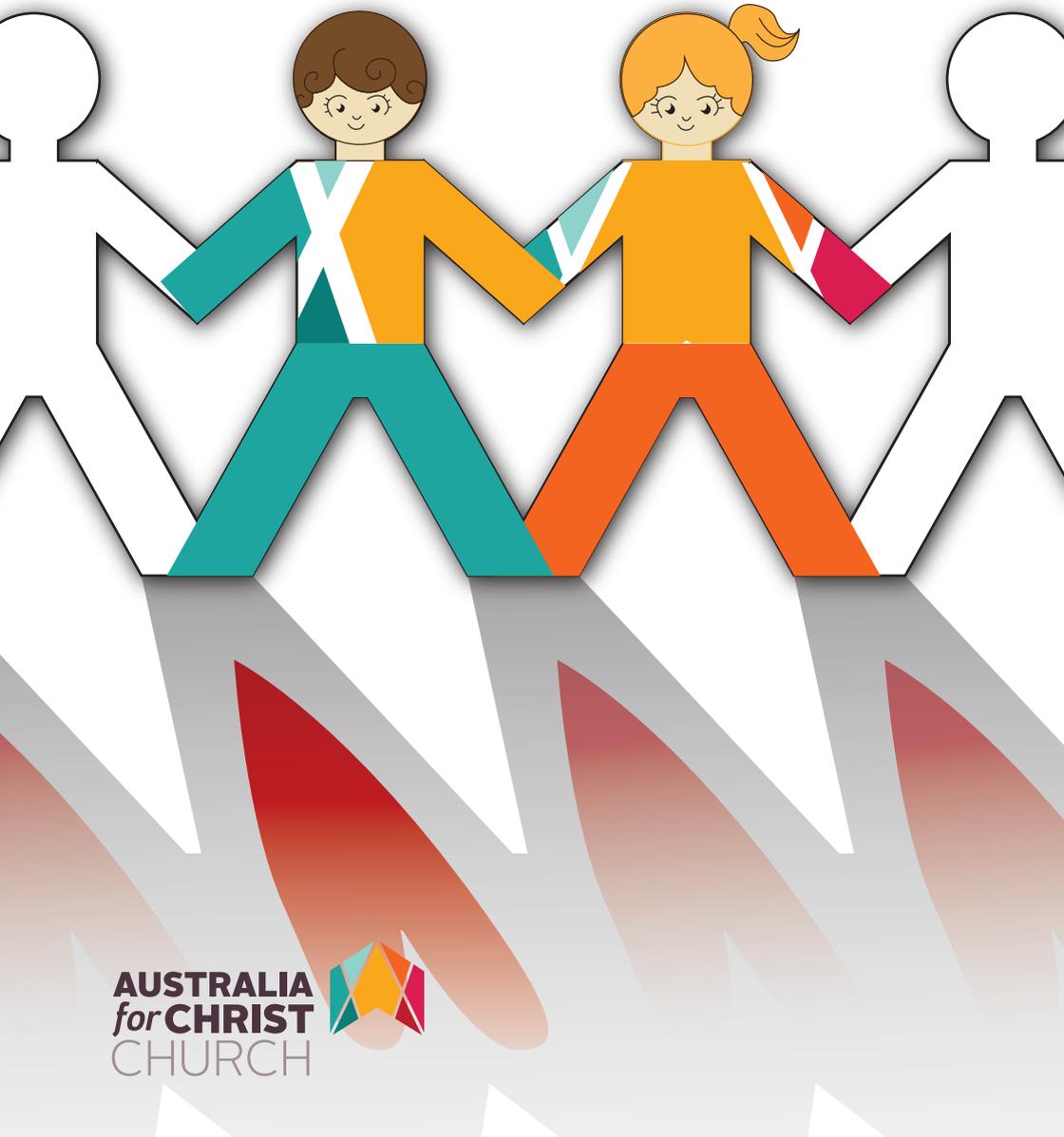


CONNECT GROUPS

word time

SUMMER 2014



AUSTRALIA
for **CHRIST**
CHURCH



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THE LATTER MINISTRY OF JESUS

JESUS ON THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION

PART 1 - PETER'S MISTAKE

1. Today's scripture: Matthew 17:1-13
2. Reference scripture: Isaiah 42, Luke 9:28-36

Today's message

Jesus took His disciples, Peter, James and John to a high mountain and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Then Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Him.

The tabernacle of Jesus Christ

Tonight's scripture teaches us several things.

First, when Jesus was transfigured and clothed in a glorious light on the mountain, Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with Jesus. Moses and Elijah were two representatives of God in the Old Testament and both were witnesses of the glory of Christ.

Moses, as the representative of the law, witnessed about Christ through laws and sacrificial rituals. Elijah, was the representative of the prophets who followed the period of the law. Through their preaching and prophesying, the prophets witnessed of humankind's future salvation through Jesus Christ.

The magnificent glory of the transfigured Jesus is the glory that the law and the prophets of the Old Testament foretold. When Christ came in the flesh for the work of redemption, Moses and Elijah, as witnesses of the Old Testament appeared before the disciples just as it was written in the law and foretold by the prophets.

Second, Peter spoke incorrectly. Peter unwittingly suggested to Jesus that they should build three tents or tabernacles, one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. This was a grave mistake because Moses and Elijah were only witnesses of Jesus' glory and they were merely on an errand, they should never have been placed equal with Jesus. The laws and prophecies were to be fulfilled and accomplished in Christ and they were never meant to stand side by side with Jesus.

Third, God corrected Peter's error. When Peter began to place the law and the prophets equal with Jesus, God spoke from the glory of the cloud and corrected Peter by saying: "This is my Son and I love him. I am very pleased with Him. Obey Him!"

The disciples then looked round and found that Moses and Elijah had been taken up to heaven by God.

The Law and the Prophets were meant only to witness that Jesus is the one and only Saviour of man and their witnessing had already been completed in Jesus. This teaches us that our only Saviour, who deserves our worship and trust, is Jesus Christ.

According to God's command, we should not build a tabernacle to anyone or anything but Jesus.

Closing questions

1. How could Peter have applied James 1:19..."Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak " and Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 "Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools...Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God." How might we apply these two Scriptures?

2. Is it possible to make a good thing bad by making it more important than it really is, or give too much of our time, energy or emotions to a hobby or cause? Discuss this and be transparent with one another.

Application in our daily lives

Jesus is God, so He could never be compared with Moses or Elijah. We must always give Jesus the first place in our lives.

JESUS ON THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION*

PART 2 - WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1. Today's scripture: Matthew 17:1-13
2. Reference scripture: Isaiah 42, Luke 9:28-36

Today's message

Jesus took His disciples, Peter, James and John to a high mountain and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Then Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Him.

Jesus alone

The disciples of Jesus could not help but be astounded at the awesome scene. Peter, who was acting like the spokesman for the three, bravely opened his mouth:

“Lord, it is good that we are here. If you want, I will put three tents here – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

Actually, in his bewilderment, Peter put his foot in his mouth.

Immediately a cloud overshadowed them and a voice spoke:

“This is my Son and I love him. I am very pleased with Him. Listen to (obey) Him!”

The disciples fell on their faces and trembled but Jesus touched them, saying: “Stand up. Don't be afraid.”

When they turned around they found only Jesus was there.

The meaning of Jesus' transfiguration*

The doctrine of resurrection is one of the most important truths of the Christian faith but sadly few Christians have a firm understanding of what it's all about. Jesus was resurrected on what we call Easter Sunday but it's much more than that, it also entails what will happen to all believers, those already in heaven and those of us still here on earth at His second coming.

Jesus' transfiguration is foretelling that our mortal body will also be transformed in the not-too-distant future, just as Jesus' glorious body was (Philippians 3:21). So we must earnestly look for and expect Jesus' return to earth as the King of kings.

As those disciples climbed hard to follow Jesus to the mountain, we should also remember that after our brief moment of hardship on earth we will be given the privilege of enjoying God's glory.

Second, Jesus talked with Moses and Elijah. It is described in detail in Luke 9:30-31. They were talking about Jesus' crucifixion, which is evident that our blessing of transfiguration like Jesus' glorious body, is possible because Jesus was crucified on the cross. It's interesting to note that angels or demons have never and will never have a physical body. Also Jesus is the only person in the trinity who has a physical body.

