



FOURSQUARE **MINISTRY TRAINING**

MODULE THREE

“FOUNDATIONAL DISCIPLINES OF CHRIST’S DISCIPLES”

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Part One Bible Study

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- **Ministry Skill 2: Leading Christians into the Holy Spirit Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

Background to being a disciple of Jesus:

Jesus is our amazing, great Rabbi.. our Great Teacher of His Disciples.

John 1:48-49 ‘Nathanael said to Jesus..”how do You know me?” Jesus answered and said..”Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig-tree, I saw you”. Nathanael answered and said to Him..”**Rabbi, You are the Son of God, You are the King of Israel**”

John 3:1-2 ‘There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night and said..”**Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher sent by God: for no man can do the miracles that You do, except God is with Him.**”

What was the significance of Jesus being called a ‘Rabbi’?

The significance was that a young man would give his life to be a disciple of a Rabbi, and learn to copy everything he did, so that he could do the same for one other young man later. The highest purpose that any Jewish young man could aspire to, was to be a Rabbi. Rabbi’s commanded the greatest respect in Israel. A young man would finally pluck up the

courage to go to a Rabbi and say..”**Can I follow you and be your disciple?”** If the Rabbi said yes, then that boy would leave his home immediately, and go and live with the Rabbi. He would be his ‘shadow’, and would never leave him. Everywhere he went, that young man would go. He would learn the whole of the Old Testament by heart; and be taught everything that the Rabbi knew. He ate with the Rabbi, slept in the same room as the Rabbi, and even went to the toilet when the Rabbi went to the toilet. He made himself inseparable from this ‘religious giant’ to whom he had attached himself. **From that day, he left everything he had known behind, to become for the rest of his life, a disciple, and then a Teacher.**

For Jesus to be called ‘Rabbi’ was the highest honour that could be bestowed on Him. He hadn’t ever been trained as a Rabbi, but knew more Wisdom than the Rabbi’s, taught with greater authority than the Rabbi’s, and moved in the Power of the Holy Spirit; and so He was recognised as a genuine Rabbi who came to be a Rabbi a different, and obviously much superior way. Both Nathanael, and Nicodemus, among many others, summed up Jesus’ pathway as having only one possible heritage:

.....Rabbi.....You are the Son of God.....You are the King of Israel.....You are a Teacher sent by God, God is with You.. demonstrated by the miracles in Your ministry.

What was different about being a Disciple of Jesus?

He insisted that **the only way to live was to copy Him in** everything He said and did; and He still commands the same today.. He’s the same, nothing’s changed!

Instead of having one young man come begging to be a disciple, **Jesus commanded not just one person, but all people to “Follow Me” and be My disciples, and then “go and make disciples of everyone in the World.”** His view is that everyone would either be a disciple; or have become a teacher, like Him, teaching others how to be His disciples.

<p style="text-align: center;">MODULE 3 ‘DISCIPLINES OF THE DISCIPLE’ INTRODUCTION: ‘DISCIPLINED TO STUDY AND APPLY THE WORD OF GOD’</p>

Disciples discipline themselves in Christ’s Lifestyle:

Disciplined disciples of Christ celebrate a life of continued co-operation with the Spirit and The Word to conform their own life to Christ’s image.

Jesus didn’t come to govern our life by handing out a long list of compulsory, repetitive, religious rituals; touted as giving immunity from bad health, bad luck, and angry, bad spirits.

Jesus came to make us live, think and act like Him, through doing all the things spontaneously for Him, because we have discovered ourself to be in the greatest living, Eternal, Love relationship in the Universe. Then..what wouldn't you do for Him? TRUE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE IS A LOVE REACTION.

What would you not do for this 'Lover of your Soul', dear Disciple?

- You can't bear to be apart from Him! You learn to follow His Spirit all day long!
- You'll spend as much time talking and listening to Him as you can.
- You'll read, treasure and re-read all His love-letters, and let their contents change you. His collection forms a whole library called 'The Bible'. All His words He wrote aren't ordinary.. they have a miracle dimension built in by Him for us, called "Spirit and Life".
- You'll find out what He wants you to do, be thrilled He asked you to help Him; and gladly work with Him, so He can do it through you.
- You'll rave about Him, telling others what He's done for you, and what He's really like; and basically, promote Him everywhere.
- You'll admire Him constantly..Worship Him.. sing songs to Him.
- You'll place everything He has provided for you at His disposal, and distribute it joyfully as soon as He says.. so He can give you more, so you can repeat it.
- You'll hang out with others who are the same, and work with them as Family, building them up, and letting them build you up. You'll get Baptized into this 'Fellowship in Christ's Spirit'; and meet each week to share in Communion, also known as 'The Lord's Supper', so you can remember together that He has paid for every need you've got when He died on The Cross, and pray for each other to get theirs met as well.
- Use what He gives you, i.e. permission to use His Name, and His Power and His Authority to turn things the right way up in your own life, in your friends and in your local community of 'neighbours'.

We'll start with God's 'Love-Letters'.. the Bible. There are four great things we can focus on..

- i) **How did He get all of them to us, and then arrange them in such an amazing way?**
- ii) **How does He want us to read and understand them?**
- iii) **How would He advise me to go about in-depth studies?**
- iv) **Why He wants me to keep a record of what He is showing me each day.**

GOD'S LOVE LIBRARY: HOW HE GOT IT INTO OUR HANDS

Purpose of this Unit:

- i) To show how this Holy Spirit breathed Library of Scriptures came into being;
- ii) To look at both the men and women God used; and their historical contexts; showing how both played their parts in contributing to The Bible;
- iii) Proving that the 'Inspiration of Scriptures' is from God alone.

