

U.K. CHURCHES OF CHRIST

Follow-up Studies

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1. Prayer: Speaking to God

What could be more natural between two people who love each other than communication? Surely one would expect to see an enormous amount of communication between a man and the God he loves with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. And yet this is far from what we see! Communication of this sort is not natural; it must be learned. There are many hindrances - all of which Satan will gladly use in his campaign to keep us off our knees. Yet they can all be overcome, if we are willing to rely on God and give prayer the priority it deserves.

PRIORITY

Mark 1:35 Jesus, a busy man, finds time to pray. He finds a place free from distraction. He finds a time free from distraction.

Suggested scriptures: Psalm 42:1, Psalm 63:1, Luke 6:12, Hebrews 5:7

LEARNING PROCESS

Luke 11:1-13 It's not natural (even disciples had to be taught). Develop structure in your prayer life.

HINDRANCES

1 Peter 4:7 Lack of concentration. May wish to pray aloud.
 Psalm 66:18 Lack of personal righteousness
 Luke 1:1-8 Lack of persistence.
 I John 5:14 Prayer contrary to God's will.
 Mark 11:24 Lack of faith.

Suggested scriptures: Matthew 6:5, John 14:13-14, James 5:16-17, Ephesians 6:18, John 9:31, Colossians 4:2-4

CONCLUSION

Phil 4:6-7 Cast your worries upon God.
 Jer 20:21b God is looking for people who will devote themselves to be close to him. Take up the challenge!
 Psalm 5:3 Have a *daily* prayer time.

Suggested scriptures: 1 Thess 5:17, 1 Peter 5:7, 1 John 5:14

Practical suggestions: i) Set a time and length to pray each day.
 ii) Write out a prayer list.

FASTING (Often associated with prayer in the Bible)

Matt 6:17-18 Shows that this is expected of Christians.

2. Bible Study: Listening to God

Assisting young Christians to become rooted in consistent and productive personal Bible study is one of the top priorities of those discipling them to Christ. Only in this way will we be able to take our stand against Satan and his schemes, wielding "*the sword of the Spirit*" (Eph 6:18). Moreover, abiding in the word of Christ is the surest safeguard against sectarianism. While not fostering independence of spirit, let us carefully call each man and woman in Christ to an independent and discerning study of the word of God. Let us listen to God's voice.

INTRODUCTION

Matt 4:4 "Every word" - Comparable to physical bread, therefore essential. If you don't stay in the word, you won't stay in the faith.

WORK AT YOUR BIBLE STUDY

2 Pet 3:15-16 Possible to distort scriptures to own destruction.
Tremendous responsibility on us personally to stick with the truth.
Some passages are difficult to understand - but not impossible (2 Cor 1:13)
Strive to comprehend them yourself first, before asking others what they mean.

2 Tim 2:15 Becoming a well-equipped workman (3:17)
Not being ashamed.
Developing competence in studying with people.

1 Pet 3:15 Equipped for evangelism: not just Bible knowledge, but being able to answer questions, studying technique, etc.

James 1:22-25 Useless to study the Bible without making the applications to our lives.

Suggested scriptures: Joshua 1:8, Matthew 24:35, Psalm 119 (entire), Psalm 1:2-3, Romans 15:4, Ezra 7:10, Isaiah 66:2b, 1 Cor 10:11, Colossians 3:16, 2 Timothy 2:7

Practical suggestions:

- i) Have a set time to study your Bible daily.
- ii) Write down the convicting points and pray about them.
- iii) Do well in church classes, teaching programme.
- iv) If reading Bible for first time, don't try to read straight through. Focus on the New Testament until you are quite familiar with it, then venture out into O.T.
- v) Get into the habit of reading an entire book of the Bible-at a time; don't skip all over the scriptures!

