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# Introduction

What is the Church? Could it be more than bricks, mortar, and stained glass on a street corner? Is being part of a Church valid today as it was in the past?

More than just an organization, the Church is family. Only in a context of connected relationships will you mature and be enabled to bring forth what God has deposited in you. Your destiny is intertwined with the men and women He has placed in your life.

Arthur Wallis said, "If you would do God's best with your life, find out what God is doing in your generation and fling yourself into it." In this generation God is working through His people to disciple the nations. I encourage you to fling yourself into the Church so that you may find your purpose and be part of fulfilling His Great Commission.

*Eric Ahlstrom*

# The Church

Is the Church more than a Sunday morning experience? Is God's ultimate purpose simply your attendance in a meeting? Study and discover!

1. What is the Church? (Eph.1:20-23)

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2. Who places you in the Church? (1 Cor.12:18)

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3. What are you and what does God want to do with you? (1 Pet.2:5)

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A Church is not just an organization; it is a living "organism." The Church is Christ's body here on earth of which your local church is but one part.

The word "church" in the Greek is *ekklesia* meaning "called out ones." Hence the Church is a corporate body of believers called out from the world system; more than any mere brick and mortar building. If you think about it, going to the "church of your choice" is not necessarily the best plan. Instead allow God, the master builder, to put you, "the living stone," where He chooses.

4. What was Jesus' prayer for the Church? (John 17:20-23)

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5. What does God want in the Church? (Rom.15:5-6; Phil.2:1-2)

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6. What commandment did Jesus give you? (John 13:34)

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7. What is one way you can fulfill the law of Christ? (Gal.6:2)

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8. What else are you to do in the Church? (Heb.3:13; 10:24-25)

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9. What will be unable to withstand the Church? (Matt.16:15-18)

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Even the 'gates' of death will not stop the advance of the Church. On the contrary, the blood of martyrs has many times paved the way for the Church to take the gospel into seemingly closed cultures and nations.

10. What is God going to use to make His wisdom and truth known? (Eph.3:10; 1 Tim.3:15)
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The Church in many ways is like a family—a family that works together. You have brothers and sisters in the Lord who care for you. The needs that you have are often met in God's Church. The Church is also the solution for many of the world's problems and is God's repository of wisdom.

Jesus established the Church to corporately glorify Him and to reach the unbelieving world with the gospel. Those who are looking for the very foundations of truth will only find it with God and in His Church.

Read 1 Cor.12:14-27 to see how the Church is to function as a body.

11. Are there any lesser members in the Church? (vs.14-17)
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12. What are you to do with the seemingly weaker members? (vs.22-24)
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13. What should there not be in the Church and how will you keep this from happening? (v.25)
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14. What happens if one member suffers? (v.26)
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15. If you are stronger than another in an area, what should you do? (Rom.15:1; Gal.6:2)
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16. What does the Bible say about one who keeps separate from others? (Prov.18:1)
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God has destined His people to be together through all of eternity. Those who avoid fellowship are missing one of the greatest experiences a Christian can have. It can almost be said that those who do not enjoy being with Christians on earth will not enjoy heaven!

17. How will you be wise? (Prov.15:31; Prov.13:20)
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18. Why are two people together better off than one independent individual? (Eccl.4:9-12)
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19. How does the Church grow and hold together? (Eph.4:16; Col.2:18-19)
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20. How will the world know you are a follower of Jesus? (John 13:35)
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21. What will the Church, the bride of Christ, be like when Jesus returns? (Eph.5:27; Rev.21:2-3)
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God the Father will have a bride ready for His Son Jesus at His return. The Church is destined to be beautiful in unity and purity under the Lordship of Jesus. This transformation of the Church takes place by the selfless love of its members.

However, being a member of the Church is not "a spectator sport." To demonstrate God's love you must participate in His Church. In fact, He has designed you so that you cannot be self-sufficient and still grow as a Christian. Therefore, trust God to place you in His Church.

### **Digging Deeper**

Amos 3:3; Rom.12:4-5; Acts 5:42; 1 Cor.14:26; 1 Pet.4:8;  
John 15:5-6; Luke 11:17; Eph.5:25-27

# Christian Community

The Christian life is like running a marathon; no one can run the race for you, yet to be successful you can't run alone. You need friends along the course who encourage and coach you to keep on pace to the finish. When you tire, they remind you to look to Jesus for strength. Should you begin to stray from the course, they point you back in the right direction.

1. What influence can friends have on you? (Prov.13:20; 1 Cor.15:33)

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2. What would cause you to walk with bad company? (Amos 3:3)

The people whom you spend time and live with should be carefully chosen. Though it is important to have unbelieving friends to reach with the gospel, those who have the greatest influence in your life should be Christians. When you are single, having a Christian roommate can make the difference in maintaining right priorities.

3. Those who don't know Jesus live for what things? (Matt.6:31-32)

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4. What should be your top priorities? (Matt.6:33; John 13:34; Rom.14:19)

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You can be walking in the light of God's Word and still not feel its warmth when fellowship is not a priority.

