

Ministry in the Marketplace Bible Study Leader's Guide

The purpose of this guide is to review with you some obvious, self-evident observations to assist you as you seek to help others as they work through the Bible study books in the MIM series. Let's look at few of these important principles:

Never create the impression that people are doing God a favor by spending time with Him in the Word and prayer. God does His people a favor in having a relationship with them, not vice versa.

On your first study with a man I tell him there are just two rules: One, he can quit anytime he wants. Second, you can quit anytime you want.

Remind him that all questions are valid; the only invalid question is the unasked question. Let him know that if you do not have the answer, you will work with him in obtaining the answer. (Include a resource he can use to find answers to such questions.)

Helping people discover truth for themselves is better than giving them a lecture. Lead by asking questions whenever possible, helping the person discover for himself what the passage says. This does not mean that you never give an answer, but it does mean that you are seeking to help the other person learn how to study the Bible on his own.

This means you have a three fold task as you meet man-to-man and in small groups:

- 1 – Help them absorb and apply the biblical truths contained in the studies.
- 2 – Help them learn how to do Bible study on their own; he needs to learn to feed himself.
- 3 – Going through this study is also preparation for them to take others through the study.

When you ask a question, give ample time for the person to answer. Do not be concerned if you experience a period of silence.

Remember, at no time is this person “your disciple.” God brings people into your life so that you can invest in them, and God does this as a favor to you. When you give your life in exchange for others, you are investing in the eternal rather than the temporal, and in the process fulfilling your purpose for being here on earth.

John 3:22-36 records the response of the followers of John the Baptist when some of “his men” began to follow Jesus. John patiently explained to them that this was his mission. John had no desire to accrue to himself the loyalty of others. As a result of his investing in people he wanted them to fall in love with Jesus. As John said, “He (Jesus) must increase; I (John) must decrease” (verse 30).

The ministry is like a train in that people are constantly getting on and getting off. Rarely does God bring into your life people who “stays on the train.” If people failed to get off, there would be no room for new people getting on. The Holy Spirit puts them into your life so that you may invest in them for a period of time, after which He moves them on to other things. As John the Baptist said, your goal is for these people to consider you less and less important, and Jesus more and more important.

The Bible is your authority. Never manipulate or modify the clear teaching of Scripture in an endeavor to make it easier for the one you are seeking to influence. The Bible is Truth, and to

suggest that it does not mean what it says destroys what you are seeking to accomplish. Bibles in paraphrase are enjoyable for devotional reading, but are inadequate for serious Bible study. Use only an authorized translation of the Bible, such as NASB, RSV, KJV, NKJV, or NEB. When you use modern translations you create the impression that it is permissible to tamper with what God says in order to make it more palatable for today's culture.

Guide for Book One

This study is designed to get people started in Bible study, introduce them to the Lover of their souls, and discover whether or not they are actually converted. Thus, it may be used as an evangelistic tool as well as a beginning with Christ Bible study. It is best to assume that those you are seeking to influence know Christ as their Savior, and allow them to discover for themselves that they are not, if this is the case. At the end of this first book you will have opportunity to specifically ask where he is in his spiritual journey.

Chapter One

Your objective is to introduce them to the authority and reliability of the Word of God. Can a person know the Creator of the universe? If so, how and where does He reveal Himself, and what does He expect from His creation? For the Christian, the Bible is the **only** reliable source available for knowing God. If it is not the infallible, inspired Word of God, then man rather than God defines who God is and what He wants.

For the Bible to be God's Word, the following miracles must be true:

- 1) – The Creator must want a relationship with His imperfect, sinful creatures.
- 2) – He had to communicate with His creatures in a way that they could comprehend the seemingly incomprehensible.
- 3) – Those to whom He revealed Himself had to be able to communicate to others the actual Words of God, with all of the limitations of intellect, language, etc., and it still remain God's infallible Word.
- 4) – This Revelation given by God had to be faithfully transmitted through the centuries, passing through various languages so accurately that what you have in your Bible is the actual Word of God.

