

Progressing Together



EGLI 203

Character and Qualities of a Servant of God



Church Leadership

Study Leader's Guide

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INTRODUCTION

We can find the beginnings of all the major themes of the Bible in its first five books: Genesis through Deuteronomy. These themes then are developed progressively and historically in the whole Bible. They find their fulfillment in the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is also true when we come to study the subject of leadership. In this course we will study the character and qualities of those God calls to be in leadership positions in the church.

We will cover such topics as

- Calling: how and why God calls people into leadership positions.
- Qualifications: the character qualities, which God looks for in a leader.
- Gifting: how God equips and enables someone to lead.
- Vision and task: what God calls a leader to do.
- Responsibilities of a leader.
- Practical problems a leader often has to deal with.
- Relationships between leaders in the same church and between leaders of different churches.

Table of Contents

Syllabus.....	5
Bibliography.....	7
Lesson 1: Joshua and David.....	8
A. Joshua.....	8
B. David.....	10
Lesson 2: Jesus and Paul.....	13
Lesson 3: Leadership in the church; Elders and Deacons	17
A. Elders.....	17
B. Deacons	18
C. Different forms of government in the church.....	20
D. Review and reflection	21
Lesson 4: Deborah, Priscilla and Women in Leadership	23
A. Deborah.....	23
B. Priscilla.....	24
C. Women and leadership roles	25
Lesson 5: Responsibilities of leaders.....	30
A. Leading Meetings of Believers	30
B. Preaching & Teaching.....	32
Lesson 6: Pastoral Care (1) - General	39
A. The Cost of Pastoral Care	39
B. Spiritual needs.....	40
C. Physical needs	40
D. Relationships.....	41
Lesson 7: Pastoral Care (2) – Church Discipline	44
A. The purpose of discipline	44
B. Case Studies	44
C. False teaching.....	46
D. Reflection and Review	47
Lesson 8: Finances	51
A. The leader and his personal finances:	51
B. Christian giving	51
C. A generous gift and how it was managed	54
Lesson 9: Relationships between leaders in a local church and Relationships between churches	60
A. Relationships between leaders in a local church.....	60
B. Relationships between local churches.....	62
The Apostles' Creed.....	66
Lesson 10: Revision and Exam.....	67
Endnotes.....	67

Syllabus for CHUR203 - Servant Leaders Facilitator – To be Announced Certificate Level

Course objectives

To equip elders, discipleship group leaders and church planters with practical leaderships skills applicable to their ministry context, following a model of servant leadership.

Course description

This course focuses specifically on true spiritual leadership in the church. It begins by looking at biblical examples of leadership in Moses, David, Jesus and Paul. It then moves on to discuss the roles of elder and deacon, taking into account the role that women play in the church as well. Other subjects dealt with are the ministries of preaching, teaching, counselling, church discipline, church finances, and relationships between pastors and other leaders.

Learning Outcomes

Content: By the end of the course, the student will be able:

- To outline the roles of elders and deacons, their qualifications and responsibilities.
- To recognize his or her individual gifts in leadership, pasturing, teaching, and etc.
- To describe different styles of church government, and to recognize the dangers of authoritarian leadership.

Character: By the end of the course, the student will demonstrate:

- A commitment to servant leadership: to serving the body of Christ in humility and holiness with the gifts and abilities that God has granted to him or her.
- An appreciation for Christian unity, an understanding of its theological foundations and a desire to see unity within his/her congregation, and between churches in his or her area

Competency: By the end of the course, the student will be able:

- To better understand how to guide, protect, enable and coordinate his fellowship in a spirit of Christian humility so that each person fulfills God's calling upon him or her.
- To grasp the basic principles of resolving conflicts, and applying church discipline.
- To lead a worship service, to preach a simple message (15 minutes), and to lead a Bible study.
- To balance a simple accounting ledger and handle basic financial matters in the church.
- To establish a goal and a plan for the growth of his/her church, based upon present resources.

Course requirements

Certificate Level

- To demonstrate knowledge of course material through

- answering questions at the end of each section
- completion of the final exam
- To attend 18 of 20 instructor-led sessions (27 contact hours minimum)
- To participate in discussions by listening, contributing as appropriate, and responding when asked a specific question
- To plan and lead one 20 minute period of worship.
- To lead one section or entire lesson of the course being studied, depending on the number of students in the course.
- To write and deliver a 15 minute message on a verse or paragraph of Scripture.
- To maintain a ledger of the local church, fellowship, or small group's assets, receipts, and expenses for the period of the course (not less than one month).
- To conceive of a goal for the local congregation and develop a two to four page plan about how to achieve it.

Evaluation methodology and scale

- Student performance and mastery will be assessed according to the following scale:
 - 50% on completion of reading, of questions, and of assignments (5% on worship time, 5% on Bible study, 5% on lesson taught, 5% on homily, 5% on ledger, 5% on goal and plan for the local church)
 - 10% on student participation and attitude in discussions
 - 10% on attendance (percentage equals number of classes attended, divided by number of classes held, times ten)
 - 30% on the final written, or oral, exam.
- The evaluation scale is as follows
 - passing grade - 70-79%
 - good grade – 80-89%
 - excellent grade – 90-100%

Course schedule

To be announced.

Credits earnable

- 2 hours of credit towards a Certificate in Christian Studies

Prerequisites

(Progressing Together course CHUR201, or equivalent)

Textbook and related materials

- Required - Progressing Together Manual for CHUR203
- Additional readings may be required at the instructor's discretion.
- Recommended - Any book dealing with issues related to leadership and ministry in the Church

Course methodology

The student will work inductively, reading texts, answering questions concerning knowledge, application and analysis, and drawing conclusions which will be applicable to local context. After answering the questions in each lesson, students will gather to discuss answers and practical application. When possible, the course leader will give additional talks to reinforce what the students are learning through the lessons.

Policies

- Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated, because it is deemed contrary to Christian teaching and academic integrity.
- Absences in excess of 3 class hours will lead to a reduced grade; no student missing more than 6 class hours will receive credit for the course. Students who show little or no interest in completing course work will first be warned, then asked to leave the course if they do not change their conduct.

Bibliography

- Callahan, Kennon. *Effective Church Leadership*. San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers. 1990.
- Lundy, David. *Servant Leadership for Slow Learners*. Reading, England: Authentic Lifestyle. 2002.
- Maxwell, John. *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson. 2007.
- Sumner, Sarah. *Men and Women in the Church*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books. 2003.

Lesson 1: Joshua and David

Lesson objectives:

1. To see basic principles of leadership in the lives of Joshua and David.
2. To apply these principles to ourselves.

A. Joshua

Joshua's character, faith and conduct were all outstanding. He was the leader who guided the people of Israel into the Promised Land, and by the hand of God led them to victory over their enemies.

1. Read Numbers 14:1-9

- a. What outstanding quality did Joshua (along with Caleb) demonstrate by doing this?

Joshua showed his faith in God. He believed God had the power to give the people of Israel the land He had promised to them. With God's help, they would be able to conquer their enemies.

His faith also gave him the audacity to challenge public opinion –risking the rejection of his friends (and even stoning!).

With Caleb, he had the divine perspective the others were passing over.

2. Read Numbers 27:12-23.

- a. Why did Moses ask God to appoint a leader over the people of Israel? (15-16)

The people needed a leader to give them direction.

-so that they would not stray and perish like sheep without a shepherd!

-that they no longer be rebellious.

- b. The Bible uses a common illustration taken from everyday life to describe the leader and the people. What is it?

A shepherd and his sheep.

Note to the leader: You can ask what this illustration teaches us about our relationship with God. Answer leads: The shepherd protects, intimately knows, leads by pastures and waters, takes care (heals), goes ahead, corrects...

- c. How was Joshua chosen? (v.18)

By the Lord's command.

- d. What vital quality did Joshua have (v.18)?

The Spirit of God.

Note to the leader: How can we recognize the specific anointing of the Holy Spirit in someone's life? Leads: fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22); courageous faith in God; submission to God's will, sensibility (Josh. 5:13-15); spirit of service towards; humility; radiant joy...

- e. Why did Joshua need authority? (v.20)

So that the people would obey him.

3. Read Joshua 1:1-9.

- a. On many occasions God calls a leader to accomplish a specific task. What was the task that God entrusted to Joshua?

To conquer the land which God had promised to give his people.

- b. What did God tell Joshua he must do to be successful?

- a) be strong and courageous*
- b) obey God's law and meditate on it continually*

Note to the leader: This involves time set apart to study and meditate the Word of God, and listen to what God reveals to us.

4. Read Joshua 5:13-15.

- a. What do we learn from this passage about Joshua's heart attitudes?

*He was courageous, but also humble and obedient.
He has the spiritual sensibility and discernment to understand who this "man" was in front of him.*

5. Read Joshua 23

- a. How do we know that Joshua was successful in completing the task which the Lord gave him?

'The Lord had given Israel rest from all their enemies around them.' (23:1)

- b. To whom did Joshua give the credit for this success?

To God. (23:3, 9-11, 14)

- c. What warning did Joshua give to the people of Israel?

Not to turn away from God; not to ally themselves with the peoples of the land; not to inter-marry with them; not to worship their gods.

6. Read Joshua 24:14-15.

- a. What essential quality for a leader do we see in Joshua here? Describe this quality in your own words.

Complete commitment to the Lord.

B. David

The life stories of Joshua and David have much in common. This teaches us that the Lord has established some definite criteria for those He calls to be leaders of His people. David was an outstanding king. We will only observe a few of the lessons that we can learn from his life here.

1. Read 1 Samuel 13:14.

- a. What did God see to be desirable in David?

'a man after his own heart'. David loved God and desired to serve him.

2. Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

- a. How did God call David? What part did David play in this?

God took the initiative through Samuel. David simply received the anointing with oil.

- b. What important principle is mentioned in verse seven?

Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart.

- c. God empowers those whom he chooses to lead his people. Like Joshua, David is consecrated and commissioned by one of God's prophets. How did Samuel consecrate David?

By anointing him with oil.

d. What does the anointing with oil represent? (1 Samuel 16:13b)

The Spirit of the Lord descending upon him.

3. Read 1 Samuel 24:1-13.

a. Like Joshua, David often showed godly behaviour. Here he could have easily killed Saul who falsely accused him and pursued him. Why did David spare his life?

