

EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



**MINISTER'S HANDBOOK
FOR
CHRISTIAN ORDINANCES**

by

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Book 114

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WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

Professor Simon Greenleaf was one of the most eminent lawyers of all time. His "Laws of Evidence" for many years were accepted by all States in the United States as the standard methodology for evaluating cases. He was teaching law at a university in the United States when one of his students asked Professor Greenleaf if he would apply his "Laws of Evidence" to evaluate an historical figure. When Greenleaf agreed to the project he asked the student who was to be the subject of the review. The student replied that the person to be examined would be Jesus Christ. Professor Greenleaf agreed to undertake the examination of Jesus Christ and as a result, when he had finished the review, Simon Greenleaf personally accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

Professor Greenleaf then sent an open letter to all jurists in the United States saying in part "I personally have investigated one called Jesus Christ. I have found the evidence concerning him to be historically accurate. I have also discovered that Jesus Christ is more than a human being, he is either God or nothing and having examined the evidence it is impossible to conclude other than he is God. Having concluded that he is God I have accepted him as my personal Saviour. I urge all members of the legal profession to use the "Laws of Evidence" to investigate the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and if you find that he is wrong expose him as a faker but if not consider him as your Saviour and Lord"

HOW CAN I BE SAVED?

Salvation is available for all members of the human race.

Salvation is the most important undertaking in all of God's universe. The salvation of sinners is never on the basis of God's merely passing over or closing His eyes to sin. God saves sinners on a completely righteous basis consistent with the divine holiness of His character. This is called grace. It relies on God so man cannot work for salvation, neither can he deserve it. We need to realise that the creation of this vast unmeasured universe was far less an undertaking than the working out of God's plan to save sinners.

However the acceptance of God's salvation by the sinner is the most simple thing in all of life. One need not be rich, nor wise, nor educated. Age is no barrier nor the colour of one's skin. The reception of the enormous benefits of God's redemption is based upon the simplest of terms so that there is no one in all this wide universe who need be turned away.

How do I become a Christian?

There is but one simple step divided into three parts. First of all I have to recognise that I am a sinner (Romans 3:23; 6:23; Ezekiel 18:4; John 5:24).

Secondly, realising that if I want a relationship with Almighty God who is perfect, and recognising that I am not perfect, I need to look to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour (I Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:6; John 3:16).

Thirdly, by the exercise of my own free will I personally receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour, believing that He died personally for me and that He is what He claims to be in an individual, personal and living way (John 1:12; 3:36; Acts 16:31; 4:12).

The results of Salvation

The results of this are unbelievably wonderful:
My sins are taken away (John 1:29),
I possess eternal life now (I John 5:11,12),
I become a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17),
The Holy Spirit takes up His residence in my life (I Corinthians 6:19),
And I will never perish (John 10:28-30).

This truthfully is life's greatest transaction. This is the goal of all people; this is the ultimate of our existence. We invite and exhort any reader who has not become a Christian by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ to follow these simple instructions and be born again eternally into God's family (Matthew 11:28; John 1:12; Acts 4:12; 16:31).

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MINISTER'S HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION

The concept behind this project came from one of our pastor-mentors who has taught the Certificate in Pastoral Theology from EBCWA for a number of years. In the first world we are used to having free availability of so called "Pastoral Handbooks" from the many denominations but these are too expensive or unavailable in many places. They are also sectarian in their focus, often putting a strongly "Baptist", "Presbyterian", or "Episcopalian" emphasis, and so they are often unhelpful for the student, who seeks to be simply biblical and spiritual in his/her emphasis as they celebrate the ordinances of the Church with God's people.

While many will only speak of two "ordinances" for the Church (Baptism and Communion), I will take the widest definition of "Biblical Ordinances" as passed to the Early Church, by the actions/teaching of the Lord Jesus and the Apostles, (**Jude 1-3**), and will include the following in the discussion.

1. Dedication of Parents/Children to the establishment of a godly family.
2. Water Baptism of believers upon confession of their faith in Jesus as Lord and Saviour.
3. Weekly worship services celebrating the Resurrection Victory of the Lord.
4. Communion/Eucharist – as the celebration of the fellowship of the saints in the local church.
5. Marriage – as the foundation of all stability in the societies of men.
6. Anointing/Dedication of godly, gifted, and called believers to ministry roles in the local church.
7. Funerals – as the public opportunity to proclaim the Lord's victory over sin and Death.

This is, as it is labelled, a "Minister's Handbook". It is designed for ministers of the local church and all who are called to Eldership in the local church that they might be able to think biblically through the issues that surround the application of the Church Age Ordinances into the ministry of the local church. It is not "prescriptive", but a framework for each pastor under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to develop a Christ honouring public service for each "ordinance". Please go well beyond this – this manual is a starting point – not an end point.

These are not "**sacraments**" that, by definition, minister grace, forgiveness, absolution, or any other thing. They are not magical rituals that minister power, and should never be spoken of as such. Satan is the one who delights in rituals that make people feel special, powerful, and important, and as we will see anything that creates this impression is from the enemy. "**Ordinances**" are there to illustrate and teach spiritual aspects of our relationship with the Lord and Saviour. The definition of an ordinance is an "authoritative rule/order/routine as laid down by a governing body". They are to be seen as the shared reflections of apostolic teaching that the local church is to share in together to express their faith and their community identity.

They are not to be "dress up" impressive rituals, but real reflections of spiritual relationship, undertaken in holy humility and shared worship by all the church membership. Elders have the responsibility to lead these, as their spiritual mentor role requires, but all must be ready to partake in a reflective and "other" focused heart. The Biblical Church "Ordinances" reflect our union with Jesus and our community of faith with the apostles and early church membership, and bind us together in time with those who went before, and with all who share them today.

It should be noted that the purpose of this little guide, like all our material, is to assist any Christian Leader in growing in the knowledge and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that they can become more effective servants of the body of Christ, and be more Christ like in their service to the Lord's people. It is not to be followed, or read from to take services, for we are all urged to be daily "filled in the Holy Spirit", Ephesians 5:18, and we are to walk close to the Lord in all we do, under His direction, not slavishly following the prescriptions of men. This booklet is only the starting point for you to develop services. Each of us is responsible to stand before the Lord and answer for how we handle these things, and so let us prayerfully work through these topics.

Everything we do in the local church is to be about Jesus, and the divine ordinances passed to the Early Church through the Lord and the holy Apostles, all teach us more about Jesus and our relationship to Him. All that speaks about Jesus must be spoken of and celebrated with reverence and proper attention to the details revealed by scripture. We must not be casual about such things. This document is the start of your service preparation, not the end, for each of us must stand before the Lord and give account of our service, and it must be "our service", not a pale imitation of another's format and ideas that we have borrowed.

- 2 Corinthians 5:9-20.** *"9. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.
10. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.
11. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.
12. For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.
13. For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.
14. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:
15. And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*

16. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.
17. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.
18. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;
19. To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.
20. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Many today believe that we have freedom to do whatever we want in the matter of ordinances, but that is to ignore the clear teaching of the Apostles. We are responsible to the Lord, and we need to remember he weighs all our works, and seeks holy and acceptable service. As a College we are unashamedly apostolic, and all we do rests upon the revelation "once delivered unto the Apostles" (**Jude 3**). We do not believe we have any mandate or permission from the Holy Spirit to go beyond the instructions given to the Apostles, except where apostolic practise allows for variance.

All that Scripture reveals magnifies Jesus, and that is what we seek to do. If you have any other agenda we would urge you to return to the Diploma Course and repeat its study material, or find another place to study, for **we will give you no comfort or permission to go a millimetre beyond the Apostle's teaching**. They did not do everything that we will discuss, (for example formal weddings), but we believe their teaching supports the things we suggest. We have selected our company and we will not change it – we want to be seen and judged in the company of God's holy Apostles, and we seek no other company.

Before studying this book the student is urged to complete all three Certificate Courses in the EBCWA Diploma, so that all the key doctrines of Systematic Theology, Biblical Theology and Pastoral Theology have been studied and mastered. This book will be drawing upon concepts studied in all three Certificates, and it is unwise for the Elder to celebrate the Church Age Ordinances without wisdom in the doctrines behind them.

The Holy Spirit will always keep us and guide us, but when we handle holy things, it is important to do so in holiness and wisdom, lest we give God's people the wrong impression by word or deed, and so fall under judgement.

- 2 Corinthians 4:1-7** "1. Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;
 2. But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.
 3. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:
 4. In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.
 5. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.
 6. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
 7. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

God's people still need "to see Jesus" (**John 12:21**), and not be distracted by the Minister by anything he/she does or says away from the centrality of the person, plan, power and purpose of the Lord Jesus for them and the church. The ordinances of the Church Age, given to the Apostles (Jude 3) are to be understood and handled properly by elders. Let us heed Paul and Solomon's words in our work in the local church. If we handle the things of God well, we will be blessed and we will be a blessing, but if we handle the things of God carelessly or ignorantly, we will be deceived and become deceivers. Casual attitudes by elders towards the celebration of the divine ordinances is the path of judgement, and with Communion especially, possibly even the "Sin unto Death"! **1 Corinthians 11:27-32**.

- Proverbs 16:21-28**. "21. The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.
 22. Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly.
 23. The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.
 24. Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.
 25. There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.
 26. He that laboreth laboreth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him.
 27. An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire.
 28. A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends."

The Systematic Theology course is to be completed well before this book is read for application, as it is critical that the Christian is well grounded in Theology before taking up any pastoral role and responsibility at all. We observe at this point that many local churches seem to operate on the principle of "learn as you go", and while this principle is true in part, it is dangerous when holy things are handled foolishly. I repent of some early "applications" of my own in this matter, for I did things in ignorance and worked foolishness and confusion as a result. Let us be careful in these things.

Everything we do in local church services ministers to others either truths or errors – service is a very serious thing. When you take any leadership role in the Church you also become the focused point for satanic attack, and unless you

know the Word, and walk in the Holy Spirit, you will be attacked and possibly be destroyed by him! An old childhood friend of mine became a Pentecostal “pop-up” church pastor. The church grew quickly and he took it over as “pastor” but didn't know the Word, nor value the importance of hearing apostolic policy and following it. I tried to assist, but he rejected systematic Bible study, preferring emotionalism to genuine spirituality, just doing what he “felt” God was saying. Within years the church faded, his marriage broke up, his children were in disarray, and later he suicided after running up great debt. Be very careful here! Proverbs 16:20, 2 Corinthians 4:1-2.

1 Peter 5:8-11. “8. *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*
 9. *Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.*
 10. *But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*
 11. *To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”*

All we do in the ordinances must teach truth carefully so that all might be built up in faith; not undermined and side tracked from the path of safety and truth. Grace can be undermined by legalism, and sacramental thinking established by pious nonsense in celebrating an ordinance. If the result of celebrating a biblical ordinance is the lifting up of the minister rather than the truth of scripture, and the person and work of Jesus, then we have got it wrong 100%.

All we do in the local church is to be designed to build up faith upon the holy foundation of apostolic teaching and practise, and that means lifting up Jesus, not embarrassing the Lord. Young believers are not to be given roles without training and instruction, lest they be ashamed, discouraged, or deceived into falsehood by sloppy practise. We are not to carelessly let believers “make mistakes” in their service, as such public shame may discourage their future service, and may even drive them from God’s people in shame. We are to teach and encourage all to know the truths and celebrate them with confident joy, and joyful, yet holy focused worship.

If people are hesitant to serve, let them heed the Holy Spirit’s urging and pause, study more, and pray more, and then move into service when they feel confident in the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit and their now solid belief in the truth of the Holy Scriptures. Church services are not the places to practise anything; all practise is to be done beforehand. If the singer cannot sing without embarrassing errors, then they practise privately and with friends/family until they can sing “as unto the Lord” without their mistakes distracting from the spirit of worship. This principle applies to all service.

If the Elder has not conducted a service before, then they are to practise in the Pastor’s “Preaching Class” until their fellow Elders/students feel uplifted by their service. God’s people are not guinea pigs to be experimented upon by people who are unused to handling holy things. We are to study to show ourselves holy and ready to serve publically – 2 Timothy 2:15 - we are not to make the services of the church into places where people are embarrassed and ashamed. All public service is to be saturated by private prayer, study, and preparation.

No-one is to serve publically in the ordinances unless they have first been “tested and approved” in private study and classes run by the senior pastor, lest shame come to them or the church. There is to be no untested service that brings any embarrassment upon the name of Jesus or the person of the servant. We are not to put people in a situation where they look foolish. People do not grow well by humiliation. We are here to build God’s people up, and that means we do not put them in a place where they might feel shame through lack of ability, gifting, calling, study, preparation, or practise!

2 Timothy 2:15 “15. *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*
 16. *But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.*
 3:14. *But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;*
 15. *And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*
 16. *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*
 17. *That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”*

FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS TO HAVE MASTERY OVER BEFORE SEEKING - OR BEING ASKED TO CONDUCT ANY ORDINANCE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

To become a student within our College, each person needed to prepare an “application dossier” for their local EBCWA training mentor. This dossier had the following information in it. Let us pause and reflect what has changed over the time of your study until this point when you stand to minister to the local church.

- [1] Full name, address, date of birth. (This won't of course change)
- [2] Two character references. (What would people say of you now - two+ years down track?)

- [3] The student's faith testimony. (How has your testimony changed? How has your faith grown?)
- [4] Their Academic record including all trade, professional or other qualifications. (What have you learned/advanced in?)
- [5] A summary of their Christian work since they were saved. (What have you done since starting the course?)
- [6] They had to explain their purpose in taking the Diploma course – now reflect upon that purpose now.
- [7] They had to think about the possibility of teaching the course locally as a mentor later. (How has this advanced?)
- [8] They then had to answer the questions below.

Question 1 - Explain the Character of God and why it is important.

Question 2 - Explain faith and resting in the Lord and explain why it is important.

Question 3 - Explain confession of sin and why that is important.

Question 4 - What is spirituality? How are you spiritual?

Question 5 - Why do believers suffer?

The things that the student is asked to reflect upon above are the things that now, having graduated they should revisit before beginning their service. I would invite all Elders reading this book to pause at this point and reflect upon their answers to the above five dossier questions now, after a couple of years of study and preparation for ministry. Some things do not change, but our understanding of others will have changed significantly. Reflect upon the things that have changed and what about them has changed. Especially reflect upon your deeper understanding of the Character of God and Spirituality.

You now seek to serve the Lord in the Local Church, and conduct the Ordinances of the Church. Pray now as you begin this study that you may reflect and mentor the holy character, purpose and power of God in all you do, so that every service you prepare from this little manual brings glory to the One who gave all for you.

TRANSLATIONS OF THIS MANUAL

The Lord may encourage you pastor to translate this Manual into another language. If that is done on a computer it may be possible for us to include it on a future CD which would greatly benefit others. Please email it to EBCWA and we will freely distribute it to assist others to the glory of the Lord, or simply share it within your own language/people group. Utilize the new on-line Google translating tools to their full benefit, and use your local language knowledge to correct anything the on-line translation APP has difficulty with, and then please share the material freely with all who will benefit from it. We live in days where the ability to run a document through an auto-translate Application is producing 95+% accurate documents – let us embrace this and use it to spread the Word to all who can read and hear it.

“THE LAST DAYS” – THE PASTORAL CONTEXT FOR OUR SERVICE

The intensified stage of the "Angelic Conflict" begins at the cross, resurrection and ascension of the Lord. This stage of world history is called the Church Age, but was also known by the Lord and the early believers as, "the Last Days". THIS IS THE PRESENT CONTEXT OF OUR SERVICE AS MINISTERS IN THE LOCAL CHURCHES. There are at least 18 characteristics of life in these days DESCRIBED BY PROPHETIC WORDS; characteristics of the Church, and truths recorded in advance in scripture about the type of people that you will meet in these last days. We must be knowledgeable about all these things, as this is our sphere of operation. We are to be prepared servants/soldiers/ambassadors, then we can serve and fight as the winners, in Christ, that the Scripture records we are.

The context for the exercise of the Church Age Ordinances is the reality of the intensified stage of the Angelic Conflict. This is why we must be so careful in our handling of the Ordinances – for we exercise these things in the presence of the angels – both those that applaud us and those that oppose us. **Hebrews 12:1-3** reminds us also that we are being watched by all those saints who have gone before, and they seek to praise God in heaven for our faithful service.

Paul (below) tells us to be ready to serve in difficult times, as the people that we are going to meet at times are not going to be very nice people, and they seek our hurt and the destruction of others. Be ready for them, recognise them and protect your flock against them. The threat is real, and as pastors we have a holy obligation to teach and serve in such a manner to be worthy of our Lord and protect the flock as he would have us do. Live in the truth and be strong against the evil one. These are the "Standing Orders" for all ministers of the Lord in these "last days".

2 Timothy 3:1-7.

"1. This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

2. *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*
3. *Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,*
4. *Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;*
5. *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*
6. *For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,*
7. *Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*
8. *Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith."*

The eighteen characteristics in this passage are a catalogue of the evils of selfishness, and self centeredness; both characteristics of Satan, who magnifies self above obedience to God. Remember also from your Systematic Theology study the strategies of Satan, for the essence of ministerial service involves establishing pastoral routines and practises that protect you and the flock of God from the known strategies of the enemy. At the heart of all Satan's strategies is self centeredness, rather than God centeredness. The ordinances are given to the Church to assist us in remaining centred in Christ and His Holy Word. They are not rituals, but portrayals of essential realities of our relationship with Him.

The practise of the Church Age Ordinances is to be Christ Centred – not following the enemy's religious viewpoint and being self centred! Let us remind ourselves of the enemy's viewpoint and ensure we stay as far away from these mental attitudes and behaviours as possible in our service to the Lord's people. Ritual is Satan's tool to keep people entertained, and the ordinances are never to become polite and "dress up" rituals that draw attention to the minister, and make him feel important, or make others think he is special. They are to be reflections of our living spiritual relationship with Jesus our Lord and King, for that is their purpose.

The eighteen characteristics of those "captured already by the enemy", as recorded by Paul here, are;

1. Lovers of self - To be self centred means that everything is interpreted in terms of selfish concerns; it is a moral relativism that centres on the self rather than God or others. The exercise of the ordinances of the church will magnify the Lord's person and work in the life of the church and into the community. No ordinance must ever be a vehicle for self promotion for the minister, or an opportunity for any act of self centeredness. When people leave a service with the person of the minister in their mind he/she has failed in his/her holy duty.
2. Covetous - Lovers of money so that everything has a price and what is of value is what can be measured in dollar terms. No ordinance is ever to be conducted for money, praise, power, position or reputation. People may make donations to the pastor or the church after or even during an ordinance service, but the pastor must have his/her hands clean of any desire for money.
3. Boasters - We would say people like this are "full of hot air"; they have neither substance nor heart, but love to speak great words about themselves. Humble exercise of the ministerial duty regarding the ordinances is to be the characteristic of all celebration of them in the local church. No pastor is to be a boaster about how well they conduct services.
4. Pride - Arrogance knows no bounds when the opinion of God is ignored and the self is the sole criteria for decision making. Beware this satanic warning sign – for pride indicates the heart is unstable and the feet will soon fall into a hole the devil digs for all those who believe their own publicity.
5. Blasphemers - When people think they know better than God they very quickly move on to directly insult God and his words, for they don't think they are bound by the rules that govern those who are, in their eyes, foolish enough to believe in God! Do not arrogantly go beyond what the Scriptures teach regarding the ordinances lest you fall into this great sin.
6. Disobedient to parents - At heart a nation's strength is rooted in the strength and respect within the family unit. Where children grow up to despise, disobey, or ignore their parents they will grow up without a healthy sense of discipline. The society will then suffer as the child who does not respect its own parents will not often respect the life or property of others. This point applies equally to children and parents; parents must live so as to be worthy of respect and children must respect as far as they are able their parents. Even within the ministerial office, when parents are possibly quite old, the pastor is to be judged on the basis of his/her treatment of them. We are to be characterised by loving care and concern, not pious neglect.
7. Unthankful - This term sums up a trait of people who are in evil that often baffles others. Why is it that you can do wonderful things for some people and they will despise you and insult you for the good you have done them, or they will use your very kindness against you? The answer is here. People who get into evil and false doctrine will lose all perspective and have as their character trait an ungratefulness that is destructive and nasty. Be a minister known for thankfulness; both towards God and God's people who support the ministry.
8. Unholy - Holiness means to be set apart for God and his service, and unholiness means the reverse; to be set apart for self and evil rather than God. "Unholy" in effect means to be active in the service of the enemy. We handle the

ordinances of the church in holiness! There is to be no casual, flippant, or disrespectful attitudes or actions in any service that involves an ordinance of the Church Age.

9. Without natural affection - No capacity for love is an indication of deeper and more dangerous aspects of a person's nature. When people love only themselves they are incapable of truly loving others. All the ordinances are about the love of the Lord for us and this love is to be reflected in the service conducted.
10. Trucebreakers - When people have morality that is rooted in self interest you can be sure of only one thing with them; that you cannot be sure of them at all. They will be as stable as the wind is! These are people whose word you cannot trust, whereas the minister who conducts the holy things of God must be trusted in all his/her words.
11. False accusers - Malicious gossips will abound where-ever self is king. If we will not talk about the Lord and His Word to them they will talk about everything and anything else, as if it were important. Let all who handle the things of God be known for their enthusiastic and passionate words about the things of the Lord.
12. Incontinent - No self control. People who follow their whims and fancies as if they were truth and righteousness, where-as they are simply lust and desires. All who would conduct the ordinances of the Church Age must be self (read Holy Spirit) controlled in all things. As we serve the Lord in these services we must not allow any emotion to destabilize us, but be solely focused upon the things of God and the magnifying of the Lord's person and work. No personal agenda or belief must distract us from the Lord's work in these things.
13. Fierce - Brutal men are Satan's men. Gentle men are God's servants. There is no place in the church for those who will tear another person apart with their words or their hands. We are not to be fierce like wild dogs, but gentle like our Lord. A fierce violent man is a false brother: a fierce and vicious woman is a false sister.
14. Despisers of those who are good - A man is known by his company and by those he loves. No good man will despise good men, but every evil man will. Look at the company others keep and see where their hearts are. Ministers must be lovers of the good!
15. Traitors - If a person is dishonourable they will betray you without thought. Evil has no standards other than self gratification, and betrayal of the good for temporary gain is to be expected from evil men. Loyalty is a characteristic of true ministers.
16. Heady - Thoughtlessness is another trait of the evil man. They do not think about consequences, they are rash and foolish, lacking foresight and concern for others. This is one of the reasons I discussed above the importance of practise and mentorship for all who would handle the Church Ordinances. All done is to be thoughtfully and prayerfully prepared for.
17. High minded - While being rash and foolish themselves they use such terms of others. They do not see any problems with their own behaviours, for they are perfect in their own eyes. Beware of ceasing to examine yourself daily – for only in prayerful self examination is sin eliminated that would otherwise defile service.
18. Pleasure lovers - Their God is their belly. Philippians 3:19. They do things to feel good rather than because they are good, and will be of benefit for them and others. The sole focus of all services that involve the Ordinances is the blessing of others – they have nothing to do with the pleasure for the minister. We receive great joy in the Spirit as we serve, but our service is not for pleasure, but for blessing to be given to Christ's people.

WHERE DOES THE POWER COME FROM? (FRUIT INSPECTION – NOT FAKE “RITUALS” – Matthew 7:13ff)

This terrible list above is all too common in our day as it was in Paul's day. It is just another sign of the impact of evil upon the world. These are the things that Satan and his workers (both demonic and human) aim to foster within the churches, for these things will keep people away from God and God's purposes for them. We must set our hearts and minds firmly against any behaviour or thought that leads to this defiled way of living. In the fifth verse Paul identifies the central point about these people. The truly frightening thing is, we must remember that these people are often in the churches, and in Paul's day they were claiming to be more spiritual than the genuine believers.

