

Hatfield Christian Church

Ladies Life Group Guidelines

Term 4

2007

A Time to ...

What the word says about ...

Compiled by the pastors' wives
of Hatfield Christian Church.

Dear Lady Leader

The end of the year is often a time of intense busyness as we try to wrap things up and tie up loose ends. In the midst of the activity, however, let's not forget the truths we learnt last term about resting in God. I trust that the time we spent gaining a godly understanding of rest will leave an indelible imprint on you and your life group members.

As the team of pastors' wives, we really try to hear what is on God's heart for every guideline booklet. We trust that the material covered in this booklet will be a great deposit in your life.

The theme for this term is *A Time to ...* and touches on the well-known scripture in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 'There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven ...' (NIV). Each guideline is divided into two parts and handles contrasting aspects, such as *A Time for War* and *A Time for Peace*.

We pray that you will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to facilitate breakthrough in the lives of the ladies in your life group, and that you would experience breakthrough in your own life too. Be encouraged as you remember that, although there is great responsibility on the life of a leader, there is also great **reward**.

1 Corinthians 3:8-9a says, 'The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labour. For we are God's fellow workers ...' (NIV).

Our prayers are that, as you lead and love, the Lord's protection and favour will be on you and your family. We pray that the Holy Spirit will cover your home and give you wisdom for every situation. We appreciate you and commend you to the Lord.

You are loved.

Ansa and the pastors' wives

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*A TIME TO CHALLENGE ...
A TIME TO ACCEPT ...*

A Time to ... A Time to ... A Time to ... A Time to ...

Objective

To understand the value of being challenged in terms of spiritual growth, and the importance of being able to accept advice and take responsibility for our lives.

Ice-Breaker

Share with one another about a challenge that you tackled and overcame. E.g. completing a triathlon, attempting to cook an adventurous meal, etc.

Word and Discussion

A Time to Challenge ...

'I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that doesn't bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more. ... Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me'

John 15:1-4 (MSG)

- What are some of the areas of your life where you feel you are 'bearing fruit'?

- In the light of the above scripture, how would you define spiritual growth?

Now read 2 Peter 1:3-8. We will never grow spiritually if we are not challenged to higher heights. This scripture shows that we should be challenged towards consistently:

- increasing our knowledge and understanding of God's Word;
- decreasing in the frequency and severity of sin in our lives;
- increasing the amount of Christlike qualities that we practise;
- increasing in our faith and trust in God.

Perhaps the best summary of spiritual growth is becoming more like Jesus Christ. It is a lifelong journey that takes place as we read and apply God's Word to our lives.

- What does 2 Timothy 3:16-17 teach us about God's Word?

- How are you increasing your knowledge and understanding of God's Word?

- Another key to Christian growth is walking in the Spirit. Read Galatians 5:16-18, 24-26. What do you understand by 'walking in the Spirit'?

What does spiritual growth look like? Read Galatians 5:22-23. Are you becoming more loving, more joyful, more kind, more self-controlled, etc.? Often we focus on not sinning instead of simply pursuing the characteristics we would like to have. Rate yourself on the following 'Fruit of the Spirit' table by ticking the appropriate column:

Fruit of the Spirit	Poor	Average	Good
Love			
Joy			
Peace			
Patience			
Kindness			
Goodness			
Faithfulness			
Meekness			
Self-control			

Discuss the areas where you are particularly strong, and also those where you are particularly weak with one another.

- Consider the following: if you keep on doing what you are doing right now, would you have grown spiritually by the end of the year, or would you be in exactly the same place?

As you pursue becoming more like Jesus, think about doing a course at the church such as:

- Leadership Training School;
- Nation Changers;
- Alpha.

A Time to Accept ...

'Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise.'
Proverbs 19:20 (NIV)

- Do you find it difficult to accept advice or help? If yes, what are some of the reasons for this?

We cannot accept responsibility for the decisions and actions of others. The things that we are to accept responsibility for are:

- Our feelings
- Our attitudes
- Our behaviour

- Do you let your feelings run rampant?