David respected Saul as the Lord's anointed king.

4. Read 2 Samuel 5:1-5.

a. Like Joshua, David was called by God to accomplish a particular task in the history of God's people. What was that task?

To be the ruler of Israel and to establish them securely as a nation in their own land.

5. Read 2 Samuel 7:1-17.

a. God's plan for David went far beyond his being the king of Israel. What did God promise to do for David? (11-16)

God promised to 'build him a house' – that he would be the father of an enduring succession of kings.

b. How was this promise finally fulfilled? (See Luke 1:30-33)

In Jesus, the descendant of David.

6. Read 2 Samuel 11.

a. In contrast to Joshua, David sinned very seriously. What sins did he commit?

Adultery, murder, deception.

b. What lessons do all church leaders need to learn from this disastrous incident?

To guard against temptation (especially, for men, sexual temptation) at all times.

Lessons from the lives of Joshua and David

Note some important principles which we learn from the lives of these two leaders.

- a. How were they called to their leadership positions?

They were called by God, through Moses (for Joshua) and Samuel (for David).

- b. What qualities of character did they have?

Commitment to the Lord. Faith. Humility. Courage.

- c. How did God equip them for their work?

By His Spirit, but also through their previous life experiences.

- d. What did God call them to do?

For Joshua: to lead the people of Israel into the Promised Land.

For David: to establish the people of Israel securely and to found the monarchy.

- e. How can we apply these truths to ourselves and to Christian leaders today?

I.e. Recognize the leaders and give them our respect.

Not seek to take their place.

Obedience

Establish righteous standards to select new leaders.

Note to the leader: John 3:34 encourages us to depend on God and to trust in his help, because God gives His Spirit without measure to His sent one.

For Further Study

Read 1 Samuel 13:1-14 and 15:1-35, and provide reasons for why Saul was rejected as the leader of God's people.

(Disobedience/pretence (13:9-13)

Seeking the approval of the people; stubbornness (15:20-21, 24-25)

Lesson 2: Jesus and Paul

Introduction

Jesus is “the Word of God who became flesh” (John 1:14). Yet, in his earthly life, we can see many parallels with the lives and ministries of other great leaders. During his earthly life, Jesus was the leader of his disciples and He is now the head of His church. In fact, each of the principles of leadership finds its perfect expression and fulfilment in Him. He is the highest, the purest, and the most holy example of what a church leader should be. Here we look at a few essential aspects of Jesus as a leader.

Lesson objectives:

1. *To see basic principles of leadership in the lives of Jesus and Paul*
2. *To apply these principles to ourselves.*

1. Read Matthew 3:13-17.

- a. Who commissioned Jesus for his earthly ministry?

God the Father.

- b. What power did Jesus receive for his ministry?

The Holy Spirit.

2. Read Luke 22:24-27.

- a. We read here one of Jesus’ most significant teachings about leadership. What quality did Jesus say was essential for a church leader?

Humility – the willingness to serve humbly.

- b. Give some examples of this quality in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Washing the disciples feet (John 13).

Miracles of healing the sick – Jesus turned no one away.

3. Jesus’ whole life was governed by his obedience to his Father in heaven. Describe how Jesus saw his mission in the following passages.

- a. Mark 10:45

To serve and give his life as a ransom for many

b. Luke 4:42-44

To preach the good news of the kingdom.

c. Luke 19:10

To seek and save the lost.

d. Luke 24:45-49

To fulfil all that was written in the scriptures about him, including his death and resurrection, and then to send out his disciples to preach.

Paul

Paul was an apostle, called by God to proclaim the gospel to the gentiles and to build the church of Jesus Christ. By faith Paul was enabled by the Spirit to preach and teach the Gospel. He was also empowered by the same Spirit to live an exemplary Christian life.

4. Read Acts 9:1-20

a. How did the Lord Jesus call Paul into His service?

He appeared to him on the road to Damascus.

b. How did he equip Paul for this service? (v. 17)

He was filled with the Holy Spirit.

c. What essential quality of a church leader did Paul show in his response to the Lord's call?

He was obedient. In response to God's commission, He immediately began to preach (v. 20)

d. What was the task for which the Lord called Paul? (v. 15)

'to carry my name before the gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.'

5. Read Galatians 5:13-26.

- a. Paul experienced the most severe trials during his ministry. What was the source of his power?

The Holy Spirit. But he also had to deny himself and die to the flesh in order to experience this.

- b. How can a church leader today put into practice the principle of living by the Spirit?

Student's answer: for discussion.

Paul knew his calling from God very clearly. How does he describe it in the following passages?

6. Acts 20:17-24

'testifying to the gospel of God's grace'

7. Rom. 15:14-22

'a minister of Christ to the gentiles – preaching where Christ was not known'

Lessons from the lives of Jesus and Paul

Note some important principles which we learn from the lives of these two leaders.

8. How were they called to their leadership positions?

*Jesus was called by God the Father.
Paul was called by the Lord Jesus.*

9. What qualities of character did they have?

Humility; obedience; courage...

10. How did God equip them for their work?

By His Holy Spirit.

11. What did God call them to do?

Jesus: preaching and teaching; calling and training his disciples; dying for the sins of the world; rising again and sending out his disciples to preach.

Paul: preaching Christ to the gentiles and founding churches.

12. How can we apply these truths to ourselves and to Christian leaders today?

Student's answer: for discussion.

Lesson 3: Leadership in the church; Elders and Deacons

Lesson objectives:

1. To see the pattern of church leadership which developed in the New Testament, looking particularly at the book of Acts and Paul's pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus.
2. To discuss how we can apply these patterns today.

A. Elders

In the New Testament, we find a body of leaders called "elders" in leadership of the local Church.ⁱⁱⁱ Their main responsibilities were to insure the teaching, prayer, and pastoral care of the community, as well as to train and oversee the other leaders within the different ministries and activities of the local church. The 12 apostles had already trained and designated elders to assume the leadership of the church in Jerusalem in Acts 11:30.ⁱⁱⁱ

1. Read Acts 14:21-28.

- a. This is the second time in the New Testament that the word 'elder' is used to refer to the leaders of the local church in Acts. On their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders over each newly planted church. What does this passage tell us about the importance of church leadership?

Paul and Barnabas clearly believed it was essential to appoint elders for the future well-being of the churches.

- b. Having appointed the elders, what did Paul and Barnabas do next?

They prayed and fasted and then committed the believers to the Lord. Then, they left and entrusted them with the responsibility of the community.

2. Read 1 Peter 5:1-5.

- a. The apostle Peter here calls himself 'a fellow elder'. How should an elder (or 'overseer') exercise his authority?

As a shepherd; willingly and humbly; by setting an example.

3. Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

- a. One of Timothy's responsibilities was the appointment of elders (overseers). What qualities did Paul tell Timothy he must look for in an elder? Make a list.

Above reproach; the husband of but one wife; temperate; self-controlled; respectable; hospitable; able to teach; not given to drunkenness; not violent, but gentle; not

quarrelsome; not a lover of money; managing his own family well, with obedient and respectful children; not a recent convert nor proudful; a good reputation with outsiders.

4. In 1 Timothy 3:2, we find a quality that includes all the requirements and which has been called by some commentators an 'all-embracing requirement': 'above reproach.' However, Paul certainly cannot be saying that elders must be perfect or near perfect, or practically sinless in order to qualify to be an elder. What do you think he meant?

He must be a person worthy of respect. He must not be someone who could be accused of any serious sin or wrongdoing.

His conscience must be purified of all non confessed sin.

He is victorious— freed from the hold of any sin, and when he becomes aware of some sin he confesses it and removes it at once.

Note to the leader: According to 1 Tim 5:19-20, it is clear that the enemy seeks to attack leaders. We must watch over the reputation of our elders, and tolerate neither slander nor the denying of sin. We also can see that the elders' conduct is more important than their personal gifts in ministry.

5. Read Acts 20:17-35.

a. It is clear from this passage and a number of others (e.g. 1 Timothy 4:14) that elders shepherded and oversaw churches as a group of men rather than as single individuals. How does Paul describe their main task and responsibility? (see especially 28-35)

'To keep watch over yourselves and all the flock'

To maintain true and correct teaching, based on the gospel ('the word of his grace')

To feed the church: to meet needs and be of help rather than to seek to receive from those who are under their responsibility. (v35)

B. Deacons

In the early church, it soon became clear that the leaders elders need help with their work. There were many practical matters that needed their attention. If they had given their time to such things, they would have been in danger of neglecting their responsibility to give spiritual leadership. So a second type of leader was appointed: a deacon (diakonos).

1. Read Acts 6:1-7.

- a. The 'Seven' were appointed by the apostles to 'serve' tables (the Greek infinitive is 'diakonein'). What was the exact purpose of their task?

To ensure a fair distribution of food to the Jewish widows of both the Hebrew (Aramaic) speaking community and the Greek speaking community.

- b. What were the qualities the apostles told the believers to look for in the men who were to be appointed to this task?

*'Full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom'
Of good reputation (honest and trustworthy)*

- c. Both Stephen and Philip went on to exercise outstanding ministries (see 6:8-15 and 7:1-53 for Stephen; 8:4-8, 26-40 for Philip). How do you think their work as deacons prepared them for this?

- a) they were recognised as having positions of responsibility*
- b) they were 'faithful in little' and so God entrusted them with more.*
- c) They listened and were at the service of the others—they knew the needs of the people.*

2. Read 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

- a. By the time Paul wrote his letters to Timothy and Titus, the roles of 'elder / overseer' and 'deacon' were well established. What kind of men did Paul tell Timothy he was to look for as deacons?

*Men worthy of respect; sincere; not indulging in much wine; not pursuing dishonest gain; having a clear conscience; having wives worthy of respect; being married to just one wife; managing their children and households well.
They first had to be tested and found faithful in some prior service.*

- b. Do you have deacons in your church? What role should they play in a church today?

Student's answer: for discussion.