If any one of these miracles did not happen, the Bible is not the Word of God.

The purpose of Bible study is not primarily the imparting of knowledge, but rather the transformation of the life. Solomon says in Proverbs **23:7**: "For as he thinketh within himself, so is he..." God says that the essence of a person is identified by his thoughts. For this reason, we spend time in Scripture so that we can train our minds to think as God thinks. All permanent change in an individual takes place by the alteration of how he thinks. (Read The Filter System in the Ministry in the Marketplace series.)

By way of example, Jesus words in John **7:17** are the basis of the scientific method. As you will note in chapter eight, commitment comes before knowing. The scientist invests millions of dollars and thousands of man-hours on a theory prior to knowing if his theory is correct. So too, God says, if you wish to know if what Jesus says is correct, you must do what He asks you to do.

Throughout this study, ask questions about the verses based on how the person answers the questions in his Bible study.

Chapter Two

Increasingly, the body of Christ has accommodated itself with politically correct thinking, accepting culture's insistence on tolerance and inclusivity. Surveys show that a large percent of those calling themselves Christians believe there are many ways to God, and a good moral life is adequate to guarantee eternal salvation.

In chapters two and three the disciple needs to understand what the Bible teaches regarding the Person and work of Christ. Ask in a variety of ways the question, "If people are correct who say that there are many ways to God, then what was the purpose of the life of Christ, and why was it necessary that He die on the cross?"

Discuss John 1:1 and 14, asking who is the Word in each of these verses.

Combining John 1:2 and 14:6 ask, "What is necessary for a person to come to God? How much of what Jesus says do you have to believe in order for Him to accept you?"

Discuss his answer to the last question in chapter two.

Chapter Three

This chapter probes the purpose behind God offering His Son as a sacrifice.

In the OT all sacrifices were offered by man for man. Man sinned; man had to have his sins covered in order to relate to God; man offered a sacrifice for his sins. Although his sins were covered, justice was not satisfied, in that the sinner did not pay for his sin. The OT word for covering is "atonement."

In the NT, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was offered by God for God. As Paul notes in Romans 3, this concept is the heart of the gospel message; God paid the penalty for man's sin, resulting in the forgiveness of the sinner while at the same time satisfying the justice of God. In the NT the word for substitute is "propitiation."

When explaining this concept to a young man, he responded, "Oh, you mean that Christ took the rap for me!" This is exactly what Christ does for the sinner. God will not sacrifice His justice in order to justify the sinner, and so in His infinite grace He paid the penalty for our sins with His own life.

Go over the timeline at the end of the chapter and ensure that the disciple understands that the cross, standing in the center of history, pays for the sins committed in the past as well as the future.

Chapter Four

One of the most vexing problems you face in your ministry is the pernicious heresy that a person can relate to God on his terms. More and more people perceive that a relationship with Christ frees them to do whatever they want with their lives. Because such thinking is contrary to

everything the Bible teaches, you will find this issue resurfacing throughout the MIM Bible studies.

Eternal life is a free gift found only in Jesus Christ. Paul teaches in 1Corinthians 6:20: “You were bought with a price.” Christ purchased you and the price was His own life. You now belong to Him; the Bible says the redeemed are His slaves. For a person to say that Christ saved them and then seek to live life as he wishes, is a contradiction of terms, as seen in 2Corinthians 5:15: “...and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again.”

Although the Bible prohibits judging the motives of others, it appears as though people intentionally confuse the reason people are saved (which is the propitious death of Christ) with evidence that they are saved (which is an eager willingness to be the slave of Christ). They reason that to insist that Christ’s followers are His slaves is the same as earning salvation. Surrender to the will of God is not a requirement for salvation, but it is the result of Christ’s salvation.

