

Hatfield Christian Church

Ladies Life Group Guidelines

Term 2

2007

Skilful Saints

What the word says about ...

Compiled by the pastor's wives
of Hatfield Christian Church.

Dear Lady Leader

There is a sound in the Spirit like that of the wind blowing through the leaves. I believe it is the sound of growth in the women of the church, and am thankful to be working with a great team of ladies like you.

'The Lord announces the Word, and the women who bear and publish the news are a great host!'

Ps 68:11 (AMP)

Our theme for this term is 'Skilful Saints'. We will linger on firming the foundations and trust that the women will be strengthened, and be an inspiration to friends and family. May their influence expand in ever-widening circles, until the encouragement of the Lord is resounding in the women of the nation! We are busy with things that are far bigger than ourselves, and it is of the utmost importance to ensure that we are clean, strong vessels for God to use.

For those who attended our February 2007 News Girls Seminar, remember to keep on 'Doing Life Right', and keep on taking back enemy territory. Our next seminar is scheduled for 7 and 8 August 2007, and we look forward to meeting together again.

We pray for the protection of your families and for God's abundant provision – body, soul and spirit. We also pray that you will have Godly wisdom and creative strategies, and will see breakthroughs in your life groups. We love you and have confidence in your leadership.

God's grace be with you!

Ansa and the pastors' wives team.

Contents

Week 1	The Father's Love	1
Week 2	Worship	5
Week 3	Walking in the Light and Commitment	10
Week 4	Mothers	14
Week 5	Praying for Opportunities	20
Week 6	Forgiveness	24
Week 7	Opportunities and Opposition	29
Week 8	Obedience	33
Week 9	Choices and Routine	37
Week 10	God's Sovereignty	41
	Christian Foundations	45



'How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are!'

1 John 3:1 (NIV)

Objective

To know (with our heads and our hearts) the love of our Father and to explore the definition of a Father according to His terms, and not our own life experiences.

Ice-Breaker

When you think of the word *father*, what **colour** comes to mind? Share this with one another.

Word and Discussion

The word *father* may evoke many thoughts and feelings inside you, depending on the life experiences you have had.

God wants us to know Him (rationally and experientially) as a Father in terms of **His** definition of what a father should be. The way that we view Him will affect every aspect of our life therefore it is vital that when we view God, we do so through the correct lenses.

1. God loves us passionately!

He doesn't love us in a distant, dispassionate, mild sort of way; he's crazy about us! Read about the intensity of His love in Song of Songs 8:6b-7a: 'for love is as strong as death, its jealousy as unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many rivers cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away.'

2. He not only loves us, he likes and enjoys us!

He knows us intimately – our idiosyncrasies, thoughts, habits, emotions, likes, dislikes, strengths and weaknesses. Think about one of these things about yourself, share it with your group, and then consider that He knows it. Read Matthew 10:30.

3. He dreamed about us before we were even conceived.

We originated in His heart! Personalize the following paraphrase of Ephesians 1:

For He chose ME in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined ME to be adopted as His daughter through Christ Jesus, in accordance with His pleasure and will.

4. He formed us.

Meditate on the wonder of the truth expressed in Psalm 139:13-16.

5. He has compassion on us.

Read Psalm 103:13-14. Not only is God merciful, He actually **delights** in showing us mercy – it is part of who He is!

6. He disciplines us.

Read Hebrews 12:5-6. God hates sin because it damages us. He put laws in place to protect us from the damaging effects of sin. When we break these laws He must discipline us to uphold the laws that are there for our protection. God's discipline is rooted in His love for us.

7. He forgives us.

Read Luke 15:11-31 – rather than being called the Parable of the Lost Son, this should be called the Parable of the Forgiving Father. Note the response of the father in Verse 20: the father was **waiting** for the son, he **ran** to his son and, **without asking questions**, before his son even had a chance to apologize, the father **restored** him to sonship.

When we know that our Father loves us, we will have a sense of:

- **Security.** God wants us to know the safety and security of His love. Children who know their father's love are more willing to take risks because they know that they have the unfailing support of their father, even when they make mistakes. The opposite of security is **fear**. What drives out fear? (1 John 4:18)
- **Belonging.** We don't need to prove ourselves or to compete with others for acceptance. We have a Father who knows us, accepts us and wants us as we are! We have a home in Him; we belong! (Romans 8:15 – whose children are we?) The opposite of belonging is **wandering**.
- **Identity.** Knowing the Father's love settles the questions that we have about **who we are**. Examine how carefully and intimately He made you: see Psalm 139:13-16. The opposite of knowing your identity in Him is **confusion**.

Conclusion

We have a heavenly Father whose love can replace all the brokenness there is in this world. His love is like an unfenced orchard full of wonderful, ripe fruit, waiting for us all to come and take as much as we want to, without cost. We can even build a tree house there and stay forever.

Ministry

Do you have a deep sense of security, belonging and identity? Or do you feel that something is missing? Do you perhaps relate more with feelings of fear, wandering and confusion? Journal some of your thoughts, and then share with one another.

God intended that our parents provide a place in which we receive a sense of security, belonging and identity He intended them to reflect His love to us. Because 'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (this includes us) parents often 'fall short' in this regard. (See Romans 3:23) Do you need to forgive your parents for not accurately reflecting the love and acceptance of God to you? Pray a prayer of forgiveness out loud in your group (your life group leader can lead you in this); as you let go of the hurt and bitterness, you open your heart to receive the perfect love of your heavenly Father.

Pray for one another for a deeper mind and heart understanding of the Father's love.

If you have access to a CD player, listen to a song about the Father's love. Here are some suggestions: 'Lovesong' by Third Day, 'He won't let you go' by The Kry, or 'I have called you by name' on *Waves of Glory* by Church Ablaze. The CD *The Father's House* by Brian Doerksen also has many great songs to choose from.

Prayer Focus

- Pray that members of your family (husband, children, parents, etc.) will have a deeper understanding of the Father's love for them.
- Pray that the Father's love will be revealed to and will draw any unsaved friends that you have.
- Pray for nations (such as Iraq) that do not have freedom of religion, that the people would come to know the love of the Father.
- Also pray the above for our own nation – that instead of crime, the love of the Father would become our trademark.

Preparation for Next Week

Ask the ladies to bring watercolour paint, sheets of paper and paintbrushes if they can. Next week's study is on worship and there will be a practical, creative time.