True spirituality centres in the issue of power; the false brother/sister has the power and the life style than comes from the self and Satan, while we are to have the power and life that comes from God. You remember from your previous study that Pastoral Theology is all about assisting people to live in God's power in the Christian community, and then into the wider community. Ministry is often characterised by weekly challenging them to see the difference between human viewpoint and divine viewpoint, human power and techniques, and genuine Holy Spirit enabled power.

Remember always, Satan's objective is not to make people into the town drunk, his real coup is to make them self righteous legalistic hypocrites, and if he can get them into the ministry, he really creates chaos amongst God's people. The town drunk all too often gets saved, but the false/fake believer rarely does, for their hypocrisy is their permanent shield against truth. Satanically deceived people have no real power except what pride can produce, and it produces the

above list rather than the list of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 6. Satan's policy is to rob people of God's power and distract them from God's purpose, and keep them blinded to truth by self centeredness.

Pastoral Theology applied, is the Holy Spirit empowered organisation of the church's activities in a way that constantly is keeping God's policies and power to the forefront, and constantly warning the Lord's people away from the distracting temptations of the enemy. The Church Age Ordinances are to be a formal reflection of Holy Spirit empowered living in seven key community relationships and worship activities.

The Commentator W Hendricksen notes, "These (false) people lack spiritual dynamite. They have no love for God, nor for his revelation in Jesus Christ, nor for his people. Hence, since they are not spirit filled men, it is not surprising that they lack power", (Pastoral Epistles, page 286). They are great pretenders, phoney, and empty of both genuine power and true eternal hope. They are peddlers of rituals, but have no spiritual reality. In Jude 12 they are referred to as, "clouds without rain", promising much to a hungry land but delivering nothing of value, nor meeting any real need. Our handling of the "ordinances" is to deliver the opposite to God's people, and witness to the community to the spiritual truth we hold, and the reality of the power we manifest.

Many in the world want a religion that does not require much of them. Satanic alternatives to the truth are religious and ritualistic. They demand little real change to sinful life patterns, or anything that would disturb the Old Sin Nature. Genuine Christianity is not the choice of the self centred but a weak counterfeit ritualistic faith often is. We must keep reminding ourselves that the enemy's chief desire is to keep people from seeing their need of a Saviour, and then hindering them from following their Lord and Saviour. Satan wants people comfortable and distracted from eternal realities. He doesn't care much about what distracts people, and will use sin, evil, as well as "good works" to do so.

Pastoral Theology looks at the many things we need to employ to ensure people are always aware of eternal realities so that they walk in the Holy Spirit's power and the light of biblical truth. All genuine practical theology is about stopping spiritual deception leading the flock astray from biblical truth. Pastoral Theology's heart is all about genuine and full care for the flock of God. The Church Age Ordinances are central to this as they all proclaim in some way the truths of the Lord's person and work and his impact upon our daily life and community involvement in this present world.

Robert Mounce, in his Commentary on Timothy, is scathing but accurate when he says, "(these) people want a religion that requires nothing and changes nothing. A bit of rustic tradition totally inoffensive to anyone. Keep away from people like that, is Paul's advice to Timothy". (1 Timothy, page 134). As Jesus put it to his disciples in **Matthew 7:13-23**, spot their fruit and correctly identify them as the enemy, not your brethren! The enemy has more "secret/destructive agents" in the church than there are Holy Spirit filled ministers – so be very careful – be a fruit inspector well before you give your trust to any man or woman!

Paul is strong in his command to avoid such false brothers. As the Lord's servants in ministry we are to keep on turning away from any who are like this. At any point where such people are identified they are to be rejected and avoided, and this would appear to involve both the public and church social life, and private life. Such people are to be seen as "anathema", **1 Corinthians 16:22**, and are to be fled from as if they have the plague, for spiritually they have a terrible plague!

Let us all join with Dr Harry Ironside in his heart felt prayer. He died here in New Zealand on a visit to see extended family, and so I feel particularly close to him. "God, give us to be genuine, to be real, that eternal things may so grip our souls that we will live and do the work and be real witnesses for him". (H A Ironside, Commentary on 1 Timothy, page 220). These Church Age Ordinances are always to be administered in a real Holy Spirit empowered manner, never as the rituals of dead and fake religion. We must not resemble in any way the fakes of "Christendom".

False teachers are portrayed by Paul as vile and slimy "worms" who will stoop to anything to achieve their self centred goals. The verb translated "creep" is one that indicates the character and purpose of the false teachers. They are like thieves, and the analogy is a close one for they try to steal the stability and joy of all they target. They act like thieves and actually "target" those who are potentially weak and vulnerable.

Remember, Pastoral Theology is about pastoral care, looking after and protecting those who are vulnerable and weak, and doing all in the Holy Spirit's power to assist them to become strong, stable and spiritually powerful and active. The Church Age Ordinances are designed by the Lord to be the public rituals that stabilize the vulnerable and strengthen all in the truths that will keep them from the devious enemies of all truth.

The pastor protects the flock by guarding against evil men and women getting power and influence, but also by teaching the truths of God's Word which will protect the young believers with knowledge so biblical discernment can be learned. All the Church's Ordinances teach significant stabilizing truths that will over time, through their practise, assist all believers to overcome any vulnerability from their pagan past or childhood trauma experiences. The fellowship of the saints and the services of the saints when they gather as a local church are all to be things that build us up and strengthen us in our holy walk before the Lord.

If we fail to hear, study, believe, and apply the principles of the Holy Word in our services we will end up believing any old nonsense, and the result will be we are "used" by those who are the religious "con men" of society. All who are conned

are personally responsible for the situations they get into, for they have not taken the precautions that Paul has urged. Only the foolish are fooled, but God help the pastor who has not taught truth, for then the Lord will hold them responsible.

Ezekiel 3:17-20. *“17. Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.*

18. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

19. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

20. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling-block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand.”

Pastoral Care means the pastor cares enough to tell the flock the truth of God’s Word, and teach in such a way as to protect them with full knowledge of the truth, so that they have no excuse! If the pastor does not tell the flock the truth, then the Lord holds the pastor responsible for the flock’s troubles! **Ezekiel 2:3-8, 3:8-11, 17-19, 33:1-7.** Read all of these verses, for the Lord’s words to Ezekiel are His words to every pastor of his flock. It is a serious thing to have the care over God’s people and that care and attention to detail comes to a fine point in the correct handling of the Ordinances.

Peter warns us of the deviousness of the enemy by using the lion analogy for Satanic attack. **1 Peter 5:8-9.** Lions target the animal they wish to kill very carefully. They pick the weak, the sick, but particularly the animal that is isolated from the rest of the herd. Any believer that is sick or weak spiritually is so because of failure to apply the Word into the very fabric of daily life, and they are isolated because they have got away from their brethren in the Lord and are no longer sharing the Ordinances together.

Pastoral care is about keeping the flock together, well fed by the Word, protected by good systems that keep false brethren away, and focused on the true tasking of the church in showing love to each other, and outward missions to the world. As we have received from the Lord, we serve with servant hearts, celebrating the Ordinances He gave to bring glory to His Holy name, and bind his people together in the fellowship of the truth. **Matthew 28:18-20.**

People are often vulnerable as they walk through this world. **Firstly** they are vulnerable when they are “laden with sins”. If they have not been dealing with their sins on a moment by moment basis in accordance with Scripture, **1 John 1:9**, they will become more and more vulnerable to satanic attack as they hide their weaknesses rather than dealing with them. **Secondly** they are vulnerable when fearful of truth, and so walking through life lacking true spiritual discernment. Sin in the life hinders spiritual growth, and stops learning vital and life saving truths, and then the con artists of Christendom target the vulnerable person, deceive them, and destroy them. **2 Timothy 3:6-7, Jude 4.**

Pastors are to guard God’s people from evil men, and break down vulnerability, replacing it by Holy Spirit filled biblically sound living with Holy Spirit empowered discernment. Preaching the whole counsel of God’s Word verse by verse protects the Lord’s people, for they will then hear many messages on repentance from sin and avoidance of evil. Regular challenge to deal with sins that will otherwise trip them up protects people as they obey the Word, confess their sins, and make straighter paths for their feet, so they fall less easily next time. **Hebrews 12:12-15.**

Pastoral practise is rooted and grounded upon the foundation of Systematic Theology, and upon a full and truthful understanding of the nature and power of sin and the Old Sin Nature. Confession of sin is only half the story, but it is a crucial first half, and it alone opens the door in holiness for the Ordinance of Communion. Theology teaches truth that saves and sanctifies us, and then the ordinances reflect that truth and build upon it with fellowship centred activities that celebrate all God has done and is doing with us.

The Church Age Ordinances remind us of all the truths that assist us in walking in holiness before the Lord. The second issue Paul raises in 2 Timothy 3 is that the “foolish ones” are being “led away with their various lusts” rather than resisting them. Strong desires are not to be heeded; they are to be discerned! If a desire is good it can be followed but if it is wrong it is to be resisted and as James warns us we cannot blame God if we fall due to our own lusts being given power over us. **James 1:13-15.**

The enemy will always have someone or something to lead us away from the truth, for he specialises in alternatives to truth! Strong desire is simply that, strong desire! Its strength is no guarantee of truth or goodness! We are to remember that God requires holiness and that always involves discernment and holy decision making. **Hebrews 12:16-29.**

The **third** characteristic of the “victim mentality” (vulnerable and foolish person) is that they are “always learning new things”, yet never really gaining or growing in spiritual strength from their knowledge. What is the problem here? Is there something wrong with the Word of God, or is it a problem with the preacher and/or the hearers? Pastors are seriously challenged to “get it right” in all they do, and we will emphasize this truth in this little manual. We are under double discipline if we mess up what the Lord calls us to do as we see in the Corinthians passages.

The Bible makes it clear that the problem is mainly the forgetful hearer, **James 1:19-25.** As Hebrews 4:2 identifies, the issue is that the word has not been mixed with faith in the hearers, and therefore not been applied to daily life. Without

application there is no understanding and no growth. Without doctrine applied the people perish. Pastoral care ensures the people hear the truth, and are urged/exhorted to apply the truth into their daily life, and the church is organised in such a way that there are lots of opportunities to hear the truth and be encouraged by others to apply it. The Church Age Ordinances are the stability factor for the church services, as their constant and regular message is holiness grounded in daily life events.

Pastoral care means that the church is set up and run in such a way that prayer, serious practical Bible study, and service, are all "normal" things and people are daily encouraged to do them at every turn they take in daily life. The Ordinances are also celebrated in such a way that all who attend the services receive the truth about the godly foundations of the Plan of God for mankind in the Church. Some will fail to pay attention to all this, but the pastor has the responsibility before the Lord to ensure they have done all they can to be blameless if the flock do not obey!

FALSE TEACHERS (Let us not be like them in any way at all!)

The false teachers will be able to be depended on in one matter; they will always oppose all who stand for the truth! They keep on opposing (present active indicative) the truth. They cannot abide the truth and must oppose it at all points lest they are convicted by the message. The two men mentioned in 2 Timothy 3:8 and following, Jannes and Jambres, opposed Moses, and for every early miracle Moses did they counterfeited it with satanic power. They were totally convinced of their beliefs and even when the evidence of the superiority of Moses God came through they rejected it. They didn't want to know the truth!

Paul refers to them as, "men of corrupt minds". The word for corrupt indicates that they once had the truth and were intelligent but had let the evil within them get hold and the very strength of their mind became their weakness. This led to their being disqualified by God and declared "reprobate", or rejected by the potter as a bad pot. They are good for no worthy purpose and if they have belonged to the Lord they will be disciplined by him. God is in control and will deal with them finally but like Moses we may be called to stand against these people and we must be ready to oppose all who argue against the things that God requires. This is particularly important in the celebration of the Ordinances, for in them we teach and proclaim truths that the enemy will always seek to distort.

The trashcan of history is full of men and women like these false teachers and evil miracle workers. We are often baffled that so many false teachers and miracle workers exist, and yet a short study of biblical history reminds us that every genuine prophet and teacher has always been outnumbered by Satan's crowd of fakes! God does not pay his accounts on the 20th of each month! Some times these evil people survive for a long time, but eventually the truth comes out and they fall, and drop from sight. Their folly is finally seen by all. **2 Timothy 3:8-11**. We are not to be distracted by them, but hold the apostolic practise and teach and operate as the early church leadership did in all matters.

All believers must be ready to spot the false teachers as we have seen above, but even more than this we must focus our energy on trying to keep all the flock "safe" from attack from them. We are safe when we are walking as we should, and we are in danger of being deceived when we walk away from the Lord and his Word. As the old song says, we must, "trust and obey, for there is no other way, to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey!" Pastoral Theology is the study of all things that will enable this to happen as smoothly and naturally in the church as is possible.

Go through each of the following doctrines carefully, and ask yourself whether in all you do in the local church you are encouraging or facilitating the application of these principles, for each of these is central in the celebration of the Ordinances we will study below. All we do in the church services, whether in an auditorium, a field, a home group, or around a hospital bed must reflect these primal truths. The Church Age Ordinances must reflect these things, and be a visible witness to the truths of the Holy Word.

DOCTRINES

CHRISTIAN LIFE

1. God is pleased with believers
 - a) By asking for the right things. (1 Kings 3:9, 10)
 - b) By living a separated life. (2 Timothy 2:4)
 - c) By doing his will. (Hebrews 13:20, 21)
 - d) Walking in fellowship with him. (Hebrews 11:5, Genesis 5:24)
 - e) By praising God. (Psalm 69:30, 31)
 - f) By resting by faith in God's provision. (Hebrews 11:6)

2. The Christian life involves walking:
 - a) in the Truth (2 John 4)
 - b) by means of faith in wisdom (2 Corinthians 5:7, Colossians 4:5)
 - c) in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 25)
 - d) in Love (Ephesians 5:2)

- e) in newness of Life (Romans 6:4)
- f) worthy of our vocation. (Ephesians 4:1)
- g) worthy of the Lord (Colossians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:12)
- h) honestly as in the day (Romans 13:13)
- i) in good works (Ephesians 2:10)
- j) in light (Ephesians 5:8, 1 John 1:7)
- k) in Christ Jesus (Colossians 2:6)
- l) circumspectly (Ephesians 5:15,16)
- m) as ye ought (1 Thessalonians 4:1)

3. The Christian life demands honourable conduct:

- a) Believers have freedom in Christ (Galatians 5:1), but our conduct must not
 - i) harm the weak (1 Corinthians 8:9);
 - ii) be hypocritical (1 Peter 2:16);
 - iii) does not edify (1 Corinthians 10:23);
 - iv) lead to habits which enslave (1 Corinthians 6:12);
 - v) lead to self-indulgence (Galatians 5:13);
 - vi) offend personal conscience (Romans 14:5).

b) Our conduct towards God:

- i) Done in His Name. (1 Timothy 6:1)
- ii) As unto Him. (Colossians 3:23)
- iii) For His glory. (1 Corinthians 10:31)
- iv) To be worthy of Him. (1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:5)

c) Our conduct towards others:

- i) Be a good example. (Romans 14:7; 1 Timothy 4:12)
- ii) Worthy of our calling. (Ephesians 4:1)
- iii) Honest. (2 Corinthians 8:21)
- iv) Free from the appearance of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:22)
- v) Helpful to a neighbour. (Romans 12:18; 15:2)
- vi) Not a cause of stumbling. (Romans 14:13)
- vii) Honouring one's parents. (Colossians 3:20)
- viii) Honouring to the government. (Titus 3:1)
- ix) Must not entail unequal yoking. (2 Corinthians 6:14)
- x) Not to judge others (Romans 14:10-13)
- xi) Not to cause others to stumble by our actions (Romans 14:15, 21-23)

d) Our conduct towards self:

- i) Pure and not lustful. (1 Timothy 5:22; 1 Peter 2:11)
- ii) Must not defile. (1 Corinthians 3:17; Titus 1:15)
- iii) Must not condemn. (Romans 14:22)
- iv) Must do good works. (Titus 3:8)

e) This conduct is only obtainable under the filling of the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18; 1 John 1:9).

4. The Christian life demands diligence:

a) Love towards others. (Galatians 2:10, 2 Corinthians 8:8). We should be eager to help those who are less fortunate than ourselves especially by giving them the gospel.

b) We should be keen to take care of the saints (other believers) (Hebrews 6:11, 2 Corinthians 7:12, 2 Corinthians 8:16, 17, 2 Timothy 1:17)

c) We should be eager to rest in the promises and principles of God. Happiness comes from this. An example of not resting in the promises is the Exodus generation. (Hebrews 4:11)

d) Confirmation of our calling (2 Peter 1:5, 2 Peter 1:10) We should witness for Christ eagerly, zealously.

e) Unity of the body. (Ephesians 4:3) We should be zealous in maintaining the unity of the body.

f) For the commendation of God. (2 Timothy 2:15). Be eager to show yourself approved by God.

g) To have a life without spot or blemish. (2 Peter 3:14) We should walk close to the Lord and not expose ourselves to unnecessary areas of temptation.

CHRISTIAN LIFE – PRIORITIES

1. The First Person - Jesus Christ has ultimate priority - Colossians 1:16-18
2. The First Possessions - The kingdom of God, the greatest gift - Matthew 6:33
3. The First Offering - the giving of oneself - 2 Corinthians 8:5
4. The First Denial - the denial of self - Matthew 7:5
5. The First Discipline - the discipline of prayer - 1 Timothy 2:1-4
6. The First Commandment - to love God supremely - Matthew 22:37-38
7. The First Excuse - too busy to have time for God - Matthew 8:21-22

CHRISTIAN LIFE – DEPOSITS

The Christian life has a number of deposits:

1. **First Deposit** - at salvation the believer makes a deposit with the Lord. (2 Timothy 1: 1 2) You deposit your life with the Lord.
2. **Second Deposit** - in the Christian life the Lord deposits Bible doctrine with the believer - through teachers and personal study. (2 Timothy 1: 1 4)
3. **Third Deposit** - the believer in the Christian way of life deposits his fears, problems, pressures, (I Peter 4:19) with the principle being found in (I Peter 5:7, Psalm 55:22)
4. **Fourth Deposit** - the believer in the Christian way of life deposits the gospel with the unbeliever. (Romans 1: 14)

CHRISTIAN LIFE – LAWS OF LIBERTY AND RESPONSIBILITY

1. THE LAW WHICH WE ARE NOT UNDER - THE MOSAIC LAW

Christ fulfilled the requirements of the Mosaic Law (Matthew 5:17). If the Holy Spirit has control over us we automatically fulfil the righteousness of the Law.

2. THE LAW OF LIBERTY

This law is directed towards oneself. Biblically speaking you have the right to do certain things that will not cause you personally to fail the Lord in any way. (1 Corinthians 8:8)

3. THE LAW OF LOVE

This law takes other believers into consideration. In effect this law says that because of your love for the weaker brethren and in order not to offend or upset them you refrain from doing certain things which you have the liberty to do. You refrain not because they are wrong in themselves but rather you wish to help other believers rather than hinder them. (1 Corinthians 8:9)

4. THE LAW OF EXPEDIENCY

This law concerns the unbeliever. It is expedient that your life tells the world of Christ. The unbeliever has set up standards of conduct for the Christian. Therefore you refrain from or do certain legitimate things - not because they are wrong but because they may offend an unbeliever and prevent him from seeing the real issue that Christ Died For His Sins (1 Corinthians 9, 20-23)

5. THE LAW OF SUPREME SACRIFICE

This law is directed towards God. It involves the believer forsaking a completely legitimate function in life in order to more perfectly serve the Lord. Missionaries often function under this law when they live in primitive conditions on the mission field. This law can also operate under second and first world conditions. (Matthew 3:1-6)

6. PRINCIPLE:

As Christians we have liberty, but total freedom for ourselves may enslave others. We have to use our liberty in such a responsible manner that it does not infringe on the liberty of others. As Christians we must act responsibly, remembering we answer to the Lord. In all we do we lift Him up that the lost may be drawn to Him. (Ephesians 5:15)

TESTS FOR ALL MINISTERS CONDUCTING THE ORDINANCES

The tests for all ministers to daily apply to themselves are clearly stated by Paul. The eighteen characteristics of the false teachers above are balanced out and answered by the nine characteristics of the faithful minister. Let us test ourselves and challenge ourselves by these tests! We must "be holy" in our service, and that means "set apart" for the glory of the Lord not the glory of ourselves. Before we serve in the ordinances let us ensure we have holy hands. 1 Timothy 2:8.

1 Peter 1:13-19. *"13. Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;
14. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:
15. But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;
16. Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.
17. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:
18. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;
19. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:"*

1. **Doctrine** - Paul had no secret doctrines, everything was open and clear to be checked against Scripture and against his own and the Lord's life. Paul's teaching was plain speaking and all could see and hear it and assess it systematically. How transparent are we?
2. **Manner of life** - This refers to the way a person lives away from the pulpit, or place of teaching. In their daily walk do they live as they should? We must if we are to properly "adorn" the gospel message we give, and represent the truth in the celebration of the Ordinances. Titus 2:10.
3. **Purpose** - The word prothesis has a meaning that indicates Paul had a "guiding principle" for his life and it was to glorify Christ; he lived for that and so must Timothy and us all.
4. **Faith** - What he believed was seen by doctrine in practise in every decision of his life. We are to be tested as Paul was; when we face a decision do we apply "faith" to it, do we seek the Lord's will and apply his word? It is in this that we see faith applied. It is in our decision making that the world really sees what we believe!
5. **Long suffering** - The strong military word for gritting it out on a long campaign is one of the key fruits of the Holy Spirit. Being "big souled" is what we are called to and the mature believer will show this trait, it comes naturally to one walking in the Holy Spirit. As we celebrate the Lord's Ordinances we celebrate things that no personal emotion must intrude upon. Let us be Holy Spirit led in all things.
6. **Charity** - Agape love is another fruit of the Spirit that shows our status as believers and our right to speak as pastor. If we have no love, we are a clanging cymbal (1 Corinthians 13:1-13); we have nothing of substance to offer people.
7. **Patience** - Another fruit of the Spirit which emphasises that we are waiting on the Lord's time for things to happen rather than telling God what and when to do things. To wait on the Lord does not mean we are inactive, but that we are ready to move at all times, but seek clear guidance as to when and where. We are in no human rush, but seek God's timing and God's way. As we speak and conduct a service we are always open to the Holy Spirit's leading.
8. **Persecutions** - When one stands for the truth there will be those who attack you and this happened with Paul, for he stood for truth and those who preferred the lies of the enemy persecuted him. We are known by our friends and by our enemies, and Paul was proud to be on the receiving end of persecution from the enemy, it meant he was dangerous to them! How relaxed are we about receiving enemy attack?
9. **Afflictions** - To suffer for the truth in the body by persecution is one thing but the faithful pastor will often be called to suffer mentally with anguish and concern for others in the midst of his own pressures. It is this inner torment of soul for others that is in view here, and it is the lot of all who love the Lord and his people. Paul's testimony in 2 Corinthians 11:23-33, spells out much of the above, mentioning the things that had happened to that point in his ministry. Far more pressures had happened since he wrote that letter, although it is these first trials that he refers to, very likely as it was then he met and influenced Timothy so much as a young man. These early trials were etched onto Timothy's mind as he saw what it was to be a missionary pastor first hand.

What a challenge to us is this portrait of a pastor! As Mounce observes, "If believers today are not meeting persecution it is not because the world has come to appreciate goodness. It is rather because so few believers have determined to live genuinely Christian lives".

"The nearer we get to the end the higher is the rising tide of rebellion against God", (Ironsides).

We must be ready to face these things, and all who would enter the pastorate must be ready for this sort of life in advance of their training. "It is only for those who are both in the world and in Christ simultaneously that persecution becomes inevitable," (J Stott). Let us teach, mentor, and handle the ordinances of the Church in such a manner to bring glory to the Lord, and true doctrinal understanding, fellowship, and joy to the members of the churches we serve.

DOCTRINES

ANGELS – ANGELIC CONFLICT – OUR “BATTLE CONTEXT”

1. There is an angelic conflict and it is intimately related to our presence in this world.

2. ETERNITY PAST

[a] Initially God created angels. At creation we are told that there was unity as all the angels sang in unison.