- What is your attitude like most of the time? How are your gratitude levels?

- Are you exhibiting Spirit-filled behaviour?

Sometimes you need help to get over a hurdle in your spiritual walk. Do make an appointment with a trusted counsellor for help. Some things are easier to deal with and settle, once your perspective has been adjusted. The Bible exhorts us to carry one another's burdens.

Conclusion

In order for us to grow spiritually we need to allow ourselves to be challenged, accept help and take responsibility for our lives.

Ministry

Pray for one another for spiritual growth and a greater manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit.

Prayer Focus

Pray that injustice in our nation would not go unchallenged.



A TIME TO WORK ...
 A TIME TO REST ...

A Time to ... A Time to ... A Time to ... A Time to ...

Week 2

Objective

To highlight that a balance between work and rest is God's design.

Ice-Breaker

Describe an ideal work day and an ideal day of rest.

Word and Discussion

A Time to Work ...

'... enjoy the good of all [your] labour; it is the gift of God'
 Ecclesiastes 3:13

- When you close your eyes and you hear the word *work*, what thought or picture comes to mind?

- Why do you think you have this picture or thought?

Take a look at the following scriptures:

- 1 Timothy 5:18
- Genesis 3:19
- Titus 3:14
- Proverbs 6:9-11
- 2 Thessalonians 3:10
- Proverbs 13:4

From these Scriptures, we can see that work is from God. In Genesis 1:28 God gave the commandment to mankind to work. Even faith, if not backed up by works, is worthless – In James 2:17 (AMP) the Bible says, 'So also faith if it does not have works (deeds and actions of obedience to back it up) by itself is destitute of power'

According to the *Vines Concordance* 'to work' or 'labour' has more than one meaning:

- 'To do': to earn money, job, chores at home;
- 'To create': an income, arts, music;
- 'To build relationships': in community, shops, schools;.
- 'To bear fruit': ministry, missions, outreaches;
- 'Working in the Kingdom': obedience and response to God (See John 14:15, 23).

- What other activities would you describe as work (e.g. raising children)?

- In terms of the definitions of work given above, what activities are you involved in?

- Which of these make you come alive?

- Discuss whether the things you are involved in are in line with your giftings.

- What are the benefits of work? E.g. Income; self-worth; social interaction.

Although work is God's design, the enemy tries to pervert this truth by causing us to work too hard (*i.e.* to work without resting). What are the consequences of this? Think of things like busyness, stress, broken families, health problems and so on.

- Are you working too hard and resting too little? What is the fruit of this in your life and how can you change it?

God's will is that we 'shall not labour in vain' (Isaiah 65:23). To ensure this, work must always be balanced with rest.

A Time to Rest ...

'Let us therefore be diligent to enter His rest.'

Hebrews 4: 11

'In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.'

Isaiah 30: 15

Labouring 'to enter His rest' seems like a paradox, but to understand this, picture yourself are on a train that is going to a certain destination. The train is moving (working) but you are resting, yet you will reach your destination (gain ground, achieve something). This is what it means to 'labour to enter His rest'.

The world rewards busyness, achievements and always asks for more, better and quicker results. The Lord says, 'If you sit at My feet, you are my sons and daughters.'

Take a look at the following scriptures:

- Matthew 11:28
- Hebrews 4:9
- Psalm 1:1-3
- Psalm 37:4
- Mark 6:3

We need to think in terms of **body**, **soul**, and **spirit**.

If we keep on working without resting (even if it is ministry) we will reach the point where we burn out. To prevent this from happening, we should do things that fill our emotional tank.

Discuss the following:

- What restores your body? E.g. healthy lifestyle (sleep, eat, exercise, holiday, etc.)
Did you know that exercise helps our organs to properly fulfil their task of cleansing the body of toxins and impurities, which minimizes sickness, aches and pains, etc.

- What restores your soul (Your emotions, mind, and will.)? E.g. Crafts, cooking, gardening, reading, scrapbooking, etc.