3. Faith, Works and Grace: The Balance

One of the greatest travesties in the church today is that new Christians are taught to depend on self, to struggle up the road of salvation by works. This attitude may be created before he/she is baptised, in the Bible study setting. But more often this is an acquired deficiency, learned through observation of "older" Christians. Such an orientation undoes the work of the cross. Equally sad, however, is the school of thought that prides itself on having arrived at a true understanding of grace, only to condone and even encourage lukewarm commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ. Clearly we must strike the balance - hence this study.

FAITH

Heb 11:6

We need faith to please God, but what is faith?

Jas 2:14-16

Faith is more than intellectual belief- it results in action.

Compare vv.20-24

Note the interrelationship between faith and obedience

/Gen 22

WORKS

Eph 2:8-10

The Bible clearly teaches that we are not saved by our own effort, but this doesn't mean that God doesn't expect anything from us. // *is an unearned gift, but it is conditional on obedience (2 Kings 5:1-15)*

GRACE

Titus 3:5

We are saved not because of our righteous deeds, but by his mercy. Grace is unmerited favour or mercy.

1 Cor 15:10

But the fact that we do not earn or deserve it does not mean that we can do as we like. (Jude 4)

Titus 2:11-14

Grace will have its effect. It is because of grace that we strive to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives.

4. Relationships in the Body

When one enters the community of the redeemed, relationships are radically transformed! Instead of having ourselves as the Centre of our focus, we are to "*consider others better than ourselves*" (Phil 2:3). However, implementation of these bible principles will never occur as long as we retain a denominational concept of fellowship and the body. Church is not just something we need to attend; it is an opportunity to tend to needs. And there are many needs to be tended to! In short, if young Christians are not grafted into the body in a functional and practical way, they will most likely be reclaimed by the world. And if that is what is happening in our ministries, we are failing (1 Cor 3:12-15). The most crucial time for integrating the young convert into the local congregation is the First few weeks - and even days.

WHY DIFFERENT FROM THOSE IN THE WORLD?

John 13:34-35 Jesus commands us to love each other as he has loved us. This quality of love is what makes us distinct as Christians.

Mark 3:35 We are Jesus' brothers and sisters if we do God's will. Because of this common purpose, Christian relationships transcend blood relationships.

HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT?

1 Peter 1:22 Our love for each other must be sincere and from the heart.

1 John 3:16 Jesus is our example. Our love for others can be measured by how much we are willing to sacrifice for them.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN PRACTICE?

1 Thess 5:12 Different people have different needs.

1 John 3:17 Look after each other's material needs.

Col 1:28 Let's be concerned about each other's spiritual well-being.

CONCLUSION

Eph 4:29 Be edifying

Eph 5:21 Be submissive not only to leaders (Heb 13:17), but also to each other.

Suggested scriptures: Acts 2:42-47, 3 John 5, Heb 10:24-25, Acts 4:32-35, James 1:19, Romans 12:5, Heb 13:1-2, 1 Cor 12:12-27

Practical suggestions:

- i) Make it a point to phone and write to other Christians in order to build relationships (Heb 3:12-13). Set specific goals in this area.
- ii) Pray for each other daily.
- iii) Introduce yourself to at least one new person in each service for the next week.
- iv) Write notes and cards to your brothers and sisters. Write also to leaders in your congregation to encourage them

5. The New Testament Church: Three Aspects

We demand book, chapter and verse for all our doctrines and practices - and rightly so. Hearing our Restoration Plea, how does a young Christian respond when he sees many practices he may never before have seen in his life? He is not used to *weekly* communion, and certainly not to *sacrificial* contributing. And what about the strange custom of "going forward"? This study provides scriptural explanation for these three practices in the New Testament Church.

COMMUNION (Lord's Supper, Eucharist)

Matt 26:26-29	Passover supper (Jewish background). Bread is body of Christ, wine is blood.
1 Cor 11:23ff	Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. Proclamation of Lord's death until he comes. Examine yourself before eating.
Acts 20:7	Christians came together <i>in order</i> to break bread. It appears from the evidence of the NT and that of early church history that the Christians broke bread together at least once a week.