[b] Satan as Lucifer with the title Son of the Morning was the head of the angels. Isaiah 14. Ezekiel 28:12-15

[c] It is noted that the Lord Jesus Christ is now called Son of the Morning in 2 Peter 1 showing that the Lord replaced Satan as a result of His victory at the Cross.

3. FALL OF SATAN

[a] Satan became proud and attempted a coup d'etat against God in Isaiah 14:12-17

[b] When Satan fell he took one third of the angels with him. Revelation 12:9.

[c] The angels who exist forever therefore fall into two permanent groups

(i) Elect Angels who remained faithful to God (1 Timothy 5:21)

(ii) Fallen angels who chose to follow Satan who fall into two categories:-

(1) Imprisoned ones who were made inoperative at the time of the Flood (Jude 6, 2 Peter 2:4)

(2) Demons who are currently operative (1 Corinthians 10:20, 21, Mark 5:1-20)

[d] There is therefore a spiritual warfare between elect and fallen angels, which affects the human race. (Ephesians, 6:12, Revelation 12)

4. SENTENCE ON THE FALLEN ANGELS

[a] In eternity past Satan and the fallen angels were judged and sentenced to the Lake of Fire - Matthew 24:51

[b] It would appear that Satan appealed against his sentence and said "how can a God of Love sentence any of his creatures to the lake of fire?"

[c] The answer is in the character of God who is HOLY as well as LOVE. His holiness can only judge sin and rebellion.

[d] The lake of fire therefore was not created for man. Man ends up in the lake of fire due to his own negative attitude towards God.

5. MAN'S ROLE IN THE ANGELIC CONFLICT

[a] This sentence which was given before man existed has not yet executed and will not be so until the end of the Millennium in Revelation 20:10.

[b] There must be a long lapse of time before the sentence is executed with this period being taken up with the whole of human history. Therefore the purpose of the existence of the human race and its relation to God can only be explained as a testimony to the angels.

[c] Through the creation of man God provides a clear legal witness to Satan and his angels of their sin. The whole of human history is to prove certain points to the angels. Things can happen in your life as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and these can only be explained as a testimony to the angels.

6. FALL OF MAN AND VICTORY OF THE GOD MAN

[a] Man starts off lower than the angels. Hebrews 2:9 tells us that Jesus Christ made Himself a little lower than the angels.

[b] Although Adam failed to be victorious the Lord Jesus Christ replaces Adam in history and won the battle in His humanity. 1 Corinthians 15:22 tells us that in Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive.

[c] A new form of creature judges come into existence and will judge the angels 1 Corinthians 6:1-3

7. SIMILARITIES BETWEEN ANGELS AND MAN

[a] Angels and mankind have a number of parallels with human free will being tested in exactly the same way as angelic free will.

[b] Angels began in innocence and full obedience to God (Job 38:7 Ezekiel 28:14-15)

Man began in innocence (Genesis 2:25)

Angels sinned - rebellion of Satan (Isaiah 14:12-14)

Man sinned - rebellion of Adam (Genesis 3:1-7)

Angels are divided into two categories - elect or fallen.

Man is divided into two categories - believers and unbelievers. (John 3:36)

8. ADAM AND FREEWILL

[a] God created Adam and Eve, to show Satan that mankind, created lower than angels (Hebrews 2:6-7), would choose to obey God. Mankind therefore, by a choice of freewill, would decide whether to obey God and be blessed, or to disobey God and be judged (the same choice that Satan had).

[b] A test was instituted for man's freewill - obedience to God or disobedience. (Genesis 2:16-17). Adam - and therefore all mankind - sinned and thereby rebelled against God. All of mankind, therefore, is in the same condition of sinful rebellion as Satan.

[c] However, God instituted another test of freewill for mankind - will they choose to return to God through Jesus Christ, or will they choose to continue in sin and rebellion (John 3:16, 2 Peter 3:9).

[d] Anyone who chooses to return to God will be saved; anyone who chooses to remain in rebellion to God will be judged in the lake of fire, the same fate as Satan (Matthew 25:41)

[e] Therefore, by the work of Christ on the cross, and man's freewill faith in Christ, God has vindicated His love to save and His justice to judge.

9. RESOLUTION OF THE ANGELIC CONFLICT

Stage 1 - Salvation - by faith, man is saved and made positionally superior to angels (Hebrews 2:6-7)

Stage 2 - Christian Walk - by faith, the believer overcomes Satan (Ephesians 6:10-17)

Stage 3 - Eternity - in Christ, the believer will judge Satan and his fallen angels (Hebrews 2:8, 1 Corinthians 6:3)

10. THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Angels watch the human race. (1 Corinthians 4:9, Ephesians 3:10, 1 Timothy 5:21, 1 Peter 1:12) Elect angels rejoice every time someone is saved (Luke 15:10)

11. THREE BASIC QUESTIONS

The angelic conflict answers three basic questions:-

[a] Why man? Inside man is a soul with mentality and freewill which when linked together resolves the angelic conflict, (Colossians 2:14-15, Hebrews 2). The cross is the real victory in the angelic conflict.

[b] Why sin? Sin resolves stage 1 of the plan of God (see paragraph 9). At the cross sin was judged and the barrier between man and God was removed so that man's relationship with God depends on his free will. Every time a person accepts Christ, elect angels rejoice. In the garden man was innocent and all he had to do was stay away from one tree. Now man is guilty he has to come to a tree (the cross). (Genesis 2:17, 1 Peter 2:24)

[c] Why suffering? Suffering resolves the issue in Stage 2. Suffering involves the promise principle. (1 Peter 1:7-8, Romans 5:2-4). Suffering is designed for blessing and is a further blow to Satan. It is to demonstrate the love of God in a way that cannot be done in eternity as in eternity there is no more sorrow, pain or death. (Revelation 21:4)

12. STAGES IN THE CONFLICT [SEE SATANIC ATTACK ON THE PLAN OF GOD]

[a] From the fall of man to the ascension of Christ the line of Christ and Jesus Christ himself were the target of attack. Once the ascension was a fact in history Satan was unable to attack the line of the Saviour.

[b] The resurrection, ascension and session of the Lord Jesus Christ caused intensification in the angelic conflict.

[c] Once Christ is glorified at the right hand of the Father the angelic conflict becomes intensified in the Church age.

[d] Every Church Age believer is now a target and because of this every believer has had special provisions made for him:

- (i) Indwelling of the Holy Spirit (John 14:17)
- (ii) Indwelling of Jesus Christ (John 14:23)
- (iii) Completed canon of Scripture (1 Corinthians 13:10)

13. PROGRESSION TO THE LAKE OF FIRE

This explains the actions of the Lord Jesus Christ from the time he sat down at the right hand of the Father until the Last Judgement. Psalm 110:1 says "The Lord [God the Father] said to my Lord [God the Son], Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

[a] The first stage – Insurgency warfare – Pentecost - Rapture

During this time He calls out the personnel who will replace the angelic council members who have been condemned 1 Corinthians 4:8, 6:1-3, 2 Timothy 2:12, Revelation 3:21

The angelic council comprises God and all the angels as seen in 1 Kings 22:19-23 and 2 Chronicles 18:18-23

[b] The second Stage – Rapture to Second Advent - Confrontation

During this time the new members of the angelic council are evaluated in relation to their divine and human good, rewarded [1 Corinthians 3:11-15], they lose their old sin nature and have a resurrection body. The rebellious members, Satan and his followers are cast out of heaven Revelation 12:4

[c] The third stage – Second Advent – Victory Stage

Christ casts Satan and the fallen angels into hell for a thousand years and rightfully asserts His authority.

[d] The fourth stage – The Last Judgement. The Lake of Fire was created for Satan and his angels Matthew 25:41

Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire with the demons and the unbelievers. Unbelievers join them in the Lake of Fire because they have not accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. The old creation is destroyed and a new heavens and a new earth provided by God. At that point all knees shall bow and the promise of making His enemies His footstool will have been fulfilled.

14. THE BELIEVERS AND RESULT OF THE ANGELIC CONFLICT

The result of the angelic conflict:

Stage 1 - Salvation - saved mankind is positionally superior to angels;

Stage 2 - Christian Walk - through suffering the believer develops his faith towards Christ to such an extent that he thereby shows the fallen angels the certainty of their doom;

Stage 3 - Heaven - In eternity the believer in his resurrection body will be physically superior to angels.

15. CONCLUSION

Through the fall of man Satan obtained control of the world though not necessarily control of mankind.

What makes it possible for man to live in the Devil's world and not be under his control? - Free will.

By using The Word of God you can make decisions that are completely against Satan and his concepts.

Satan is the ruler of this world. (2 Corinthians 4:4, John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11, Ephesians 2:2)

However we have the Bible - the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16) We should know it and use it.

LAST DAYS – CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LAST DAYS

Just as world conditions just before the flood indicated judgement was overdue so conditions now show that we are at the end of the last days. Do not despair when you look around – see these truths in the Word, and recognize that the power of the Holy Spirit is sufficient to undertake the warfare we are called to. **1 John 4:4**. Walk in the power of the Holy Spirit's Filling ministry believer, or you will be overwhelmed by the devious power of the enemy.

The "last days" are characterized by the following:

1. Preoccupation of people with physical appetites - Luke 17:27
2. Rapid advances in technology - Genesis 4:22
3. Grossly materialistic attitudes and interests - Luke 17:28
4. Uniformitarian attitudes and interests that reject prophetic truth - Hebrews 11:7
5. Inordinate devotion to pleasure and comfort - Genesis 4:21
6. No concern for God in either belief or conduct - 2 Peter 2:5, Jude 15
7. Disregard for the sacredness of the marriage relation - Matthew 24:38
8. Rejection of the inspired Word of God - 1 Peter 3:19
9. Population explosion - Genesis 6:1, 11
10. Widespread violence - Genesis 6:11, 13
11. Corruption throughout society - Genesis 6:12
12. Preoccupation with illicit sexual activity - Genesis 4:19; 6:2
13. Widespread words and thoughts of blasphemy - Jude 15
14. Organised satanic activity - Genesis 6:1-4
15. Promotion of systems and movements of abnormal depravity - Genesis 6:5, 12

LAST DAYS – DENIALS THAT CHARACTERISE THE END TIME APOSTATE CHURCH

1. Denial of God. (Luke 17:26; 2 Timothy. 3:4-5)
2. Denial of Christ. (1 John. 2:18, 4:3; 2 Peter. 2:1)
3. Denial of Christ's return. (2 Peter 3:3-4)
4. Denial of the Faith. (1 Timothy. 4:1-2; Jude 3)
5. Denial of Sound Doctrine. (2 Timothy. 4:3-4)
6. Denial of Separated Life (Practical Sanctification. 2 Timothy 3:1-7)
7. Denial of Christian Liberty. (1 Timothy 4:3-4)
8. Denial of Spirituality. (2 Timothy 3:1-8; Jude 18)
9. Denial of Biblical Authority. (2 Timothy 3:4)

HOLY SPIRIT – TEACHER

1. He is the Spirit of Wisdom. (Isaiah 11:2, 40:13-14)
2. He reveals the things of God. (1 Corinthians 10:13)
3. He reveals the things of Christ. (John 16:14)
4. He guides into all truth. (John 14:26, 16:13)
5. He enables ministers to teach. (1 Corinthians 12:8)
6. He teaches the saints to answer persecutors. (Mark 13:11, Luke 12:12)
7. He directs in the way of godliness. (Isaiah 30:21, Ezekiel 36:27)
8. He brings the words of Christ to remembrance. (John 14:26)

BIBLE – INSPIRATION

1. The principle of inspiration is found in (2 Timothy 3:16) "All Scripture is God breathed". Gk. THEO PNEUSTOS.

The Holy Spirit communicated to the human authors God's complete plan (2 Samuel 23:2, 3, Isaiah 59:21, Jeremiah 1:9, Matthew 22:42, 43, Mark 12:36, Acts 4:24, 25, 28:25)

The human authors of Scripture so wrote that in spite of their personalities, they were able to communicate God's plan with perfect accuracy in the language they wrote.

2. The origin of Scripture is beyond human viewpoint. (2 Peter 1:20, 21)
3. The Bible is the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:16) Therefore it is the absolute standard for believers. (Psalm 138:2)
4. Pre-canon revelation from God occurred through the Holy Spirit. There was no written scripture until the time of Moses. (2 Samuel 23:2, Ezekiel 2:2, 8:3, 11:1, 24, Micah 3:8, Hebrews 3:7)
5. Four categories of Old Testament revelation:
 - a) The spoken word - thus saith the Lord. (Isaiah 6:9, 10, Acts 28:25)
 - b) Dreams. (Numbers 12:6, Genesis 15:12, 31:10-13, 31:24, Daniel 10:9) -whilst asleep.
 - c) Visions. (Isaiah 1:1, 6:1, 1 Kings 22:19) - whilst awake.
 - d) Angelic teaching. (Deuteronomy 33:2, Acts 7:53, Galatians 3:19, Psalm 68:17)

6. The extent of revelation:

- a) The unknown past - the Bible portrays past historical details unknown to man apart from revelation. (Genesis 1-11). The accuracy of these historical facts is guaranteed by inspiration, e.g. Creation, Noah's Flood.
- b) Ancient history - whilst the Bible is not a text book of history, all historical citations are accurate.
- c) Objective law - the Old Testament contains many laws for both individuals and national life. These laws express perfectly the mind of God to those people to whom they are addressed.
- d) Some portions of the Bible contain direct quotations from God. The doctrine of inspiration guarantees that such quotations are properly recorded exactly as God desired.
- e) God uses the emotions, trials and triumphs of certain believers to declare His grace in devotional literature like the Psalms, Song of Solomon
- f) Inspiration extends to the recording of falsehoods just as they were uttered. Satan Genesis 3:4
- g) Inspiration guarantees the accuracy of all recorded prophecies.

Notes

THE SEVEN HISTORIC CHURCH AGE ORDINANCES

TEACHING GRACE TRUTH IN SPECIFIC WORSHIP SERVICES

1. DEDICATION OF INFANTS/PARENTS – SANCTIFICATION OF THE FAMILY

The modern church's dedication of children goes back to three important New Testament passages. The **first** reminds us that the firstborn of all Israelite families was dedicated to the Lord, and that the Lord as the firstborn of Mary was dedicated, and thereby recognised as belonging to the Lord. Luke 2:22-39. The provisions that the family of Jesus our Lord followed are recorded in the Mosaic Law in Exodus 13:2, 22:29, Leviticus 12, Numbers 8:17.

Luke 2:22-39

*"22. And when the days of her purification according to the Law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;
 23. (As it is written in the law of the LORD, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)
 24. And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.
 25. And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.
 26. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.
 27. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,
 28. Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,
 29. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:
 30. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
 31. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;
 32. A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.
 33. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.
 34. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;
 35. (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.
 36. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;
 37. And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.
 38. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.
 39. And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth."*

All boys were to be circumcised on the eighth day, and the first born of all clean beasts were to be offered up to the Lord on the eighth day. **Exodus 22:29-30**. The Church's understanding of these provisions for Israel was, and remains, that while the firstborn alone was dedicated to the Lord under the Age of Israel, because we are all in union with Christ, (who is the "firstborn of the new creation"), then we are all dedicated to the Lord.

In Israel only the firstborn was dedicated to the Lord, but in the Church Age, the church elders of the past believed that all children of godly parents should be dedicated up to the Lord. It is a way by faith of saying that you, as parents, are bringing this child up to know and love the "firstborn of all creation", the Lord Jesus Christ. **Romans 8:28-29, Colossians 1:15-19**.

The **second** key Gospel passage behind the historic dedication of children is the record of the incident where the Lord sets apart children under his special care and concern, and thereby sanctifies and tasks all parents and the community leadership with protecting the children.

Mark 10:13-16

*"13 And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.
 14 But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.
 15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.
 16 And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."*

The **third** New Testament passage that is relevant to the dedication of children is the passage from **Matthew 18:1-11**. This is the strongest possible teaching of the Lord's attitude towards those who abuse children in any way. It is a passage that amplifies the importance of the solemn dedication of the child to the Lord who loves and cares for children,

and who will judge any who abuse them. Notice just how strongly the Lord warns those who abuse children that they are under his special and fatal discipline if they do not repent and change their attitudes and behaviours.

Matthew 18:1-11

- “1. At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?
 2. And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,
 3. And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.
 4. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
 5. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.
 6. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.
 7. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!
 8. Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.
 9. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.
 10. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.
 11. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.”*

The Lord laid his hands on the little children and blessed them. The Protestant churches practice the dedication service following the Lord’s blessing of the children, and teaching about their importance; it is not done as an alternative to infant baptism. There is no biblical basis for infant baptism; as it has no biblical warrant at all. Water Baptism is for believers only. You become a Christian as you accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord and publically certify this by water baptism, which we will study below. Infant dedication is a very different thing to baptism.

The idea of infant dedication is that there is a commitment by both parents and the whole church family to bring up the child in the safety, love, joy, grace, knowledge and the admonition of the Lord. In any service of dedication you are praying for those children, and committing yourselves as a church family, to mentor, protect from abuse, teach and encourage them, that they might meet and go on with the Lord. You also encourage the parents that they are not alone in this task, but that God and the church family are watching them, and God will judge them harshly if they hurt/abuse their children.

Remember that in the ancient world of the Bible, adoption was very common, and when a person took on the responsibility of a child through adoption the full responsibilities of parenting were theirs and they were held responsible by the Lord and the community for the care, welfare and godly upbringing of that child. To abuse a child was to insult God, and to rob the community of a future member, and was taken very seriously.

While in many cultures children were considered a commodity and treated badly, the biblical instructions were, from the days of Moses, very much focused on welfare, safety and godly upbringing, with great value seen in the child as a gift on loan from God himself. A service of dedication of children spotlights these biblical principles and challenges all in the wider community to value children as Jesus does.

If you decide that this ordinance is one your church would like to celebrate then you need to plan the details carefully to proclaim the historic truths behind it. I believe that as this is a church family commitment, and that as such, this should be part of a Sunday morning service, where the child is dedicated to the Lord in the presence of the local church community. If there are going to be a large number of visitors in the service you could have a special service on another day. I would then suggest that it be a solidly evangelical service that targets the visiting family members of the child being dedicated to the Lord.

From the Gospel passages above the following points will be covered in this service:

1. The service will begin with a reading of the scriptures above.
2. It will then be opened in solemn prayer for the safety, security, and godly future of the child being dedicated and the parents/care givers bringing up the child.
3. The parents and child will then be called forward, with their immediate family. A prayer can be said over this family group to ask God’s blessing upon them all in Jesus name.
4. The dedication promise is then read out to the parents – each minister should develop their own form of this, but it may go something like this. “Do you.....and dedicate your child to the Lord, seeking God’s purposes for this child’s life? Do you dedicate yourselves to bringing this child up in a godly manner, so that he/she knows the Lord’s love for them and is kept safe from all childhood abuse?” The minister may require the parents to formally swear this to the entire church, and possibly ask the immediate family to also swear this to the church before the Lord.
5. The child is then gently and carefully taken by the minister and while cradling the child in their arms the minister is to pronounce a blessing upon them in the name of the Lord. In some churches a prophetic word may be said over the child, by a church certified prophet, as was done by Simeon and Anna over the Lord. Be careful of this however and make sure the person who speaks any word is indeed Holy Spirit gifted.

Beware of some random person jumping up and uttering a false word. The Holy Spirit must be in absolute control of such a service. Remember, the devil enjoys creating chaos and spreading pious sounding lies.

6. The service is closed in prayer again made for the child, the family and the entire church to fulfil their oath before the Lord to be examples of Christ's love to this child.

There are other passages that can be used in such a service, and the parents and family may even be asked to suggest some to be read aloud by a family member as a part of the service. I believe that the parents and family should be part of writing out the service, using the guideline above, but making it their own.

In some cultures they would want to prepare a formal and printed "Order of Service" and have the name of the child and parents on the cover of the service hand out. This is a matter of individual cultural taste, but it can be a good thing to have a hand out that unbelievers carry away and reflect upon the words of Jesus, and the nature of Christian parenting, as against their own pagan approach.

Once again this emphasizes the difference between the "ritual" approach of religious and false child baptism, and the ordinance approach – for in this service we are celebrating the parent's/church's relationship with Jesus, and the deep desire of all believers present for the child to grow up and have such a relationship established themselves also.

Some other passages of scripture that you may find useful to explore and use in the service. Deuteronomy 6:4-7, 1 Samuel 1:24 – 2:1, Psalms 103:17-18, 127:1-3, Ephesians 6:1-4, Colossians 3:20-21.

2. WATER BAPTISM UPON CONFESSION OF ADULT FAITH

Water baptism is a subject that has created church splits and factions down the centuries and so it is important to work within the beliefs, practises and statement of faith of your own church. I will explain the way to administer a water baptism drawing on historic Early Church precedent, not denominational beliefs.

This is an old Jewish ritual, certainly going back to the days just after the return of the Exiles from Babylonian Captivity, and possibly being practised in some form in the days of the united monarchy or even before. Certainly archaeology has discovered baptismal pools in houses from many places in the Holy Land, dating from the centuries before Jesus ministry. It was a ritual taken directly into the Church Age by the Lord's direct command to utilise it to celebrate and mark the genuine salvation of a believer.

Many in the ultra-dispensational theological camp, preach that baptism is only a Jewish ritual and so has nothing to do with the church. This view of theirs is I believe false doctrine. They argue that the important baptism is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and that water baptism is just an illustration of this, and so can now be deleted. The Spirit's baptism is indeed critical, and I believe automatic when a person is truly saved, but the Lord has told us to go into all of the world preaching the gospel and baptising in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:18-20. As we do not do the baptising by the Holy Spirit, (this is God's work – not ours!) this passage can only mean baptise new converts with water in the Jewish manner in a Mikvah pool, or source of water that allows for immersion.

Water baptism was nearly always done in the biblical world by **immersion**, or in rare cases of great water shortage by **effusion** (pouring over the head). If we are going to be faithful to the Lord's command, I believe we must baptise by total immersion in water our new converts, and there must be serious reasons why we do not baptise by immersion. It is total immersion that truly pictures salvation, as it visibly portrays the spiritual reality; that the believer has died to their old life and been raised up to take their first new breath as a set apart child of God.

Effusion still pictures a truth; that of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit over and into the new believer and as such it is not a bad thing, but it's another thing! Water Baptism by Immersion totally portrays the truths that the Lord orders and I believe we fall short if we do not do it as he and the disciples/apostles did. In rare circumstances where there is not sufficient water and there are pressing reasons not to wait until water can be found, effusion may be used but more explanation needs to be given, as it is the "second best" option, and was seen that way by the Jews of Jesus day.

Water baptism is indeed a Jewish ritual that was practised widely in the days of Jesus. Most expensive homes had their own baptismal pool called a Mikvah. It was used for the ritual purification of women after their monthly period cycle, signifying the cleansing from the old cycle and the start of a new period of time for her fertility. It was also used by both men and women to signify, and formally identify before others, any major change in life that had spiritual significance. It was seen as being a way to symbolise the farewelling of the old, and the coming out of the water to live in a new reality.

Turn to and read **Acts 10:39 - 48**. Peter preached the gospel, they accepted the Lord Jesus Christ, the Spirit then falls on the people and they speak in tongues, which is a sign for Peter the Jew, that they have become acceptable to God. Peter, seeing their conversion, asks why they should not be baptised by water immediately. He immediately baptises them all as they publically confess their faith in Jesus as their Messiah. They then asked him to stay several days to teach them doctrine so they could understand this great change in their lives more fully and he did, teaching them biblical truths to reinforce their new life in Christ Jesus.

Here Peter was being obedient to Jesus command in **Matthew 28:18-20**. The ultra dispensationalist theologians say that this is an interim ritual, and therefore not to be our current practice. This argument of theirs is clearly not true, for this pattern continues through Acts and the early church, both before (Acts 2:41, 8:34-39), and afterwards (Acts 16:15, 33, 18:8, 19:3-5, 22:16). From the Mikvah type baptismal pools built in early Roman Empire churches that survive in Italy and other places we can tell that this was the Early Church's regular practise until at least 500 AD.