WORSHIP

Skilful Saints

Skilful Saints

Skilful Saints

Skilful Saints

'ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come before him; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.'

1 Chronicles 16:29 (NIV)

Objective

To understand that worship brings us closer to God and leads us into a fuller, more meaningful life of Christian commitment.

(Remember that you will need watercolour paint, sheets of paper and paintbrushes for this meeting!)

Ice-Breaker

Watch a portion of a DVD that shows children worshipping if you can. Or talk about how little children worship.

Word and Discussion

1. The Meaning of Worship

Worship has sometimes been described as 'communication between God and man.' This communication may be an **expression of adoration, praise, submission, obedience, consecration, commitment, meditation or devotion.**

One Bible scholar has defined worship as 'joyful concern with God through Christ'. It is man's response in recognition of who God is and what He has done. As we read His Word, we discover the majesty, power, righteousness, and love of God. As we recognize His divine attributes and the manifestation of them in His actions toward man, we are drawn to Him in praise and adoration. This is worship.

Private worship, as well as corporate worship times (groups), is important. Describe how you are experiencing private worship at this point of your life and if it is leading you into a fuller, more meaningful service of Christian commitment.

2. An example for us to follow

Let's have a look at one of the greatest examples of a complete experience of Godly worship:

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.” Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

Isaiah 6:1-8 (NIV)

Now let us look at the different aspects of worship experienced by Isaiah:

- **Praise and adoration:** ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’ (Verse 3)
 - o As we refer back to our theme scripture, 1 Chronicles 16:29, in our worship we need to be ‘ascribing glory to the Lord’ by adoring Him.
 - o Why do we need to praise and adore Him?

- **Confession:** “‘Woe to me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined!’ For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King; the Lord Almighty.” (Verse 5)

Very often in worship, as we behold our perfect King, we become aware of our own sin and unworthiness. This is okay because part of our worship experience is to confess our sins so that we may come boldly before Him with nothing holding us back or hindering our worship.

Take time to write down anything you need to confess to Him.

- **Renewal:** ‘With it [the live coal] he [the angel] touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”(Verse 7)

What a sense of freedom we have when, as we worship the Lord, He forgives us our sins. You can often literally feel a weight lift off your life, which often brings about a deeper commitment from us to the Lord as a sign of our gratitude.

Would you like to share an experience of how worshipping God brought about a sense of renewal in your life?

- **Dedication:** ‘Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me.’” (Verse 8)

As we come in surrender before God, lifting His Name on high, He often calls us to some sort of action, even if it is something simple like giving someone a hug or a call to see how they are doing. Other times the Lord might ask something more of us. Part of our worship is a dedication of our lives to Him.

Share with the group things God has spoken to you about or asked you to do while you were worshipping Him.

3. Other aspects of worship

Various aspects of worship were mentioned at the beginning of these guidelines. We have spoken about praise and adoration, confession, renewal and dedication. Take some time to talk around the other aspects of worship: submission, obedience, consecration, commitment, meditation, and devotion. Mention to the group one scripture about worship that has impacted your life in one of these areas.

These aspects of worship are relevant whether we are worshipping in private or corporately.

4. Private Worship

In private worship we have the advantage of being alone with God. We can bring our own unique problems, fears, needs and appreciation to God. There is no limit on the subject matter and no specific form to follow. We can communicate with God personally, in our own way, through reading the Scriptures, prayer and song. God desires that we come to Him regularly in this way.

5. Corporate Worship

Corporate worship has a different dynamic. It refers to when believers join together to express praise to God. As a body of believers, we are uplifted and edified by the ideas and devotional expressions of others – the corporate ‘knowing’ that there are many others whose hearts feel the same love for the Lord as ours. There is an increased sense of awareness of His presence. Usually we sing with more exuberance and less self-consciousness when we sing with others.

Conclusion

True worship reveals to us the glory of God and our own weaknesses. It brings us to repentance for disobedience, and leads us to renewed dedication and obedience. We respond to God’s forgiveness in praise and adoration. Let worship grow in your heart!

Ministry

Play worship music, and let the ladies paint or draw or write a poem or a letter to the Lord. Let them express their worship in creative ways. Trust Him for a double portion of His presence in this time.

Prayer Focus

- Pray for a spirit of worship to invade our city’s churches, drawing the city closer to God and to His voice.
- Pray for worship leaders in our nation to deny self and humbly sit at the feet of Jesus.
- Pray for our own worship leaders to be touched and blessed by the Lord.



‘But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.’

1 John 1:7 (NIV)

Objective

To find out what it means to be ‘transparent’, and to commit ourselves to a life that keeps a short account of sin.

Ice-Breaker

How did you handle ‘being found out’ as a child, after you had done something wrong?

Word and Discussion

What does ‘walking in the light’ mean? Read 1 John 1:7.

Take time to write down a few thoughts on this and then share with one another:

God is our loving Father. He is also truth and light. He desires that His light shines in and through us. Read Matthew 5:16.

1. In order to live an upright life, we need to be honest.

- **With ourselves.** It is possible to live a lie if we do not accept and confess certain things in our lives.
- **With God.** Once we have come to honesty in ourselves, we can come to God our Father, and He is always willing to forgive, and work in our lives.
- **With each other.** We need to live honestly and openly with our family and friends.

We need to align our lives with the Word of God.

‘Your word is a lamp unto my feet and light to my path.’

Psalm 119:105 (NKJV)

God’s Word is truth and our partnership with truth starts by coming into agreement with His Word and staying in agreement with what He says our whole lives.

2. What are the consequences if truth and honesty are compromised?

- Liberty is lost as guilt and shame set in (e.g. Adam and Eve).
- Deception takes root. – 1 Corinthians 3:18-19.
- We start living with masks. – 1 John 1:8.
- Fellowship with God and others is compromised. – 1 John 1:6.
- Relationships deteriorate.

Which relationships are most important to you?

Let us commit to work towards truth and honesty in all these relationships.

‘If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.’

1 John 1:6 (NIV)

Relationships need truth and honesty to flourish. In the absence of these ingredients, there is a lie.

Discuss the consequences of a lie:

Which ingredient breaks the cycle of a lie?

Read the following scriptures: Ephesians 4:25, John 8:32.

'Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?'