Goal: Once we discover that the Bible is in Truth, the inspired, written Word of God, it transforms our reasons for studying it. The Bible is the greatest written work ever made. Even though it has continually faced attacks (*of course it would!*) about its authenticity for the last 2,000 years; the Believer receives it with Faith in God and finds their life being continually transformed by the revelation action of the Spirit of the Lord, on those Words they have sown into their soul; as they have meditated on what God is saying.

Scriptures:

- i) Psalm 119:105 *'Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path'*
- ii) John 6:63b *'The Words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit' and they are Life'*
- iii) Ephesians 6:17 *'Take the Sword of the Spirit, which is The Word of God'.*
- iv) Hebrews 4:12 *'For The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart'.*
- v) 2 Timothy 3:15,16 *"From the time you were a child you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto Salvation, through faith which is in Jesus Christ. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished with all good works.'*

Here are some Key Terms we need to become familiar with:

- i) **Testament:** This word translated from both the Hebrew and the Greek means "Covenant". A covenant describes the terms of an agreed relationship between two people, or two parties. The 'Old Testament' contains the Old Covenant between God and Israel through Moses. The New Testament (Covenant) describes the replacement of Moses Covenant through 'The Law' (*The Torah.. which was based on salvation through works*); with salvation from our sin, by

trusting in the Blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ to cleanse us of all sin through His death for us, in our place, on The Cross of Calvary. Under this New Covenant we are saved by God's Grace, by which He has given us what we could never earn or deserve, a sinless new beginning on confession of our sin and repentance from it with Godly sorrow. As a cleansed vessel, we invite the Spirit of Christ to come and live within us Eternally. We choose to be His Disciples, and discipline ourselves to follow Him, and serve Him through the Word And the Spirit.

- ii) **The Canon of Scripture:** The word in the Greek is 'kanon' which means 'rule'. Our Early Church Fathers formed a 'rule' by which we could base our lives on Christ by faith in God's Word. They gathered God's Word from every source they could. They deliberately collected, screened, and authenticated certain Books to be included in The Bible. Meticulous examination of a range of copied texts.. some on parchment made from crushed reeds, and some on vellum (sheep skin) enabled them through comparison of available complete, and parts of manuscripts, to present a completely authoritative set of Books. Collaboratively they sought Divine Inspiration for each Book, and finally accepted 39 in the Old Testament, and 27 in the New Testament. The primary level of acceptance for inclusion in the New Testament canon was that the Book was either written by an Apostle, or someone close to the Apostles. This guaranteed that their writing about Jesus and the Early Church would have the authenticity of eyewitness accounts.
- iii) **The excluded Apocrypha:** These are sixteen books from the inter-testamental period. While they may be of some historical value, they do not appear to be Inspired by the Holy Spirit, and so are disqualified from The Canon. However, the Roman Catholic Church at The Council of Trent in 1546 declared eleven of them to be worthy of inclusion, and both the Roman Catholic and high Anglican Church include them in their Bible.
- iv) **An often used Manuscript Source of the Old Testament:** 'The Septuagint' which was created about 250 BC by seventy Jewish elders in Egyptian Alexandria, was a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament.

When was the Bible Written?

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Bible which Jesus used was the Hebrew Old Testament. The New Testament Books were written over a period of about 55 years after His death and Ascension. From about AD 45 there were probably several collections of what Jesus had said circulating in the churches. It is believed that Mark's Gospel was the first written. Of Paul's Letters it is believed Galatians was the first written about AD 49. Virtually the whole of the New Testament was written in Greek, with the exception of Matthew which was believed to have been written in Aramaic.

The writers the Holy Spirit used:

Matthew wrote Matthew

Mark wrote Mark

Dr Luke wrote Luke and Acts

John wrote John, 1,2, &3 John and Revelations

Paul wrote Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Thessalonians, Colossians, Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and is generally credited with Hebrews.

The Accuracy of the Copies:

Originally a room full of Scribes was the early 'printing press'. They would copy down the words with extreme accuracy. The result was that the handing down of Scripture was done with great faithfulness and diligence, and to get virtually perfect accuracy, manuscript could be compared with manuscript from different times and places. Monks continued this faithful process after the commencement of the Monastic Period. God has stood over his Word to protect it! Attempts made by some schools of theology to attribute a variety of authorship sources to even one Book, has raised unnecessary issues; and this approach has proven to be an academic exercise which erodes faith in the Inspiration of Scripture.

The Old Testament:

The Old Testament books were written over a period of about 1000 years in the Hebrew language except for a few portions that were written in Aramaic.

*'Moses is believed to be the author of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. He most likely wrote them after his Divine Call to lead them out of Egypt back to Israel in approximately 1491 B.C. His writing of Creation, the Fall of Man (4004 B.C.), and the events surrounding Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, were handed down to him by oral tradition (word of mouth) over the generations. God the Holy Spirit then enabled Moses to recall, fill-in, and accurately record all the details necessary to complete the first part of the Old Testament according to God's satisfaction'. **

The arrangement of the books and chapters of the old Testament with which we are familiar today, has been inherited from the pre-Christian Greek translation called the *Septuagint* completed in 250 B.C. The reasons for not following a close chronological order have been lost in the antiquity of time. All oral transmission was eventually changed into a written form.