- What restores your spirit? E.g. Reading the Word, worship, staying in the Secret Place, etc. Read Colossians 3:1-2; Psalm 16: 11.

Conclusion

God created work and rest and we should pursue a life which keeps them in balance. If we focus on work without resting, we will end up burnt-out. On the other hand, all rest and no work leads to laziness. Let's follow God's example and lead productive, yet rested lives.

Ministry

Pray for each other and ask the Lord to teach you how to balance work and rest in your daily lives.

Prayer Focus

Discern what the prevailing spirit over your community is: overwork or slothfulness. Pray in this regard, especially concerning the impact that this has on family life.



Week 3

A Time to ... A Time to ... A Time to ...
A TIME FOR OUTSIDE ...
A TIME FOR INSIDE ...
A Time to ... A Time to ... A Time to ...

Objective

To inspire us to reach out and influence the world, without neglecting to spend quality time with God, our families and ourselves.

Ice-Breaker

In which other countries do you have family or friends who you keep contact with?

Word and Discussion

A Time for Outside ...

'You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.'

Matthew 5:14-16 (MSG)

- Our bodies have been designed to thrive on fresh air and sunshine. In the same way, our spirits are designed to get outside: to shine like a light in a dark room; to be the pinch of salt that flavours everything around us. We are all in some circle of influence – where have you been directly or indirectly positioned?

- How would you define evangelism?

- One definition is 'to preach the Christian faith enthusiastically.' What do you think about this interesting description by St Francis of Assisi, 'Preach the gospel at all times, and when necessary use words'?

- Read 2 Corinthians 2:14-16. We are like salt, or light, or the _____ of Christ, and both believers and unbelievers are affected by our presence.

- Read Matthew 10:16. What does it mean to be 'shrewd as snakes', and 'innocent as doves'?

- Read Jude 22-23 and comment on it.

- Read the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. On what basis are we sent? (Verse 18)

- What should we do? (Verse 19)

- What does He promise us? (Verse 20)

- Read through Acts 10, where the Lord sent Peter to Cornelius, a 'Gentile'. Write down the Lord's command to Peter (Verse 15)

- How was Peter's mind changed? (Verses 28, 34, 35)

Most of us are not Jewish and we therefore would also have been regarded as 'Gentiles' Let us be thankful to be included in God's grace-plan, and be sure to reach out to ALL nations, as we are commanded and privileged to do!

The Lord may also be stirring your heart for a specific nation – respond in prayer, and be open to go on a short-term missions outreach should the opportunity arise. Be ready to **go** as He sends you 'outside', whether you take the step of courage to reach out to a new neighbour or to a new nation. He has promised to be with us as we go!

A Time for Inside ...

'He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul.'

Psalm 23:2-3 (NIV)

We have spent a lot of time last term thinking about godly rest – let us hold onto these truths to ensure that we are energized from the inside out.

‘Somewhere in the middle of Martha’s kitchen and Mary’s seat of devotion at Jesus’ feet there is a place of divine power. The ideal balance would place both Mary and Martha at Jesus’ feet in joyful devotion and communion until the appropriate time; then both would be released in power to serve Him and worship Him in the ‘kitchen’ of life.’

Tommy Tenney

In order for this energizing to take place, there are certain things we need to do:

a. We need to spend quality time with Him.

Look up the following scriptures:

- Hebrews 12: 2
- Psalm 46: 10
- 1 Peter 3: 15
- John 15: 4

b. We need to spend quality time with our families.

Consider Hebrews 10:24 – ‘And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds.’

- What are some of the things your family likes to do together?

- When life gets difficult / hectic, how do you encourage your family? Let's learn from one another.

c. We need to have times during which we ‘refuel our tanks’.

In last week’s study, you would have listed some of the things that make you come alive / recharge you. Have you put any of these into practice in the last week? Make it a priority to do the things that help you to run the race with more passion.

Ministry

Which area do you find more challenging: to step more boldly ‘outside’, or to be disciplined to spend time on the ‘inside’. Pray for one another around this.

Prayer Focus

Pray over the areas of influence that you are involved in.