Amos 3:3 (ASV)

We cannot walk with the God of light and embrace the darkness of lies in our hearts. There will not be agreement but rather conflict and broken fellowship.

3. The powerful fruit of truth and honesty

Truth and honesty go hand in hand and they are powerful tools against the devil. We don't need to be perfect to have healthy relationships. However, we need to **commit** to honesty and truthfulness in all our relationships in order for them to flourish.

When we commit to honesty and truth, some powerful things happen:

- Forgiveness.
- Light and freedom.
- Trust and grace.

- Healthy and joyful fellowship.
- Boldness and openness.

A lie is never a safe hiding place. God is committed to expose lies; therefore, when we lie, we will always be found out. Read 2 Samuel 12:12. Truth refreshes us and keeps us healthy.

4. Our commitment

If we commit to walk in the light, we will be set free to spend our energy on accomplishing God's life goal for us instead of wasting time on draining emotions like guilt.

- Make a commitment to God to be truthful and honest.
- Make a commitment to your family and friends that honesty will be your trademark.
- Come clean today. Forgiveness is available. Ask and receive.

'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'

1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

Conclusion

Walking in the light starts with a choice and develops into a lifestyle as we align our lives more and more with the Word of God.

Ministry

Allow time to ask the Lord if there are any 'dark' areas in your life that need to be brought into the light. Confess, ask and receive forgiveness, and be set free.

Prayer Focus

- Pray for a new desire and commitment to live in His light, and to allow His light to shine through us and to touch people around us.
- Pray for truth and righteousness to reign in our city.
- Pray for our leaders in government to walk in truth and to commit to live honest lives.



‘Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.’
 Genesis 3:20 (NIV)

Objective

To take a walk through the Scriptures to learn valuable lessons from a few women who excelled in their roles as mothers.

Ice-Breaker

Share a light-hearted attribute/habit of your mother’s with the group. E.g. she always burnt the rice, she liked bright orange lipstick, etc.

Word and Discussion

It is an honourable role in God’s sight to be a mother – whether by natural birth, through the process of adoption, fostering, or by ‘mothering’ those in need of love, guidance, help or spiritual input.

A mother plays a pivotal role in the life of her child. Whether good or bad, her influence will forever impact her child. Her job is never done; it is demanding, stressful, sometimes difficult, but it is also joyful, fruitful, and brings great rewards that last a lifetime. The impact of her influence will be felt down through future generations.

‘Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you’
 Exodus 20:12 (NIV)

The Lord holds both the father **and** the mother in high esteem and highlights their importance in the family. Read:

- Exodus 21:15 (NIV): ‘Anyone who attacks [or kills] his father or his mother must be put to death.’
- Exodus 21:17 (NIV): ‘Anyone who curses his father or his mother must be put to death.’

Let’s take a look at a few Biblical examples of mothers:

1. Hagar – Genesis 21:8-21

Hagar, a maidservant, had a rough time and is not usually held up as an example to follow. She made mistakes and was sent away into the desert. But her love for her son shines through as well as her pain. When there was no water left, she put Ishmael under a bush, walked a short distance away and began to sob. She could not bear to watch her son die. She was in a hopeless situation but the Lord had a plan and a future for her son. He met with her in the desert and gave her instruction for the future.

2. Rebekah’s mother – Genesis 24

Milcah had taught her daughter well - Rebekah was helpful, hospitable and served Abraham’s servant with kindness and generosity. She was a strong woman who submitted to the Lord’s will for her daughter. It must have been a difficult situation – a stranger arriving suddenly and without warning, and taking her beloved daughter to a faraway land. He wanted to leave immediately. Although she would have liked her daughter to stay a few more days, she released Rebekah, with a blessing, to fulfil the Lord’s plan for her life.

3. Moses’ mother – Exodus 2:1-10

Moses was born under dangerous circumstances. His mother hid him for three months. Her trust in the Lord was strong. She carefully made her preparations to keep her baby safe and then she released him upon the waters of the river. The Lord had a plan for her baby boy and He brought Moses back to her for a season, then she again released Moses to Pharaoh’s daughter to fulfil God’s purposes for the nation of Israel.

4. Samson’s mother – Judges 13

Samson’s mother was sterile and childless. An angel of the Lord appeared to her, told her that she would give birth to a baby boy and then gave her specific instructions on how to raise the child. She was also told God’s purpose for her son: Samson would be set apart for God from birth and he would begin the deliverance of Israel from the hands of the Philistines. She believed God and was obedient to Him. She raised Samson as a Nazirite in accordance with the instructions given by the angel of the Lord. Samson led Israel, occupying the office of judge for 20 years.

5. Hannah – 1 Samuel 1:1-2:27

Hannah longed for a child and promised the Lord she would give him back to the Lord to serve Him. She was faithful to her promise. She rejoiced when she brought her young son to the temple and left him in Eli's care. She trusted the Lord and He gave her the strength she needed. Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favour with the Lord and men in the service of the Lord. The Lord was gracious to her and she later gave birth to three more sons and two daughters.

Each of these mothers played a vital role in the history of Israel. They were willing to release their children to fulfil God's plan.

6. The prostitute – 1 Kings 3:16-27

In the story of the two prostitutes we again see the love of a mother for her child. Solomon wisely judged between the two prostitutes – women of ill repute. Once again we see the love of a mother who would rather give up her son to another than have her child killed.

Take time to think about the six women discussed above. What characteristics are evident in each of their lives that we, as women of God, could emulate?

o Hagar: _____

o Rebekah's mother: _____

o Moses' mother: _____

o Samson's mother: _____

o Hannah: _____

o The prostitute: _____

7. Bathsheba – mother of Solomon

- Proverbs 1:8 - Solomon learnt much from both his parents. He tells us not to forsake our mother's teaching as it leads to wisdom.
- Proverbs 6:20-23 – We are told to bind our mother's teaching upon our hearts **forever**. Your mother's teachings will guide you, watch over you when you sleep, speak to you when you are awake; they are a lamp, a light, and her discipline is a way of life.

- A mother's teaching cannot be delegated to others. The things we instil into our children will be passed down through the generations. What have you passed on to your children that you inherited from your mother and/or grandmother? Share with the group.

A mother plants seeds into her children's lives that will bear much fruit in the future. Some qualities are not necessarily taught, but imparted to our children. In 2 Timothy, Paul wrote a personal letter to Timothy, his close friend and co-worker. Paul refers to Timothy as his beloved son, when in fact, Timothy was his spiritual son. Timothy's mother and grandmother had sown good seeds into his life and Paul reaped the fruits of those seeds for the extension of God's kingdom.

'Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy.'
2 Timothy 1:4 (NIV)

Let's look at some of the qualities that a mother imparts:

1. Tenderness

Tenderness is not taught, rather it is the mother's example that encourages this in a child. Our boys are often taught from a young age to be tough and tears are discouraged (they are not seen as a masculine trait). Yet in Scripture, we read of God's mighty men displaying moments of great tenderness.

- o David wept with Jonathan – 1 Samuel 20:41.
- o Jesus wept when Lazarus died – John 11:35.
- o Jesus was tender with children and lepers, and showed compassion to those who were sick and hungry.

A mother's tender love, shown in warm hugs, gentle words, loving smiles and wise advice will help her child face the storms of life.

2. Authentic Christianity

'For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.'

2 Timothy 1:5

'You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.'

2 Timothy 3:14-15

Timothy's faith was genuine and true and stood the test of time. Paul encourages Timothy to continue in the faith that he had learnt in his childhood days. Timothy grew up in a home where both his grandmother and his mother had been a role model for him and it showed in his life. The fruit of his home life was evident in the depth of his faith.

What qualities should we, as mothers, be instilling in our children from a young age?

3. Inner Confidence

'For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.'

2 Timothy 1:6-7 (NIV)

Paul affirms Timothy and reminds him of his strengths. He helps Timothy to overcome his shyness. Paul had prayed for him for the spiritual gifts (Verse 6), but it was in Timothy's home that faith had been cultivated and nurtured. Confidence is built into our lives by our parents who equip us with strength that carries us through difficult times. Negativity and criticism break down our inner confidence, whereas positive encouragement builds inner confidence.

4. Demonstrative Love

The Greek word used here is *agape*, which means 'unselfish'. It's the kind of love that seeks the highest good for the other person. This kind of love a child first experiences from the mother. A mother is usually the one who takes care of the baby's every need, who nurtures and loves unconditionally. It is the mother's love that will determine the way in which a child will demonstrate love to others later in life.

5. Self-control

2 Timothy 1:7 also speaks of discipline. Mothers need to balance love and discipline. Children need boundaries to be set in place so that they can learn self-control. Research has shown that children who are taught discipline and self-control within a loving environment develop self-esteem and confidence. This builds character and helps them to be responsible for themselves and others.

Conclusion

Proverbs 31:28 (NKJV) says that, 'her children rise up and call her blessed.' May your children always remember to bless you, and also build the strengths that you built into them, into their own children. Keep on hearing from God and pray His wisdom over your children.

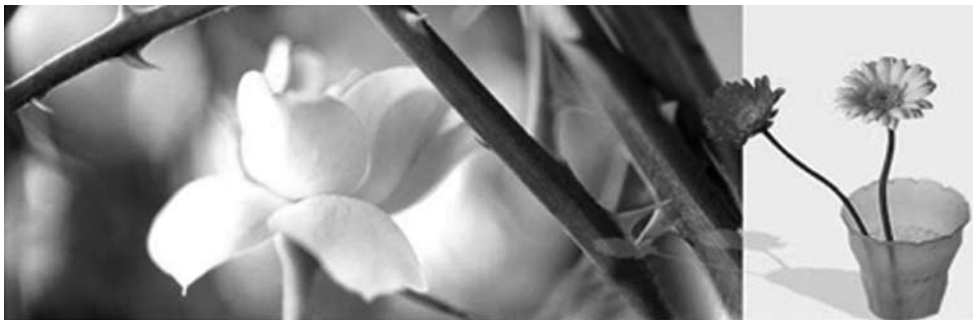
Ministry

Which of the above-mentioned qualities are evident in the lives of the ladies in the life group? Let the ladies affirm one another as they identify these qualities in each other. May you be blessed and encouraged.

Let them prayerfully identify areas in which they are lacking and then pray for them to take positive steps to change. Repent of mistakes in the past and trust the Lord to guide you in the future.

Prayer Focus

- Pray for the mothers in the nation for wisdom, strength and courage, and that the women will rise up and take responsibility for their children.
- Pray for an end to violence against the children of our nation.



'To everything there is a season and a time for every matter or purpose under heaven.'
Ecclesiastes 3:1(AMP)

Objective

To understand and recognize the divine shifts in your life – moments when God changes the times and seasons.

Ice-Breaker

If you could work in a circus, what would you like to do, and why?

Word and Discussion

We need to understand the timings and seasons God ordains for our lives and ministries. Too often we try to reap during the planting season; plant during harvest time; run when we should res; and rest when we should run.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem saying: "you did not recognize the time of your visitation."
Luke 19:44 (NAB)

Have you ever done the right thing at the wrong time? Share some of the ramifications you experienced because of this.

1. Definition of Opportunity

- The Greek word for opportunity is *Kairos* – the **strategic** or **opportune** time.
- It speaks of entering a new season, which has a certain new characteristic.
- '*airos* speaks of quality.

'Call to Me and I will answer you and **show** you great and **mighty** things, fenced in and **hidden**, which you do not know ...'
Jeremiah 33: 3 (AMP) (Emphasis added)

Before we can enter *Kairos* time (opportune time), there is a *Chronos* time. This is the general process of time. It speaks of duration and quantity. This is a very important time during which God exchanges our 'old wineskins' for new ones. (See Matthew 9:17)

This is the time where God changes us on the **inside** and builds character so that we can be ready to enter the 'opportune (*Kairos*) time'. New opportunities are most often born during the *Chronos* time.

Think of a lobster that constantly has to shed its shell to be able to grow. A moth or a bee has to struggle through the wax capsule to rub off the membrane that hides its wings.

Think of the following examples:

- Moses spent 40 years tending sheep in the desert before his *Kairos* time;
- Abraham had to wait many, many years for a son;
- Paul – after his Damascus road experience he had to 'wait' approximately 12 years before his ministry began.

When we pray for opportunities God answers, but He first declares that they are coming:

- Isaiah 42:9
- Isaiah 43:19
- Jeremiah 33:3

In order to be able to discern and hear, we need to be:

- Alert and on the lookout (for the new thing);
- Flexible (make sure our wineskins are new);
- **Ready** for **hidden** surprises.