Third, there was a voice from God: "Obey him!" This voice of our Father in heaven still commands us today to listen to Jesus. Jesus came to us as our Shepherd who gave us life and abundant blessings. When we hear His voice, we can receive abundant "food" from Him.

We also have an obligation to please our heavenly Father, by growing in faith. Faith comes when we hear God's Word.

For your own private study, in the appendix we've included a list of almost 100 passages that refer to our resurrection.

Closing questions

1. One of the most important doctrines of the Bible is the fact that one day all Christians will get an immortal physical body just like Adam and Eve had before they sinned. This doctrine is so important that the Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit living inside all believers is to be considered a down payment showing that He will make good on this promise. Why is such a big deal made of this in the Bible?
2. Why does it matter whether we live forever with the promised glorified physical body rather than just be merely spirits like the angels and those who are in heaven right now?

Application in our daily lives

1. When Jesus returns, we will be transformed to have a glorious body like His. Therefore, let us keep ourselves holy in thought and deed, looking forward with great expectation to His Second Coming!

* A complete change of form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual state.



JESUS' ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM PART I

THE HUMBLE SERVANT

1. Today's scripture: Matthew 21:1-11
2. Reference scripture: Zechariah 9:9. Luke 19:29-44

Today's message

A few days before Jesus suffered on the cross, He entered the city of Jerusalem receiving praise and glory. His entering into Jerusalem was not just a simple passing event but has profound lessons for us to learn.

The donkey-riding Jesus

On His way to Jerusalem, Jesus arrived at Bethphage, near the Mount of Olives and He sent two disciples to the village to bring a donkey and its colt. Jesus told them that if anyone were to ask anything, just to answer, "The Master needs them".

So Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem on the donkey His disciples brought to Him. A great crowd who followed Jesus spread their garments on the road for Him and also cut down branches from the trees, spreading them on the road, crying out with praises to Jesus: "Praise to the Son of David! God bless the One who comes in the name of the Lord! Praise to God in heaven!"

We can find a few astonishing facts in this scene: The first fact is that Jesus' riding on a donkey was foretold in the scriptures. About five hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Zechariah spoke: "Your King is coming to you. He is gentle and riding on a donkey. He is on the colt of a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:5).

Jesus, as the Son of God, entered Jerusalem on a donkey, thus fulfilling the Word of God through the prophet.

Jesus' riding on a donkey showed His humility. He could have entered the city with a host of mobilized angels and with the great sound of a trumpet, but instead He came " gentle and riding on a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9, Matthew 21:5).

Before this entrance to Jerusalem, He spoke about Himself: “I am gentle and humble in spirit”. (Matthew 11:29). Also Jesus was obedient even to death on a cross to save us, according to His Father’s will (Matthew 26:39, 42).

As shown above, Jesus’ words and deeds were completely different from those of the religious leaders of that day. Today, as Jesus’ believers and followers, we should be lowly before God and others, just as Jesus has taught us.

Closing questions

1. Jesus was the opposite of being ostentatious (showy & flamboyant). Instead, though He is the Creator of the universe, He was meek (modest, mild and humble). Apply this to how we should treat people when we are giving direction or orders or how should we use our authority in the family, work place or church context.
2. What is the difference between carrying ourselves with dignity and walking in a prideful manner? What can we learn from the distinction?

Application in our daily lives

1. Following Jesus’ example for true humility, let us live a truly humble life through our words and deeds.



JESUS' ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM PART 2

THE KING OF KINGS

1. Today's scripture: Matthew 21:1-11

2. Reference scripture: Zechariah 9:9. Luke 19:29-44

Today's message

A few days before Jesus suffered on the cross, He entered the city of Jerusalem receiving praise and glory. His entering into Jerusalem was not just a simple passing event but has profound lessons for us to learn.

The praise-receiving Jesus

When Jesus was entering Jerusalem, a great crowd cried aloud, :
“Praise to God in Heaven!” In the King James Version their cry reads
“Hosanna in the highest!” By that time in history hosanna in the Hebrew language had become an exclamation of praise though the people would have still understood its original meaning, which was “save or help us now”.

At that time, Israel was occupied by the Roman Empire. The people of Israel were oppressed and exploited like slaves by the Roman government. Because Jesus appeared and performed miracles under such circumstances, the Israelites thought Jesus would be their deliverer who would save them from the Roman Empire. In other words, the Jewish people misunderstood the purpose of Jesus' coming to earth. He came to give life and freedom to all mankind, who were under the curse of death in the captivity of satan's bondage, resulting from Adam and Eve's fall. Jesus came to revive our dead souls by His precious blood shed on the cross.

The Israelites became greatly disappointed when Jesus would not be their deliverer from the Roman Empire. However Jesus stayed resolute. He was destined to bear the cross according to the plan of God so that the price of man's sin would be paid. Soon enough, the praise of Hosanna from the lips of the Jews disappeared and they began to shout: “Crucify Him on the cross”.

As He approached the city the children continued praising Jesus, “Praise to the son of David” but the High Priests, Pharisees and Scribes became indignant towards them. Jesus rebuked the wicked leaders: “I tell you, if my followers don’t say these things, then the stones will cry out” (Luke 19:40).

He quoted a scripture from Old Testament prophecy: “You have taught children and babies to sing praises” (Matthew 21:16).

The love of God and the redeeming work of Jesus Christ are so great that even stones could not keep silent but would praise Him. Today, we too should live a life of praising Jesus with pure hearts as children.

Jesus, the King of kings

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, people spread their garments on His pathway and shouted, “God bless the King of Israel” (John 12:13).

What kind of a king was He? He did not use a horse, but a donkey.

A horse is a symbol of war, while a donkey is a peace symbol. Jesus came to earth as the King of peace, to give us peace. When He was born, angelic hosts also witnessed that He is the King of peace:

“Give glory to God in heaven, and on earth let there be peace to the people who please God” (Luke 2:14).

One clear piece of evidence that Jesus came as a king is shown in the fact that the people spread their garments on the road for Him. We can see in 2 Kings 9:13 that people put their garments before Jehu when he was made king. The spreading of people’s garments before Jesus’ pathway tells us that Jesus entered the city indeed as our King.

However, Jesus’ kingdom does not belong to this world; it is the kingdom of heaven. It is the kingdom of God that the returning Jesus will rule. Through Jesus Christ we became citizens of the kingdom of God and Jesus became our king and ruler. When Jesus cleansed the temple with a king’s authority, no one there defied Him. In the very near future Jesus will return to earth as the King of kings. Everyday we should praise Jesus, our King of peace, and live in hope and joy expecting His return.

Closing questions

1. Is it possible to get disappointed in God and our praise be turned into bitterness? How can we safeguard against this?
2. Do you think or talk very often about the return of Jesus? Should Christians “indulge” in thinking and talking about Christ’s second coming or can this keep us away from doing God’s work more effectively? Compare and contrast the following scripture (Luke 19:130, Matthew 24:42-51).

Application in our daily lives

Let us live with the dignity that we are God-reckoned kingly priests.



THE 3RD PERSON OF THE TRINITY

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT? PART 1

1. Today's Scripture: Acts 5: 1-4, 1 Corinthians 2:10,11

2. Reference scripture: Romans 8:26-28

Today's message

Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it is not possible to live by faith and witness. For us to accomplish anything at all, we must first seek the Holy Spirit's support. To do so, we must first acquire knowledge about the Holy Spirit. What is the nature of the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is God

The Bible says that the Holy Spirit is God. It is recorded in the Bible that a married couple, Ananias and Sapphira, sold all of their property. Hiding part of the proceeds, they brought only a portion. To the disciples attempting to deceive them into believing they had brought all, Peter rebuked them for lying to the Holy Spirit and also informed them that lying to the Holy Spirit was equivalent to lying to God because the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3,4).