Pray with a partner for any country that the Lord impresses on your heart.



Objective

To know when to speak a word of encouragement, prophecy, rebuke, etc., and to understand the importance of listening to God and others.

Ice-Breaker

This will require a bit of impromptu acting. Find two volunteers. Ask them to act out a counselling scene where one person pours out her problems and the counsellor, through body language, shows that she is not really listening (e.g. yawning, looking at her watch, etc.).

Word and Discussion

A Time to Talk ...

‘Preach the Word, be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction.’
 2 Timothy 4:2 (NIV)

Sometimes it is hard to decide what is more difficult – to control what goes into our mouths (food) or to control what comes out of our mouths (words)! But what is certain is that the words we speak are powerful. Therefore we need to be aware of what we say and when we say it. Read Proverbs 12:18.

- Can you think back to a time when you spoke when you should rather have not and those words ‘damaged’?

- Can you think back to a time when you spoke and it was exactly what was needed to be said at the time, and your words brought healing?

Because of the eternal effects our words have, God desires that we use them to build not break down.

Here are some ways our words can build up:

a. Encouragement

When we encourage a family member or friend to ‘keep up the good fight’, our words bring life into their situation. Read Ephesians 4:29-30 in the Amplified Bible as well as Isaiah 50:4. Is encouragement an important part of your Christian walk? How do you go about encouraging others?

b. Speaking the truth

There is a time and a way to speak the truth and we need God’s guidance and wisdom. The saying goes, ‘What the heart is full of, the mouth will overflow with’. Read Philippians 4:8 and John 8:32. Do you find it difficult to speak the truth or perhaps to hear the truth?

c. Prophecy

God longs to make His way clear for His children and He often uses others to speak into our lives. Read Acts 2:17. Has the Lord used anyone to prophesy over you or have you been given a word to prophesy over someone else?

d. Rebuke and encourage with patience

Part of our growing and maturing in Christ means that from time to time we may need to give or receive a word of rebuke. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:14 and Proverbs 15:31. If you have the freedom to share, tell of a time when you received a timely word of rebuke which caused you to grow. How can we make words of rebuke easier to receive?

Consider the following scripture:

'There is more hope for a stupid fool than for someone who speaks without thinking.'
Proverbs 29:20 (NLT)

Our words are weighed and counted more than we realize. We can never take our words back. Once spoken, they are out and headed on a path of blessing or destruction.

A Time to Listen ...

'... let the wise listen ...'
Proverbs 1:5 (NIV)

'Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.'
Proverbs 17:28(NIV)

Listening is of utmost importance. So often misunderstandings arise because someone did not listen. Communication breaks down when we talk but don't listen.

'A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after a while he gets to know something.'
Wilson Mizner

a. Listening to God

This should be on the very top of our priority lists. We need to set time aside to listen daily. Read Deuteronomy 7:12-15 and 30:20. How good is your listening ability when it comes to hearing God? Do you hear Him clearly or are you still on a journey of discovery?

b. Guidance

Listening gives us direction. Read Proverbs 2:8-11. Do you find it easy to do what God tells you to do when you are listening? What are some 'tough' things you have felt Him say to you?

c. Listen to your elders

We can gain so much wisdom in those who have walked a little further down the road than what we have. Read Proverbs 4:1; 12:15. Do you have a mentor who speaks into your life? Do you listen when he/she speaks?

d. Listening brings life

Recently a family was hijacked. The father shouted to his daughter to get inside the house. Fortunately the little girl listened and ran inside. The consequences of her not listening would have been fatal. Read Proverbs 10:17. Do you struggle to listen to correction, look for excuses for your behaviour or get defensive? How should we respond to correction?

e. Be quick to listen

It is said that we should listen twice as much as we speak because we have two ears and only one mouth. Read Proverbs 25:12. Taking the time to listen to someone speaks volumes; when we listen to someone we affirm them because we acknowledge that what they have to say is important. How has someone listening to you impacted your life?