'Be well balanced, (temperate, sober of mind), be vigilant and cautious at all times;'

1 Peter 5:8a (AMP)

What are some of the effects of not waiting on God's timing for something to happen?

2. Hindrances to entering *Kairos* time

Explain how these hindrances happened:

- Confusion – Judas, disciples
- Frustration – King Saul (lost kingship)
- Lack of faith and persistence – King Saul
- Lose expectation and heart – Peter, Job
- Disillusionment – Elijah
- Impatience – Abraham bore Ishmael
- Fear – Israelites, Pontius Pilate

3. Examples of people who missed or nearly missed their '*Kairos* time'

- **Israelites** – went around the wilderness for 40 years and some never entered the Promised Land.
- **Peter** – went fishing after Jesus died and nearly missed Pentecost.
- **Pontius Pilate** – did not accept his wife's dream.
- **Nicolo and Matteo Polo** – visited the Kublai Khan in China in 1271. He was the ruler over China at the time (even over the whole East). He was attracted to the story of Christianity, as told by Nicolo. He requested that they send him 100 skilled religious leaders to convert his country. However, nothing was done for 30 years and the opportunity to get the gospel to China was lost for a long time!

4. People who prayed for and entered doors of opportunity (some examples)

- Abraham – had a son
- Joseph – saved a nation
- Hannah – got a prophet-son
- Esther – saved a nation
- Joshua – took a nation into the Promised Land.

Share one experience where you entered the door of opportunity moving through *Chronos* to *Kairos* time. What was a highlight for you during this time?

5. Some keys to unlock the shift

Our faith and perseverance allow Him to shift us into the next strategic season.

- Accept responsibility to do our part;
- Be flexible;
- Need great faith to change or move;
- Remember the basics;
- Live in complete obedience;
- Realize there will be battles; and
- Recognize our need for help

Conclusion

There are reasons why God ordains opportunities for us, as well as reasons why He wants us to pray for them. If everything we ask God is for ourselves, we will rarely receive answers. We have spiritual responsibilities as Christians and, in fulfilling them, we will see with greater clarity what the personal opportunities will be.

Ministry

- If anyone battles with some of the keys, pray for them to gain victory.
- Let those who missed opportunities, repent and ask God for new opportunities.
- Ask, as a group, for wisdom and discernment to recognise the '*Kairos* times' in their lives.
- Discuss how you can encourage friends, family and colleagues who have waited for months or years for something from God.
- Write down specific steps you can begin to take right now to further your pursuit of God and His fullness.

Prayer Focus

Pray for the Lord to show us opportunities to reach out and make a difference in our community. Your opportunity may well be someone else's *Kairos* moment. (Read Joshua 1 to see the marks of transition)



'As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.'

Psalm 103:12 (NIV)

Objective

To see in the Word of God that living in forgiveness is a vital part of our lives.

Ice-Breaker

How would you react if a neighbour popped in for tea and then accidentally knocked your Royal Albert teapot off the edge of your table onto the tiled floor?

Word and Discussion

Forgiveness is not an emotion, but a decision. If we **decide** to forgive, whether the guilty party 'deserves' it or not, the awesome power of God will be released, setting us free from bondages and releasing the other person too. When all are released from hate or ill feelings, God can work a miracle. When I decide, 'I **will forgive**', I operate in faith and faith **pleases** God. (See Hebrews 11:6)

Let's look at the Scriptures and trust that the Holy Spirit, our Helper, will open the eyes of our understanding. (See Ephesians 1:17-19)

'And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'

John 8:32(NKJV)

1. God's character revealed

God is kind, good, gracious and merciful. Read the following scriptures:

- Exodus 34: 6
- Psalm 108: 4
- Romans 2: 4.

When we become born again we receive the nature of God:

- 2 Corinthians 5: 17
- 2 Peter 1: 2-4
- Colossians 3: 12-13

Write out 2 Corinthians 5:17:

2. God is ready and waiting to forgive

'For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.'

Psalm 86: 5(NKJV)

Read Isaiah 30:18 and 1 John 1:9.

3. Jesus, our Example

'Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."'

Luke 23:34 (NKJV)

- As Jesus hung on the cross, He spoke out forgiveness and by doing so released His enemies to receive forgiveness for what they had done.
- How did Stephen follow Jesus' example? Discuss the account recorded in Acts 7:59-60.
- Jesus taught us to ask for forgiveness and to forgive others in the 'Lord's Prayer'. (See Matthew 6:12)

4. Is it important for us to forgive others?

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Matthew 6:14-15 (NKJV)

- Discuss whether or not we should forgive people if we are the innocent party. Should we wait for them to apologize first?
- When we celebrate the Lord’s death and resurrection by partaking of the ‘Lord’s Supper’, we have an instruction to follow: ‘Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat and drink’. Why is it so important for us to do this?
- Read 1 Corinthians 11:27-30. Discuss whether a flow of healing could be blocked in our bodies if we drink ‘unworthily’.
- Healing results when we forgive and live righteously – James 5:16.
- Forgiveness brings a release on both sides – John 20:23.

5. God loves restoration and reconciliation

‘God ... has given us the **ministry** of reconciliation’

2 Corinthians 5:18(NKJV) (Emphasis added)

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. Write down or discuss what you think this ‘ministry of reconciliation’ is that God has given to each one of us.

6. Don’t be too harsh on offenders

‘Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins’

Proverbs 10:12 (NKJV)

- Remember that, while we were still sinners Christ died for us (See Romans 5:8) and that love covers a multitude of sins. (See 1 Peter 4:8).
- Read 2 Corinthians 2:4-11. What attitude of heart is exposed here?

- We can intercede for others, our city and our nation, that God will bring people to a place of repentance and forgiveness. This is what Daniel did. (See Daniel 9:4-9:19)

7. Forgiving myself

“You shall love your neighbour **as** yourself”

Romans 13:9b (NKJV) (Emphasis added)

Love enables us to forgive. As we allow the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with God’s love (See Romans 5:5), we can forgive, but if we do not begin with receiving God’s love and forgiveness for ourselves, we will not be able to forgive others easily (See 1 John 4:11).

‘There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.’