Also, the resurrected Christ faced His disciples and commanded them: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

In this passage, Jesus Christ placed the Holy Spirit on an equal standing with the Father and the Son, confirming that the Holy Spirit also has power and authority in unison with the Father and the Son. In addition, when we examine the work of the Holy Spirit, it is clear that the Holy Spirit is indeed God. The Holy Spirit created the world according to God's will (Genesis 1:2), raised the dead (Romans 1:4), rebuked the world in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8) and drove out evil spirits (Matthew 12:28).

Another fact which confirms the nature of the Holy Spirit is that the Holy Spirit shares all the attributes of God.

- a. The Holy Spirit is everlasting (Hebrews 9:14).
- b. All things, even the deep thoughts of God, the Holy Spirit searches and is aware (1 Corinthians 2:10).

c. The Holy Spirit has the almighty power of God (Luke 1:35).

d. The Holy Spirit is omnipresent (Psalms 139: 7, 8).

We can see that the Bible testifies to the nature of the Holy Spirit as everlasting, almighty, and omnipresent.

The Holy Spirit has a personality

The Bible states that the Holy Spirit possesses a personality. When the Bible refers to the Holy Spirit, it uses the terms, “He”, “Him”, “Counsellor” and other personal pronouns.

“When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me” (John 15:26).

“He will convict the world” (John 16:8).

“When He, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you” (John 16:13).

The Holy Spirit does work which can only be done by one who possesses personality. The Holy Spirit speaks (Revelation 2:7); He helps man in his weakness and intercedes for man (Romans 8:26). The Holy Spirit teaches us and reminds us of everything Jesus has said to us (John 14:26); the Holy Spirit oversees the work for Jesus Christ and chooses those who will become Christ’s servants (Acts 9:31). Finally, the Holy Spirit leads us into the knowledge of God and grieves for us when we stray (Ephesians 4:30).

Closing questions

1. The Holy Spirit is a person. He has personality, a will, feelings, everything we attribute to personhood. How do Christians fall into the error of treating Him like a mere force or power?

2. Ananias and Sapphira’s sin is no greater a sin than most if not all of us have committed, why then did God severely judge them and not us?

Application in our daily lives

1. The Holy Spirit has knowledge of all things and He has come to this world in order to help us. Always accept and trust the Holy Spirit.
2. Our bodies are the temples where the Holy Spirit resides. Always remember this fact and keep your thoughts, words and actions holy.
3. God commands us to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). Pray now and ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit.



WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT? PART 2

1. Today's Scripture: Acts 5:1-4, 1 Corinthians 2:10, 11

2. Reference scripture: Romans 8:26-28

Today's message

Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it is not possible to live by faith and witness for God. For us to accomplish anything at all, we must first seek the Holy Spirit's support. But to do so, we must first acquire knowledge about the Holy Spirit. What is the nature of the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit has all the attributes of personality just as we have. The criterion that determines characteristics or more accurately personality are intellect, emotion and will. The Holy Spirit has all three. The Holy Spirit knows all the deep thoughts of God and He knows and guards our hearts (Romans 8:27, 1 Corinthians 2:10). These are the evidences that the Holy Spirit has intellect. The Holy Spirit brings God's love and pours it into our hearts (Romans 5:5). The Holy Spirit grieves because of our sin (Ephesians 4:30). It is through the Holy Spirit that we can experience the deep love of God when we live by faith. It is also through the Holy Spirit that we are led to pray when we are fearful or worried. The Holy Spirit understands our emotions and fills us with God's love because the Holy Spirit also has emotions.

Also, the Holy Spirit has a will, He will not allow anything that is not the will of God (Acts 16: 6, 7).

The Holy Spirit and us

What kind of relationship should we have with the Holy Spirit? We must first offer worship to the Holy Spirit because He is one of the Trinity.

We must also acknowledge, greet, accept and depend upon Him. As the Holy Spirit has personality, we must offer ourselves, to Him and be humble when we are led by Him.

Until the day we breathe our last breath and are resurrected into heaven, we should keep ourselves open to the Holy Spirit and ask for His help: "The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercede for us with groans that words cannot express, And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of

the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" (Romans 8:26, 27).

Not only does the Holy Spirit know every detail of our lives and minds, but He understands us and tries to help us.

Even today, as God with personality and character, the Holy Spirit comes among us so that He can help us. We are all temples where the Lord and the Holy Spirit reside (2 Corinthians 6:16). We must take special care so that the Holy Spirit in us is not grieved. Rather, we must positively acknowledge, greet, and accept the Holy Spirit, and please Him through constant prayer so that He can help us live truly rewarding lives.

Closing questions

1. The Bible seems to indicate that the Holy Spirit is sensitive to how we act - good or bad. Should we then desire to do and be good out of a motivation of making the Holy Spirit happy rather than grieved?
2. The Bible says we are Temples of the Holy Spirit. Tie this scripture to "greater is he who is within us than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Why should this give us confidence and take away any fear we have of demons.

Application in our daily lives

1. The Holy Spirit has knowledge of all things and He has come to this world in order to help us. Always accept and trust the Holy Spirit.
2. Because the Holy Spirit is God, He is deserving of our worship. Give yourself to the Holy Spirit's guidance and worship Him.



THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE BIBLE

PART 1

1. Today's Scripture: Numbers 11:24-30
2. Reference scripture: Psalm 19:1-6, Isaiah 45:18

Today's message

While Jesus Christ resided physically in this world, He said, "and I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Comforter to be with you forever..." (John 14:16)

The other Comforter whom Jesus was referring to was the Holy Spirit, one of the Trinity comprising the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. For the next four weeks we will study the importance of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives of faith.

The Holy Spirit in the first 5 books of the Bible

Let us begin the study of the Holy Spirit by examining His work in the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible, whose authorship has been credited to Moses):-Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

First, the Holy Spirit actively participated in the creation of this world and of man. The Spirit of God hovering over the surface of the waters in Genesis 1:2 was the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit who hovered over the vast emptiness and chaos, creating the world according to God's Word. Also, during the creation of man, the Holy Spirit's participation is well documented (Genesis 1:26-28).

First, in the book of Job, Elihu said to Job: "The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life" (Job 33:4).

Elihu clearly understood how the very creation and life-giving breath of God were both manifestations of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Second, the Holy Spirit descended upon the early Isrealite patriarchs actively transforming and empowering them. The Holy Spirit descended upon and worked through such ancestral fathers as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. In Genesis 20:7, God called

Abraham a prophet, and in Genesis 41-38, the Egyptian Pharaoh looked upon Joseph and proclaimed him “one in whom is the spirit of God”.

Third, the Holy Spirit filled Moses and moved him to write the Pentateuch, and enabled him to do the great task of leading the Israelites out of Egypt. In Number 11:10-30, the Holy Spirit appeared to the seventy elders. As God has promised, the Holy Spirit of the Lord appeared and filled Moses and the seventy elders, empowering them to do wondrous things. Joshua also experienced being filled with the Holy Spirit and was able to accomplish many great tasks for God after becoming the leader of the Israelites.

As demonstrated in the Bible, the Holy Spirit participated in the creation of the world and continued to move among men, filling them and enabling them.

The Holy Spirit during the period of the Judges

During the lifetimes of Joshua and the elders (the personal witnesses of God’s almighty power) the Israelites submitted to God, worshipping and doing His will. However, with the passage of time, the collective memories of the Israelites began to fade and they were influenced by the Canaanites into worshipping idols and committing other sins against both God and Man. God was greatly displeased with the ungodly behaviour. He caused them to be conquered by surrounding nations and suffer under their rule. Once punished for their disobedience, God established judges whom He filled with His Spirit so that they could lead the Israelites out of sin and away from the grasp of other nations.

- a. Othniel, the first of such judges being filled with the Spirit of God led a war against their Mesopotamian conqueror and freed the Israelites out of her control (Judges 3:10).
- b. Deborah being filled with the Spirit of God, acted as both a prophetess and a fair and righteous judge over the Israelites. Her wisdom and authority came from the Spirit of God.

Closing questions

1. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are a community within themselves with all three Persons being involved in the creation and in the lives and affairs of man. What principles can we draw from this as we attempt to live and go about His business in our Connect Group community and in ACF as a whole?
2. Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the comforter in John 14:16. The Greek word for comforter has not only the connotation of a defence attorney who helps us against the accusations of the evil one but also a helper that would provide guidance in doing what is right. Give an example of when you felt His nudging you away from wrong thinking and actions.