People cannot leverage God with His promises. Although it is true that God did obligate Himself to Abraham and others in the Bible, simply because He talked directly with them, it does not follow that those professing faith in Christ can obligate Him with His general promises. The general promises may give assurance of salvation, but they can never guarantee salvation.

Ask, “Do you think that everyone who claims to have received Christ as their Savior will automatically go to heaven?” If there is any ambiguity in their answer, go over Matthew 7:21-23 with them, where Jesus discusses many calling Him “Lord.”

The last question in the study is of critical importance. Spend adequate time going over his answer. If there is any ambiguity or uncertainty, go over with him the booklet, “Do You Know The Steps To Peace With God?”

Book Two Bible Study Leader's Guide

Chapter One – Assurance, Certainty, and the Purpose of God's Promises

Assurance is the product of a healthy relationship. If a friend said, "I have no assurance that my wife loves me," you would conclude that there is something wrong with their relationship. On the other hand, assurance invites presumption. People are tempted to be more abusive of those with whom they are secure/assured in their relationships. For example, men often speak to their families in ways they would not speak to strangers or their employers.

God desires that His children be secure in His love for them, and gives promises to assure them of this fact. The value of assurance, however, is limited. It can give peace of mind and a sense of wellbeing, but often people find that their reasons for being assured are threatened. You fly on an airline assured that the plane will safely bring you to your destination, but en route the engine catches fire and you lose your assurance.

Although salvation is a free gift of God's grace, assurance of salvation is not. God's promise of eternal life is granted only to those who love Christ and obey Him. Carefully review this fact as Jesus calls it to your attention in passages such as John **14:21** and **15:10**.

Certainty is possible only after the fact; assurance has value before the fact. If a married man tells his wife that they are married, she will be unsure why he said it; she knows they are married and has the marriage document to prove it. If, however, he tells her that he loves her, she will say, "Tell me again." Women need to be assured that their husbands love them simply because some women find that such was not the case.

The English language uses the word "know" in at least four different ways:

- 1) – **Information**: "Do you know the country in which you were born?"
- 2) – **Intimacy**: "Adam knew Eve and she had a child."
- 3) – **Assurance**: "I know that when the doctor operates on me I will get well."
- 4) – **Certainty**: "You know that you are reading this."

Help the student understand these various uses of "know" as well as the importance of distinguishing between them.

No one can be certain that when they die they will go to heaven any more than they can prove there is a God and the Bible is the Word of God. God requires that people walk by faith, and faith is commitment before knowing. In this we see the value of assurance. People cannot be certain that God loves them, but they can be assured that He does.

The objective of this study is to help understand the relationship between assurance, certainty and God's promises.

Chapter Two: Time With God in Prayer

Prayer is to the Christian's life what breathing is to living. Thus, Paul admonishes us to do it unceasingly. The challenge is to develop the habit of taking all of life's input and turning it vertically in prayer. To the degree that the man of God does this, he diminishes his propensity to sin.

Jesus' promise of eternal gain for prayer, irrespective of the perceived outcome, is quite remarkable. Explore why this is. Although a dogmatic answer is impossible, reflecting on it calls attention to the value God places on prayer.

Carefully go over the various components of prayer. Why is each important? Help the disciple reflect on this.

Discuss the various implications of thanksgiving. How do words like "indifference," "disappointment," "entitlement," and "contentment" relate to a grateful heart? How does gratitude influence generosity?

Many Christians make their requests known to God and then sulk when God seemingly does not answer them. Explore whether a person would really like to control his own life and the implications if he was in control.

Go over James 5:17-18 and the fact that God does respond to prayer – using the "Ten Most Wanted" card as an illustration. You may want to go over 2Peter 3:9 with him.

Chapter Three – Time with God in His Word

In Book One, Chapter One you explored the Word of God and its foundation for salvation and the truth of the gospel. In this chapter you explore the importance of spending time in the Bible. Primarily, through time in the Word a person gets to know God and understand His ways, learn what it means to live a life pleasing to Him, and become equipped to share God with others.