We see this ordinance in many biblical passages. Turn to and read the Acts passages above, and then note all the water baptisms in the book of Acts. If you do not practice this ordinance in the manner that the apostles did, then you are out of step with the Lord and the Apostles. Jude 3. We follow apostolic practise, and so we baptise in water by total immersion. Most of our churches built in the Baptist tradition have a built in baptismal pool, but if your church is by a river, has access to a private or public swimming pool, or is by the sea, any of these sources of water may be used.

The early *mikvah's* were all in private homes, but as we see from the Gospels and Acts, the early apostles used any source of water to baptise; whatever was available they utilised in the presence of whoever was there at the time. Baptism doesn't have to be an evangelistic service in the sight of unbelievers, but in many cultures it is an amazing opportunity to witness to the power of the Gospel to change lives. Whether it is public or private it is a declaration by the believer of their changed life because of their faith in his person and saving work for them.

Water baptism pictures union with Christ, dying to the old life and being raised to new life in which power you are destined to live through the indwelling Holy Spirit. The apostolic practice was to baptise the same day that people were saved, then to stay with them a few weeks and stabilise them through Bible teaching. Baptism was close to salvation in the early church, and therefore any delay to it is unscriptural, and you must have good arguments to deviate from the apostolic pattern.

Baptism is the doorway of entry into the local church. Conversion followed by baptism. Be baptised in accordance with the Lord's commands. Now let's look at another question asked. Is the water running or still, salt or fresh? Some Scriptures show it to be running water, others still. Actually as we have already seen it didn't matter to the early apostles – they used whatever they had access to that illustrated the truth of the life change that had occurred at salvation.

In the early Non-Jewish Church it was probably in the central pool of the house washing water supply, or a private "*mikvah*", (Jewish ritual baptismal pool in a private home – as many new converts at that time were Jewish). We take the dimensions of our baptismal pools in churches from these Jewish *Mikvahs*. In most cases the baptisms of the early church were private; in the *mikvah* pools of private Jewish homes of people in the new Christian congregation, and later in the churches of the fourth century.

Remember, the early church practice was not to use the baptism service as an evangelical service as we do, rather as a private commitment before the church and family members. This doesn't mean however that we cannot do things publically and make the service evangelical in its thrust to the pagan friends of the new convert.

Who should conduct the service? As with communion, this is a church ordinance and so the church's leadership should conduct the service. It should be held wherever there is water enough to conduct it, in a place significant to the church and the people. It may be public, or can be private, just as it was in the earliest church. One of the best preserved baptismal pool on the Mikvah model to be seen easily is in the Roman Catholic cathedral in Ravenna, a capital of the later Christian Western Roman Empire. Look at it on line through Internet search.

In the ancient world after the church had been in existence for around a hundred years the baptisms ceased being spontaneous, just after salvation, and the church would gather "candidates" for baptism, and they were formally instructed as a group, and then the baptismal service for them all took place around Easter. This was so the city bishop could do the baptisms. This was a result of the persecution of believers by the Roman Empire, and also because sacramentalism was steadily coming into the church, and they had started to believe that only the bishop could properly administer the ordinances. People facing death for their faith desperately wanted to get the ordinances "right", and in this they increasingly leaned on the authority of their local bishop, and later the opinion of the senior bishop at Rome.

Most churches keep white garments for baptism, a practise that goes back to the early church. Whatever garments speak of purity in the culture should be used, whatever colour portrays that in your local culture. The early church baptised first and taught later, but as persecutions began they reversed that order so that those presenting themselves would fully comprehend the meaning of what they were doing, as being baptised in the early Roman Empire could lead to your arrest and execution! Baptism became a thing that had extremely serious implications and teaching was given thoroughly before it. This remains the case in Moslem lands today.

Either teaching before or after the ordinance, (both were early practises and separated only by persecution) but let there be thorough teaching by the minister for all who go through this ordinance (before or after it) so that they understand it fully.

Baptism was an ordinance held at any time after evangelism in the very early church but within 100 years it became a special focus of major church services, especially around Easter time. I favour the earliest apostolic model, with individual baptisms being held as part of regular worship services that have a special section set aside for the baptism, but having said that I can see a real place for a special service away from normal worship, especially if the water source

is some distance from the church meeting place. It can become an opportunity to evangelism, but also for a church picnic and family celebration. Whatever is prayerfully considered to be appropriate in the local church's cultural context should be considered.

Elements for the baptismal service –

1. Only those who have openly acknowledged the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord are to be baptised. Following the tradition of Acts we ought to begin the formal baptismal part of the service by calling upon all who are to be baptised to publicly affirm their faith in the Lord aloud for all the church to hear. This can be done as a group with a loud "Amen", or "Halleluiah", or a simple "Yes we do!"
2. As the baptismal candidates approach the minister, the minister should be standing in the water and be speaking to the congregation about the significance and meaning of baptism, quoting some verses of scripture that command this ordinance. The minister will need at least two assistants close to them, or in the water with them, one to pass their Bible to when they start to immerse the candidates, and another to assist with any large candidate, so that they are easily lifted out of the water after the immersion.
3. As each candidate comes to the minister the minister should ask them again to affirm their faith personally in the Lord Jesus and when they have done this aloud, for all to hear, then they are to be taken firmly, with their hands clasped in front of them, and the minister should state a formal declaration over them.
4. The declaration should have the following elements in it. "My dear brother/sister..... having confessed your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord I now baptise you in name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in obedience to Jesus holy command to us." More may be added, but this is the important thing to say aloud, as you have already done some general teaching as the candidates approach.
5. At this point the minister lowers the candidate into the water (they may bend their legs to make sure they can stand again if there is restricted space) so that they go right under the water. They are then to be brought straight out again. Don't let anyone start praying as they are under the water lest the candidate drown!
6. When they come out of the water the minister should lay hands on them and pray privately for them, and if there is a prophetic word to give, then that is the time to do so privately. The minister may also ask all the people to hold their hands out towards the baptised person and pray for them also. After a short time for prayer the minister guides the person baptised to the dry land again and the next candidate approaches and the same process is repeated.
7. When all the candidates have been baptised the minister should lead all the Lord's people in a corporate prayer of thankfulness and blessing over all the baptised people. The ceremony should always end with a fellowship meal, preferably with the Communion Service before the family meal. In the early church the baptism service opened the door to the Communion Table, and none could take Communion unless they had been baptised. This is a good rule, as it is the apostolic practise, but you must be guided by your own church's statement of faith and practise.

DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM

1. Usage of word "baptism" prior to the Koine (common) Greek (pre. 350 BC).
 - a) The English word "baptism" is a transliteration of the Greek verb BAPTIZO meaning to identify. This word was used by Greek poets, dramatists and historians to portray identification of one object with a second so that the nature or characteristic of the first object is changed.
 - b) For example Xenophon (fourth century BC) tells of Spartan soldiers dipping their spears into pigs' blood before going into battle. By identifying the spears with blood, the nature of the spears was supposed to have been changed from a hunting to a warrior spear.
 - c) Euripedes (fifth century BC) used the word to describe a sinking ship. As it sinks, the character or nature of the ship is changed. It is so identified or "baptised" with the water that it no longer floats - it becomes a wreck.
2. Meanings of the Koine Greek:
 - a) Verb - BAPTO - to dip (John 13:26, Luke 16:24), to dye (Revelation 19:13).
 - b) Verb - BAPTIZO - to dip, to immerse, to cleanse by washing.
 - c) Noun - BAPTISMOS - washing of dishes (Mark 7:4), doctrine of baptisms (Hebrews 6:2).
 - d) Noun - BAPTISMA - ritual baptism (Matthew 3:7, 21:25), spiritual baptism (Romans 6:4), figure of martyrdom (Mark 10:38, Luke 12:50).
 - e) Noun - BAPTISTES - one who baptises like John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1, 11:11, Mark 6:25).
3. Real baptisms: an actual identification - a person identified with something real. These are dry baptisms, and do not involve water. There are four real baptisms:
 - a) Baptism of Moses - a double identification of the children of Israel at Red Sea (1Corinthians 10:2).

- i) With Moses - the people were identified with Moses in his faith, leadership and deliverance. They had victory "in Moses".
 - ii) With cloud - the people were identified with God (the cloud) as He delivered them through the dry seabed and destroyed their enemies behind them. They had victory "in God".
- b) Baptism of Fire - unbelievers are identified with judgement (Matthew 3:11, 13:24-30, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).
- c) Baptism of the Cup - identifies the Church Age believer with the victory of Christ after the cross - Christ identified himself with our sins (Matthew 26:39, 2 Corinthians 5:21)
- d) Baptism of the Holy Spirit - enters Church Age believers into the Body of Christ, and therefore identifies them with everything that Christ is (1 Corinthians 12:13, Romans 6, Ephesians 1:3)

4. Ritual Baptisms: involve literal water, which represents something else:

- a) Baptism of Jesus - unique (Matthew 3:13-17). Water represented Father's Plan. Christ identified himself with the Father's will in going to the cross.
- b) Baptism of John (Matthew 3:1-11, John 1:25-33, Acts 18:25). Water represented the kingdom. Identification of John's converts with Jesus and His Kingdom.
- c) Believer's (Christian) baptism (Acts 2:38, 41, 8:36-38, 9:18, 10:47-48, 16:33).
 - i) Water represents the work of Christ.
 - ii) Identification of Church Age believer, with Christ in his death (going into the water), burial (under the water) and resurrection to "newness of life" (coming up out of the water).
 - iii) Water baptism is a testimony to personal faith in Christ.
- d) Two Central Ordinances for the Church:
 - i) Water baptism - once; represents salvation.
 - ii) Communion - repeated; represents fellowship.

3. RESURRECTION DAY WORSHIP SERVICES

Let us read the words of **Psalm 29:2** –“Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness". This is our starting point when considering worship, and Church Age worship needs to be at an even higher level than that of the Temple services of old Israel, as we have more to celebrate than David and Solomon had! While worship is not to be considered an “ordinance” as such, for it is to be a constant activity, the specific dedication of Sunday for Church Age corporate worship is an ordinance, and a significant change from the days before the Lord’s ministry.

Worship means honouring God for who He is, and what he has done, is doing, and will do in the future. All worship services will involve praise, but also learning more about the Lord, and so learning to respect and love Him more and praise Him more, that you might serve Him more. If your worship does not include all these things then you are not fulfilling the spirit of Psalm 29:2. Refer below to the BTB study of this Church – Worship and Praise.

While every day is to be lived and worshipped in “as unto the Lord”, and this spirit of worship in all we do is to characterise believers of the Church Age, Sunday is a special day that is to be celebrated as the literal turning point of history. Sunday is the turning point of history because it is Resurrection Day; the day Jesus proved he had defeated sin on the Cross by defeating death from the grave.

Firstly let us remind ourselves of the command to make every day a day to be lived to the glory of the Lord who has won the victory over sin and death for us. Then we will reflect upon the ordinance given by the Lord’s actions that lead us to Sunday worship services that are meant to celebrate the resurrection in joy and Holy Spirit power.

Colossians 3:16-24

- “16. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
- 17. And **whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.**
- 18. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.
- 19. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.
- 20. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.
- 21. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.
- 22. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God;
- 23. And whatsoever ye do, **do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;**
- 24. Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.”

Giving glory to the name of God is worship. It involves everything that is a part of recognising who God truly is, praying to him, being silent before him, praising his name in words and songs, but to the ancients it was most of all bowing before him. Notice in the passage above that all family and social relationships are sandwiched in between the commands to live every day in a spirit of worship. If you are having any worship service as part of local church life it must provide for these things to be expressed.

Secondly let us reflect upon the spirit of worship. Worship must provide for the teaching of God's Word, for it's through the Word that God is known fully, but also there will be prayer, giving, singing, silence, service to the needy, and fellowship with each other. There must be the opportunity for people to both silently meditate upon God's glory, and praise Him for who he is, and to serve Him. If any of these elements are missing you have not got a worship service. Many modern churches refer to songs of praise as "worship", but this is only a part of what worship is.

Turn to and read - **Matthew 28:5-10, 16-20** – here, after the resurrection his disciples fell at His feet and worshipped Him, recognising His Lordship. Some doubt, some hesitate, but they are convinced by what they observe and worship Him. Worship involves recognising who God is, committing yourself to Him as Lord, opening and studying His Word and casting yourself on Him in total dependence on his guidance for the issues of daily life.

Turn to and read - **John 13:12-17, 15:7-17** - from these verses it is clear that we are His friends if we do whatever He tells us to do. Worship involves friendship, and this leads to fellowship with the Lord and this will lead to service given to Him in obedience to His Word. It will also overflow as well to our relationships with others in the light of the worship and fellowship with the Lord and understanding of His Word. Genuine worship always overflows to service of others. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is the joy of real worship, and the joy of love being shown to others.

John 15:7-17. *"7. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.
8. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.
9. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.
10. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.
11. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.
12. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.
13. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.
14. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.
15. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.
16. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.
17. These things I command you, that ye love one another."*

If there are not the opportunities for these things to happen you need to change the format of your worship service. As the minister you need to lead the service initially to set the tone and example. You might do this yourself even later in your ministry, or have others conduct services as part of their ministry training. It is important to have people involved, but as the minister you have to do the initial planning with them to ensure it is the best possible format to enable biblical worship to be expressed in holiness and with the dignity that is due to the Lord of glory.

Thirdly, let us consider a key difference between the Age of Israel and the Church Age that begins with Pentecost, but is established upon the foundation of the Cross and the physical bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. That key difference is the day of worship and the manner of worship, and this difference is to be reflected in all we do in worship services. Let us reflect upon this difference between the Jewish Sabbath and the Church Age shift to Sunday morning worship to remember and amplify the message of the resurrection.

THE SABBATH AND THE LORD'S DAY

1. Sabbath means Rest. We no longer have one day of Sabbath rest, but are called to live every day in the reality of what the Lord has provided for us through the Cross, the Empty Tomb, and the Day of Pentecost.
2. Salvation is the eternal Sabbath (Matthew 11:28) - we must trust in God to save us, apart from our own works.
3. Trusting in the promises is the daily Sabbath (Hebrews 3:11) - we must trust in God to provide all our needs.
4. The original Sabbath (Genesis 2:2, 3) God finished His work of creation on the sixth day and rested on the seventh.
5. The Sabbath of Israel. (Exodus 20:8-11, Deuteronomy 5:12-15)
 - a) In the Old Testament, the Jews were commanded not to work on the seventh day. They were to trust in the finished work of God to supply their needs.

- b) The Sabbath (Saturday) was the remembrance day of the old creation, of the old covenant. (Exodus 20:10-11, 31:12-17, Hebrews 4:4)
- c) Legalists burdened the Sabbath with many hundreds of extra-biblical commandments and regulations.
- d) Under the Mosaic Law the Jews had a sabbatical year; they were supposed to rest every seventh year. (Exodus 23:10, 11)
- e) Because they did not take their sabbaticals they endured the 70 years of Babylonian captivity. (Leviticus 26:33-35, 2 Chronicles 36:20, 21, Daniel 9:2, Jeremiah 25:11, 12, Jeremiah 29:10)
6. The Sabbath spoke of the Old Creation Exodus 20, 31 and Hebrews 4 - the Lord's Day (Sunday) speaks of the New Creation. Saturday belongs to Israel, the family of God, Sunday belongs to the Church the royal family of God. Matthew 28:9, Galatians 6:15, Hebrews 9:15, 10:20, 1 Peter 2:9-10.
7. The Lord's Day
- a) The Lord's Day (Sunday) is the remembrance of the new creation, the resurrection life of the Church in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15, Hebrews 9:15, 10:20)
- b) In the New Testament, all days are to be "as unto the Lord". (Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 4:1-3)
- c) There is a moment by moment Sabbath for the believer in the Church Age. (Hebrews 4:1-3)
8. Why is Sunday so important?
- [a] Sunday is resurrection day. Matthew 28:1,
 [b] It was also the day of the first meeting of the disciples. John 20:19,
 [c] It was the first day they received instructions from the Lord. Luke 24:36-39
 [d] It was the day the church began as the day of Pentecost was always on a Sunday. Acts 2
 [e] It was the day the early church met. Acts 20:6-7
 [f] It was the day to give offerings. 1 Corinthians 16:2.
9. This day has been blessed by God. If the church was wrong on meeting on a Sunday the Lord would have pointed it out well before the Seventh Day Adventists came on the scene in the 19th century.
10. There is no such thing as a "Christian Sabbath". Ephesians 4:1-3, Romans 12:1, 2. Every day should be lived as unto the Lord, lived in the filling of the Holy Spirit. We meet on the Lord's Day when we celebrate our new birth, the Lord's victory, the birth of the Church. There are no particular rules, a day of joy, rejoicing and celebration.
11. The concept of the moment by moment Sabbath is illustrated in four passages in the Old Testament
- a) Moses at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:10-14)
 b) Abraham (Romans 4:17-21, Genesis 22, Hebrews 11:17-19)
 c) The bones of Joseph (Hebrews 11:22)
 d) Caleb and the Giants (Numbers 13, 14, Joshua 14:6-14, 15:14, Judges 1:20)

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES - WHAT MUST YOU CATER FOR?

- [a] Your service must firstly, and always, lift up the Lord, the Cross, and the Resurrection. It doesn't matter whether the "service" is a home group meeting, and church of thousands, or an underground meeting of persecuted believers in the Lord in a cave, forest or field – these truths are to be lifted up.
- [b] There must be time in the service to spend time at the Saviour's feet. People need to be able to praise Him verbally and non verbally both in what they say and do. Sunday is the day of Pentecost also, and so the challenge must always be given to "walk in the filling of the Holy Spirit". The Spirit must be "let loose" within God's people every Sunday, and they must enter every service with the expectation that God will move within and upon them.
- [c] There must be lots of public and private prayer. Prayer must be central in the service. Silent prayer is vital so that each person can come privately before the Lord, as well as public prayer where someone leads the service in prayer. There should be several prayer times through the service.
- [d] Songs of praise and dedication should be part of the service. In song you express worship and adoration, praise and commitment to the Lord. Let the words and actions of all people in the service always magnify the person and work of the Lord Jesus!

- [e] God's Word must be central in the service. People must be drawn to the Lord through His Word – so that they can understand more of Him and draw closer to the truths that will set them free from any falsehood that holds them captive.
- [f] There must be a proclaiming of bible doctrine in each service; it involves loving Him more, serving Him more, knowing Him more. We are saved to serve. Even if there is not a chance to serve in the service, there will be afterwards at fellowship time, and there is a chance to serve on the streets as you leave the meeting place.
- [g] There must be a possibility of provision of the Gospel; we must preach salvation. We cannot praise Him without remembering that He saved us and that there is a possibility that all can be saved. None must every leave a Sunday service without hearing what he did that first Sunday morning, as evidence that what he did on the Cross had been victory! "Present your bodies to the Lord as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual service". Worship is dialogue between God and his people.

SUGGESTED FORMAT

You need to have balance with a good amount of variety. Do not be too rigid, but swap your format around, but always remember the principles above and apply them as testing questions to whatever changes you want to make. Always ask of any change you make to worship the following questions.

1. Will this change draw more attention to the Lord's person and work?
2. Will this change give people more opportunity to draw near to Jesus in loving worship?
3. Will this change make the service more "set apart"(holy) to honour the Lord?
4. Will this change give people more opportunities to fellowship with their Lord?
5. Will this change ensure that everyone leaves with the Gospel ringing in their ears?
6. Will this change draw people towards more Christ like service in the community?
7. Will this change remind people that all they have done/heard/believed must be worked out in daily life?

The **first part of the service** should be a settling activity, and it can be either passive or active. The passive form is the musician(s) playing quiet thoughtful music where people can calm themselves and pray with music that does not encourage chatter. It may also be simple silent prayer by all. It may also involve a weekly paper banner/blackboard hung at the front of the meeting place – on which is a Bible verse (a biblical promise) for the people to meditate upon as they prepare to meet the Lord in the service. This can be done by power-point slide if available, but the children's Sunday School class can prepare a paper banner for the adults each week, or decorate a blackboard as part of their memory verse activity and both groups are blessed.

The other beginning activity is "active" where choruses or other songs/hymns are sung, but beware of the "works of men" here, where some feel we must "warm up" the crowd before the service. The Holy Spirit is to light any fire within the people of God, and he doesn't need our help by loud music, he needs us to bow in humble prayer and draw near the Lord. There is a place for both active and passive worship to settle people into a spirit of holiness. This means that they have deliberately "set themselves apart" from the cares of the week for worship. The formal "call to worship" should come after the settling activities.

In the "**call to worship**" the minister (or preferably another Elder/Leader) should stand up (remember we are heralds of the King of kings and so we stand to proclaim his words) and say, "Hear the Word of God", and then read the chosen Bible passage to formally open the service. The elder opening the service should have prayed about the Bible reading to start the service and been led to the right one by the Holy Spirit.

If the minister is preaching about a certain topic, this can be announced, but minister, please, always let the Elder leading the worship be led by the Holy Spirit to the right reading, and let the song leader be led by the Holy Spirit to the right songs. Ministers are just that, "ministers" of the Lord, to lead people into Holy Spirit dependence, not controlling tyrants who want the services of the church to be run "their way" – it is God's way – not ours – and that means all people are to experience the Holy Spirit's ministries in every service, no matter how many people are there gathered together.

As ministers we need to trust the Holy Spirit to lead the other elders to the right readings and songs. As we trust the Holy Spirit to lead others, so we build the spirit of worship amongst the leadership, and all have the joy of being led. When the minister selects every element of the service they are robbing others of their service and the experience of being led by the Holy Spirit! The minister is not in his place as the under-shepherd of God's flock to micro manage, but to open the people of God to the ministry of the Holy Spirit of God. If the minister "micro-manages/controls" all the service details, the Holy Spirit is quenched and grieved, and the controlling minister is heading for divine discipline, even the "sin unto death".

The church service should always start with God's Word, as all we do is rooted and grounded in the truth that is contained in the Bible. We do not follow fables but truth and the service should start and end with the truth of the Word about the resurrection power of the one who is King and Lord of all! **2 Peter 1:16, Jude 1-3**.

The formal "call to worship" was followed in the Early Church by a **formal prayer of consecration** and then by the hymn of consecration, or by **songs/psalms/choruses** that prepare the hearts and minds of God's people for worship. They

can be happy or serious but they set the tone for the service, so let the person selecting them make sure the words are true and powerfully encouraging or challenging to God's people. Remember, everything in the Sunday (Resurrection Day – Jewish Feast of Firstfruits) service must remind people of what happened on Resurrection Sunday morning! Remember also that as the Jewish Feast of Pentecost was always on a Sunday, and so every service we hold on Sunday must encourage us all to walk in the filling of the Holy Spirit.

The first hymn, or bracket of songs, was always followed by another reading of God's Word (**a Psalm** is good at this point – 1 Corinthians 14:26) and **prayer**. Public prayer should be short and powerful, and private prayer long. If someone prays for five minutes he has prayed for four minutes too long. The prayers in the worship service should be short, sharp, powerful, and to the point. Once again let all be involved in some way in this at some time.

There needs to be an opportunity for an **offering** to be given as that is also worship, as it reminds us that we are to care for the poor and needy and support the ministries of the local church in the community. I prefer this at the end of the service, after the message, but you can have the offering at any time that is convenient.

There needs to be a **message** from God's Word with a mix and match of spiritual songs/hymns. The teaching message/sermon should be followed by **hymns of praise with a benediction** taken from God's Word, and you close in prayer committing the people to the Lord. The service concludes by exiting to music, either the musicians, or the people singing as they leave. People should leave with the call to engage in the mission of the church ringing in their ears.

