Does It Say?**

The first step of the inductive method is observation. It is also the most important step—in the same way a solid foundation is critical to the construction of a house. At this stage, we observe the text, looking for every detail we can find in it, and recording our observations. The key to this step is to ask an endless series of questions such as “Who?, What?, Why?, Where?, When?, etc.” These questions help us focus on *what the Bible says*, rather than bringing our ideas to it. We also look closely at the context of the verse, paragraph, chapter, and book to discover and understand the situation in which it was written. At this stage, it is very important *not to interpret or apply* the text. We must discover all the information first—in the next step (interpretation) we will look at what it means.



## **B. Interpretation – What Does It Mean?**

The process of interpretation has two parts. The first part is to determine *what the passage was intended to say to the original audience*. The second part is to formulate *the message of the passage as a biblical principle* that can be applied to other similar situations.

This is a difficult stage, requiring serious and prayerful thought, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. At this point, we need to compare all our understanding of the original historical, geographical, political, cultural, and religious situation with the facts that we unearthed in the observation stage. Any facts that we have missed in the observation stage will hinder our work here. Now is also the time to compare this text with other similar passages to see if they can help us understand it—being careful that they do not distort the facts of the text we are studying. If the meaning of the passage is still unclear, it might be necessary to return to the observation stage and keep digging for more information.

## **C. Application – What Should I Do?**

The final stage of the inductive method is application. At this point, we take the result of the interpretation stage and decide how the principle might apply in our situation. Since we have carefully looked at the original context, and know the details of it, we can look for similar contexts in our day.

The difficulty of this stage is to determine what situation today is really analogous to the original situation. We can only say “thus says the Lord” if we can demonstrate that this similarity exists. If our situation is truly the same as a biblical passage, then we can assume that the Lord expects us to apply the message to ourselves. In that case, the important task is to state *specifically* and *clearly* “what we should do.”

## **III. BUILDING A SOLID PYRAMID**

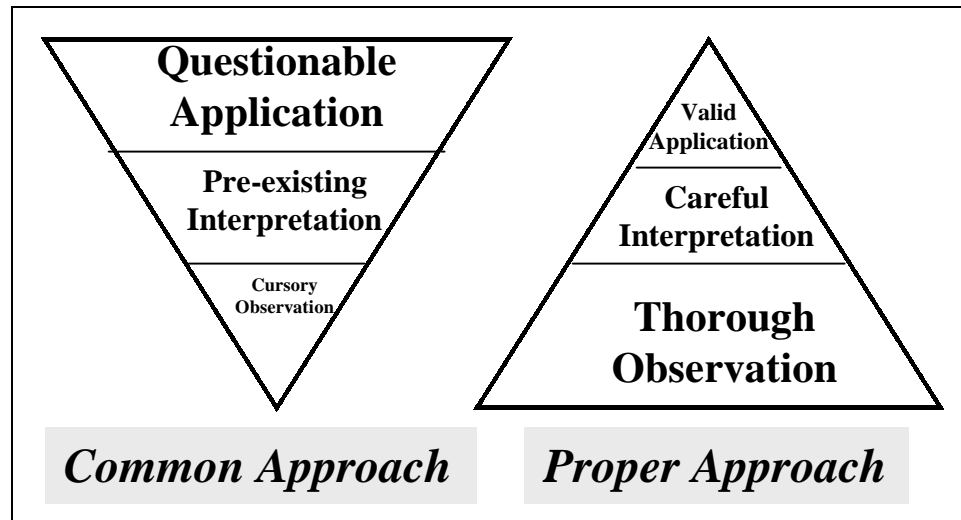
It is important not to skip any of the steps, or to change the order. It is impossible to correctly say what a passage means without first fully observing it, and futile to ask what we should do without knowing what the text means. Therefore, it is critical that we take the necessary time to use the inductive method properly.

### **A. Rushing the Process**

The most common mistake in using the inductive method is to spend too little time on the observation phase. The person studying the Bible takes a quick glance at the passage and assumes that he or she knows what it says. This defeats the learning process. The result is an understanding of the passage that is exactly the same as it was when the process started. The Scripture has not been allowed to speak to us or to teach us. If we approach the Word of God in this way, our biblical understanding will stagnate. The Bible is living and active. We can never fully understand the depths of its teaching. There is always something more for any student of the Word to learn—if we will take the time and effort to understand it.

There is always more for any student of the Word to learn—if we will take the time and effort to understand it.
---

**Figure 1.4 Good and Bad Foundations**



Christian workers often rush the process because they are in a hurry to prepare a message for others. Or, they may be lazy. Either way, the result of this poor preparation is weak preaching, without the power of the Lord behind it. Skimping on the process can be compared to the inverted pyramid in the left side of Figure 1.4. A cursory observation is expanded into a quick interpretation, or a pre-existing interpretation is “hung” on a text that may or may not support it. Finally, a sermon or message is build upon this shaky foundation. Sadly, this may be the most common kind of teaching in churches today.

#### **B. A Solid Foundation**

The pyramid in the right side of Figure 1.4 demonstrates the proper use of the inductive method. Notice that observation is the largest section, followed by interpretation, and that application is the smallest. However, the application is solid and valid—being based on a thorough study of the Word.

The inductive method can be compared to mining for gold. First, tons of gold-bearing rocks are crushed into manageable pieces and washed (observation). Next, the crush rock is sifted to find the gold nuggets (interpretation). Finally, the gold nuggets are melted down and shaped into useable jewelry of other objects for the consumer (application). The process produces only a small amount of gold compared to the weight of the original rock. However, the result is of great value. In the same way, the result of studying the Word using the inductive method is worth all the effort required.

### **CONCLUSION**

The inductive Bible study method is a superior method of studying the Word. It leads to a more accurate understanding of the Bible, and promotes true spiritual growth and learning. As such, it is the best method not only for pastors and preachers, but also for every Christian. We are all to be learning from the Scriptures. Every church planter should not only master this method, but should also teach it to every believer in his care.

The following lessons will describe in more detail exactly how to use each of the three steps of the inductive method. Time will also be provided to practice and become comfortable with each stage of the process. The effort required will be more than balanced by the resulting new understanding of the Word of the Living God.

## **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

- What is the basic difference between deduction and induction?
- Why is the inductive method a superior method of studying the Bible, compared to the deductive method?
- What are the dangers of the “common” approach to Bible study and preaching?

## **ACTION PLAN**

- When you next study the Bible, record how much time you spend on observation, interpretation, and application. On the basis of these times, evaluate whether you are using the inductive method, the deductive, or something in between.
- In preparation for the next lesson on observation, pick a sample short passage of Scripture to study (no more than a paragraph or so). Spend at least two hours prayerfully observing the passage and asking God to open your eyes to things that you have not yet seen. Record your observations. What did you learn?

BIBLE STUDY  
METHODS

LESSON 2

# Observing God's Word

## WHAT DOES IT SAY?

### ☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to model for the church planter how to study the Bible through the inductive Bible study principle of "observation."

### ☞ Main Points

- Successful Bible study should be surrounded by prayer.
- Context is extremely important.
- There are six key questions to ask about any passage.

### ☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Know how to prepare inductive Bible study observation questions.
- Be committed to study the Word of God diligently.

### ☞ Appendix

2A The Language of the Bible

### ☞ Suggestions to Trainers

This lesson is followed by a one-hour workshop that will focus on applying the principles of observation. This lesson includes sample observation questions for Jeremiah 1. You should emphasize the kinds of questions asked, because the trainees will be required to make up their own questions in the workshop lesson.

## INTRODUCTION

All Christians need to be able to study the Bible for their own spiritual growth as well as for the growth of those under their spiritual care. God has given every believer the Holy Spirit to be his or her principal teacher. Let us never forget the importance of our dependence upon God's Spirit to teach us and to empower us to obey what we learn. With God's help, it is possible for every believer to understand the Bible, even if the only book we have is the Bible. In addition, God has given some people the special role of helping His people discover the truths of Scripture and apply them correctly to their lives. It is especially important that a church planter know how to help others discover God's truth through Bible study.

One of the best ways to systematically discover, understand, and apply God's truth is the inductive Bible study method. The inductive Bible study method leads to this process of discovery through three basic steps that are called "observation", "interpretation", and "application." The Holy Spirit teaches us, but God also expects us to study His Word diligently using all the resources He has put at our disposal. We should never choose between studying hard or depending on the Holy Spirit—both are important!

God expects us to study His Word diligently using all the resources He has put at our disposal.

This lesson focuses on the first step of inductive Bible study—observation. As the previous lesson stated, observation is like the base of a pyramid. If we do a thorough and careful job of observation, the resulting interpretation and application will be much more accurate. Our goal should be to understand *exactly* what God wants us to know and do, and therefore observation is a critical step in the process.

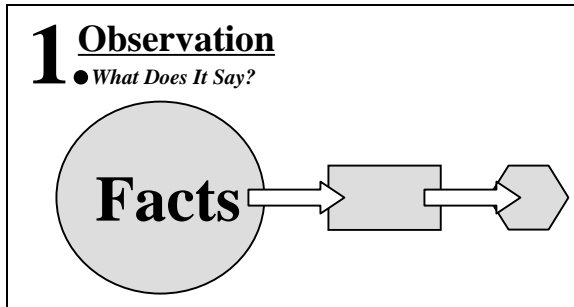
## I. OBSERVATION—WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

Observation concerns the details and facts that are seen in a selected Bible passage. It answers the question "What does the text say?" It clearly shows the people, places, events, circumstances, objects, time, relationships, personal opinions, ideas, etc., which were in the writer's mind and the context when the text was written.

Students of secular classical literature have spent countless hours trying to decipher the meaning of great texts written by men. In many cases, this process has continued for hundreds or even thousands of years since the writing of the texts, with new understanding constantly emerging. Take a minute to think about some of the great classical authors of your country, and the search for the meaning of their writings.

If this effort is warranted, how much more we should strive to understand the living, active, bottomless Word of the Almighty God. To quickly read a Bible passage, and assume that we understand it completely is utterly foolish. There is always more to understand.

Figure 2.1



### A. Prepare for Observation

Since the Bible is the inspired Word of God, we cannot approach it like any other book. There are several factors that will affect whether or not we understand it.

#### 1. *Belief*

The Scripture says that a "man without the Spirit" cannot understand the things that come from God (1Co 2:14). Since only those who have repented of their sin and trusted Christ for salvation have the Holy Spirit, an unbeliever cannot fully comprehend the Bible. This does *not* mean that only believers may be involved in a Bible study. It *does* mean that when unbelievers are present, they are limited in what they will be able to understand. The Holy Spirit desires to show them the truths of sin, righteousness, and judgment from the Word, in order to lead them to salvation. Therefore, a Bible study for unbelievers should focus on the basic truths of the Gospel.

#### 2. *Prayer*

Proper Bible study will always be surrounded by prayer. Before starting the study, we should pray and confess any sin or other obstacle that prevents us from learning from the Word. We should also pray for enlightenment (Ps 119:18; Eph 1:18). During our study, it is also helpful to pray for clarity whenever we see something that we do not understand. And finally, when we have finished the study, we should pray about how God would have us apply what we have learned to our own life and to the lives of others.

Proper Bible study will always be surrounded by prayer.

#### 3. *Readiness to Obey*

James tells us that we must not only listen to the Word, but also obey it (Jas 1:22-25). Jesus also said that putting His words into practice was like building a house on a rock (Mt 7:24). Not obeying them, however, was like building on sand (Mt 7:26). In fact, Jesus seems to say that giving spiritual truth to those who are not willing to obey it is as foolish as giving pearls to pigs (Mt 7:6). God is very serious about how we respond to His Word. The more we know, the more severely we will be judged.

#### 4. *Self-examination*

It is true that a pastor or church planter is responsible to teach the Word to others. We are told to “feed the sheep” (Jn 21:17). But this does not excuse him from first applying it to his own life. Every good cook samples the food as it cooks to determine whether or not it is ready to serve to others. At the very least, we should always look for application to ourselves, even when our goal is to preach to others. However, it is even more profitable if we also partake heartily of the meal, rather than just sample it.

We should always look for application to ourselves, even when our goal is to preach to others.

The student of the Scriptures should never feel that he or she has reached the point of understanding the Word fully—this is not possible. It is much better to be a “learner,” growing daily through study of the Word and prayer, than to masquerade as an “expert.” A teaching ministry will be more rich and rewarding if the teacher is sharing out of the abundance of truth that he or she is learning from the Lord on a daily basis.

#### 5. *Willingness to Learn*

Approach the Scriptures with an open mind. Be willing to let God teach you what His Word really says. Always be willing to expose your personally held belief to the light of God's Word. Don't be afraid of changing your viewpoint if God's shows you the truth about an issue.

### B. **Take Enough Time**

There are some proven principles for understanding the general focus of the passage. If the process is rushed, the result will be a shallow understanding of the text. It is important to exercise the patience and determination to keep working until the text is understood.

The first step is to **read the text over several times** to get an overall understanding of the passage. This takes time, but bears much fruit. There are many passages where it is easy to get bogged down in details unless you can discern the general theme through several readings. A good understanding of the passage's overall focus will help you to keep a proper balance and divide your time appropriately for the different parts under study.

### C. **Look at the Context**

The term ‘context’ refers to the verses that surround the passage being studied. Understanding the context is one of the most valuable tools of Bible study, and yet it is often ignored. When we look at the context, we are seeking to understand what is the theme or subject of the book, chapter, and paragraph of the verses that we are studying. Looking at the context means examining.

- What do the preceding and following verses talk about?
- What is the theme of the paragraph?
- What is the theme of the chapter?
- What is the purpose and theme of the book?
- Is the passage in the Old or New Testament and what does this mean?

A good example of the importance of context is Philippians 4:19, where Paul promises that God will “meet all your needs.” Many understand this to be an unconditional promise to everyone. Many would recognize that since Philippians is written to believers, this promise is only for Christians. However, a more in-depth study of the context reveals that Philippians is a “thank-you letter” to the Philippian church for the gift they sent to Paul through Epaphroditus. The context of chapter four is specifically talking about this generous gift that they had sent to Paul out of their poverty. The context of verse 18 shows that God was pleased with this gift. Therefore, the context indicates that verse 19 is a promise to those who have sacrificed to financially support a missionary church planter (Paul) who was preaching the Gospel to the lost (in Rome, at that time).

Understanding the context is one of the most valuable tools of Bible study.

Some Bibles have notes before each book that explain what the particular book is about. These can be helpful. There are also other commentaries and books available that discuss the setting and background of a particular Bible book or chapter. However, it is better to limit the use of these resources until the interpretation stage. There is no substitute for reading the Scriptures yourself and allowing them to speak to you with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. During the observation stage, focus on what *you* see in the passage and the context. Take the time to listen to God before you move on to the commentary of men, even if they might be gifted teachers or authors.

Observing the context involves reading more than just the passage being studied—it includes the surrounding verses, chapter, or book. We step back and look at the passage from a distance before we move in for a closer look. Insights and notes about the context should be carefully recorded. They will be of major importance in the interpretation stage.

Step back and look at the passage from a distance before moving in for a closer look.

#### **D. Examine the Structure**

Having looked at the passage from a distance, it is now time to look more closely. Read the passage several times, looking for and recording any of the following details of the structure:

- Key words - Note any word or words that are repeated. Often this indicates the theme.
- Comparisons or contrasts - Is something the same as something else, or the opposite?
- Progression of an idea - Does one thing build upon another? Are they linked to other ideas like a chain?
- Verbs – Is there some kind of action? Is there a command we must obey?
- Conjunctions - Is something equal to something? Often the conjunction “but” appears in contrast, and the words “like” or “as” may indicate comparison.
- Illustrations - Visualize in your mind the thing or action that is being described.
- Kind of literature – A passage may be history, prophecy, allegory, didactic truth, logic, parable, or many other possibilities. Appendix 2A lists many more of these. Noting the type of literature in the passage will also affect the interpretation in the next stage, so it should be recorded carefully now.

