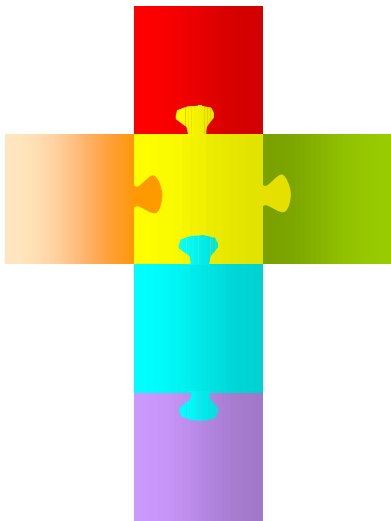


# *Building a better life*



*a pocket-guide for Christian living*

## **Preface**

The aim of this booklet is to give an overview of what it means to be a Christian and to show how following Jesus is actually the best lifestyle option anyone can choose.

The contents of this booklet also serve as the foundational teaching material for all our Youth Group and Recovery Ministry programs. A Bible reading plan is also included at the end of this guide to help you in further discovering the riches of God's Word and its benefits for daily living.

I trust that the information in this booklet and our activities together will truly help us to build a better life for each one of us!

Yours truly in Jesus Christ,

Peter Kutschker

# Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the following sources of information which have been specifically used in preparing this booklet:

*John Bell, Way of Life Ministries (p3)*  
*David Pawson, "The Normal Christian Birth" (p7,8,9)*  
*Bruce & Petranella Litchfield, "Christian Counselling" (p11)*  
*Institute in Basic Life Principles (p12,13,14,26,27,38)*  
*Neil T. Anderson, "Set Free" (p13)*  
*Bible College of Victoria (p18,32,36)*  
*Grace Brethren International Missions, "ACT Strategy" (p20,33)*  
*David Pawson, a sermon on the Psalms (p24)*  
*Lesslie Newbigin, "The Gospel in a Pluralist Society" (p29)*  
*Balwyn Baptist Church S.H.A.P.E. Kit (p30,31)*  
*Hans Finzel, "The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make" (p37)*  
*Edith Schaeffer, "L'ABRI" (p41)*

I would also like to honour my parents and every other person I have met over the years. This booklet is a tribute to them all.

Finally, I wish to express my thanks to God for His Word, which so richly blesses me.

Further information about subjects raised in this booklet is available at:

<http://www.geocities.com/ifcc.online/lifepuzzle>

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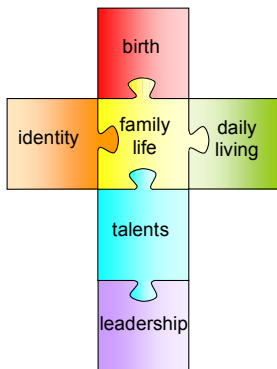
# Introduction

All of us, I believe, want happy and successful lives for ourselves and our children.

But when we look at the world around us, and perhaps even into our own selves, we realize that things are falling far short of our ideals.

So is there a solution to life's difficulties? Is there a simple plan we can follow to help each one of us build a better life?

This booklet addresses each of the six core aspects of human living, and gives a simple outline of the Bible's answers at each step.



# 1. Being "born again"

Although we are physically alive, for many people there still seems to be something missing inside of them - they can't seem to find happiness, peace, or joy. The Bible says that this is because of our sins which separate us from God and each other. The first thing we need to do is re-establish our relationship with God through being **born again**. This is achieved by turning from our sins and believing in Jesus Christ.

*Growth points:*

- **Understanding yourself**
- **The message of the Bible**
- **Turning from your sins**
- **Believing in Jesus Christ**
- **Getting baptized**
- **Receiving the Holy Spirit**

*Key Bible verses:* Genesis 1-3; Luke 4:14-21; 24:44-49; John 1:1-18; 3:1-21; 17:3; Romans 1:18-32; 3:20-26; 6:23; 10:9-13; Acts 2:38-39; Ephesians 2; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Revelation 19-22.

## Understanding yourself

Human beings are spirit, soul, and body. We were designed to be firstly in a relationship with God and reflect His glory in all that we do. The following table shows what went wrong, and what Jesus Christ can do for us:

| GOD'S DESIGN OF HUMANS                                              | ACTIVE PRINCIPLE                              | MANKIND'S PROBLEM                                               | CHRIST'S PROVISION                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b><i>SPIRIT</i></b><br>WILL/<br>'HEART'                            | GOD'S WORD<br><br><i>John 6:63</i>            | DEATH BY SIN<br>(hard heart)<br><br><i>Ephesians 2:1-2</i>      | NEW BIRTH BY HOLY SPIRIT<br><br><i>John 3:3-7</i><br><i>Ezekiel 36:25-27</i> |
| <b><i>SOUL</i></b><br>MIND<br>EMOTIONS                              | DECISIONS BY FAITH<br><br><i>Romans 1:17</i>  | DARKENED / BLINDED<br>(trial & error)<br><br><i>Romans 1:21</i> | SPIRITUALLY RENEWED<br><br><i>Romans 12:2</i>                                |
| <b><i>BODY</i></b><br>SIGHT<br>HEARING<br>FEELING<br>TASTE<br>SMELL | MEANINGFUL SERVICE<br><br><i>Genesis 1:28</i> | DECAY, DEATH<br><br><i>Romans 5:12</i>                          | REWARDING LIFE, FRUITFUL LIVING<br><br><i>Galatians 5</i>                    |

## **The message of the Bible**

What follows is an overview of the whole message of the Bible:

God is glorious. He is the creator and ruler of all things. He is infinite yet personal. He is holy, good, kind, loving, and generous toward all of His creation, and He loves being in relationship.