1 John 4:18-19 (NKJV)

8. Joy floods into our hearts when we receive forgiveness

‘Blessed [happy] is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered’

Psalms 32:1 (NKJV)

- King David experienced God’s forgiveness and the joy of his salvation returning – Psalm 32:1-2; Psalm 51:1-13.
- When we do things God’s way, the stamp of God’s Kingdom is on us – righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (See Romans 14:17)

Ministry

Spend time quietly in the presence of the Lord. Allow the Lord to show us if we need to forgive and release anyone for whatever reason. Also allow the Holy Spirit to show us if we have picked up any offences. Write the names or situations down.

It is most important to **speak out** forgiveness. Pray something like this: 'Lord, I ask You to please forgive me for holding on to this offence. I choose to forgive _____ I release (name or situation) _____ right now. Father, I receive Your forgiveness. Please wash and cleanse me from my sin. I receive my freedom now and I choose to bless _____ and to set them free, too. Thank You, Father for filling me now with Your peace and joy.'

If any need to forgive themselves, lead them in a similar confession of faith where they place their own name in the space in the prayer.

Remember: Forgiveness is not based on how we **feel**. Once we have forgiven, we pray a blessing over the offender whenever we think of them and rejoice in our freedom.

Prayer Focus

- Pray for people who are battling to forgive (who have been hijacked, abused, divorced, etc.)
- Pray for forgiveness to flow between cultural and racial groups in our nation.
- Pray that we will all be quick to forgive and to walk in forgiveness.



'For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries'
 1 Corinthians 16:9 (NKJV)

Objective

To understand that although God has given us opportunities, we need to know how to defeat the opposition.

Ice-Breaker

If you could train a sports team, which one would it be?

Word and Discussion

1. The seed of opportunity

There is no shortage of opportunities from God's side. What we need is sensitivity to His Spirit so that we can see and discern the open doors of opportunity He provides.

When it comes to open doors of opportunity, God is not a salesman who makes a few suggestions about possible purchases. You can know for certain that every opportunity from God that comes your way is His will in seed form entrusted to you! How do you understand this? Name some examples.

2. How do we walk the path?

The extent to which the opportunity will become reality rests on the fitness and courage of our faith, in the midst of the adversity that we will face. We are in a time where **perseverance** is of the utmost importance.

Hebrews 11:6 says, 'But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God, must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.'

We are called to make the most of every opportunity – Ephesians 5:16 (NIV). This calls for spiritual fitness. Two of the most crucial things to do after receiving a promise of an opportunity from God are to get you faith fit and your prayer life powerful. Faith-fit people persevere in believing and applying God's Word.

How can we do this practically?

3. Opportunity and Adversity

Keeping the faith and doing life right are tested most severely as we face the reality of threats and opposition. We need to understand the fact that opposition and storms are part of life. Read Luke 6:48 and James 1:2.

Share a testimony in this regard.

Also be aware that the enemy's biggest snare is offence, see Proverbs 19:11, 18:19 and Psalm 139:23-24.

How can offence influence your opportunities and adversities?

Promise and opportunity become reality when we apply the principles of God's word consistently. Sometimes we look for another promise because we are simply too lazy to apply what we already know. The great heroes of the Bible had precious promises fulfilled, but not without courage and endurance. They are called heroes because they persevered.

Examples:

- Noah – Genesis 6:17-18
- Joseph – Genesis 50:18-21
- Mary – Luke 1:35-38

Can you remember any others?

We need to become skilled at turning opposition into opportunity; some of the greatest God-opportunities come disguised in opposition. This comes as we learn to walk in the Spirit and apply His wisdom. (See Colossians 1:9-14)

4. Fulfilment

When God gives you the promise of opportunity He is already seeing the completed picture. He sees the end from the beginning.

How does this apply to you?

God's word never fails. Read Ezekiel 12:27-28; Joshua 21:45 and Psalm 89:34.

Conclusion

Ask God to help you to see the opportunities He brings your way, even if they are disguised in opposition. Opposition necessitates that we exercise our faith and persevere.

Ministry

Allow 10 minutes for all to journal what the Lord is saying to them. Turn to the person next to you and share what the Lord has said.

Pray together – ask the Lord to reveal a strategy to defeat the opposition in each person's life.

Prayer Focus

Read the following scriptures prayerfully and allow time to meditate on them: Colossians 1:9-14 and Ephesians 1:15-23. (*The Message* translation is interesting.)



OBEEDIENCE

Skilful Saints

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Skilful Saints

'This is love for God: to obey his commands.'

1 John 5:3a (NIV)

Objective

To develop a Biblical understanding of obedience and how it is a natural outflow of hearing God's voice.

Ice-Breaker

What rules did your family have that you, as a kid, thought were pointless?

Word and Discussion

Obey – to do what you are told to do by a person, law, etc.

How is obedience linked to hearing the Lord's voice, according to its definition? Read James 1:22. The Message puts it this way: 'Don't fool yourself into thinking that you are a listener when you are everything but, letting the Word go in one ear and out the other!'

Act on what you hear!' (Emphasis added)

1. Why do we obey?

- 'If you _____, you will obey what I command.' (John 14:15)
- 'This is _____: to obey his commands.' (1 John 5:3)
- '...the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of _____ with all that _____ him and _____ his commands.' (Daniel 9:4)

Week 8

Talk about different motivations we can have in obeying. For instance, why do you obey speed limits?

2. Who obeys whom?

Children obey _____ (Ephesians 6:1)
Slaves obey _____ (Ephesians 6:5)
Christians obey _____ (Hebrews 13:7)
Christians obey _____ (Psalms 119:67)
Evil spirits obey _____ (Mark 1:27, 16:17-18)
Thoughts obey _____ (2 Corinthians 10:5)

How do you understand the above scripture?

Wind and waves obey _____ (Mark 4:41)

3. Examples of lives changed through obedience

- Naaman – 2 Kings 5:1-14
 - o What was his need?
 - o What was the Lord's word to him?
 - o What was the result of his obedience?

- Jonah – Jonah 1:1-3, 3:1-10
 - o What was the Lord's word to him?
 - o How did he react?
 - o What was result of his obedience?
- Paul - Acts 9:1-19
 - o What was the Lord's word to him?
 - o Who else was involved? How?
 - o What was the result of his obedience?
- Samuel - 1 Samuel 3:1-19
 - o How did he react when he heard God's voice?
 - o What do you learn from God as you read this story?
- Moses - Exodus 18:13-27
 - o How did the Lord speak to him at this time?
 - o How did he react?
 - o What were the results?