#### **E. Ask Questions: Who?, What?, Where?, When?, How?, and Why?**

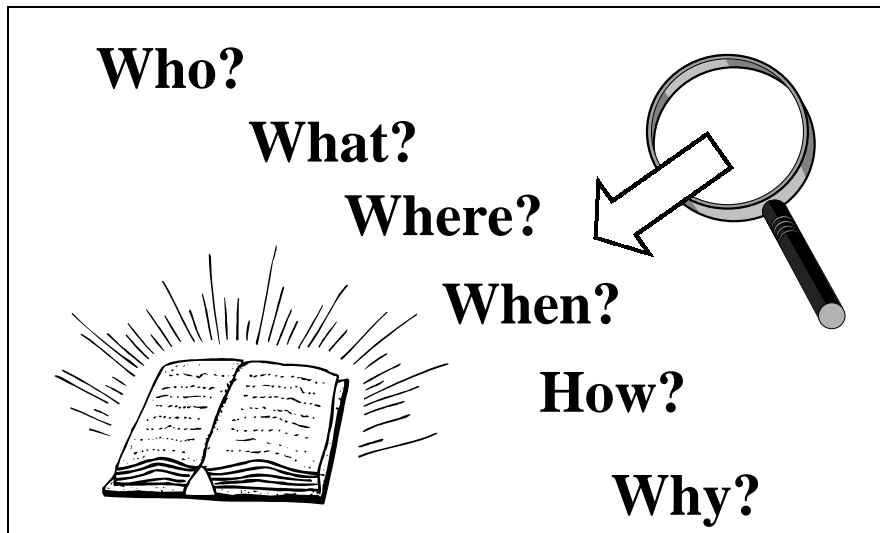
The best method of discovering the content and meaning of a passage of Scripture is to ask key questions about it, and record the answers. Figure 2.2 shows the six key questions that should be asked and answered. There are, of course, other possible questions, but these are the most important ones. Other questions tend to be variations of these six.

Ideally, you should ask every form of these questions that you can think of (the more the better). Sample variations of these questions are shown in the next section. As you ask questions, carefully record the questions and the answers on a sheet of paper. You will need to refer to them in the interpretation stage.

If you ask a question and cannot find the answer, note the question and come back to it at a later time. Do not disregard those questions. They may be important. Instead, pray about them, meditate on them, and ask God to show you the answers. Be prepared for this to take time and effort, but it will be worth it when you arrive at a clearer understanding of the passage. Only then will you be able to apply it with confidence in your own life, and teach “thus says the Lord . . .” to others.

If you cannot find the answer to a question, come back to it at a later time.

Figure 2.2 Key Observation Questions



## II. SAMPLE OBSERVATION

We are going to use the six questions to see what we can discover about God's truth in an Old Testament passage about a young man called to serve God. As we study this passage, it will become very clear that he was being called to take a stand that was radically different from his contemporaries. No doubt some of you will be able to identify with the struggles this young man had to face as he responded to God's call. The passage is found in Jeremiah 1.

Open your Bible to that passage, pray for enlightenment, and then look for the answers to the following questions. Take special note of the *kinds of questions* that are asked. In your own study later, you will need to make up similar questions to ask of other passages as you study them. Write the answers next to each question.

### A. Who?

- To **whom** is this part of Scripture attributed (verse 1)?
- **Who** are the persons mentioned in this passage (verses 1-2)?
- **Who** are the kings noted in verses 2-3?
- **Who** are the people God is summoning to bring disaster on the land (v.15)?
- Verses 18-19 list Jeremiah's main opposition. **Who** will these people be?
- (Other?)

### B. What?

- **What** special event is noted at the beginning of verse 2?
- Is it possible to deduce **what** Jeremiah's role was from verse 2?
- If so, **what** was that role?
- According to verse 2, **what** event took place at the end of the reign of Zedekiah?
- **What** happened to Jeremiah in verse 3?
- **What** was the "word of the Lord" that came to him (verse 5)?
- **What** are the four specific actions attributed by God to Himself in verse 5?
- In verse 5, **what** was to be Jeremiah's role?
- **What** was the extent of Jeremiah's role? Limited to the nation of Israel, or much broader?



- **What** was Jeremiah's response in verse 6?
- **What** was God's response to Jeremiah in verses 7-8?
- **What** are the two imperatives God gives to Jeremiah in verses 7-8?
- **What** options does Jeremiah have according to verse 7?
- **What** is Jeremiah's emotion that God addresses in the first part of verse 8?
- **What** two reasons are given to Jeremiah for not being afraid (verse 8)?
- **What** does the Lord do to Jeremiah in verse 9?
- Verse 10 describes Jeremiah's task. **What** were the elements of that task?
- **What** is the progression noted in verse 10?
- **What** were the two things God showed Jeremiah in verses 11-16?
- **What** does verse 12 describe God doing?
- According to verses 14-16, **what** is about to happen to the people of God?
- **What** are the specific reasons God is bringing judgment on His people (v.16)?
- **What** are the instructions God gives to Jeremiah in verse 17?
- **What** commands have been repeated from earlier?
- **What** is the new promise (verse 17)?
- **What** will the people of verse 18 do to Jeremiah (verse 19)?
- **What** is the promise God gives Jeremiah for the battles ahead (verse 19)?
- (Other?)

**C. Where?**

- **Where** is the setting of this passage according to verse 1?
- **Where** is this located?
- **Where** will the people described in verse 15 come from?
- (Other?)

**D. When?**

- **When** is the time period described for the overall contents of this book?
- In verse 5, **when** did God know (choose) Jeremiah?
- In verse 5, **when** did God set Jeremiah apart for ministry?
- **When** did the action in verse 18 take place?
- (Other?)

**E. Why?**

- **Why** is God "watching" in verse 12?
- **Why** is God pronouncing judgment on His people (v.16)?
- (Other?)

**F. How?**

- **How** is Jeremiah described in verse 1?
- **How** is his father Hilkiyah described?
- **How** does Jeremiah address God in verse 6?
- **How** does Jeremiah respond to God's word in verse 6?
- **How** does God describe Jeremiah in verse 18?

Use the space provided below to list any other observations you made concerning Jeremiah 1:

### **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION**

- What does 'context' mean?
- What are the six key questions to ask a passage?
- When, during a Bible study, should we pray?

### **ACTION PLAN**

If you did not have time to complete the observation of Jeremiah 1, do so before the next lesson. See if you can ask other appropriate questions of the same passage. Save these questions and answers for use in Lesson 4.

BIBLE STUDY  
APPENDIX  
2A

# The Language of the Bible

---

When we study the Word of God, we are looking for its intended, literal meaning. We want to understand the message that the Lord desires to communicate through it. But it is important to realize that, like all great literature, the Bible writers often used figures of speech to communicate truth. In addition, they used many different kinds of literature in their writing. Studying the Bible accurately requires that we recognize these differences, and treat each passage according to the kinds of language and literature used.

## I. KINDS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN THE BIBLE

### A. Simile

A simile compares two dissimilar things, using words such as “like,” “as” or “than.” Psalm 1 compares the righteous man to a tree planted by streams of water. Both bear fruit and prosper.

### B. Parable

A parable is a simile in a longer story form. Jesus helped the disciples understand His kingdom by telling a parable about workers who were paid equally though some had worked longer than others had. He begins with the words, “For the kingdom of heaven is *like* a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard...” (Mt 20:1).

### C. Metaphor

A metaphor compares two dissimilar things without using obvious words such as “like” or “as.” In Jeremiah 1:18, the Lord said to Jeremiah, “Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall...”

### D. Allegory

An allegory is a long metaphor. In Judges 9:7-15, Jotham tells a story about a worthless thorn bush being king over the other productive trees to describe a corrupt political leader.

### E. Hyperbole

A hyperbole expresses something in extreme terms to make a point. When Jesus says that a judgmental person has a log in his eye and doesn’t know it, he is saying something that is physically impossible. His point, however, is that a person who is unaware of his own sins is totally unable to evaluate another person’s sins.

### F. Sarcasm

Sarcasm criticizes by using undeserved or ridiculous praise. Paul criticizes the Corinthians’ pride by writing, “Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings – and that without us!” (1Co 4:8).

Deciding when the biblical writers were using language figuratively or literally is serious work. It would be a grievous error to ignore one of God’s commands by claiming it to be figurative language. On the other hand, to say that every verse in the Bible should be interpreted literally leads to some perplexing problems. When the Lord referred to Jeremiah as “a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall...” He obviously wasn’t speaking in a literal sense (Jer 1:18). The same is true when the

Lord said he was appointing Jeremiah to “uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow...” (Jer 1:10).

How can we know the difference between literal and figurative language? You can ask some simple questions like these:

- Does the passage state that it is figurative? (“Listen to another parable...” Mt 21:33).
- Does the passage become absurd or impossible if it is interpreted literally? (“I see a boiling pot, tilting away from the north... from the north disaster will be poured out on all who live in the land...” Jer 1:13-14).
- Does the passage describe God, who is Spirit, as if He had a physical body and other strictly human qualities? (“Then the Lord reached out His hand and touched my mouth...” Jer 1:9).

If the above questions don’t apply, then the verse can most probably be interpreted literally.

## II. KINDS OF LITERATURE IN THE BIBLE

### A. History

The Bible is full of historical accounts and biographies. For example, the book of Judges tells the history of Israel between the time of Joshua’s conquest of the land and King Saul’s reign. The book of Nehemiah is Nehemiah’s diary of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. The Gospels are Jesus’ biographies and include His teachings. The book of Acts records the significant happenings in the early history of the Church.

### B. Instruction

Throughout the Bible you will find guidelines, commands, principles, proverbs, doctrines and practical advice. The major part of the book of Leviticus contains detailed instructions for the Israelite priests. Proverbs gives advice on finances, relationships, and work. Paul’s letters to specific churches are full of both doctrine and practical guidelines for the Christian life.

### C. Prophecy

Most prophetic literature is a written account of sermons originally preached to God’s people. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, the larger prophetic books, are collections of sermons spanning the careers of these prophets. These books were not meant to be read from start to finish as a single unit. The secret to understanding these books is finding the beginning and ending of the individual sermons and reading from one sermon to the next. Nearly all the sermons dealt with the historic periods of the writers. Some of the sermons dealt with the future beyond the lifetimes of the prophets.

### D. Poetry

In the poetic literature of the Bible every human emotion is expressed. Many biblical books contain poetry. The Psalms and the Song of Songs are entirely poetry and many of the prophetic books are predominately poetic.

### E. Apocalypse

Some prophecy is written in a special kind of literature known as apocalyptic. The word apocalyptic means “unveiling” because it reveals events that will take place in the future. The book of Daniel and the book of Revelation are good examples of this literature. Apocalyptic passages are highly symbolic and it is necessary to understand the symbolism in order to interpret the message. The central message in apocalyptic literature is the second coming of Christ and his ultimate victory over Satan. Typically, the whole of creation is involved in the coming events. (Compiled from Inch and Bullock, eds., 1981. *Literature and Meaning of Scripture*. Baker Book House.)

BIBLE STUDY  
METHODS

4

LESSON

# Interpreting God's Word

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

---

### ☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to model for the church planter how to study the Bible through the inductive Bible study principle of "interpretation."

### ☞ Main Points

- The importance of careful interpretation.
- Common errors in interpretation.

### ☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered each participant should:

- Know the basic principles for interpreting the Scriptures
- Be committed to study the Word of God diligently.

### ☞ Appendix

4A Bible Charts

### ☞ Suggestions to Trainers

This lesson is followed by a one-hour workshop to develop skills in interpretation of a passage.

## INTRODUCTION

Apart from the Holy Spirit and prayer, the Bible is the most important resource we have as a church planter. The living and active Word of God is alone able to penetrate the hearts and souls of those whom we seek to win for the Kingdom of God. It equips us for every good work, which certainly describes our ministry of multiplying churches across the land. It serves as the only standard by which we measure and evaluate every doctrine, practice, or tradition of the Church. History, tradition, and the human intellect may lead astray, but the Bible stands firm as the truth of God.

It is important, therefore, for us to know how to "rightly divide the Word of Truth." Our enemy Satan has spared no effort to undermine the Bible and its truth. Over the centuries, many different controversies have been created by a false understanding of what the Bible says. You don't want to be guilty of adding to or supporting those false understandings of God's Word.

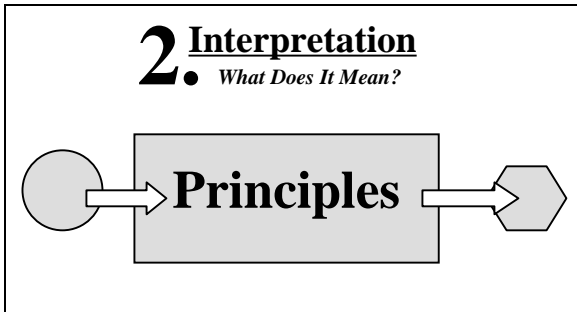
## I. INTERPRETATION—THE SECOND STAGE OF THE INDUCTIVE METHOD

Interpretation answers the question "What does the text *mean*?" This session presents some guidelines for discerning what the Scriptures are really saying. This is not intended to be a full treatment of this subject, only an introduction. We also want to take the same passage we have been dealing with in Jeremiah chapter 1 and apply these principles to gain a clearer understanding of that passage.

The interpretation stage follows the observation stage of inductive Bible study. This seems obvious, but all too often those who study the Bible rush ahead to this stage without doing a thorough job of observation. As a result, their interpretation is often faulty, since they do not have enough facts to accurately interpret the passage.

The stages of observation, interpretation, and application can be compared to the process of building a house. Observation would be the *collecting of the materials*. Interpretation is the stage where the owner actually *constructs the house* from the materials. Application is the stage where the owner moves into the house and *lives in it*. Every stage is equally important, and they are all interdependent. If the materials are lacking (observation), it will not be possible to complete the house. If the house is not constructed carefully (interpretation), living in the house will be dangerous. If no one lives in the house (application), then building it was a waste of time.

Figure 4.1



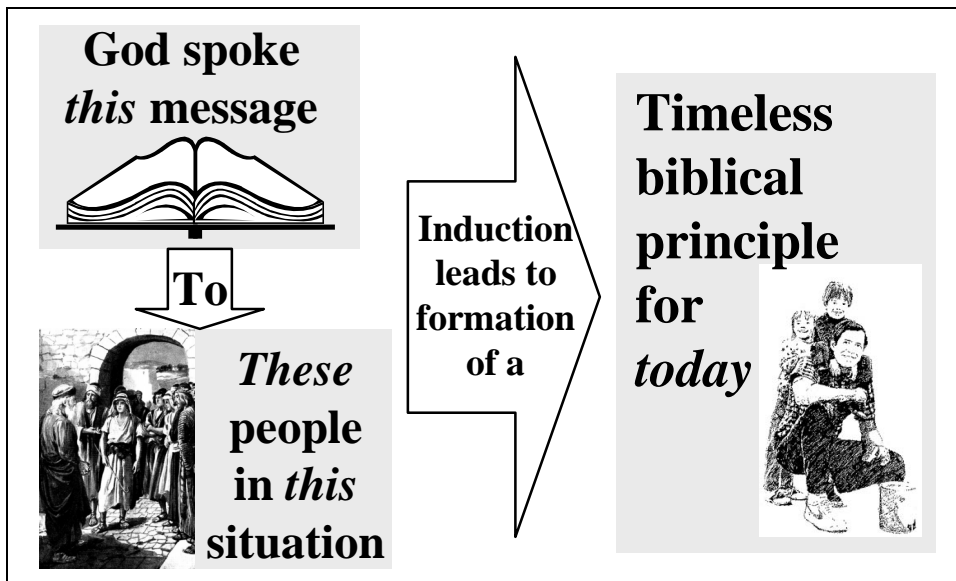
With this analogy in mind, it should be clear that interpretation should be done carefully, prayerfully, and thoughtfully. If at any point you find that you do not have enough facts to decipher the meaning of the passage, you should return to the observation stage and ask more questions. Actually, this is normal. Rarely do we note everything important in a passage, any more than a builder never runs out of material and has to get more.