Application in our daily lives

1. The Holy Spirit took an active part in the creation of the world and of man. Therefore, He knows all including our deepest thoughts. Acknowledge, greet, accept and trust the Holy Spirit.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE BIBLE

PART 2

1. Today's Scripture: Numbers 11:24-30
2. Reference scripture: Psalm 19:1-6, Isaiah 45:18

Today's message

While Jesus Christ resided physically in this world, He said, "and I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Comforter to be with you forever..." (John 14:16). The other Comforter whom Jesus was referring to was the Holy Spirit. For the next 3 weeks, we shall continue our study on the importance of the Holy Spirit in our daily faith lives.

The Holy Spirit during the period of the Judges (Continued.)

c. Another judge was Gideon who undervalued himself and considered himself unworthy to become a servant of God's will and purpose (Judges 6:15). However, God planted a seed of faith in his heart and filled him with the Spirit of God, transforming him into a courageous warrior of faith to overcome his earlier doubts.

d. Samson being filled with the Spirit of God, became a judge with extraordinary physical power. Although seemingly his power emanated from his hair, the actual source of his power itself was his devotion to the Lord. However, Samson lost his strength and power when God's Spirit eventually left him due to his uncontrolled carnal desires which led to his tragic end (Judges 16:20-21). When Samson repented of his sin, the Spirit of God descended upon him, empowering him once again to destroy the Philistines' temple and glorify the Lord.

The Holy Spirit filled Samuel, Saul and David

Even after the period of the Judges, God chose His servants and revealed His will through them.

First, God called Samuel to a dual role of both judge and prophet. God revealed Himself on many occasions to Samuel, who was trained since childhood to become a prophet. Filling him with the Holy Spirit, God made Samuel a prophet. With the power vested in him by God through

the Holy Spirit, Samuel travelled widely around Israel and ruled in God's name (1 Samuel 7: 15, 16).

Second, the Holy Spirit descended upon Saul and established him as the first king of Israel. Samuel anointed Saul with oil who had been out searching for a mare (1 Samuel 9:15). Afterwards, Saul was so greatly filled with the Spirit of God that Saul himself prophesied like the prophets (1 Samuel 10:10). Although Saul later succumbed to his fleshly desires, before he sinned God filled Saul with the Holy Spirit and while the Spirit continued to reside in Saul, he ruled over the people of Israel.

Third, the Spirit of the Lord established David as the second king of Israel. When Saul's pride drove him farther away from God, God called upon Samuel to anoint David. Once anointed, David was greatly moved by the Spirit of God. Afterwards, King David ruled magnificently over Israel, sang spirit-filled songs to the Lord and wrote many poems of praise and worship, all while being filled with the Holy Spirit. However, like Saul, David also committed a grave sin against God, but unlike Saul, he quickly realized the extent of his sin and lamented: "Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me" (Psalm 51:11). David proclaimed on his deathbed: "The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; his word was on my tongue" to the world how he had lived his entire life filled with the Holy Spirit (2 Samuel 23:2).

The Spirit of God manifested His presence and moved about in this world affecting many things and people, since creation and throughout the history of the Israelites. However, rather than working directly, all the Holy Spirit's work was done through individuals who were selected and filled with the Holy Spirit. God's involvement in the history of the Israelites is well documented; He now desires to fill us with the Holy Spirit and work in and through us.

Closing questions

1. What happened to Saul when the Spirit of God left him (1 Samuel 16:14)? This explains why David was so afraid of losing the Holy Spirit after he sinned with Bathsheba (Psalm 51:11).

2. We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against...wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). "Not by might not by power but by my Spirit says the Lord" (Zachariah 4:6).

What parallel is there between the Holy Spirit empowering the heroes of the Old Testament for battle and our present day warfare?

Application in our daily lives

1. God gives power to His servants by anointing them with the Holy Spirit. In order for us to fully carry out our responsibilities as witnesses for Jesus Christ, we must also be anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit. Pray now and everyday for the Holy Spirit to endow you with power.



THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE BIBLE

PART 3

1. Today's Scripture: Matthew 12:28-32

2. Key Verse: Roman 8:14

“Because those who are led by the Holy Spirit are sons of God ”

3. Reference scripture: 2 Chronicles 24:20, Joel 2:28

Today's message

The Holy Spirit and the Prophets

First, the Holy Spirit worked through the early prophets. The early prophets were those who came after Samuel but did not leave any written records of their message, as opposed to the writing prophets. One of the early prophets whom the Spirit of God anointed was Azariah, who being filled with the Spirit of God warned king Asa to forsake idol worship (2 Chronicles 15:1-8). Another prophet whom the Spirit of God descended upon was Jahaziel, who by leading King Jehoshaphat to obey and trust God led the Israelites to victory (2 Chronicles 20:14-22). About the same time, God came upon Elijah and by sending fire to Elijah's altar, led the idol-worshipping Israelites and king Ahab to once again stand righteous in the worship of God (1 King 18). Elisha, the servant of Elijah in whom the Spirit of God moved even greater than in Elijah, continued Elijah's work and proclaimed the will of God as His prophet. In such ways, the Spirit of God through many of the early prophets did numerous wondrous works for the people of God. Second, the Spirit of God also worked greatly through the writing prophets, opening their spiritual eyes to see God's divine plan for man's redemption. The writing prophets are those who have recorded their messages in the Bible.

Joel prophesied that regardless of gender and social standing, people would receive the Spirit of God (Joel 2:28). Micah proclaimed that by receiving the Spirit of the Lord, with justice and might, he would declare the transgressions of Jacob and the sin of the Israelites (Micah 3:8). Isaiah also prophesied that the Holy Spirit would descend upon the Messiah who was to come. He further proclaimed that God would pour the Holy Spirit upon us from on high (Isaiah 32:15).

Not only did the Holy Spirit grant visions to see God's plans, but the prophets also experienced firsthand the Holy Spirit working directly through them in accordance with God's will. Jeremiah proclaimed the Holy Spirit as "the hand of God" (Jeremiah 1:9; 6:12), and Daniel himself was called a man who was filled with the "spirit of the holy gods" by Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:8). Haggai confirmed that the Spirit of God and His covenant had accompanied the Israelites during their exodus from Egypt (Haggai 2:5). And Hosea prophesied that the Holy Spirit would descend upon us (Hosea 6:3).

Closing questions

1. What enabled Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, to stand before the people and shout (2 Chronicles 24:20)? How do we apply this to our lives?
2. What does God's promise to "pour out" His Spirit on people in the last days mean? What does the metaphor "pour out" mean (Joel 2:28)? What would be the difference in meaning if the metaphor "sprinkle" or "drip" had been used?
3. According to the Bible, by whom can those things which are not possible by our might or power be made possible (Zechariah 4:6)?

Application in our daily lives

All of Christ's ministry was through the power of the Holy Spirit. The key to success in faith for Christians lies in being filled with the Holy Spirit and being led by Him. Are you being led by the Holy Spirit?



THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE BIBLE

PART 4

1. Today's Scripture: Matthew 12:28-32

Today's message

The Holy Spirit and Those Awaiting the Messiah

In the period of the New Testament, at the time of Christ's incarnation, the Holy Spirit appeared to a number of those who were devout. Zechariah, Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna, were among those filled with the Holy Spirit and eagerly waited for the Messiah who would bring comfort and salvation to Israel.

God sent the angel Gabriel to Zechariah and promised him a son. Gabriel further told him of how the child would be filled with the Spirit even while in the womb and how he would lead many people of Israel to God (Luke 1:15, 16). And indeed as was promised, the Holy Spirit descended and filled Elizabeth and the growing fetus (Luke 1:41). The manifestation of the Holy Spirit is better demonstrated as Mary and Joseph took baby Jesus to the temple. When Simeon (who lived his entire life guided by the Holy Spirit) saw baby Jesus, he sang praises to God and prophesied that He would become a light to the Gentiles and glory to the people of Israel (Luke 2:25-32). Anna the prophetess also upon seeing baby Jesus, gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem (Luke 2:36-38).