Suggested scriptures: Exodus 12 (historical background)
Mark 14:12-16, Luke 22:7-20, John 6:48-58, Acts 2:42

CONTRIBUTION (for needs of the Church)

Matthew 6:21	Your treasure will be where your heart is.
Matthew 6:24	Cannot serve both God and money, so make sure that God is first.
Prov 3-9-10	Are you honouring God with your money? Give him the "firstfruits" of your income. In the OT they gave 10%. And be responsible when you are away; leave your contribution behind (church needs it).
1 Cor 16:1-2	Taking up a collection is <i>biblical</i> .
2 Cor 8:1-15	Advance planning.
2 Cor 9:6ff	Good material on sacrificial giving...

Suggested scriptures: Ex 36:6-7, Mark 12:41-44, Luke 6:38, 1 Tim 6:5-10,17

CONFESSION (coming Forward)

James 5:16	Public confession No private "confessional" in the Bible. Ask spiritual people to pray for you. The prayer will be effective.
Prov 28:13	Will not prosper if keep sins inside...

6. Being Discipled: God's Plan

Despite much controversy over *methods* of discipling, it is indisputable that the NT teaches the necessity of discipling in the lives of Christians. The importance of ongoing discipleship should be clear to someone before the point of baptism. This study aims to cultivate an attitude of openness on the part of the young Christian towards discipling, as well as to remind him that, in the final analysis, it is the responsibility of the one who has confessed Jesus as Lord to persevere in his Christian growth. Discipleship is not just a human expedient, it is a command of God (Matt 28:19).

BEING DISCIPLLED

2 Tim 2:2	Discipling process: a chain reaction.
Col 1:28 - 2:1	Goal = maturity/completeness/perfection. Difficulties in any discipling relationship, but realise challenges are made in love. Discipling is hard work.
1 Cor 11:1	Follow example of one discipling you. He/she is not perfect. Therefore, follow only insofar as he/she is following Christ.
Prov 10:17	Attitude of openness to correction. If you have the wrong attitude, you will lead others astray.
Prov 11:14	Ask for advice.
Prov 15:12	Cherish challenge and initiate with the one discipling you.
Luke 6:39-40	End-results: becoming like your teacher, making his good points part of your own life.

DISCIPLING YOURSELF

Heb 5:11f	Don't be slow to learn. By constant use [habit] train yourself. Ultimately, you are the one responsible for how you do spiritually. Cannot blame your failings on others.
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Practical suggestions:

- i) Arrange a regular time to meet together each week.
- ii) Strive for daily contact.
- ii) Have fun times together as well.

7. Hindrance: The Heart

The Bible speaks of the heart as the governing Centre of the whole man - intellectual, physical, and psychological, and thus man's heart makes him what he is and gives rise to all his thoughts and actions. It is imperative that a young disciple be taught to guard his heart, to keep it sensitive and open to God's word.

INTRODUCTION

1 Sam 16:7 God looks at the heart.

WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS OF THE HEART?

Jer 17:9 Deceitfulness: in the sense of feelings and impulses. Deceitful with regard to discerning the trust, or what is best.

Mark 7:21 Sinfulness: the heart is the source of sin as well as evil desires.

Heb3:12 Hardening: hearts can become hard, become unbelieving (doubt) and turn away from God.

WHAT IS THE REMEDY?

Jer 29:13 *Seek* God with all our hearts. This verse is not just for non-Christians!

Psalms 51:17 Cultivate a penitent, *contrite heart*, which responds quickly to God's word.

Psalms 119:11 Hide *God's word* in our heart.

Prov 3:5-6 *Trust* in the Lord with all our heart.

CONCLUSION

Prov 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart! It's the source of our spiritual life.

Suggested scriptures: Gen 6:5, 2 Chron 16:9, Psalm 51:10, Prov 14:12, Prov 28:26, Ezek 18:31, 1 John 3:20

Practical suggestions:

- i) Pray for a pure heart.
- ii) Confess sin, be humble.
- iii) Write out Bible verses which pertain to your heart.