Conclusion

You can be used mightily by God if you learn to discern when to speak and when to listen.

Ministry

If you are carrying 'baggage' from a time when the careless words of others wounded you, or from a time when you were not listened to, bring these things before the Lord. Forgive those who need to be released receive the Lord's healing.

Ask forgiveness for reckless words you may have spoken, and make right where you can. Ask the Lord to help you become a good listener.

Prayer Focus

Pray for heart-to-heart communication in the families of your community.



Objective

To become more aware of the value of corporate and personal prayer and to motivate us to become more involved.

Ice-Breaker

Share about a time you spent in meaningful prayer, whether in a corporate or private setting.

Word and Discussion

A Time for Corporate Prayer ...

'For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.'

Matthew 18:20 (NIV)

Corporate prayer is when two or more people gather to pray and is one of the many ways we can commune with God. This type of prayer includes various aspects:

1. Prayers of praise and thanksgiving

An attitude of praise and thanksgiving when we pray causes our faith levels to rise. Read the following scriptures and write down key words or phrases:

- 2 Chronicles 20 _____
- Acts 16:25 _____
- 2 Corinthians 4:15-16 _____
- Isaiah 61:2-3 _____
- Philippians 4:6-7 _____

- Are there areas in your walk with the Lord where you are ungrateful / not giving thanks? If so, decide now to repent. Meditate on Philippians 4:6-7 as you continue to journey with Him.

2. Prayers of Spiritual Warfare

We also need to come against the enemy as we pray. It is important that we do this under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

'Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.'

Ephesians 6:11-18 (NIV)

Read and reread this scripture. Discuss it among yourselves and share testimonies about how the Lord has come through for you as you have stood and stood again.

Read and comment on the following scriptures about spiritual warfare and write down key words or phrases.

- Colossians 2:15 _____
- James 4:7 _____
- Mark 16:17 _____

- Matthew 18:18 _____
- Luke 10:19 _____
- Psalm 34:7 _____

3. Praying 'In the Name of Jesus'

The word tells us that we can ask in the Name of Jesus. Corporately we can agree together for something in prayer, in His Name.

'I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.'

John 14:12-14 (NIV)

In Luke 18:1 Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. We must persist and persevere in prayer.

4. Praying in Unity

Read Acts 4:24-31. This scripture talks about praying together. Agreement has tremendous power. Here are some of the main points from this portion of scripture:

- The believers were one in heart and mind;
- They raised their voices together in prayer to God;
- They asked for great boldness, healing and miraculous signs;
- The place where they were meeting was shaken;
- They were all filled with the Holy Spirit;
- They spoke the word of God boldly;
- With great power, they testified about the resurrection of the Lord; and
- Much grace was upon all of them.

5. 'If my people will humble themselves and pray ...'

'If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.'

2 Chronicles 7:14-15 (NIV)

Meditate on the above scripture and spend some time praying together for our government.

A Time for Private Prayer...

'Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.'
Isaiah 65:24 (NIV)

1. Praying in the Spirit

The word tells us that praying in the Spirit edifies us. Praying in the Spirit can also be included in corporate prayer. Read the following scriptures and write down a key phrase:

- Jude 20 _____
- 1 Corinthians 14:2 _____
- Romans 8:26 _____

2. Meditative Prayer

Meditate on the following Scripture:

'The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul.'
Psalm 23:1-3

- Consider taking a scripture that the Lord has impressed on your heart, and ask the Lord to reveal new levels of meaning. Wait with Him and write down what you sense that He is saying.

3. Resting Prayer

This type of prayer is without an agenda. It's simply about resting: no Bible, no pen, no notebook! Our aim is purely to enjoy Him. Resting with Him creates space in our lives; it energizes us to go on and is vital in the rushed lifestyles that most of us lead.

You would often find yourself in this place when there is deep worship music surrounding you.

4. Listening Prayer

'He who has ears to hear, let him hear.'

Luke 14:35b (NIV)

Prayer is not just a time to speak to God but also a time to listen. So find a place and a suitable time, listen and write down what He says.