Interpretation should be done carefully, prayerfully, and thoughtfully.

## II. THE PROCESS OF INTERPRETATION

When we interpret a passage of Scripture, we seek to clearly describe the original biblical situation, and to state the message that God communicated in that situation. We can then carefully and prayerfully assume that God would speak in a similar way to a similar situation—resulting in a general biblical principle.

Figure 4.2 Using Induction to Discover the Biblical Principle



Therefore, interpretation involves:

- Understanding the original, biblical situation and people
- Identifying the message communicated to those people at that time
- Formulating a principle that summarizes these facts, and which would apply to a similar situation in any era—especially today.

The principle that results from interpretation might be a warning, a promise, a challenge, etc. The important thing is to understand the original situation clearly enough that we can say "thus says the Lord" with confidence when we apply it to our own lives and the lives of others.

#### **A. Sift through the Observation Facts to Find the Key Ones**

Interpretation is more of an art than it is a science. That is, it is more than a matter of following certain rules—although rules and guidelines do exist. Practice, prayer, and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leading are necessary in order to develop the ability to sift through all the facts from the observation stage, identify the most important ones, and understand the main message of the passage.

#### **B. Determine the Author's Main Point**

When we refer to the author of the passage, we have in mind both the human writer, and also God who directed the writing. With the exception of some prophecies that the human writer did not understand, the writer's point and God's point should be the same.

In some cases, the main point may be clearly stated in the passage. Usually, however, it will be necessary to look for the clues and key observations. The context is normally the most important indicator of the topic or main point. Repeated word or phrases are also valuable clues. Each passage will be different, but you will be looking for the following information:

- What subject is the author writing about?
- What is he saying about that subject?

The ideal situation is to be able to summarize these two things in a concise sentence. This may take quite a few attempts before it is right. Continuing the analogy of building a house, this is like laying the foundation properly. The fuller description of the message of the passage will be built on this statement, as will the application.

The ideal situation is to be able to summarize the point of the passage in a concise sentence.
--

#### **C. Determine the flow of thought in the passage**

Once the main point of the author has been stated, the next step is to describe how he builds that point in the passage. What style does he use? Why? What method or what logic? Why did he choose this way of presenting it? It should be possible to note both the content of the passage, and also the attitude or emotion being communicated. Texts might be encouraging, sarcastic, angry, confronting, soothing, pleading, challenging, etc.

### **III. THE BASIC RULES OF INTERPRETATION**

Although interpretation is essentially an art to be developed through practice, there are some basic rules that should be followed. The rules described below assume that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and that God intends for us to read and understand it. Not everyone agrees with those assumptions, and this is the source of many of the religious disagreements in the world, as well as the source of many of the cults.

#### **A. General Principles of Biblical Interpretation**

1. The Bible is the authoritative Word of God.
2. The Bible is its own best interpreter, reflecting the character of God.
3. Saving faith and the Holy Spirit are necessary to understand the Scripture.
4. You should interpret history, actions, attitudes, personal experience, etc., in the light of Scripture and not Scripture in the light of these things.
5. The primary purpose of the Bible is not to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives.

6. Every Christian has the right, the responsibility, and the privilege to investigate and interpret the Word of God with the help of the Holy Spirit.

### **B. Grammatical, Historical, and Theological Principles of Biblical Interpretation**

1. You should interpret words according to their meaning in the historical and cultural context of the author. Always think about how the original hearers would have understood and reacted to the message.
2. It is important to understand the grammar of a passage before trying to understand the theological truth that it teaches.
3. Figurative language normally has one main point. Do not try to read too many things into that kind of passage. (See Appendix 2A "The Language of the Bible" for a description of different kinds of figurative language.)
4. You should be no clearer on a subject than the Scriptures are clear. Don't add you own thinking or church tradition to what the Bible says, for you or others could come to believe those thoughts are actually Scriptural.

### **C. Common Interpretation Errors to Avoid**

Three common errors in interpretation happen because of the failure to remember key attributes of Scripture.

#### *1. Springboard*

This kind of error takes its name from the springboard that gymnasts use to help then jump higher. The springboard is not central to their performance—it only helps them get started. This error occurs when the interpreter already knows what he wants to say, and is not particularly interested in discovering the meaning of the text. He briefly looks at a passage and "jumps" from there to some other topic or teaching that he really wants to discuss. This insults the Lord, Who wrote the Word to communicate truth to us.

#### *2. Allegory*

This method is also very common, but just as unacceptable. It involves ignoring the clear meaning of Scripture and trying to find some hidden message. There are indeed some passages that are very difficult to understand. However, most passages make sense when we look carefully and the words and grammar. We should never look for "hidden meanings" when one is presented clearly. Even in the case of a difficult passage, it is better to admit that we don't understand it than to try to fabricate some kind of meaning that is hard to support.

We should never look for "hidden meanings" when one is presented clearly.
---

#### *3. Ignoring Progressive Revelation*

It is impossible to understand a passage if we forget the progressive nature of Scripture. God sometimes changes the way He deals with men. For instance, in the Old Testament, God required a series of literal animal sacrifices. However, these sacrifices were only temporary. When God's perfect Lamb died on Calvary, He fulfilled all the Old Testament requirements (Heb 9:12). No sacrifice of any kind is required in the New Testament. If someone were to sacrifice a lamb for his sin today, it would be an insult to Christ. Therefore, interpretation decisions must be made with care, and with the broader teaching of the Word in mind.

### **D. Use "Helps", But Use Them Carefully**

There are many tools and helps that assist in the process of interpretation. These include commentaries, Bible handbooks, Bible notes, Bible cross-references, dictionaries, atlases, and many other books. As helpful as these are, they should not replace personal effort to understand the passage. They are meant to *help*, not to *do the work for you*. Use them as needed to understand things that are not clear to you. Be especially careful with Bible cross-references.



Often, they only refer to another verse that has the same word or phrase in it. The verse referred to may or may not have *anything* to do with the topic of the passage.

#### **IV. SAMPLE INTERPRETATION**

Refer back to your observation notes on Jeremiah 1, and work through the process of interpretation as time allows. Follow the format shown below.

##### **A. Sift the Observations to Find the Key Facts**

As I look at my observations on Jeremiah 1, it seems to me that the most important observations are (*list*):

##### **B. State the Main Point**

The subject of the chapter is:

The thing that Jeremiah is saying about this subject is:

A concise statement of main point, reflecting the two ideas above, is:

##### **C. Describe the Flow of Thought**

Jeremiah develops the main idea of the passage by:

#### D. Some "Meaning" Questions

As you work through the statements above, it might be helpful to consider the following questions about the *meaning* of the text. Perhaps you will think of other good, or even better, questions. These are offered to start you on the process.

##### *Verse 5*

- What does it mean that the Lord "knew" Jeremiah?
- What does it mean to be "set apart?"
- What are some implications of the statement "...before you were born I set you apart...?"

##### *Verse 6*

- Why might Jeremiah consider himself a "child?"
- Why do you suppose Jeremiah responded the way he did?

##### *Verse 7*

- How would you characterize a call from God by what you see in this verse?
- What does your answer to the preceding question say about God and His character?

##### *Verse 8*

- What do the Lord's words say about the response of the people to Jeremiah's future ministry?
- What motivation is there for Jeremiah to face the opposition?

##### *Verse 9*

- How did the Lord "put" His words into Jeremiah?

##### *Verse 10*

- What do you think the phrases "uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and plant" mean?
- What can you assume about the character of Jeremiah that would enable him to follow through with God's plan?

##### *Verse 12*

- What principle do you find in this verse concerning God's involvement in the ministry of those He has called?

##### *Verse 16*

- What does this verse show about the character of God, even when it comes to judging His own people?
- Was God justified in what He planned to do to the people? Why?

##### *Verse 17*

- What might have been part of Jeremiah's "getting ready"?
- Why do you think the Lord repeated again what he had already said before (verse 8)?

##### *Verse 18*

- What is the meaning and significance of the phrases "fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall?"
- Why would the people of verse 18 be so opposed to Jeremiah and his message?
- How does God fortify and prepare His people today to stand for Him?

##### *Verse 19*

- What does this verse show about God's character and commitment to those He calls?

### **E. The Biblical Principle**

The final step in the process of interpretation is to attempt to state the meaning of the passage as a concise biblical principle. This statement should be very similar to the "Main Point" in section IV.B. above. However, the main point in section IV.B. related to the specific context of Jeremiah 1, more than 2500 years ago. The principle that you want to formulate now should be valid at any time, especially today.

The form of the principle would be something like: "In this kind of situation, we should..." or "When this happens, God will..." The exact wording of the principle for a particular passage will vary, of course. Also, the principle should be as specific as possible. This process is not easy, but it is important. And with God's help, it is possible.

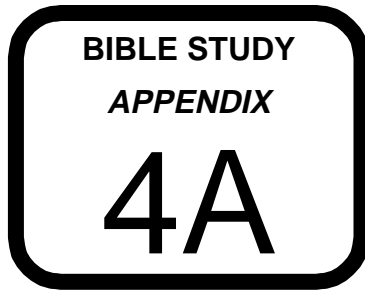
From my study of Jeremiah 1, I find the following timeless biblical principle (record):

### **QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION.**

- What are three common errors in interpretation?
- What question does interpretation answer?

### **ACTION PLAN**

- Finish any remaining questions in this lesson that you have not yet completed.
- Begin to work through the interpretation process using Acts 17:1-10.



## Bible Charts

---

On the following pages are two charts that may help be of help to you:

- Figure 4A.1 gives the big picture of God's eternal plan through the Old and New Testaments.
- Figure 4A.2 shows the historical periods of the Bible.

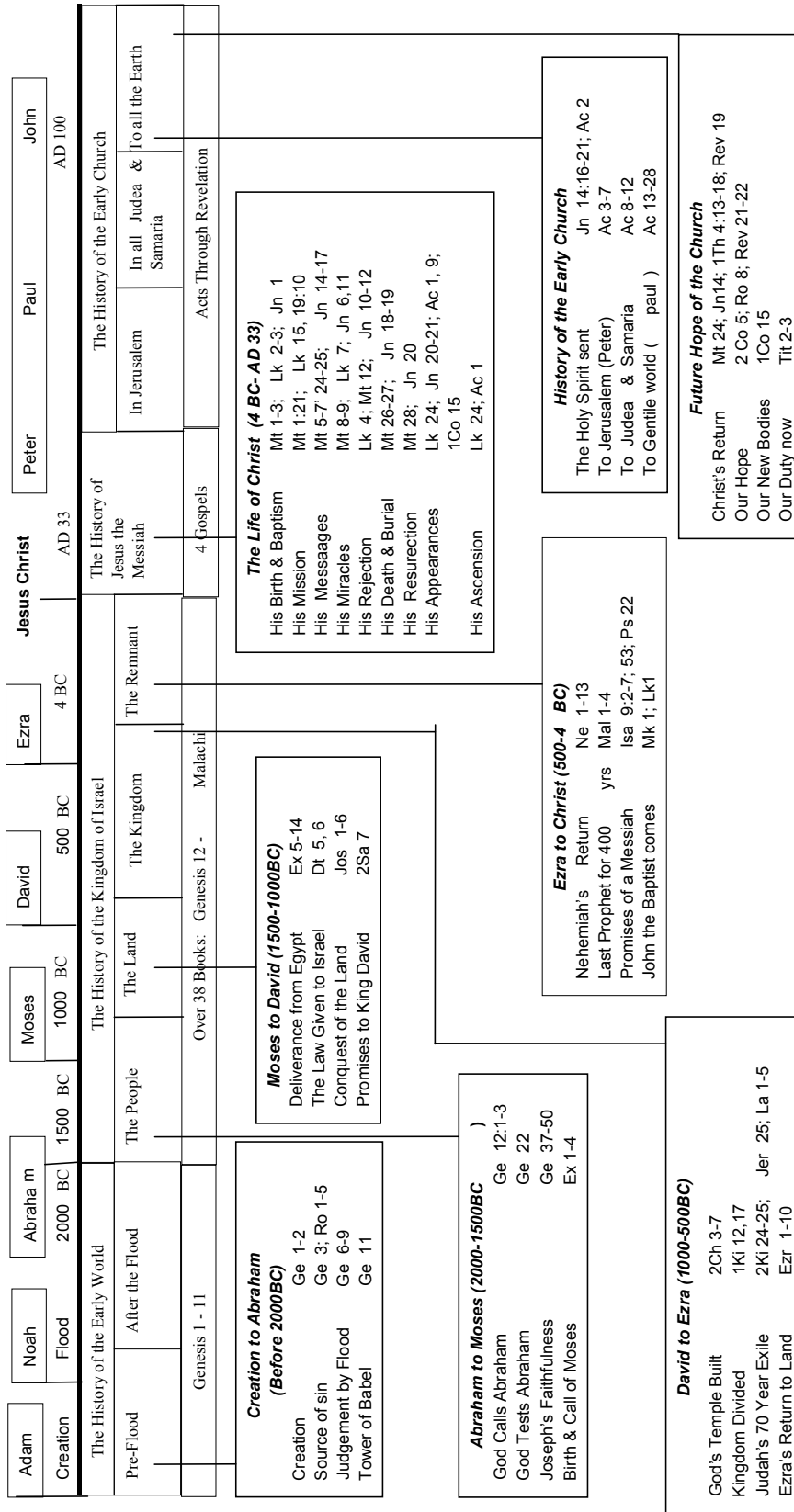
**Figure 4A.1: Redemptive History of the World in the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT)**

The chart below is intended to give the BIG PICTURE of the Bible by showing that the Old and New Testaments are united in declaring God's eternal purpose. Beginning in Genesis, God created Man (male and female) to have a relationship with Him. When Man sinned, that relationship was broken. The account of how God began rebuilding that relationship begins in Genesis 3:15 and ends in Revelation 22. In fact, the Bible is primarily the history of God's redemptive plan.