Fellowship should follow every gathering of God's people, cell group or large auditorium, and this is to be encouraged if at all possible, so that brethren may linger together, eat and drink together, and share each other's burdens in group prayer and encouragement. Worship has solitary elements, where we are alone with God in contemplation, but it must end with group encouragement and a fellowship that strengthens all who have come together in the Lord's name. If we are not drawn together to encourage each other, the formal service has failed to allow the Holy Spirit to freely move.

The formal part of any service should be an hour to an hour and a half. Beware of marathons. People can only concentrate for so long, young children can only be kept quiet for a short while. You find that people have not heard anything because they are worried about their children making a noise. If you are going to have a somewhat longer service make sure that the children are catered for. Beware of making a service longer, when what you need is to make it more simple, relevant, focused, and Holy Spirit powerful! It is not "much speaking" that is needed, but powerful Holy Spirit empowered biblical speaking that God's people need. Paul once spoke all night, but that was because he was only there for 7 days! Acts 20:6-11. Do not take Paul's example in Troas as normative at all!

Remember Minister that the pastor is a teacher and teachers need to be focused on communication that is clear, concise and to the point to meet the objectives set. Turn to and read - **2 Timothy 4:2** - go out of your way to teach God's Word. Jesus words to Peter were powerful and simple – "feed the flock!" **John 21:15-19**. In your teaching there are four points to remember if you wish to make the Lord happy with your work:-

[a] **Perspiration and prayerfulness in your study will prevent perspiration of embarrassment in your pulpit.** Turn to and read - **2 Timothy 2 : 15-16** - a minister should not babble or waffle on and on. Busy and stressed people come to hear a man who has been with God over the Word, not the ideas of men from books, or last minute thoughts from Saturday night. A minister is there to "minister" the Word of God and that means preaching with Holy Spirit empowered clarity of mind and heart.

[b] Use the **KISS** method - **Keep it Simple and Sincere**. Do not try and be academic and complicated. Do not take a pile of books to quote from, but rather use the Scriptures. If you quote from men put them in your sermon notes for people to refer to later, but do not have people leave with the quotes of men in their minds. Remember, the Bible is what man needs to hear, for it is God's policy, not the thoughts of man. Real intelligence and wisdom is shown by simplicity of thought, and complicated thinking is nearly always the sign of disordered thinking!

[c] **Do not over promise and under perform.** Do not promise to cover something and then not do it. Do not try to cover too much, and do not get out of your depth. Wait until you know what a passage means before you teach it. Sit with the Holy Spirit long in the passage before preaching a passage. Do not use base or gruesome details. Sometimes people need to be shocked, but do not use shock as a matter of course. You should not say something from the pulpit that you are not willing to say face to face with some one – so ensure what you say is the Holy Spirit's message.

[d] **Be biblical, and stick to the Scripture;** be alive with illustrations that make the Scriptures come alive. Be enthusiastic. If you cannot be enthusiastic there is a spiritual problem in your life – solve it and stay out of the pulpit until the joy of the Lord is truly your strength! Nehemiah 8:10. Anchor every truth you speak upon in and around the Resurrection of the Lord, for that is the heart of the "Good News" that we are to proclaim every Sunday. One older

professor said to keep your finger on the verse you are speaking to in the Bible, then you keep your place and remember your purpose – to proclaim God’s Holy Word.

PRAYERFULNESS

Prayer meetings are the power house of the church. Your Sunday worship service will lack power if the church lacks prayer through the week. Start the daily/weekly/men’s/ladies... prayer meetings always with a Bible reading followed by a time of prayer for consecration, and then time for silent prayer. You should always have a short teaching session, covering great prayers of the Bible perhaps, or just read a Psalm together. Make this study short, preferably only 5-10 minutes. Finish the short “thoughts” section with some sung worship and group prayer and praise for a few minutes.

Then on a blackboard or on paper, have the prayer points of the people, and the pastors written out for all to see or read. These may be gathered through the day/week by the Elder who co-ordinates the prayer ministry teams of the church, or the topics may be gathered at the start of the meeting from those attending.

Do not discuss the specific sin of any individuals in the prayer meeting unless every step has been followed to try to resolve it first. (If they know that their sin has been discussed openly it makes it very hard for those people to come back into the church again.) Such an act is the last step in the discipline process **never** the start.

Divide your prayer group attendees up into small groups giving each group a list of items to pray for. This allows for everyone to pray in a small group where they are not overawed. With this method each person concentrates on one subject. As the minister(s) circulate from group to group. This allows you to see how people are praying. Limit your group size to ten people each, but far smaller if possible.

When each group finishes their list, share with one another burdens and seek prayer for blessing/power for each other in the small groups, and then when all have finished, pastor, you call them all back together. You can then end the prayer meeting with a time of singing, praising God for what he has done and will do in answer to prayer. Challenge people regarding what they have been praying about and the specific jobs that they have ahead of them to be obedient to the Lord’s demands. There is no need to separate husbands and wives or families in a prayer meeting.

“Pray more, believe more, and so receive more” - The dying words of C H Spurgeon. The most active churches evangelically in their communities will be the ones that have the most prayer meetings! There is no accident in this correlation, for it is God’s evidence to us of the power of prayer. Expect nothing without prayerfulness.

My dear friend, Pastor Lance Janes, at our local church has just died last weekend (2014). He died the night after our men’s Friday morning (7am-8am) prayer meeting together. He had been on the church board as a valued elder for over twenty years. He said to the men, not knowing it would be his last challenge to them, “Guys I believe that in the last two years, this men’s weekly prayer meeting has achieved more than the church board has in two decades”. Prayer changes things, but first it changes the people who get into the habit of powerful Holy Spirit filled prayer.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

1. Those who will not heed the Word of God within the church are to be first warned and then rebuked (privately if the error is private, or publically if their error is public) (2 Thessalonians 3:14, Titus 1:13, 14).
2. If they still will not listen to the truth then the individuals are to be isolated from the fellowship and others are to separate themselves from them (1 Timothy 6:3-5).
3. If they still refuse to change they are to be expelled from the fellowship (Titus 3:10 Galatians 1:6 –10).
4. Paul warns about false doctrine (1 Timothy 1:4, 11). Then he expels the two false teachers, Hymeneus, and Alexander, that they might be shocked even to learn the truth, and stop blaspheming (1 Timothy 1:18-20).
5. Any expulsion is only temporary; it applies only so long as the person is unrepentant. When they repent they are to be received back again as was the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), and the man in adultery (1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Corinthians 2:5-11).

MUSIC

1. Music has been part of the creation since the start of man’s presence on the earth. (Job 38:7).
2. The Jews sang their thanks to God for their delivery from Egypt. (Exodus 15:1).
3. Sacred music provides:-
 - a) Refreshment and drives away evil spirits (1 Samuel 16:23).

- b) Assists with the ministry of the Word (2 Kings 3:15, 16).
- c) Helps to bring man to God (Psalm 40:1-3).
- d) Helps defeat the enemy (2 Chronicles 20:21-22).
- e) Fills the House of God with glory (2 Chronicles 5:13, 14).

4. The Jews lost their song in captivity (Psalm 137:1-6) but recovered it when they returned. (Ezra 3:2, 11).
5. We have the lyrics of many songs in the Bible such as the Psalms, Miriam's song but no musical notes. The lyrics which accompany the music are important as music by its effect on the emotional pattern can cause the believer to sing words which are inaccurate or heretical, yet feel good.
6. There is a song for the redeemed (Colossians 3:16) which is one of the results of the filling of the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18-19). There will be a new song in heaven. (Revelation 5:9).

4. THE COMMUNION/EUCHARIST SERVICE

The communion service is the joining together of believers to fellowship with the Lord at His table and with each other. These are to be always **joyful yet solemn occasions**. It is a memorial of the Lord's death, as well as the glory of His resurrection, and in addition the certainty of His coming again. It is a victory celebration. He has won. We celebrate it until He comes, but we do so with our eyes also upon the Cross – remembering the cost.

Pertinent Scriptures are Matthew 26:26-30, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20, John 13:1-20, 1 Corinthians 11:20-34. Let us read them now and identify the use of these texts in the service of Communion.

Matthew 26:26-30.

- “26. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.*
- 27. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;*
- 28. For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*
- 29. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*
- 30. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.”*

Mark 14:22-26

- “22. And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.*
- 23. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.*
- 24. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.*
- 25. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.*
- 26. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.”*

Luke 22:14-30

- “14. And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.*
- 15. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:*
- 16. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*
- 17. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:*
- 18. For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.*
- 19. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.*
- 20. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.*
- 21. But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.*
- 22. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!*
- 23. And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.*
- 24. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.*
- 25. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.*
- 26. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.*
- 27. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.*
- 28. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.*
- 29. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;*
- 30. That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”*

John 13:1-26

*"1. Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.
 2. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;
 3. Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;
 4. He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.
 5. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.
 6. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?
 7. Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.
 8. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.
 9. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.
 10. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.
 11. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.
 12. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?
 13. Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.
 14. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.
 15. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.
 16. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.
 17. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.
 18. I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.
 19. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.
 20. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.
 21. When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.
 22. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.
 23. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.
 24. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake.
 25. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?
 26. Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon."*

1 Corinthians 11:23-34

*"23. For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:
 24. And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.
 25. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.
 26. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.
 27. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.
 28. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.
 29. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.
 30. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.
 31. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.
 32. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.
 33. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.
 34. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come."*

In the Gospels we have the simplicity of the Lord's Table brought out. Matthew 26 alone could lead you into legalism, but when complemented by Mark's parallel passage and by Paul's explanation of how the Early Church celebrated the Communion Table in 1 Corinthians 11 we then get the full picture as it was for the early churches. Remember the words, "A Text out of its context is a pretext", and so keep all of God's counsel together.

It is from Matthew 26 that some teach transubstantiation. By applying Jude 3, the exhortation of Jude for the saints to follow apostolic teaching, we are saved from this, as the explanation of 1 Corinthians 11 corrects any misunderstanding. This subject underlines the importance of interpreting all scripture with or by other scriptures.

The first few verses of the 1 Corinthians passage show us that the Early Christians celebrated Communion once a week. Sunday was a working day for the Roman Empire until the fourth century when Christianity was legalized and then became the dominant faith. So after a hard day's work on the Sunday night the early church membership would gather together and have a fellowship meal, an agape/love feast, which was followed by Communion, and then that was followed by Bible teaching from any visiting preacher-teacher. Acts 20:1ff.

The trouble was that in Corinth at the time of Paul's writing to them, the love feast was a disgrace, as there was gluttony, drunkenness, jealousy, and many other sins that were causing the meals to be anything other than a "love feast". All this is corrected by Paul's letter, and he assists us greatly by explaining how they celebrated the Lord's Supper – Communion/Eucharist (all terms for this important Ordinance).

After the meal they had the Lord's Table (Communion) after which a speaker would give a lengthy Bible study. The mental attitude of some, and the behaviour of many, at the agape meal however were causing the Lord's Table to be brought into disrepute. As a result some of the Corinthians were put under the "sin unto death" by the Lord because of this and some had died by the time of Paul's correction.

It is our own serious reminder that to blaspheme a solemn ordinance is to come under judgement from the Lord; it is a solemn reminder that in the Church Age "near enough is not good enough". The motto, "anything goes" is pagan, and those who lived this way in Corinth died under God's direct judgement! Let us be well warned that we have no right to simply celebrate Communion any way we choose!

Here Paul tells them all to "wait upon one another" at the agape meal, having enough to eat but not too much, and certainly not getting drunk at the shared meal. If any man is ravenously hungry, Paul argues, he is to eat a little at home before coming, so that he is not out of control at the love feast. The meal before Communion is to be with dignity, with love, and with behaviours that reflect the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Anything short of this is sinful and makes the Communion defiled. The principle is, that God takes this ordinance of the Lord's Supper, the Communion Table, very seriously, and that if you treat it in an unworthy manner you are bringing contempt on the Cross of Christ that it remembers. So we can see that although the Communion table was a celebration it was also a serious thing. In our casual day we must guard against being flippant and irreverent.

The wine represents the blood and the bread the body. If you participate therefore in the meal having unconfessed sin in your life you are guilty of bringing disgrace upon the blood and body of the Lord Jesus Christ. You need to deal with sin before any service, and there should always be time made for silent prayer/confession before the service begins. **Proverbs 17:3, 2 Corinthians 13:5.**

Paul says that we should all regularly examine ourselves, judge ourselves, so that we might not be judged by God. **1 Corinthians 11:31.** Do not let the bread and wine touch your lips if you have not dealt with sin in your life. **1 John 1:5-10.** Disgraceful conduct at the love feast before Communion had created great sin, and it was unresolved, and so God resolved things by judging certain believers with death.

In 1 Corinthians Chapter eleven we have a basic service format for the Lord's Table. If we deviate from 1 Corinthians we depart from apostolic teaching and our position is that such departures are dangerous and disastrous. What Paul is saying here, is that God is judging the congregation because they are not taking communion seriously. If you have trouble in your church around the time of Communion, then examine your practises. Taking Communion lightly and not being very careful about how it is administered are things you should never do.

PARTICIPATION IN THE LORD'S TABLE

Who should partake in communion? We have a choice of an open table where all believers who are in fellowship may partake or a closed one where only baptised local church members can take it. The most biblical way is an "open table", where all who love the Lord in spirit and in truth are invited to the "Lord's Table" (it is not ours it is **His!**).

People attending the Lord's Table should be encouraged to ensure that they have dealt with any sin, and are controlled by the Holy Spirit before participating. It is the "Lord's Table" not ours! We don't "own" this ordinance – for it speaks of the Lord's death and resurrection until he comes for us – it centres in HIM! It is serious, and that fact should always be made clear to all attending.

Who should take the service? It is a church ordinance so the church leaders, elders or deacons should lead in the communion. There is no sacramental idea here. All you have to do is to read the passage of Scripture, call the Lord's people to prayer and distribute the elements. It is to be celebrated wherever the church is; a formal church building, a prison, a private home, an open field. It is not a personal thing; it is a family thing. It is a time when the church family gathers to celebrate the bond that binds them; the precious blood of Christ. This is an ordinance that centres its reflection upon the person and work of the Lord Jesus on the Cross.

As a rule, in the early church it was celebrated in homes, for that was where the church met. Today it could also be celebrated in homes if the home is being used as a meeting place for the local church or in an isolated situation such as an Australian sheep station, where the only believers for hundreds of miles are under one roof. Re-read **1 Corinthians**

13:5, and Matthew 5:23, 24. So the first clear principle we have is that we must reflect before we come, and deal with our sins before the Lord.

There may be a case where you have a housebound person or someone who is dying who wishes to take communion. Such a person can be visited on request by the deacons or elders. That person's home then becomes a location where the church is, as the church is made up of saints, and wherever two or three are gathered in the Lord's name, there the Lord is. **Matthew 18:20.**

This sort of special communion service is still not a sacramental act with special power however. It is special as it may be the last communion that person has before they meet their Lord, and as such it is important for the church members who gather to celebrate the Lord's sacrifice for their loved one who is soon to join their Lord. You should always have the deacon or deaconess who is responsible for that person present, and make the service a special time for praise and prayer.

When do you have the Communion Service? The best thing may be to make it a special service before the main service, before the sermon, or have it in the evening after a church supper for believers only, as they did in the ancient world, but before the evening teaching service. If you do this, make the fellowship time light and relaxed. However you decide to do it, try to celebrate the Communion weekly as the apostles did, with holiness before the Lord. **Jude 3.**

The meal before the communion service in the early church was a simple one, involving bread, cheese and wine, perhaps some cold meat, vegetables, stew or soup. We call such things today a "pot luck supper", where all food is placed on a common table and shared. Keep such a "pot luck" supper simple, so that clean up is easy, and unlike our first century brethren avoid alcohol in most cultures. Alcohol caused trouble in Corinth and still does.

How often should you have it? In the ancient world they had it **once a week** before the special evening teaching service, and after a shared meal, so none were hungry as they entered this service. It was a service that reminded believers of the cost of their salvation, underlined the need for confession of sin, and taught the doctrine of position in Christ, and the doctrine of Grace. They believed it should be regular. I agree, and weekly must be the best pattern, as it was for the apostles! This is our standard, isn't it! **Jude 3.** If you differ with us on regularity, then fine, you act before the Lord, but ensure that it is celebrated in a biblical manner.

What should we celebrate it with? Should it be with ordinary bread and wine, or with unleavened bread and unfermented wine (Grape juice)? If you follow the apostles you should use grape juice or unfermented wine and unleavened bread, as was used at Passover time, a time when all leaven/alcohol (evil) was swept from the house. The elements used, preach the uncorrupted blood and the pure life of the Lord, and as he was without sin or evil, so the elements we use should be without leaven/fermentation to be the best picture possible.

If you can buy crackers or Jewish unleavened bread in your country use it, or whatever in your own culture speaks of the things the Passover spoke of. Beware of cost here also for a poor group, but be as accurate as you can be in the symbolism. Remember, in times of persecution believers used whatever they had, and so any element that you have by prayerful consecration is able to be used.

DOCTRINE

COMMUNION – THE LORD'S SUPPER

1. There are three suppers which man is invited to:-
 - a) The gospel supper (Luke 14:15-24)
 - b) Marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9)
 - c) Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-29).
2. Those who accept the gospel supper will eventually appear at the wedding supper and in the meantime, whilst on earth, should partake of the Lord's Supper.
3. At the Lord's Supper the believer meditates on:-
 - a) The death of Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour
 - b) The risen Lord who makes intercession for him
 - c) The coming Lord who will return for His church and set up His reign on the earth.
4. The Lord's Supper is derived from the Passover meal (Exodus 12:1-11, 1 Corinthians 11:23-32). Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7).
5. The bread represents the body of Christ which was broken for us when He bore our sins on the cross (1 Corinthians 11:24).

The wine represents the blood of Christ which is the guarantee of our salvation. For without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (1 Corinthians 11:25).

6. The Lord's Table is prepared for believers in the presence of their enemies (Psalm 23:5).
7. The believer must be in fellowship to discern the meaning of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:29). This is accomplished by self judgement (1 Corinthians 11:31, 1 John 1:9).
8. Partaking of the Lord's Supper without fellowship with the Lord can result in sickness or death (1 Corinthians 11:30).

COMMUNION FORMAT

1. The Church gathers – with the expectation that they are going to celebrate the Lord's Supper. As it is announced – all can prepare their hearts beforehand through the week.
2. The Elder or deacon conducting that weekly service stands and calls the people to prayer and confession of any sin that might bring judgement upon them if they eat unworthily. The passage of scripture from 1 Corinthians 11 may be read right through.
3. There is silent prayer and confession for a minute or two.
4. The elder/deacon conducting the service calls the servers forward (these are the people who will pass out the elements to the people, or give them to the people at the front if the people come forward to take the elements).
5. As the elements are distributed the person conducting the service reflects upon the theme of the service and draws people to reflect/pray before they each take the elements.
6. If elements are being distributed it is good for all to hold their portions and all the church eat and drink together, but if people come forward to receive them, then reflection and prayer needs to be before the church moves from their seats.
7. When all have been served the person leading the service should pray and dedicate the ordinance to the Lord and the service ends in prayer and songful thanks.
8. If elements have been distributed, then time needs to be taken to collect cups and other items used in the service and clear them away before the teaching service begins.

5. CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Minister's Manuals, and books about wedding services may be useful, but great care is to be taken when using resources, as the writer may not be a Bible believing Christian, and so their emphasis may be pagan, and they may teach falsehood. Be discerning about what books and formats you allow used for weddings, lest evil get a toe hold in the local church and false doctrine be taught.

There are all sorts of resources for funerals and weddings on the internet and in books. Build your own biblically sound wedding and funeral file with illustrations. Good articles from Christian papers on marriage, divorce, bringing up children, indeed any topic that might be useful in ministry, can all be filed away and drawn on later.

The Book of Acts will not give you much help here, as to the format for wedding services, for the Early Church was **NOT involved** in either formal wedding or funeral "services" as a matter of course, or at least as we understand these two ceremonies today. We must uphold the sanctity of marriage, but in the matter of how we conduct a church wedding we do not have much biblical precedent to draw upon, and must centre our practises in things that amplify and emphasize the truths of scripture about marriage. It is marriage that is the divine institution, not the wedding service, and so we see the service now as an "ordinance", but the key is the truth about the nature of Christian marriage.

In the days of the Apostles marriage was a civil and family/cultural affair, and death also was a family matter, with the early church following the rituals of Israel if they were Jewish and the Greeks if they were Greek. As the centuries rolled on and the church was recognised by the State, then these ceremonies were taken over by the church and began to resemble the ones we have today. This occurred as the church replaced the state and private family ceremonies with its own; the cultural practises being replaced by newly developed Christian culture. This occurred by around 320 AD, so we must be careful in the matter of weddings, for marriage is the Divine Institution, but neither weddings or funerals were church based in apostolic times, but were state/family functions. We may find ourselves entering such a time again, where we no longer do either "service" as such due to persecution and legal changes in many nations.

I still consider both services to be important "ordinances" for each were always recognized by the early church as times for prayer, thanksgiving and warning. Prayers and Bible readings were used from the first century to bless a married couple, dedicate and bless children, and as they buried a believer. There are many examples of simple services from all ages of the church's history in print today, so there is a lot of material that can be edited by you to assist your preparation of services if you want to draw on early historical precedent.

You need to have good resources that are relevant to your own cultural context as a pastor, for every year you will have to take on average, one or two weddings, two-four baby dedications, and two to three funerals per one hundred people at any church. This changes dramatically when epidemics strike, or if there is a "baby boom". One pastor in Africa I worked with took seven to twenty funerals a week due to the AIDS epidemic – these times require powerful prayerfulness, Holy Spirit empowerment, and a really powerful saturation of the Word of God in your life.

I consider all these services as “Ordinances” but the way we do them can vary, as the Early Church did not record details in Acts or other New Testament Letters, although details are found in the Ante-Nicene Father’s works from earliest days. This gives us freedom in format, but reminds us to be careful of details, lest we be unbiblical in what we proclaim by our actions. Remember, everything we do proclaims what we believe, and people heed our actions far more than our words.

Many people in the world consider the church to be the "hatch, match and despatch" organisation. They will want you to baptise babies, marry sinners, and bury pagans as if they were saints. If you are a Bible believing minister you cannot necessarily be involved in any of this, unless you have really good biblical reasons. This is an area to do a lot of prayer homework in and work closely with your Eldership or Church Board to ensure you have good local church policies to follow and keep yourself safe in your relationship with the State!

In these areas today there are official documents that must be signed, for the State has jurisdiction over registration of births, marriages, and deaths, and this raises its own problems that must be addressed by all churches as the days grow darker, and persecution of Bible believing churches increases world wide. Each church must decide what to do, and have agreed policy, for the fate of the individual local church in its relationship with the State rests upon these things. For each of these services we will examine the prayerful path to take when the State begins open opposition to bible believing churches being involved in these things. At this time we will need to return to apostolic days and not be involved “officially” in births, deaths or marriages, but until then we celebrate God’s revelation about the truths behind each of these things.

The day **will come** when local churches cannot be involved in any official documentation for births, deaths, and marriages, as the bible believing, and uncompromising churches will be under persecution. This day is not far away in some western nations, where to be a marriage celebrant under state law requires you to “marry” homosexuals and lesbians, which the Bible forbids. I believe we will see the day when bible believing churches will need to formally separate from the laws of the State and this will lead to open persecution of believers.

JEWISH WEDDING – AS A PICTURE OF BIBLICAL MARRIAGE

At the time of Christ the marriage was arranged through “marriage brokers”/“match makers” primarily with the father of the groom as the key decision maker. There are many interesting analogies from the Jewish marriage process to the relationship we have with God. Marriage for the believer is a spiritual as well as a practical and social thing.

Let us see how the Jewish people did things and identify the analogies to spiritual truths. As we do this, think of the application of these rituals to your own local cultural practises regarding marriage, as there will be local customs that you will want to involve, and some that you may need to challenge and have nothing to do with.

1. Prior to the first visit of the prospective groom to the bride, the father made arrangements for their relationship through an intermediary/broker. (Hebrews 2:13)

Analogy - God the Father - the Planner made arrangements for mankind in eternity past.