Note that the Lord used someone not of the same faith but who had wisdom – Exodus 18:1.

Does anyone in the group have a testimony of how simple obedience changed your life?

4. What are the reasons Christians choose to disobey?

Discuss in your group, and identify reasons for disobedience.

5. Obedience starts with a choice in your heart

'Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach ... No, the word is very near you: it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.'

Deuteronomy 30:11, 14 (NIV)

Read Philippians 2:12 – the attitude of our hearts is reflected in the way we obey.

Read Acts 5 17-32. Discuss the way the disciples reacted to an ungodly command from the authorities in Verse 29.

Ministry

Notice how patient the Lord has been to the biblical examples we have looked at. Sometimes obedience has a spiritual time-limit, especially as we flow in the gifts of the spirit. Have you missed out on making the most of an opportunity because you waited too long? Ask the Lord for forgiveness for this or for any known disobedience.

Let's encourage each other to obey the Lord in the things that He has said to us. Take action this week! Remember, obedience is better than sacrifice, see 1 Samuel 15:22.

Prayer Focus

Genesis 49:10 says that 'the obedience of the nations is His'. Pray around this as we think of South Africa.



Week 9
Skilful Saints
CHOICES AND ROUTINE
Skilful Saints
Skilful Saints

'I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore **choose** life, that both you and your descendents may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His Voice and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days;'
Deuteronomy 30:19b-20a (NKJV) (Emphasis added)

Objective

To see the value of good choices, that they result in life giving routines and habits.

Ice-Breaker

Group in pairs, and think up your own idiom about good and bad choices. In other words, something that you have or would teach your children. E.g. 'Bad choices will come back to bite you, and good choices will come back to hug (or kiss) you.'

Word and Discussion

In the beginning the Lord said to Adam and Eve that they should not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They did not make a good choice. They ate from the tree and this resulted in them knowing right from wrong, in a place where it was unnecessary for them to know wrong. God wanted an unstrained relationship with His creation.

So, from the beginning of time, we as humanity have lived in a place of choices. We can choose life or death, blessings or curses, over ourselves. Read the opening scripture again.

Most of us have not always made good choices. This has resulted in us becoming damaged. We may also have become damaged as a result of other people's choices. And so we may find that as we do life, we do it with a limp. We may not even know why we are limping, or how to fix our limp!

God alone can fix the limp. But, we need some knowledge on how to be positioned for healing and restoration. In going through the list below you may find some useful tools to re-position yourself:

- You need to recognize that you have a limp.
- A limp is the result of a damaged spirit. Read Ephesians 6:12.
- A damaged spirit will manifest itself in our soulish realm (mind, will and emotions) and in our body.

Write down what you feel has damaged you, and how that makes you feel in your soul and in your body.

- We need God to heal our spirits.
- We need to make some life choices:
 - Choose to be under the Lordship of Jesus.
 - Allow the Holy Spirit to have control.
 - Allow the Holy Spirit and the Word to renew your mind. Read Romans 12:2.
 - Take your thoughts captive. Do not allow your thoughts to go rampant in an ungodly direction. Read Psalm 19:14 and 2 Corinthians 10:5b.
 - Choose to forgive those that have hurt you – remember that forgiveness is a road to be walked. Read Matthew 18:21-22.
 - Fellowship with other believers. Don't be an island! Read Hebrews 10:25.
 - Allow the Lord to minister to you through creativity, nature and things that you personally enjoy doing.
- As we endeavor to do all the above, we will be re-positioning ourselves for God to come and heal us. This takes time, **not because God is slow, but because we can only go slowly because of our limp**. So be patient, work with God, allow the rhythms of His grace to flow through you and over you.

“The Father has given me all these things to do and say. This is a unique Father-Son operation, coming out of Father and Son intimacies and knowledge. No one knows the Son the way the Father does, nor the Father the way the Son does. But I'm not keeping it to myself; I'm ready to go over it line by line with anyone willing to listen. Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me –atch how I do it. Learn **the unforced rhythms of grace**. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.”

Matthew 11:27-30 (MSG) (Emphasis added)

As the Lord restores you it would be important for you to develop some **new routines** in your life so that you do not go backwards but keep moving toward the fullness of life that God wants for you. For example, don't let your thoughts run away with you, move away from temptation, etc.

So, how are you going to develop good routines? God has made each uniquely in His image.

'For You formed my inward parts, You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skilfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they were all written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them. How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!'

Psalm 139:13-17 (NKJV)

We individually have things that we love doing, things that energize us; things that make us come alive.

Make a list of those things now:

1. What does sovereignty mean?

God is all-wise and all-knowing and His decisions and ways are beyond what we can understand.

- God's judgements are 'unsearchable', implying that there will be situations we cannot explain or give adequate reasons for.
- God's ways are 'unfathomable' (*i.e.* beyond comprehension) and so, although the Lord has chosen to make Himself known to us through Jesus, why He does things the way He does them is often a mystery to us.

'For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.'

Romans 11:34-36 (NASB)

2. How do we fit in?

- Discuss what responsibility each person has for their life in the light of the sovereignty of God. Is there a part that we can play? Psalm 8: 4.
- Read Romans 12 and 13:1-7, keeping in mind that it follows straight on from Romans 11.
- Consider the following verses, and journal what the Lord says to you:
 - o Be spiritually transformed (12:1-2).

- o Demonstrate your spiritual gifts (12:6-8).

- o Develop loving relationships (12:9-21).

- o Respond properly to government (13:1-7).

- Even though God is sovereign, we can still **choose** how we will live our lives within a given set of circumstances. We also get to choose where we will spend eternity.

3. What practical difference does God's sovereignty make in my life?

'Then Job replied to the Lord:

"I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you. You asked, 'Who is this that questions My wisdom with such ignorance?' It is I – and I was talking about things I knew nothing about, things far too wonderful for me.

You said, 'Listen and I will speak! I have some questions for you, and you must answer them.' I had only heard about You before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes. I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance."

Job 42:1-6 (NLT)

- God's sovereignty helps us find peace from anxiety (Verse 2).
- God's sovereignty means that not everything has a ready explanation (Verse 3).
- God's sovereignty keeps us humble before Him (Verses 5-6).