We as humans are made in the image of our glorious God. We have a free will and were intended to live in a way which reflects God's glory through obeying His easy commands. The result would be eternal life in harmony with God, each other, and creation.

But we have all fallen short of God's glory. We have listened to the devil's lies and have been selfish, covetous, proud, and unbelieving: the roots of sin. As a result our relationships with God, ourselves, each other, and the rest of creation are in a mess - subject to death. That's the result of sin. And to try and cover up our sin we choose to find our significance, sense of purpose, and wholeness, in things, beings, or pursuits other than the one true God. We try to hide from God.

But God's kindness, tolerance and patience are such that He leads each one of us to see the wrong we've done. He speaks to our conscience. He hopes that we will turn to Him with a desire to change our ways.

God's wrath is therefore deservedly towards people who consciously suppress this knowledge in their conscience and reject Him. They give the devil a foothold in their life. They become idolatrous. They end up living a life of depravity. They approve of others who live the same way, though knowing better. But they cannot escape God, because there is coming a Day when God will judge the world based on truth.

**But for those who do turn to God now, there is good news!** Because God loves us so much, wanting us to experience life to the full, He did for us what we could never do for ourselves. He provided a means of taking the penalty of death due us, washing us from our guilt & shame, and bringing us back into a right relationship with Him, each other, & creation.

God did this through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is the Son of God, namely the Word of God incarnate on earth.

Therefore, to all who turn to God asking for the forgiveness of their sins, and who believe in His means of getting right with Him - that is, ultimately trusting that Jesus died for you in your place, and that He rose again - there is the assurance of everlasting life. You will not be condemned to hell and banished from God's glory, because you have now been washed of your sins & guilt! But to those who do not believe, there is the certainty of judgement & hell.

Furthermore, all who trust in Jesus Christ will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to live inside of you to help you live a life which glorifies God. He does this by helping us to do all that Jesus taught us and modeled for us. He will also help you be set free from the power of sin and also be healed of your brokenness and hurt which had so influenced many of your past behaviour patterns. And to top it all off, the Holy Spirit also gives each believer gifts & abilities to serve the cause of Christ in the world!

This new life is lived out not in isolation but together with others who also believe and are filled with the Holy Spirit. This is Christ's church, and we are an example of what it means to be living in relationship with God. But we are still living in the midst of an evil world whose god is the devil, and we will suffer persecution. But we live for Jesus Christ until the day He returns, after which there will be a new heaven & earth in which there is no more evil, and a whole new realm of living in His glorious presence will unfold. Amen.

Do you want to be born again, and thus begin to experience a better life as God always intended?

Just follow the steps on the next few pages...

## Turning from your sins

- Thought - conviction of sins. Agree with God that you have fallen short of His glory. Agree that your actions & thoughts birthed from selfishness, covetousness, greed, unbelief, & pride are offensive to Him. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) provide a good starting check-list. The heart of the matter is that we need to 'die to self'.
- Word - confess your sins. Humbly ask for mercy. Humbly tell God, and the person(s) you have sinned against (where possible), the specific sins you have committed.
- Deed - correct your sins (eg. stop worshipping your idol, return what you have stolen, stop getting drunk, be content with your pay, break off the illicit relationship, give your excess goods to the needy, burn occult material, etc).

## Believing in Jesus Christ

- put your trust in the historical fact that God out of His forever enduring love sent His one & only Son, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, to die on the cross for your sins personally (the 'Lamb of God' who takes away the sins of the world). In so doing you have the forgiveness of your sins!!!

- believe that Jesus rose again from the dead, proving His Divine identity, showing that sin & death have been conquered, and indicating that new life is possible for you.
- tell the risen Jesus, whom God made Lord & judge of all, that you want Him to be your Lord, and that you want to obediently follow Him.

The following is a prayer you can pray:

Dear God,  
thank you that you love me  
thank you that you sent Jesus to die for my sins  
I am so sorry for my sins (name them here)  
please forgive me  
I don't want to sin any more  
I believe that Jesus died for me  
I believe that Jesus rose from the dead again.  
And Lord Jesus, I want You to be the Lord of my life  
and I want to follow You  
Please help me.  
Thank you Lord God  
in Jesus name I pray,  
Amen.

### **My Decision**

Today I have prayed the above prayer with all my heart.  
I have received Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour and  
will trust in, rely upon and adhere to Him as my Lord.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Getting baptized**

- it is a physical event with a spiritual effect, confirming your faith in Jesus.
- it is a washing away of sins, a burial of your old way of living, and a rising to new life. Ask a believer to immerse you in water, with the words "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, I baptize you into the name of the Lord Jesus, into His death, burial, and resurrection."