The "hand illustration" teaches the various ways to get to know God through Scripture. Go over each "finger" and discuss their advantages and limitations, emphasizing the importance of meditation. The velocity of life is such that few men take time to think. Meditation has become a lost art. The absence of meditation greatly diminishes the value of each of the other "fingers."

Application is the heart of time in the Word. The Bible defines holiness as obedience. Obedient people are holy, and holy people are obedient. Discuss the application of each of the "five fingers." Review Book One, Chapter One and the relationship between transformation and thinking.

Chapter Four – The Purpose of Life

God gave Solomon the three things people covet most: wealth, power, and intellect. With these he ran an experiment to see if they could bring purpose to life, and concluded that they could not. Life is short and void of purpose. Help the student to think through the meaning of Ecclesiastes

3:11: God is in complete control of both His creation and history so that there are no accidents. He places in man a sense of eternity. This is why man is incurably religious. But God also failed to reveal to man why he is here on earth or what will happen to him when he dies.

For this reason, the first objective of any religion is defining purpose, not revealing salvation. A person cannot prepare for eternity unless God reveals Himself to that person and tells him what he ought to do with his life. As already noted, Christianity is a religion of revelation. God has revealed Himself in His written Word, the Bible, and in the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.

The Bible teaches that the gospel is part hope and part obligation. Christ gives His people hope in that He assures them that when they die they will join Him in heaven. Christ also gives commands and insists that an expression of people's love for Him is obedience.

You obey God by exchanging your life for the eternal rather than the temporal. You invest in the eternal by mastering the written Word of God, and by investing in people. An eternal investment in others involves The Great Commission: Evangelism and Edification.

Throughout this study, help the disciple to stay focused on this truth. Ask questions about the answers he writes out in his study, forcing him to consider his purpose.

Chapter Five – Perpetual Opposition

There are a number of reasons why people fail to maintain their focus on the eternal. One of them is perpetual opposition. Twice, in Galatians 6:9 and 2Thessalonians 3:13, Paul says, “Be not weary in well doing.” Perpetual opposition, when you seek to do well, is both discouraging and wearisome. Reason suggests that if God wants a person to succeed in his quest for holiness, He would not perpetually oppose him. The purpose of this chapter is to explore why the opposite is the case.

As noted in Genesis, God introduced opposition as an antidote to man's lust for autonomy. The desire for autonomy is not sin; it is what motivated Adam and Eve to sin. You cannot have a relationship with another without a will, and the existence of a will guarantees disagreement. (If you are in perpetual agreement with another, you are nothing more than a robot.) The desire for autonomy means that you rather than God should determine what is in your best interest.

When things go well people begin to think in terms of self-fulfillment, self-realization, self-actualization – anything but self-sacrifice. When the world of such people falls apart, they are preoccupied with survival. Christianity is a religion of rescue. It is designed for the desperate. As Jesus said, “...They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mark 2:17). Perpetual opposition reminds people of their need.

In Romans 5:1-11 Paul asks and answers the question, “Why does God treat His friends like they are His enemies?” Because of Christ the believer has “peace with God.” This being the case, why does He bring tribulation into the lives of those He loves? He gives the answer in vv. 3-4: tribulation is designed to purify our hope. When things go well, people tend to embrace a temporal hope; when life is filled with tribulation and suffering, people tend to long for heaven. Make sure that the people you help understand God's rationale in inflicting His people.

Many Christians refuse to “blame” God for natural disasters occurring in the world. They reason that either God allowed it but did not cause it, or that such events are the work of Satan. Without intending to do so, they challenge both His control over His creation and His goodness in inflicting pain on people. This, of course, was the issue with which Job wrestled.

Carefully go over the verses in which God says that He does these things, ensuring as best as possible that people you are helping see this. A failure to grasp this important truth guarantees an inadequate relationship with God.