Quote **John and Sonia Decker: Christ's Ambassadors International 2010*

Historical Time-Line of the Bible

- i) 250 B.C. Hebrew Old Testament scrolls were translated into Greek and called the Septuagint.
- ii) 0-33A.D. Jesus birth, life, death and resurrection. He used the Hebrew O.T.
- iii) 49 – 100A.D. The Apostles and eyewitnesses of Christ recorded and distributed the original Gospel accounts in hand-written letters in Manuscript form. Most were written on Papyrus. They used both the Greek and Hebrew Old Testament as their Bible.
- iv) 150-397 A.D. For almost 300 years a whole range of ‘collections’ and hand-written copies circulated through the known Christian world. Some were even translated into Syrian (Peshitta), Egyptian (Coptic) and Latin. There was a widely accepted agreement by this time of what should be considered ‘Inspired’ and therefore accepted as the complete ‘New Testament’. During the early centuries some of our great Christian ‘Fathers’ such as Eusebius of Alexandria, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Ignatius and Origen dedicated themselves to the Gospels and with the Holy Spirit aiding this process there arose a dual witness of the New Testaments 27 Books in 367 in the Eastern Church in Egypt’s Alexandria; and in 397 in the Western Church in Carthage (North Africa). What we have today is what was agreed over 1600 years ago.
- v) 400 – 1546 A.D. Jerome translated the Hebrew old Testament and the Greek New Testament into a totally new Latin version called the Vulgate Bible. He completed this between 382 and 405 A.D. It was true to the original manuscripts and became the official Bible of the Western world for over 1,000 years. This was confirmed at the Council of Trent in 1546.
- vi) 500 – 950 AD A new, more exact version of the Old Testament called the Masoretic Text was developed by Hebrew Scholars. ‘Vowel’ points were also introduced in what had been a ‘consonants’ only Hebrew text.
- vii) 1228. Chapter divisions were given to the Books of the Bible. Previously each book was one long arrangement of text.
- viii) 1380. **John Wycliffe** translated both OT and NT into English. He primarily used the Vulgate.
- ix) 1525-30. **William Tyndale** translated both OT and NT into 16th Century English using the early NT Greek versions, and the Greek Pentateuch, and the Vulgate Bible. **Why?** Because language keeps changing so that today’s vernacular might have had a different meaning yesterday. For example: The original Divine’s Authorised King James version of the Bible contained words like ‘prevent’ which in today’s vernacular means to ‘stop’, whereas in their time it meant ‘to go in front of’. Holy Spirit revelation runs parallel to the contemporary understanding of the meaning of words!

- x) 1535-39. **Miles Coverdale and Matthew** both produced separate Bibles using mainly Tyndale's research. Coverdale produced **The Great Bible** in 1539.
- xi) 1551. Verses were added to the Chapters.
- xii) 1560-8. **The Geneva Bible** did an update using 'officially accepted' previous translations.
- xiii) 1582-1610. **The Douay Bible** was created by Roman Catholic scholars using the Vulgate texts of 400-500 A.D. Up until today this has been the commonly accepted Bible in the Catholic Church.
- xiv) 1611. **The Authorised King James Bible** translated by 47 'Divines' or highly trained scholars under the direction of James 1st of England. Enormous research was done using comparative texts and sources to make this incredibly accurate, and it became the most popular version for over 350 years.
- xv) 1881-1885. **The Revised Standard Version.** This was developed by a group of American and British scholars who incorporated some polluted texts and manuscripts, even with portions being removed that were contained in the King James A.V. In some cases notes were added casting doubt on the authenticity of some verses. It seems to lack the inspiration of the KJV. **The American Standard** version of 1900 simply updated the RSV and included it's same problems.
- xvi) 1952 – now. There have been more translations in the last 60 years than in the previous 2,000. Some see it as a fulfilment of Matthew 24:14.. ***"And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all Nations, and then the end shall come."*** All major language groups have translations. There is only a tiny handful of people groups that don't. It may be translated, but it also has to be preached!
 The 1947 discovery of the **Dead Sea Scrolls** at Wadi Kumran by a shepherd boy, has hastened the study because many of these manuscripts are over 1000 years older than our previously available texts.
- xvii) 1978. **New International Version** which like other versions took over 10 years to produce, and relied on Ancient Texts, was produced by International teams and is accepted world-wide as being accurate.
- xviii) 1982. **New King James Version** was produced over seven years by 119 scholars and is the preserved and improved 1611 version.

Which version of Bible should I use?

Use a version that has integrity. You may also desire to supplement it with an Amplified, or other easy to read translation to assist in understanding the meaning, if that assists you personally. But be aware, that versions like the Good News Bible sacrifice some important terms for the sake of easy reading. God says.. *"It is the privilege of a King to search out a matter"*. Studying The Word wasn't meant to be just 'an easy read'. The Holy Spirit who wrote the Word will always reveal what He has written as you seek His guidance and counsel in your faithful studying. Other helps are a good Concordance which includes the Hebrew and Greek words and notes; with perhaps a Greek-English, and

Hebrew–English Lexicon, if you wish to go deeper.

<p style="text-align: center;">MTFGCNZ: MODULE 3..UNIT 2 <u>PREPARING YOURSELF TO LEAD INSPIRED</u> <u>BIBLE-STUDIES</u></p>

If you are going to be leading other people in Bible Study, or carrying out Teaching or Preaching, you need to have a tested, systematic and practical approach to studying God's Word.

Goals for this Unit:

1. To discover the meaning of a passage of Scripture through revelation of the Holy Spirit.
2. To work out how to apply this revelation to our own lives first.
3. To be able to communicate The Word faithfully to others so that they can apply it in a meaningful way as well.

Foundational Principles for Bible Study:

(The following four points are a summary introduction to be covered in detail in the remainder of this Unit.)