C. Different forms of government in the church

The writings of the New Testament demonstrate the importance of the role of **elders** in the leadership of the local church. The role of the entire **congregation's** approval is also emphasized (Acts 6:5; Acts 15:12, 22), with every member's the responsibility to discern the will of God and to correct where there is error (Phil 1:1; 2 Cor 11:19-21; Gal 1:6-8; Col 3:16). Very early in the history of the church, the **bishop's** role developed – a member of the elders'/bishops'/pastors' council who represented the assembly and presided over the council. This is more or less equivalent to the role of **pastor** in several evangelical churches of today. When the church spread, the bishop sometimes also came to represent all the assemblies of a city and its surroundings.

Maintaining balance in the exercise of these two –or three– different sources of authority is very important for the proper functioning and good health of the church.

However, throughout the history of the Church, we observe 3 main forms of government, each reflecting a concentration of authority that comes from one particular source.

Form of government	Description	Main source of authority
Congregationalist	The whole congregation gathers to determine church affairs through majority vote or consensus. The leaders represent the congregation and execute its decisions. I.e. Congregationalist; certain Baptists	The assembly/the congregation
Presbyterian	A group of elders supervises and governs the local church. The congregation expresses itself through its choice of elders and is involved in discipline. I.e. Presbyterians, Assembly of brothers	The council of elders
Episcopal	A bishop leads the church as God's representative. The elders and leaders counsel him and execute his decisions. For some, the bishop is invested by other bishops. Anglicans; Assemblies of God; Methodists	The bishop/pastor

1. What form of church government is to be preferred? Why?

Student's answer – for discussion.

Note to the leader: With the variety of government forms the church has known throughout the times and cultures, we could argue that there is place for some flexibility when it comes to which form is more appropriate for any specific church context. However, if we take the example of the New Testament to be normative, it is important we emphasize the role of

the council of elders, all the while recognizing the contribution of each member of the community and of the servants particularly qualified to lead the church.

2. What form of government best describes the way your church functions

Student's answer

3. What changes do you think would help your church to be better balanced, if it were possible?

Student's answer

D. Review and reflection

1. Basing your answer on your study of elders and deacons until now, how do you think God wants to see His church administered today?

Students' answer: to be discussed.

Suggestions:

As a team, with some kind of order in which each one finds his place and can exercise his gifts in unity with the whole.

The character of the leaders was the first thing to be considered, with their ability to teach and to defend good doctrine when it comes to elders.

As much as possible, there should be a group of elders, supported by deacons. Those who are appointed elders and deacons should possess the qualities of conduct established by Paul.

The elders' role will be to guide and to teach.

The role of the deacons will be to concern themselves with practical things, especially to provide for those who are in need.

2. What attitudes should you entertain towards the leaders of your church? (see 1 Pet 5:5-6; Heb 13:17; 1 Thes 5:12-13)

*An attitude of joyful submission with an acknowledgment of their authority.
With humility and thankfulness for the service they offer to us.*

By regarding them with esteem and honor.

Note to the leader: Close in prayer in favor of the leaders of the communities represented by the group, and for appropriate relationships with them.

For Further Study

1. At times it may happen that only one leader is recognized to lead a community, especially when planting a new church. What problems and dangers should be avoided in such cases?

Examples of answers:

-The doctrinal danger: the doctrinal tendencies of the leader and his potential excesses could go without being confronted or even be taken as Gospel truth. Other important doctrines might be neglected. (An outside systematic training program can help with this)

-The relational danger: Even without wanting to, the leader might take an overriding and intrusive role in the intimate life and the family decisions of people under his responsibility (i.e. conscience guide, guru. (We must train the people under our responsibility to make their own decisions in light of the Word of God, and then leave as soon as possible.)

-The spiritual power danger: the trap of pride can be particularly devastating in this case. (It is important for the leader to give an account to some outside leader or authority.)

Lesson 4: Deborah, Priscilla and Women in Leadership

Lesson objectives:

1. *To study several important passages about women in leadership.*
2. *To see how these passages can be applied today.*

In recent years, there has been much discussion about the role of women in the church. What leadership roles are open to both men and women? Is it right for a woman to hold a position of leadership where this would place her in authority over men? In this lesson, we shall look for biblical guidelines to help us decide these questions. What does the Holy Spirit teach us through the word of God?

A. Deborah

1. Read Judges 4.

- a. Deborah held a position of public leadership and authority. What roles did she have? (4-5)

She was a prophetess, leading Israel and deciding disputes.

- b. What message did she give to Barak? (6-7)

The Lord orders him to recruit an army and prepare himself to defeat Cicero's army.

- c. How would you describe Barak's response? (v. 8)

Barak hesitated and said he would only go if Deborah went with him.

- d. Although Deborah agreed to Barak's request, she warned him that he would lose something because of his attitude. What would he lose? (v. 9)

He would lose the honor of the victory, because God would give the glory to a woman (She did not want to take away his glory as a man)

- e. What was the result of the battle?

Complete victory for Israel.

- f. How did Sisera die?

He was killed by Jael, a woman who mercilessly betrayed him and killed him.

g. What lessons about leadership can we learn from these events?

- a) *We need clear direction from the Lord – such as Deborah gave to Barak.*
- b) *God looks for willing obedience. Barak was hesitant, but nevertheless he did obey.*
- c) *God can use a woman as well as a man to save.*
- d) *A woman can be capable of leading God's people.*
- e) *A woman can prophecy on behalf of God.*
- f) *Men can lose their dignity when they relegate their leadership role to women by lack of faith in God. (Is this principle true in every culture?)*
- g) *To the contrary of the other judges, Deborah called a man to lead and deliver the people instead of doing it herself, even when the man pleaded for her to come.*

Note to the leader: Is Deborah's example a model or a crisis? Should we promote the place of women in leadership of the church or recognize that God can use women when men shrink before His call to carry out their role.

As for Deborah, she did not seek to replace Barak, but to encourage him to move forward.

B. Priscilla

Priscilla and Aquila were a great help to both Paul and Apollos. They also had a church in their home in Ephesus. They were clearly an outstanding Christian couple and there is much we can learn from them. It is interesting to note that it is often Priscilla's name which is mentioned first.

Note to the leader: It is interesting to note that Priscilla's name is often the first one to be mentioned.

1. Read Acts 18:1-4, 18-26.

1. How did Paul get to know Aquila and Priscilla?

Aquila and Priscilla were probably already believers in Jesus before Paul met them. They were all in Corinth at the same time. Aquila and Priscilla practised the same trade as Paul did: tent making.

2. What help were Priscilla and Aquila able to give to Apollos?

They explained to him the way of God more adequately. He only knew the baptism of John, not that of the Holy Spirit.

2. Read Romans 16:3-5.

3. How are Priscilla and Aquila described? (v. 3)

'fellow workers'

4. What had they done for Paul? (v. 4a)

They had risked their lives for him.

5. What else do we learn about them? (v. 4b)

'all the churches of the gentiles are grateful to them.'

C. Women and leadership roles

God has prepared a ministry for each Christian, women and men. He has also given him or her the gifts to exercise it. But some questions do arise: Is it right for a woman to be the pastor of a congregation or to have the responsibility of teaching a congregation? Can a woman be an elder? If it is not right for her to have these roles, then what roles should she have?

1. Read Titus 2:3-5.

- a. What did Paul tell Titus to teach the older women? (v. 3)

To be reverent in the way they live, not slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good.

Note to the leader: Point out the similarities to the requirements for being an elder, except those of leading and of teaching in good doctrine.

- b. What special role did he encourage them to have towards the younger women? (4-5)

To train them to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind and to be subject to their husbands.

2. Read 1 Timothy 2:8-15.

- a. What instruction did Paul give about "teaching and the exercise of authority"? (11-12)

The woman should not teach or have authority over a man. She must receive teaching "in silence" or "peacefully".

Note to the leader: The Greek word "esuxia" can be translated by "in a spirit of peace; peacefully" (see 2 Thes. 3:12) or "in silence" in agreement with the teaching found in 1 Cor 14:34.

b. On what principles does Paul base his argument?

On the account of the creation of man and woman in Genesis 1 and 2.

The order of creation

Eve seduced first and her initiative in sinning.

c. Are these principles still valid? Do you think they apply equally in every cultural setting?

Student's answer: for discussion.

Suggestions:

The Genesis account of the creation of man and woman is fundamental. However, we do also need to look at the rest of the teaching of the Bible to see how the relationship between man and woman works out in different cultural settings. In this matter, several different cultures are represented in the New Testament; however, the recommended practices seem to apply as a general rule (1 Cor. 11:16; 14:34)

d. What basic principles have we learnt in this lesson about the ministries God entrusts to women?

In the case of Deborah, we see a woman in a leadership position. This may have been because the men (represented by Barak) had failed to assume their responsibilities. It was certainly exceptional and there is no other similar example in the OT. However, God blessed it!

Priscilla and Aquila were able helpfully to instruct Apollos, who was a very gifted preacher. This instruction probably took place in their home rather than in a public setting.

Paul does seem to forbid women taking public leadership and teaching roles in the church when there are men who can fill these roles. He bases his argument on the creation account in Genesis.

Paul exhorts women to have a ministry to other women and also to children.

See the 'For Further Study' section for more discussion of this issue.

e. What are some creative ways women can develop and exercise their ministries according to biblical guidelines?

Student's answer: for discussion.

Note to the leader: Besides the official role of elder/pastor and of doctor of men (some might also add the official function of deacon according to the passage in 1 Tim 3:11), all gifts and ministries are open to all and needed. The list of possibilities and ministries is endless. Help others to realize this by seeking creative or unexpected examples. I.e. spiritual counsel or, counsel referent, treasurer/accountant, bible course writer, trainer, "teacher of children and women", educator, supervisor, host, prophet, artist (painter, film director, writer, actor, producer, compositor), technician, computer engineer, chaplain...

For married sisters, none of these ministries surpass the essential role of caring for her family and raising her children in the Lord.

For Further Study

The Bible has much to teach us about the roles of men and women in the home, in the church and in the wider world. In this lesson we have focussed on the church, but we have only been able to look at a few passages. Here we give some others which will help you to think further about these questions:

On the day of Pentecost, about 120 believers, including both men and women (see Acts 1:12-15) were gathered together. The Holy Spirit came upon them and they began to speak in 'other tongues'.