## **Receiving the Holy Spirit**

- this is a promised gift from God, sealing & completing your new birth. He will give you the Holy Spirit in His time - just wait!
- you will know when you receive: you will come forth with spontaneous spiritual speech, praising & glorifying God from deep joy, either in your own language or other tongues. Such speech includes the cries 'Jesus is Lord!' or 'Father!' Don't be surprised if others think you are drunk!
- ask a Spirit filled believer to lay hands on you and pray that God will pour out His Spirit into you (if you are not filled already by this stage!).

**PRAISE GOD! You are now born again!**

## 2. Identity in Christ

Deep down, many people have a low self-esteem, often through real or perceived experiences of rejection. So, we often do anything to try and feel good about ourselves and find 'acceptance'. We turn to alcohol, drugs, or sex. Others try to find wholeness in their car, or money, or sport, or fashion. But these things still leave us empty inside. The Bible says that the solution is to find our wholeness and **identity in Jesus Christ** - in Him we are totally accepted by God!

*Growth points:*

- **Who am I as a Christian?**
- **Conquering the past and bad habits**
- **Seven wisdom principles**

*Key Bible verses:* John 8:31-36; Colossians 2:8-10; Romans 5:1 - 8:39; 2Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20; 6:14; Philippians 3:7-16; Matthew 10:37-39; Hebrews 12:14-15; 1John 1:7-9; Romans 12:1,2; Psalm 139; Matthew 8:8-10; Acts 24:16; 1Peter 1:3-9; Romans 14:7,8; Ephesians 4:17-32; Psalm 1.

## **Who am I as a Christian?**

The most important thing is to start to see yourself as God sees you! Some points are:

### **By virtue of creation ....**

1. You are created in the image of God, and so are very good in essence (even if you don't do good all the time and still may sin and make mistakes).
2. You are loved by God unconditionally for who you are.

### **By virtue of Jesus' death for you and that you have put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ ....**

3. You are precious and priceless in God's sight.
4. You are a saint of God, totally forgiven of all sins, made holy and pure in God's sight, and at peace with God. All your guilt is washed away, and you are totally accepted by Him!
5. You are a new person - the old has gone! You are now no longer defined by what you once were or did. God, by grace, has "restored you to glory"!
6. You are free from all condemnation.
7. You are a child of God and a member of His household, adopted into His eternal family, now having great dignity. God is now your Father!

Remember, it's not what you do that makes you right with God or anyone else - it's what God has done for you in Jesus! God loves **you**!!

## Conquering the past and bad habits

Every time in our life where we have not made choices in line with God's wisdom, we have established thought patterns that are sinful, leading to destructive lifestyle patterns. Consider the following analysis:

|                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Surface problems</b><br>(Visible actions)   | wrong clothes, broken vows, profanity, dishonesty, disrespect, debt, runaways, wrong music, bad habits, arguments, seduction & flirting                                               |
| <b>Surface causes</b><br>(Attitudes)           | inferiority, anger, fear, worry, rebellion, envy, jealousy, boredom, insecurity, guilt, frustration, depression                                                                       |
| <b>Root problems</b><br>(Character)            | 1. Bitterness<br>2. Temporal values (greed)<br>3. Moral impurity                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Root causes</b><br>(Wrong Responses to God) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resisting God's grace midst experiences of rejection.</li><li>• Violating principles of life.</li><li>• Believing the devil's lies.</li></ul> |
| <b>Root issues</b>                             | covetousness, pride, unbelief                                                                                                                                                         |

When we respond to problems in life in ways which dishonour God, we actually give 'ground in our souls' to the devil. This ground needs to be regained one step at a time.

To be free we need to:

1. **believe the truth** as to who we really are (see the 7 points mentioned earlier);
2. **confess and renounce** every aspect of sin in our life (see opposite table);

When confessing to God, a sample prayer is:

- "Lord, I confess that I have participated in (activity) and I renounce (activity). I repent. Thank you for forgiving me."

When asking for forgiveness from someone you have offended, a suggested wording to use is:

- "God has convicted me of how wrong I've been in (basic offense). Would you please forgive me?"

3. **show mercy** by forgiving our offenders;

To maintain freedom we need to

1. **Walk in the Spirit** by actively and daily choosing to listen to the Holy Spirit's guidance.
2. **Set your mind on godly things**, remember God's truths, and avoid worldly entertainment.
3. **Take up your cross daily**, pray & fast, remember that you have died to sin, and fight any temptation in the name of Jesus.
4. **Share with a Christian friend** if the temptation is getting too strong, and pray together.
5. **Prompt confession and renunciation** of new acts of sin. Don't be embarrassed to confess your sins - that is a trick of the devil!

## Seven wisdom principles

Violating God's principles of wisdom leads to conflicts in key relationships (Response to God, Acceptance of self, Family harmony, Purpose for the future, Effectiveness in friendships, Harmony in courtship and marriage, Management of financial affairs).

Maturity and happiness in life come as we grow in understanding and applying seven universal non-optional principles of life:

1. **DESIGN.** Thanking God for my physical features, abilities, gender, parents, siblings, & other "unchangeables" brings Self-Acceptance.
2. **AUTHORITY.** Honoring my authorities (parents, government, church, work) brings Inward Peace.
3. **RESPONSIBILITY.** Taking responsibility for our actions and asking for forgiveness when we do wrong brings a Clear Conscience.
4. **SUFFERING.** Transforming hurts into genuine love, & forgiving offenders brings Genuine Joy.
5. **OWNERSHIP.** Yielding my rights to God brings True Security.
6. **FREEDOM.** Having our minds transformed from false thinking patterns brings Moral Purity.
7. **SUCCESS.** Hearing and obeying the teachings of the Bible brings Life Purpose.