There are foundational principles for personal Bible Study and every serious disciple of Jesus will study the Word. It is recommended that any leader know and be able to apply the following principles before they lead a Study Group.

1. Have a clear understanding of the nature of The Bible..
 - The Bible contains God's Words in man's words.
 - The primary focus of the Scriptures is God's Grace and Love..(*how He is working with us right now*) and how we will respond as a result.
 - Firstly.. what is God's Part.. then
 - What is our part? Our responses are not legalistic, but a maturing, growing response within this Grace.
 -
2. Preparing yourself to study The Word: a) guided by the revelation which comes by The Holy Spirit. Therefore we pray for this illumination from The Spirit of the Lord, in Jesus' Name. (read Psalm 119:18; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14)
b) Where possible use a good translation with paragraph divisions.
3. Rightly Dividing The Word of God:
 - a) Context: See what the Word is saying in the context of it's surrounding Scriptures.. "*a text without a context, easily becomes a pretext*". Find the focal point, identify it in words that are meaningful to you, and stay on track with it.

- b) Literal translation. If it can be translated literally, then the second rule of interpretation is.. “take it literally if at all possible”. If you can’t, then look for the figurative, or symbolic meaning.
- c) Identify with the situation as if you were there yourself, living at that moment, and seeing the meaning as it would be interpreted by the people of that time. “Put yourself in their shoes”. Relive it in your own mind.
- d) Personal Application: What specific thing is God having you do, to build it into your own life, and so renew your own mind to agree with the mind of Christ Jesus.

4. Foundational Practices for Bible Study:

Write the Scripture down. Learn it. Get the revelation on it by asking God 100 questions about it, and receive His answers. Then find out what God wants you to do with it, and apply it with diligence and reap the freedom that His Truth has set another part of your life free with..

Illustration of the basics of a Student of the Word: I know of a young man who loved to go for a jog for about an hour. Firstly he would find out from God what key Scripture verse that God wanted to speak to him about that day. He would read the context, and then write the verse on his hand. Then he would set off for his jog. It would take him 15 minutes to learn that Scripture off by heart without mistake. Then he would ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the meaning of that Scripture. That would often take about 30 minutes because he would look at it from every angle, selecting key words, key phrases, key ideas, the main idea and anything else he could. Then it would all begin to become clearer and clearer as to what God was saying to him. Finally he knew that he knew what the passage meant. For the last 15 minutes he would ask Holy Spirit to show him how he could apply it. Then he would apply it, and do it.

Over the years, learning many Scriptures a month, he has a treasury of The Word that the Holy Spirit can bring to his remembrance, that he might walk in the Word, and not in the flesh. When he is teaching, or preaching or leading a Study, Holy Spirit continues to bring these treasures, both old and new to inspire his hearers.

A Disciple: “A son of God with a hundred questions for God”.

For the serious studier of The Word.

1. Questions about the context:

The two key contextual questions we ask are:

- i) **The Historical Context:** What is the original historical setting?
 - Who did God use to write this passage?
 - When was it written?
 - To whom was it being addressed at the time?

- Why did God need to have this said.. what was the situation?
- Where was the writer, and what was their situation?
- What is the location, and situation of the readers?
- What geographical, political, religious or social factors are important?
- ii) **Biblical Context: Where is it located in Scripture**, and what does this say to us?
 - In what section of the Bible is the Book located in which the passage is found?
 - In what section of the Book is the passage found?
 - What verses are found immediately before and after the passage?

2. **Questions about the Content:**

The six 'keys' to studying the content of the passage..

- i) **What does the passage say?** Make your Bible dirty with reading and re-reading and contemplating; underlining, writing side notes, highlighting words, circling words and phrases, connecting key words... so that you will be a 'clean' Christian.
- ii) **Who are the individuals and groups involved?** What role do these people have in society and in religion; how are they perceived in this role; what role are they playing here.. in context or out of context; what does God want us to identify/not identify with in this situation; what are they doing at the time, and why; how do they fit in with what the author is saying.
- iii) **What genre is being used?** Is it a direct quote used by another; direct speech being quoted; a story; a parable; a letter; a prophecy; an historical reference; or a poem?.. or a combination?
 - Can it be interpreted literally? If so always do that.
 - Is it written figuratively.. then interpret it that way.
 - What is the mood.. command, judgement, anger, grief, joyful, serious, humorous etc.?
- iv) **What is the central theme of this passage?** What is the key verse, and in the key verse what is the key phrase.. how would you express this as the main idea in your own words?
- v) **Which are the key words?** Why are they the key words? Are they being repeated? Is there anywhere else in the Bible that they have already been quoted as a second or third 'witness' that God has built in? What was the context of the other places they were used? What are they.. list them, and meditate on them with Holy Spirit. Are they nouns.. *naming words*; adjectives.. *describing words*.. or are they verbs.. *doing words*? Are they referring to the past (past tense); present (present tense) or the future (future tense).
- vi) **How does the arrangement of the words promote** .. cause and effect; actions and consequences; God's ways and thoughts; comparisons, contrasts, progressions; and man's response to these higher ways and thoughts?

3. Interpretation: What does this passage mean in terms that I clearly understand and can communicate effectively to others?

Apply our interpretive questions:

- i) Why did the Holy Spirit put it this way?
- ii) What is God telling me the real meaning is?
- iii) What is the significance of this for me?
- iv) What are the implications for me in its applications?
- v) Has God been speaking the same thing to me, through other passages? When? Why?
- vi) Are there additional thoughts and understandings He has built in this time? Why? Why didn't He show me before?