1. Read Acts 2:5-18.

f. What were the believers declaring as they spoke in 'other tongues'? (v. 11)

'the wonders of God': what He had done in raising Jesus from the dead.

g. On whom did God pour out His Spirit? (15-18)

On all people, both men and women.

3. Read Acts 21:8-9. These verses tell us about some people who prophesied. Who were they?

Philip's four unmarried daughters.

Paul had to give detailed instructions to the Corinthian church about the place of women in the worship service. There was obviously a serious problem of disorder.

4. Read 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.

a. How does Paul describe the relationship between man and woman? (3, 7-9, 11-12)

Man is 'the head of woman'. He is the 'image and glory of God'. Woman is the 'glory of man'. But they are not independent of each other.

- b. How do we know from this passage that women prayed and prophesied in the church? (4-5).

Women could pray and prophesy, but with their heads covered.

Note: prostitutes had their heads shaven as a sign of disgrace.

- c. What was the meaning of wearing the veil (covering the head)? (v. 10)

It was a 'sign of authority' – showing the respect of the women both to God and to the men present.

Note: wearing the veil. Some Christian groups today still believe that the woman should cover her head during the worship service. Others believe that the important principle is that the women should respect the authority of the men who are leading the church and should dress accordingly (as in 1 Timothy 2:9-10). They would say that wearing the veil was a sign of this respect in Corinth in the first century, but that it is not always necessary today in the 21st century.

5. Read 1 Corinthians 14:26-40.

Paul returns here to the conduct of the worship meeting. As we have seen above, it appears that women were free to pray and prophesy during this meeting (1 Cor 11:5). However, in verses 33-35, Paul says that the women should remain silent. What are we to do with this obvious contradiction? Paul perhaps meant by this that a woman did not have the authority to teach in public. Why? The Greek word used for "speaking" frequently indicates a teaching with authority. Such teaching might be given after there had been a time for prayer and prophecy (in which the women could participate). It might have involved weighing the different prophecies (v. 26) and deciding which were truly from the Lord, or how they should be understood. These commentaries are an attempt to resolve an obvious contradiction, but there are other solutions suggested by doctors that are sometimes of a technical level.

It seems clear that Paul does set a limit to the woman's role here. (Compare 1 Timothy 2:11-12). On the other hand, he certainly did not mean that the woman was not to speak at all in church, as this would contradict his earlier teaching in 1 Cor. 11.

- a. Why do you think Paul set this limitation on the role of women?

*To maintain good order.
Men need to be encouraged to lead.*

Paul believed that it was the responsibility of the male leaders of the church to have the final word in the establishment of correct teaching.

6. Read Galatians 3:26-27.

We have looked at Paul's teaching on the different roles of men and women in the church. However, we must never forget that, in Christ, men and women of every racial and social background are of equal value in God's sight.

- a. How do we become members of God's family?

Through faith in Jesus, expressed in baptism.

- b. What is the new clothing that we have?

Christ himself.

- c. What is the result of this new clothing?

Equality among all believers, as descendants of Abraham in God's family and inheritors according to the promise.

Since we have been forgiven and adopted in Christ, God bestowed on us the greatest honor of belonging to his family and enjoy the highest privileges of His royalty. Following Deborah's example, he calls us all, men and women, to favor the others in his family, and seek to elevate them.

Lesson 5: Responsibilities of leaders

Lesson objectives:

1. To see how the early church conducted their worship meetings.
2. To study some important passages about teaching.
3. To apply what we have learnt to our own situations.

We shall now look more closely at the responsibilities of leaders in the Church of Jesus Christ today. According to the NT pattern, the elders have the responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the church. This includes:

- Leading meetings of believers
- Preaching and teaching
- Pastoral care

In this lesson we shall look at the leading of meetings and teaching. In lessons 6 and 7, we shall go on to study various aspects of pastoral care. We should also keep in mind that the deacons assist the elders in being responsible for the material welfare of the church.

A. Leading Meetings of Believers

The New Testament does not give us a specific model for a worship service. However, there is plenty of material in both the Old and New Testaments to help us, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to prepare and conduct worship services which are pleasing and acceptable to God.

The person leading the worship does not necessarily have to be one of the elders or deacons. Nevertheless, the worship service takes place under the authority of the church; this function is called “chairmanship”. It is therefore essential that they have a good understanding of what the Bible teaches as to what is acceptable worship.

1. Read Acts 2:42.

- a. Here we see the believers beginning to meet together, under the leadership of the apostles. What were the key elements of their meetings? (*Note: ‘breaking of bread’ – this probably refers to the Lord’s Supper*).

Listening to the apostles’ teaching; sharing in fellowship; the breaking of bread; prayer.

2. Read Acts 16:11-15.

- a. Here we see a simple, informal worship service by the riverside. What were the important elements of this service?

Prayer (and, probably, reading from the OT)

Teaching from Paul.

Baptism of Lydia and her household (perhaps a little later)

3. Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

- a. It seems that in the first century church Christians celebrated the Lord's Supper whenever they met for worship. What does Paul indicate in this passage as the primary reason to celebrate communion (v.26)?

To commemorate and proclaim Jesus' death ('to proclaim the Lord's death until He comes')

- b. Paul also had to remind the Corinthians of the attitudes they should have towards each other, and particularly during the Lord's Supper. What should these attitudes be?

Mutual concern and sharing.

Self control and dignity.

Preparation and serious self-examination in order to repent of sin and be able to eat and drink the Supper in a way worthy of Jesus.

4. Read 1 Corinthians 14:26-40.

- a. What are the main principles taught in this passage concerning the conduct of a worship meeting (26 and 40)?

'Everything must be done for the strengthening of the church'

Each one should participate and leave space for the others.

A variety of forms and manners; hymns, prophecies, etc.

'Everything must be done in a fitting and orderly way'.

5. Read Psalm 100.

- a. What can we learn from this expression of OT worship?

Joy, thankfulness, focus on God himself – who He is and what He has done.

6. Read Ephesians 5:15-21 .

- a. Paul is not necessarily giving instructions for a worship meeting in this passage. However, we can apply his teaching to our meetings. What should we be aiming for?

Be filled with the Spirit; joyful singing; thankfulness; mutual submission.

B. Preaching & Teaching

Worship should always go hand in hand with preaching and teaching. This is for the simple reason that if the Word is not proclaimed (see John 17:17), all the other elements, including the sacraments of the Lord's Supper or Baptism, lose their meaning or can even become idolatrous. Church history gives many sad examples of how this has happened.

1. Read Matt. 28:18-20.

- a. Part of the 'Great Commission' refers to teaching. What did Jesus expect his disciples to teach the new believers?

'teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you'

2. Read 2 Tim. 1:11.

- a. How does Paul describe his calling and ministry here?

A herald, apostle and teacher.

3. Read Col. 1:24 – 2:5.

- a. How does Paul describe his calling and ministry here? (25-27)

To present the word of God in its fullness

- b. What was the goal of Paul's ministry? (28-29)

To present everyone perfect in Christ. (Through instruction, warning, proclamation)

- c. Paul's ministry of teaching was not simply an academic presentation of the facts of the gospel. According to this passage, what else did it involve?

*An effort/Suffering – proclaiming, admonishing and teaching – labouring and struggling. Paul was intensely involved in his preaching of the gospel and gave himself to helping and encouraging the believers.
This requires a deep change of attitude, character, perspective and motivation to truly become more like Christ*

4. Read Eph. 4:11-16.

- a. What 'gifts' has the risen Christ given to his church (v.11)?

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers

b. What is the purpose of the ministry of the 'apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers'? (12-13)

To prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

c. What was Paul's vision for the church? (14-16).

The church is to grow up into the head – Christ. This growth takes place through speaking the truth in love and each part of the body doing its work.

5. Revise what we have learnt about leading meetings and teaching in this lesson. What practical applications can you see for your own situation?

a. Leading meetings

Student's answer: for discussion

Suggestions: Meetings involve worship, teaching, the Lord's supper, prayer and fellowship. We must aim to have a right balance of the different elements.

There should be an atmosphere of joy and thankfulness. If not, what is preventing this? There must be good order and people should be built up and encouraged.

b. Teaching

Student's answer: for discussion

Teaching should, over time, cover the whole range of the Bible. It must not be limited to certain 'key passages'.

It should encourage obedience and practical application, and not mere understanding.

The aim of teaching is practical: to build up the believers by stimulating them to know Christ, to gradually become more like him and to develop and carry out their ministries.

The teacher must be prepared to labour and struggle in order to fulfil his ministry.

For Further Study**Do we have ‘apostles’ and ‘prophets’ today?**

1. Reread Eph. 4:11-16.

Some Christians believe that the ministries of ‘apostles’ and ‘prophets’ are still continuing today, together with ‘evangelists’ and ‘pastors and teachers’. The ministry of a ‘pastor / teacher’ clearly corresponds closely with that of an elder. We all recognise the continuing need for evangelism. But what about the ‘apostle’ and ‘prophet’?

Were ‘apostles’ restricted to the 12 apostles, with Paul and a few others, in the first generation of the church’s life? And were ‘prophets’ only needed in the period before God’s revelation in the NT was complete? Or can we still have apostles and prophets today? We will look at some other passages which will help us answer these questions.

6. Read Eph. 2:19-20.

a. How does Paul describe the ministry of ‘the apostles and prophets’ here?

‘to lay a foundation, with Christ as the chief cornerstone.’ The church is then built on this foundation.

Note to the leader: You can examine the meaning of the word “foundation” – Without the apostles (and the New Testament they left us as a heritage), we could not have true knowledge of Jesus Christ (see CHUR 201 _____). Their role as authentic witnesses demonstrates the importance and the wealth of our heritage in four gospels.

7. Read Eph. 3:4-6, 9-10.

a. What did God reveal to his ‘holy apostles and prophets’?

The ‘mystery of the church’: that the Gentiles can now, through faith in Christ, become part of God’s people, on an equal footing with Jewish believers.

Jesus chose his twelve apostles to have a foundational role in his new community, the church. This new community was to be made up of Jews and Gentiles – all who would believe in Jesus. After Judas had betrayed Jesus and committed suicide, Peter saw the need to replace him.

8. Read Acts 1:21-22.

a. What requirements (qualifications) did the person who was to be added to the ranks of the apostles have to meet?

To have been one of those who had followed Jesus from the beginning of his public ministry up to his ascension.