Conclusion

Prayer is life-changing! God changes us and/or our circumstances as we commune with Him alone in private times of prayer, as well as with other believers in corporate prayer.

Ministry

What can you do to take your prayer life to the next level? Pray for one another for the courage to take your prayer life a step higher.

Prayer Focus

Pray for the women in our church to become greater women of prayer – to impact their own lives, their families' lives and the lives of those in the community around them.

Week 6



A TIME TO CORRECT ...
A TIME TO EXTEND GRACE ...
A Time to ... A Time to ... A Time to ... A Time to ...

'... the Lord disciplines those he loves ...'

Hebrews 12:6a (NIV)

Objective

To understand the benefits of correction and the value of giving and receiving grace.

Ice-Breaker

What names do your family call the 'spanking instrument' used to discipline disobedient children?

OR

Comment on the 'sin bin' method used in rugby to punish a player who consciously jeopardizes the safety of the other players. He is then publicly banished from the game, to stand on the sideline for a certain time.

Word and Discussion

A Time to Correct ...

Read Hebrews 12:3-11 and John 15:1-16.

'...and every *branch* that bears fruit He **prunes**, that it may bear more fruit.'

John 15:2 (Emphasis added)

1. The Pruning Process

Discuss the process of pruning together. Think about fruit trees, rose bushes, grape vines, etc. Is there a special time or season that pruning should take place? Does the pruning have to be carried out in a particular way? How do the pruned plants look after pruning? What is the result of the pruning process if it is executed properly? Bear in mind that this process also includes 'feeding'.

God desires us to live fruitful lives which will bring glory to His Name (John 15:8). He desires that our joy should be full (John 15:11). He desires that we should 'prosper in all things and be in _____, just as your _____ prospers' (3 John 1:2).

2. The Purpose of Chastening

'But if you are without chastening ... then you are illegitimate and not sons.'
Hebrews 12:8

- If God ignores us when we make mistakes, we will end up in destruction. His love for us brings correction, so that the peaceable fruit of righteousness (right standing with Him; relationship with Him) may abound in our lives (Hebrews 12:11).
- If God tells us to discipline and to correct our children, how much more should we submit to His discipline in our own lives? Read and write out the following verses of Scripture:
 - o Proverbs 13:24

- o Proverbs 23:13-14

- o Proverbs 29:17

Read Hebrews 5:8-9. Even Jesus learned obedience from what He suffered.

A Time to Extend Grace ...

Have you noticed that people who had gone through great difficulty in their lives are mostly not arrogant, but full of grace? Discuss.

1. God has made His grace available to us.

Read Romans 5:17.

2. God's nature is forgiving and compassionate.

He does not want anyone to perish. God is righteous and just.
Read Psalm 103:6-9.

'The Lord ... is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.'

2 Peter 3:9

3. We should not take advantage of God's grace.

Write out Romans 6:15; 23.

4. The grace that God extends to us empowers us and takes us beyond our own natural ability.

Read what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:10.

5. Read the parable Jesus related in Matthew 18:21-35.

'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?'

Matthew 18:21

- What stands out to you from this well-known parable?

7. Nineveh

Jonah felt that the wicked people of Nineveh deserved to be punished by God, but when they repented, God forgave them and relented from destroying them (Jonah 3:10). Instead of rejoicing, Jonah was angry (Jonah 4:1). God had to explain to Jonah that He had decided to **extend grace** (Jonah 4:10-11).

8. Read Isaiah 1:16-20.

'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ...'
Isaiah 1:18b (NIV)

God forgives us and cleanses us from all sin. Jesus extended grace from the Cross when He said: 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do' (Luke 23:34).

Conclusion

There are times when God corrects us and there are times when He extends grace towards us. Let us grow in maturity through these experiences so that we can correct others in love and also extend grace and compassion when God prompts us to do so.

Ministry

If you have rebelled against or resisted the chastening of the Lord or other forms of discipline, spend some time in prayer and repentance.

Is the Lord prompting you to extend grace to someone in particular? Spend some time waiting on God in this regard, and then determine in your heart to do what He impresses on you to do.