Comparing Sources:

- vii) Do I gain any further understanding by checking my source against other translations?
- viii) Do I need to consult further with other concordances, Bible dictionaries, the Net, Atlases, Lexicons or Commentaries?
- ix) **Arrange your Material:**
 - a) The Scripture
 - b) The Main Idea/principle which God is revealing
 - c) The 2-4 sub-concepts which contribute to the Main Idea, with Biblical Illustrations and other relevant material
 - d) Your Conclusion
 - e) Your Application in clearly stated terms...*"God is telling me to do X!" (see expansion of the Application in Section 4 following)*

4. Expansion on the Application:

Apply this new Truth so that I can live in it now and for the rest of my life.

- Are there key commands I need to define and obey
 - What errors do I need to avoid?
 - What sins do I need to forsake, after repentance and forgiveness?
 - What promises do I need to claim?
 - What principles do I need to live by?
 - What attitudes do I need to change, so that the Fruit of the Spirit is being applied where I didn't realise I wasn't applying it before?
 - Am I ready to share the very 'comfort' with which he has comforted me?
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MODULE 3. PART 3. BIBLE STUDIES INVOLVING: TOPICS AND CHARACTERS

Purpose of this Unit:

There are several different ways to study The Word of God:

- i) Working one's way consecutively through a passage, or a Book;
- ii) Choosing a topic such as "Love" and studying the Scriptures associated with that; and
- iii) Taking a Biblical Character, and researching from the Scriptures what their profile speaks to us about.

Whichever way we choose to study God's Word, there are several fruits that will emerge..

- i) Our sense of "**identity**" of "who am I in Christ?..' will grow and grow, so that we increasingly come into the measure of the fullness of Christ in our own lives.
- ii) We will get **direction** on how the Word and the Spirit will tell us what to do, and what attitude to have in any given situation while we are doing it , so that we are living a holy and faith-filled life.
- iii) Our sense of **Purpose** about where we fit in; and how we are personally and corporately meant to go about it; as far as 'Building the Kingdom' of God is concerned.

Part 1. Topical Studying.. how to go about it.

God's key Principles of Wisdom that we can readily apply to our own lives are the outcomes, which we are seeking. God has a plan for our Growth in Christ, and studying His Word reveals His planned steps for us; which are sometimes 'baby-steps'; and sometimes we take a giant step and are enabled to leap over a 'high wall'. Another benefit of Topic Study is that through this process of Topic Study we also learn a little more about "how-to-do-Theology". So the benefits are:

- i) To find answers to personal questions on how to live the Christian Life.
- ii) To help us balance the **teachings** on specific topics, and **basic truths** of God's Word.
- iii) Titus 1:9: 'Hold fast the faithful Word, which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able to both exhort in sound doctrine, and to refute those who contradict.'
- iv) To encourage us to compare one reference with another to better interpret God's Word.
- v) To discourage us from taking one passage out of context and making a doctrine out of it.

- vi) To introduce us to the basics of Biblical Theology.

The step by step process to do a Topic Study from The Word

- i) Key Word. Select the topic by identifying your key word.
- ii) Refer to a Bible Concordance. This may be found in the back of some Study Bibles, or may be a separate volume such as 'Youngs' or 'Strongs' or other.
- iii) List the References: List those found under your key word, and be aware that some references apply to a different 'sense' or 'meaning' of the word, so stay with the references that relate to your topic. Sometimes you will find that there are so many references that you will need to go through the list with Holy Spirit and mark for reference those He 'quicken' to your mind.
- iv) Arrange the References in 'Groups' or 'departments': There will be sub-groups of that one topic which relate directly to it. For example: Your Topic is "Prayer". Within this topic there are a number of 'departments' such as.. 'When to pray'; 'How to pray according to God's Will'; 'Effects of Prayer' etc.
- v) Summarise the main ideas that emerge from each reference of group of references. Your notes need to apply to the context of your Main 'Key' Scripture.

Applying my findings to my own situation; or applying them to a group or congregation situation.

A readily applied Application will come from asking the right questions, which would need to include..

- i) These Scriptures are God speaking.. so what is He telling His people through this?
- ii) Do all the Scripture/group references say the same thing, or has He added different relevant dimensions to what he is saying?
- iii) What are the most truthful conclusions I can draw after comparing all the Scriptures in their context?
- iv) What changes will I/they need to be making to conform one's life to this Word?
- v) Will I be a hearer, and not a doer? Will I go out and apply this now, as God is directing me, or do I have to "keep going round the mountain" until He is able to build that element of Christ's Life into me?

An Example of a Topic Study: "Prayer"

- i) Key Word: Prayer (noun). It happens when we 'Pray'.
- ii) Concordance: This lists numerous passages on Pray and Prayer.
- iii) List both: Make separate lists of both 'Pray' and 'Prayer' from the Concordance.
- iv) Should I stay initially with the New Testament?
- v) Now I'll sort them into 'groups' or 'sub-topics' or 'departments' on this subject:
(This following example is not exhaustive, but is an illustration)
 - Who to pray for: Matthew 5:4; Acts 6:6; Ephesians 6:18 etc
 - When to Pray: Matthew 26:36; Luke 5:16; Romans 12:12 etc
 - Hindrances to Prayer: Matthew 6:5; Luke 18:10; James 4:3 etc

- **Where to Pray:** Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 9:18 etc
- **How to Pray:** Matthew 6:7-14; Matthew 18:19-20, Jude 20 etc
- **Prayer requests:** Matthew 26:41; Luke 22:32; John 17:19-20etc
- **Praise and Thanksgiving:** Matthew 14:19; Acts 10:1-2; Acts 16:25 etc
- **Effects of Prayer:** Luke 3:21; Luke 9:28-35; Ephesians 3:20 etc.