- b. Who was appointed and what was the purpose of his appointment?

Matthias, to be a witness to the resurrection

Later, Paul became an apostle in a unique way.

9. Read Acts 9:1-6, 15.

- a. How did Paul meet the first requirement ('seeing the Lord Jesus')?

Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus. (See also 1 Cor. 1:9.)

- b. Why did God call Paul as an apostle?

'to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel'

10. Read Romans 16:7.

- a. What title seems to have been given to Andronicus and Julia?

apostles

11. Read 1 Corinthians 12:28-31.

- a. What are the greater gifts which the believers are encouraged to strive for?

Apostles, prophets and teachers

- b. If Paul is encouraging the believers to strive for these gifts, what does this imply about their availability for believers other than those mentioned by name as having them?

These gifts of the Spirit, including apostleship, prophethood, and teaching, are also available to every believer. However, the Holy Spirit alone distributes them.

12. Read 2 Cor. 11:9-13.

- a. What does Paul complain about in this passage?

Those who take advantage of the believers financially and lead them astray spiritually, pretending to be true apostles.

- b. These deceivers were obviously none of Christ's 12 apostles, and yet some of the Corinthian believers accepted them with the title of "apostle". What does this imply

about the existence of others having the gift of apostle, outside of the 12 disciples of Christ?

If there is a false version of apostle, then there must also be a true version. It would appear that the first century Christians accepted the possibility of others, who weren't one of the original 12, also receiving the gift of apostleship.

Question for discussion: do you think there can be 'apostles' today with the same authority as the twelve and Paul?

Student's answer: for discussion

Suggestions:

The position of the '11' and Matthias must be unique: they had a close personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus during his earthly life and therefore could, at first hand, tell of what he had done and taught. See Revelation 21:14, for example.

Paul had an exceptional calling. Some people today do claim to have 'seen the Lord' in a vision and to have been appointed by Him as apostles. Any such claim would need to be very carefully evaluated.

We should also note that, as far as we know, no one in the generation of Christian believers that followed the apostles claimed to have the gift of being an apostle.

The authority of the Writings of the 12 apostles (the New Testament) remain above that of any servant ministering today.

Definition of Apostle: In the New Testament, there are two uses for the Greek word 'apostle.' One is simply a messenger (e.g. Philippians 2:24) and the other is an especially appointed person called and ordained by Christ himself (e.g. Romans 1:1). These especially designated apostles such as the 12 disciples and Paul were all eye witnesses of the resurrection and had the same authority as the Old Testament prophets to receive, teach, and write authoritative, infallible revelations of God, many of which become a part of the New Testament canon of Scripture. In the latter sense, these apostles are entirely unique and their specific role and function in redemptive history is therefore unrepeatable.

Prophets

Definition of Prophet: In general, a prophet is a person appointed by God to receive infallible revelations and give those revelations either orally or in written form to the believing community.

Does God still give the gift of prophecy today? Does He still call people to be prophets? The answer we give to this question will depend partly on our answer to the previous question about apostles.

Christians who believe that God still calls people to be apostles today will certainly think that He also calls people to be prophets.

However, Christians who do not believe that God still calls people to be apostles today are divided over whether He still calls people to be prophets. Some believe that both the apostles and prophets of the NT church had a ministry of laying the foundation of God's perfect revelation of salvation. Once that revelation in the NT was completed, there was no more need for apostles or prophets. Therefore God no longer calls people to these ministries. Rather, He guides us by giving us the Holy Spirit to help us understand and put into practice the teaching of the NT.

Other Christians believe that, although there are no more apostles, there may still be prophets, who bring direct messages from God for today. These messages must, of course, be in harmony with the teaching of the Bible.

It is not possible for us to discuss this question in detail here. However, it is clear from the NT that every message which claims to be from God, whether or not we call it a 'prophecy' or a 'word from the Lord' must be tested.

13. Read I Thessalonians 5:19-21.

- a. What did Paul tell the Thessalonians that their attitude to prophecies must be? (v. 20)

'Do not treat prophecies with contempt'

- b. Why is it important to 'test everything'? (v. 21)

Clearly, some prophecies might be false, just as some teaching can be wrong.

- c. How should prophecies be tested?

They must be in general conformity to the Bible's teaching. For example, we could not accept a 'message' which encouraged someone to abandon his wife and go and marry someone else.

Where a 'message' gives practical directions which cannot be directly tested from the Bible – for example, telling someone to take or refuse a particular job, to go to a certain place, to marry a certain person – it should be evaluated by experienced and mature believers. They will have the wisdom and sound, practical judgement and common sense, to know if it is a wise course of action.

Note to the leader: A prophet must recognize the primary authority of the apostles and of the holy prophecies of the Old Testament. (1 Tim 3:16; 1 Cor 14:36-38)

14. What should our attitude be if someone claims to bring a message from God today?

To test it according to the criteria above (answer to q 9)

To listen with discernment—to explain to others if necessary

A lot of caution and an open Bible.

An attitude of submission to other “prophet” servants (1 Cor 14:32)

Note: Paul addressed this letter to the first century church at Thessalonica. Within the first century church there were both true and false prophets (see 2 Peter 2; 1 John 4:1). Whether or not we believe that God is still calling people to be prophets today, the principle which Paul gives: ‘test everything’ applies to all teaching given by Christian leaders.

In conclusion, we have said that a prophet is a person appointed by God to receive infallible revelations and give those revelations either orally or in written form to the believing community. There are Old Testament prophets and New Testament prophets. In the New Testament, some scholars believe there were foundational prophets (see Ephesians 2:20; 3:5) and people (‘congregational’ prophets) who regularly gave prophetic messages in the churches (e.g. 1 Corinthians 14:29). There is no scholarly consensus whether ‘congregational’ prophets gave infallible utterances as these utterances needed to be weighed. Further, there is no definitive New Testament teaching which states clearly that the ministry of the prophets was to cease after the apostolic age.

Lesson 6: Pastoral Care (1) - General

Lesson objectives:

1. To see how church leaders should care for those in their charge
2. To look at ways to handle difficult situations
3. To apply this teaching to our own situation

In lessons 6 and 7 we look at how the elders are to care for their church members. The biblical image of the shepherd with his sheep illustrates perfectly what pastoral care is all about. The elders, assisted by the deacons, have the responsibility both spiritually and materially to care for the believers in their church. Jesus is the good shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep. He expects his under-shepherds to have the same attitude of self-sacrifice.

A. The Cost of Pastoral Care

1. Read John 21:15-19.

- a. What commission did Jesus repeat three times to Peter?

'Feed my lambs – take care of my sheep – feed my sheep.'

Note to the leader: Make sure that everyone realizes what this implies (to take care of the sheep, to lead them, guide them, protect them, serve as their model and worry about them).

- b. What kind of suffering did Jesus predict for Peter?

A martyr's death – tied and lead with his hands spread out (crucifixion).

Note to the leader: Make a comment between his role as a shepherd and his crucifixion-he was ready to put himself in danger and to die (every day).

2. Read 1 Thess. 2:1-12.

- a. To whom does Paul compare himself in v.7?

A mother caring for her little children

- b. To whom does Paul compare himself in v.11?

A father dealing with his children

- c. What do we learn from these comparisons about the heart of a true pastor?

He should have both a mother and a father's concern for the believers in his charge.

The responsibilities of the elders and deacons are both spiritual and material. They must be concerned for the well-being of their church members in both these areas.

B. Spiritual needs

Above all, a church leader will be concerned for the spiritual growth of the church members under his care.

1. Read Gal. 4:12-20.

- a. What was Paul's great desire for the believers in Galatia? (v. 19)

That Christ should be formed in them – that they should grow spiritually.

- b. What danger was he worried concerning them? (v.16-17; Gal 1:6-7)

Some people were seeking to separate the church from its relationship to Paul's ministry in order to be zealous for their own selves. This was all the more dangerous because they were teaching a twisted gospel blended with human works. The believers risked forsaking salvation by faith and fall away from grace.

- c. What illustration does he use to describe his role and attitude towards them (v19)? What does it teach us?

Paul uses the illustration of a mother in the pains of childbirth –he works very hard, feels pains and is anguished about making sure the church finds life.

2. Read Gal. 6:1-2.

1. What should our attitude be to a fellow-believer who falls into sin?

*To restore him or her gently.
With humility, being careful not to fall.
Attentive and caring for the other, risking ourselves for his sake.*

C. Physical needs

1. Read James 2:14-17, 1 Thess 4:9-12; 2 Thess 3:10-15.

- a. What should our attitude be towards brothers or sisters in need?

James 2:14-17 teaches us that it is our duty to meet the basic physical needs in a real and practical manner to brothers and sisters in the faith.

1 Thess 4:9-12 exhorts every Christian to work with his own hands in order to provide for his own needs and also to be able to give to others. Elders should model and encourage this attitude.

2 Thess 3:10-15 insists the church does not encourage a spirit of easy help, yet all the while being available to come alongside and help, and to do good works (v13); the elders severely sanction those who are inactive and live dependant of others.

Note to the leader: We have the responsibility of concretely helping first the members of our own family (Gal 6:10), then the family of God, and only then those of the outside who are in need (Gal 6:10). This is our common responsibility as the church, as a whole, and it is important that we organize ourselves accordingly.

2. Read James 5:14-16.

- a. What are the elders to do when they are called by someone who is sick?

To pray over him and anoint him with oil.

To give an opportunity for him to confess his sins and assure him of salvation.

- b. What will the result of their prayer be?

Healing and forgiveness.

Note to the leader: This does not imply that every disease is a result of sin (v15 does say "if he has committed sin"). Although God loves to answer our prayers, He is sovereign when it comes to healing and He can decide it is better not to heal in certain situations (2 Cor 12:7-10; Eccl 3:1-3, 11).

D. Relationships

In John 13:34-35 Jesus said to his disciples: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Part of a leader's responsibility is to help believers obey this command.

1. Read Phil. 4:2-9.

- a. What did Paul ask one of his fellow workers to do for Euodia and Syntyche?

To help them to be reconciled and be at peace with each other.

("to agree with each other" means to get along, to seek together to serve Jesus Christ and one another in all humility).

b. Why is it so important to help church members be reconciled to each other?