### 3. Christian Community life

In the world, family life is becoming less and less stable, with so many divorces, broken homes, and children without fathers or mothers. Home is often not the safe refuge it was designed to be. The Bible's solution is that we should see ourselves as belonging to a 'Spiritual family' or **Christian Community**, often called 'Church'. God Himself is our caring heavenly Father, and other Christians are now our 'brothers / sisters'. We no longer ever have to feel alone!

*Growth points:*

- **Who is God?**
- **Who are we as Christians?**
- **What do we do together?**
- **God's values & mission**
- **Spiritual growth disciplines**

*Key Bible verses:* Matthew 3:13-17; 16:15-18; 22:36-40; 28:18-20; 5:1-7:29; 2Timothy 3:10-15; John 13-17; Acts 2:42-47; 4:32; Ephesians 1; John 4:19-24; Philemon 1:4-6; 1Corinthians 10:31-33; 11:17-34.

## Who is God?

God is the glorious creator of the universe, the only God. There is no one else like Him. For us as Christians, God may also be described as our Father, redeemer, saviour, shepherd, teacher, comforter, refuge, deliverer, provider, and more! We can totally trust Him to provide for all of our needs.

God has revealed Himself to us in history as a tri-unity: God, Word of God, Spirit of God.

After the Word of God became a human (in Jesus Christ of Nazareth), God became known as the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ", with Jesus therefore being known as "the Son of God". All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus, and He is the head of the Church.

The Spirit of God, or Holy Spirit, lives within each one of us as Christians. He motivates and equips us to do God's will, teaches us the truth, and convicts people of their sins.

## Who are we as Christians?

People were first called "Christians" because they were always joyfully talking about Jesus Christ, were obedient to Him, & really wanted to be like Him, following in His footsteps, even if that meant being persecuted. That is what it means to be His disciple. Jesus Himself said to His first missionaries:

"Go into all the world and make **disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and **teaching them to obey** all things I have commanded you". (Matthew 28:19,20)

Christians are people who have the Holy Spirit within them (see §1). All other people filled with the Holy Spirit are our 'brothers, sisters', and there is a special unity between each one of us and Jesus Christ. Jesus is not ashamed to call *us* His brothers and sisters. In fact, the Bible describes the Church as the 'bride of Christ'. Jesus has promised to always be with us. God has also ordained that we be co-heirs with Jesus Christ of the new world He will create!

## What do we do together?

As a Spiritual family, God wants us to enjoy spending time together with Him & each other. He wants us to glorify Him and give Him thanks in all circumstances and be committed to His purposes in the world.

Note: (1) let us learn to live & work *together*; (2) we are to look out for each other's needs; (3) worshipping & obeying God brings glory to Him & is utterly satisfying; (4) we are to be growing in purity and faithfulness; (5) families grow in number, and God wants to use us in helping as many as possible to come to Him!

A time of worship together might look like this:

1. Singing songs and praising God
2. Prayers of thanksgiving (and confession, if required).
3. The Lord's Supper (Holy Communion) in which we are reminded of God's love for us.
4. Sharing our needs and praying to God for them and the needs of others.
5. Offering for the poor / needy / missionaries / leaders of the church
6. Teaching and encouraging each other from the words of the Bible.
7. Singing.
8. Enjoying food together!

## **God's values & mission**

God, as our loving heavenly Father, wants each one of us to become conformed to the character of Jesus Christ and living our lives around the same concerns that Jesus had:

### **Vision**

- To see God's name revered and respected.
- To see God's kingdom and rule come.
- To see God's will done on earth as it is in heaven.

### **Mission**

- To make disciples of all nations.  
(That is, to help all people become followers of Jesus, and thus experience a better life now and for eternity)

### **Values** (the duty of mankind; God's commands to us)

- Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.
- Love your neighbour with practical concern just as you would look after yourself.
- Love one another sacrificially and with mercy, just as Jesus modeled to us.

God has given us His Holy Spirit to help us fulfill the above. We will then live a life that reflects God's glory. It is "life to the full"!

## Spiritual growth habits

Jesus said that eternal life is "knowing God and Jesus whom He sent" (John 17:3). To build a deep relationship with our triune God we must develop these five habits:

**Bible Study.** How do we hear from God and know His will for us? His living words for us are in the Bible, and He will speak to you through them.

**Prayer and Fasting.** This is where we talk with God, not with showy words, but genuinely. Spend much time glorifying Him, giving Him thanks for everything, and presenting to Him requests for ourselves and others. Also spend time in quietness to listen to Him in spirit. Combined with fasting, prayer and what you hear from God becomes even more powerful!

**Worship.** This is where we praise God, singing songs to Him and proclaiming His greatness. God is worthy of all our praise, because He has saved us from hell and judgment and given us new life in Jesus!

**Fellowship.** This is where we spend time with each other, sharing our joys as well as our burdens, sorrows and weaknesses, with the purpose of "building each other up".