Some of the summary of Conclusions on “Prayer” which we will have reached.. (Showing that topic studies will help us in every area!)

- We must ask God for all that we need in Jesus’ Name
- We must ask from a heart which is free from sin, such as unforgiveness;
- There is a definite pattern from Jesus on how to pray;
- Using our Prayer language during our Prayer times keeps us focused;
- We can pray in faith knowing that God hears and answers our prayers.

Part 2: Conducting a Study of a Character from The Bible

Why do this? Because when a person’s character traits are studied, we can compare them with our own. They have left us an inheritance which we can identify with. It will either be to demonstrate characteristics which are a ‘cautionary tale’ to divest one’s self of; or role-modelling character traits we would wish to emulate. Whatever character quality we wish to master; whether it be faith, love, or any other; there is a character in the Bible who demonstrates this. **All this leads us to an abundant life in Christ.** Let’s get more specific...

a) The benefits of a character study are:

- i) They reveal Divine insights about living life God’s way which we can apply to our own life;
- ii) They give us a working model of what to do, or not do;
- iii) They help us to avoid the pitfalls other people in the Bible experienced, so that we don’t have to repeat their mistakes.

b) The purpose of Character Studies:

- i) To examine a person’s life history and see who they were, what they did, and what they were like.
- ii) To learn important lessons about God’s will for our lives.
- iii) To understand that the people of the Bible were not perfect and that they struggled with weaknesses and doubts just as we do today.
- iv) To allow the Biblical characters to speak to us as an example: 1 Corinthians 10:11.. **These things happened to them as examples for others, and they were written down as a warning to us.**
- v) To show us clearly how God works in people’s lives.
- vi) To emphasise that the Bible wasn’t written as a set of rules. Instead, most of it shows real people working out their own salvation pathway in the sight of a gracious, merciful and loving God.
- vii) It helps us to teach the Bible to others using real people, that people of all ages can identify with, and relate to.

c) The Approach to a Character Study

- i) Select the person in the Bible that Holy Spirit quickens to you.
- ii) Refer to your concordances, Bible dictionaries, or topical Bibles for help.
- iii) List all the main Scriptural references that relate to that person.
- iv) As you read the references make a list of the important facts:
 - Find out what the person's name meant when translated from it's original language.
 - Try to find out where they spent their early years and what place in history they played.
 - Note the names of relations and friends.
 - Note the type and character of their friends and co-workers.
 - Study in detail how they talked and interacted with others, including their emerging strengths and weaknesses.
 - Note where they lived and travelled.
- v) Write notes on what others said about them. As well ask yourself the important questions about this person.
 - What were they remembered for? Achievements; leadership or other things?
 - How did they react in times of trouble, victory or defeat?
 - How did they relate to God during these times?
 - Was there a change in their character for better or for worse?
 - What lessons did they learn from life; and from Father God; and from other people?

d) Apply your findings to Your situation:

- i) Sum up the main lessons that you learn from this person's life.
- ii) Compare the person's life with your own situation.
- iii) Are there any similarities in your own life?
- iv) How did their relationship with God affect the final outcomes of their life or situation?
- v) Can you apply the principles they learned to your own life?
- vi) If we believe Scripture such as Malachi 3:6 **I the Lord do not change.** Hebrews 13:8 **Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever.** *Do you feel that God will treat you the same?*
- vii) Write a sentence or two about **how** your relationship with God can be strengthened as a result of doing a character study.
Note: 2 Timothy 2:15: **'Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of God.. shunning profane babbling which will increase unto more ungodliness'.**

Module, Part 4.

DEVOTIONAL STUDY AND JOURNALLING

Do you have this daily discipline?

- You get alone with God on a daily basis **for worship, prayer and Studying the Word**, to get revelation and inspiration from Him.
- You know that you will have a two-way conversation with Him.
- You believe that you are going to grow in an ever-closer relationship with Him.
- You are strongly aware that God will use this time to get personal with you.
- When you give God quality time; and quantity time, you will, without any doubt, achieve a balanced spiritual life.
- You sense the Holy Spirit compelling you to keep a progressive record of the keys which God is giving to you.
- You will obey Him, and do what He has told you. “Hear and Do” becomes your motto.
- You are ready at all times to communicate with others what You are hearing Him say, so that you can be a messenger from Him for those amongst whom you live and work.

If you don't have this time of daily 'devotion to God alone' where you are demonstrating your strong love and attachment for Him, you are heading straight for defeat. This is the piece of time devoted to Him; and none other!

The Keys to meaningful devotions and journaling..

Maintain a deep faith expectation that God is going to share the most profound revelations and inspiration during your personal time with Him.

- i) Get alone with God and His Word.
- ii) Resist all Satan's distractions.. he has set himself to try and distract you every day of your life on this Earth from being with Father God. He will use interference from phone calls, visitors, pets, family, work, doubt, conflict within and without, discouragements.. and a 'cloud of apathy'. Beware of his devices.
- iii) Resist him. He has to flee from you. Bind the voice of Satan; and set aside the thoughts of your own mind, so that you are left to discern the voice of the Spirit of the Lord. ***Matthew 4:8-11 'Again the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their splendour. "All this I will give to you, if you will bow down and worship me". Jesus said.."Get behind me satan, for it is written.."Worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve."Then Satan left Jesus (for a season); and the angels came and ministered to Him.'***

Satan had to flee because God's Word is quick, sharp and more powerful than any two-edged sword. It is Spirit and Life. It is Truth and Life. It is the ultimate authority in all the affairs of our daily life. **Learn to submit yourself to God, especially through your daily devotions.. and then you'll see why satan has to submit to you.**

The Main elements of your Devotional Study and Journalling.