Chapter Six – The Importance of Obedience

The Emerging Church is a movement that has captured the imagination of evangelical Christianity. Because it is a movement and not an institution or creed, each adherent accepts and rejects those aspects with which they agree. In essence the Emerging Church argues that God’s revelation is dynamic, not static. Just as how God related to His people in the OT (e.g., sacrifices, dietary laws, etc.) differs from how He related to them in the NT, so also how God relates to His people today differs from how He related to them in the NT. In the NT we find dogmatic assertions and prohibitions, such as Jesus is the only way a person can go to heaven, and homosexuality is wrong. Today God is saying to His church that He wants tolerance and inclusiveness, majoring on common concerns such as poverty, injustice, and care of the environment.

In varying degrees, this worldview has infiltrated virtually every segment of Christianity. In the minds of many, an emphasis on obedience is legalism, resulting in the ignoring of NT commands. For example, probably no set of NT commandments is more thoroughly neglected in the church than those found in the Pastoral Epistles.

Commandments are, by their nature, restrictive. They establish parameters for behavior. For this reason, people tend to resist them. God’s commandments, however, are not punitive, but protective; they are expressions of His grace to help avoid harm. They only appear restrictive when people cannot see their benefit.

Obviously, if the NT dogma and commandments are no longer valid, then neither are the NT promises. If this is the case, a person is saved by his own encounter with the god of his imagination, and people forfeit all biblical hope of salvation.

The premise of these Bible studies is Scripture is the only reliable source of God’s revelation, and the words of Scripture are divinely inspired and infallible. As noted at the beginning of this study, “Obedience cannot save you, but you cannot be saved without obedience.” This is the clear teaching of the whole of the Bible.

It is essential that Christ’s followers understand the distinction between “The Reason People are Saved,” “The Condition they Need to Meet to be Saved,” and “The Evidences/Indications that they are Saved.” Think carefully on this distinction yourself, and then patiently help others understand it.

Historically the church has divided between those who believe “the Christian is obligated to obey all OT commands unless they are **repealed** in the NT,” and those who teach that “the Christian is not obligated to keep any OT commands unless they are **repeated** in the NT.” Without going

into the reasons for this difference of opinion, you are best served teaching the latter, especially in light of passages such as Romans 6:14.

Explore with those you are helping the reasons people do not believe. Believing is an act of the will; people believe what they want to believe. Reason helps make the decision, but the will makes the decision; it is the supreme court in a person's life. Let these would-be disciples articulate their answers to the questions following the reasons people do not believe.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, we find the only recorded instance of Jesus meeting God's will and not wanting to do it. Hebrews 5:8 says this is when Jesus "learned obedience." For any relationship to be authentic, the will has to be tested.

If the will determines what a person believes, why do people refuse to believe that every Word in the Bible is inspired and infallible? This question addresses the heart of the issue regarding submission.

Finally, work through the difference between general and specific commands. For example, some may argue that the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 is a specific command given only to the Jesus' disciples. The context, however, clearly suggests otherwise, for Jesus said, "...teaching them to observe all that I commanded you." Believer's today are obligated to obey those commands given to His disciples.

Chapter Seven – Grace, Forgiveness, and Eternal Consequences

Although God is not obligated to reward faithfulness, He does so as an expression of His love and grace. He motivates us with His warnings of what will happen if we disobey, but fear is not a pleasant motivator. Thus, He also motivates us by His promise of reward if we do obey Him.

This means that eternity will differ for each individual. This chapter explores this truth as it applies to heaven, but it is equally true for hell. Jesus said, "But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee" (Matthew 11:24). Obviously, hell will not be the same for everyone.

All people have in common that God has implanted in them a moral gyroscope identifying right and wrong. People may differ regarding what constitutes right and wrong behavior, but their sense of justice says that the Law of the Harvest should apply. When people become Christians they somehow think that God will not apply His standard of Justice to them because of Christ's propitious death. Nothing could be further from the truth. For this reason, it is important to spend time distinguishing between what God promises in forgiving the sinner, and His Law of the Harvest.