- 2 The prospective groom would then meet the bride and fellowship with her.

Analogy - Christ came to earth at the first advent and spent time with man.

3. Prior to leaving the bride's house the bridegroom would pay the whole dowry or payment for the bride. (Hebrews 9:23-28)

Analogy - Christ's death on the Cross paid the debt of all mankind in full.

4. The bridegroom would return to his father's house and build a future house for the newly married couple to live in. (John 14:1-3)

Analogy - Christ ascended to his father's house/heaven to prepare a place for his bride.

5. At the Father's request the Son would go to the Bride's home to pick the bride up.

Analogy - Christ's return to earth for his church at the Rapture.

- 6 The bride as she left her home was married to the groom. (1 Corinthians 15:51-58)

Analogy - As the body of Christ rises to meet Christ in the air the body becomes the bride.

7. The bride had been preparing her wedding garments waiting for the bridegroom. The bridegroom adorns his bride for the wedding supper. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15)

Analogy - Whilst waiting for the return of Christ, the Church produces gold, silver and precious stones. The final dressing of the body is done by Christ at the Judgement seat of Christ.

8. The bride and groom hold a wedding feast in the groom's father's house, which in rich families could last anywhere from a week to a month.

Analogy - The wedding feast of Christ will last 1,000 years - The Tribulation Period and possibly all of the time the Millennium occurs on earth.

9. Friends of the bridegroom would attend the wedding feast, and be there in the groom's father's house feasting before the groom returned with the bride.

Analogy - Old Testament Saints in resurrection bodies will be involved in the rejoicing of the Millennium.

10. Friends of the bride waited outside the wedding hall, with lamps alight waiting for the bridal couple to arrive, before they were permitted to enter the wedding feast. (Matthew 25:1-13)

Analogy - Tribulation Saints who survive the great tribulation will enter into the Millennium in their physical bodies to replenish the earth.

MARRIAGE AND "WEDDINGS"

Remember, for Wedding services - the ancient church was not involved in wedding services at all. Weddings in the ancient world were cultural, social, and legal affairs only. For several hundred years no one had a wedding service in a church building, as there were few church buildings, and the church was under persecution. From 320AD only they regularly held wedding services. The same occurred with funerals. As the church was under persecution they did not have funeral services, as such, as we know them today (More below on this).

A minister in the time of Paul did not take either service, so there are no examples in the Bible of the Christian wedding or funeral service. The Christian funeral in early days was simply offering prayers with family over a body being buried in the ground, or taking them into the catacombs if they were not allowed to bury them normally. Do not go to the Bible for precedence for either formal service, there are none that will give guidance.

We however get guidance from Scripture on doctrines in these two areas, but not practice. Weddings and funerals give opportunities for evangelism within the celebration/remembrance, and that must be our main objective if we conduct such services. These are wonderful and public opportunities to proclaim biblical truth, and as such are useful things. Because Marriage is a Divine Institution, and death was defeated through the Cross/Empty Tomb, they are both considered as "Ordinances" that we embrace, because they enable us to proclaim the Resurrection Truths of our faith.

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Christian marriage is a relationship of respect, of fidelity, of trust, and of love. It is also a commitment to whatever family the Lord will give the couple. The Christian idea of marriage is a high and noble one, stressing the responsibility and commitment of the couple. Passages on marriage include Ephesians 5, 1 Corinthians 7, and Colossians 3. In many passages the Lord talks about love and responsibility in many ways, and all these can be woven into a useful and powerfully helpful service. This is true whether you hold official State recognised "Wedding" services or simply hold a blessing of a Christian Marriage after a State recognised ceremony elsewhere.

In the ancient world the marriage itself was the taking away from the mother and father of the bride to be and the groom taking responsibility for her. The parents were no longer responsible for her; the husband was from that point onwards. The wedding feast after this "capture of the wife" went for perhaps a week, as shown at the wedding of Cana. John Chapter 2. After a day or so the parents of the bride joined the party and both families were bound together in the subsequent fellowship. Virginity was very important in the ancient Jewish world, and both husband and wife were expected to belong to each other alone, in purity and loving commitment.

Doctrines here are important. Leaving mother and father, cleaving to each other, and accepting a new relationship and authority are all important concepts to be understood for believers marrying. For the man, he is taking the responsibility of caring for, and protecting his wife, and being solely focused on her, not any others. She is promising to follow him and respond to him alone. The parents were to be kept at arms length once arrangements are made. In some situations they were never seen again. These are important principles that must be related to the wedding today. Refer below to the doctrinal study.

Marriage is for grown ups, not for babies. If people are not adult in their attitudes and ready for the responsibility they must not marry. If they have had sex and a baby is on the way, that is simply sin, and must be faced, and the child cared for, but it does not mean the sinful couple of youngsters should marry! That may simply compound their sin with an evil! The man must be a man; not a lust filled boy. If he is not ready to be a man and take financial and personal responsibility for his wife, then let him not marry, whatever their pregnancy status! The woman must be willing to leave her mother; and so, if she is not, then let her not get married.

As Paul would make clear in **2 Corinthians 6:14**, the couple were not to be “unequally yoked” together. This refers back to the Old Testament rules regarding not yoking an oxen and an ass together to pull one plough. An animal will be hurt if it is placed alongside another that cannot pull its equal weight. The husband and wife must be equal; they must “pull the same weight” in their life. That means they are spiritually, intellectually, professionally and culturally equal, and able to work together in society and community at the same level with equal respect from others and towards each other.

If a couple are not “equal” one will be hurt and the other will not reach their potential before the Lord. Equality applies in every area of life, and that means spiritually equal in passion for the Lord, intellectually and professionally equals, and in social, creative and cultural gifting equal. They must be able to walk the path of life together in all areas of life – and if they cannot you are simply setting them up to fail. Being “in love” is not good enough for marriage to be biblical and powerfully useful to the Lord. Being “in love” is vital, but there must be strong equality in all life areas, good communication, and much more besides, or their union will be a disaster down track.

You as the minister have a responsibility before the Lord to be sure that this is all understood and both have right understanding of their biblical responsibilities. If there is in-law interference in the process and the young couple are either not ready or unequal, then a wedding should not proceed. You are responsible before the Lord for these decisions and must not join together people who are unsuited and unequal, or have been pressured by others, or social opinions.

Remember, even if they have sinned and produced a child before their planned wedding, they should not be married if their union is unequal or unbiblical in any manner, for all the church is doing is sanctifying sin and ensuring that either, or both, will be unable to reach their potential before the Lord in this brief life of theirs. We have one chance to get the job done on this earth, and the Lord has assigned a path for us to walk and serve within. We cannot serve the Lord in power with the wrong life partner! Marriage is a game breaker for success for many because they do not hesitate and think!

Marriage is a serious business where a woman is trusting her life to a man and leaving her parents. Often this is not preached and the newly weds are under complete domination of the in-laws or parents. When you leave your mother and father you must leave them and stand alone before God and your community. It is better to stop a wedding that is not based on the biblical principles, than have a divorce shortly afterwards and bring disgrace upon the Lord and shame to God’s people.

These are just some of the biblical principles, and you can see from these alone how easily a church minister can fall foul of the State in refusing to marry those who the State recognises as being legally able to wed under the increasingly pagan based laws many of our nations are passing. Each church must be sure of its stance on all these things, and each minister must ensure their Church Board backs his/her stance on these matters.

SEXUAL RELATIONS

If you are dealing with a youth group you have to get across the concept that, if you are a believer, you do not play around with sex, as it is for adults within a marriage relationship only. God does not say “no” to pre-marital sex for no reason; he has many reasons. By biblical rules God is trying to stop mankind from making shipwreck of their life. People may do the wrong thing, but if you have told them the truth, they have been warned. We are not held responsible for people who deliberately go against the teaching of the scripture, but we are held responsible if we have not warned them. **Ezekiel 3:4-17, 18:30-32, 33:1-7, 34:1-10.**

You have, as a minister, to be clear and if necessarily blunt, regarding the doctrines around the biblical viewpoint on marriage. The message is very clear, “Get married God’s way and enjoy having sex with your marriage partner alone all your life”. Today the pagans talk about, “safe sex”, but the only safe, satisfying, and life long sexual life that mankind can have is with the wife or husband who has never been with anyone else.

If a woman is already pregnant and the couple want to get married but they cannot afford to be away from one set of parents then you need to discuss with the people involved if there is a place where they can live in the house with privacy. If there is not, the marriage will not survive, as they will not be able to communicate, and the man is clearly not in a position to look after his wife. They have an uphill battle because the relationship has started with sin rather than sanctification.

Do not be bullied into sanctifying sin with the evil of a marriage that is clearly not of God and is doomed to divorce due to the unequal yoking. If the child is born through the parents sin it will survive, but establishing a marriage that is wrong for both the man and the woman will not help this child, nor will any subsequent children have blessing. You as a teacher have a major role in the preventative ministry by advising the young people regarding sex, trying to avoid this sort of situation.

Turn to and read again **2 Corinthians 6:14**, read also, **Nehemiah 13: 23 - 27**. Note the principle; no believer marries an unbeliever, with no exceptions. If a believer has sinned sexually and a child is born, let them face their responsibility regarding this child, but not ruin their life and the child’s possibly by marrying the other parent, unless it is appropriate that they do so. Many ministries are lost, and young believers are side tracked from service for years, through the sin and evil of wrongful sexual relationships. We do not sanctify sin by a hasty marriage to cover up immorality, and join together

permanently those who ought never to have come together in the first place. Read Ezra 10:2ff, and see just how seriously marriage with “strange” (unbelieving/unequal) partners was to be taken by the tribe of Judah.

In a number of countries today the homosexual lobby has secured the right to “marry”, and the full satanic assault on biblical marriage is under way in many nations, being pushed aggressively by President Obama’s America. Romans 1:16-32. The use of the term “marriage” by homosexual couples is forbidden by scripture as an evil and sinful thing, and no Bible believing church can be involved in marrying any homosexual or lesbian couple.

The danger the church is in within countries that make such things legal is very real, for if that nation’s “Marriage Act” permits a homosexual/lesbian couple to marry, then they may approach a minister and request you conduct a marriage for them in the church. If the church has the license to conduct State recognised marriages you are acting illegally if you refuse them. If you refuse to recognise their right to marry you will see your church stripped of its license to marry at very least, and may lose charitable status, or even face direct legal penalty.

In such countries your church must have a clear and public policy that protects you from these people. If you do not think about this before it happens, you will see these people setting you up for a court case for denying them their “rights”. It has become Satan’s best way to rob missions of money by spending it on lawyers and fines. In such a country my counsel is that the local churches must return to the practise of the first three centuries, and not conduct any State marriages at all for anyone, even born again believers! Just conduct truly Christian blessing services for church members who have been married under the State’s Laws.

In such countries you must absolutely separate Church and State, and expect no support from the State, nor seek any. You must expect persecution to begin soon after these evils begin to be legally enacted. This is the state on my own nation. In such a climate you are safest to simply bless Christian husbands and wives that have married, and preach the truth about God’s Ordinance to them and God’s people at the closest regular service to the Official state recognized wedding “ceremony”. Believers will need to formally register their wedding or they may not be able to travel together to some countries but the church will bless them only, as state recognition involves too much compromise of truth.

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Another question is, can a divorced person be remarried by you as a minister? There is division on this issue among good Bible Believing Christians so be sure of your church’s position, and be gracious to others. The passages here to look at are, **Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Matthew 5:27-32, 19:3-12, 1 Corinthians 7:15**. Read these and other verses on the subject of marriage covered in the doctrinal study below. I believe that if a person is legitimately divorced, which is by means of adultery by their first partner, and the partner has gone off and joined themselves to another, then remarriage is an entitlement for the deserted believer, who was wronged by the adultery.

Remember, under the Old Testament Law the Jewish adulterers were executed, and so the innocent always had the right to remarry, because they were widows or widowers, not divorcees! We do not have adulterers executed today; we have them lauded in the press and telling their stories of “true love’s triumph”. Our media celebrates evil today, but we must stand for truth, and not punish the innocent, while the guilty are praised by evil men and women in the media.

The Bible is clear that the adulterer has no right to remarriage, and any such remarriage is on-going adultery in God’s eyes. This was the position of the Early Church through the early centuries, but each church must come to its own position and the minister must uphold it. Remember – good people differ on these things, and while charity should rule in debates about this, you are answerable to the Lord for your decisions, and so must not marry a couple if you sincerely believe the Lord forbids their union. This principle applies even if the State forbids churches from marrying, for you cannot bless by public or private prayer any union that is unbiblical.

In early days the churches would require the repentant adulterer to attend the church, but they did not have the right to continue in any office or responsibility within the local church if they had brought disgrace upon the church by their actions. The Early Church set a number of years of quiet repentance upon all who sinned sexually, before they could take Communion again, and before they were entered back into full fellowship and service. The adulterer was never given the right to re-marry another however. Few churches today hold this ancient standard – but this certainly appears to me to be the biblical one!

You need to have a studied and settled position on divorce and re-marriage, and this needs to be spelled out in your local church material that tells people who you are and what you believe and practise. The other problem you will have will be the marriage between two unbelievers who want to have a “white wedding”; being married, as they will put it, “properly” in the church. If a person has been immoral they will often want the “Hollywood Wedding” and so make a travesty and circus of the concept of biblical and godly marriage. Do not be part of pagan play acting that mocks biblical truths.

The idea of a white wedding in the church is that of purity and God’s plan being celebrated, and as ministers of the Word of God we should not be party to glossing over immorality. What is your church board’s position? What is your own biblical position on these things pastor? What does your church have recorded publically as its position on these things? You must have a publicized position on these things, or evil men and women will come to sue you for “humiliation” and mock you, the Word of God, and the Lord!

It is great to be able to testify that one has not had sex with anyone else, and that is meant to be the testimony of all young believers as they approach their wedding day. As a minister, be careful of this whole matter of involvement in marriage ceremonies for unbelievers. My position is that I do not want to waste time with the play actors and people who will turn the church buildings into a three ring circus, nor do I desire to pander to things that are unbiblical.

Evangelistic opportunities are often thin on the ground with a wedding, for as far as most are concerned, you are there simply to “do what they want”. This is an area for real spiritual strength on your part, with clear witness and a firm position that is well publicized in your church material.

Many unbelievers will expect to be able to come to the church their parents or grandparents came to get married in, and demand of you what they want! They are in effect paying for the buildings and for your time and they want you to dance to their tune. Pagans often believe that the churches are there to fulfil a “service” to the community, and if you are registered with the State for weddings, then they will demand it of you. What is your written church policy on these things pastor?

We are being increasingly challenged in the western churches with these things, and this will be world wide in a few years. Please believe my heart felt plea to you as you read these words – have your Church Board develop a statement of faith and practise regarding these things well before you are challenged as the minister to do things in a way that does not honour God and His Holy Word. The enemy is very busy in these areas and each church must know where it stands.

If your local church has no stated public policy on these things, then you need to have a deacon/elder retreat for at least an eight hour day and pray and discuss these things. The objective of this meeting being to come to a formal public statement that the church has, as part of its literature/web site, explaining to all who come to seek your “services” what your policy is. If you “hire” your building you may not be able to restrict what is said and done by the people hiring it! I believe that the church building should be so full of believers worshipping and fellowshiping every day that there is no room for “hiring” by pagans – but examine your policies pastor, or the enemy will out-fox you.

It must be a “Church Board Policy” so no individual is seen to be responsible for it, and all collectively support it. If you do not do this you will have your church building attacked, stoned and even burned to the ground by angry pagans who you morally have to refuse services. We have had churches attacked in my country in recent weeks for refusing to pander to pagan demands to run services that mock the biblical doctrine of marriage, and also abuse heaped upon the churches that deny the right of unbelievers to use pagan funeral rights within the church.

The Early Church was absolutely separate from the State, but we are often recognised by the State with tax advantages for our charitable work. This charitable status may increasingly come at a price, and that price may be accepting things we cannot under the clear teaching of the scriptures. I believe we may see churches stripped of their charitable status and then actively persecuted by the State for their stance over homosexual marriage and other matters. As the days darken we must expect this and prepare with clear biblical policies that we can take our stand upon.

Churches have been attacked (with stones and fire bombs) in New Zealand for taking a stand over who they will marry, without having a public policy in writing that is published. Only a published policy allows the minister to say, “I am very sorry, but the Church Board policy for some time has been this,” He then hands them the policy. Such things need to be on the bulletin board outside the church and on any web site also. We must be public in our stance, so none are “turned away” with any embarrassment, and even then we may be persecuted for our stance, but at least we have faced the issue and the church is united on it.

A Church Board Policy must address all the central questions people ask about all the “Ordinances”. We have, I believe, entered the days that are like the old “days of Noah”, that were characterised by sexual immorality and pagan worship, where people worshipped themselves, and the gods made in their own image. This means they will ask us to do unbiblical things and we must expect them to be baffled at best, and angry often, at our refusal to go along with satanic deception. Matthew 24:36-39. We all must have a policy that stops argument and even violence against the minister or buildings, or at least has unified the congregation around what we believe before the storms of evil break upon us.

CHURCH BOARD POLICIES ON MARRIAGE IN TODAY'S PAGAN WORLD

Suggested church board policy on marriage in places where you will be often asked to marry pagans, the multiple married people, or homosexuals/lesbians....

1. Marriage is a Divine Institution joining a man and woman together to the glory of God, and we uphold its sanctity and importance for society before Almighty God.
2. We uphold the separation of Church and State and so do not conduct wedding services for State Marriages in this building. (Remember my points above; this is **vital** if the local State “Marriage Act” permits all and sundry to marry legally.)
3. For dedicated Christian Church Members, who are biblically qualified to have been married, we will conduct a Christian celebration of blessing over their marriage.
4. This is the position of the Earliest Churches in history, and in light of the moral conditions of the present day we have returned to this position.

Young people can save themselves a lot of heartache by living in the biblical way. It is not appropriate I believe for ministers of God's Word to take church weddings for unbelievers, unless there are clear evangelical opportunities that the Holy Spirit has opened up in front of your eyes. However an unbeliever can marry an unbeliever if they are "equally yoked" in other areas of life also, but should you be involved in a church? I have changed my position on the local church's involvement in marriage ceremonies over recent years as I have seen the satanic strategy shift.

Why I hold this position now in 2016, is I believe in today's moral climate that marriage of "all comers" in churches is simply now too dangerous with the legal changes in my own country. Christian ceremonies and promises made by those who do not recognise Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, gives the impression that the unbelievers are "right before God", and any such delusion is dangerous for their eternal salvation. We are tasked to ensure eternal issues are clear, and some "Christian" ceremonies can seriously confuse the unbeliever into thinking they are by participation right before God.

Local churches must have a clear policy on this matter, and as the minister you must follow the policy or leave that church. If your church takes weddings, and if you believe that there is an evangelistic opportunity, you may decide to use a two-pagan wedding service as such. Be careful here, have your objective well thought out and their permission in advance for what you want to say.

If you are taking a marriage service for spiritual objectives, it is not just a couple of hours that will be required for this; there will be many hours counselling the couple and practising the service so it runs well and honours God. Be wary of expense here, for often weddings are about showmanship and pride to outdo their friends. This is another reason why I believe the modern churches must adopt an Early Church position in these things.

Paganism, in the form of "wedding planners" have taken over what they now call "the wedding market", and in some places they are now celebrity events to be managed like a three ring circus! Morally you do not want the young couple to spend a lot of money that they cannot afford. They can be "different" and just have a quiet and very Christian celebration of their marriage commitment without the big showy wedding service and reception. Their money should be spent on their future, not a showy pagan drinking party!

Cultural aspects will dictate what is seen to be "right" and "wrong" about these matters and you must work in accord with the local traditions and customs, as long as they do not violate the principles and doctrines of the Word of God. Remember the Bible's doctrines take precedence over "cultural expectations" and you must stand against culture when it conflicts with doctrine. You must have the Church Board's policy clear on all these things.

Time is required to run a wedding service well. You also need to have a practice to ensure you have a God honouring service. It is not to become a "three ringed circus"; it is a commitment before God and his people. If they want a circus let them go somewhere appropriate.

If it is morally and scripturally safe in your society to run wedding services in the local church then the following things need to be considered:

You should carefully vet **music** and the ceremony to make sure that it is honouring to God. In order to get it right from the start you should say that "this is it", and have a standard prepared that you can hand them on paper. Have a handout and tell them that this is an agenda for the next few weeks of counselling. Then say to them, "At the end of that time you will be asked if you still want to get married, and by your response then I will decide if I am going to marry you or not". Do not let them make the rules. This can save you a lot of time. The minister is there to serve God not the whims of unsaved man.

The wedding service, once it is set up as a **God honouring event**, is the bride and grooms day, not the "in laws" day. So the parents should be out of it and have no say about anything in the marriage, once it is arranged. If there is any interference you turn to Genesis 2:24 and tell them to hear the Word of the Lord. If the mother of the bride does not want to leave and the bride does not want her mother to leave, ask them all to leave. Failure to follow the Scriptures will cause misery. **Matthew 19:5, Ephesians 5:31**. Some cultural practises may change this, but be careful; you violate the clear principles of Genesis 2:24, at your, and the people's peril!

Keep the service to a minimum. It does not need to be a long service. Have a short message to the people. If they are unbelievers give them the gospel. Most are not listening anyway! The minister should be paid for the time that he has spent with them **Luke 10:7, 1 Timothy 5:18**. There are many people who despise the job of the minister. Do not let anyone despise you. Do not let them treat you as a nothing. It is not wise to attend the breakfast unless they are Christians, well known to you, and friends. There is little that you can do at a wedding breakfast. Remember, local custom and what is, "good manners", will dictate some of your behaviour, but the Bible must not be compromised.

With the unbeliever you can turn the payment issue round to tell them that as Christ died freely for them there will be no charge as money is not the question salvation for them is. As a rule, we should accept no money from unbelievers for anything, for they may walk away thinking that they have paid for their salvation.

In every youth group you should teach marriage, sexuality, and the family. You can use Proverbs and then have teaching sessions on Biblical sexuality starting with Genesis 3, Song of Solomon and then go to Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3.

Every year the youth group ought to be taught this. You have to give it bluntly. Proverbs is very good on this. This will save time on counselling later.

SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR WEDDING

1. Pre-service music, which changes to the "Wedding March" (bride's preference) as the bride enters to meet her groom at the front of the church.
2. All stand to honour the bride as she enters and her groom greets her at the front of the church.
3. Prayers of thanks and commitment are said to bless the proceedings by the minister.
4. The minister leads the congregation in a song/hymn that is appropriate (chosen by the couple to sum up their faith and belief in God and marriage).
5. There is a short reading and a **short message** by the minister to emphasise some aspect of the biblical teaching about marriage and the family. Make it short and powerful – few are listening to you!
6. The formal vows are made or repeated (if they have been married before in a State ceremony).
7. A prayer of blessing over the couple is given by the minister in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.
8. The couple exit the church to joyful music that sums up their belief that they are entering into a wonderful marriage before God and His people.

MARRIAGE

1. Man and angels have personality but only men and animals have the temporal spirit ("nephesh") and experience physical death. Angels do not die because they are spirit beings.
2. Marriage requires both personality and life, therefore it is only applicable to man. There is no marriage in the angelic realm (Matthew 22:30).
3. Definition:- the personal relationship between a male and female member of the human race which typifies the saving relationship between Christ and believers. It is a relationship that is meant to last for all of time.
4. God's instruction - "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish and the fowl and every living thing". This shows that man should subdue and have dominion over the animal kingdom.
5. If God was a solitary personality there would be no divine example of relationships, however with the three personalities in the Godhead relationships are demonstrated. He is a personal God and we can therefore have a relationship with him.
6. Marriage typifies the relationship between Christ and the church – of respectful mutual submission (Ephesians 5:21):
 - a) in the form of grace and faith (Ephesians 5:22), the word submit meaning to fall into line to the law of God which the carnal mind cannot do (Romans 8:7; 10:3).
 - b) you submit yourself by an act of freewill.
 - c) a family can strain marriage relationships if they are not submissive (Romans 13:1,5).
7. Grace is typified by the male and faith by the female. If this pattern is not adhered to it results in misery and suffering.
8. Grace and the man:
 - a) the man is in the role of an initiator
 - b) the man provides information to which the woman can respond but must not coerce her free will
 - c) the man has to show his character to the woman
 - d) the man has to be patient, a form of grace.
9. Faith and the woman:
 - a) the woman is in the role of a responder
 - b) the woman makes the choice of her free will
 - c) she is the one who uses faith
 - d) the woman needs time to grow.
10. Glory revealed:
 - a) The glory of God is shown in the man in the form of a changed life through regeneration.

b) The glory of the man is shown in the woman by changes in the woman.