- i) Thanksgiving and Worship
- ii) Prayer
- iii) Studying the Word
- iv) Journalling
- v) Going and doing.

1. Thanksgiving and Worship: The gate into the Tabernacle of Moses, and later God's Temple in Jerusalem, was known as 'The Beautiful Gate'. It was gorgeously created from woven threads of white, purple, blue and red. In the sunlight, it shimmered like a 'living door'. Jesus is the fulfilment of this by being our 'Living Door' and we come into the presence of Almighty God in Jesus Name alone. As David said.. **'I will enter His Gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise'**. Bless the Lord at all times. Let His praise continually be in your mouth. Let your soul boast in Him. Rejoice in the Lord always.

Why praise Him with Thanksgiving? Because you have come into the Presence of Almighty God.. **"and in the Presence of the Lord there is Joy forever more'**. Throw out the concerns, the doubts, and any other parasite that which would rob you of peace and Love for God, and rejoice in the Spirit in His Presence. It's just you and the Lord! Jesus went off each morning to a high place alone. (Mark 1)

2. Pray in Jesus' Name: Jesus says to us.. Matthew 6:5-14 **"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth.. they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen. Then your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. And when you pray don't keep rattling on like the pagans, because they think they will be heard simply because of the volume of their words. Don't be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. This then is how you should pray..'Our Father who is in Heaven. Hallowed be Your Name. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the Kingdom; and the Power and the Glory, forever and ever, Amen'**. (For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.)

This great passage is the foundation for the devotional life of us all.

- Get alone with God
- Hallow His Name.. as you have done in your Praise and Worship
- You are going to be rewarded!
- Pray using few words as the Spirit leads you
- Let His will be done.. He is God.
- Pray daily for the needs of the your day.
- Confess sin; and forgive any who have sinned against you.
- Ask for Helper to lead you away from temptation, and deliver you from evil.
- Ask Holy Spirit to bring The Word alive as you read and study it.
- Conclude with Praise and Worship.

3. Studying The Word.

Read the Word of God.

To stay spiritually healthy we need to read The Word each day.

1 Timothy 4:13 **'Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.'** 'devoted to public reading', and obviously also, private reading.. why?

Psalm 1:1-2 **'Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in it he meditates both day and night'**. 'meditate on it both day and night'. What will this do for that individual Believer?.. 'mind'.. 'revelation'.. 'food from Heaven'.

It is recommended to spend a minimum of half an hour each day in God's Word. The more you read and study it, the more the Holy Spirit can lead you where He wants you. For example:

Isaiah 55:10 *"As the rain comes down from heaven, and the snow, and does not return, but waters the Earth, it gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater.. so does My Word that proceeds forth out of My mouth not return unto me empty, but it shall achieve the purpose that I send it forth for, and will prosper in that thing."*

- 'rain' and 'snow' bring 'life' from heaven. Without it there is dryness, death and desert.
- 'The Word of God' is from Heaven, and is life for our body, soul and Spirit. As rain soaks in, and snow melts and soaks in, so we must let that Word soak into our souls by meditating on it, and allowing the Holy Spirit to open it up to us. Then it becomes something very real to you, **so that you can 'sow' into your daily situations** that Wisdom, so that you walk by faith in God's Truth.
- Bread is 'seed' crushed into flour, mixed with olive oil and cooked into a loaf. People don't sit down and eat handfuls of wheat. They process it first. It starts off as the seed from the sower. Then it is put under the mill-stone and crushed to release the flour. The millstone brings both weight and movement.. and that work is the work of the Holy Spirit gradually releasing more and more flour.. or 'revealed understanding'. When we have revelation and understanding, we can apply it to 'the heat' of any pressing situation we

are in, and the end product will be that God will come through, and bring LIFE there. *His Word will not return back to Him empty. It will have produced LIFE exactly as it is programmed by Him to do.* **DO YOU SEE HOW MUCH GOD WANTS TO SPEAK TO US AND GUIDE OUR LIVES!**

Reading recommendations:

- That you spend half an hour a day in The Word;
- Devoting 40 minutes per day, will enable you to read the Bible in one year.

Record interesting findings: Holy Spirit helps you to be disciplined. Holy Spirit helps you to focus on what Father is saying to you that day. Holy Spirit helps you make the right notes. Making notes reinforces the power of that revelation.. and is also one of your own ‘helps’ when you look back later, because over time we forget.

Deeper Meanings: Some passages have deep meanings. That is where research using bible Dictionaries, Topical References, Biblical encyclopaedias; and concordances will help..*if we don’t understand a particular passage.* Treat that ‘hidden wisdom’ as a vein of ‘silver’.. a vein of ‘hidden treasure’.

Proverbs 2:4-5 ‘and if you look for it as silver, and search for it as hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of The Lord, and find the knowledge of God.’

Keep within the context: *Always read the passage with the paragraph before it, and the paragraph after it.* We are making sure we see the larger picture. Reading around the passage gives us an overall view of the author’s intent; and so we are then able to harmonise it with the whole of God’s Word.

Meditate on The Word: Read. Stop. Ask for revelation. Stop. Wait. Listen. Clearly verbalise His response. Note it down. **Illustration:** When David talks about meditating on the Word of God, the word meditate is the similar word we would use to describe the process of **digestion.** We have one stomach to digest our food; but David is using the example of a cow which has a number of stomachs through which the food passes. The cow keeps ‘chewing it over’, until finally it produces health in the animal and milk for the owner. We keep chewing it over; and like a special tasty ‘dish’, keeping coming back for another growing taste of God’s goodness.