Because people tend to think that the motivation for eternal gain is "selfishness," they need help in distinguishing between "selfish" and "self-interest." Selfishness can only exist in an environment of limited resources. For example if we are in the desert, you are thirsty, and I have the only water, if I do not share it I am selfish. If we are in the midst of a rain-storm and I take a long drink of water, this is not selfish, it is self-interest. Because the resources of heaven are infinite, the motivation for eternal gain is not selfish; it is self-interest.

Not only does God expect his followers to be motivated by gain, He never asks them to do anything sacrificially without the promise of gain. In essence He says, “You cannot out-give God. He is a debtor to no man.” Carefully walk through these passages with others so that they can clearly see cost/results ratio of a life of obedience.

Book Three

Living the Christian Life

Chapter One – Knowing the Will of God

Why do people want to know the will of God? The obvious answer is, so that they can do His will. Some, however, view the will of God like they view obtaining counsel from others. They wish to hear what others say, but reserve the right to make their own decision. God reveals His will so that people can obey Him. To hear Him speak and then decide not to do what He says angers Him.

Jeremiah **38:14-16** records an encounter between the prophet Jeremiah and king Zedekiah of Judah. The king sought a Word from God and Jeremiah said to him, “...if I give you advice, you won’t listen to me.” People want to know what God thinks, while at the same time having no intention of doing what He says.

Begin this study by asking this question: “Why do you wish to know God’s will? What do you intend to do with it once you have it? Can God sense in you an eager desire to do His will?” In this we see that the will of God is closely related to obedience.

The two broad areas pertaining to the will of God are the objective and subjective decisions that need to be made. In the objective arena you find what God says He wants; He takes the initiative in telling you. In the subjective arena you are unsure regarding what he wants and you come to Him for help.

If a person refuses to do what God says, why would He assist in the subjective areas? Such a person does not wish God to make the decision. He merely wants to hear what God thinks so that he can decide.

One way you can determine if you truly want His will, irrespective of what it is, is by taking the decision out of your hands. If you do this, you do not eliminate the risk, but you do eliminate willfulness. Nothing in Scripture suggests that you should do this, but ample Scripture says that you may do it if you wish.

God placed in the breastplate of the High Priest the Urim and Thummim – two stones used to determine the will of God. On occasion people in both the OT and NT cast lots for the same purpose. Such examples affirm you if you desire to do this, but they do not obligate you.

In this study emphasize the need to purpose to do the will of God before asking what His will is – by living a life constantly submitted to what He has already said is His will.

Chapter Two – Walking by Faith

Biblically, two thoughts are closely related: Dependence and Control. When people are out of control they are dependent. When the anesthesiologist puts a person to sleep in preparation for open-heart surgery, that person is no longer in control and is dependent upon the surgeon and his team. When a person parachutes out of an airplane he is no longer in control, and is dependent upon the parachute to keep him from getting killed. Such illustrations are legion.

Faith is commitment before knowing. The object of faith determines what you call it. If the object of faith is the stock market, you call it business; if poker, you call it gambling; if the doctor, you call it medicine; etc. The object of faith also determines its validity. In the illustration in the Bible study, the ice, not the amount of faith of the person, determines whether or not crossing on the ice was a valid risk.

Genesis 3 records the introduction of sin into the world. Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because they, rather than God or anyone else, wanted to decide what was good and what was evil in their eyes. They did not want to be dependent upon God to decide for them; they wanted to be in control.

Man is never more insecure than when he is aware he is out of control. However, it matters not the degree that a person is in control, he always wants more. Ultimately, man will never be satisfied, no matter how much control he has, until he is able to replace God. Whatever else happens in the universe, God will never delegate control to someone else. Creating and control are the essence of being God. Man will never be in control and he will always remain dependent.

Understanding man's nature, God will never allow a person to know or control the future. He must walk by faith. Hebrews 11:1 teaches that faith is always demonstrated in the future and the invisible. Without one or both of these, it cannot be called faith.

