

## **Living in the Kingdom**

Matthew 22:37, 39, 40 states:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind...and You shall love your neighbor as yourself'. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

This booklet is designed for new believers and others who may not be familiar with Jesus' commands regarding our responsibilities to others in His Kingdom.

The studies are arranged in an easy-to-follow order and are designed to last approximately six weeks. It is impossible, in such a short time, to cover all the truths necessary to sustain a vital walk with the Lord in the fellowship of His church. However, it is hoped that these two booklets will form a sort of "spiritual boot camp" from which a disciple can build. We trust that additional follow up will be provided by those in the body who are more mature and can help these new ones overcome the barriers to love.

The studies can be used in several ways:

1. We recommended that you use the questions in this booklet as a guide to discuss the recommended passages. You should prepare by praying that the Lord would speak to the new believer through His word. Continue in prayer during the discussion time. Using this method, the new believer needs no preparation, although you might ask him to read the passage in preparation. Remember: The questions in the booklet are to be used to start discussion rather than be seen as a rigid study to which you should adhere. Flexibility is encouraged.
2. A second way this can be used is for you to give the booklet to the new believer. He/she is asked answer the questions in preparation for the time when you two will get together to study the relevant portion. Once again when you get together be flexible and be willing to dig. This approach may be preferred with an older believer.
3. The least preferred way is for you to give the new believer the booklet to work through on his own with no help or follow up.

We hope that this booklet will be helpful to those desiring to obey our Lord's command to "make disciples of the nations".

### **Study #1: Meaning and Cost of Discipleship**

1. Read Matthew 28:19, 20. Jesus' disciples are commanded to make disciples of all the nations. What are they instructed to do with these disciples?
2. Read the following passages and note what Jesus calls His disciples to do.
  - a. Matthew 11:28-30
  - b. Mark 2:14
  - c. Luke 17:7-10
  - d. John 17:20-24

3. Read Luke 6:40. What is the result of discipleship?
4. Read Matthew 16:24-26. What is the cost of discipleship?
5. Have you counted the cost of entering the Kingdom of God? Of course the benefits far outweigh the cost. (Cf. Matthew 13:44) What might answering the call of God to His Kingdom cost you?

## **Study #2: Church Life, Ministry**

The early believers understood that Jesus had called them out to be a unique people for His name (1 Peter 2:9,10). This unique people were called his church (Ephesians 1:22) and they met regularly in local assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:20, Hebrews 10:25)

### **I. Read Acts 2:42-47.**

1. What are the 4 key activities in which these early believers engaged (v. 42)?
2. Fellowship was more than "going to church". The root meaning of the word comes from a word meaning "to share". What are some of the ways early Christians shared with (served) each other in the church? (Those who served are called ministers, what they were doing are called ministries).
3. Has God called you to be a minister? (See Ephesians 4:12, 16)
4. What are some ways you can help meet the needs of the body? (See Romans 12:3-13)
5. In which of these areas might you have a desire to share?
  - A. Do you need further equipping in order to be able to serve?
  - B. How can you get this?

### **II. Prayer: Everyone should be involved in the ministry of prayer in serving others. Read John 14:12-14; 16:23-27.**

1. What is prayer?
  - A. What are some reasons why we should pray?
  - B. Are there any restrictions on God's promise to answer our prayers? See James 4:1-4. What are they?
2. Jesus prayed privately as well as with others (corporately).

- A. What are some benefits of corporate prayer?
  - B. What are some benefits of private prayer?
3. Some people find it helpful to actually construct a prayer list to remind them of prayer needs. If you desire to do this you can do it one of two ways:
- A. Use the above list to pray for yourself and others allowing the Holy Spirit to focus your prayers on those for whom He wishes you to pray.
  - B. Make a list of people who need your prayers and list SPECIFIC needs for which you can pray for each one. Keep the list of above needs in mind.

### **Study #3: Forgiveness**

The church is populated with people who sin. Normally when someone sins against us they hurt us. We often react in one of two ways: we either "blow up" or "clam up". Neither of these responses is biblically appropriate. If we are going to live in harmony with the others in God's Kingdom we need to learn how to forgive.

#### **I. Read Ephesians 4:26-32.**

1. Is rage sinful? In Ephesians 4:31, which sinful responses listed could be considered as "Blowing Up"?
2. Which of these responses would be "Clamming Up"?
3. What is the proper response to being hurt?
4. How long do we have to get rid of our anger?

#### **II. Ephesians 4:32. Sometimes when we are sinned against we find it very difficult to forgive. Read Matthew 18:15-34.**

1. When we see someone sin what should we do about it? (See also Matthew 7:1-5) Why?
2. Suppose they don't listen? What should we do then?
3. Who should the confrontation benefit?
4. What should our attitude be?
5. What does it mean to forgive? See verses 27 and 30.
6. Why should we forgive?
7. Should we forgive even if the offender refuses to repent?

8. What are the consequences of not forgiving? (See also Mt. 6:12-15)

(See appendix on the Covenant of Forgiveness)

#### **Study #4: Giving**

I. In Acts 2:42-47 we see that the early church was a giving church. Read Luke 21:1-4. Notice that giving is a form of worship to God. All should be involved in giving.