Prayer Focus

- Pray for Godly, loving discipline in our homes.
- Pray that the Lord will help us and His church corporately, to be those who are not judgmental but rather those who extend grace to those around us.
- Ask that God will show us when we are judgmental, and when we are judging a certain situation. There is a vast difference in the Spirit.



Objective

To acknowledge that we are in a spiritual war and must engage in spiritual battle. However we are also called to be messengers of peace.

Ice-Breaker

Do you like war movies? Why / why not? Share with one another.

Word and Discussion

A Time for War ...

‘For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.’
 Ephesians 6:12

In the Old Testament, wars were fought to gain territory, position and wealth. Read Joshua 1:1-7. Even though God promised the Israelites the land, they needed to fight for this promise to come to fulfilment. Not fighting meant losing ground, wealth, possessions and possibly being conquered. Our battle is not physical but spiritual and the giants that we face, though often not tangible and visible, are very real. What do you think are the giants in your life currently?

1. What is this war?

‘For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.’
 1 John 3:8b

- Discuss this scripture:

2. How do we position ourselves for war?

‘Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with the truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shot your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit ...’
 Ephesians 6:13-18

- a. **We must be born-again** (1 John 5:5).
- b. **We need to walk in truth by:**
 - knowing our authority in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21; Luke 10:19).
 - knowing the Word (Joshua 1:8).
- c. **We need to walk in faith** (Hebrews 11:1, 6).
- d. **We need to be submitted:**
 - to God (James 4:7);
 - to one another (Ephesians 5:21);
 - to church leaders (Hebrews 13:7,17).

e. **We need to be filled with the Spirit** (Ephesians 5:18).

f. **We need to be prayerful** (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

- Are there any other points that you think should be added to the above list?

3. How do we do warfare?

‘For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.’

2 Corinthians 10:4-6

- a. It is **very** important to note that we cannot enter into warfare until our own obedience is fulfilled! This is our warfare **positioning** (posture). This by itself is called **Lifestyle Warfare**.
- b. Knowing the armour of God (our weapons) is of paramount importance, (Ephesians 6:10-17) especially knowledge of the Word of God, which is our Sword of the Spirit.
- c. We need to inquire of the Lord. Notice how many times in 1 Samuel 23 David inquires of the Lord. Also see 2 Samuel 5:19.
- d. Know what the Word says about it (1 Timothy 1:18-19; Philippians 4:4-6).

A Time for Peace . . .

‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.’
Matthew 5:9

- We are called to the ministry of reconciliation through Christ. Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

We are His ambassadors and, as we extend peace, we spread the fragrance of the gospel (Proverbs 17:9; James 3:18).

- How can you spread His peace to the people around you?

Conclusion

We are called to engage ruthlessly in battle against the enemy. However, we are also called to be peacemakers, bringing a sense of faith, hope and love to those around us.

Ministry

Spend time waiting on the Lord. Ensure that you know how to prepare yourself for spiritual warfare. (All soldiers undergo screening, training, and preparation for battle). Ask Him to show you the areas in your life where you need to be warring, and for opportunities to be peacemakers.

Prayer Focus

- Pray for our government and your spiritual leaders. We need to keep Godly instructions coming through to them.
- Thank God for peace in our country, that we are not in a war. Pray for areas where government needs to hear the hearts of the people and respond to their needs.



Many of us know that 25 December is not the real date on which Jesus was born. The early Christians adopted this date for their celebration of Christmas because at that time all kinds of pagan festivals were celebrated on that day. Rather than join in the pagan festivities, the Christians chose to celebrate the birth of Christ.

With time, the Christmas celebrations started to influence and overtake the pagan festivals. And so non-Christians started to celebrate Christmas. Although they often did so in a non-religious way, the spirit of Christmas – goodwill, compassion and peace – was, and still is, emphasised. Ultimately, however, these good qualities still point back to the Christ of Christmas. Let's continue to spread the spirit of Christmas, which is the fragrance of Christ, to those we meet (especially in the long Christmas shopping queues).