11. Compatibility:

a) The important area of compatibility is that in the spiritual realm as one can be psychologically compatible with many people.

b) Spiritual compatibility is indicated by the phrase "one flesh" and is a picture of the union of Christ and the church.

12. Satan will attempt to blur the differences between man and woman and cause role reversals. The degree to which this occurs reflects the level of decadence in a society.

13. Legitimate reasons for the termination of marriage:

a) the death of one of the partners

b) the desertion of a believer by an unbelieving spouse where one of the two partners has become a Christian after marriage (1 Corinthians 7:10-16)

c) inappropriate marriage partners such as close relations as specified in (Leviticus 18)

d) adultery or fornication as this causes the destruction of the one flesh principle by forming another one flesh (Matthew 5:32; 19:9).

6. ANOINTING/DEDICATION, ORDINATIONS OF GODLY LEADERSHIP

Turn to and read - **Acts 14:20-23** - Here we have Paul founding churches and ordaining elders in each church. There is a plurality of elders in each church. This is done after a thorough period of preparation for everybody involved with Prayer and Fasting. The Jewish fast concept that was carried into the early church involved rising early for breakfast before 6am, and then only water was taken between 6am and 6pm when the evening meal would be taken.

Fasting was not onerous if you rose early! It was designed for everyone to be involved in, so that people rose early, ate, and then prayed through the work day, when as their stomach rumbled they would drink some water and pray. It remains a great way to set aside yourself for the Lord's work and to remember to pray through the day, for your stomach sounds the reminder! Some fasts involved no food or water between 6am and 6pm – this is unhealthy and not advised for any.

Turn to and read - **Titus 1:5 - 9**. Paul gives Titus the authority to organise the church in Crete. In this he says that there will be certain people ordained. The bishop and the elder are clearly the same person, with the term pastor being a reference to the elder who rules/leads.

The English words translated "appoint or ordain" involve a number of Greek words; which in the Greek culture involved a show of hands, but also recognised a solemn appointment to a role, and in the Jewish model involved the laying on of hands to signify the setting apart, and new authority, of the people anointed/appointed. So there are two concepts here; the approval of the majority of the people, and the authority of the apostolic delegates, who are able then to appoint a people who are "approved" by character and qualification.

Turn to and read - **Acts 6 : 1 - 6**. What is happening here is a group of church members are looking at men who have these spiritual gifts. The apostles are saying, "you vote for them, certifying them as qualified in your eyes, and we will appoint/anoint them into the role". In the early church there is the apostolic delegate in authority over the church that appoints people but the congregation themselves have a part in the process.

We do not have a dictatorial situation even in these earliest days. The church membership is involved but it is the people in charge who will eventually ordain. Titus, as the apostle's delegate, was the one with Paul's special authority, so he ordained the elders and deacons, but he selected the men involved in association with the congregation's information about them, and their approval.

What is an ordination service today? It is a formal recognition by the church, through its leadership, that the person being set aside for a specific ministry has the gift and qualification for that ministry. That person is being set aside for the job for which they are qualified, by both gift and fruit in their life. They are being publically certified as safe and right for the role.

Ordination is not giving people authority from a bishop but it is the church, through the actions of the eldership, recognising that the person has the gift and is demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit in their life. A person with a gift but no fruit in their life is not qualified to hold that position, and is not to be ordained.

LAYING ON OF HANDS

If the person to be ordained is to become an elder, deacon or deaconess they have entered into a position of authority in the church. This was signified in the early church by the laying on of hands by those already recognised as having the Lord's authority over the church.

There are four things that the laying on of hands must signify. It was a specifically Jewish custom and was brought into the church by Jewish people, who were the majority in the early years. If it is appropriate in your own local customs that this ritual continue then be sure each of these things is true for the people being ordained.

[a] It recognised the new authority that was being given to the person that was the recipient of it. Sometimes the whole congregation did this to show that the person had authority over them.

[b] It was setting someone apart for that task. When Paul and Barnabas were set aside for a missionary journey they were set aside in the church one Sunday morning and hands were laid on them.

[c] It meant that you were delegating your power to them, or recognising that you are sharing authority with them. If you are an elder and appointing a new elder you are saying to the person that they are going to be in authority over this church as you are.

[d] It was also a way of saying, "Blessings upon you; may the Lord bless you". When you are ordaining an elder or deacon you want the Lord to bless them. It is still appropriate for the church to do this today as it is an apostolic practice. We do not recognise apostolic succession as such, but we recognise the above principles as relevant in all churches of the Lord. The elders of the church, at very least should be involved with all ordination services.

In addition they set aside deacons to do a job. As elders we are ordaining them and recognising that they are responsible to the eldership. They are to be in obedience to them. Here the elders tell the deacons what to do, not the members. Ordination takes a variety of forms and so each service needs to be different and its significance explained each time.

When there is a specific job to be done in the church people should be set aside for the task, publicly recognised as responsible to the eldership for the task (ordained for it) so that all know they are to do this, and know what the job is, what their authority is, and what the issues are that are to be supported or prayed for. The ordination service is a public recognition of authority and responsibility in a specific tasking; the results are everyone knows what is happening and who is to be prayed for and for what!

There is always a set of spiritual qualifications for all tasks that involve authority.

There ought to be a public act of commitment as a part of every ordination, when the whole congregation stand at the end of the service to pray for the elected/selected officers. In their standing they commit themselves to follow those people. As elders, deacons, missionaries, church planters (if you are establishing a daughter church the pastor should be sent out with a special service) or other specific short term mission or outreach. Some churches will have all church members hold out their hands in blessing to the people being set aside by the service. Have a policy on this and follow it with teaching to amplify the doctrines behind the practise.

Once a person has been publicly ordained they should lead an exemplary life. It is an advantage to have public ordination for specific tasking, because then if the ordained people do not measure up, they are up for public discipline. If a church officer falls into gross sin they must be publicly rebuked and publicly stripped of the office that they were publicly set aside for. An ordinary church member can however be dealt with privately for sin, but not a person who has openly accepted ordination to a role that requires exemplary conduct before the world. It is a serious thing to be publically set aside for the Lord's work!

The office of elder, deacon and the like is not necessarily a permanent thing. It was often common to be appointed deacon and then go through to eldership over time, and later some would go on to be appointed bishop over the entire city. The deacon was often also set aside as an evangelist, as seen by the life of Philip and of Stephen.

Procedures for ordination services should follow local custom and be fully discussed and set out by the local church board. Certain things should however always occur. Firstly, an examining council meets - a candidate for a ministry role should submit his doctrinal position in writing, and his/her CV, as they can then be questioned by either the Board, or the whole congregation on the facts of their life and work to date.

All candidates for ministry are to be tested thoroughly as to their views concerning the church, their knowledge of the Bible, their knowledge of the denomination's history and practice, and their personal attitude to the church, their marriage, their family and their behaviour in the community is all to be assessed. They are standing before God's people and the wider pagan community as an "approved" leader of God's people and so they must be unable to be accused of any sin, and so bring disgrace upon the Lord or his people!

They are also to be questioned and tested on their acquaintance with contemporary thought and affairs. They must know the local issues and be ready to bring God's policy to bear upon them. Their skills of preaching, evangelising, teaching, and pastoral visitation may also be examined, depending on the role they are being "set aside" for. Their ability to relate to others, their ability to work as part of a team, their proven evangelistic and missionary commitment, stewardship, attitude towards the pagan community all need to be tested. For pastoral roles it is vital to ask, what do unbelievers think of them? If unbelievers say that a person is "no good", then they are not fit to be a minister.

The service itself. Be Holy Spirit led here, depending on the nature of the service being set aside for. It should start with prayer, and then a solemn hymn of affirmation, the appropriate Scriptures are read aloud, an appropriate sermon is given, and then the challenge to be obedient to the Lord is given to the candidate. Once they have committed to following the Lord and serving the Lord's purposes and Plan, then the laying on of hands occurs, followed by another time of prayer, and then a hymn of commitment, benediction and the right hand of fellowship is given by all present to the newly appointed officer of the church.

There may be an entire service set aside for that person/people, as it is extremely important that such services are special and seen to be by all. It may be on a Saturday but it may be on a Sunday followed by a communion that the newly appointed person leads, so their first act of service is serving the Lord's Supper to the church that stands behind them.

In Acts 6 where the deacons were appointed they had seven deacons for around seven thousand new members (although the local Jerusalem congregation may have been only a few hundred)! If you have a congregation of fifty you will probably find that there will not be seven Holy Spirit gifted deacons provided by the Lord, for they are not needed. You need one deacon probably per twenty five to fifty members. The job of the person set aside for this role is a social worker and counsellor. The jobs of deacons however are often expanded, and that is fine if the Holy Spirit leads you to task them with additional social work required for God's people.

The deaconess was also a social worker; working with the older women especially. Deacons should meet in their own gatherings and share the social concerns of the church that will allow them to coordinate matters and call upon the eldership for targeted prayer when required. They should keep the elders fully informed of all social matters affecting the Lord's people so that prayer can be targeted to the needs of the people. One elder should be "set aside" to receive prayer requests and call the entire membership to prayer through a cell phone or email activated "prayer chain".

The elder's meeting under the chief elder/pastor/bishop has the spiritual concerns of the church as their focus. They should receive reports from the deacons and respond to them with spiritual guidance. Eldership was an Old Testament function also, whereas deacons only occur only in the New Testament, although both roles are straight "borrows" from the synagogue structure of the diaspora.

DOCTRINES

CHURCH GOVERNMENT – QUALIFICATIONS FOR HOLDING THE OFFICES

PASTOR / ELDER – Qualifications: (1Timothy 3 and Titus 1 – Refer to the commentaries on these chapters for a full discussion of each subject)

1. Blameless - you will be blamed for many things in ministry - make sure that no accusation of evil or sin is true. You must deal with sin in your life or it disqualifies you.
2. The husband of one wife - a one woman man, not with a roving eye looking for a woman to replace his wife, or a man who is proven an adulterer.
3. Vigilant - sober or clear headed or cool.
4. Sober - has self control.
5. Good behaviour - orderly and appropriate to situations, respectable.
6. Hospitable - always ready to invite people into your home.
7. Keen to teach - keen to share the Word of God with them.
8. Not given to wine - he should not be addicted to alcohol.
9. Not a striker - he must not be a hot head who mouths off or attacks others.
10. Not greedy of filthy lucre - he must not be greedy for money.
11. He must not be a contentious arguer.
12. Not covetous - this is the desire for the things that are base and disgraceful or a desire for things that are not good. In order to test a candidate you need to put a person under pressure to see if things emerge. Have a board of examination when you evaluate people.
13. If the person has a wife, then ask what is his home life like? You should not need to call his wife in but someone should have visited the home from the church. One of the older ladies, perhaps a deaconess should be on the committee.

14. He should not be a novice; not a newly planted seed. No one should be a pastor within two years of being saved. It should be probably closer to five. You may have people who are very well qualified but they need a couple of years experience before they would be considered as an associate pastor. You can ruin people by giving them too much responsibility too soon.

It is also important according to the Scriptures to get an appreciation of the person from unbelievers to see what form of a testimony and standing he has in an unbelieving world. He needs to be well thought of by unbelievers.

DEACON—Qualifications are equally important as for eldership: (1 Timothy 3)

- a) be honest regarding money
- b) be morally pure as they are dealing with people who have lost their husbands
- c) be spiritual and walking with the Lord
- d) be wise - full of doctrine
- e) be endorsed by the eldership (the apostles laid their hands on them to give them authority)
- f) be grave - they must be serious, mature and dignified
- g) not be double tongued or two faced - what they say must be what they mean
- h) not be given to wine, not a drinker who sits over his drinks. He does not need to be a tee totaller.
- i) not be greedy for money because the deacon is the person who deals with money
- j) hold doctrine in purity, thus being a conservative as far as doctrine is concerned
- k) have a pure conscience or a tender conscience, a person who feels sin deeply
- l) be proved. He should be proved in other areas before he becomes a deacon- v 10
- m) be a faithful worker in the church if he is to be considered as a deacon
- n) be the husband of one wife or a one-woman man (i.e. faithful, not lusting after other women) - v 11 He may have been legitimately divorced according to scripture
- o) if married, have a wife who was dignified, not a gossip, since the deacon may share sensitive matters with his wife. What was said to the deacon, or deaconess had to be kept secret. No gossip could ever hold any role in the early churches.

7. FUNERALS

Now let us look at the subject of Funerals. Even the unbeliever looks for some comfort in this area. They will often want you to say what a nice person some pagan relative was, even when he/she wasn't. If you believe God's Word you cannot preach lies about pagans, pretending they are in heaven when you know they are in hell, however be careful of such things unless it is clear to all. The eternal destiny of the lost attending a funeral is in your hands at such times and lies are not to be told them, but nor is the truth to be told with such offence that it is rejected out of hand.

One thing is certain at a funeral; if the dead were unsaved, then it is too late for them, but not for the mourners. You cannot save the dead, but the living can be led to the foot of the Cross, and the open door of the Empty Tomb! There is hope in our message and at funerals that hope must be seen clearly.

Some pagan people have the false cartoon concept of Saint Peter at the "pearly gates" of heaven waiting for them to come, and that all will be welcomed into heaven by a forgiving God. They think that they can ignore the Lord Jesus Christ in time and yet have him accept them in eternity, when the truth is that he is on the throne of judgement waiting for them! The key passage from Revelation must be used at least once at most funerals of the lost. Revelation 20:11-15.

The unbeliever wants to think that everything is alright, and they don't need to be concerned about the Gospel, but the truth is they must be very concerned indeed! Remember, Satan is a deceiver, and distracts most people by the details of life, and at a funeral there is a brief window of opportunity, with a life over before them to confront them spiritually with the truth! Such foolish notions, as some unbelievers have, do allow for the opportunity to give the gospel at the funeral, but you must ensure the family know what you will say well before hand. No surprises for the grieving family!

When unbelievers face a dead body they know in their hearts that their cartoon idea of God, and heaven/hell, is not true. You have to give them the truth, for often this is the only time they will hear it. Secure the family's position to tell the truth, or else all is lost. If the funeral will have many lost people attending it will be a major battle field of the Angelic Conflict, so powerful prayer is vital. Mobilise the prayer warriors and win a battle for the souls of the lost. Do not mobilise the church to provide food and cups of coffee and tea, but mobilise them to pray the souls of the lost into the kingdom.

THE MINISTER'S ACTIONS

When there is a death in the church family, **immediately visit** the family. Do not stay for hours, they are in a state of shock. You go into the house with a chosen verse or two, and pray for the family and bereaved friends and neighbours, and then leave. (The only exception to this is if the funeral and burial needs to be immediate – then you must discuss with them the funeral service at this first meeting.)

Having visited the family you know the spiritual condition of the people, and so **call the church prayer warriors** to targeted prayer for the lost who will be attending, and for protection over the staff as they fight the demonic forces with the Gospel message during the service. John 16:8-11 is to be brought down upon all who come to the service. Seek the Lord yourself over each and every funeral that you might have the right Bible passage to read and the right words to say – you must be Holy Spirit led at every step!

This **first visit** is an opportunity to **give the hope of the gospel**, but be sensitive to the state of the people there and the nature of the death. You cannot say where the person who has died is, but you do know what the Bible says - Luke 16: 22 - 31.

If they were saved, or were under the age of accountability (Numbers 14:29, 2 Samuel 13:23, Matthew 18:10), you can give them the Christian hope, for the loved one is in heaven. Remember that children are with Jesus; there is absolutely no doubt about that, as also those with what we now call "diminished responsibility" through severe mental illness or some other retardation. I believe that many suicides, through catatonic depression are also in this category and I expect to see some who were overwhelmed and died this way in heaven. Be assured in your own mind through biblical study and share the truth with the mourners, and share the challenge to live in Christ Jesus and be assured in Him alone!

Tell the mourners about the hope of Jesus resurrection and the certainty we can have in relationship with him. The fate of the dead person is now sealed, but the fate of the living gathered around is still unsure, and so remind them all, that "it is given unto man once to die and then the judgement". Hebrews 9:27. Invite them all to reaffirm their faith, or find faith in the one who alone gives hope at such times.

On the **second visit** to the family raise the subject of the content of the funeral service, and ask them to think about the content of it seriously. In hot climates without body preservation the funeral may need to be quickly handled, and so be sensitive to time frame and shortening the time between your visits. If possible encourage the family to sit with the dead as long as they can, as that assists them in their acceptance of the death and the changed family structure that results from it.

A funeral service is the last testimony of a faithful Christian person. You should, with the believing family, choose the music, and the message carefully. It is important to **check everything** with the family first. You have to be true to the Bible. Check out what you are able to say with their blessing and approval, so that you are not compromised. The truth may offend, but you must not be offensive. Do not have a lot of hymns. If they are unbelievers just have music.

Do not have unbelievers mumble their way through hymns they do not know and will not sing again. Save that otherwise wasted time and tell them the truth that might save some. Do not give unbelieving people the impression that they are believers, and that singing a few hymns and saying a few prayers will get them into heaven! People must hear the truth – it may be the one day of their short life when the satanic distraction of money, lust, power and worldly goods seem far away!

Funeral Service Format

1. Quiet entry music is to be played, or sung by the choir. Select reflective music, for even if the person is a great believer we are still wanting to reflect upon our own mortality, and the fact that one day we also stand before our God. Do not have false joy at funerals; it is the time to reflect on what matters eternally. Do not lose this moment minister – the eternal destiny of the people rests in your hands – Ezekiel 33-34!
2. The call to worship is to be arresting for all. "We are here to remember..... And remember that our only hope in this life and the next is the one who defeated sin and death, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in his name that we gather here to remember our brother/sister...."
3. Lead the congregation in a prayer, and include time to privately pray in silence in this service, that all might come before their God.
4. First Hymn is to be sung, or music plays for time of reflection.
5. Remembering the dead in light of eternity – Read a Bible passage or passages that the Holy Spirit has led you to for this person, time and place.

6. Tributes to the dead are given – what is their legacy? Do not allow lies to be told here, and control who speaks very carefully. If you give pagans the microphone they will often say nothing about the dead but waffle about themselves. If there is nothing good to say about a person, then allow no nonsense to be said, and simply remind people of the need to have something said over them at their funeral. Tell the parable of the Talents and speak about the gift of life from God and the need to be careful in its use from this day forward. Challenge people hard if the Holy Spirit leads - “Remember our brother here, and live your life before the Lord Jesus in such a way that there is no shortage of good things to say about you...”
7. Close this section in prayer for the living gathered before you that they might know Jesus in spirit and in truth.
8. Closing hymn, or processional as the body is taken to be buried. If there is no burial ceremony, then read the burial service to the people at this point, as if they were watching the body be buried/cremated. The words can be altered but the standard ones are known by all. “In death we are reminded that man is but a vapour and that we are here for a moment of time. We were made for eternity and it is into eternity that our brother/sister has gone. We will follow them one day. Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust we all are. We commit the body of our brother/sister to be buried/cremated in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection through the person and work of Christ Jesus our Lord. We commit him/her to the righteous judge from whom none can hide in the end, and we commit ourselves to live before Him who died for us in a manner that is worthy of His sacrifice. Amen.”

The **graveside service** is also important if there is to be one. As you go to the graveside **read resurrection texts** as you are going, or texts associated with judgment. Have them printed out, for the people later to read and reflect on what they believe. As the coffin goes into the ground there is again an opportunity for reading the words of scripture. If the deceased is a believer the talk and texts should be on resurrection. Revelation 1:17-18, John 14:19, Revelation 14:13, 1 Corinthians 15:51-57, John 14:1-3, Revelation 20:10-15.

Write out the bible texts you are going to use each time you take a service so that you are encouraged and strengthened in the process each time. Important passages to read and use are – Psalm 23:1ff, 68:20, 90:1-12, 103:6-17, 116:15, Luke 16:19ff, John 5:25-29, 14:1-27, Romans 8:24-39, 1 Corinthians 15:19-22, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, James 4:8-10

FOLLOW UP

You (or deacons/deaconesses) should visit and follow up the funeral service for at least twelve weeks after a death, once a week, as it takes that long for people to come to terms with the death, and during that time they will be open to the words that were given at the service. Remember the graveside service makes the issue of resurrection clearer than any service in a church.

If there are large numbers of deaths in a community, due to an epidemic, war, or accident, then a grieving families Bible study over a period of time, will be useful to save on the impossible burden that individual visitation may place on the pastoral team. If an epidemic closes church buildings and restricts gatherings of people have an alternative plan through skype, other internet devices, mobile phone apps, and telephone, and CD teaching – the church must minister in epidemics – but do so legally and without spreading infections. As pastors we are called to die for the sheep – and that means we keep ministering till death no matter what the risks to our self, but we do not risk the lives of the innocent.

Cremation or burial **does not matter** to the Christians. Burial is simply a better example and picture of resurrection if you have a body. Cremation was a pagan practice as is the scattering of ashes, as it is saying that they do not want the body to come back together again. Even though these things are pagan in their root, cremation can be legitimately used by the Christian, if cultural or practical reasons exist why it must be that way, but the ashes should not be scattered as that pictures an unbiblical reality. We believe that each person will be raised where their body/its remains are laid, or where they last stood upon the earth before the destruction of their body.

Remember, God, who made the universe will have no trouble raising all people to stand before Him in the Last Judgement, so there is no worry even if a body is blown to bits and there is nothing to bury. God will raise them on the last day! Some of the great believers/martyrs of the church’s history have no known grave, and in some cases their bodies were burned and their parts/ashes scattered. They will be raised by the creator of the universe, who is their Saviour and Lord, and so will we all! Even the ungodly dead will be raised to be judged – so no matter how they scatter their ashes the Lord will bring them back to be judged! Revelation 20:10-15.

Try to keep the importance of resurrection, for blessing or judgment, to the forefront of the people’s minds. Study this doctrine often in the church, for both the unsaved and the saved are resurrected; one to blessing eternally, the others to eternity with Satan in the Lake of Fire. Revelation 20-21.

Notes

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP – OUR CONSTANT CHALLENGE

ACTS 20:25-38

- “25. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.*
- 26. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.*
- 27. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*
- 28. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*
- 29. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.*
- 30. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*
- 31. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.*
- 32. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.*
- 33. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.*
- 34. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.*
- 35. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*
- 36. And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.*
- 37. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,*
- 38. Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.”*

A biblical leader is not a person who gives an order and people obey out of fear. That is tyranny. Leadership means people respecting you and wanting to obey the Lord you serve, and looking for opportunities to serve him also. This is the standard for Biblical leadership in the pastorate; it is leadership by example and by service. As Paul potentially sees these people for the last time he sums up his attitude towards his leadership of them and it is a testimony that we should covet in our own ministry.

Our role as pastoral leaders is to co-ordinate the energies and enthusiasms and gifts of the membership, so that they serve and serve well. Leadership is the art of earning your people's respect by mentoring and leading into Holy Spirit empowered service, and rallying them to a common purpose with a personal character which inspires confidence, devotion and self sacrifice.

Paul, in the Pastoral Epistles, stressed the character of the pastoral minister. You cannot lead people until you are a person who is worthy to be followed. You should not expect to be a godly leader in the church unless you daily have the fruit of the Spirit in your life. Walk in the filling of the Holy Spirit pastor and so you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus. The lasting fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life is the minimum standard for consideration of a person for pastoral ministry, and it is the minimal standard for leadership.