**Witnessing.** Through telling others about Jesus and our faith, they also can come to believe in Jesus, and so God's spiritual family grows! Don't think of it as a "pushy" thing; rather, you will be surprised at the number of opportunities that will come your way to just naturally share the difference that Jesus can make!

## 4. Daily living God's way

The world in which we live is being polluted & trashed. People are being abused instead of respected; there are wars, crimes, rapes, pornography, religious arguments, refugees, dog-eat-dog in the business world, etc. The Bible says that we need to learn to live our **daily life in the world** but **not** 'of the world', seeking first God's will in everything.

*Growth points:*

- **Using the Bible**
- **Understanding the Spiritual realm**
- **Responsible use of the environment**
- **Economics & daily work**
- **Friendships, courtship & marriage**
- **Politics & government**
- **Interacting with other religions**

*Key Bible verses:* John 17:15; 2Timothy 3:16,17; Hebrews 1:13-14; Ephesians 6:10-18; Revelation 12:7-12; Genesis 1:26-28; 9:1-3; Revelation 11:17-18; Matthew 6:19-34; 2Thessalonians 3:6-13; 1Corinthians 6:15 - 7:40; Ephesians 5:22-33; Romans 13:1-7; Acts 17:16-34; Colossians 1; 3:16,17; Titus 2:11-14.

## Using the Bible

The Bible is God's written Word to us. It is living and powerful, revealing to us the truth about God, ourselves, life, morality, history, and the cosmos.

Christians should be actively involved in personal study and group reflection on the Bible, so that they can grow in wisdom and love for God. Then they will be able to live in this world but not live according to the base values of the world.

Bible reading is like food to the soul and spirit. Through prayerfully reading, hearing, and meditating on memorized portions, our minds are renewed in accordance with God's truth, & we grow to become more like Christ.

It is written: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

*Bible reading tip:* Begin each day by prayerfully reading 5 Psalms (to strengthen your relationship with God) and 1 chapter of Proverbs (for your human relationships), capped off with a passage from the Gospels.

## **Understanding the Spiritual realm**

The spiritual realm is the greater reality behind the physical universe. God, who is Spirit, is present all throughout the universe. He is the creator and sustainer of all things. You cannot escape God's presence!

There are other spiritual beings, called angels, who are not on the same level as God, but they are much more powerful than human beings. They are designated by God to be helpers of Christians.

There are also fallen angels who rebelled against God. These are called demons, and are lead by Lucifer, the devil. The devil wants all people to worship him, and he is the real enemy of people on earth. People who do not obey God open themselves up to demonic oppression. Christians also must be wary of the devil, for he is also trying to destroy us. We overcome the devil by:

(1) the blood of Jesus; (2) our Christian testimony; (3) not loving our lives even unto death; (4) submitting to God; (5) prayer; (6) doing the Word of God.

## **Responsible use of the environment**

The world in which we presently live is not the original pristine one which God originally created. It has been under a curse since Adam and Eve's sin in the Garden of Eden, and it has also been totally 'rearranged' by a global flood in the days of Noah.

The Bible also teaches that this world is not destined to last for ever, but that there is coming a day of judgment in which this world will be destroyed by fire, after which there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

Until that day, the Bible gives the following guidelines:

- (1) Humans are to be regents of the environment, filling the earth and subduing it, having dominion over it & all the animal kingdom. This also implies that we treat the environment with respect, and don't rape it.
- (2) Humans must not treat the environment romantically (as though trees or animals were our 'brothers', or the earth was our 'Mother') or reverentially (we do not worship the environment and becomes its devotees). The earth was created for us.

## Economics & daily work

Four keywords should govern our economic affairs: ***contentment, creativity, love, responsibility***, combined under the umbrella of doing ***all for the glory of God***. The following are some resulting basic principles:

1. We can *enjoy* what we do if it is for God's glory!
2. The total environment in which we work should be *healthy* - mental, spiritual, physical, emotional.
3. We must treat everyone, from consumer to employer to employee, as *creative wonderful persons* and not as objects or machines.
4. Work is essentially *serving others*, and providing for their needs. One person's abundance - in time, skills, resources - is to supply another's lack!
5. First principles in any society must always be the production or provision of sufficient *food, drink, and clothing*, closely followed by shelter. Once these needs are met, and we ensure that these primary producers are always getting enough in return for their labour, can we joyfully diversify our work activities.
6. We each have a *responsibility to work* for as long as we are fit and able to in whatever sphere God calls us, within a wholesome 'work-rest-play' cycle.
7. We should seek to *employ the unemployed* so that they also can express their talents and gifts for the glory of God and benefit of others.

## Friendships, courtship & marriage

Having friends, along with a life partner, is one of the chief blessings God has given mankind after knowing Himself. The desire to share with other humans is integral to who we are, and God Himself said "It is not good for man to be alone".

Friendships can be classified into four levels:

- (1) Acquaintance - based on occasional contacts;
- (2) Casual friendship - based on common interests, activities, & concerns [oneness of soul];
- (3) Close friendship - based on mutual life goals [oneness of spirit];
- (4) Intimate friendship - based on commitment to the development of each other's character.

When seeking a marriage partner, do not fall into the trap of dating. Instead we should choose the concept of courtship.

Dating is "*singling out* one person of the opposite gender and cultivating interest through thoughts, looks, notes, talks, or events". Dating is an exercise in divorce because it is not based on commitment but rather the fulfilling of sensual desires.