OT	Creation: Ge 1, 2	Fall/Sin: Ge 3:1-14	Promise of a Redeemer: Ge 3:15, 21	Promise repeated to Abraham: Ge 12	Sacrificial System initiated under Law of Moses/Blood Atonement: Exodus	A chosen people to be His Witness throughout the World
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Man (Male &amp; female) created in IMAGE of God 1:27</li> <li>- to have relationship with God, 3:8</li> <li>- to have relationship with each other, 2:24</li> <li>- to reproduce, 1:28</li> <li>- to rule over earth, 1:28</li> <li>- to receive God's blessing, 1:28</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Image Marred</li> <li>- Relationship with God broken</li> <li>- Pain and suffering</li> <li>- Try to rule over each other</li> <li>- All under a curse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The "offspring" of the woman would strike the heel of the serpent.</li> <li>- God made garments of skin for them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I will bless you</li> <li>- In you all nations of the earth will be blessed</li> <li>- God chose one nation to be His people &amp; to make Him known throughout the earth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Isa 53:7</li> <li>- Ex 12:13 A lamb to be sacrificed for sin. (Picture of the Lamb of God that would take away sins of the world).</li> <li>- Leviticus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jos 2:8-14; 4:24</li> <li>- 2Sa 7:25-26</li> <li>- 1Ki 8:41-43</li> <li>- Isa 43:10-12; 54:5; 55:4, 5; 59:20; 60:16</li> <li>- Da 7:13-14</li> <li>- Zec 13:1</li> <li>- (plus many, many more)</li> </ul>	
NT	Jesus: Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world	Gospels: Jesus the Redeemer Came	Acts: History of story of Redemption taken to ends of earth	A Redeemed people being transformed into image of Christ: "How should we Live?"	Revelation: Ultimate Redemption	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jn 1:29</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mt 1:21</li> <li>- Jn 3:16, 17</li> <li>- Lk 4:18, 19</li> <li>- Lk 19:10</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jerusalem 2 &amp; 6:7</li> <li>- Judea &amp; Samaria 6:8 - 9:31</li> <li>- Palestine &amp; Syria 9:32 - 12:24</li> <li>- Eastern part of Roman World 12:25-19:20</li> <li>- To Rome 19:21-25:31</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ro 3:24; Ro 4:22-25; Ro 6:11-14;</li> <li>- Ro 8:29</li> <li>- 2Co 3:18</li> <li>- Eph 4:21-33</li> <li>- Col 1:15-22</li> <li>- 1Pe 5:1, 10</li> <li>- 1Th 2:19</li> <li>- Jude 24, 25</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (Creation of) a New Heaven and New Earth (21:1)</li> <li>- Everything made new (21:5)</li> <li>- His servants will reign with Him (22:5)</li> <li>- Blessed are those who wash their robes (22:14)</li> </ul>		

**Figure 4A.2 Chronology of the Bible**

This chart shows how the Bible is broken down into historical periods. Key figures in each of the periods are noted



© 1995 - Myles Lorenzen. Used by permission

**BIBLE STUDY  
METHODS**

**5**

LESSON

# Interpretation Workshop

## ☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to give trainees the opportunity to practice the interpretation stage of inductive Bible study.

## ☞ Main Points

- The goal of interpretation is to understand the author's intended meaning.

## ☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered each participant should:

- Begin to apply the principles of interpretation.
- Better understand the meaning of Acts 17:1-10a.

## ☞ Suggestions to Trainers

Workshop: Divide the trainees into small groups of 3-4 people. Have all the groups work on the same passage recommended at the end of the first hour. Allow 15 minutes at the end of the workshop for the groups to discuss their understanding of the passage together.

## WORKSHOP FORMAT

The passage we will use for our workshop is Acts 17:1-10a. The format for this workshop is as follows:

- We will divide into groups of 3-4 people.
- We will have 35 minutes to read the passage and work through the steps of interpretation as presented in Lesson 4.
- The last 15 minutes of the workshop we will regroup and share our understanding of the passage, and to choose key 'interpretation' questions.

## GROUP WORK

As a result of Lesson 3, each trainee should already be very familiar with Acts 17:1-10a. You will need to refer back to your observations in that lesson in order to complete this lesson. In fact, it may be necessary to do additional observation of the passage if questions arise that you cannot answer.

Use the same process that you used to interpret Jeremiah 1 in Lesson 4.

### A. Sift the Observations to Find the Key Facts

As I look at my observations on Acts 17:1-10a, it seems to me that the most important observations are (*list*):

*Context of the passage:*

*Original audience:*

*Original situation:*

*Other facts and observations:*

**B. State the Main Point**

The subject of the passage is:

The thing that Luke is saying about this subject is:

A concise statement of main point, reflecting the two ideas above, is:

**C. Describe the Flow of Thought**

Luke develops the main idea of the passage by:



**D. “What Does It Mean” Questions**

As you work through this passage as a group, record below key questions you asked about the meaning of the passage that helped you better understand *what the verses mean*.

*[Circle the two most helpful questions that you would use if you were leading a group study of this passage.]*

**E. State the Biblical Principle**

The timeless principle of this passage is:

**SUMMARY**

Use the space below to take notes when the groups come back together to discuss their understanding of the passage. Note how other groups agreed or differed from your understanding. Try to arrive at a consensus on the meaning of the passage.

Choose the two best ‘interpretation’ questions for a group study from among the ‘favorites’ of all the groups and record them below.

- 1.
- 2.

**SOURCES**

Hendricks, Howard G., and William Hendricks. *Living By the Book*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991.

BIBLE STUDY  
METHODS  
**6**  
LESSON

# Applying God's Word

## WHAT SHOULD I DO?

### ☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to model for the church planter how to study the Bible through the inductive Bible study principle of 'application.'

### ☞ Main Points

- We need to obey the biblical principles we learn, or else the exercise is futile.
- Our situation must be equivalent to the biblical context for the application to be valid.

### ☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should:

- Know how to apply principles learned from the Scriptures
- Know how to prepare inductive Bible study application questions.
- Begin to apply the application principles presented in this lesson.

### ☞ Suggestions to Trainers

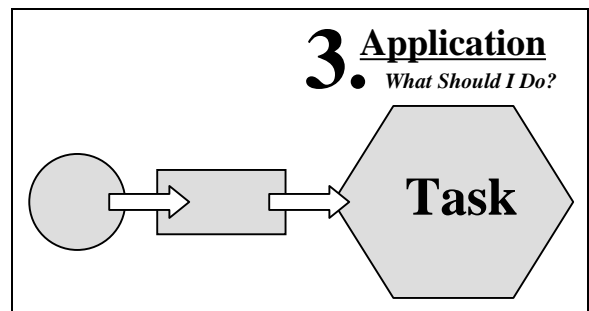
The focus in this lesson should be on practical applications that each person can make to his/her own life and ministry. Trainees should be encouraged to make these personal applications.

## INTRODUCTION

For some reason, the hardest part of the Christian life is applying the truths of Scripture to everyday life. We might gain much knowledge and our faith might increase from our study of the Bible. However, unless we understand how to put into practice what we have learned, the study will not greatly profit us. In the preceding lessons, we have collected our materials (observation) and constructed them into a biblical principle (interpretation). Now it is time to live in the truth (application). Application specifically asks the question "what should I do?"

When we determine what we *should* do, we still need to **obey** what the Bible teaches. Jesus taught that His disciples should teach others "...to obey everything I have commanded you" (Mt 28:20). The Apostle Paul speaks of applying what has been learned this way, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1Co 11:1). The Apostle John writes that "we know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands" (1Jn 2:3). Also, we need to look for practical ways to **apply** the truths we learn as we study the Bible. The Apostle James writes, "...faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (Jas 2:17).

Figure 6.1



In this lesson we want to return to the passage in Jeremiah chapter 1. We will study the text again, looking for biblical principles that we can apply to our lives. While the principles will apply to everyone, the practical applications may well vary from one person to another because our circumstances are all different.

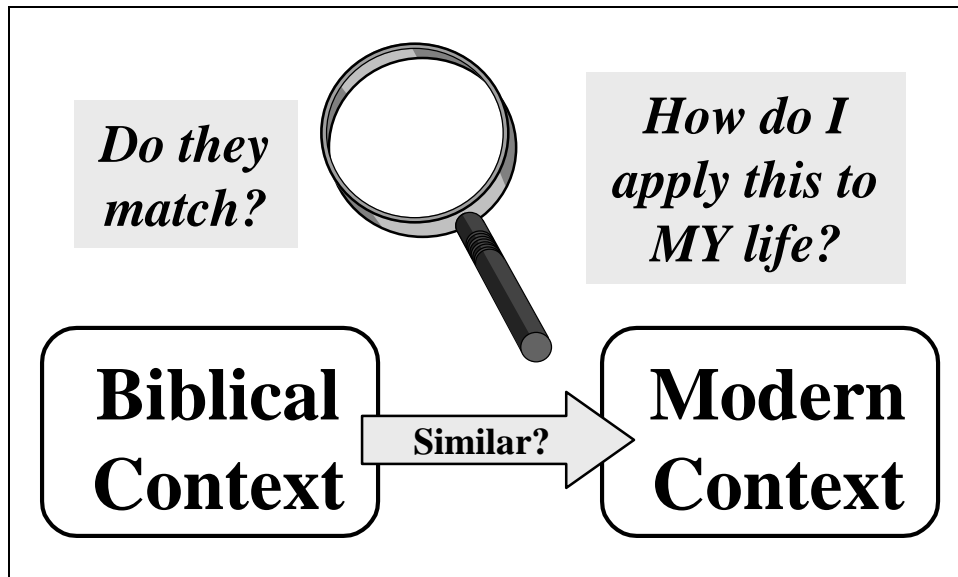
## I. APPLICATION—THE THIRD STAGE OF THE INDUCTIVE METHOD

There are two very important issues that must be addressed in the application stage. The first is the fact that application should always be made to oneself, rather than only to others. It does not matter whether the study is for the purpose of personal growth, or for teaching others. If we do not apply it to ourselves first, we become hypocrites. Whatever we teach to others should always flow out of what we have already learned and applied in our own life. Then we can teach others if the need arises.

The second important point is to make sure that *our context* is the same as the *original context*. We cannot, and must not apply a message given to biblical characters to our own lives unless our situation is equivalent. Therefore, much of the application stage consists of asking "What in my life is similar to the situation described in the passage?"

Application consists of asking "What in my life is similar to the situation described in the passage?"

Figure 6.2 Comparing the Contexts



## II. PROCESS OF APPLICATION

Proper application starts with a logical and systematic consideration of the basic areas of our life and ministry that should be affected by the biblical principle that we have seen in the text. It is helpful to consider each topic, and then to ask ourselves probing, thought-provoking questions about what we should do in response to the message. As always, this process should be surrounded by prayer, and accompanied by a willingness to learn and grow in the Lord.

### A. Application Topics

The ultimate goal of application is personal character development and greater ministry effectiveness. There are a number of areas or topics that we should consider when we try to apply the message of a passage personally. These topics include both our personal life and ministry. Some examples are listed here:

Faith: What can I learn about personal faith?

Attitudes: What attitudes are good or bad? What are their results? How can I change negative ones?

Actions: What should I start doing? What should I stop doing?

Sins: What sin(s) have been pointed out to me? How can I right things with God/others?

Challenges: What challenges have been made clear to me in my personal life? In relationships with others? In my ministry?

Promises: What promises can I claim as my own? Are there conditions? What are the implications for my life and ministry?

Character: What are the godly character qualities that I need to develop in my life and ministry?

## B. General Questions

Hendricks lists a number of helpful application questions that can be asked of any passage of Scripture. They are:

- Is there an example for me to follow?
- Is there a sin to avoid?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there a prayer to repeat?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a condition to meet?
- Is there a verse to memorize?
- Is there an error to mark?
- Is there a challenge to face?

## C. Specific Questions

Having asked the general application questions of Jeremiah chapter 1, it is also helpful to look at each verse or section and ask more specific questions. As distinct from previous stages, however, these questions directly relate to *what you should do* as a result of the message. There are an endless number of these specific questions, since they are different for every passage. You are limited only by your creativity. The important thing is to open your heart to the Lord, and allow Him to show you what He wants to be different in your life.

Some sample questions are listed below. Feel free to add to them as you work through the passage.

### *Verse 5*

- What does the teaching of this verse say personally to you about your personal relationship with God the Creator?
- What does this verse say to you personally about your call to ministry?
- If you do not have a clear sense of call, what is this verse saying to you?
- What does this verse say personally to you about God's will for your life?
- Do you know what God's will for your life is at this point?
- What impact does this verse have regarding your faith in God's sovereignty?
- Do you agree? Do you accept this concept without reservation?

### *Verse 6*

- Do you identify with Jeremiah's hesitancy to respond to God's challenge?
- What have been your "excuses?"
- Are you still offering excuses? What should you do about them?

### *Verse 7*

- What do you think personally about God's response to Jeremiah?
- How do you feel personally about the apparent lack of "flexibility" on Jeremiah's part to refuse God's call?

- There doesn't seem to be any room for Jeremiah to make his own decision. What do you feel personally about not having any real choice in the matter of a call by God? Should you have a choice?
- Does this verse create a problem for you in the area of man's free will and God's sovereignty?
- If this does create a problem, how will you respond?

*Verse 8*

- What does this verse mean to you personally?
- How will you apply this to your personal and ministry situation?

*Verse 9*

- Can you describe a situation in which God has "met" with you personally?

*Verse 10*

- What does this verse say to you personally about God's ultimate goal of your ministry?
- Can you see any similarity between Jeremiah's task and yours as a church planter?
- There were obstacles that Jeremiah had to face and overcome in order to reach the goal of building and planting anew. What are some of the obstacles you face as you reach toward that same goal of building up the kingdom of God by planting new churches?
- How do you feel about the prospect of being in a position where you might have to go against tradition and leaders who might oppose your church planting ideas?
- How would you deal with the obstacles and those who might oppose you?

*Verse 12*

- How do you see the principle of this verse applying to you personally?
- What does this verse do for your confidence as a church planter?

*Verse 16*

- How do you deal with the issue of "other gods" in your own life?
- What do you need to do to make sure that your allegiance is only to God and not to other "gods", i.e., materialism, nationalism, etc.?

*Verse 17*

- How do you rate your readiness at this point to be able to stand up for God against all opposition?
- What do you need to do personally to prepare yourself for your future ministry?
- What areas of your life need reinforcing spiritually?

*Verse 18*

- God fortified Jeremiah. How has God fortified you to stand for Him?
- What has God given to you to be with you in all circumstances?
- How does this make you feel about God and His provision for you and your ministry?

### III. SUMMARY

The application I see for my life and ministry in Jeremiah 1 is:

### QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW, AND APPLICATION

- Do you agree that it is always necessary to apply teaching to ourselves first of all? Why is that important?

- How does the 'context' influence the application of a passage?

### **ACTION PLAN**

- If you have not had time to complete this lesson as a group, do so before the next workshop so that you will be familiar with the principles.

### **SOURCES**

Hendricks, Howard G., and William Hendricks. *Living By the Book*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1991.



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



---

# ACTS

~ Dr Wally Marais



# 1

## Introducing the Witnessing Church

### Lesson Purpose:

- To obtain an overview of the Book of Acts in order to understand the message thereof.

### Lesson Outcome:

- Know the contents and background of the Book of Acts
- Understand the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church
- See that it is the living Christ acting through His Body
- Seek the power of the Holy Spirit in his own life.
- Comprehend himself as an extension of the body of Christ

### Table of Contents

- Who is the writer of Acts?
- Why did Luke write Acts?
- What a wonderful name for a book!
- And who are the readers of this book?
- What is the overall challenge of the Book of Acts?

The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ has its roots in Gen 3:15 when God promised to send one powerful enough to crush Satan and his dirty work in the lives of men and woman. All through the Old Testament we are reminded of this deliverer of God's people and the promise of His Presence, Power and Purity in our lives, thereby restoring in us the image of God in which we were created. He came and satisfied the demands of sin through His atoning death and also met all the requirements from God's side. The power of the Holy Spirit who raised Him from the dead was made available by Jesus to every believer, giving them power to be like Him, having eternal life and the same quality of His holy life. This was brought about through the mighty power of the Spirit of God recreating all believers into Children of God. They were able to be restored to the Image of God in them. They were now able to live free from the sinful nature which had defiled and controlled them. The presence of the fullness of the Spirit of God filling their lives with His light expelled the darkness of sin. Jesus was alive in His Body imparting to them moment by moment this new quality of life, imparting His purity to them, and using them as His body to continue his ministry through them. He has never stopped doing this, from that first day of the Last days, the day of Pentecost until now His Spirit has been pouring Himself into the lives of the disciples of Jesus who receive His fullness by grace through faith. This offer will continue until the very last day of the last days which will be at His second coming. Any Christian who is not being filled with the Holy Spirit is not being made Holy by His presence and lacks His power in their lives. They do so because they do not believe and they do not ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit.



## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

There are different reasons why they do not ask in faith. Some have been taught that because they received the Holy Spirit at salvation they already have Him, but what they do not see is that He does not yet have all of them and that is why they are still seeking something more. Others do not believe that they can be delivered from the sin nature so want to hang on to a doctrine that denies Jesus the power to expel the darkness of all sin from their lives. Still others think that being filled with the Holy Spirit means that they are being told that they will be sinlessly perfect and none of us can accept that false doctrine.

Because of a lack of a right conception of sin, they confuse Christian perfection with sinless perfection. They understand that there are sins that need forgiveness and cleansing now, and they know that there is still a sinful nature in them but they refuse to believe that the Blood of Jesus can cleanse them from all sin now. They have been taught that their sinful nature and human nature are one and the same. This means that they believe that they will be released from this evil body of sin at death and thereby substitute death as their saviour. Imagine what you would feel like if you were Jesus knowing that you had died to free the person from the cause of his sinning and he refuses to accept your provision. You really have to answer this question when you read the book of Acts before Jesus can start acting through your life. It is not just reading what happened 2000 years ago, that what happened then is what is happening now and some of you are missing what the message of this book is all about.

It is about 120 Christians who were already saved being filled with the Holy Spirit of the living Jesus, their hearts being made pure, their lives being empowered by the Spirit, and Jesus continuing working in and through them and with them to continue His Ministry preparing the way for His second coming. It is about a new created people of God being empowered and kept holy and doing holy Jesus things in this unholy world. Christians are able in the power of the Holy Spirit to go into this evil world and plant little flags announcing that the reign of King Jesus is already here in us now. His kingdom has broken through and we by faith choose to live with Him. God's Spirit is available 24 hours of the day. Imagine if all those who were praying for revival would by grace through faith accept His fullness into their lives. We would have revival, this is exactly what happened in most revivals where Christians were involved. The history of the Hebrides revivals shows how the message of Holiness was opposed by so many who were tied to their theological biases, and missed out, but those who by faith opened in brokenness and openness were used to save even countries from war and destruction. Do we really believe that Jesus cannot undo in one divine moment what the devil has done in our lives. What we need is full deliverance, not only deliverance from demonic power but from that demonic power and presence working in the lives of God's people.. As long as Christians oppose the message of the pure heart they are going to remain bound and under the control of the devils sin principle in them, paralysing them from doing Jesus things to their people. A young man was preaching at an open air and on the edge of the meeting sat an old drunkard listening. The young man told of his past life and his salvation and ended by saying, "I am saved but I am still a sinner.No one can be perfect. I sin in word, thought and deed everyday.After the service the drunkard approached the young man and said, "Young man if you must sin to go to heaven, what must I do to go to hell?"The time has come to ask yourself where you are in this movie picture taken of the Church and Christians over a period of some 30 years. That is why it is here in the Bible and there is a reason why God's Holy Spirit is walking alongside of you through this book. What He did then He still does today.Measure where you are and be honest enough to yield yourself entirely to Him, and see what happens.

## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

You can be certain that this is not a record about so called sinning Christians, rather it is a book about how God using ordinary men and woman cleansed them from the sin nature making them true human beings to do supernaturally natural things. It could be your life story.

#### **Who is the writer of Acts?**

It is clear that the writer of Acts and of the Gospel of Luke is one and the same person (compare Luke 1:1-3 with Acts 1:17).

It was accepted quite early in the Church that he could be none other than Luke. Justin Martyr (150 AD.) states that Luke is the author of the third gospel.

The Anti Marcionite prologue to the third gospel (170 AD.) confirms this. Irenaeus (185 AD.) Clement, Origen, Tertullian and the early church fathers had no doubt that Luke was the writer of the third gospel (and therefore of Acts).

Tradition is in complete accord that Luke is the unnamed writer of both Luke and Acts.

Who is this Luke that the Church has come to accept as the writer of Acts? He is mentioned only three times in the Bible, i.e. Col 4:14,

Phm 24, 2 Ti 4:11. We know little about this wonderful Christian.

- From these three references we can establish that:
- He is not a Jewish but a gentile Christian (see the Daily Study Bible (DSB, P.2).
- He is a medical doctor and very dear to Paul.

He is one of the few Christians who remained with Paul both during his first imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:16-31; Col 4:14; Phm 24) as well as his last imprisonment (2 Ti 4:11).

A document which is dated 170 AD gives the following interesting additional information about Luke: Luke was a physician by profession. He served the Lord without blame, having neither wife nor children, and at the age of eighty four he fell asleep in Boeotia, full of the Holy Spirit.

#### **Why did Luke write Acts?**

When somebody writes a book he does so for a reason (or more than one reason). Luke also had his reasons for writing Acts. He stated in Luke 1:3-4 that he intended to give an accurate and true account of the ministry of Jesus. Luke wanted Theophilus to know: This is exactly how it all happened! Luke very clearly maintained this intention in writing the book of Acts.

- What can we learn from this?
- Your work as Christian (or church leader) is always to set the record straight about Jesus! We must tell people: "This is what it is all about. This is Jesus and this is what He did! (and still does!)"
- Be accurate and true and convinced (and excited) when you give people the story of Jesus and what He did!

## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

- Luke wanted to give the story of how the Church began and how it expanded. One could say that Acts is Church History.

But there are two different ways of writing the history of something:

There is the way of detail. The historian tries to give a detailed report of events. He gives close attention to dates, names, places, events, etc. and tries to explain carefully how things came to be what they now are. There is the way of glimpses. The historian only tries to give glimpses of the great moments and persons of a particular time.

Details such as names, events, dates and persons are not always important. The events of a few years may be summed up in only a sentence or two.

The whole idea is simply to open up a series of windows for people to see how things came to be what they now are. Luke is this kind of historian. We must therefore not expect a detailed and exhaustive history of the Church by him.

We are looking at a moving picture taken over thirty years..

#### **What a Wonderful Name for a Book!**

The early Christians soon called this book Acts and it has had that name ever since. The Greek title is *Praxeis* which literally means "actions, deeds, practices". Acts is unmistakably a book full of actions, deeds and practices. But whose actions? Different answers are given to this question.

The full title of most Bible translations is: The Acts of the Apostles.

This title suggests that Acts wants to tell us something about the actions, deeds and practices of the apostles. But is this really the case? Acts most certainly does not give an account of what all the apostles have done.

In fact, it concentrates mainly on what Peter and Paul have done, with small references to James and John (see the DSB, P. 1). We should therefore not stress the point too much that Acts is a record of what men (apostles) have done.

Some suggest that a more accurate title for the book would be: The Acts of Jesus Christ. (Compare Acts 1:1,2). "My first book I wrote about all the things Jesus did and taught... until the day He was taken up to heaven" (Good News Bible). It really is the account of what the Living Lord Jesus did through His Body, the church. They could never have done this on their own, or even through THEIR faith, but had to learn to trust His faithfulness.

In his first book (the gospel) Luke tells us of all Jesus began to do and taught until He was taken up into heaven.

Yes! Acts is indeed the book in which we are told what Jesus the Living Lord, did. See for example the refer-

## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

ences in Acts itself of what God and the Lord did (14:27; 15:4,12; 19:11; 21:19). In these references the people are excited (not about what men (apostles) did) but about the great things the Lord did!

What can we learn from this possible title?

- We need congregations and churches where Jesus is clearly at work! Too much of what is seen in our churches today can be explained in terms of human efforts, cleverness, programs and sweat.

We need a church which is clearly the work of the Living Jesus! (Compare the promise of Jesus: "I will build my Church" Mt 16:18.) Of course He uses people in building the church. But let Him build it! This is one of the reasons why we should study Acts to find out how Jesus built his church and still wants to today.

That which is not of Jesus in our churches is not worthwhile and is wood, grass and straw (1 Co 3:12)!

The title could equally well read: The Acts of the Holy Spirit

In the early chapters of Acts no great figure in the church either spoke or acted or came to any decision other than under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the principal actor in the drama of this exciting and growing church.

The success of the early church in reaching its world for Christ can only be explained in terms of an empowering by the Holy Spirit. (See for example the promise of Jesus in Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8.)

In Acts we therefore have in a very real sense, the actions, deeds and practices of the Spirit of the living Lord Jesus.

- What can we learn from such a possible title?
- If we will ever become the living church of Jesus Christ it will not be as a result of our good planning and organising, but as a result of the Holy Spirit's work in and through us. He has already shown us His plan for world evangelism.

He will build the church into something extraordinary if we stop trying to do His work for Him and let him do it! Just be available to the Spirit of God (walk, live habitually in the Holy Spirit, responsive to, controlled and guided by the Spirit; Gal 5:16 Amplified Version) He has shown us that His plan for the church is for it to be His Worshipping body, His fellowshiping body and His ministering body. To neglect one of these is to go around in circles accomplishing nothing..

- Everything in our churches that is not of the Spirit of God must be recognized for what it is and be rooted out.! Everything that cannot be maintained in our churches without constant human pressure and sweat and encouragement is not worth maintaining.

Only the Spirit can bring life and glory into the church of Jesus Christ.

### **And who are the Readers of this Book?**

The reader is called Theophilus (1:1). Who is this Theophilus? At least two possible explanations can be given: Theophilus is the name of a real person. If he is a real person, he is a Christian and obviously also an important somebody because he is called "most excellent Theophilus" (Luke 1:3).

- What can we learn from this fact?
- If Luke was willing to write two whole books so that one Christian (Theophilus) may become a knowledgeable and committed follower of Jesus, we should not consider time and prayer spent on only one Christian as wasted. Many times we are called to build into the life of an individual and we should do it gladly for Jesus!

Some argue that Theophilus may not be the name of any particular person at all. They argue that the name Theophilus consists of two Greek words: A theos (which means God) and Aphilos (which means friend or lover). It could therefore be that Luke intended to write to every lover or friend of God! Acts then becomes a book that was specially written for all those who love God!

### **What is the overall Challenge of Acts?**

Expect the Living Lord Jesus to act in and through you and the Church! He is alive and well and ready to act in your life and in the church where you fellowship. Become the "church where Jesus is at work". Use Acts as your study guide as to how you may become such a church.

Remember that Acts was "inspired by God and is useful for teaching the faith and correcting error, for re setting the direction of man's life and training him in good living" (2 Ti 3:16; J.B. Phillips translation).

This book shows clearly how Jesus takes Christians under the power of the sinful nature, and changes them by cleansing them from the sin principle thereby making them holy channels through whom He continues His ministry.

#### **Group Discussion:**

What principles do you find in Acts that should be applied in your life and in your church?



# 2

## The Holy Spirit Produces a Pure and Powerful People of God – The Church

### Lesson Purpose:

- To understand the role of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts, in the life of individual Christians and in the life of the Church. We will soon see that he chooses to only work through pure hearts and clean lives.

### Lesson Outcome:

- Be faced with what he believes about the saving and sanctifying work of Christ's Spirit today.
- Live out what he believes.
- Preach the truth as He sees it.

### Table of Contents

- Who is the Holy Spirit?
- What Does The Holy Spirit Do?
- The Holy Spirit in the life of individual Christians.
- The Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

### Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Spirit is introduced to us in Acts under the following names:

- The Holy Spirit (1:2),
- the promise of the Father (1:4), the Spirit (1:4),
- my Spirit (2:17),
- the Spirit of the Lord (5:9),
- the gift of God (8:20),
- the Gift (11:17) and
- the Spirit of Jesus (16:8). He has been called "The other self of Jesus".

He is a Person, a Somebody: not just some force in us.

The Holy Spirit is never presented as a mysterious kind of power or influence or force which God exerts on people but He is always presented to us as a Person!

The marks of personality are knowledge, feeling and will and any being who knows, thinks, feels and wills is a person. And there is no question about it that the Spirit in Acts is One who knows, wills and feels.

## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

Because He is a person, He can

- speak (1:16; 11:12; 28:26),
- knowingly give (2:4),
- decide certain things (15:28),
- urge Christians (20:22) and
- testify to believers (20:23).

He can

- be lied to (5:3),
- tested (5:9)
- and withstood (7:47).
- He witnesses to people (5:32)
- and commands them (8:29).
- He instructs leaders (13:2)
- and sends them out as missionaries (13:4).
- He forbids Christians to do certain things (16:6).

When Christians lied to Him, He brought immediate judgment, and obedience brought immediate blessing.

In other parts of Scripture the personality of the Spirit is borne out by the fact that He has

- a will (1 Co 12:11),
- feeling (Eph 4:30)
- and is intelligent (1 Co 2:10,11).
- He teaches (John 14:26),
- guides (Ro 8:14)
- and intercedes (Ro 8:26) etc.)

The doctrine of the personality of the Spirit is fundamental and vital. Anyone who does not know the Spirit as a person has not come to a well rounded Christian experience.

The following is quoted from the book: The Holy Spirit, who He is and what He does by Dr. R.A. Torrey:

“The importance of the doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit. In the first place the doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit is of the highest importance from the standpoint of worship. If the Holy Spirit is a person, and we think of the Holy Spirit merely as an impersonal influence or power, as so many do, then we are robbing a Divine Person of the worship which is his due, of the love which is his due and of the faith and confidence and surrender and obedience and worship which are his due.”

He is the one who applies the Blood of Jesus to our hearts, he is the one who expels the darkness of sin by filling our lives with the Light of his presence, He performs the work of Grace in us that sanctifies us entirely, and He is the One who imparts to us His power, the same power that He used to raise Jesus from the dead.

In the second place, it is of the highest importance from a practical view point that we know the Holy Spirit as a Person. If you think of the Holy Spirit.....as a mere influence or power, then your thoughts will constantly be, How can I get hold of the Holy Spirit and use it?



But if you think of Him in the Biblical way as a Person of Divine Majesty and Glory, your thought will be, 'How can the Holy Spirit get hold of me and use me?'

Important: Always think of the Spirit as a Person with whom you can have a relationship.

He is God!:

Acts does not only teach that the Holy Spirit is a person, but that He is a divine person! He is presented to us as God!! In Acts 5:3 Peter blames a certain Ananias that he had lied to the Holy Spirit. He rephrases the statement by saying that Ananias had lied to God (5:4)! Lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God.

The deity of the Holy Spirit is borne out more fully in other parts of the Bible. That the Holy Spirit is God is proven by His characteristics.

- He has omniscience (1 Co 2:10,11),
- omnipresence (Ps 139:7),
- omnipotence (Ge 1:2),
- He is eternal (Heb 9:14),

The Spirit does things which can only be ascribed to God:

- He created (Ge 1:2, Ps 104:30),
- He regenerates people (John 3:5,6; Tit 3:5)
- and resurrects the dead (Ro 8:11).

It is because He is God that He is equally associated with the Father and the Son (Mt 28:19; 2 Co 13:14).

Important: Always think of the Spirit as God whom you should worship and obey.

### **What does the Holy Spirit do?**

The Holy Spirit is mentioned more in Acts than in any other book of the Bible. If you really want to know who the Holy Spirit is and what He does, you will just have to read Acts!

It is important to see that one of the main aims of the book of Acts is to show how the Church lived under control of God the Holy Spirit!

Acts teaches the truth of Gal. 5:16: "Walk and live habitually in the Holy Spirit responsive to and controlled and guided by the Spirit" (Amplified Version).

The early Christians had a living, practical relationship with the Holy Spirit. He most certainly was no mere theological doctrine to them and He was not given mere lip service in their personal lives and in their churches but He was God alive with them and in them. (See Jesus' promise in John 14:16.)

What can we learn from this?

It is not enough to have a good theology of the Holy Spirit and to have our doctrines straight about Him. It is not enough to merely profess: "I believe in the Holy Spirit".



## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

Acts calls us to experience the Holy Spirit! And any Christian (or church) who professes and does not experience the Holy Spirit, has an incomplete Christian life.

The Holy Spirit in the life of individual Christians

Jesus promises his followers in 1:8: "But you shall receive power- ability, efficiency, might when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." (Amp. Version)

He reminded them in Luke 24:49: "Behold, I will send forth upon you what my Father has promised; but remain in the city (Jerusalem) until you are clothed with power from on high. (Amplified Version).

In order to have power and be efficient for Jesus, Christians need an "experience" with the Holy Spirit. This "experience" with the Holy Spirit is described in Acts in the following terms by Christians:

We were baptised with/in the Holy Spirit (1:5; 11:16).

Also see the promise of a baptism in/with the Holy Spirit in Mt 3:11; the "in" means we all became one Body in the Spirit, and the "with" means that we all have only one source of purity and power, God's Holy Spirit. Mk 1:8; Luke 3:17; John 1:33.

We need to be immersed in (introduced into) the Spirit and teach other Christians how to be "introduced into" the Spirit, and we also need to experience the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

#### TAKE NOTE

It was the disciples, already believers who were filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost in the upper room. Only after they had been filled did the Holy Spirit use them to preach to the thousands who were present from all over the known world. We will discuss this later in more detail.

The Spirit came upon us (1:8; 19:6).

The Holy Spirit Himself acts and "comes upon" Christians. What is the result of the Spirit coming upon them? They receive power to become efficient, effective witnesses for Christ, they are able to say: not only is Jesus alive in us now, but he is imparting to us His quality of eternal life, and we are different. (1:8)!

What makes any Christian a powerful, effective witness for Jesus? Not his knowledge of Scripture, his intelligence, his long experience as a Christian, his Theological training, his personality, etc. The Holy Spirit gives power to see and understand what Jesus is doing in ones life, The most effective witness is when ones life testifies that what he is also living everyday, he is a living witness to the power of the Spirit of Jesus in him. Only the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon us, in us, with us can make us true witnesses that Jesus is alive.

We were filled with the Spirit  
(2:4; 4:5,31; 9:17; 13:9).

## The CCP Pastoral Training Course Acts

---

(See also Luke 1:15, 41, 67 for this phrase.) "They were all filled diffused throughout their souls with the Holy Spirit." (2:4 Amplified Version.)

This term indicates that Christians had an abundant, overflowing, filling experience with the Spirit! (The original Greek word means "to be under full influence of; to satiate.") Christians should be under the "full influence of" the Holy Spirit. This means that nothing else fills our lives. We trusted Him to fill us with all of Himself, and when He does He expels everything else. We have not been taught to appropriate by Grace through Faith His fullness so most of us have to return to him again for that subsequent work of grace when he expels all the darkness of sin. He has to fill every Dept.of our lives, our secular, social, spiritual and secret lives, and He has to keep filling them everyday, and He does because He is faithful. The Greek tense actually speaks of "be being filled with the Spirit" Eph 5:16

The Spirit was poured out upon us (2:17,18; 10:45).

(Also see Tit 3:6 for this phrase.) The Christians in Acts could give an account of how the Holy Spirit was poured out abundantly upon them. The Holy Spirit never gives eternal life, or cleansing, or power apart from Himself, His presence is always the power that is what this verse means that he keeps pouring out His presence and power upon us, and when we obey him we can count on his presence. That is why it is so important for us to keep walking in the light He gives moment by moment for if we obey him he keeps us clean and fills us with God's love and power continually. People will see the difference that the outpoured Spirit makes in your life for you will have a different family now not composed of disobedient, warped and sinful people but of those washed by the rebirth and renewed by the Holy Spirit. You are now an heir of a new quality of life in Christ. Tit 3:8 – 11.

We have received the Holy Spirit (2:38; 8:15,17,19; 10:47; 19:2).

(See also John 7:39; 14:17; 20:22; Ro 8:15; 1 Co 1:22; Gal 3:2,14 for the same phrase.)

The early Christians did not merely believe that they had been filled with the Holy Spirit. They had an 'experience' which proved it to them. There was a point in time when they could state as a matter of fact: "Now we have received the Holy Spirit".

Do not settle for anything less than a real touch of the Holy Spirit in your life!! Do not be satisfied until you can say: I have received!!

But this does not only mean that the Spirit came into you and performed the miracle of new birth in you, but that He continues to live in you giving you power to live the Jesus life, It also means that He wants to get all of you, for he has a plan to use you. Something happened to them when they received the Holy Spirit (read Acts 2:42 – 47). They were being filled with the Holy Spirit continuously, everyday Spirit things happened in their lives, things that only the Spirit of Jesus can do. If the Holy Spirit gets you similar things will happen. These were not a people who had made a decision and then tucked their ticket to heaven in their pockets and went out to live as they liked, these were people being filled with God's Holy Spirit. They were different because they had received the Holy Spirit and He had and was filling their lives with Himself.

## The CCP Pastoral Training Course Acts

---

The Spirit fell upon us (8:16; 10:44; 11:15).

This is perhaps the strongest of all the phrases the early Christians used! But what they were saying was that the Holy Spirit came upon them with a sudden force. (Michael Green, in his book "I believe in the Holy Spirit" says: "There is a whole host of places where we are told that God's action is like the wind, strong, boisterous, uncontrollable. This God can and does break into human life and sometimes He does it through the violent, the unexpected, the alien").

It also means that the Spirit falls upon us when He wants to, He cannot be manipulated or controlled by man in any way. No one has the monopoly on the Holy Spirit, be it individual or denomination or organization, he is God and He operates by His own rules. You cannot demand Him to do anything or command Him to do anything, we can only ask and allow Him to work His will.

Yes, the Holy Spirit is not always predictable!

The Spirit was given to us (5:32; 8:16; 11:17; 15:8).

(Also see Luke 11:13; John 14:16; Ro 5:5; 2 Co 1:22; 1 Th 4:8; 1 John 3:24; 4:13.)

Only God can give us the Holy Spirit of Jesus. There is no way that Christians can manipulate the Spirit. There is no ritual by which He is given. He remains the gift of God. We are born of the Spirit and are Filled with the Holy Spirit.

### **To whom is the gift of the Spirit given?**

God gives the Spirit to the Christians who obey Him! (5:32).

Obedient Christians are Spirit filled Christians. And Spirit filled Christians are obedient to their Lord. God will not waste the fullness of his Spirit on those who will not obey Him!

God gives the fullness of Spirit to those who ask! (1:14; 4:31; 8:15).

Compare: "How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask and continue to ask Him!" (Luke 11:13 Amplified Version.) This kind of asking must be in faith, that means once we have asked we accept by faith and that pleases God. If you have not received Him it is because you have a heart of unbelief. When you ask Him to come into you, and to fill you, believe that God wants to give more than you want to receive Him. No sooner does He come into your life when He will ask you to hand your life completely over to Him so that He can fill you.

Those early Christians in Acts did not have the same understanding of receiving the Holy Spirit as we do today. We grow up with pre conceived ideas about who and what the Holy Spirit is and does. Some theologies teach that what happened in Acts will never be repeated again. Others say that the receiving and the fullness of the Spirit is for now but applies only to those who have been elected and chosen to receive the Holy Spirit and be saved.

There are those of us who believe what the Bible tells us. That on the day of Pentecost it was the believers who were first filled with the Holy Spirit.

## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

We know according to the prayer prayed by Jesus in John 17:17, that God would sanctify his disciples (make them holy and set them apart for a holy use) The church would be founded with Holy members filled with the Holy Spirit.

So then it was Christians who were first baptized with the Holy Spirit giving birth to the Church. Before this day they already had received the Holy Spirit into their lives, we read in John 20:20 that Jesus Breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit". We know that they were already believers because they had left all to follow Jesus and even confessed openly that He is the Christ. Also in John 17 :2 Jesus gave them eternal life, Vs 6. Jesus had revealed the Father to them and the Father had given them to Jesus. Vs 8. They had obeyed God's word and fully accepted the truth taught them by Jesus, Vs 9 They belonged to God. How much more Christian did they have to be to be for real, of course they had been born from above by the Spirit of God and had received the Spirit of God and now in Acts 2 they are Filled with the Holy Spirit. A woman who is pregnant carries that baby for nine months until it is born. Jesus was busy forming His church through his atoning work, applying His saving work to His disciples preparing them for their birth as His one Body, His church and it happened that special day on Pentecost. Pentecost was the day the Jews were celebrating the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai and also celebrating the ingathering of the harvest, so it was a very joyous occasion for them all.

It was on this day that Jesus gave birth to His Church. These disciples who already possessed the Spirit were now possessed by the Holy Spirit, who both purified them and empowered them. We know from Acts 15: 8,9 that their hearts were purified. "God, who knows the heart showed that he accepted them ( the gentiles) by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as He did to us. He made no distinction between us and them for He purified their hearts by faith." Do not try and change it believe it. God purifies hearts through faith. His church had to be pure and powerful.

It is not enough to receive the Spirit. You have to go on and be filled/baptized with the Holy Spirit . The Spirit came to write the Law of the Spirit in Christ Jesus upon the hearts and minds of his followers, and to commence the in gathering of the harvest which since that day is ready for reaping.

There is no secret to a pure and powerful church, it is all about the Holy Spirit!

The early Church was so completely dependent upon the Spirit that they could never make it without Him. He supplied all their needs:

The Spirit can be trusted to guide and support and equip the Church:

He teaches (John 14:26; 15:26), glorifies Christ (John 16:14), convinces men (John 16:8), recreates them (11 Cor 5:17), delivers them from the sinful nature Rom 6:22 fills men (Acts 2:4), empowers the church (Acts 1:8), organizes the church program (Acts 13:2), direct church affairs (Acts 15:28), solves church problems (Php 4:19) and disciplines and chastens (Heb 12:5 11).

He gives untrained men and women the ability to minister (Acts 4:13), meets financial needs (Acts 4:31 35), recruits workers (Acts 13:2),

The Holy Spirit can be trusted to supply the church with all it needs to function as the body of Jesus Christ!

## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

And only as the Holy Spirit is allowed His place in our churches will they begin to have similarity with the church in Acts.

Only as we allow Him to equip, lead, encourage us and see Him as the source of the church's life, leadership and energy, will our own churches rise above the miserable limitations of our human abilities, talents and intelligence.

Until we come to a real dependence upon the Spirit and cease to depend on our own efforts, programs, plans, cleverness and energy, we will constantly be plagued by failures and heartaches.

The dependence on the Holy Spirit by leaders and members of the church will ask for a new way of directing our church affairs! It will require of us to start listening to the Holy Spirit. (See for example 8:29; 10:19; 13:2 and the consequences of listening to the Spirit.)

Jesus' instruction to the disciples was:

- Wait! (1:4) - Don't rush in and do and organise.
- Wait! - for the Spirit to lead and guide and tell you what to do.
- Wait! - until you are filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49).
- Wait! - until He takes control of you.
- Wait! - until He begins to work through you.

We need Churches in South Africa that are clearly the work of the Holy Spirit. Our people will be saved when we depend upon the Spirit of God!

We need Churches in Africa that are clearly the work of the Holy Spirit. Our people will be saved when we depend upon the Spirit of God!

#### **Group discussion:**

- The Holy Spirit was given to us; not for us to manipulate, He remains the gift of God which He gives to those who obey Him and to those who ask in order to make us efficient to do the work of Jesus. To what extent has this statement become a reality in your personal life and that of your congregation?
- Why do you think the church today opposes the message of full deliverance from the sinful nature. Would it make a difference if we asked the Holy Spirit to purify our hearts from all sin and to fill us with Himself?



# 3

## Jesus' Mission through His Church

### Lesson Purpose:

- To understand the Biblical concept of Church growth as expounded in the Book of Acts.

### Lesson Outcome:

- The student will understand the basic principles of church growth and he will:
- Expect the church to grow spiritually
- To grow numerically
- Know how to measure the church for growth

### Table of Contents

Every letter or book in the Bible was written with a purpose.  
Growth and numbers in the early Church.  
Numerical growth wrongly opposed.  
When do Churches grow? (according To Acts)

Every Letter or Book in the Bible was written with a purpose

Why did Luke write Acts? One of his main purposes in writing it was to show how Christianity spread from its cradle (Jerusalem) to Rome.

Jesus commanded His disciples to be His "witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth" (1:8). And it is interesting to see how Acts 1:8 becomes a pattern for Luke to show just how the gospel spread from Jerusalem, through Judea and Samaria to the ends of the earth.

### Growth and numbers in the early Church

The symbol of the Mighty rushing wind speaks of the Force of the Spirit breathing upon the harvest fields whitening them for harvest. This is His direct will, that everybody everywhere have an opportunity to respond to the Gospel. He has made the harvest ready.

There can be no doubt that the book of Acts has a very real emphasis on growth and numbers in the early church. See the reports on growth in 2:41,47; 4:4,32; 5:14; 6:1,7; 9:31,35,42; 11:21,24; 12:24; 13:49; 14:1; 21; 16:5; 17:4,12; 18:8,10; 19:20; 21:20.

## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

Luke uses the following Greek words when describing the growth of the church:

*Prostithenai* (2:41,47; 5:14).

This word means “to add, to join to, to gather with”. God likes to add and join new Christians to those that already belong to the church. He is in the adding business.

This is the meaning of the symbol of Tongues in Acts 2, “all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Notice it does not say unknown tongues but other tongues and it records the other 14 different languages they spoke that day. The word Tongues instead of languages is used by the translators to show that this was a miracle for they had not learned these languages, in fact these were so called Unclean languages that were not supposed to be spoken in Jerusalem. The message was that there were no longer unclean people, even the gentile nations were to be added to the church which is what happened.

What can we learn from this?

It must never be forgotten that God means His church to grow! And when there is no growth, there is no life. (“Growth is the only evidence of Life” words on a Christian poster).

*Plethunein* (6:1,7; 9:31; 12:24).

This word means “to multiply, increase”. The church of Jesus does not only grow by adding new Christians to it, but by multiplying them. God likes to add to the church (1+1+1+1 etc.), but He most certainly also likes to multiply the church (2x2x2x2 etc.). Multiplication is a fast and vast increase in the numbers of new Christians.

What can we learn from this?

There should be no doubt that God is interested in a rapid growth of the church!! He is not interested in the survival of the church but in its rapid multiplication!! (Think of the second Timothy two verse two principle.)

*Auxanein* (12:24):

This word means “to grow, to spread”. It is God’s intention that Christians should spread over the earth. They should not hide in small pockets, but cover all the earth! We were not meant to be a small minority but a majority!

*Matheutein* (14:21):

This word means “to disciple, to make disciples”. The task of the church is always and foremost to turn people into disciples of Jesus! Remember the words of Jesus in Mt 28:19: “Go to all peoples everywhere and make them My disciples...”(TEX).

This carries with it the meaning of healthy people, holiness is soul health, and disciples are followers being filled with spiritual health moment by moment, this the second symbol of the flame of Fire that sat upon



## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

each of them, burning out all the sin with its sin principle in their lives allowing them to commit themselves to become true disciples of Jesus, disciples are learners, not mere followers. The deliverance from the sinful nature which is not subject to God's will and indeed cannot be is the most powerful healing of all. Jesus does not merely give you power to control your disease or sickness He heals you from the disease. Eradication a term misunderstood is a medical term and was used by the old time holiness preachers to describe what Jesus did with the sinful nature. In entire sanctification God's Spirit heals Christians from the whole disease of sin. Imagine if He only suppresses it or strips it of its power, then Christians can only become sick testimonies to the delivering power of Jesus! This is the greatest need in the church today, the Old Time Fire of the Holy Spirit purifying the people of God and making them holy.

What can we learn from this?