2 Timothy 4:1-8

- “1. I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;*
- 2. Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*
- 3. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;*
- 4. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*
- 5. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.*
- 6. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*
- 7. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*
- 8. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”*

In all we do let us be mindful of the Lord's example and challenge – for it is to Him alone we must give final account for our handling of the Ordinances that we have studied.

2 Corinthians 5:7-17

- “7. (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)*
- 8. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*
- 9. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.*
- 10. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*
- 11. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.*

12. *For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.*
13. *For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.*
14. *For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:*
15. *And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*
16. *Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.*
17. *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*

DOCTRINE

SHEPHERD – CHRIST THE SHEPHERD

1. In the Bible, sheep represent believers - Matthew 25:33, 34 - they are contrasted with goats (unbelievers).
2. Sheep are helpless, they need to be led, fed and protected.
3. Israel was called the sheep of his fold (Psalm 74:1, 79:13, 95:7, 100:3 Jeremiah 23:1).
4. The Lord himself is the true Shepherd (John 10:10-16).
5. The Lord Jesus Christ is seen as the shepherd in five different ways in 1Peter 2:21-25.
 - a) The suffering shepherd (v 21).
 - b) The sinless shepherd (v 22).
 - c) The submissive shepherd (v 23).
 - d) The substitutionary shepherd (v 24).
 - e) The seeking shepherd (v 25).
6. The Shepherd as Christ appears in three successive Psalms.
 - a) Psalm 22 - the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep (John 10:11). He is the Door (John 10:9).
 - b) Psalm 23 - the Lord is my shepherd - the great shepherd of the sheep (Hebrews 13:20).
 - c) Psalm 24 - the chief shepherd appears as the Man of Glory (1Peter 5:4).
 - d) These show the shepherd dying for His sheep, the resurrected shepherd tending and caring for His sheep and the future shepherd ruling over His sheep.

OUR "DAILY ORDERS" AS THE LORD'S CALLED PASTORS – "SHEPHERD THE LORD'S FLOCK!"

The shepherd guards the flock as well as feeding them. Guard the Lord's flock from the wolves out there who are going to try to fleece, abuse, and destroy them, and you do that by teaching them truth and thereby discernment, so they spot dangers and dangerous people before catastrophe. You also have to guard your flock from the wolves dressed as sheep, on the inside of any church or Christian organization, who will spread false doctrines. You need to protect your sheep as well as feed your sheep, in fact your best protection will be given by the way you teach discernment.

If you are feeding your flock good food in a thoughtful manner they will not tend to run off and find another pastor to feed them. Like the good shepherd we identify the best food for the flock and we are careful and thoughtful in our feeding of them, so they grow strong and stable in all ways. Even if you feed the sheep well, you will get an attack of a wolf at least once a year who will try to lead a little group astray. Free will is the challenge for us all, and the free will of believers will be challenged by the enemy often.

Do not let the sun go down on any attack upon the Lord's people; respond to any threat to their safety as soon as you hear of it. Have a good tight doctrinal statement, as that provides a back stop for you. Then if anything said is in contravention of any doctrine, you can say, "either change your mind or change your church". If you do not move quickly against false teachers they will lead away weak/vulnerable believers who will become "shipwrecks". God will judge the pastor if they do not hit the heresies quickly. This is where regular visitation pays off. Every minister, if he has a church

with a hundred or so members, can visit each of the flock once a year, and by visitation you discover what people really think away from others influence.

The deacons, who otherwise are the key visitors, should be reporting to the pastor anyway on what their visitation is picking up on. Who has got the problems? What can the church do to help? Who is spreading any problems? You need to know what is going on. As a pastor you need to be a manager, just as the shepherd manages the safety and security of the flock. Do not get to the stage where the sheep are in the ditch dying, and you do not realise that they are there, let alone spotted they were in danger in the first place.

Note Acts 20 verse 31 - Paul warned with tears. He was passionate as a teacher and as an administrator. Don't let the details relating to the believer's safety slip out of your mind. Be passionate to keep the flock safe, well and growing in their worship, their love and care for each other, and their wider community service.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT AS A PASTOR

It should also be noted that in Acts 20 verses 33 and following that Paul was not doing it for the money. He made tents during the day and taught at night. The ministers in these early churches "worked their passage". Most of Paul's ministry was working his way round the ancient world by making tents and other canvas products. Paul was very practical in his teaching and his life witness.

As it is said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive". God will recompense you in your service for Him, but do not go into the ministry to receive money. Look at your ministry as a giving one and not a taking one.

Paul is tough on the young pastors he trained, but this is because the church community is tough on young ministers. By doing the theology course our way (by internet or night school) you are getting good training for the real ministry by working during the day and learning at night. The only time that Paul received money was when he was in jail and could not earn money himself. Don't expect to be more "successful" than Paul was, and have money all the time, or be paid at any time! Paul was well into his fifties before he was fully supported, and then it was only a temporary thing until his late sixties.

Ephesians 4:11-16. *"11. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*

12. For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14. That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

16. From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Note, why were the gifts given? This was the purpose. The purpose of biblical leadership centres in you knowing the purpose of your existence and assisting others to discover their reason for being on the planet. Why do you exist? If you are a pastor teacher you exist for the perfection of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ. We are here to build others up until we all become fully useful members of the body, in the unity of the faith. Paul is saying, "you want to know what your job description is pastors, well here it is".

The gifts of the Holy Spirit all have purpose; they have a function in the church. The purpose is to build up and equip all the believers unto good works. The gifts of the Spirit are not given for self centred enjoyment, but for building each other up. Many ministers are lazy, and they do not see that they are left here to work and build others up for more ministry. Ministry is work. It is work that God calls you to. People sometimes want to play with their gifts, especially if they can play before the church with being a minister, have others run around after them, and sleep in each day of the week! That is not biblical ministry!

Dorcas had a wonderful gift, she could sew and could work hard to help others and did so. Someone else had the gift of prayer. This is the church in action; everyone is busy in their spirit controlled and directed works for the Lord. The person who has the gift of pastor teacher needs to study the Word three or four+ hours a day. It is work being a real pastor, and it is work being an evangelist. As a pastor you should be keen to preach as often as you can.

Take up your cross daily and follow the Lord. Note that I say, or rather the Lord says, "take up **your** cross", and that means self sacrificial service that the Lord has called you personally to. You are not here to live anyone else's life, but to do your job, and so do it in the Spirit's power. You should be keen to do more for others and take them into consideration more than yourself.

If you are paid or unpaid, do all your work for the Lord as "unto the Lord", and do it with rejoicing. If you are finding it difficult to achieve this, please pray more and re-study this little book – and discover what it is that you need to do to allow the Holy Spirit to really "have his way" with your life.

FEED THE FLOCK OF GOD

Holy Spirit filled Bible teaching gives stability and spiritual growth and service to the flock. If you go into a church and the minister is lazy you will quickly notice things there that are wrong! There will be no growth, no protection from devious people, and little service coordinated for the glory of God. There will certainly be no connection to the local community!

You will find some churches comprise mainly spiritual babies, (both by age old and young), and it may not be evangelism that has produced the babies! The Pastor's job, as the shepherd is to be feeding the babies so that the babies grow up and move out in service and mutual encouragement. Babies are however not able to do much, but require a lot of personal attention, and are easily tossed about with every wind of doctrine because they have not grown up in discernment. The reason most believers lack discernment is because the pastors lack focus to their task before the Lord – they have failed to feed the sheep and encourage them to grow.

Some do not teach the Word because they do not know the Word themselves, but sadly some pastors do not value their role of teaching the sheep, and are simply lazy or distracted. There will never be a time when a man who has the gift of pastor teacher will want to leave the ministry if he is walking in the Holy Spirit's power and doing his job correctly. You will want people to grow up, and you will always hunger to feed the sheep. You may desire to do things differently, but you will desire the best for God's people. Those who do not desire to feed the sheep may have become depressed, and they need to address whatever it is that has flattened them and be Spirit filled again, and pour the Lord's spiritual food to his hungry lambs.

- 1 PETER 5:1-7.** *"1. The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:
2. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;
3. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.
4. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.
5. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.
6. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:
7. Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."*

You are to feed the believers in the local church you have care over, as the under-shepherd of the sheep who is directly responsible to the Lord himself. Peter has the credentials to give this advice because he has faithfully served for many years, suffered for the faith, and will be martyred eventually. Pastor, be rebuked/encouraged by Peter and you take up your cross and be prepared to suffer, and work till the end. Matthew 10:38, 16:24, Luke 14:27. There is absolutely no room for wimps here in the ministry!!! If you want a cushy job go else-where; God calls for soldiers to lead and die if needed for their people.

True pastoral leadership means protecting and feeding the flock, and it means putting yourself second to the duty to care for the sheep, unto death, your death. You do this because you want to do it, for you love the sheep, as the Lord loves them and you; you do not do it for the money. The genuine pastor is not in it for money; he is in it to serve the Lord. He should be able to feed his family and honour God in his provision for his own and his provision of spiritual food for the sheep under his care.

In verse 3 we see that we should not be like a feudal Lord over the church. If you are a leader of God's people you lead in humility and not in power. You cannot rule the church with your own opinions; you rule it by the proclamation of the Word of God. You show the way by your life as an example and mentor. Peter reminds them that the Chief Shepherd is going to come back and hold all the leadership and all believers generally accountable for their use of the gifts they have received.

He reminds the older people that they must all be subject to each other. God's men must lead in humility and be controlled by the Holy Spirit. None act as "lords" for there is one "Lord" and He is our Saviour. We serve by service and acts of love and care, and for the pastor-teacher that means he teaches and encourages.

Notes

A PASTOR'S PROFILE (10 points)

- [a] They will be committed to the Lord's people. This will be shown by the consistent, faithful, clear and systematic preaching of the Word of God.
- [b] They will be protecting the flock from the wolves and perverters of truth. You do it by teaching regularly and systematically and by telling the wolf to go away when spotted, and driving him/her away if required.
- [c] They will be passionate for the Lord's people - Acts 24. Paul got involved with his people.
- [d] They will lead by example, by word, by deed, by dress, by behaviour. If you act like a pig your congregation will be like piglets.
- [e] The pastor will set an example in giving, of time, of self, of energy, of goods, of money. They will be prepared to work in God's revealed way.
- [f] They will serve The Lord's flock meeting their needs. To serve them you need to know them, not in a nosy sense but as a caring person.
- [g] They will set the pace spiritually, in spiritual growth. You cannot expect people to grow faster than you pastor. If you preach the fruit of the Holy Spirit they must see it in your daily life and witness.
- [h] The pastor who preaches the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ can expect to suffer. This is a pastor with whom the Lord is going to be able to do a lot. We have to learn to deal with pressure and suffering.
- [i] They do not lead by coercion. The pastor does not live like a lord. This is anti God and opposed to Scripture. You are to be an example to the flock in love.
- [j] The pastor leads with their eyes on the chief shepherd, as an under shepherd, recognising the sheep are not his/hers but God's.

Hebrews 13:13-17 *"13. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.*

14. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

15. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

16. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

17. Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

Reflect on these verses if you are a junior member of a pastoral team. Note that we are told to submit ourselves to those who have rule/authority over us, for they are faithful and watch over our souls. They look after you as people who are going to have an account to give to the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not cause them grief. If you are disobedient to them it is not going to be to your benefit. If we find we cannot respect or follow a senior pastor-teacher, and the problems they have are not able to be solved, when we have tried in humility to solve the problems, we quietly leave and find a pastor we can respect and admire and receive food from. We are to respect the role, even if we cannot respect the individual, and if he/she needs discipline – we leave him/her to the Lord.

The true pastor is to be like a husband who loves the church as his wife. The minister provides for the church as the bride of Christ by teaching, by prayer, by warning, by encouraging/exhortation, and by leadership that sets an example. As pastors we are all called to live as an example, with tireless biblical service. Leadership in the church puts pressure on you because you must be worthy of respect. If a minister has personal problems due to sin, it is their issue to resolve by prayerful obedience to the Holy Spirit. Encourage and pray for them, but expect them to be living, studying and teaching as they should. Pray for the pastor under divine discipline, but leave him to the discipline/correction of the Lord, and give God room to deal with him.

Notes

EIGHT PERSONAL GOALS FOR CHURCH LEADERS

What should the elder/pastor, deacon, or deaconess plan for? Paul sets out eight personal goals for us all:-

- [a] You should have prayer goals and set time for prayer every day.
- [b] You should have study goals with our prayer time leading into our study time. If you are a full time worker it will be in the morning whilst if you have a secular job it will be after work.
- [c] You should have a visitation goal. You should aim to visit your people at least once a year. The afternoon appears to be the best time for visitation.
- [d] Your evangelistic goals - a prayer list for personal soul winning,
- [e] Your doctrine to be applied goals - sort out areas of weakness in your own lives - you need to have a goal to apply God's Word to those problems.
- [f] Family goals - you should put aside time for wife and family. Plan to do things with them.
- [g] Exercise goals, every day you should spend 40 minutes exercising, if you do not, you are not going to be fit, and if you are not fit you are not going to be able to function as well as you should.
- [h] Teaching goals - think about the books you want to study and teach from and plan how you are going to do it.

As a minister if you are not studying at least three-four hours a day, I am sorry pastor, I believe you are lazy or distracted. You should be able to prepare a message every four to five hours, which will mean that there will be four or five messages that you will be able to give in any given week. This is what Paul meant by being "apt to teach" – you are ready with little notice to step up and feed any hungry lambs that need food. As a shepherd you are always alert for wolves and for any sheep that is not getting enough food to be a strong member of the flock.

If a minister is giving three or less messages a week I believe he/she is either lazy or distracted. You should be able to prepare at least three messages a week in your own time. Even in a tent making ministry I have regularly been preparing and giving three hours of Bible teaching a week – this is a minimum standard surely, if I have done this while working full time in other paid work.

If you can get an extra message a week you have fifty extra messages a year available. You can use those in times when things get tight. You are not to study on a Saturday night for a Sunday morning message – for that shows bad stewardship. Your messages must be prayer saturated and Holy Spirit anointed – and that means you are walking in the filling of the Holy Spirit. They also need to be enthusiastically and powerfully preached.

If you do not have goals you will not achieve anything. One friend of mine put it this way, "If you have no goals you can be 100% sure you will achieve your aim = nothing". Paul says to Timothy in both of his letters to him that there are serious goals to aim for as a minister/shepherd of the Lord.

Notes

EIGHT CHURCH GOALS

[a] There will be a priority list for things to be changed, look at things from previous annual reports. See what the failures and successes of the church have been. You then pray to the Lord and look at what changes need to occur over a period of 1 to 10 years. Let the Lord dictate the timing here not you, but focus your prayerful thought on what the Lord wants the people and you to do.

[b] To establish a prayer warrior group, mainly the older people who are free to do this as the core group. 1 Timothy 5:4 ff. Those who have the gift of prayer will tend to be from the over sixties. Organize these people and ensure they have set things that need prayer given to them weekly and really follow through on prayer requests/targets.

[c] Prayer should be your emphasis in every full or part church meeting. No meeting should be held at any time that does not have prayer as a major element of it.

[d] Practice good professional meeting protocols, to ensure that meetings are run as Christian meetings should be run. Acts 15. Make sure that there is leadership, and prayer, and free and open debate, and that there are spiritual applications of principles that the Bible teaches.

[e] You need to publicise your teaching programme so that people know in advance what you are going to cover. If people have problems about certain books they know when it is going to be solved, as they will know when you are going to deal with a particular section.

[f] You need to lead the people to feed on the Word of God by regularly teaching the Word in Holy Spirit power.

[g] There is a need to stress holiness, and deal face to face with sin. Be ready to confront this issue.

[h] Stress a Holy Spirit led organisation. Everything is done in accordance with the will of God through the ministries of the Holy Spirit.

If the Holy Spirit isn't doing the work in you there will be no real power flowing through your work – Be Holy Spirit filled and be active – life is too short to waste in poor stewardship.

Dr John Cameron McEwan
Dean EBCWA

Auckland New Zealand - Feast of Tabernacles – 14 October 2014, revised 11 April 2016.

As a Pastor I Practise.....

1. **Prayer** as the Life preserving power of the Local church. Know that I will take time to pray over all issues and I will call the church to prayer over all issues that matter to us. I will seek for a prayer warrior co-ordinator, if there isn't one to organize the older people and "shut ins" to pray through all issues we are challenged by.
2. **Systematic Bible Teaching Ministry** to feed the flock of God as the Lord directed the apostles. John records the clear order in John 21:15-25. I would want to preach through the Bible verse by verse so that all the saints are thoroughly equipped with all that the Holy Spirit has revealed we all need to know to serve our Lord. I would want to teach at least four times a week.
3. **Passionate Holy Spirit filled Worship** that truly expresses our glorious confidence in the truths of the Word, and the amazing position we have as believers in Christ Jesus. I want as many as possible to be involved in worship and seek for all to find their true giftedness and serve the Lord in the services of the church and the work of the church body in the community. All service that honours the Lord and lifts up his holy name is worship, and I want all of us to be worshipful in our work, our community care, our witness, and our church services.
4. **Evangelism** as a regular activity – we are here to fish, not clean up the fish pond. Out working of the "Great Commission" may involve community work in many different ways, but we are not here to make this world a better place for unsaved people to go to hell from! We are here to seek to save the lost. I do not want the church building opened for any activity where we are not praying to meet the need of the lost for the only Saviour – the Lord Jesus Christ. I will use all methods to communicate the Gospel message and call the lost to repentance.
5. **Church Growth** is a priority – and when we are all walking in the Holy Spirit's power, feeding on the Word, and walking prayerfully – the church should be growing in size and influence in the community. If there is no growth there is something wrong at the core of what we are doing – or not doing.
6. **Visitation** within the church family by the eldership, so that all church contacts are visited and prayed for individually on at least an annual basis.
7. **The Priesthood of All Believers.** I believe that every local church belongs to the Lord – it is His Church – not ours, and so HE will provide all the gifting and resources we need to achieve his work here. This mean we seek by prayer the open door of blessing and if we are short of people or any resource we take this to the Lord, we do not go the pagan way of fund raising and more meetings! The Lord must do the work in his power through the Holy Spirit or the work is clearly not HIS!

I can be depended upon the seek the Lord's path only – for I have learned through my fifty years as a believer that no other path is safe, secure, blessed and worth walking! All the plans of men are worthless.

I seek the Lord's "well done" alone. Join me on your knees and then let us do the work HE has called us to do in the local area.

STARTING A NEW MINISTRY

If the Lord leads us to establish a new mission, it is with the power of the Holy Spirit **ALONE** that it must be established. If God does not build the house those that labour do so in vain. We must trust God not men, and depend upon prayer power not marketing or asking others for resources. Our first principle is therefore PRAYER for the Lord to open the doors and provide what is needed directly to enable HIS work to be done.

It is also an EBCWA principle that we do not ask anyone for money. We are a Faith Mission, and that means we pray, we work, we announce what God is doing, and leave provision to the sovereign will of the Lord. If resources are not there, we cannot advance, and we do not advance, for it is the Lord's harvest, not ours. If we cannot move forward through lack of funds, in the Lord's Sovereign Plan, it is because another has the job, or we are not ready.

We pray and wait, but we do not ask others for funds. Paul sets the example in **Acts 16:6-12**.

If we feel "led" to establish a ministry, but resources are lacking locally, we must get upon our knees and seek the way the Lord wants it established. Our experience is that it will be done without large buildings needing to be purchased, or any equipment initially. God has led us to establish Bible Colleges in ways that

do not have any administrative costs, and where the Lord provides the money for the pastors to do what is required on a weekly basis.

EBCWA Operating Principles

1. If the Lord leads us in a direction the Lord will provide for us there if it is truly His Plan and His time for the plan to be executed. Pray for the Lord's provisions alone.
2. Do not ask any man for money, simply announce the ministry and advance into it in prayer, seeking the Lord's provision as you go. Ensure the Lord has opened the door with direction and provision before physically advancing. God rarely gives lots of money to establish things, but seeks our walk of faith to ensure things are provided when needed in a way that honours Him and brings glory to His holy name. Jesus gets the glory – not any men from His work.
3. Gather prayer warriors around you immediately, and have them pray daily for the needs, but open your eyes and seek the humble brother/sister with the loaves and fishes, not the "Rich Young Rulers" who tend to hold onto their wealth. God works through the poor and rich people, but only those who commit themselves to him with all they have.
4. Do not seek a trouble free path, for it will probably not be the Lord's path. Matthew 7:13-23 tells us that the Lord's path is always the "narrow/constricted" way. We have to squeeze through tight places on His path in prayer and with perspiration at times. Pray, trust, wait, and move as the door opens and you have the resources to advance through it.
5. Do not wait for a full bank account, for what is "full"? Step out and minister as the door opens and you have the opportunity, and the funds to arrive at the place of ministry, and speak there. If you cannot reach the place, you are not meant to be there. Be ready to personally work in manual labour, your trade, or in any task that you can, to fund your own ministry. All ministries must be LOCAL and supported locally. Do not fall into the "American Prosperity Gospel" trap, for it is a lie. We stand with the Apostle Paul, and he worked by day and preached by night. **Acts 18:1-3, 19:8-12, 1 Corinthians 4:9-16, 15:9-11**
6. EBCWA was established with this Pauline (and biblical) mental attitude. Paul didn't pray over handkerchiefs, he sweated as he worked, and it was those sweat cloths that healed the sick. Many men today seek "sweat-less" ministry, but God's Holy Word indicates that such are fake and crooked. God works with those who sweat in the work! If you are not ready to do that you must find another group to work with.
7. EBCWA began with myself (Dr McEwan) very ill, and very poor, through inability to work. We were given premises to use (we never owned them, and moved on from them four years later) and started without any funds above those needed to get the building useful. I provided my own transport (or was driven by students) and each person their own bibles and study books, and we started. God blessed greatly as we advanced, but not with money in abundance, just enough to advance to the end with joy in our hearts.
8. In the prisons of various nations we see the same things happening today (2015). The prisoners have a Bible from the Bible Society, and note paper and a pencil, and the lecturer has a study book and their Bible and they begin with nothing else. We now provide the notes on CD/flash drive to be down loaded onto any Prison computers, and the Power Points to use when teaching the Diploma Course if the facility has a projector and computer, but these are not needed. In your local situation, my beloved brother and sister, just start with a set of notes and your Bible open, but start with prayer and work with prayer, and end with prayer. We found that the prison authorities themselves provided printing for prisoners as the courses advanced when they saw the "fruit" in the lives of the prisoners. **Matthew 7:13-23**. Prisons were transformed in South Africa by the course and the prison officers provided help for the men and women they once despised and feared, who they now saw were their brothers and sisters in Christ.
9. **STARTING OUT** - Prepare yourself by studying the Course from the CD or website. Be ready to teach it. Pray for the People, and the Premises as I did all those years ago. Step out to meet the needs with your Bible open and the notes under your arm, and see the Lord provide for what the poor need in your local area. If it is Bibles, pray for that need to be met. If it is for pencils and paper, pray for that to be met, or transport, pray for that.
10. Do not wait for computers, power point projectors, or cars to drive you to the place of ministry! If they are there use them, but do not depend on expensive technology, use the simplest things, for Satan

finds the simplest things the hardest to oppose and destroy. Be like Paul, work and provide for your own team yourself and advance into the God anointed ministry.

Trust God, build a local ministry and serve the local churches.

Do not depend upon “rich donors”, for they can be cut off easily by the enemy.

Trust the Lord alone and keep as “low cost”, and “low profile” as you can, for Satan finds it hard to eliminate poor people who have no support structures to destroy but are supported by the power of God.

We have prayer and we can work and perspire in the Lord’s work.

Let us do that and trust God alone. If God builds, no man can tear down!

Jesus our Lord can be trusted.

Your brother in the Lord,

DR JOHN C McEWAN (DEAN – EBCWA)

Auckland, New Zealand (The “ends of the earth”)

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