Note: Sexual expression is to be *only* within marriage. Flee sexual immorality, flirting & seductive behaviour.

Courtship may be defined as "two fathers agreeing to work together with a qualified young man to win the daughter for marriage". If a young man is serious about a girl, let him ask her father for permission to grow the relationship! Engagement is "a daughter's agreeing to accept the proposed love and protection of a young man in marriage".

A Christian marriage is to be a model of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church: "As the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it." (Ephesians 5:24,25).

The following 8 qualities must be present for a successful Christian marriage:

1. Must be genuinely "born again"
2. Must accept himself / herself
3. Must be a man / woman under authority
4. Must have a clear conscience
5. Must know how to yield rights
6. Must have moral freedom (else he / she is only using you to love himself / herself)
7. Must know God's purpose for his / her life
8. Must have financial freedom.

Finally, when it comes to having children, God wants us to be fruitful and multiply! Every child is a blessing from the Lord.

## **Politics & government**

Politics is basically the science and art of government, and its aim should be to help people living collectively in a society to live in harmony & prosperity.

Let us respect and submit to our politicians, praying for and encouraging them to make decisions that will not only uphold justice and righteousness, but also be most beneficial for allowing us to live godly lives and hence help others to be saved.

If a governing authority asks us to do something which is against our conscience, we must obey God rather than men, but still submit to the governing authority's decisions against us. The Bible is filled with such examples. There is no need, nor precedent for, radical violent upheaval against the governing authorities by us as Christians. Our prayers and our obedient submission as we seek to do God's will shall accomplish the greater purposes of God.

## **Interacting with other religions**

There is a common view that all religions are basically paths to the same destination, and that the most important thing is that we love each other and be happy (as long as we don't lose our own personal creature comforts).

Whilst other religions have elements and illustrations of the truth within them, because God has never left Himself without witness in any culture, God's full and complete revelation of truth, and how to be free from sin and in right relationship with Him and others, is in Jesus Christ, the climax and fulfillment of Jewish revelation.

Whilst respecting the rights of others, we must insist that if they are ultimately seekers of truth, they need to follow Jesus.

Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

## 5. Gifts & talents

People's abilities to express their talents are often stifled, or they have never been given an opportunity to flourish. The Bible promises that when you open yourself up to God, He gives you **spiritual gifts**, and often your **talents** are given full opportunity to bloom! These gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to establish the Christian Community - both internally in quality and to see it grow in numbers - to ultimately bring glory to God. These gifts are most often in line with the desires of your heart, your abilities, your personality, and your life experiences.

*Growth points:*

- **Discovering your spiritual gifts**
- **Effective use of your gifts & talents**
- **Being mentored**

*Key Bible verses:* John 14:15-17; Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-18; 1Corinthians 12-14; Romans 12:3-21; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1Peter 4:10,11; Matthew 6:9-10; 26:36-46; 2Timothy 2:2.

## Discovering your spiritual gifts

All spiritual gifts can be virtually summed up into two categories, either 'speaking' or 'serving'.

Pray for God to reveal to you which gift(s) He may be wanting you to exercise, and see which ones you find yourself now nearly always liking to do:

**Speaking:** preaching, prophecy, evangelism, missions, church planting, teaching, exhortation, words of wisdom, words of knowledge, discernment, intercessory prayer, praying in tongues, speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, music, worship, leadership.

**Serving:** hospitality, mercy, service, helping, pastoring, giving, arts and craft, healing, miracles, administration, organisation, faith, leadership.

You will normally come to discover what gifts you have by others in your local Christian Community telling you or confirming what you think you might have.

## Effective use of your gifts & talents

We must never let ourselves be chiefly defined by the gift we exercise or the role we play. We are first and foremost humans in the image of God, greatly loved by Him! Our gifts, roles, etc, are 'sub-expressions' of who we are in Christ.

This being said, we can say that any role we exercise must be for the common good. That is, it is to build up and edify others.

With this in mind, a person will exercise their gift well if the following characteristics have been built into their lives:

- A vital relationship with God
- An ability to wait on God for His timing and will
- A compassion for people
- A vision for the potential of their gift(s)
- A servant spirit
- A developing participation in a team
- A volunteer spirit
- A life of example
- A disciplined life

## Being mentored

Having a mentor is one of the key ways in which each of us grows to maturity in any aspect of our life. To put it in building terms, each one of us needs to be in a Master-Apprentice relationship for us to grow well!

For a person to grow in their spiritual gift, there will be some form of "on the job training", including modeling as well as some form of mentoring:

- Modeling: I do, you watch; We do; You do, I watch.
- Mentoring: coaching, using *Plan, Do, Check, Act*.

Note that whether or not you actually have another human as your 'mentor', the Holy Spirit is always wanting to teach you, and Jesus is always your 'chief Shepherd'. God is working in you both to will and to act according to His good purpose (Philippians 2:13).

Once a person grows to maturity in the use of their spiritual gift and in their Christian life, they can then be released into leadership if God wills, which is the authority to guide others through the same process.

## 6. Servant leadership

We see in the world dictatorship and oppressive leadership. We see power politics, and people still treated like slaves or pawns in a game of chess. We see some leaders who don't really know what they are doing. But we need good reliable leaders in every sphere of society: at home, at work, in government, in the Church. The Bible teaches that **servant leadership** is the best way to lead, and Jesus Christ is our model.