Take a few minutes to write down a difficult situation that you are anxious about, or don't have answers for. Read Job 42:1-2 again as well as Psalm 33:20-22, and entrust this situation to the Lord. Wait on the Lord for a few minutes and write down what you sense the Lord is saying to you.

How will you practically apply what you have written in the next week?

MINISTRY

Worship the Sovereign Lord together, and humbly entrust your life into His hands again today. Kneel and link hands, symbolizing unity, and tell the Lord that you trust His sovereignty over all that He has made, including yourself.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray for those facing difficult circumstances.
- Pray for those who have been hurt by the 'easy explanations' offered by people.
- Continue to pray earnestly for our country and the crime situation. Strengthen the arms of the righteous who are making a difference out there.



CHRISTIAN FOUNDATIONS
Skilful Saints Skilful Saints Skilful Saints

This final chapter is some foundational information for you to use when leading someone to the Lord, or sharing around baptism in water and in the Holy Spirit.

1. Salvation

What does it mean to be saved?

In the beginning God the Father created the world and mankind for relationship. After a time Adam and Eve were enticed by Satan, chose to sin and fell from their position of authority. As a consequence they died spiritually, they came under the Curse (See Genesis 3:16-19) and their relationship with God was broken. However, God promised in Genesis 3:15 that he will crush the head of Satan and will make a way of reconciliation with man. Out of His love for us He fulfilled His promise by sending His Son Jesus Christ to earth to become a man like us in every way. He was fully God and fully man, yet He was sinless and He died on the cross for our sin so that we do not have to die. By His death on the cross he made a way for us to be reconciled to the Father by accepting His sacrifice, repenting of our sin and choosing to live for Him. Jesus was raised from the dead and now sits at the right hand of God interceding for us. When we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Saviour we become a new creation (our spirit becomes alive) and we receive eternal life as well as many other spiritual and physical blessings. To be saved means that you have received forgiveness and pardon from the death sentence of sin. You have been moved from the Kingdom of darkness, from the hold of the devil, to the Kingdom of light, the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Who needs to be saved?

All mankind is born into sin. All people need to be saved because all have sinned. 'For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.' Romans 3:23 (NIV)

How can I be saved?

There is only one Saviour and that is Jesus Christ, God's Son. He became sin for us that we might be saved. 'For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.' 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV). The way to salvation is: repent (ask forgiveness and make a 180-degree turn), put your faith and trust in God, and live for Him.

If you feel that you would like to give your heart to Jesus and be saved, please pray this prayer of repentance:

Lord Jesus Christ, I believe that you are the Son of God who died for me and was raised from the dead. I confess that I have lived my life independently from you and have committed sin. Please forgive me! I commit my life to you and invite you to come and live in me. I receive your forgiveness and eternal life. Thank you Lord! I pray this in the Name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Assurance of Salvation

When we have repented, confessed our sin and believe, we are adopted into the family of God and are sons and daughters of God.

'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' 1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

'But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.' John 1:12 (NKJV)

2. Water Baptism

Water baptism is for those who believe in Jesus (Acts 8:35-39). Belief comes before baptism. Jesus himself was baptized, thus setting an example and paving the way for us to follow. Jesus commanded that we be baptized. In Matthew 28:19 (NKJV), He says to the disciples: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' In this sense, baptism is not really an optional extra.

The word *baptize* means 'to plunge or immerse'. It involves the process of immersion, submersion and emergence. The biblical pattern for baptism is descending into, being submerged and emerging from the water.

Baptism is the outward seal or affirmation of the inward change produced by repentance. Romans 6:1-7 (NKJV) says,

'How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His

death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.'

(Also read Colossians 2:12 and Galatians 3:27.)

When we are baptized, we identify with Jesus' death and resurrection. It is a symbolic 'death'. It is the death of our old way of life. In other words: before I became a Christian I had a certain lifestyle with a certain set of values; when I encountered Christ, then that lifestyle and all that went with it, had to go. The Christian life is an entirely different way of living. To be baptized is a public testimony to that death and to the expectation of a new life in Christ. It is a very powerful action that says you are serious about your commitment to Jesus and, very often, deliverance can take place more successfully after you have been baptized.

3. Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity: God the Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches that just before Jesus was crucified, He told His disciples that He was going to send the Holy Spirit. Jesus told them that 'He would be just like me.' Everything Jesus was to them, the Holy Spirit would be to them.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is not conversion, but something that is subsequent to, and different from, conversion. It is a releasing, or an outflowing of that which is already within you.

The purpose of baptism in the Holy Spirit is firstly to receive the power of God in order to be witnesses. Acts 1:8 (NIV) says, 'You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses.' Secondly, it is to introduce us into participating in the gifts of the Spirit. An important thing to remember is that Jesus had actually told the disciples that those who believed in Him would end up doing the same things that He did, and that even greater things would be accomplished in His name. This would be made possible by the sending of the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, the Holy Spirit gives us guidance and wisdom in our everyday life. He fills us with passion for Jesus. 'Be [continually] filled with the Spirit' (Ephesians 5:18 (NKJV)).

Holy Spirit baptism is for **all** believers. God desires us all to have this gift. He wants to lift you out of the realm of the natural into the supernatural.

How to be baptized in the Holy Spirit:

- Believe that the promise is for you and your Father in heaven wants to give you this gift of the Spirit, and that Jesus is the baptizer, who wants to baptize you personally in the Holy Spirit.
- Confess any known sin and cleanse your heart before the Lord.
- Seek His face, ask Him to fill you with His spirit and receive the Spirit by faith.
- Ask your life group leader or a fellow believer to pray with you.
- The primary sign of baptism in the Holy Spirit is power and victory in your life.
- A common outward sign is speaking in Tongues (Acts 2:1-4; Acts 19:6), although not speaking in Tongues does not mean that you have not been filled with the Spirit. However, Tongues is for every believer and increases your effectiveness in prayer and everyday life (Romans 8:26). Trust God for Tongues. The Bible says that they spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance. The Holy Spirit is not going to force your mouth open. Put out your faith and trust in God, then open your mouth and speak out in your own language and declare the wonders of God. Your language will change into a heavenly one.
- Once you have received Tongues, practice it every day (1 Corinthians 14:2; Romans 8:26) but also trust God for the other Spiritual gifts as described in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11. Also trust God as you yield your life to Him and follow the Holy Spirit's leading that the fruit of the Spirit will be more and more evident in your life as described in Galatians 5:22-23.