5. What activities did the early Church leave for you as an example to follow today? (Acts 2:42)

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Never in the Old or New Testament are God's people depicted as disconnected from a community of faith. It is so easy to let work, goals, projects, and personal ambitions consume all your energies; however, God wants you to assign top priority to relationships.

In the book The Friendship Factor, Dr. Alan McGinnis notes several researchers' findings concerning the importance of relationships: 15% of one's career success is due to one's technical knowledge and about 85% is due to people skills. People are discharged from their jobs, excluding general layoffs, 60% to 80% of the time for lack of social competence. Only 20% to 40% of terminations are due to technical incompetence.

Studies also have shown that lonely people live shorter lives than the general population. Many of the goals you accomplish in life will only materialize through building relationships in the local church.

6. What will you have to do to be a good friend? (Prov.17:17)

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7. What does a friend do for a friend? (John 15:13)

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Friendships are wonderful; yet making friends requires effort, time, and commitment. Being a friend means overcoming insecurities, rejection, and hurt. It takes determination to esteem and listen to your friends.

Do not fear whether you will be an adequate friend, God gives you the grace and ability. And above all, love never fails (1 Cor.13:8).

9. What causes strife and disunity in relationships?  
(James 3:16)

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10. What can hurt a friendship? (Prov.16:28; 17:9)

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11. What does a gossip or talebearer do? (Prov.11:13)

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12. What are you not to do? (Rom.14:13)

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Jesus commanded you to love your neighbor as yourself. However, the struggle you have with this command is not in loving yourself. The battle to obey is a problem of self-denial, not of self-esteem.

The biggest enemy to friendship is selfishness. Putting what you want ahead of what God and others want will only cause strife. Having God's interests in mind will keep you from wandering into selfishness.

Satan also knows the importance of friendships; that is why he wants to cause division. The devil will send demons with accusations to tempt you to be critical of others and to backbite. God wants you to be merciful toward other's shortcomings as you would have them be toward your weaknesses (James 2:13).

13. What kind of friend does God want you to be? (Prov.18:24)

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14. In what does God delight? (Hosea 6:6)

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15. What should you not do to friends? (Prov.27:10)

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16. What should you do when you say you are going to do a thing or give your word on a matter? (Num.30:2; Psalm 15:4; Matt.5:37)

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17. What promise do you have for being faithful and loyal to those who God has placed in your life? (Prov.21:21)

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To be loyal and faithful implies you will not abandon your friends, family, or church when circumstances are tough. The act of loyalty is a giving of yourself even when the other party does not give back. To be faithful is to do what you say you are going to do. If you are going to be a disciple of Jesus and a friend others can depend on, your word must be your bond.

18. What is better than secret or hidden love? (Prov.27:5)

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19. What must a true friend be willing to do? (Prov.27:6)

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20. What can friends do for one another? (Prov.27:17)

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God uses other Christians to help you with weak areas. He wants to give you friends in your Christian community who will not be afraid to speak the truth in love. It is the persistent encouragement from these types of friends that can keep you from falling away from Jesus (Heb.3:12-13; Jude 23). God-given friends will help you keep the vision to serve God burning in your heart; they will also be the ones who stir you to maturity and to seek after God.

### Digging Deeper

Prov.9:7-9; 11:14; 15:22; 18:19; 20:6; 24:6; 29:18; John 17:11

# Church Government

Many have thought that the Church is a democracy, but it is not. The Church is a theocracy; the Lord is head of His Church. God rules His Church in three ways: 1) by His Word, the Bible; 2) by His Holy Spirit; and 3) through His delegated authority.

1. What has God told you to do concerning authority? (Rom.13:1) \_\_\_\_\_
2. Who establishes all governing authority? (Rom.13:1) \_\_\_\_\_
3. What delegated authority has God set up in the Church? (Acts 14:21-23) \_\_\_\_\_

God has delegated some responsibility to elders in the Church. This authority is not an alternative to the Holy Spirit and the Bible; it is in collaboration to bring God's order to the Church. Relationally, they are equally your brothers in the Lord. Functionally, God has placed them in a position of service, as well as leadership, to counsel and help you.

Your first responsibility is to hear God for yourself and to obey His Word. At the same time God intentionally does not tell you everything for every situation. As a team's coach makes game plans and sets workout and practice times, Jesus has His assistant coaches setting meeting times and game plans, too.

Again, elders and leaders are not to hear God for you. It is your responsibility to read God's Word and to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit while considering the counsel and direction of leadership.

4. What responsibilities do elders have? (Acts 20:28; Heb.13:17; 1 Pet.5:1-3; James 5:14-15; Rom.16:17) \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. Why does God provide guidance through others? (Prov.11:14) \_\_\_\_\_
6. What attitude are you to have toward elders in the Church? (Heb.13:7, 17; 1 Pet.5:5; 1 Thess.5:12-13) \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_
7. What are you not to do concerning those in authority? (1 Tim.5:19; Ex.22:28) \_\_\_\_\_  
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8. What responsibility do you have toward all authority including elders? (1 Tim.2:1-2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What other position of service has God placed in the Church? (1 Tim.3:8; Acts 6:1-3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What ministries has God set in His Church? (Eph.4:11) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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The Church is ultimately Jesus' responsibility. Your responsibility is to trust God to use the delegated authority He has placed in the Church.