*Growth points:*

- **Qualifications for leadership**
- **Training objectives**
- **Mistakes to avoid**
- **Exercising discipline**
- **The purpose of leadership**

*Key Bible verses:* Matthew 20:25-28; 23:11,12; John 13:1-17; 1Peter 5:1-10; 1Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 6:1-7; Matthew 18:15-35; 1Timothy 5:17-22; 2Timothy; James 3-4; 1Corinthians 3.

## Qualifications for leadership

In the mind of Jesus, leadership equals servanthood first & foremost. Unless that is grasped, then any leading that we may do is not leading at all within the Kingdom of God.

To be a servant, a person must be humble; humble enough to wash someone else's feet. The Bible says "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1Peter 5:5). The Bible also says "Pride goes before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). Remember, all that you have is a gift from God. Therefore, be humble!

Beyond this, the Bible is very clear on what qualities a spiritual leader is to have:

|                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Blameless<br>A "one woman man"<br>Temperate<br>Self-controlled<br>Respectable<br>Hospitable<br>Able to teach<br>Not a drunkard | Not violent but gentle<br>Not quarrelsome<br>Not greedy<br>Manages his own family well<br>Not a recent Christian<br>Good reputation with non-Christians |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## Training objectives

Once a person shows themselves to be "reliable" and "qualified" through actual ministry situations, they should begin a training program to further develop *character*, *knowledge*, and *skills*. This is so that they can be thoroughly equipped for the requirements of leadership: *serving*, *giving direction*, *'steading the ship in times of storm'*, and *self-sacrifice*.

The following objectives should also be aimed for as part of the training program:

- Having a mature theology based on a strong knowledge of the Bible and God's plan of salvation.
- Understanding the jigsaw-puzzle of life (one form of which is that presented in this booklet).
- Being visionary.
- Able to communicate and equip well.
- Skills in management - self, time, ministry, people, finances, home, etc.
- Having an owned philosophy of ministry.
- Seeing oneself as part of a dynamic web of relationships.

## Mistakes to avoid

The number one mistake a leader can make is to put their work before prayer & worship. A leader's relationship with God must have priority over any other relationship or task. A wise leader says "I am too busy not to pray".

The Bible says "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain" (Psalm 127:1) and "'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit', says the Lord Almighty" (Zechariah 4:6).

The following are a further ten mistakes that leaders often make:

1. The Top-down attitude
2. Putting Paperwork before Peoplework
3. The Absence of Affirmation
4. No Room for Mavericks & new ideas
5. Dictatorship in Decision-making
6. Dirty Delegation (eg. not clear cut, not defined, and not according to ability)
7. Communication Chaos
8. Missing the Clues of Corporate Culture
9. Success without Successors
10. Failure to Focus on the Future.

## **Exercising discipline**

God has given a responsibility to people in positions of authority to exercise discipline in a spirit of gentleness so that the people they are serving might grow in godly character and thus reflect God's glory in the world.

These principles should be followed:

1. Be an example of what you intend to teach.
2. Demonstrate love before correction.
3. Train the person to delight in wisdom.
4. Establish goals and limitations.
5. Clarify the consequences of disobedience.

### **First Offense - *Give Warning***

(1) Get alone with the person; (2) Clarify the instruction; (3) Convey grief eye-to-eye; (4) Give only one warning; (5) Be prepared to follow through on discipline.

### **Second Offense - *Steps of Correction***

(1) Act "in the day you hear it"; (2) Bind Satan before the confrontation; (3) Get alone for correction; (4) Establish personal responsibility; (5) Appeal to the conscience; (6) Associate correction with love; (7) Give comfort after repentance.

# The purpose of leadership

"Life was meant for living", and the purpose of leaders is to help equip others to live a truly fulfilled and God-honouring life in every aspect. And this belongs to a bigger picture. Leaders are co-workers with God in preparing & equipping people for eternity with Him. What a responsibility & privilege!

At the centre of the jigsaw-puzzle of life, as this booklet has depicted it, is Christian Community, and the chief relationship to be cultivated is that between us and God. It is the pinnacle of human existence.



All the gifts and skills we have are ultimately so that we all can live in praise of God and to His glory both now and forever more. This is living at its best!!

## Conclusion

A happy and successful life is one which is able to enjoy a close relationship with God in community with others and reflect His glory in every aspect!

Jesus said:

**"I have come that they might have life to the full"** (John 10:10)

This abundant life comes as we "take up our cross" and follow Jesus. By dying to selfishness and choosing to submit to Jesus in every realm of life, He then enables us through the Holy Spirit to fulfill the mandate given to us at the beginning of creation - *having good relationships with God and each other, fill the earth and subdue it* - and He also gives us the assurance of going to Heaven!