Biblical faith is always active, never passive. A person believing that the sun is hot, the moon is cold, and that Germany is a country, illustrates passive faith. It is passive because such belief does not require taking a risk. Active faith, however, involves taking risks in the direction of doing God's will, especially when the person does not want to do it. Without active faith a person cannot please God. God wants His followers to walk by faith – to actively demonstrate their looking to Him to control their lives, in a spirit of complete dependence.

The objective of this study is helping people grasp the importance that God places on walking by faith.

Chapter Three – Faith, Hope, Love, and Fear

Many biblical concepts are interrelated, as illustrated in Chapter Two with “control,” “dependence” and “faith.” So too the words of this chapter are closely related. All four words are frequently discussed throughout the Bible, but most Christians place greater emphasis on faith, hope, and love, than fear. This is probably due to the first three being viewed positively, while fear is perceived negatively – no one enjoys fearing.

If “faith” is commitment before knowing, “hope” is the object of commitment. People take risks in the direction of their hope. Sick people take risks prescribed by doctors because they hope to feel better. Hope is future gain. People always take their risks (walk by faith) in the direction of what they perceive to be of profit to them.

If a person is asked, “Do you think that you will die of cancer?” they answer, “I hope not.” This means that they consider it of value not to die of cancer, and they cannot be certain they won’t die of cancer. Thus, we see how all this is related to love. People do not want to die of cancer because they love their lives and they love the absence of pain. They hope they won’t get cancer because they fear cancer.

Fear differs from respect in that the person defines what respect looks like, while something outside the person defines fear. For example, when the Bible commands that you respect your parents, you decide what that looks like. When the young Marine recruit fears his drill instructor, the instructor defines what the fear looks like.

Because there can be no authority without fear, God threatens those contemplating disobedience, as surely as the police threaten those contemplating robbing a bank. The absence of hope and love produces indifference and mitigates fear.

The objective of Bible study is learning to think as God thinks in hopes of living a life pleasing to Him. Biblical thinking requires understanding these concepts and applying them to all of life.

Chapter Four – What is the Ministry and Whose Job is it?

As the Christian church in the West drifts further and further from biblical norms it redefines ministry in terms of the temporal rather than the eternal. People are taught that evangelism is chauvinism. There are many ways to God and Christianity is merely one of them. Caring for the earth, alleviating poverty, promoting world peace – these are currently how ministry is defined.

In this drift the laity plays an important part. They are responsible for seeing that the ministry agenda is fulfilled. They are recruited to build houses for the poor, take short-term missionary trips to other countries to help people in their poverty, and generously give of their assets for such causes.

Returning to the Bible for a proper understanding of the ministry makes the follower of Christ appear radical and out-of-step with other Christians. For this reason it is paramount that men of God clearly understand His purpose for them in this life and the role they play as they seek to take Jesus to work with them.

The cause of Christ has historically understood the strategic role that alleviating the physical needs of others plays in reaching people for Christ. Thus, missions have included hospitals, care of the aged, education, and a host of other such endeavors in the ministry. However, they understood it as a means to the end of the Great Commission, not as a replacement for it. Today, countries like India say, “We want Christian missionaries to come to our country and help alleviate the needs of our people. But do not come preaching Christ and trying to evangelize. We are happy with the gods we worship.”

God does not need people. He called them to participate with Him in what He is doing in the world. No one will go to hell because another person failed to share the gospel with him. Clearly, the God of Scripture did not delegate the eternal destiny of people to other people.

For this reason it is imperative that His disciples understand that God designed the ministry as a favor for the saved, not the lost. How does a person best prepare for an eternity with Him? By willingly submitting himself to Him as His slave and living a life of obedience to His will. Part of His will is that His people give their lives in exchange for others.

The world says that when I serve you, I do you a favor. God says that when you allow me to serve you, you do me a favor. For this reason Paul said he was in debt to the Roman church for allowing him to minister to them.