The leaders God appoints, though not perfect, must meet strict requirements (read 1 Timothy 3:1-13 & Titus 1:5-9). God will make sure that the elders lead properly. Your eyes are to be on Jesus when He uses His delegated authority to deliver His counsel. Yet this is not a blind trust; it is one rooted in following God's Word first.

The Church only operates properly when the deacon ministry is directing and administrating the daily, functional duties and services.

11. What responsibilities do they have? (Eph.4:12)

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12. What benefits will these ministry gifts bring to the Church? (Eph.4:13-15)

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The five gifts mentioned are commonly called the "five-fold ministries." The word "ministry" means service. Those who equip others for the work of service do so to bless others and not for their own personal gain or ambition. For example: The pastor is not responsible for taking care of every church member's needs; instead, he equips the members to minister to one another. The evangelist does not do all of the soul-winning; instead he equips and inspires the church to evangelize.

Those functioning in these ministries are not always elders in the Church. Nor does one have to be gifted in one of these ministries to be an elder. The title "pastor" is often given out of loving respect to those who may not actually hold the position, yet still visibly lead in the church.

13. What is the procedure for Church discipline? (Matt.18:15-17)

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14. What should you do if you encounter another Christian in sin? (Gal.6:1)

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Church discipline is redemptive. The purpose of correction is to restore him in relationship with Jesus and with those in the church, not to expose and humiliate a person.

The authority to bring correction extends only as far as there is love. Love wants God's best for the other person and covers a multitude of sins.

When you discover sin in another person (from new member to leader), your first response must be towards their restoration. If the individual does not respond to your appeal, your next step is to bring along others who have seen the sin so that they too may bring correction. Should the individual still resist repentance, you must bring elders or leaders of the church to him in hope that he will see the sin and turn away from it.

If there is still no repentance, church membership is revoked until the person repents. Sin not only hurts that individual, it also hurts those in the church and must be removed for the good of all.

15. Why does God discipline you? (Heb.12:10)

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16. How do you sometimes feel during correction? (Heb.12:11)

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17. What does this correction bring? (Heb.12:11)

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18. What are you if God disciplines you? (Heb.12:5-8)

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The Lord will use other people to bring correction into your life. Being corrected is not always enjoyable, yet in the long run brings a peace to your life.

Receiving discipline is part of family life. When a child errors or disobeys, the father lovingly brings correction for the purpose of redemption. The father's hope is that the correction will bring positive change to his child.

19. How can you be a wise son (or daughter)? (Prov.13:1; 3:11-12)

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A coach can only train his athletes as they yield to his coaching. The leaders God gives you can only help you as you willingly follow their example.

For example: the Roman centurion (Matt.8:5-13) recognized Jesus as having delegated authority from God and was able to receive healing for his servant. The people of Jesus' hometown (Mark 6:1-5) could not see past His humanity and therefore were unable to receive God's miracle power.

People have a tremendous temptation to despise and reject what becomes familiar, even if it is the Lord Jesus Himself. You must look past the flesh and humanity of the leaders God has given you to benefit from the treasure and gifting He has placed within these people.

As stated earlier, no church or church leader is perfect. Should you find yourself in a situation where a church leader strays from his sphere of authority to meddle in an area of your life (say financial, family, or career) uninvited, you have a responsibility to speak up. Sometimes a simple, "I'm not comfortable talking with you about this" is enough to re-establish a proper boundary. If that doesn't work and you believe there is a violation, bring another leader with you to discuss and resolve the trespass (Matt.18:15-16).

Nevertheless, if the leader persists (granted this does not involve a sin that threatens to hurt others) and you find no other advocate in the church to help reconcile the violation, you may need to distance yourself from that person or possibly find a new church family if the Lord so leads as a last resort.

However the above scenario is rare. The majority of people called to serve in vocational ministry do so for God first and secondly out of a love for His people. Therefore, trust God to use the leaders He has placed in the Church to help you grow and mature as a Christian.

### **Digging Deeper**

Num.12:1-16; 16:1-40; 1 Sam.15:22-23; 1 Tim.5:17-19; 1 Cor.5:1-11

# Leadership

God has called the Church to influence the world. Therefore He is developing leaders to have godly influence in every sphere of life.

In this fallen generation, the cry seems to be "make it to the top" or "look out for number one." You may have tried to be great without ever succeeding or if you have succeeded, you may have found it "lonely at the top."

What does it mean to be a leader in God's kingdom? Does it mean working your way up the ecclesiastical ladder or could it mean something else?

1. From where does promotion come? (Psalm 75:6-7)

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2. What must you do to be great in God's kingdom?  
(Matt.20:25-28; 23:11)

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3. What must you do to be promoted? (Matt.23:12)

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God has not reserved leadership for an elite few. He wants to make leaders out of all who will respond to His call whether in the home, business, community, or Church.