8. Laziness, Idleness, Discipline

How many of us have had great dreams for how God was going to use us - how he would mould us into what he wanted us to be - and just when the going got rough, and the process became painful, we resisted, and perhaps even took two steps backwards! Few, if any, of us are naturally disciplined, discipline must be learned. And yet without it how do we suppose that we will take the gospel into all the world? Surely that is fantasy! Discipline, therefore, must be built into our Christian lives from the earliest possible moment.

INTRODUCTION

1 Tim 4:7 Train yourself to be godly. The Christian life is a process of training in righteousness.

LAZINESS

Heb 6:12 Don't become lazy. Laziness is a constant threat to the life of every Christian, young or old. Imitate those who are patient, faithful and disciplined. Look for good examples, learn from them. Realise that laziness is sin!

Suggested scriptures: Prov 12:1, Prov 24:30-34, Prov 26:13-16

IDLENESS

1 Thess 4:11ff Be constructive members of society and of the church. Hard-working people win the respect of others. Try not to be dependent on anybody (do not go into/remains in debt).

2 Thess 3:3ff Follow the example of disciplined people. Don't be a "busy-body" - appearing busy but not really achieving anything.

DISCIPLINE

Heb 12:11-12 No discipline seems pleasant, but it yields a more satisfying life. Make your life count!

Suggested scriptures: 1 Cor 9:24-27, 2 Tim 2:4-6, Heb 5:14

Practical suggestions:

- i) Make a timetable of how you use your time. Set some goals.
- ii) Spend time with a disciplined person and learn from him.
- iii) If you are not a punctual person, make an effort to be early.

Suggested reading: The Disciplined Life - R. Taylor

9. Evangelism, Boldness, Tact

When it comes to evangelism, I have seen few young Christians who possessed both boldness *and* tact. People usually go to one extreme or the other; so tactful that they say little, if anything, or so bold that tact is thrown to the wind. Evangelism is axiomatic, but boldness comes through prayer and tact is developed through careful observation of those who are diplomatic. In view of the crippling effect of fear on new Christians - and old - and considering the number of tactical errors made by young Christians, why shouldn't we have a separate lesson on this most important subject?

EVANGELISM

2 Cor 5:10-21	Because we know and fear God, we try to persuade others. We are Christ's ambassadors and God has given to us the ministry of reconciliation. It is not an option.
Philemon 6	Our understanding and appreciation of God will grow as we are active in sharing our faith.
Acts 8:1,4	The early Christians were evangelistic - not just the leaders!

BOLDNESS

Rom 1:16-17	The gospel is nothing to be ashamed of because it has the power to save.
Luke 9:23-26	If we are ashamed of Jesus and his words, he will be ashamed of us.
Acts 4:29-31	Pray for boldness! God will answer your prayer.

TACT

Matt 10:16	Need to be wise/shrewd in our evangelism.
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Negatives:

Prov 12:18	Reckless words.
Prov 25:17	Too frequent contact.
Prov 27:14	Coming on too strong!

Positives:

1 Cor 9:20-23	Accommodate yourself to your hearer.
Titus 2:10	Make the gospel attractive.
1 Peter 3:15-16	Show gentleness and respect.

Suggested scriptures: Matt 7:6, 2 Tim 2:23-26

Practical suggestions:

- i) Set a weekly goal for visitors.
- ii) Work on improving one area of your life in order to make the gospel more attractive.
- iii) Go evangelising with someone.

10. Service with a Smile

When Jesus came to the earth, he came as a *servant* (Mark 10:45). And he is still a servant, since he always lives to intercede for us (Heb 7:25). In following the Master, certainly this is one area that we dare not play down, no matter how lacking in glamour it may seem. For, as Jesus has taught us, the road up is the road down.

Matt 20:26-28	The way up is the way of service, opposite the way of the world. Jesus came to serve, not to be served.
Phil 2:3-8	Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Consider others better than yourselves - then you'll look to see others' needs met. For Jesus to come to earth was the supreme act of self-humiliation. We need to imitate this selfless example in our everyday lives.
Luke 17:7-10	When we have served, our attitude should be that we have only done our duty. No complaining (Phil 2:14); no expectation of reward.
Col 3:23-24	Serve with all your heart! Realise that you are serving the Lord Christ, not men.