Proverbs 2:1-2,5 ‘My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding.. then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.’ The insights you continue to gain will amaze your fellow Believers, and friends, and anyone else you are prompted to share God’s wisdom with. Meditation unlocks the secrets of God!

Proverbs 25:2 ‘It is the privilege of a king to search out a matter.’

4. Journalling: The most rewarding time in the life of a Christian is when they begin to hear the Lord's voice within their heart. It needs to be written down otherwise it will be forgotten. Use an Annual Diary (or similar) which has a page for each day, because then you can keep a track of what God said to you, and when he said it. **A good exercise is to read back through every seven days what God has been saying, and do a quick summary.** We learn a lot from Him by seeing His patterns of growing us. Failing that, something simple such as a spiral notebook will suffice.

John 10:27-28 "My sheep (disciples) listen to My voice. I know them and they follow me. I give them life forever, and they will never perish; no-one can snatch them out of My hand"

Revelations 3:20 "here I am. I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."

5. Hearing the Voice of the Holy Spirit:

He is the same today, yesterday and forever. He will speak with you as He speaks with all His disciples. **How** He speaks to you is another matter. Here are some of the ways..

- i) In your thoughts: He just interrupts our normal thoughts and puts His own thoughts into our thinking at that moment. He speaks more when we have made ourselves deliberately available, such as during our Meditation, Worship or Prayer. As those who are Baptised in the Holy Spirit, there is a union of God and us in a very real way at these times.
- ii) Through the Word: "Dear Father, please show me what You are wanting me to hear. Thank You in Jesus Name, Amen." He may use thoughts, or pictures (**visions**), or a series of words accompanying that particular passage.
- iii) In Worship and Praise: Creative Praise and worship creates a spiritual atmosphere which gives an opportunity for the Lord to speak to you. It may be through the words you sing; or through another person's voice bringing a prophesy; or word of encouragement.. as long as there is a freedom given for the Holy Spirit to manifest God's voice, He will do it. What He says to you personally makes a lasting impression!
- iv) Through bringing questions to God as requests for answers: **Jeremiah 33:3 "Call unto Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things which you don't know"**. He may answer directly, or answer over a period of weeks. Wait patiently before Him. Keep a track of this along with your daily study in the Word. It is a good idea to keep your Bible and journal with you.. even keep it handy at work, because He may speak to you anytime.
- v) Where God refers you directly to a passage in The Bible normally outside of where you are reading to give you specific answers and guidance: This is over and above your normal study. The word for this is '*Rhema*' (Greek).. or a personal word from God to you from The Word.
Romans 10:17 'So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by The Word (*Rhema*) of God'. Our daily reading of The Word '*logos*' (Greek), will bring

forth it's revelations, as God promises. This answer builds quick, strong faith in us for what God wants to do in this situation.

God can speak more in seconds than man can write in hours!

6. Responding in the Voice of the Holy Spirit within you.

Dialoguing in tongues is speaking to God in our unknown prayer language. It is hard not to do this and find after a few minutes the sense of the 'river' of the Holy Spirit rising up within your innermost being. (John 7:37-39). After you have prayed, ask..” Dear Lord, please give me the interpretation of what I am saying in tongues. Thank You Lord, I believe I have received according to what You have said..”**Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in Prayer, believe that you have received it, and it shall be yours”. Mark 11:24**

When He speaks to you through a His Word, or with a revelation.. start putting it into a song; or start repeating these God-given thoughts in your mind. Repeatedly rehearsing what He is sharing with you will cause you to enter the supernatural realm of God; and the benefits of this in your own life; and in your ministry to others will abound more and more.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL ASSIGNMENT

(To be completed and emailed to the Administrator within three weeks)

- i) Find a place where you can spend one hour alone with God.
- ii) Using a watch, dedicate the minutes below for each exercise.
 - 2 Minutes.. worship the Lord, thanking Him for who He is, and what He has done.
 - 3 Minutes.. Confess any known sin. Forgive anyone the Holy Spirit brings to mind. Pray for those who have wronged you, and used you negatively.
 - 10 Minutes.. Intercede for those you promised to pray for. Start with a list, using names if they are known to you.. including Pastors, leaders, crisis situations, people groups in your community, neighbours, Governments, missionary foci, family, teachers, current events. Then pray in Tongues.
 - 5 Minutes.. Pray for your own needs. Pray also in tongues for your needs.
 - 30 Minutes.. Open the Word, beginning with Acts 1:1. Ask God to cause the Word to come alive in your mind, and to illuminate the things you have never seen before. Do this daily.
Place your Journalling diary, spiral notebook, ring-binder etc., on the table beside your Bible.
 - Record anything that inspires you.
 - Look up any hard to understand portions in the according to the

method by which you have been taught.

- Think and picture your way into the context, characters and situation of the time.
- Slowly read out loud any passages of interest, asking the Holy Spirit to help you understand what you are reading.
- Pray in tongues occasionally as you read.

10 Minutes: Begin thanking and Praising the lord for any insights, He has given you during the last 50 minutes. Worship Him openly using your Prayer language. When you feel the most edified, stop and listen with your mind (repeating if necessary) until you hear words or phrases in your mind. Speak these words out your mouth and then write them in your Journal. Record anything that comes to your mind. End by thanking the Lord for being with you during that last hour.

3. At the end of seven days write a short paragraph in your journal on what happened during this seven day exercise. *(If it is easier to photocopy it, and post it, then please do)*

Now we can understand the value and importance of the discipline of personal devotions and journaling.