However, when people try to make a name for themselves or to seek recognition in leadership without God, confusion and frustration are often the end results (Gen.11:1-9). Contrary to the world's system, Jesus has determined that leadership is best developed through service and responsibility.

4. What are you exhorted to do and not to do? (Phil.2:3-4)

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5. What attitude should you have as a leader? (Phil.2:5)

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- 6. Who is Jesus? (Phil.2:6)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 7. What did Jesus become? (Phil.2:6-7)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 8. What did Jesus, King of the Universe, do for His followers? Why? (John 13:2-5, 12-15) \_\_\_\_\_

Although Jesus is God, He did not flaunt His rights and privileges of being God. Jesus, the greatest leader the world has ever known, came to serve.

- 9. How are you not to think of yourself? Why? (Rom.12:3, 5)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 10. How do you know love? (1 John 3:16)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 11. Besides God, who are you to love? (Matt.22:37-39)  
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- 12. How are you to love others? (1 John 3:18)  
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Loving God is easy—He's perfect! God deserves your love and service.

On the other hand, loving imperfect people takes a little more effort. You may feel others do not meet certain conditions and therefore do not deserve your love. However, since God's love for you is unconditional, your love for others should also be without expecting anything in return.

A good question to ask yourself before serving someone is, "What would be God's best for this person?"

- 13. What did the leading apostles call themselves? (2 Cor.4:5)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 14. Why did Jesus make you free? (Gal.5:13)  
\_\_\_\_\_

- 15. When you serve others, whom are you actually serving? (Eph.6:6-8; Col.3:23-24)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 16. Are you doing God a favor when you serve? Why not? (Luke 17:7-10) \_\_\_\_\_
- 17. Above being a servant, to what more does Jesus call you? (John 15:15)  
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It is true that if you serve others, others will likely serve you in return. Nevertheless God is looking for a purer motivation, one that does not expect anything in return for serving.

You are called to be a son (or daughter) who is concerned for the Father's business and to share in its ownership. When you serve others, you are helping your Father's kingdom business grow.

Then, of course, there is the hireling who serves only to get something for himself. Outwardly the son and the hireling may appear similar; nevertheless when the money or recognition stops, only the son will continue to serve at his own expense.

- 18. Why did the Holy Spirit give you gifts? (1 Cor.12:7; 1 Pet.4:10)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 19. How will the church grow? (Eph.4:16)  
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God gives you gifts and talents to serve and influence others. These gifts are used to build and strengthen His Church. Ask God to reveal the gifts He has given you. Let Him show you how to serve others confidently with these gifts by following the examples of other leaders. Experiment by doing different services for others.

As a ship cannot be turned unless it is moving, you must take some action so that God can steer you. Look for needs and see if you can help. Be open and available for responsibility when others ask you. Often the areas of service in which you are effective are the ones in which God has gifted you. As you serve, your ability to influence others for Jesus and opportunities for leadership will increase.

### Digging Deeper

Rom.12:6; Eccl.9:10; Col.2:19; 1 John 4:7-8, 20

## The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He said He would send the Holy Spirit to empower believers. This power manifests through gifts distributed by the Holy Spirit.

Before you can understand what the gifts of the Holy Spirit are, you must know what they are not:

- 1) Natural Talents: God has given you some talent or talents, yet only a Christian has spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are not simply dedicated natural talents, although the two may be similar.
- 2) Occult Manifestations: These demonic expressions, at first appearance, look good, yet are crafted to ensnare and deceive people. Examples of the occult are ESP and clairvoyance in contrast to the spiritual gifts of prophecy and the word of knowledge.

Satan and his demons can channel power, though limited, through people yielded to their control. The Bible gives an example of counterfeit gifts demonstrated by Pharaoh's magicians matching several of God's miracles worked by Moses (Exodus 7-11).

1. What things should you know? (1 Cor.12:1)

2. What different ways does the Holy Spirit manifest Himself in believers? (1 Cor.12:4-6)

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The Greek words for these manifestations are *charisma*, *diakonia*, and *energema* respectively.

*Charisma* is a supernatural gift given by the Holy Spirit.

*Diakonia* is a practical gift of service, ministry, or administration.

*Energema* is a gift that produces workings, effects, or operations. You may have gifts from each of these categories.

3. What are the *charisma* gifts of the Spirit? (1 Cor.12:8-10)

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The *charisma* gifts are given for operation at times of specific need. They are often seen working together. For example, the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge gifts are both given for insight and information by the Spirit beyond natural wisdom and comprehension as in Acts 5:1-4.

The gifts of faith (as distinguished from daily trust), and effecting miracles are the exceptional confidence in God for a specific situation and the working of powerful acts above the ordinary. They are respectively demonstrated in Acts 9:36-42. As shown in Acts 16:16-18, the discerning of spirits gift enables you to determine if a behavior is of God, of man, or satanic. The gift of prophecy is speaking the revelation given you by God to share with others as in Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11.

4. What did the Lord use to confirm the Gospel? (Heb.2:3-4)

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A sign is something that points or gives direction. The gifts of the Holy Spirit direct an unbelieving world to the truth of His Word.