Suggested scriptures: John 13:1-17, Phil 4:4-5, Prov 3:27-28, Eph 6:7-8, Psalm 100:2, Gal 6:2,10

Practical suggestions:

- i) Learn to serve without being asked. Look for needs.
- ii) When asked to help in a particular way, *be responsible!* For example, duties such as child care, ushering, communion, teaching, clean-up, office duty, food preparation, etc.

11. Academics: Obstacle or Opportunity?

God certainly expects excellence of Christian students: if not excellent results, at least excellent effort. Too often (undisciplined) students become Christians and then use evangelism or the church as an excuse for mediocre or poor performance. We must help our students to see that their academics are a God-given responsibility. There is nothing "unspiritual" about studies. The unspiritual course to take is to neglect academics, for without perseverance the student suffers great loss in character, discipline, confidence, and credibility - not to mention future prospects.

CLEAR COMMISSION

1 Cor 7:24 God called us to be Christians as students for a reason! We have a responsibility to glorify God in academics and evangelism.
Col 3:22-23 *Attitude* is more important than *aptitude*. Academics are a vital part of your "spiritual" life. To have consistent motivation, work for God, not for self.

EVANGELISTIC EXAMPLE

1 Thess 4:11 A consistent example has an impact! Classmates will be drawn to those who can help others.
Mark 7:37 People were amazed by Jesus' all-round excellence. You will amaze family and friends if you excel in all areas. "Ministry *through* academics, not *inspite* of academics."

POWERFUL PREPARATION

James 1:2-4 Persevering with academics leads to spiritual maturity: discipline, focus, faith.

Suggested scriptures: Prov 6:6, Prov 18:9, Phil 2:14-16, 1 Tim 4:15-16, 1 Tim 3:7

Practical suggestions:

- i) Seek discipling in your academics.
- ii) Get input from lecturers and classmates.
- iii) Attend every lecture. This is important for your example (even if the lecture is lousy).
- iv) Take good notes, and catch up on missed lectures.
- v) Go through homework within a day of receiving it and plan how you will get it done.
- vi) Keep current at all times! For conscience's sake, as well as for practical reasons.
- vii) Aim to sleep reasonable hours, especially during exams

12. Christian Marriage: Cord of Three Strands

God's word and his power provide us with everything we need for happy, godly, fulfilling lives in every area (2 Tim 3:17, 2 Pet 1:3, John 10:10). The area of marriage is certainly a crucial one, and if marriage is not going well serious spiritual problems will also be present. Marriage is a legitimate and vital area for discipling, especially as our sick society knows virtually nothing of God's plan for marriage. Indeed, Christian marriage is one arena in which disciples will dramatically outshine the many worldly examples surrounding them. A great marriage, in short, draws others to Jesus!

GOD'S PLAN

- (a) Marriage meets our deepest needs (Gen 2:24, Prov 18:22). Your husband or wife should be your closest friend!
- (b) Marry a Christian! (2 Cor 6:14ff, 1 Cor 7:39)
- (c) Marriage is for life (Matt 19:9)
- (d) Take advice! (Prov 15:22)