Our first aim can never be to merely increase the numbers of my church or my group or my denomination, but to turn people into holy followers of Jesus! Is this your aim? (2 Ti 2:2).

*Perisseuein (16:5):*

This word means "to abound, be abundant, increase". There can be no doubt that God desires the church of Jesus Christ to abound, increase and be abundant.

What can we learn from this?

Luke was most certainly interested in informing us about the numerical growth of the church and the Holy Spirit through him was showing us that He wants His people to be pure and growing spiritually.. The early church did not teach that numbers was of no importance and that we should only concentrate on the quality of Christian life in our churches. It expected both growth in numbers and quality.

God is interested in how many people have become true followers of Jesus as a result of our efforts to share Jesus with our city, province and country!! Our God is a God of quantity and quality. Scholars have pointed out to us the so called "progress reports" in Acts.

God certainly would like to see our "progress reports" today! Too often we cannot report progress in either numerical or spiritual growth. This must be changed and can be changed. Only obedience to the Holy Spirit speaking to the church today about Holiness is going to make it happen just as He did in Acts.

We cannot change His formulae, first the Christians must be filled and the sin nature cleansed from their hearts and then His driving force will drive them into the streets where, as they preach, He will once again breathe out His convicting and regenerating and sanctifying power upon the thousands.

There are no short cuts, we need the Wind, the Fire and the Tongues.

In conclusion, what can we learn from this?

The church grows by adding new Christians to its numbers. A healthy church cannot but grow! (Remember: Growth is the only evidence of life.)



## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

The growth of the church is both in quality of life and in its number of new Christians. (See for example Acts 9:31 "and so it was that the church...had a time of peace. Through the help of the Holy Spirit it was strengthened and grew in numbers, as it lived in reverence for the Lord" (Good News Bible).

God expects the church to grow. He wants lost people not only to be searched for, but to be found and carried into the fold of the church (Luke 15: 1 7).

#### Numerical growth wrongly opposed

In spite of the obvious fact that Acts is interested in showing us the numerical growth of the church, many Christians and Church leaders feel that the emphasis on numerical growth is wrong and they are threatened by it. But more than that many good Christians sincerely oppose the teaching of the deliverance from the sinful nature.

Some Christians consider the biblical emphasis on numerical church growth as a kind of sickness. They even have a name for it. It is called "numberitis". They say that those Christians who work for church growth are sick with numberitis! Some even consider the emphasis on the statistical growth of the church as idolatry. This idolatry is called "numberolatry". (A worship of numbers.) Warnings are constantly sounded against wanting to become big. Some believe that "small is beautiful".

Concerning the message of the pure heart they say that we Holiness preachers think we are "gods" because they think we are preaching sinless perfection, we agree that only God is perfectly sinless and can never ever sin, but we can be as perfect as He has made it possible for us to be, and he has commanded us to BE HOLY" You can be sure that His commands are also His enabling. We would rather listen to God than to men. It is His work and we are His possession, therefore we have to Obey Him, we are to grow in numbers and in holy living.

He emphasises both numerical and spiritual growth of the church. God not only wants better Christians but more Christians.

What can we learn from this?

See to it that more and more people in our towns and cities and rural areas come to faith in Christ as their Saviour (16:31) and commit their lives to Him (11:23).

Know and believe "that God wants His church to be Holy and to multiply and that He will bless your prayers and work in this respect.

Church growth is not a phenomena of the past. God's church is growing today. (According to calculations made by prof. Peter Wagner of Fuller Theological Seminary, USA, every day sees 80,000 new Christians and 16,000 new congregations open each week around the world!! Three new congregations are opened up each week in South Africa!)

Be excited about the growth of the church worldwide and expect God to act in your church.

The CCP Pastoral Training Course  
Acts

---

When do Churches grow?  
(According to Acts)

- When Christians have been filled with the Holy Spirit and become effective witnesses for Jesus!
- When the wind of God is once again blowing upon his church. (Acts 1:8)
- Witnessing for Jesus was done in the power of the Holy Spirit. (See and study Luke 24:48,49; Acts 1:4,8; 2:4; 4:8,31; 5:32; 6:10; 13:4,9).
- When the gospel of Jesus is presented to all people, when people start speaking to people of other tongues and not just in the churches.
- All evangelising in Acts is telling people what Jesus has done for them. The Christians in Acts did not talk religion of church etc. They spoke about Jesus. See for example: "So Philip began to tell him about Jesus". (Acts 8:35, The Living Bible).
- He went at once to the synagogue to tell everyone there the Good News about Jesus. Acts 9:20. Churches grow when people are introduced to the Person of the Living Lord Jesus!
- When people are called, not only to submit to Jesus but also to allow the flame of God to purify them and the wind of God to drive them.

Repentance is a keyword in church growth (2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 20:21). Repentance is "the re orientation of all of our lives to the kingdom style" (B. Girard). When Christians change their minds and seek God in earnest He will change their hearts. Unless the church changes its mind about defending the possession of the sin nature and unless they stop thinking of themselves as sinners and return to the fire of God and to the outreach of all people in the wind of the Spirit nothing is going to change. The world waits to see the witness of a Jesus people, a Holy nation, a people belonging to God.

When Christians know the joy of the Lord (2:46,47).

Nobody wants more problems than they already have. They will be attracted by a joyous fellowship of committed Christians, people who are pure and powerful are joyous people.. When the holy Spirit is in control of your life and you see Miracles happening everyday through the ministry of the living Jesus through you, there is nothing more than that. Its all about Him, he keeps you holy, he empowers you, he makes ministry happen through you, you enjoy getting your hands dirty for Jesus, it is all joy. That is what the world wants, this kind of purity, power and joy that only Jesus gives.

Group discussion:

Are we as Churches growing in quality and quantity? How are we going to get revived? Can you imagine Jesus reviving a lot of sinners to continue living under the power and principle of sin. He never has a sale!



# 4

## The Witnessing Church: Its Nature and Mission.

### Lesson Purpose:

- To understand the nature of the Church according to the book of Acts

### Lesson Outcome:

- Once the student understands the nature and mission of the church he will:
- Be able to know his place of involvement
- Be able to communicate these to others.

### Table of Contents

- What does Acts teach us on the nature of the Church?
- How does one become a member of "the Church of God?"
- Characteristics of the Church in Acts

In a very real sense the book of Acts is a study on the church! Therefore by studying Acts we can become acquainted not only with the history of the early church but also with the nature of the church.

What does Acts teach us on the nature of the Church?

The Greek word for church is "ecclesia". Ecclesia is used for the church in Acts 5:11; 8:1,3; 9:31; 11:22; 12:15; 13:1; 14:23; 15:3,4,22,41; 16:5; 18:22. We can learn the following about the church from these passages.

The word literally means "an assembly, a gathering together (of people)".

It is derived from the verb "eccalein" which means "to be called out from". The church therefore is an assembly of people called to be Holy.. This is important.

The word "church" always refers to God's people! It is not uncommon for us to think of a building or a denomination (for example the Methodist Church, the Anglican Church etc.) when the word "church" is used. But the Bible always uses the word "church" for redeemed people and never, for the place where they assemble, or for the organisation to which they belong.

As a matter of fact, it is not until the third century that anything in the nature of a church building came into being. For more than two centuries the church had no official buildings and headquarters! Called out in the sense of being chosen by God to come out of the world into a fellowship where God is King.

The Church belongs to God:

If the church is “an assembly of called out people”, to belong to the One who calls them, then who does the calling? God does! See for example “whom God has called to be his own people” (Ro 1:7, Good News Bible); “to those who have been called by God” (Jude 1, Good News Bible). (See also Ro 8:28; 1 Co 1:9; 1 Pe 2:9; 5:10; 2 Pe 1:3.) Remember! The Church are people called by God and belonging to Him. The church is therefore rightfully called “the church of God” (20:28)

For “the church of God” see also 1 Co 1:2; 10:32; 11:16,22; 15:9;

2 Co 1:1; Gal 1:13; 1 Th 2:14; 1 Ti 3:5,13. The only time in the NT that the church is called “the church of Christ” in Ro 16:16.

What can we learn from this?

- The church can never be (and must never be) the possession of men with which they can do as they please. No! God owns the church, and He has never given up or delegated His ownership.
- We sometimes act as though God has retired from the business and has turned over His church to us to manage and organise. God was and is and ever will be the sole and complete owner of the church.
- If your local church is God’s possession, handle your church with care! God will hold you responsible for what you are doing to his possession.
- Seek the will and plan and dream of God for the church and begin to shelve your will and plan and dreams for it.

How does one become a member of “the Church of God?”

There are two basic requirements namely conversion and committing ones life to Jesus.

Conversion:

Firstly, Acts states categorically that in order to become part of “the Church of God” one has first of all to repent. (See and study 2:37 38.)

The original word for repent in 2:38 is “metanoein” and it means “to undergo a change in frame of mind and feeling; to make a change in principle and practice”. (The Analytical Greek Lexicon.)

Acts teaches that in order to become a Christian and part of God’s church one should repent, i.e. change, turn from. Turn from what? It is clear from Scripture that one should turn from sin. Repentance is a renunciation of sin and a recognition that Jesus delivers from the power and the presence of the sin nature, and restores man to the image of God, his true humanity.

The first step into the church of God is always a radical turning away from sin. Somebody has said that repentance is “the reorientation of all our lives to the kingdom style”.

## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

If our churches do not demonstrate this turning away from sin, we are something less than the church God wants us to be. A church that does not preach holiness will not be a holiness church and as long as the preachers do not preach the message we will not experience revival, we as preachers are to blame. Acts also uses the word “epistrephein” to describe conversion. (See 3:19; 9:35; 11:21; 14:15; 15:19,36; 16:18; 26:18,20; 28:27.)

The word means “to turn around, to turn back.” (The analytical Greek Lexicon.) In order to become a member of his church, God wants people to make a complete turnabout. God is not satisfied with half measures, but demands that we make a full turn! .

Are we really serious about God’s entry requirements? Have we substituted repentance and conversion with our own or denominational requirements for church membership? Many churches today are acting as if God has a sale on the go, as if He has lowered the price for us to get a ticket for heaven.

If only preachers would preach the whole truth. God is going to hold us preachers responsible for suppressing the truth.

Committing ones life to Jesus Christ:

Secondly, people are called from sin to Jesus Christ. (See for example 2:36; 8:5; 35; 11:21; 16:30,31 etc.) The Christian life is always a call to Jesus! Jesus Himself always called people to follow...Him. (See for example Ma 8:22; 9:9; 19:21; John 1:43; 21:19,22).

God’s call has never changed, “ Be ye Holy for I am Holy” 1 Peter 1:15. 2:9

To become a member of God’s Church, one must not only turn away from sin, but also make a personal commitment to the Living Lord Jesus. We are never called to a set of Christian rules, to religion, to a church or a system etc.

“ For you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God,---”.

To be a Christian is to be called to Jesus and become a follower of Him. “He is the One who invited you into this wonderful friendship with His Son” (1 Co 1:9; The Living Bible). He calls you to allow His Spirit to save and to sanctify you. You are no longer a sinner when the Spirit recreates you and makes your heart pure, you are a child of God with the likeness of His family in you, so live like a child of God. A “sinning Christian “ is a contradiction of terms, it is like speaking of a devil like saint, an unroyal priesthood, a good people belonging to Satan, an unholy people of God, a group of devil possessed people belonging to God, a holy people controlled by the sinful nature. Of course it is impossible to do so, and yet some Christians do it daily when they say that they are saved sinners. Saved from what?

Imagine looking Jesus in the face and saying I am totally committed to you, but my life is still controlled by the presence of the sinful nature in me!

Depending on your theological view, you may ask: But what about baptism? But baptism is a seal of conversion and commitment to Jesus Christ! It is not a prerequisite for salvation. Without offending anyone’s beliefs I must say that the New Testament church and the church in the first 300 years of its existence did not accept an unbaptized believer. It meant that you were finished with the old life of sin you were dead and

## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

buried and now alive in Christ free from all sin. I think the more we deny the death to the sinful nature in man the farther we will move away from this NT requirement.

If you want to do a study for yourself, here are the references to baptism in the NT: Mt 28:19; Mk 16:16; Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12,13, 36,38; 9; 18; 10:47,48; 16; 15,33; 18:8; 19:3 5; 22:16; Ro 6:3, 4; 1 Co 1:13 17; 15:29; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:5; Col 2:12; Heb 6:2; 1 Pe 3:21.

### Characteristics of the Church in Acts

When people have become members of God's church, what is next? William Barclay in the DSB, p. 30,31 suggests that the church in Acts had the following characteristics:

- It was a learning Church:

"They spent their time in learning" (2:42 Good News Bible).

What did the early Christians learn? In the NT learning is never the mere accumulation of knowledge. When Christians learn, they do not merely master new truths.

Obviously we should teach new Christians the basic truths of the Christian faith. We certainly do not want new Christians to be ignorant about what they believe. We need good, solid, biblical teaching. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine..." (2 Ti 3:16 King James Version).

But the learning in the church of Acts was clearly more about the Christian way of life than anything else. Christians taught one another how to do what Jesus wanted them to do. In this they were obedient to Jesus' command: "Teach them...to obey everything I have commanded you" (Mat 28:20, Good News Bible). God's church should teach Christians how to put into practice what Jesus taught. Let us teach Christians to obey Jesus!!

Every Christian should take a discipling course and learn how to appropriate the fruit of the Spirit in and through their lives. The only way to grow effectively in Christlikeness is to choose to use the fruit of the Spirit in and through our daily relationships. We cannot say we love and do nothing to lift and make life better for others.

- It was a church of fellowship:

To become part of God's church, is to become part of God's family (Eph 2:19). God wants us to live in fellowship with other Christians.

We are called to share our lives with other Christians. and one of the first priorities of the church in Acts was fellowship.

## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

“They spent their time in ... taking part in the fellowship” (2:42, Good News Bible).

The biblical church was a community of Christians who shared their lives with one another. They shared their time, homes, commitment and possessions with one another. See for example 2:42,46; 4:32 37; 5:12; (for further study see the DSB p. 43).

The quality of fellowship could be summed up in one word: love (John 13:34,35).

But these early Christians went everywhere sharing Jesus, this means they preached that the door of fellowship into God’s Kingdom was now open to any who would accept Jesus as their saviour.

What can we learn from this?

We should concentrate our spiritual efforts on building fellowship among Christians and expressing loving relationships.

- It was a praying church:

The church in Acts was a praying church. “They spent their time in...prayers” (2:42, Good News Bible).

One cannot help but notice the many references to the church praying: 1:14,24; 2:42; 3:1; 4:24 32; 6:4,6; 7:59,60; 8:15,24; 9:11,13,40; 10:9; 11:5; 12:5; 13:3; 14:23; 16:25; 20:36; 21:5; 28:8,15. (For your own study: Look up the references and find out why Christians prayed what they prayed for, and what the results were).

The early church believed: “The correct prayers of a righteous man has great power and wonderful results” (James 5:16, The Living Bible).

A healthy church loves to talk to God!

- It was a reverent Church:

The early church was said to have “feared” God, (2:43; 5:5,11) and that they spread the “fear of God” (5:11; 19:17). The fear of God is nothing less than the awe (respect) that Christians have for God. God was God to them! A healthy church is a church where people have come to acknowledge the greatness and majesty, the Holiness and Glory of God.

It was the church where things happened:

Remember that the title of the book is Acts. The church was a church where things really happened! Large numbers of people came to a saving knowledge of Jesus. The greatest miracle of all was that people were delivered not only from the power of sin over their lives, but that the sinful nature was cleansed and expelled along with demons, the people were left with pure hearts and sound minds. Many supernatural signs and wonders and healings and deliverance from evil and demonic powers are reported. (See for example 2:43; 3:1 10; 4:30; 5:12; 9:32 42; 10:10 20; 12:1 11; 13:11; 14:8 10; 16:6 10,25 28; 18:9,10; 19:11 17; 20:9 12; 28:3 8.)



## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

This was in line with what Jesus promised in Mark 16:17-18: "The Lord kept working with them and confirming the message by the attending signs and miracles that closely accompanied it" (Mark 16:20, Amplified Version.)

What can we learn from this?

Expect God to act supernaturally in the church!

- It was a worshipping church:

What is worship? It's admiring God. To worship God is to boast about Him: "My soul will boast in the Lord" (Ps 34:2, New International Version).

Worship is giving God worthship, and the only way we point to him is when we live for Him. Worship does not just happen on Sunday, that is celebration that Jesus is alive. What we do on Monday in the office when we live for Him is worship. Although particulars as to their admiration of God are scarce, we can still access the quality of their worship by looking at the following:

They were constantly praising God (2:47, Amplified Version 3:8,9). The word used here for praise means: "to sing praises in honour of" (Analytical Greek Lexicon). They loved to praise God in song. A healthy church is a singing church (Eph 5:18,19; Col 3:16).

They were "extolling and magnifying" God (10:46, Amplified Version). The word used here means "to make great, magnify, to declare great" (Analytical Greek Lexicon). The church lifted God up in their praises.

They glorified God (11:18; 21:20). The word means "to honour, to do honour to, make glorious, clothe with splendour" (Analytical Greek Lexicon). The early Christians regularly clothed God with splendour.

They "were worshipping" Jesus (13:2, Amplified Version). The church loved to worship its Lord. They carried Him wherever they went giving Him worthship.

They were continually filled with joy (13:52 Weymouth Translation 15:3,31). Joy characterised their lives and meetings.

They were singing hymns of praise to God (16:25 Amplified Version). Christians verbalised their praise in songs.

They thanked God (28:15).

They loved to say "thank you" God.

- It was a happy Church:

The joy of the Lord was in their lives. Very little is said about the joy of the Christians in the book of Acts, but we may be certain that they were a joyful people. For the fruit of the Spirit is .... joy (Gal 5:20).



## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

- It was a ministering church;

They discovered their gifted ministries and used them in ministry both in the Body and to the outside world and thereby Jesus was able to continue His ministry through them.

Peter and Paul became church planting apostles and teachers, Barnabas was a missionary with the gift of giving, others were able to preach in languages they had not learned, Stephan was involved in Compassionate ministries, Peter also had the gift of healing and even raising the dead to life, Philip was an evangelist, his daughters were prophetesses, many of them had different gift mixes but they used them. There are some 29 gifts listed in the New Testament and this does in no way exhaust the ministering gifts and yet some 90% of Christians do not know what their gifted ministries are. There can be no doubt that the early Christians wanted to share Jesus with the world. And they did it most effectively. A healthy church is an evangelising church.

If the same energy, time and talent was put into evangelism that is being put into worship services our churches would be too small.

Group discussion:

Are you as a congregation faithful in your calling of making people disciples of Jesus? Remember: It is our calling to share Jesus, not just maintaining or congregating churches or propagating doctrines or theology.



# 5

## The Witnessing Church becomes the target of Satan.

### Lesson Purpose:

- To understand the role of persecution in the life of the individual Christian and in the life of the Church according to the Book of Acts.

### Lesson Outcome:

- Once the student has completed this lesson he will:
  - See that he has become a target of Satan.
  - Equip himself to withstand any attack from the enemy
  - Make sure that the fifth columnist in his heart the sinful nature has been expelled by the Holy Spirit
  - Walk in the light and experience the constant empowering of the Spirit in his life.:
  - Learn to breathe the air of heaven through prayer and keep himself spiritually alert

### Table of Contents

- Persecution part and parcel of Christian life
- From the different examples in Acts of the suffering of Christians we can extract the following "theology of suffering":
- Suffering for the sake of Christ comes in different packages
- The important question is: Who is behind all the various forms of persecution?
- Conclusion

Acts recalls the many wonderful victories of the early church. But it also underlines the fact that these many victories were regularly accompanied and followed by the persecution of the Church of Jesus.

In fact, one can safely say that Luke intentionally gives us many examples of persecution and suffering by the early Christians to show that the church is always a suffering church!

The following is a list of all the cases in Acts where the church (or individual Christians) were harassed and persecuted in one form or another:

The CCP Pastoral Training Course  
Acts

4:1,3,17 21,29;	11:19; 12:1 6,11;	18:6,12;	23:2,3,12 15,21;
5:17,18,28,33,40;	13:45,50;	19:29;	24:5,27;
6:8,14; 7:54 60;	14:2,5,19,22;	20:1,3,19,23;	25:2,3,7,24;
8:1 4;	16:19 24;	21:11,13,27,30 32,36;	26:9 15,21;
9:1,5,13,16,21,23,24,29;	17:5 7,13;	22:4 8,19,20,22;	28:17,20.

What should we learn from this list?

Wherever Christians are successful for their Lord, they must expect to be persecuted for his sake! The victorious church will always be the suffering church!

If you want to be successful for the Lord get ready to suffer for Him! Can the story of your life be told with at least a few examples of suffering for Christ?

Persecution part and parcel of Christian life

Acts teaches us that persecution is part and parcel of the Christian's "life with" Jesus. The disciples in Acts were not surprised when persecution came! Jesus continually reminded his followers that persecution and suffering for His sake was an unavoidable thing!

In His very first major teaching (The Sermon on the Mount Mt 5:8), He prepared His followers for what was to come.

He reminded them: Happy are those who are persecuted because they are good, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. When you are reviled and persecuted and lied about because you are my followers wonderful! Be happy about it! Be very glad, for a tremendous reward awaits you up in heaven" (Mt 5:10,11 The Living Bible).

He also reminded them: Pray for those who persecute you. In that way you will be acting as true sons of your Father in heaven." I pray for all those Christians who are persecuting Jesus by persecuting holiness preachers. It is the message that brings Pentecost into the here and now. That is why the devil fights it so much, imagine what would happen if people start getting sanctified and filled with God's Spirit? (Mt 5:44,45, The Living Bible).

And in his very last major teaching to them, He still reminded them: "I demand that you love each other, for you get enough hate from the world! But then, it hated me before it hated you...Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you... The people of the world will persecute you because you belong to me." (John 15:17 21, The Living Bible).

He also wanted his disciples to realise that they would be thrown out of their synagogues (churches) and that people would not hesitate to even kill them (John 16:2,3).

And in between His first and last teachings He continually reminded His disciples of the fact that persecu-

## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

tion and suffering was unavoidable. See for example Mt 10:16 31, 35 38; 13:21; 16:24,25; 20:22,23; 23:34,35; 24:9,10,20,21; Mark 10:29,30; 13:9 13; Luke 6:22,23,27 29; 10:3; 12:11, 12:11,12, 52, 53; 14:27 etc).

The Bible reminds every Christian that all “those who decide to please Christ Jesus by living holy lives will suffer at the hands of those who hate Him” (2 Ti 3:12 The Living Bible).

What should we learn from all this?

Suffering and persecution will always be part and parcel of our life with Jesus! When persecution comes, it should, therefore, not surprise us. “Don’t be bewildered or surprised when you go through the fiery trials ahead, for this is no strange, unusual thing that is going to happen to you” (1 Pe 4:12, The Living Bible).

See also 1 Pe 3:13,14; 4:13 16. You have been warned!

You are destined to suffer.

From the different examples in Acts of the suffering of Christians we can extract the following “Theology of Suffering”:

Suffering for Christ is unavoidable if you mean business with Him!

“We must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God” (14:22, King James Version) “And I will show him how much he must suffer for me” (9:16, The Living Bible).

Paul was very clear and honest in his mind to the people who were Christians. He told them very frankly that they would face trials and tribulations’ There was no easy way out. Actually, Paul merely confirmed that which Jesus had already stated. (The Greek word Athlipsis used here in Acts 14:22 can be translated as: oppression, affliction, tribulation or persecution.)

There is a Divine necessity in suffering. Christians will experience a lot of pressure when they decide to be faithful to Jesus. When we do not experience any persecution for Jesus’ sake, we should have a long, hard look at our commitments to Jesus!

To suffer for Christ’s sake is a privilege and joy!

“...rejoicing that they were being counted worthy to suffer shame for (the sake of) His Name.” (5:41, Amplified Version). See also “for to you has been given the privilege...of suffering for Him” (Php 1:29, The Living Bible.)

Suffering and persecution is accompanied by real joy in the Lord! Suffering refines our joy! A martyr for Jesus, Guido de Bres, who died in 1567, wrote a very last letter in which he said: “My brothers, I have just been condemned to death for the sake of the Son of God. Blessed be His name! I am overjoyed. I had never thought that God would do me such an honour...”

## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

What can we learn from this?

Accept the fact of suffering for the sake of Christ! It is not only an opportunity to demonstrate your loyalty towards the Lord Jesus but also to share in the experience of Christ. .

Persecution is directed, not at the Christian, but at his Lord! See for example 9:4 where Jesus clearly states that to persecute Christians is to persecute Him! ("Why are you persecuting Me harassing, troubling and molesting Me" 9:4, Ampl. Version).

Paul thought that he was only persecuting some heretics, but he was persecuting Jesus Himself. It should be clear from 9:4 alone that all persecution, in the final analysis, is directed at Christ!

What can we learn from this?

When people touch Christians, they touch Jesus! So be careful what you do and say to others.. When you are persecuted, realise that people are not primarily angry at you, but at Christ.

Christians should however try to avoid unnecessary persecution and suffering!

Acts reports many cases where Christians fled persecution and suffering! (See for example 8:4; 9:24,25,29,30; 12:17; 14:6; 17:10; 20:3.) This was in line with what Jesus taught. He reminded his disciples to flee unnecessary and avoidable suffering (Mt 10:23; 24:16).

What can we learn from these fact?

There is obviously no great virtue in suffering when it could have been avoided by fleeing. A Christian has to find out if the Lord wants him to flee or stay. Paul was convinced on at least one occasion that Jesus did not want him to flee coming suffering (21:11-13).

To flee coming persecution is obviously not a cowardly but a wise act! There are, of course, many instances where Christians cannot flee and escape suffering. It is then that they should bear it with joy!

The suffering of Christians is, strange as it may sound, the will of God!

He decides when and how we should suffer (9:16)! He decides when we shall not suffer (18:10). This is in line with Scripture. See for example 1 Pe 3:17; 4:19).

No suffering can come over me except that which is permitted by my loving heavenly Father! Do not shun persecution. Welcome it as God's special gift for you. Remember He is in control of all your sufferings!

Suffering for the sake of Christ comes in different packages

## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

- It can be verbal abuse and attack:

In Acts the believers were mocked (2:13); warned and threatened (4:17,21); forbidden to speak about Jesus (4:18; 5:20); contradicted in what they said and talked about abusively (13:45, Amplified Version); opposed and reviled (18:6) and made to blaspheme (26:1).

Remember! Any committed Christian will experience a whole range of verbal attacks. And all of these verbal attacks are intended to intimidate and silence him in his witness for Christ (see 4:17,18,29).

What should a Christian do when he is verbally attacked? He should do what Jesus says in Mt 5:11,12 to rejoice and to be glad because of his heavenly reward! He should also pray for a new empowering by the Holy Spirit to keep on being an effective witness for Jesus (4:23-31).

- It can be ill feelings:

Non Christians not only verbally attack the Christian, but they have definite ill feelings towards them. Jesus tells us that this will be so (John 15:18,19). Acts shows how Christians are the objects of "jealousy and indignation and rage" (5:17, Amplified Version), fury (5:33; 7:54), conspiracy (9:23), envy (13:45), slander (13:45) embitterment (14:23), hate (26:11) and plots (20:19; 20:3; 23:12).

- It can be physical attack and harassment:

Many persecutors of Christians are not satisfied with verbal attacks and ill feelings alone. They can also physically attack Christians for their commitment to Christ.

Acts reports that Christians were arrested and thrown into jail (4:3; 5:18; 8:3; 9:2; 12:1,3; 16:23; 20:23; 28:17), flogged (5:40), tormented (12:1), beaten with rods (16:22), fastened in stocks (16:24) and slapped on the mouth (23:2).

What can we learn from this?

We should prepare ourselves to suffer physical attacks! Sometimes the Lord may intervene and spare us physical attacks (18:10) but this seems to be the exception rather than the rule. Are you ready to suffer physically for Christ?

- It can mean to be brought to trial:

There are a number of examples where Christians, because of their faith, were actually brought to trial, either before a religious court or civil court. (See for example: 4:3-21; 5:17-40; 6:12-7:58; 12:4,5; 16:19; 17:5-8; 19:29-40; 22:30-23:11; 24:1-23; 25:1-12.)

In Mat 10:17 Jesus said that this would happen. We should therefore not be surprised if this should happen even if we at the moment still experience religious freedom.

The sad part however is when Christians start to take one another to court and thereby becoming persecutors and enemies amongst themselves. This bears no testimony to our Christian faith and should be re-

## The CCP Pastoral Training Course

### Acts

---

placed by love, forgiveness and reconciliation.

- It can even mean death:

The supreme price a Christian may pay for following Jesus is to give up his life for Him! Jesus spoke clearly on the possibility of death in Mt 10:21; 23:33,34; 24:9; John 16:2). The church in Acts also had its fair share of martyrs:

Stephen was the first to die for Christ (7:57:8:1). We see however the secret of his courage and strength: Beyond all that men could do to him, he saw awaiting him the welcome of his Lord. Following his Master's example, he prayed for the forgiveness of his persecutors.

James, the apostle, was killed by Herod (12:1,2).

There were also many unknown Christians who died for being followers of Christ (26:10,11). We also read of many foiled attempts on the lives of Christians: 5:33; 9:23 25,29; 14:19; 20:3; 21:30 33; 23:12; 25:3.

What can we learn from this?

Are you ready to lay down your life for Jesus Christ?

The important question is: Who is behind all the various forms of persecution?

Scripture is clear that the devil himself is the source of all persecution against Christians. (This is clearly stated in Rev 12,13.)

Do note that when Christians become committed followers of Christ, they become the devil's public enemy number one! And he will make war on them (Rev 12:17).

The lesson we can learn from this?

Identify the real enemy in persecution! Do not mistake people or religious and civil courts for the enemy. Remember that "we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against... those mighty satanic beings..." (Eph 6:12 The Living Bible).

Conclusion

Christian, prepare yourself for persecution! But not in an attitude of defeat. Suffering Christians are Victorious Christians! (See Rev 12:11; 17:14.) The Church in Acts, despite all persecution, was a Victorious Church, and God intends that every Christian congregation should be victorious in spite of suffering and persecution.

When we suffer for Christ and are persecuted for his sake, we prove that we are Spirit filled Christians (1 Pe 4:12 14). "Counterfeit Christianity is always safe; real Christianity is always in peril.

To suffer persecution is to be paid the greatest of compliments because it is the certain proof that men and Satan think we really matter"

The CCP Pastoral Training Course  
Acts

---

In closing let me remind you of the Wind of God who is still blowing upon the Church. He has never ceased in 2000 years and what His breath did then He awaits to do now, The Fire of The Spirit of God has been spreading for 2000 years and is still able to consume all sin from our lives and He is waiting. The tongues of the Spirit are still available to be used for the reaching of all nations. Then where does the problem lie? If only the Church would get back to opening their lives to the Holy Spirit, He would make it all happen again!

Group Discussion:

To what extent can we as the Body of Christ expect persecution in South Africa? Are we ready and prepared to face this persecution?

To what extent do we expect revival of the preaching of the message of the book of Act?, Only you can answer that for yourself.