5. What are some of the *diakonia* gifts of the Holy Spirit? (Eph.4:11; 1 Cor.12:28)

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The *diakonia* gifts deal with functions in the Church. These functions are performed in a daily capacity. Also these ministry gifts vary in magnitude from one person to another. The following are a few

descriptions of the different *diakonia* gifts: an apostle establishes true Church government and oversees the starting of new Churches; a prophet receives direction and insight from the Holy Spirit for the Church; an evangelist equips the Church to win souls; a pastor cares for the general well being of the Church; a teacher equips the Church with sound doctrine; one with the ministry of helps assists others in fulfilling their ministries; an administrator organizes and coordinates the daily activities of the Church.

6. What are a few of the *energema* gifts? (Rom.12:6-8, 13)

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The *energema* gifts can be described as what motivates or energizes you to do a thing. For example, one with the *energema* gift of prophecy does things to bring forth or reveal God's will and justice. One with a mercy motivation does a task to comfort the distressed and hurting.

Two people can appear to do the same task yet with different motivation gifts. Here is a hypothetical situation to demonstrate the different motivation gifts: suppose a person in a cafeteria line slips on a wet spot and drops his lunch. How would each of these gifts respond to help?

Prophecy: "Where's the manager?! This wet spot should be marked so nobody else gets hurt!"

Service: "Here, let me clean up the mess for you."

Teaching: "Let me show you how to avoid accidents like this . . . ."

Exhortation: "It will be OK! All things work together for good . . . ."

Giving: "I know you have to eat so let me buy you another lunch."

Leading/administration: "Let's get this mess cleaned up! We need a mop, paper towels, etc." Then enlists and organizes the services of those around him to get the job done.

Mercy: "It's all right. I know how you feel, this happened to me a while back."

Hospitality: "After this is over, why don't you come over to my house and relax."

7. What attitude are you to have toward the gifts? (1 Cor.12:31)

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8. Why are these gifts given? (1 Cor.12:7; Eph.4:12)

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God does not allocate the gifts of the Holy Spirit based on the measure of maturity. You cannot earn the gifts either. God places these gifts in people as treasures in earthen vessels to bless others. The gifts should not be despised because of the unfinished state of the vessel delivering them.

9. How are you to think of yourself when using your gifts? Why? (Rom.12:3-5)

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Taking credit for what God has done is an attitude of pride. Those having larger measures of gifts and talents also have a greater responsibility and accountability to God for their use.

10. What are you not to do with the gifts and talents God has given you? (Matt.25:18, 25-28)

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There are many gifts yet all come from God. Your gifts do not make you better or more important than other Christians with less visible gifts. You also should not become frustrated when your gifts are different or less prominent than those of others.

You are unique. No one else has the exact same gifting and motivation that you have. To expect others to behave exactly as you do will result in strife and strain with your brothers and sisters in the Lord.

The beauty of the Church is the unity in Christ amidst the diversity of its members. What is important is that when everyone's gifts are functioning properly the Church grows.

**Digging Deeper**

Acts 2:4-11, 3:1-10, 21:10-11 2 Tim.1:6-7; Mark 16:20; 1 Cor.7:7; 1 Cor.14:1-39; 1 Pet.4:10

# Laying on of Hands

Few topics in the scriptures are as least understood as is the act of laying on of hands. Yet, the Bible gives examples of the practice allowing you to infer something of its workings.

1. What six foundational truths are you to know? (Heb.6:1-2)

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Laying on of hands is used in several key areas: healing, confirming the blessing, baptism of the Holy Spirit, imparting of spiritual gifts, and in confirmation of ministries and leadership.

2. What sign can be accomplished through you, the believer, by the laying on of hands? (Mark 16:15-18)

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3. What did Jesus do to heal people? (Mark 5:23; Luke 4:40-41)

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4. What promise did Jesus give to you? (John 14:12)

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5. What did the early believers do? (Acts 9:11-12; 28:8)

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6. Who is actually doing the healing? (Acts 4:30)

The power behind the gifts is from God. However, He chooses to use the Church to demonstrate some of His power. God at times wants to use you as the vehicle or messenger to deliver His gifts and blessings. Through the laying on of hands you become the point of contact where the Holy Spirit meets you by faith to minister to another person.

7. What kind of instrument or vessel does God want you to be? (2 Tim.2:20-21; Rom.6:13)

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8. From where does the power come? From where does it not come? (2 Cor.4:7; 1 Cor.12:6)

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God wants you to be a pure and open pipeline for His power. You have nothing to boast about in yourself when God uses you as His instrument to bring blessing to others. At the same time God wants you to share His joy in the experience of helping others.

9. How did Israel confer the blessing on Joseph's children? (Gen.48:14-16)

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10. How did Jesus bestow blessings on the children? (Mark 10:16)

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11. What did Moses do for Joshua? (Num.27:18-23; Deut.34:9)

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12. What is an empty task? Why? (Eccl.4:7-8)

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Confirming the blessing of inheritance both materially and spiritually is very important. The laying on of hands becomes the milestone in faith for the believer to receive what God wants to give.