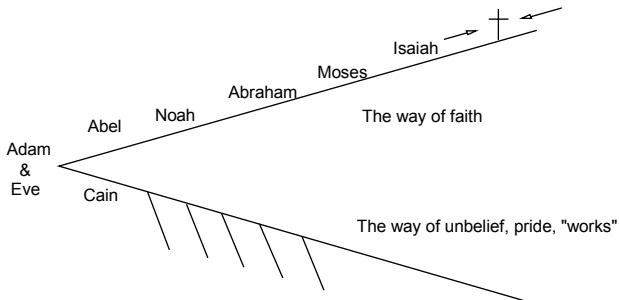
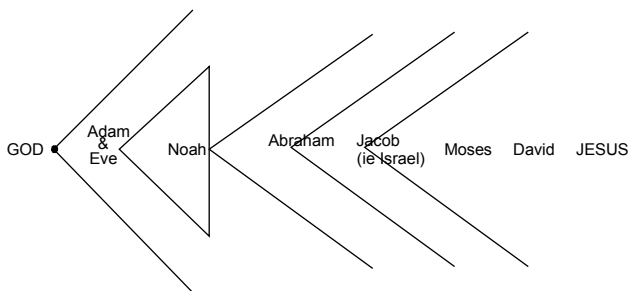
God bless you, and may your life be filled with the love, joy and purpose which comes from knowing God and His love for you!

# Appendix 1: Bible reading plan

## 1. "Foundations"

Having read Genesis 1-12, Isaiah 61, & Luke 4, read Mark's Gospel for an overview of what is in store for you as a believer in and follower of Jesus Christ.

The following two diagrams give helpful big-picture overviews of world history and the way of salvation:



If you have not yet done so already, seal your decision to follow Jesus by getting baptized in water. Ask a fellow believer to baptize you with the following words:

'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, I baptize you into the name of the Lord Jesus, into His death, burial, and resurrection.'

Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit (if you have not yet realized that you are born again!) The evidence that you are born again is that you come forth with spontaneous 'spiritual' speech, praising & glorifying God from deep joy, either in your own language or other tongues. Such speech includes the cries 'Jesus is Lord!' or 'Father!'

## **2. "Way of Life"**

Involves reading the "Letters to the churches for their encouragement & building up in the faith"

- Ephesians & Philippians for an understanding of your identity in Christ, plus Romans 1-8.
- Luke & Acts as a prelude to studying Colossians, Galatians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, for an understanding of life lead by the Holy Spirit and not just by our bodily desires and not legalistically.

## **3. "Discovery & use of Gifts"**

Involves reading the "Personal letters to leaders"

- In the context of seeking advice from other Christians who know you, and whilst being aware of the desires of your heart, your established abilities, your personality and your experience, study Romans 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 12, and 1 Peter 4 (here we find lists of spiritual gifts) and ask God to reveal to you what gifts you have.
- Then study 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon putting yourself in the shoes of the recipients of those letters and discern how one should exercise the gift one has received.

#### **4. "Faithful in opposition; Future Glory"**

Involves reading the letters which concern "Surviving attack from within and without (Within: heresy and false doctrine in the church; Without: violent persecution from non-believers)"

- John as a prelude to studying Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1 & 2 & 3 John, Jude, Revelation, for an understanding that Jesus alone is the Messiah, and that He really is all sufficient, and that we should never swerve away from Him, and that truly in Him we know what God is like!

Expect to discover that though Christian living will bring opposition from other people, we have no need to fear, for God has great things in store!

#### **5. "The Big Picture"**

Involves reading again the "Personal letters to leaders"

- Matthew as prelude to 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, then followed by Romans, putting yourself in the shoes of the writer and the recipients, so that as witnesses, evangelists, and leaders, we know the right use of the law, what the Christian life is, and how / how not to teach and lead in the above.

(Note: the above provides a way of systematically reading the New Testament in order to help you foundationally "cover all the bases" of Christian living. Expect to find much more in your reading that will bless you!)

Whilst having divided the New Testament (NT) up in such a fashion, let me say that I believe all the elements of the six steps can be found in the four Gospels, since Jesus' life necessarily encompassed all these things. He taught concerning the Kingdom of God, He lived it out in practice, and made it possible for us to be a part of this Kingdom through His death and resurrection. We are called to emulate all these things - teach, live, even sacrifice ourselves for others that they may enter the Kingdom - and the rest

of the NT is basically extrapolation or application to new converts around the world of all Jesus said and did!

(I also sense that in Romans, a systematic exposition of the gospel, we also have all of the six steps; A being in chapters 1-11, and B,C,D,E,F being in chapters 12-16.)

Furthermore, the Gospels are what the whole Old Testament (OT) always looked forward to, always talked about, and always were pregnant with in its narratives, teaching, and prophecies. Thus the OT is never redundant, and always provides for us rich background and never redundant information for living the Christian life. Thus I suggest a few ways to study and read the OT:

a) in the above curriculum, whenever NT passages refer back to or may be 'similarly found' in OT sections, these sections should be read and studied in their OT context, and then full riches will be abundantly added to you in your faith! (especially when the same themes exist).

b) when reading the OT, note and absorb the following things:

- the nature of God
- the nature of humanity
- the nature of world history, the cosmos, the spiritual realm
- the nature of how God deals with & relates to mankind.
- the nature of the People of God, in times of obedience and disobedience
- the nature of the future
- the nature of the Messiah & His Kingdom
- the nature of the People of God in the Messianic Kingdom
- God's righteousness (tseddeq), justice (mishpat) and covenant faithfulness (hesed), the three of which produce *shalom*.

May God bless your journey into the Christian life!

**"Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the person who takes refuge in Him" (Psalm 34:8).**