Chapter Five – Stewardship

Another misconception permeating the Body of Christ is stewardship. It is often taught as a means of raising support for the work of Christ. This is not suggesting that the work of Christ should be neglected, but rather that stewardship does not deal with that which belongs to the individual, but rather with what belongs to the Lord of that individual.

As the definition of stewardship implies, and as Scripture uses this term, it has to do with the care of that which belongs to another. For example, in Genesis 15 Eliezer is described as the steward of Abraham. When Paul says, “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1Corinthians 4:1-2), he is talking about his care of that which belongs to Christ.

In the OT God considered Israel as His slaves and all they had belonged to Him. The land was portioned to the people, but it could not be bought and sold in that it belonged to God. Under that economy God told His people to give 10% of their income to Him each year. This, however, is an OT Law; because God has no institutional commitment in the NT, He does not require His followers to support any institution. (Again, this does not mean that you should not, but rather that He records no command that you must.)

Like so much in the Christian life, stewardship must be understood in light of God’s reason for His followers living their lives on earth. Why does He not simply take people to heaven when He saves them? This life is the seedtime of eternity and how we sow we will reap on the other side of the grave. Stewardship must be understood from this perspective.

The objective of this study is to help others understand biblical stewardship and that God does not take kindly to His people misusing the assets He entrusted to them. They cannot delegate the decision of what to do with them to others. Rather, in a spirit of brokenness and perpetual dependence they must look to Him on a day-by-day, moment-by-moment basis for guidance on what He wants done with them.

Chapter Six – The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

Jesus talks about the Holy Spirit in the gospel of John more than in the other three gospels. Referring to the Spirit Jesus said, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the

truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” (John 16:13-14). Note, Jesus teaches that the Holy Spirit does not call attention to Himself, but glorifies Christ.

Scripture also teaches that the Holy Spirit converts the unsaved in a work the theologian calls regeneration (John 3:3-8), teaches and assists in the sanctification process (John 16:13; Romans 8:26-27), and assures believers that they are secure in Christ (Romans 8:16-17). Because He does all these things without calling attention to Himself, those beginning with Christ can easily become confused regarding the role He plays in their lives.

The Holy Spirit is a Person, not a quantity. Either a person has the Holy Spirit, or he does not have Him in his life. Using the illustration of a jar of peanut butter having no room for water, the believer’s life is like that jar. His task is to empty his life more and more (of the peanut butter) in order to make room for more and more of the (pure water of the) Spirit’s control of his life. The question is not, “How much of the Holy Spirit do you have?” but rather, “How much of you does the Holy Spirit have?”

Without delving deeply into esoteric doctrine, this chapter seeks to introduce people to Him and His work.

Chapter Seven – Telling Others Your Story

Christianity is a religion of mission. Involvement in the Great Commission entails telling others the Object of your faith. An important part has to do with what God has done in your life.

Personal experience is a powerful argument. In John 9 Jesus heals a man who had been blind from birth. The religious community, skeptical of the claims of Christ, disputed with the blind man regarding what Jesus had done. In essence they said, “Jesus is a sinner; give God credit and forget Jesus.” The blind man’s answer is classic: “Whether Jesus is a sinner or not, I cannot tell. All I know is, once I was blind, and now I can see!” Jesus’ followers are commissioned with the task to telling others their story of how they were once “blind,” but now see.

Paul’s testimony in Acts 26:1-26 consists of three basic parts: What he was like prior to meeting Christ, his encounter with Christ, and the result of his conversion to Christ. When helping others articulate their story of coming to Christ, encourage them to keep it short. A three-minute testimony is long enough. Most people would rather talk than listen. In evangelism ask questions drawing people out rather than lecturing to them. Your personal testimony is important, but most people do not want a detailed description of your life story.

Once the person you are helping has written out his testimony, let him give it to you so you can give him further guidance on how to make his story more effective. Remember to mix any corrections with positive encouragement.