- a) so that they can obey Jesus' command to love each other*
- b) so that they can grow spiritually*
- c) to prevent further division in the fellowship*
- d) to keep a good testimony to the outside world, (so that all may see we are disciples of Christ, through our mutual love)*

Sometimes church members have problems between each other which they cannot resolve themselves. In such cases, the elders may have to intervene.

2. Read Matt. 18:15-20.

In this passage Jesus gives us a pattern to follow if a brother sins.

a. What is the first step to take?

'Go and show him his fault just between the two of you'
(Do not talk about it right and left)
(Listen to him, make sure of the situation)
(The reproof should be specific)

b. If the brother will not listen, what is the second step to take?

'Take one or two others, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'

c. If the brother still will not listen, what is the third and final step?

'Tell it to the church'

d. When Jesus instructs us to 'tell the church', this clearly includes the elders. They may, of course, have been involved earlier. The first responsibility of the elders will be to establish the facts. How are they to do this? (Compare 1 Tim. 5:19.)

On the testimony of at least two reliable witnesses.
(The person must already have fulfilled the first 2 steps)
(2 or 3 witnesses must be agreed on the same facts)
(The other plaintive should be reproofed or calmed.)

e. If the elders are able to reconcile the two parties, that is clearly the best outcome. But if they find that one of them has sinned and refuses to repent, what action should they take?

Treat the offender as a 'pagan or a tax collector'. This means, if the person refuses to repent, he or she should be treated as any other unbeliever, excluded from fellowship and leadership. We shall continue to look at this subject in the next lesson.

In the next lesson, we shall look more closely at the subject of 'church discipline'.

Review the passages we have studied in this lesson. Which one might be particularly appropriate for you and your church's situation at this moment?

Student's answer: for discussion

Lesson 7: Pastoral Care (2) – Church Discipline

Lesson objectives:

1. *To study several examples of church discipline in the NT*
2. *To see how this teaching applies to our own situations.*

Just as a father must sometimes discipline his children, so a church leader must also be ready to discipline church members when this is necessary. This is both for their own good and for the good of the church body as a whole. However, it must be carried out with great care and sensitivity, or it can be very damaging to the life of the whole church. It requires wisdom, humility, firmness and love.

A. The purpose of discipline

1. Read Hebrews 12:4-11.

- a. In general, what is the true purpose of discipline according to this text?

*That we may share in God's holiness and in resemblance to Christ (v10).
This demonstrates the Father's desire for the well-being of His child: to produce a harvest of peace and righteousness in the life of those who have been so trained.*

- b. How can we apply this to church discipline?

*When exercising church discipline, a leader must in mind these goals of progressing collectively and individually in likeness to Christ by separating from the world.
The goal is never to punish or repay according to God's justice but to help the person (Gal 6:1-2). This may seem toilsome for a time but it is worth it.*

B. Case Studies

Discipline is needed when a brother or sister who has clearly sinned is unwilling to repent, in spite of the loving efforts of the church leaders to help them.

1. Read 1 Corinthians 5.

Note: 'A man has his father's wife'. Presumably the woman involved was the step-mother and not the mother, of the person who had taken her.

- a. How seriously did Paul view this case of immorality? (1-2)

Paul viewed it extremely seriously. It was even revolting in the eyes of the immoral society they lived in and gave off a very bad testimony. He told the Corinthians that they should have been 'filled with grief'.

- b. What judgement did Paul himself pass, and want the church to pass, on this person? (3-5)

To put him out of the fellowship.

To hand him over to Satan. (This expression could be understood in the following manner: to let the individual follow his course to the end of himself as he pursues his course in the world without access to communion.) See also 1 Tim 1:18-20.

- c. What was the purpose of this judgement? (v. 5)

To help him recognize his wrong and repent in view of his salvation in the day of Jesus Christ.

The expression "for the destruction of the flesh" refers to the sinful nature: pride; independent spirit.

- d. What was the effect of this sinful behaviour on the church as a whole? (v. 6)

The whole church was affected and defiled.

This attitude of light heartedness before sin was a bad example that was permeating the whole community, just like yeast acts upon the whole batch of dough.

- e. What other kinds of sinful behaviour did Paul urge the Corinthians not to tolerate among those who called themselves Christians? (v. 11)

Sexual immorality; greed; idolatry; slander; drunkenness; swindling.

2. Read 2 Cor. 2:5-11.

Note: Paul may be talking about the same person as the offender in 1 Cor. 5, but this is not clear.

- a. When church discipline has had the desired effect and an offender is truly sorry for what he has done, what should be the attitude of the church towards him?

Forgiveness and comfort; reaffirmation of love.

- b. How might Satan exploit a failure on the part of the church to forgive and restore?

*The person might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.
-overwhelmed with sorrow he might be tempted to return to the world.*

3. Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15.

- a. What sin does Paul warn against here?

Idleness: laziness and dependency on others.

- b. How did Paul want the believers to treat those who ignored his instructions? (14-15)

*'Don't associate with him'; 'warn him as a brother'
To warn him and then separate from him to shame him, all the while considering him to be a brother. Do not come to his help.*

C. False teaching

A church leader may also have to exercise discipline when a church member, or even another leader, gives false teaching. Such teaching could clearly be very damaging to new or weaker members of the fellowship.

1. Read Galatians 1:1-10.

False teachers had come to the churches in Galatia telling them that, although they had been saved by faith in Christ, they must now complete their salvation by keeping the Jewish ceremonial law.

- a. What was Paul's attitude to those who preached 'another gospel'?

He wanted them to be accursed (i.e. under God's disapproval and punishment).

2. Read Galatians 2:11-21

- a. What error had Peter fallen into?

*Hypocritically, Peter sought to make the visiting Jews who believe in Christ think that he still practiced the law because he was ashamed and feared their disapproval.
Therefore Peter had withdrawn from eating with the Gentiles.
But this communicated a very dangerous message; it was as if he were saying: 'it is not enough just to believe in Jesus to be saved. You must also keep the Jewish food laws (and be circumcised, etc.)'*

b. Why did Paul oppose him publicly?

This was a very serious matter, concerning the basis of salvation. Peter's example was having a very negative effect. Paul, therefore, could neither ignore it, nor deal with it privately with Peter. It had to be dealt with publicly.
Paul wanted to protect the non-Jewish believers from the pressure of living under the law and therefore of:
-perverting the gospel.
-destroying the freedom the gospel provides.

D. Reflection and Review

1. Sharpen your discernment (1). Every behavioral problem does not require confrontation or severe sanctions. In 1 Thessalonians 5:14, Paul distinguishes at least three types of people in spiritual difficulty, and he suggests a specific method for taking care of each one.

a. Identify the three recommended ways of helping by filling in the following table:

Type of difficulty	How to accompany the person.
<i>I.e. Those who live disorderly</i>	<i>Warn them</i>
<i>Those who are heavy laden</i>	<i>Comfort them</i>
<i>Those who are weak</i>	<i>Support them</i>

b. According to the previous recommendations, in which of the three types of difficulty is it appropriate to exercise discipline by following the peace process of Matt. 18?

Particularly in the first case: Those whose live disorderly

Note to the leader: It is not always easy to discern which category a person is found in (i.e. A brother who lives disorderly can also be weak). You can encourage the members of your group to think of an example of each category, without necessarily sharing it with the others.

c. What recommendations are equally applicable to all (v14b-15; Gal 6:1)?

We must be patient and kind towards all – even those who do us harm.

We must remain humble and be watch ourselves out of fear that we also might fall (Gal 6:1).

2. Sharpen your discernment (2). When a case of discipline arises before the council of elders, it is often preferable for him to interact directly with the person concerned without informing the whole congregation. In which of the following situations is it preferable to exercise discipline by publicly confronting the offender when the peace process has had no effect on the culprit?

a. Level of commitment

- ☒ The person in question is a church leader.
- ☒ The person calls himself a “brother” or a “sister” in Christ.
- ☒ The person attends more or less regularly the church without any commitment.
- ☐ The person comes occasionally and does not confess faith in Christ.

b. Repetition of offense

- ☐ The person in question committed a sin.
- ☒ The person keeps leaving a disturbed life.

c. Reputation

- ☒ The sin was committed before the whole community.
- ☐ Only a few people are aware of the sin.
- ☒ The sin gives a bad testimony to people outside the church.

d. Protection

- ☒ The behavior defect of the person places other members of the community in danger (example: false doctrine, pedophilia, murder, slander).
- ☐ The behavior defect mainly affects the person in question.

3. Review this lesson. What are the purposes for the use of discipline in the church? What practical application do you see for your own community?

Student's answer: for discussion

For Further Study

Slander and gossip are easily practiced –and unfortunately often tolerated– in the intimate circles of the church. How can we discern when our words are going beyond the limits of sharing news for prayer, and are instead creeping on the destructive land of slander or gossip? Here is a practical definition for slander: Sharing anything concerning anyone, when the act of sharing it is not a part of the resolution of the person’s problem.^{iv}

1. Read the following texts and summarize what they teach us concerning those who practice slander. Lev. 19:16; Prov. 8:13; Rom. 1:28-32; 1 Tim. 5:13; Psalm 101:5.

These texts testify to us the seriousness of this sin in God’s eyes, and the danger its practice represents for the community.

We must not slander or falsely accuse our neighbor –Lev. 19

God will thwart the slanderer like he resists the proud –Prov. 8:13

God hates a perverse mouth –Psalm 101:5

This sin is classified with the most pernicious sins of the most rebellious, lost people – Rom. 1

We must avoid having inactive busybodies spread gossip from house to house. 1 Tim. 5

4. What do the following texts say concerning listening to gossip? Prov. 17:4; Prov. 18:8; Prov. 10:19; Eph. 4:29-5:4; Phil. 4:8.

It is the wicked man who likes to listen to malicious stories (Prov. 17:4) that are harmful (Prov. 18:8)

To let such people speak = to encourage sin (Prov. 10:19).

We are called to be kind towards others, and not to listen to unhealthy words (Eph. 4-5), but to focus our attention on that which is building up, honorable and good (Phil 4:8).

5. How can we fight slander and gossip in our communities? (Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Tim 5:19)

By applying the peace process described in Matt. 18: to address directly and exclusively the person in question to speak of a problem.