The ministry of Jesus Christ

The life of Jesus Christ was a life supported and guided by the Holy Spirit.

First, the very incarnation of Jesus Christ was made possible through the Holy Spirit. Through the angel Gabriel, God revealed that a child would be born to Joseph and Mary through the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). The reason for Christ's birth through the Holy Spirit was so that He could be born both as Man and God to redeem this world from the curse and bring salvation to the people.

Second, Jesus Christ was anointed and marked with a seal by the Holy Spirit. When John the Baptist spoke of Jesus Christ, he said: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him” (John 1:32). This represented an anointing with oil (the enabling power) of the Holy Spirit. In addition, Jesus Christ spoke of Himself and said: “On Him God the Father has placed His seal of approval” (John 6:27).

Third, the Holy Spirit lived within Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ spoke of His body as the temple where the Holy Spirit resided (John 2:19-21). Furthermore, the body of every Christian is also the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Fourth, Jesus Christ lived a Holy Spirit-filled life and with the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ was able to accomplish His ministry. God willed that Jesus Christ be filled with the Holy Spirit in order to carry out His ministry of casting out demons (Matthew 12:28), and in preaching and teaching (Luke 4:14, 15).

Fifth, Jesus Christ was always led by and willingly followed the guidance of the Holy Spirit. When Satan tempted Jesus Christ in the desert, the Holy Spirit led Jesus to overcome Satan's temptation. After His victory over Satan's temptation Christ was continuously led by the Holy Spirit in His ministry.

Sixth, with the help of the Holy Spirit, Christ offered His body as a holy sacrifice. In order to redeem and save mankind, He was nailed to the Cross and became a holy living sacrifice. This was possible through the Holy Spirit.

Seventh, Jesus Christ was resurrected by the power of the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead. That very Holy Spirit who raised Jesus Christ will also raise Christians from death on the second coming in the same manner.

Clearly, the Holy Spirit's presence and activities in the world are well documented in the Bible. Especially in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the presence and work of the Holy Spirit is indisputably of great significance. We could even call the life and work of Jesus Christ the life and work of the Holy Spirit. Just as we cannot separate the Holy Spirit from Christ, it is equally unthinkable to separate the

Holy Spirit from the kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit must co-exist with the kingdom of God and Christians. With such knowledge and understanding, let us live with a greater desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit by acknowledging, accepting, and trusting Him.

Closing questions

1. Only a few people got the revelation that baby Jesus was something special, why was that? How does this apply to Christians today and the second coming of Jesus?
2. One of the ways we can stay full of the Holy Spirit is to use our supernatural prayer language. Do you have a supernatural language? If you do, use it often and liberally. If not, make sure to have one of the leaders of ACF pray for you soon (Acts 19:6). Has anyone in the Connect Group had a supernatural experience or seen God move in some way when they spoke in tongues?

Application in our daily lives

1. Memorise Roman 8:14
2. All of Christ's ministry was through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The key to success in living by faith for Christians lies in being filled with the Holy Spirit and being led by Him. Is the Holy Spirit leading you?



SYMBOLS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT - PART 1

1. Today's Scripture: John 7:37-39, 1 John 2:27
2. Reference scripture: Matthew 3:11, John 4:13, 14; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22.

Today's message

God the Holy Spirit does not have a physical body or physical attributes. However He operates in our physical world. So that we can better understand Him and how He interacts with His people, the Bible refers to the Holy Spirit manifesting or being like things we find in our physical world. This is called symbolism.

Water

Why was the Holy Spirit symbolized as water?

First, water is one of life's absolute necessities. Just as our physical bodies need water for physical survival, our spirits need the Holy Spirit for spiritual survival. When the Holy Spirit like living water is manifested in us, our spirits are provided with life-giving spiritual water (John 7:37-39).

Second, water also functions in our daily lives to clean our physical bodies. In just the same way, we need the Holy Spirit to cleanse our spirits from day to day (Titus 3-5).

Fire

The Holy Spirit is symbolized as fire.

First, throughout the Bible, the presence of God has been seen by the presence of fire. God revealed His presence to Moses through the burning bush on Mt. Horeb (Exodus 3:1-5). The fire of God was also present in Mark's upper room on the day of the Pentecost and brought great changes to Christ's followers (Acts 2:1-4).

Second, a characteristic of fire is its ability to burn. The Holy Spirit is manifested in our spirits like fire to burn away our sin (Jeremiah 23:29).

Third, fire also emits light. The Holy Spirit as fire comes to us and shines His holy light so that we may see and understand the truth of heaven.

Fourth, just as fire gives off heat, the Holy Spirit burns within us and provides us with a burning desire to share the gospel of Christ.

Wind

The Holy Spirit is symbolized as wind (John 3:8).

First, just as the wind exists and moves over the surface of the earth, the Holy Spirit moves throughout the world. And just as the movement of the wind cannot be stopped completely; although it can be blocked at times, the Holy Spirit's movement throughout the world cannot be completely stopped.

Second, just as the wind blows continuously over the earth and is never static, the Holy Spirit continuously works throughout this world. Since the very creation of this world, and through the Old and the New Testaments, the Holy Spirit has worked and still works today. Just as He did yesterday. He will do tomorrow.

Third, inasmuch as the wind blows where it pleases, the Holy Spirit works according to His own will.

Fourth, as the wind blows away stagnant pollution in the air and brings fresh air to replace it, the Holy Spirit blows away worry and despair in our lives and replaces it with joy and a thankful heart.

Oil

The Bible refers to the Holy Spirit as oil.

First, in the Old Testament, oil acted as an agent which purified and made holy the objects of its anointing. God ordered that all things be anointed with oil which were to be made holy (Exodus 30:25-29). To those who were chosen to be a king, prophet or priest, God commanded that they be anointed with oil (Exodus 30:30). The Holy Spirit purifies and makes holy those who are filled with Him.

Second, just as oil is an agent necessary for fire to burn, the Holy Spirit keeps the fire in us burning so that the spiritual light from that fire may reveal the secrets contained within the kingdom of God.

Third, just as the oil is necessary for our survival in that it provides nutritional value, the Holy Spirit provides nutrition for our spirits.

Closing questions

1. Which of the symbols that we've gone over tonight mean the most to you and why?
2. Do you find it difficult to keep in your thinking that the Holy Spirit is truly a Person and not merely a force when we talk in terms of these symbols?
3. What is the difference in the way we should interact with the Holy Spirit as apposed to how Aladdin of Arabian folklore interacted with the spirit called genie? Is it easy to fall into the trap of treating the Holy Spirit like a genie?

Application in our daily lives

1. Meditate on and memorize John 3:8.
2. We have studied various ways in which the Holy Spirit works. Living by faith without the Holy Spirit is just not possible. This is why we must seek, acknowledge and accept the Holy Spirit



SYMBOLS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT - PART 2

1. Today's Scripture: John 7:37-39, 1 John 2:27
2. Reference scripture: Matthew 3:11, John 4:13, 14; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22.

Today's message

God the Holy Spirit does not have a physical body or physical attributes. However He operates in our physical world. So that we can better understand Him and how He interacts with His people, the Bible refers to the Holy Spirit manifesting or being like things we find in our physical world. This is called symbolism.

Rain

First, just as the ground cannot provide fruit without first being rained upon making the ground fertile, if we are not first drenched with the rain of the Holy Spirit, we will not be able to bear spiritual fruit.

Second, the people of Israel received both the early and the late rain during fruit-bearing seasons making the ground fertile and bearing much fruit. In much the same way, the Holy Spirit rained down on the early churches as the early rain. Today it is raining down on us as the latter rain, in preparation for the great harvest to come (Hosea 6:3 James 5:7-8).

Dove

First, the Holy Spirit is symbolized as a dove of peace because the Holy Spirit moves a person from death to life and brings the news of God's peace to people.

Second, just as a dove is symbolic of meekness and humility, the Holy Spirit helps us to have a heart of meekness and humility.

Third, just as a dove is clean and untainted, the Holy Spirit helps us keep our lives and thoughts clean and untainted by sin.