God's intention is for Christians to pass on an inheritance for the next generation to build upon to advance His kingdom.

13. How did the Holy Spirit choose to impart Himself to believers? (Acts 8:17, 9:17, 19:6)

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14. What also is imparted by the laying on of hands? (1 Tim.4:14; 2 Tim.1:6)

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15. Why did Paul want to be used to bring the spiritual gift? (Rom.1:11-12)

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Commonly the baptism of the Holy Spirit is received by the laying on of hands. Again the act of laying on of hands becomes the point of contact. A believer can trust the Holy Spirit filling him through the support and encouragement of another Spirit filled believer.

Note: If you are praying with someone to receive the baptism of the Spirit (see "Baptism in the Holy Spirit" in Beginning in Victory) it is important to make sure that the one you are laying hands on has faith in God's Word to receive. The gift can never be forced on another by strength of personality or emotion. If the person is struggling or striving to receive, stop praying, go back to God's Word and let the Holy Spirit build up his faith.

Once there is faith in the person's heart to receive, resume praying and the Holy Spirit will surely do the work (Luke 11:11-13).

16. Who chose the ministry for Barnabas and Saul, how was it confirmed and what was the result? (Acts 13:1-3; 14:26-27)

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17. What did the apostles do to recognize the deacon ministry publicly? (Acts 6:3-6)

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18. How is this confirmation not to be done? (1 Tim.5:22)

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The apostles showed that they were under God's authority by allowing hands to be laid on them before going on their mission. They did not go out by their own authority. The apostles recognized God's authority to commission them as directed through the elders of the Church.

As God gives you a public ministry, allow the elders to lay hands on you to confirm and release you to greater service. When elders lay hands on a person, they are not choosing that person for the ministry. Instead they are recognizing and acknowledging the calling given by God. God is the one who establishes ministries. The elders wait till God confirms the calling to them before giving public recognition in the congregation.

19. What are you when God uses you to lay hands on another?  
(1 Cor.3:9) \_\_\_\_\_

20. What attitude should you have when you lay hands on  
another person and a blessing takes place? (Rom.12:3;  
Luke 10:20)

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In humility, allow God to use you to be an instrument of blessing to others and let God use others to bring blessing to you. As God builds you up along with others through the laying on of hands, God's kingdom is also built up.

**Digging Deeper**  
1 Cor.1:25-31; Matt.19:13-15

# Stewardship

Why is God interested in what you have and in what you give? Will the angels in heaven go on strike for lack of money if you and others stop giving? No!

Still, God is concerned with finances. The Bible has about 700 direct references to money. Nearly two thirds of Jesus' parables and one of every six verses in the gospels deal with right and wrong use of material possessions.

1. What belongs to God? (Psalm 24:1; 50:10; Haggai 2:8)

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2. Do your above answers leave anything left for you to "own?"

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A steward is one who manages the things of another. God has made you a steward of the things that He has allowed you to have in your possession. You only have the privilege of using the things He has permitted you to have within His guidelines.

3. What did Jesus say concerning your heart? (Matt.6:19-21)

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4. How does God view faithfulness? (Luke 16:10-11)

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God uses financial giving as one indicator of your attitude and willingness to give your life to Him. Money represents the work of your life in the form of transferable cash. Where you place your money is usually a sign of where you are placing your affections.

5. To whom did the tithe belong? (Num.18:21-24)

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6. What did God tell the people of Israel not to give?  
(Malachi 1:7-14) \_\_\_\_\_

7. How did the nation of Israel rob God? (Malachi 3:8-9)

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8. How did God ask the nation of Israel to test Him and what did He promise to do? (Malachi 3:10-12)

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9. Before God enacted the system of tithes and offerings with the nation of Israel, how did Abraham and Isaac show appreciation to God? (Gen.14:20; 28:22)

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God had established the system of tithes and offerings as part of the tax system for the government and religious system of Israel before monarchy rule. The tithe was the first ten percent of the produce or income. The offering was given in addition to the tithe.

Since then the Levitical system of sacrifices and offerings has been dissolved. We no longer have Levites and priests. Yet Jesus did not dismiss tithing (Matt.23:23), even though the New Testament epistles are silent on the amount or percentage of your income to give. Nevertheless, the principle and pattern of giving to God out of appreciation has been in operation since Abraham.

Throughout the history of the Church the tithe has been the standard of giving. In addition, it was not uncommon for some believers to give whole fortunes for the cause of Christ.

10. For what purpose is the Church's giving used in the new covenant? (1 Cor.9:11-14; 1 Tim.5:17-18)

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11. How did the early Church respond to the needs of others? (Acts 2:44-45, 4:32; 2 Cor.8:1-4)

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12. What are you exhorted to do with your resources? (Rom.15:26; Heb.13:16; 1 John 3:17)

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Your giving supports the preaching of the Gospel and the work of the Church. Minimizing giving to a fixed percentage can limit what God wants to do through you.