WORLDLY VERSUS SPIRITUAL MARRIAGES

- (a) **Communication**
 - i) time together (meals, discipling, unscheduled time)
 - ii) listening (especially needful for husbands)
 - iii) express, don't suppress feelings
 - iv) no festering resentments (Col 3:13)
 - v) co-ordinate schedules: don't leave each other in the dark about the other's schedule
 - vi) communication may intensify conflict: expect it, don't avoid it!
- (a) **Selfishness**
 - i) Harsh husbands? (Col 3:19) Husbands must serve their wives, being considerate (1 Pet 3:7). Husbands should do their share of the housework, cleaning, taking care of baby/children..
 - ii) bossy/nagging wives? (Prov 21:19, 25:24, 27:15). Wives must learn *submission* (Col3:18, I Pet 3:5-6)
 - iii) Weak or meek husbands? (henpecked) The man must be the spiritual leader in the relationship (Eph 5:22-23)
- (c) **Hospitality**
 - i) Is homelife centred only round each other, life in a cosy, selfish, private world?
 - ii) Hospitality is God's will! (I Pet 4:9) Open your home to others.
 - iii) Use hospitality in evangelism.
 - iv) An untidy home isn't inviting! (Prov 24:30-34)
- (d) **Spirituality**
 - i) Talk about spiritual things when together.
 - ii) Pray with spouses daily.
 - iii) Do not protect each other when there is luke-warmness or compromise (Acts 5:1-11); speak the truth in love! (Eph 4:15)
- (e) **Romance**
 - i) Don't deprive one another (I Cor 7:5)
 - ii) Remember the special touches! (cards, flowers, presents, surprises....)
- (f) **Input**
 - i) Are you (two) closed to input? Festering problems?
 - ii) Every marriage needs counselling! No-one is above it!
 - iii) Marriages need discipling. "Four-way openness": Husbands and wives having permission from each other to speak to the other's discipler if there are unresolved problems. (A good test of sincerity).

Practical Suggestions:

1. Pray together every day
2. Evangelise together
3. Share quiet times from time to time
4. Work on the church classes together. Expect the best of each other!

5. Spend one evening a week alone together, showing your love for each other and really communicating.
6. Read and discuss 1 Cor 13
7. Read Song of Songs to one another! (Lover and Beloved parts)
8. Pray daily that you will be able to study with one couple together
9. Have frequent double dates
10. Discuss your schedules together
11. Plan and overnight trip together (no children).

13. The Christian Family: Parents and Children

The family is the basic social unit, and to understand the desperate plight our society is in your need only to look at the desperate straits the average family is in! In stark contrast to worldly families, with their selfish outlook, poor communication, brewing resentments, undisciplined children and decaying marriages, the Christ-centred family is a breath of fresh air and a ray of hope. The family following God's word is a happy, communicative, warm, loving, committed and fruitful family. Just as Christian marriage is God's wise plan for men and women to love and live together, so the Christian family is both God's answer to the ungodliness and selfishness of society and his plan for character development in his most precious gift to parents: their children. What will this take? It will require a spiritual, godly focus within the family, provided by the parents and especially by the father. It will also require determination and openness to being disciplined in the area of bringing up your children.

Spiritual Focus

- (a) Chain of command (Christ - husband - wife & children)
- (b) If you want a great family life you need discipling!
- (c) Aim to have a fruitful family!

Bringing up Children

- (a) **Basic needs for security and happiness:**
 - i) time - you'll need to re-order your priorities!
 - ii) affection - without it they'll become insecure, cold, introverted, awkward around strangers.
 - iii) spiritual examples (parents) - Eph 6:4, Deut 6:7
 - iv) discipline - it's unloving not to give it (Prov 23:13-14)
- (b) **Training**
 - i) encouragement necessary (Col 3:21)
 - ii) discipline essential
 - a) God commands it (Prov 22:15,29:15,17,19,21)
 - b) The husband is the chief discipler
 - c) Wife & husband agree the "rules", lest the children pick and chose whom to obey!
 - iii) areas of training (Prov 22:6)
 - a) respect toward authority
 - b) speech and openness
 - c) affection
 - d) manners
 - e) tidiness
 - f) moodiness
 - iv) weekly discipling times with each child!

Other important matters

- (a) Have regular, consistent family devotionals.
- (b) Be on time to church, allow extra time, particularly considering the children and plan to come early.
- (c) Pray with the children before they go to bed.
- (d) Have a weekly family time.
- (e) If you have Christian children, do not undermine the teen ministry. Be open to feedback. Don't be defensive.

Practical suggestions:

- i) Have a system of allowances and incentives for the children.
- ii) Take the whole family out evangelising.
- iii) Reach out to other families as a family.