Fourth, just as a dove is frightened and easily driven away, the Holy Spirit can flee from us if we deny and grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). Finally the dove is a symbol of the anointing which is God's enabling power that comes on His people to do the work of ministry (Mark 1:10).

Wine

First, when the Holy Spirit manifests and fills a person completely, one will experience great joy and peace, much like someone drunk with wine (Acts 2:13).

Second, just as wine can provide Man with an escape from one's worries, when the Holy Spirit fills our lives, He will drive away our worries.

Third, just as wine gives courage to a person, the Holy Spirit gives us courage to stand up for the truth and about the gospel.

Fourth, just as the intoxicated man's nerves are desensitized to pain, a person filled with the Holy Spirit can endure and overcome persecution and difficulties.

Seal

Also known as Guarantor (2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:14)

This speaks of down payment. Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit living in us is the "deposit money" showing that He can be trusted to fulfil the rest of His promises of eternal life, complete with a resurrected, glorified and immortal body. The Holy Spirit's symbolization as a guarantor is also an assurance that the Holy Spirit will take responsibility for us until Judgement Day. With the Holy Spirit as the guarantor of the children of God, we will be made strong enough to overcome temptation and the trickery of satan. As such, the Holy Spirit not only guarantees our well being while in this world; the Holy Spirit also guarantees our eternal lives after our physical death.

From these symbols of the Holy Spirit, we can better understand what the Holy Spirit represents and how He works in our lives. We must always accept the Holy Spirit. Basing our lives upon the Spirit, we must pray that His work can be manifested through us in our family, church, nation and world.

Closing questions

1. Which of these Symbols we studied tonight ministers to you the most and why?
2. Which of these Symbols of the Holy Spirit are you the most in need of grasping in a deeper way?

Application in our daily lives

1. Meditate on and memorize John 3:8.
2. We have studied various ways in which the Holy Spirit works. Living by faith without the Holy Spirit is just not possible. This is why we must seek, acknowledge and accept the Holy Spirit



SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN LIVING

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS/HER WORK - PART 1

1. Today's Scripture: Ephesians 6:5-9

2. Key Verse: Ephesians 6:7

"Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men."

3. Reference scripture: John 9:4, Colossians 3:22-4:1

Today's message

As Christians, we live with dual citizenship, one belonging to this world and the other to the kingdom of God. However, while living in this world Christians face ethical conflicts. Christians must always remember that the ethical code they need in this world is simply Jesus Christ.

Our calling and work

God calls those He wants to use for the accomplishment of His will and purpose, sends them to various places as necessary and helps them live according to His will. We must understand correctly and fully the will of God – our calling, and have a right attitude. What should be the right attitude of those who are called?

First, we must glorify God and learn to love those who work around us. Since we were created to glorify God (Isaiah 43:7), we must glorify Him through our lives. We must love those around us as we work at our jobs.

Second, we must always bear in mind that we are not the only ones called by God. We were called by Him into a community of those who work to glorify Him. Since many are called in various "shapes and sizes" for His purpose, all of us who are called must devote ourselves to the calling we receive and as we do so, we as individuals and as a community of Christians can develop into that which pleases God.

Third, we must always be humble and work diligently. No matter what work we do, we must consider it as building God's altar and work faithfully (Ephesians 6:5-9).

The Christian's attitude toward work

For those who glorify God through a particular career as Christians, it is crucial to understand the following:

First, we must choose a career befitting our aptitudes. All people have individual and sometime unique hobbies, taste, personality and characteristics. As such, if one works in a career not befitting him or her, although the career may seem grand in others' eyes, the work itself will be a burden to the person. However, if the career befits the person, the work itself becomes great joy and happiness, providing great satisfaction in life.

Second, we must be satisfied by our work. No matter how fitting the work is for us, if we do not find satisfaction in it, we will soon feel doubtful about the work. Working without satisfaction soon begets loss of interest and enthusiasm, becomes a labour, and can drive us away from that very work.

Third, we must avoid work which harms brothers. For example, Christians should not be selling those things which do damage to a person or to the society. Also, making profit through deception of expecting a windfall through games of chance do not please God. Whatever work Christians choose to do, the work itself and its fruit must glorify God and be beneficial to those around us. If our current work does not glorify God or injures those around us, we must pray to the Lord and seek His help.

Closing questions

1. What are some of the habits that can help our Christian witness in the marketplace?
2. What are some of the habits that can hinder our witness in the marketplace?
3. What are some positive and negative examples you have experienced?
4. How can a retired person or a stay-home mom apply the principles of good marketplace habits?

Application in our daily lives

1. God desires to be glorified through our work and careers. Share with others if you have had an experience of glorifying God through your work.

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS/HER WORK - PART 2

1. Today's Scripture: Ephesians 6:5-9

2. Key Verse: Ephesians 6:7

“Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men.”

3. Reference scripture: John 9:4, Colossians 3:22-4:1

Today's message

As Christians, we live with dual citizenship, one belonging to this world and the other to the kingdom of God. However, while living in this world Christians face ethical conflicts. Christians must always remember that the ethical code they need in this world is simply Jesus Christ.

The duty of Christians in their workplace

Christians must share the gospel in their workplace. Witnessing is Christ's final command on earth (Mark 16:15). Also, our actions must have the fragrance of Christ. We should keep in mind that there are many people who are watching us closely just because they know we are Christians. All our actions must be good and be for the good of our society. When we work well, we glorify God (Matthew 5:16).

Man works to sustain his life and the life of his family. A wider view is that work is but another method and place for us to accomplish God's glory. So we must show special kindness to those who work with us, and with understanding and unity we must cooperate with them. To our superiors in our workplaces, we must obey with honest and sincere hearts; to our subordinates, we must treat them with love and tolerance. With other Christians in our workplaces, we should hold regular meetings to worship the Lord, study the Bible and fellowship in Christ. When we follow these guidelines, we will be able to fully cope with our duty to become light and salt in the world (Matthew 5:13-16).

An attitude of sincerity

God always uses those who are faithful and sincere. Man prefers to work with other men who are sincere and faithful. A man with a sincere and faithful attitude toward his work – whether others are watching or not – and even taking the time and energy to help others at work, such a man has within him boundless potential for great success.

A sincere life simply means that we accept God as the Lord of lords, and live and work for the Lord. A person must sincerely devote himself to his work at the office or at the factory. As Christians, through sincere and faithful attitudes in life, we can introduce Christ to others working with us. We must serve as examples of sincerity and faithfulness to others and witness Christ's love. We must also never forget that our sincerity and faithfulness pleases God.

Closing questions

1. The following four verses deal with sincerity and faithfulness. Discuss them as a group applying them to the work place and situations a retired person or stay home mom might encounter.

- a. Psalms 31:23
- b. Psalms 128:2
- c. Proverbs 6:6-8
- d. Proverbs 10:4

Application in our daily lives

1. What you do, whether it is for God or not, put forth your best effort. God will one day glorify you in turn (Colossians 3:23,24; James 4:10).

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS/HER SOCIETY

1. Today's Scripture: Matthew 22:39 Romans 13:1-7

Today's message

A man cannot live alone as a hermit. God created mankind to live with one another. Christians must live and commune with others. Today we will study Christ's teaching about Christian's responsibility towards society.

Responsibility and freedom

A Christian has responsibility toward himself as well as the society he lives.

First, we must be practical and personal. When we help those around us, it must be more than with mere words; we must offer practical help. Concerning this, the Bible states, "Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed', but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it" (James 2:15,16)?

Second, we have a responsibility to help our neighbours both morally and materially. If our neighbours walk down the wrong path or indulge in deeds that will bring hurt to themselves or others it may be our place to say something. A man, who fails to concern himself about those around him, has selfish faith.

Third, we must not discontinue our efforts in witnessing even though a person may respond negatively. We must continue in love, continue to extend a helping hand with acts of kindness.

The Christian and his duty to neighbours

Christ teaches that it is our duty to love our neighbours as ourselves (Luke 10:27). The Apostle Paul says that is the summation of all the commandments (Romans 13: 9; Galatians 5:14). This commandment tells us that we must first love ourselves. One who does not know how to love himself cannot love another. Building on the love for ourselves, we must first put all our efforts toward watching over our neighbours. We must be willing to try to understand and share in our

neighbours' troubles. To do so, we must view correctly the situation of our neighbours who are troubled. We must go to those suffering as we carry the love of Christ, to share the gospel and to provide material and spiritual help.