On the other hand, God will not condemn you when you are unable to give as others can. For example: Jesus praised the widow who could only give two mites (Mark 12:41-44). Ananias and Saphira lost their lives for the way they gave even though the amount was substantial (Acts 5:1-10). God is looking at the attitude of the giver, not the quantity of the gift.

13. What does God ask and what will He do in return? (Prov.3:9-10; Luke 6:38)

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14. How does giving influence receiving? (2 Cor.9:6, 8)

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15. What should be your attitude in giving? (2 Cor.9:7)

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16. What else does your giving do? (2 Cor.9:12-13)

God wants to bless you with His resources. Why? Because He always finances the tasks to which He has called you. Your attitude towards giving has an impact on how much He can entrust back to you.

17. What is a root of evil and against what are you to be on guard? (1 Tim.6:10; Luke 12:15)

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18. What brings great gain to you? (1 Tim.6:6)

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19. With what should you be content? (1 Tim.6:8)

Greed is an excessive and insatiable desire for money or possessions. Covetousness is an attitude of discontent or ungratefulness for what you now possess accompanied by a desire for another person's possessions.

20. What has Jesus given you strength to do? (Phil.4:11-13)

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21. What is God’s desire concerning wealth? (Deut.8:18; Psalm 84:11)

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22. For what purpose does He give wealth? (Deut.8:18; 2 Cor.9:10-11)

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23. What should one of your goals be concerning wealth? (Prov.13:22)

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God’s blessing of wealth is not for mere personal benefit. His intention is to make you a repository of blessing for generations to come. Part of discipleship involves training the next generation to handle wealth. Read Luke 19:12-27.

24. How were the faithful servants rewarded for their stewardship? (v.17, 19)

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25. What happened to the lazy servant? (v.22-24)

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26. What is the principle of stewardship? (v.26)

How you handle the possessions and work God gives you are tests for leadership. Work and school are holy vocations before God. God’s desire is to lavishly reward those who honor Him in their labor. Wealth and authority, the fruit of serving God, are given to the faithful and diligent person in the long run. It is God’s intention to turn the stewardship of this world over to His prepared people.

27. Why did Israel often lack in provision? (Deut.28:47-48)

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28. What does God encourage you to do? (Psalm 103:2)

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When Israel focused on the things they did not have instead of being thankful for what they did have, God stopped blessing them until they repented. For that reason God wants you to cultivate a thankful and grateful attitude toward Him in all that He has done for you.

Read Luke 12:16-31 for Jesus' perspective on possessions.

29. Who is not rich toward God? (v.21)

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30. What does God ask of you and what will He do in return? (v.31)

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As you align your priorities according to God's will, giving will become a regular part of your worship. Work will have new meaning as a holy vocation used as a tool in the hands of God to prepare you to reign with Him (2 Tim.2:12, Rev.5:10). Whether rich or in need, your attitude will be to put God first, being content and faithful with what God has given you.

**Digging Deeper**

Gal.6:6-9; Gen.14:18-20, 22-23; Gen.28:22; Ex.22:29; Deut.16:17; Lev.27:30-33; Matt.25:40; Acts 20:35; Eccl.2:26; Gen.39:2, 23; Ps.37:25; Prov.10:22; Eccl.5:13; Eph.4:28

# God's Heart for the Lost

How valuable are people to God? You determine value by the price you are willing to pay for an item. Jesus was willing to pay the price of His life for you and the rest of mankind. People are important to God; are they important to you?

1. What is God's heart for people? (2 Pet.3:9)  
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2. What did Jesus do with sinners? (Luke 15:1-2)  
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3. What happens when a sinner repents? (Luke 15:4-7)  
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4. What was the Father's motive for sending Jesus? (John 3:16)  
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5. What is the greatest expression of love? (John 15:13)  
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6. Who were considered friends of Jesus? (Luke 7:34)  
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Though sinners are enemies of Jesus, He laid His life down to be their friend.
7. What did Jesus say to His disciples? (John 20:21)  
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8. What does Jesus want to make of His followers? (Matt.4:19)  
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9. What has God given you? (2 Tim.1:7)  
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10. What does God's love do for you? (1 John 4:18)  
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Jesus wants to make you a friend of sinners too. Your friendship with others is God's best way to reach people with the gospel. At times you will feel afraid to tell others about Jesus for fear of being rejected or persecuted. Love overcomes fear when your concern for the salvation of others becomes more important than your own comfort and reputation.

The love of God is your motivation for reaching out beyond your comfort zone. God's love allows you to lay your life down for your unsaved friends.

It is also important to remember that no one can be saved unless God initiates it (John 6:44). One primary key to seeing another saved is to observe where God is at work in that person's life and to ask God when and how you are to participate. Many would be "evangelists" have done more damage by presumptuously barging into an unsaved person's life with a "turn or burn" message, with no understanding of what God is doing in that person's life. God is still sovereign, yet the affront makes it a little more difficult for the person to hear the Gospel at the right time.