Not to consider the accusations that come from a third party person when that person has not first applied Matt. 18, especially when the accusation is directed towards an elder.

In general, to stop people who are talking of others behind their back, even if we have to interrupt them in their speech. We can encourage them to talk directly with the concerned person if this is helpful or necessary. If the person persists in this practice, you will need to confront him/her and eventually carry out discipline.

Lesson 8: Finances

Lesson objectives:

1. To study NT teaching about the handling of money and Christian giving.
2. To see how we can apply this teaching to our own situations

A Christian leader, elder or deacon must first of all set a good example in the management of his own finances. But he will probably also be responsible for the handling of gifts made by others. The Bible gives clear teaching in both of these areas.

A. The leader and his personal finances:

1. Read 1 Timothy 3:1-10.

a. Remember that a church leader must be 'above reproach' (v.2) in all areas of his life. Look at the qualities of character that Paul gives for both overseers (elders) and deacons. Which of them relate to the handling of money?

- Not a lover of money
- Manages his own family well (organized and disciplined in personal and family management)
- Not pursuing dishonest gain
- Other qualities that have to do with money; without reproach, without deceitfulness, hospitable, tested and approved.

- b. Provide practical examples of how we can put these apply principles?

- I.e. Train and help all the parents in managing their households.*
- Maintain transparency in church accounting with consistent verification.*
- Test leaders by entrusting them with short-term responsibilities.*

B. Christian giving

A small group of believers meeting in a home or outside in the open air may have few expenses. Nevertheless, Christian believers will want to give generously for several reasons.

Helping the needy

1. Read Acts 4:32-35.

- a. What motivated some of the believers to sell their possessions?

A spirit of unity and fellowship. People placed their goods at the disposal of the church to distribute them according to the needs of the members of the community.

- b. Who took responsibility for the distribution of these gifts?

The apostles.

- c. Is it necessary for Christian giving to be channelled through the leaders? Why or why not?

Not necessarily, but the elders should be able to examine the accounts (See Acts 6:1-6).

- d. What are the advantages of channeling gifts through the leaders?

To ensure that the genuinely needy receive help.

To prevent unscrupulous people from taking advantage of naive Christians.

They know what are the needs and priorities of the community and its members. When trustworthy people are involved, it encourages those who contribute.

Supporting Christian ministry.

2. Read Philippians 4:10-17.

- a. Why did the Philippian Christians send gifts to Paul?

To help Paul continue his ministry in Thessalonica.

To relieve and support him, who was in prison at the time. (v14)

- b. How did Paul see these gifts? (17-18)

As a fragrant offering and an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

A fruit that testifies to their service pleasing to God

(For himself, it was a joy and a personal relief to see that the brothers and sisters of Philippi were participating in his ministry (v10).

- c. What promise from the God did the Holy Spirit inspire Paul to give to the Philippians? (v. 19)

That God would, in turn, meet all their needs.

d. Is there an opportunity for your church to give in the same way? If so, please explain.

Student's answer

I.e. Are there known people or organizations known by the congregation who practice a ministry of evangelism or of church planting, or people who suffer in prison because of their faith?

Meeting their own needs for teaching and pastoral care

As well as caring for poor people within the fellowship, a Christian group must, of course, meet its own needs. As the group grows, they may want to set one of the members apart as a part-time or full-time worker. This person will then need financial support. The group may also decide to rent, buy, or build a building for their meetings.

3. Read 1 Cor. 9:7-18.

a. What command has the Lord given concerning those who proclaim the gospel? (v.14)

*That those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel.
(They have a right to financial support to free them up to exercise it fully.)*

b. Why did Paul not exercise his right to receive financial support due him in return for his work? (12, 15)

*In order not to put any obstacle in the way of the Corinthians accepting the gospel. I.e.:
Questioning his motivation, slander, constraints.
For his own reward—as a voluntary offering to God.*

Note to the leader: The ministry of proclaiming the gospel was no option for Paul.

4. Read Gal. 6:6-10.

a. What responsibility does the believer have towards his teacher in the Christian faith?

*To share all good things with his instructor.
(as a general rule, sharing and equality among all the members of the community)*

b. What responsibility does the believer have towards all people?

To do good.

c. What responsibility does the believer have towards his fellow believers?

An added (double) responsibility to do them good –their needs take priority.

C. A generous gift and how it was managed

Paul organised a collection among the mainly gentile churches of Greece in order to help the poor believers in Jerusalem. As well as bringing needed material help, this collection showed the unity of God's people in Christ.

The Macedonian churches had already given generously. Now Paul urges the Corinthians to complete the collection they had previously begun.

1. Read 2 Cor. 8:1-15.

- a. What did the Macedonians do first of all? (v.5)

They gave themselves, first to the Lord and then to the leaders.

- b. What were the material circumstances of the Macedonians? (v.2)

Severe trial (persecuted for their faith) and extreme poverty.

- c. What motivated the Macedonians to give so generously? (v.2)

Overflowing joy –their desire to express their love in serving the saints.

- d. What motivation did Paul want the Corinthians to have? (8-11)

To display the sincerity of their love for Christ and their fellow believers; to follow the pattern of generous giving set by Jesus himself (v9).

To fulfil the commitment they had made (v10-11).

- e. How did Paul want the Corinthians to decide how much they should give? (10-12)

-They were to give generously –without restraint.

-and 'according to their means' –without going in debt.

- f. What was the goal of the gift, both for the givers and the receivers? (13-15)

To insure equality –that no one is lacking while another has too much.

2. Read 2 Cor. 8:16-24

a. How many people did Paul send to Corinth to receive the collection?

*Three: Titus (v. 17);
'the brother who is praised by all the churches' (v. 18); 'our brother who has often
proved to us in many ways that he is zealous' (v. 22). See also 23-24.*

b. What was Paul anxious to avoid? (20-21)

*'Any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift'
(So that no one discredits or accuses anyone of trafficking the money collected for the
donation.)*

c. What does this teach us about how money given by believers should be handled?

*These gifts should always be handled in a completely open and transparent way. It is
important to do not only what is right in the eyes of God, but also in the eyes of men.
We must prevent any suspicion that money has been mishandled. Several people
should be involved and this will prevent one or two from being tempted to take
personal advantage of the funds in their care. It must be managed rigorously and
seriously: in order not to leave even an opportunity of cheating or suspicion.*

d. How can you apply this in your own situation?

*Student's answer.
I.e. Giving without restraint, without guilt;
Offering opportunities to give;
Informing people well, organizing, preparing ahead of time;
Insuring the relational aspect by accompanying the offering;
Involving several people, even if it is more expensive;
Having representatives who are trusted by all.*

3. Review this lesson: what practical implications do you find in it for yourself and for your community?

*Student's answer.
I.e. Some questions we should ask ourselves:
-Does our giving measure up with the opportunities?*

- Do we give with joy?
- Do we give with discretion and without pressure?
- Do we take responsibility towards the servants of the word?
- Do we have examples of generosity that can encourage others?

For Further Study

Tithing

Christian believers who read the OT often ask the question: 'Should we be tithing – i.e. giving a tenth of our income to God - just as the Jewish people did in the OT?' Christian leaders sometimes ask: 'Should I be encouraging the believers in my church to tithe?'

Tithing is first mentioned in the Bible in Gen. 14:17-24, long before the time of Moses. It was a practice of several of the peoples of the Ancient Near East.

4. Read Gen. 14:17-24.

a. Who was Melchizedek?

King of Salem and priest of God Most High.

b. Why did Abraham give him 'a tenth of everything'?

Because Melchizedek had blessed him in the name of God Most High. It was also an expression of gratitude to God for giving him victory over his enemies and so enabling him to rescue Lot.

In Gen. 28:20-22, Jacob promised to give a tithe to God. Then Moses established tithing as a regular practice for the people of Israel.

5. Read Leviticus 27:30-33.

a. To whom did the tithe belong?

To the Lord.

b. What was to be included in the tithe?

The tithe was taken on all the produce of the land (grain, fruit, etc.) and all the animals of the herd and flock.

6. Read Numbers 18:20-32.

- a. Why did God give the tithes to the Levites? (21-24)

In return for their work on the Tent of Meeting. The Levites had no farm land of their own.

- b. To whom did the Levites in their turn give a tithe? (25-29)

To 'Aaron' – to the priests.

- c. What does this passage teach us about the purpose of giving the tithe for God's people in the Old Testament?

The tithe was to enable the Levites and priests to carry on their ministry as 'full-time' workers for the Lord.

At the same time, the Levites and the people alike had to learn to always give their best portion to the Lord –not to attach themselves unduly to the goods God entrusts them with. (v30-32)

7. Read Deut. 14:22-29.

- a. Apart from the Levites, who else was to benefit from the tithe?

*The aliens, the fatherless and the widows.
 Those who offered it ate from it in God's presence.*

- b. What similarities do you see between the purpose of the tithe and the reasons for giving in the NT?

*Everything we give must be offered to the Lord first.
 -To care for the poor;
 -To enable some to devote themselves to full-time ministry;
 -To maintain property and things used for worship.*

The New Testament

Given the importance of the tithe in the OT, it is a surprise to come to the NT and to find that it is hardly mentioned. There are just three references in the gospels:

- Luke 18:12 - the words of the self-righteous Pharisee.
- Matt. 23:23-24 (= Luke 11:42) – Jesus' severe criticism of the Pharisees.

The only references to tithing in the letters of the apostles occur in:

- Heb. 7:1-10. But this passage, which quotes Gen. 14:17-24, is about Jesus being a priest 'like Melchizedek'. It does not deal with the subject of Christian giving.

8. Read Matt. 23:23-24.

a. Why did Jesus criticise the Pharisees?

Because they had concentrated on the details of tithing and neglected 'the more important matters of the law: justice, mercy and faithfulness.'

b. What does this passage tell us about Jesus' attitude to the practice of tithing?

It seems clear that Jesus did not give it great importance. He was certainly not interested in minute and exact details of tithing. He certainly wanted to avoid making it a proof of righteousness and an opportunity to compare ourselves to others.

Instead, we see that he commended, for example, the widow who gave 'all she had' (Luke 21:1-4). Jesus favorably receives an offering not motivated by a formal gesture which flatters man's pride, but with humility and sacrifice, as to honor the recipient of the adoration.