The Christian and his nation

First, all authority in this world was granted by God.

“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established” (Romans 13:1).

We must always remind ourselves that the establishment, the rise and the fall of nations, have all come about according to God's will and under His authority. As such, the leaders of a nation must fear God and must lead the nation in obedience to God's will. As for the people of the nation, they must stand on God's Word and obey their leaders for their prosperity.

Second, Christians must pray for the leaders of their country. We must pray that those who rule righteously continue to rule with righteousness, and those who are tyrannical become benevolent. We must pray that all leaders believe in Christ, and in fear of God exercise their rule conforming to God's will.

Third, as citizens of our country, we must fully satisfy our duties. We must dedicate ourselves to the national order and to the happiness and peace of all its members.

Lastly, there is nothing wrong with being patriotic and loyal to our country. Of course, as Christians we must be ultimately loyal to God over all else and obey His Word before all other laws.

Closing questions

1. Read the following verses and discuss how they might be outworked in our lives.

- a. Psalms 82:3,4
- b. Luke 10:36,37
- c. Romans 13:9,10
- d. Galatians 6:2
- e. Colossians 3:13,14
- f. James 2:14-17

Application in our daily lives

1. Christians should pray for their neighbours, countries and leaders.



THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS/HER FINANCE - PART 1

1. Today's Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:7-10

2. Key Verse: 1 Timothy 6:10 "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows".

3. Reference scripture: Matthew 6:19-21, 2 Corinthians 8:9

Today's message

It is undeniable that there are certain material things we cannot live without in this world. When we possess them and they are used for God's glory, they find their true worth. In today's lesson we will study about the value of material things and the fundamental principle of material things and the way to their blessings.

The Old Testament's view of materialism

In the Old Testament, material blessings represented a rightful honour conferred on a righteous man. In other words, a righteous man is blessed by God to enjoy material wealth (Proverbs 10:3), and also material wealth is a gift of God (Ecclesiastes 5:19). Although material wealth can make one's life more comfortable, a man cannot live by material wealth alone. The Bible warns us not to depend too heavily on material things (Proverbs 11:28).

The riches of this world are only secondary to the fundamental principles of life and only the foolish depend solely on material wealth (Proverbs 22:1, 28:22). Sadly some Christians have become so blinded by riches that they no longer are able to "see" God, family or their neighbours, largely ignoring them all. Those living during the period of the Old Testament specifically said that only fools depend on the riches of this world and go by all means to acquire them. Also, while the righteous use of riches can bring honour and authority to Man (Proverbs 14:20), their ill-use combined with arrogance and pride can bring oppression and persecution to the poor and the weak.

The Old Testament does not condemn material riches but assigns them secondary importance as a tool by which we can glorify God and help the weak and the poor.

The New Testament's view of materialism

The New Testament specifically mentions that Christians must take full responsibility of their duties while living in this world. All of us have a responsibility and a duty to work for the ownership of material things. Christ told us that Christians also have a duty to pay taxes to their government (Matthew 22:15-22), and He Himself paid tax to a temple (Matthew 17:24-27). Christ observed all His duties both spiritual and civic as an example for us to respect our duties as citizens.

The New Testament also warns us of the dangers of material wealth. Christ said that it is difficult for a person enslaved to material wealth to enter into the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:23). The Bible tells us that the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10), that is the love of money contains great danger. We must be careful not to love and release the evil potential of money and wealth, but distance ourselves from them, keeping ourselves virtuous. Money is not evil; it is 'the love of money' which is evil. If we live God-centered lives and love God above our riches, we will gladly be willing to give up our wealth for God. All our material possession and wealth must be used responsibly. In the parable of the talents, the one person who was cursed by God was the one who buried the one talent he received from his master (Matthew 25:18). Whatever it is that we receive from God, we have a duty to make use of that which God gave us. When we use our riches and wealth responsibly and righteously, then their worth can be found (Mark 10:21,22).

The New Testament did not condemn material wealth. Rather surprisingly, it told people not to take pride in poverty. Jesus Christ was poor so that He could make us rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Closing questions

1. There is a saying that we come in this world empty-handed and leave it empty-handed (1 Timothy 6:7). What does the Bible say about this? How should this affect the way we look at money and material possessions?
2. What is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10)? How can we steer clear of this trap?
3. Where does the Bible tell us to store our treasures (Matthew 6:20)? How do we do that? Does giving to a good cause automatically mean we'll be rewarded for it in heaven?

Application in our daily lives

Read and memorise 2 Corinthians 8:9. Meditate on its meaning.



THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS/HER FINANCE -PART 2

1. Today's Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:7-10
2. Key Verse: 1 Timothy 6:10 "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows".
3. Reference scripture: Matthew 6:19-21, Psalm 62:10b

Today's message

It is undeniable that there are certain material things we cannot live without in this world. When we possess them and they are used for God's glory, they find their true worth. In today's lesson we will study about the value of material things and the fundamental principle of material things and the way to their blessings.

Our attitude towards materialism

So far we have studied about material wealth and its possession in relation to the Biblical view. Reflecting on the Biblical position, there are certain viewpoints Christians must take toward material possessions.

First, Christians may possess material things but not be possessed by them. Christians must learn to make use of material wealth righteously.

Second, when a Christian fails to make use of his wealth righteously, he will be tempted even more than he would be if he were not wealthy. Acts of corruption and unrighteousness readily present themselves for him to indulge in. The wealthier we become, the greater our attention must be in its righteous use, and must be careful to avoid temptations and corruptions.

Third, Christians must earn their living through righteous methods and means. Furthermore, we must not stop at merely earning it, but we must learn about its righteous use. We should learn to use it for God's glory and to help our neighbours. With our wealth, we can readily do good in God's name and for His glory.

The principle of material blessing

As Christians, we must be able to handle material wealth if it comes our way. Here are two principles that should help us keep our focus.

First, is the principle of giving to the local church that a person attends. Because the Local church is God's primary tool for building His Kingdom on the earth our first line of giving should always be to the Local church we attend.

Second, is the principle of the boomerang effect. Whenever we are led by the Holy Spirit to participate in works that glorify God, our work can return to us and becomes our blessing. One who brings blessings to others will himself be blessed. "A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed" (Proverbs 11:25) (Ecclesiastes 11:1).

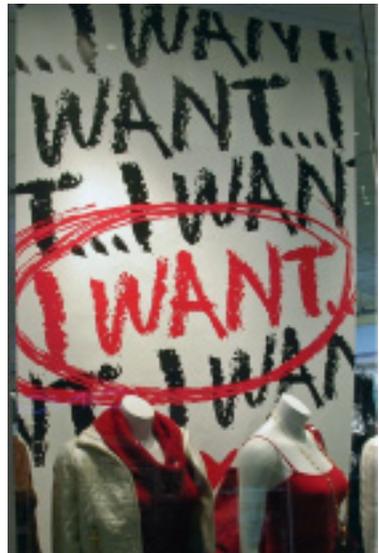
As we apply these principles to our every day lives and believe in God who blesses us, Christ knows what our needs are and fills us to overflowing with His blessings (Ephesians 3:20).

Closing questions

1. What does the Bible say about material wealth?
 - a. Psalms 62:10
 - b. Matthew 6:25,26
 - c. Luke 12:15
2. What is the Christian view of material possessions?

Application in our daily lives

1. Read and memorise Psalm 62:10b "If riches increase do not set your heart on them". Meditate on its meaning.
2. Share with others your experience of applying today's principles and being blessed by God.



HUMILITY - PART 1

1. Today's Scripture: John 13:1-17

2. Key Verse: Philippians 2:3

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.”

3. Reference scripture: Proverbs 3:34, James 4:6

Today's message

A day before the Passover, Jesus Christ sat with His disciples for supper, at which time He told them of His approaching death on the Cross. He then wrapped a towel around His waist and began to wash the feet of His disciples. In this lesson, we shall study about Christ's humility.