Although we live in a world that does not always celebrate Christmas correctly, most people are reminded in this season, that there is a REASON for Christmas.

A little story:

In 1914, during the first year of World War 1, there was an unofficial truce between the German and British troops in France. Soldiers on both sides spontaneously began to sing carols, and stopped fighting. The truce began on Christmas day and continued for some time afterwards.

Let's trust the Lord for truces, reconciliations and miracles of our own to take place at this time. It is the season of miracles. We are celebrating a miraculous occurrence; the birth of a Saviour!

Suggestions for Your Christmas Celebration:

- Testimony time! Invite friends, bring eats, and ask each person to share a testimony from the year.
- Invite someone to show you how to make decorations for Christmas, e.g. table decorations, decorations for your house or Christmas tree, or Christmas cards. (The symbolism of a Christmas tree is not linked to Christianity – it is simply an object of beauty which often creates a celebratory atmosphere).
- Come together and bake cookies for the Christmas holiday. (Being part of a group of women working together in a kitchen is an unforgettable experience!)
- Plan beforehand to do something that will lighten the load of one of our ministries.
- Get someone to demonstrate the baking of a Christmas delicacy.
- Ask at IMD (our missions department) if there is anything that you as a group can do to assist one of our missionary couples.
- Feel free! You are an incredibly creative group of women. I'm sure you can come up with a lot of your own ideas. Go for it!



Satan called a worldwide convention. In his opening address to his evil angels, he said, 'We can't keep the Christians from going to church. We can't keep them from reading their Bibles and knowing the truth. We can't even keep them from forming an intimate, abiding relationship experience in Christ. If they gain that connection with Jesus, our power over them is broken.'

So let them go to their churches, let them have their conservative lifestyles, but steal their time, so they can't gain that relationship with Jesus Christ. This is what I want you to do angels: distract them from gaining hold of their Saviour and maintaining that vital connection throughout their day!

'How shall we do this?' shouted his angels. 'Keep them busy in the non-essentials of life and invent innumerable schemes to occupy their minds,' he answered. 'Tempt them to spend, spend, spend and borrow, borrow, borrow. Persuade the wives to go to work for long hours and the husbands to work 6-7 days a week, 10-12 hours a day so they can afford their empty lives. Keep them from spending time with their children. As their family fragments, soon, their home will offer no escape from the pressures of work!!'

'Over-stimulate their minds so that they cannot hear that still, small voice. Entice them to play the radio or cassette player whenever they drive. To keep the TV, VCR, CDs and their PCs going constantly in their homes. And see to it that every store and restaurant in the world plays non-biblical music constantly. This will jam their minds and break that union with Christ.'

'Fill the coffee table with magazines and newspapers. Pound their minds with the news 24 hours a day. Invade their driving moments with billboards. Flood their mailboxes with junk mail, mail order

catalogues, sweepstakes, and every kind of newsletter and promotional offering free products, services, and false hopes. Keep skinny, beautiful models on the magazines so that the husbands will believe that external beauty is what is important, and they'll become dissatisfied with their wives. Ha! That will fragment those families quickly!

'Even in their recreation, let them be excessive. Have them return from their recreation exhausted, disquieted, and unprepared for the coming week.'

Don't let them go out in nature to reflect on God's wonders. Send them to amusement parks, sporting events, concerts and movies instead. Keep them busy, busy, busy!! And when they meet for spiritual fellowship, involved them in gossip and small talk, so that they leave with troubled consciences and unsettled emotion.'

'Go ahead, let them be involved in soul winning. But crowd their lives with so many good causes they have no time to seek power from Christ. Soon they'll be working in their own strength, sacrificing their health and family for the good of the cause. It will work! It will work!'

It was quite a convention. And the evil angels went eagerly to their assignments causing Christians everywhere to get busy, busy, busy and to rush here and there.

I guess the question is: has the devil been successful at his scheme? You be the judge!

- B – Being
- U – Under
- S – Satan's
- Y – Yoke