For discussion:

9. Why do you think tithing is so little mentioned in the NT?

Student's answer

Suggestion: Jesus challenged his disciples to leave everything and follow him. He asked for much greater sacrifices than simply tithing.

As He does with the law in general, He is seeking to replace duty with a loving response before the incredible grace of God.

10. Is it still a helpful guideline for Christian giving today?

Student's answer

Suggestion: It can be helpful. But Paul's teaching is that giving is 'according to means'. Some believers are able to give much more than a tithe. For others, it can be a struggle already to give a tithe. All believers are challenged to give generously according to what they have.

As an indicator, considering God's greatness and his promises to him who gives generously, it would be difficult to justify giving less than a tithe as believer in Christ.

11. What are the best reasons and guidelines for Christian giving?

Student's answer

Suggestion:

*to show our gratitude to God for all He has done for us through Jesus
to show compassion to the needy, especially our Christian brothers and sisters
to enable God's work, for example in evangelism or teaching, to go forward.*

Note to the leader: To give the offering with joy and generosity instead of fostering a demanding spirit displays the attitude of a mature and responsible member in the church.

12. When should we pay elders/pastors? Write down your response after having consulted the following biblical texts and others: Acts 20; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; Gal. 6:6; 1 Cor. 9:4-19.

Lesson 9: Relationships between leaders in a local church and Relationships between churches

Lesson objectives:

1. *To study NT teaching on these subjects*
2. *To apply this teaching to our own situations*

A. Relationships between leaders in a local church

If there is to be unity and harmony in a local church, there must be unity and harmony between the leaders. They must set the example. But how can this unity first be achieved and then be maintained?

1. Read Ephesians 4:1-6.

- a. Who creates unity in the body of Christ? (v.3)

The Holy Spirit

- b. How is it possible to keep this unity?

By showing humility, gentleness and patience, even in bearing with difficult brothers and sisters.

By reminding ourselves of what unites us as believers in Christ.

2. Read Philippians 2:1-11.

- a. What did Paul desire most of all for the believers at Philippi? (v.2)

That they should be 'like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose'

To be like-minded means that everyone seeks the interest of the whole group.

Note to the leader: Refer also to Phil. 4:2 where Paul encourages 2 collaborating women to lay aside a disagreement with this same expression.

- b. How could they achieve this? (3-4)

By being humble and considering others as better than themselves.

By placing others' interests above our own.

- c. Whose example should they follow? (5-11)

The example of Jesus, who humiliated himself without seeking his rights in giving himself without restraint, in obedience to His father for our interest.

3. Read John 15:1-8.

- a. What is the secret of bearing fruit in the Christian life?

Remaining (abiding) in Christ.

- b. What does it mean practically to 'abide' (remain) in Christ?

To fix our thoughts on Him; to meditate on God's word; to maintain a spiritual walk with Him; to remain open and in direct contact, to let ourselves be transformed by Him; to obey His commands.

- c. What promise concerning prayer does Jesus give to those who 'abide in him'?
(v. 7)

*They will receive everything they ask through prayer.
'Ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you.'*

4. Read John 15:9-17.

- a. How can we 'abide in Jesus' love'? (v. 10)

By obeying his commands.

- b. What is Jesus' command? (12,17)

To love one another.

- c. What are the practical implications of this teaching for a group of elders (and deacons) in a local church?

*There must be mutual submission and loving concern among the group:
-I seek the well-being of the other elders.
-I consider their thoughts/opinions to have as much value as mine (God can speak through them just as much as through me).
-I rejoice in the fact that their gifts contribute to the growth of the church as a whole.
This requires prayer, a central focus on God's word, and humility.*

B. Relationships between local churches

As we read in Eph. 4:1-6, there is a unity between all true believers in Christ wherever they are. There is 'one body and one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.'

Each local church or group of believers is the body of Christ in that particular place. If the number of believers grows there may, of course, be a number of groups in a given town. This was certainly the case in Jerusalem in the early days of the book of Acts. Nevertheless, there was a unity among them and Luke refers to 'the whole church' (5:11) or 'the church' (8:1-3) and 'the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria' (9:31).

1. Read Acts 2:42-47.

- a. What were the four activities to which the believers devoted themselves? (v. 42)

Listening to the apostles' teaching; sharing in the fellowship; the breaking of bread; the prayers.

- b. Note that "the apostles' teaching" is mentioned first. What do you think was the content of these teachings?

The life, miracles and teaching of Jesus; his death and resurrection; the meaning of all this in the light of the Old Testament; the fulfilment of OT prophecies. Salvation: repentance, faith and baptism.

Since those early days there have, as we know, been many divisions. Today we see many different Christian denominations and groups. There are the three main groupings of Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. Within them there are also divisions. For example, among Protestants we find Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Pentecostals and others. (For the reasons behind these divisions, refer to the course on Church History, EGLI 206.)

What should our attitude be to other groups who may hold different views to ours? Are some of the differences so serious that we cannot cooperate with certain groups?

2. Read John 1:15-18.

- a. What two characteristics were especially found in Jesus? (v. 17)

Grace and truth.

- b. What are the implications of these two characteristics for our attitudes towards other people and other groups?

*We must have a humble and open attitude towards other groups.
At the same time, we must not compromise on the truth.
(A need for balance and wisdom in our commitments.)*

3. Read Phil. 1:27-30.

- a. How did Paul want the believers in Philippi to conduct themselves? (v. 27)

In a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, contending as one man for before the adversary (humility and tenacity in the face of a common opposition).

- b. What did Paul want the believers to 'contend for'?

For the faith (the true message) of the gospel.

- c. What consequences might this have for the believers?

Suffering in the name of Christ.

4. Read 1 Cor. 15:1-8.

- a. Why is it so important to hold firmly to the gospel? (v. 2)

In order to be saved.

- b. What does Paul regard as being 'of the first importance'? (3-8)

That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; that he was buried; that he rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures; that he appeared to Peter, the 12 and then to others.

In other words: the historical reality of Christ's death and resurrection, in fulfilment of the OT scriptures, which also help us to understand the meaning of these events – that he died 'for our sins'.

5. Read Romans 14:1-12.

- a. What kind of difference of opinion did Paul regard as a 'disputable matter', yet secondary? (v. 1)

Different points of view about eating certain foods.

Different points of view about respecting certain days.

- b. What attitude should we have to a brother or sister who holds a different opinion to ours on a 'disputable matter' that is secondary?

We should accept him without passing judgement. (Let God be the judge.) We must not look down on him or condemn him.

- c. Looking at other Christian groups today, can you give other examples of 'disputable matters' which should not prevent us from enjoying fellowship together?

*Possible answers: the importance of speaking in tongues; infant baptism vs. adult baptism;
the choice of musical instruments in the service;
beliefs concerning eschatology (the "end times") and the modern nation of Israel;
the use of wine or of grape juice in Communion.*

Questions for discussion:

6. Christian believers have often felt the need to define carefully the doctrines which are of 'the first importance' and on which it is essential that we should agree. (See, for example, our course DOCT 201.)

- a. Make a short list of doctrines which you consider to be essential to the gospel.

Student's answer

Suggestions:

The existence of God; the deity of Christ; the incarnation; Jesus' death for our sins and his resurrection; salvation through faith in Jesus alone.

7. How much should we cooperate with Christians who say themselves to be "Christians" but hold different opinions than us on matters 'of the first importance'?

Student's answer

Suggestion:

Where the difference is on an essential matter, we need to be extremely cautious. We cannot give the impression that the doctrine in question is unimportant and can be put to one side.

To neglect responding to these doctrines could condemn members of the church to eternal condemnation. We are called to instruct those who oppose us with gentleness in order to save them from the traps of the devil and enable them to come to knowledge of the truth.

See Paul's advice in 2 Tim. 2:23-26.

8. How can we demonstrate unity between the churches of a same region?

I.e. Evangelism campaigns; humanitarian aid to those in need; concerts; biblical training or other; children's clubs and boy scouts; common prayers; pastoral exchanges; gifts; professional help and counsel; donations and loans; providing refuge; loan of premises; regular encounters between the leaders (regional pastorate).

For Further Study

The “Apostles’ Creed” is a confession of faith that is known to be orthodox – it agrees with biblical teaching. It is from the early centuries of the church and is recited in many churches today.

The Apostles’ Creed

*I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
The Creator of heaven and earth,
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:*

*Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit,
Born of the Virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, died, and was buried.*

He descended into hell.

The third day He arose again from the dead.

*He ascended into heaven
And sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,
From there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic (universal) church,
The communion of saints,
The forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body,
And the life everlasting.*

Question for discussion:

Does agreement on this creed still provide an adequate basis for working together with other Christian groups today?

Lesson 10: Revision and Exam

Lesson objectives:

1. *To revise the course*
2. *To see what is most helpful and relevant to our own situations*
3. *To work out practically how to apply the Bible's teaching on these matters.*

Instructions:

1. Review the course: look through the contents page.
2. Now choose three areas which you feel are especially significant to you.
3. Summarise in one or two paragraphs the biblical teaching on each of these areas.
4. Describe how the biblical teaching on each area can be applied to your local situation.

Endnotes

i

ii Two different Greek words are used in the New Testament to describe the senior leaders of the church: *presbuteros* (elder) and *episkopos* (responsible or bishop). Both words refer to the same person or position within the church.

Presbuteros is the word that was chosen to refer to the Jewish elders by those who translated the Old testament in Greek (250 B.C.). This word is used in the New Testament to designate the Jewish elders as well as the elders of the Christian Church.

Episkopos has Greek roots and means a person who is in a position of authority and responsibility.

There is, therefore, no biblical basis for arguing that there were two different kinds of elder in the NT, or a system where one kind of elder was superior to the others. For example, some have suggested that there might have been a 'senior elder' overseeing several congregations and 'ordinary elders' overseeing one congregation. Although this arrangement is not seen in the book of Acts, this was, in fact, the pattern of church leadership that developed in the church during the second century.

iii See lesson 3 (section D, p.15-16) of the course "Church life" CHUR 203 of Progressing Together.

iv This definition was taken from a tract called "Gossip!" by Melody Green, from Last days ministries, Oceanside, CA, USA.