The humility Christ showed the disciples

In the Jewish society, washing the feet of others was assigned to servants. Nonetheless, Christ who is God the Son took upon Himself the work of a servant to His disciples for the purpose of changing the bickering and jealousy-filled hearts of the disciples.

Jesus Christ is the very nature of God. However, He made Himself nothing and taking the nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Philippians 2:6,7 NIV). Not only that, Jesus Christ allowed Himself the death on the Cross in obedience to God. His very incarnation and death on the Cross tell us of the lowly position He had delegated Himself to and the humility He embodies. Let us examine the humility of Jesus Christ which culminated in His climactic death on the Cross.

First, Jesus Christ was born in a barn. He began with such a birth and even during His life of ministry, He had no place to lay His head which could be called His own (Luke 9:58). Jesus Christ is the Creator of this world, rightfully owning every little speck of this universe. However, He made himself the poorest of the poor, the humblest of the humble, so that He could make us wealthy (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Second, regardless of the fact that He was God, Christ dutifully obeyed and honoured His physical parents. Before Christ entered into ministry,

He honoured His parents and even took up the humble trade of His father, Joseph.

Third, Jesus Christ had fellowship and company with those of the lower social-economic and moral strata. Jesus Christ kept company and shared food with people, was looked down upon by the religious culture. The religious leaders looked down on Jesus because He was a friend to sinners and tax collectors (Matthew 11:19). The disciples Christ gathered to Himself also came from the humble sector of the social hierarchy. To such people of lowly birth, Jesus Christ revealed the wondrous secrets of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 13:11).

Fourth, Jesus Christ prayed humbly in the hills of Gethsemane. Before being taken by the crowd, Jesus Christ went to Gethsemane and prayed to God. Jesus sought to avoid being nailed to the Cross. However, instead of being adamant and refusing to die on the Cross, Christ prayed that God's will would be done (Matthew 26:39). Such obedience with painful death looming so close is perhaps the greatest absolute obedience – a show of true humility. Just as He had said, Christ did not come to “be served, but to serve” (Mark 10:45).

Closing questions

1. In what form did Jesus Christ (God in nature) come to this world? What are the lessons we can learn from this (Philippians 2:7)?
2. Name three characteristics of children. What do these characteristics have to do with humility?

Application in our daily lives

1. Man, having been led to sin and death through Adam's disobedience and pride, was once again redirected to the path of righteousness through the humility and the absolute obedience of Jesus Christ. Compare the differences between obedience and disobedience, pride and humility.



HUMILITY - PART 2

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Throw away our pride

God Himself is humble. As such, God does not look favourably upon those who are proud. When God made Adam and Eve, God required absolute obedience from them. However, with Adam and Eve being filled with pride and desiring to become like God, they were cast from the Garden of Eden, forever implanting in mankind the desire to become like God. When we look at the Old Testament, we can see how God punished the proud. After the flood, God ordered Noah's descendants to spread out over the world and multiply (Genesis 9:7). Instead, the descendants of Noah built a great nation and began to build a tower in their arrogant hope of reaching up to God. Upon seeing such arrogance in mankind, God caused many languages to be spoken by the people working on the tower, making communication for the building of the tower quite impossible. Having introduced many languages to be spoken by different people, God led the people who spoke alike to band together and live in tribes. Mankind challenged God because of their pride. Such pride is implanted in men by Satan. Satan or Lucifer was an archangel whose pride and desire to be like God led to his own downfall and was cast out of heaven (Isaiah 14:12-15).

We were created for the purpose of worshipping and glorifying God. Satan ceaselessly tried to undermine this purpose by planting seeds of pride in our hearts - a desire to become like God. We must continually look at ourselves to see whether we have become arrogant, in both thought and action. "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18).

Faith like children

For us to become humble before God, we must be like children. Jesus Christ told us that we need to be like children to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:14). This means that our character must become like that of a child. What does it really mean to be like children?

First, children are humble. Children do not know the meaning of being proud or arrogant, nor do they put on an air about themselves. They tend to express and act as they feel without any thought to impressing or bettering themselves above others. When we come before our God, we must come with humility and childlike simplicity.

Second, children are simple. Those who think themselves to be knowledgeable ask such questions as "Where is God? What wisdom does the Bible provide?" People such as these will only find themselves forsaken by God. However, when we like children turn our ears to the Lord and listen carefully, God teaches us about true wisdom and through it, shows us the path we must take in our lives.

Third, little children believe wholeheartedly in their parents and obey them. In the same way, we must believe in God's Word given to us from Genesis to Revelation. God uses His Word to guard, cure and show us His miracles.

When God looks upon us, He looks upon us as His children. God desires us to have the character befitting His children, wholeheartedly obeying and believing in Him. Though we may grow in wisdom and understanding through our experiences living in this world, we must grow in simplicity of faith in Christ and God. When our spirits are like that of little children, Jesus Christ takes us in His arms and bestows on us the blessing He has prepared, including the blessing of entering the kingdom of heaven.

Closing questions

1. In Matthew 18:1-5 the disciples ask Jesus who is or would be the greatest person in heaven for all eternity? In other words, who by their actions during their time on earth would get the most rewards on Judgment Day. What was Jesus' answer and how do we apply it to our lives?

2. Matthew 18 states that there will be special rewards for those who go out of their way to help, bless and minister to a certain segment of society. Who is this group and why does it take humility to consistently minister to these people? What are some practical steps you can take to bless this demographic?

Application in our daily lives

Analyse what it means to have faith like children and discuss with others what it means to you.



FORGIVENESS

1. Today's Scripture: Matthew 9:1-8

2. Key Verse: Matthew 9:2

“Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic. ‘Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven’”.

3. Reference scripture: Matthew 6:12 John 8:1-11

Today's message

Being forgiven signifies we have shed the shackles of guilt and the debt of sin. Being forgiven of sin is much like having bathed our bodies and spirits in the spring of healing. When Jesus Christ cured the paralytic man, He first forgave the sins of the man and had him rise up and walk (Matthew 9:1-7).

The forgiven women

We can see a good example of forgiveness by studying the woman who was about to be stoned for her sin of adultery. A woman caught in the act of adultery was brought before Jesus Christ and was about to be stoned. Jesus addressed the mob and told them that anyone who considered himself to be without sin to throw the first stone. One by one those with sin in their lives, departed from the scene. In the end there was only Christ and the woman left. Jesus then turned to the woman and said: “Neither do I condemn you. Go and leave your life of sin” (John 8:11).

The price of being forgiven

Does the forgiveness of sin come free without any price whatsoever? It does not. God being just, asks a price for the forgiveness of our sins, as when He flooded the world and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. He punishes and seeks a certain price for our sins. However, the price for our sins was paid in full by Jesus Christ when He died on the Cross. Instead of requiring us to pay for our sins, Jesus Christ already did so in our name.

For the very purpose of forgiving us, Jesus Christ wore the crown of thorns, had nails driven into His hands and feet, and was stabbed in the side with a spear. Because the wages of sin is death, Jesus Christ gave up His life and accepted death in order to pay for our sins. All we are required to do now is to repent and trust in His atoning death on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. Once we are forgiven, we can be free from a guilty conscience.

The lives of those forgiven

How must the forgiven people live? Being forgiven of our sins by Jesus Christ, we have a duty and responsibility to forgive others around us. Christ tells us that for our prayers to be answered, we must first forgive those who have sinned against us (Mark 11:25).

When we are unable to forgive others, we have so much negativity in us. This negativity prevents our prayers from being answered even though we may pray to God in faith. However, when we forgive others, we experience happiness and joy and answered prayers.

The best example of forgiveness in the Old Testament is Joseph. Joseph found it in his heart to forgive his brothers who tried to kill him and ultimately sold him as a slave to suffer in Egypt for the next thirteen years. God saw the great magnanimity of Joseph and blessed him accordingly.

There are those who say, "Until the day I die, I cannot forgive him". Find it in your heart to forgive, trusting and asking the Holy Spirit to help you. Not being able to forgive is much like having the devil take hold and control your heart. Forgiveness is at the very heart of Jesus Christ and is an expression of God's love. Those of us who have received eternal salvation through the redemption of our sins must in return forgive our husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, and our neighbours.