1. Why was this widow commended by Jesus?
2. How did this widow give to God?
3. How can you give to God?
4. Do you see giving as an act of worship? Is God pleased with this aspect of your worship to Him? If not, what can you do about it?
5. What does your giving show about your heart? (Cf. Matthew 6:19-21)

II. Read II Corinthians 9:6-15.

1. What should our attitude be in giving? If we don't have this attitude, what is the problem? (See Matthew 6:19-24,33.)
2. What are some of the principles we learn about giving here? (See also I Corinthians 16:1, 2)
3. What are some of the promises given?

III. Read Philippians 4:15-19.

1. How does giving affect our account in heaven?
2. What is the promise that Paul gives to those who give generously (verse 19)?
3. Notice in verse 18 that giving is an act of worship. What are some of the problems if we don't give?

## **Study #5: Witnessing**

Our ministry to the world is largely living out the life of Christ in such a way that they can be drawn to him. This is called a witness. Read Luke 24:44-48

1. What are the disciples witnesses of?
2. How important is it to know WHO Jesus is? See John 8:24.
3. Look at Peter's presentation of the Gospel in Acts 4:8-12. Notice how he emphasizes the person of Christ. What does he say about who Christ is?
4. He also speaks of Christ's passion (death and resurrection) and His pardon (forgiveness of sins). What does he say about each?

II. Read Acts 1:8, 4:29-31, and 8:4.

1. Who are to be the witnesses?
2. How was their witness received?
3. How did they prepare themselves for witnessing?
4. How is your witness? Is there anything preventing you from telling others about the person of Jesus Christ?
5. List some names of people God would have you witness to. You can share your testimony of how you came to know Jesus and who He is! Begin praying for yourself that God would grant you boldness to preach. (Acts 4:29).

## **Study #6: Suffering**

From the above studies it should be obvious that living in the kingdom will involve some suffering. Paul and Barnabus strengthen the early churches by "encouraging them in the faith, saying 'through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God.'" Acts 14:22

I. Read Acts 12:1-5 and John 15:18-16:4

1. What did Jesus prophesy would be the consequence of standing for Him?
2. Have you experienced any persecution for your stand for Christ? Where and when might you expect it?
3. It is important to recognize that persecution and suffering are a consequence of spiritual warfare in high places (Ephesians 6:10-12). What might the devil try to accomplish against you through trials and persecution?

II. God's purpose in trials: Read Romans 5:1-5 and I Peter 1:6-9.

1. What are some of God's purposes in suffering?
2. How should we respond to persecution and suffering?
3. What are the areas in your life where you are experiencing trials (marriage, children, job, relationships, finances)?
4. What has your response been thus far? Is God pleased? For an example, see Romans 12:16-21.

## **APPENDIX**

### Covenant of Forgiveness

The covenant of forgiveness is necessary in a fallen world when conflict often leads to a constantly deteriorating cycle of destruction and fragmentation. The following summarizes the steps in dealing with such problems.

Forgiveness is a promise and thus falls under the category of a covenant. The covenant of forgiveness is practiced between two parties: a villain (the one causing the hurt through sin) and the victim (the one absorbing the pain). Forgiveness is a gracious act (it cannot be forced and is not owed) on the part of the victim toward the villain and is a threefold promise:

1. A promise the victim will not throw up the crime in the face of the villain in the future in order to gain some advantage.
2. A promise that the victim will not be talking about the crime to others and thus injure them. In this case the victim now becomes the villain and must exercise the villain's part.
3. A promise that the victim will not rehearse the incident over and over again in their mind thus "nursing the grudge". This perhaps is the most difficult thing to do for someone in this habit. However a review of 2 Cor 10:3-5 and Phil. 4:8 will show that this is possible although it may take some practice.

There are 4 steps to be prayerfully followed:

1. **CONFRONTATION:** The victim needs to approach the villain in love, having the logs removed from his own eye and seeking the good of the villain (Mt. 7:1-5). If the villain is in a position of authority over the victim (as in the case of children approaching parents) the victim needs to approach the person with an attitude of respect (I Timothy 5:1-5).
2. **REPENTANCE:** The Villain sees his sin from this revelatory experience and takes full responsibility for his crime. There is no place for blame shifting, or excusing his actions based on the sin of another. **THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR SIN!** We are responsible to act righteously and also **REACT** righteously (Cf. Romans 12:17-21). The correct response for the villain is repentance toward God and confession toward the victim. The correct confession is "I was wrong for..." (not "I am sorry", although the villain may be).
3. **RECOURSE:** If the villain refuses the light, or excuses or justifies his actions, the

victim needs to take the next steps in Mt. 18. He should seek out an objective brother to go with him who can also mediate if it is merely a matter of misunderstanding. 4.

FORGIVENESS: Upon seeing the sincere humility of the villain, the victim, filled with the Holy Spirit and in full knowledge of the great forgiveness God has granted to him when he deserved only condemnation (Mt. 18:22-34), says: I FORGIVE YOU, thus making the covenant. In the process the victim absorbs the penalty and pain of the crime.

5. RESTITUTION: The Villain should seek from the Lord what restitution is required on his part and implement the plan.

The result of the covenant of forgiveness should be reconciliation in the relationship. Failure to do forgive may result in resentment, bitterness, and fragmentation in the relationships of the family, the church, and ultimately with the Lord. Practiced regularly it will transform relationships.