11. What has God given you and made you? (2 Cor.5:18-20)  
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\_\_\_\_\_
12. What has the Holy Spirit given you power to do and be? (Acts 1:8; 2 Cor.3:4-6)  
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\_\_\_\_\_
13. Besides being a friend, what else must you do for others to be saved? (Rom.10:13-15)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
God, in His wisdom, has chosen His body, the Church, to be the vehicle of distribution for the gospel. He could have sent angels to proclaim Jesus as Savior, nevertheless angels could only tell of what Jesus had done for others. Only a person, forgiven of sin and changed by God's power, can give direct testimony of what God has done.  
A sinner cannot relate to angels, yet he can relate to one who has experienced the same problems he now faces. Telling another person about what Jesus has done for you can give him hope that he too can be changed and set free from sin.
14. What is the Gospel you are to preach? (Luke 24:47; Mark 1:14-15; Acts 4:2; Acts 17:18)  
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15. What does God do when you preach? (1 Cor.3:7-8; Mark 16:20)

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16. Who does the convicting of sin? (John 16:8, 13)

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17. What does God require you to do? (2 Tim.2:15)

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The message is very simple: repent and believe. Preaching that message does not always mean speaking loudly. By definition preaching means to plead strongly in favor of something. Preaching can be done very quietly yet with power from the Holy Spirit to penetrate the hardest of hearts. As you speak, God watches His Word to perform it. Your responsibility is to prepare yourself to preach the Word. God will be the one who saves people.

18. How did Paul say Timothy was to fulfill his ministry? (2 Tim.4:5)

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19. What will you be like when you lead others to Jesus? (Dan.12:3)

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Your life is like water in a pond. When the pond has both an inlet and an outlet, the water stays fresh. When the pond does not have an outlet, the water stagnates.

You too must have an outlet for the Holy Spirit so that you do not stagnate as a Christian. It is not uncommon for you to discover your area of service in the Church as an indirect result of evangelism. Telling others about Jesus is also a cure for boredom and dullness in your Christian walk.

20. What was Paul's attitude toward men? (1 Cor.9:19)

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21. What was one method Paul used to reach people? (1 Cor.9:22)

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22. What happens when you lead someone to Jesus? (James 5:20)

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Just as a fisherman has to be taught to fish, you need to be taught to evangelize. Enroll in an evangelism class or find an experienced "fisherman" to instruct you on how to preach the gospel. Then once you know the basics, go reach out to those you know and love. Be creative in how you bring the good news to others.

Different approaches work with different people. The main thing is that you begin building the friendships and relationships in preparation for the time when you will tell them about Jesus. Then trust God to see them born again by His Spirit.

### **Digging Deeper**

2 Cor.5:14; Matt.28:20; Col.4:5-6; Rom.1:14-16; John 13:35;  
Matt.5:13-16; 1 Cor.3:9; Acts 20:24; 2 Tim.4:2; Isa.55:11;  
Ezek.33:1-9

# The Great Commission

What would you do if you had the cure for cancer? Would you keep the cure to yourself or would you share it with the whole world? Sin is deadlier than any cancer; one can be healed of cancer and still die in sin. God has a plan for reaching the whole world with the only cure that can save mankind from sin.

1. What promises does God give concerning the world?  
(Hab.2:14; Isa.11:9; Phil.2:9-11; Rev.11:15)

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2. What are three things that Jesus asked you to do to fulfill His will in the earth? (Matt.28:19-20)

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God has already planned the outcome of planet earth; yet He wants you to participate in His work. A disciple is one who wholeheartedly receives instruction. Teaching and training people to be disciples of Jesus is God's method of reaching the world.

3. Before the term "Christian" became popular, what were the followers of Jesus called? (Acts 11:26)

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4. What does God require of His disciples?  
(Luke 9:23-24, 14:27)

Read Matthew 10:16-42

5. Why are you not to be afraid when persecution comes?  
(Matt.10:28-31)

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6. What type of people did Paul look for in making disciples?  
(2 Tim.2:2)

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The cross is where your will is placed under obedience to God's will. Those who follow Jesus must do so by way of the cross. God in His wisdom is looking for reliable people He can partner with to build His kingdom.

Thrill-seekers who obey God when it is exciting and fun find it difficult during the tough times when He applies the cross to the unharnessed areas of the heart. Being a disciple requires passing through difficult moments to follow the Lord.

The cost of being a disciple is always too high for those who are unclear about the purpose and vision of God's kingdom. Therefore the full gospel of God's plan to reach the world must be preached if people are to willingly invest their lives to fulfill His purpose on earth.

7. From where does God want to make disciples? (Rev.5:9)

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8. How does God want to use you with people from other countries and cultures? (Lev.19:34; Deut.31:12)

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God's concern is not only for you and your friends. It's His desire that the whole world know Him. God brings people to you from other cultures and countries for you to reach with the gospel. A good example of this is the Ethiopian official who went back to his country to reach thousands with the gospel after Philip preached to him (Acts 8:26-39).

9. In what condition is the world? (John 4:35; Matt.9:37)

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10. What was Paul's encouragement to you and why?  
(1 Cor.15:58)

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11. What did Jesus ask you to pray? (Matt.6:10; Matt.9:38)

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Even though God's promises are sure about the outcome of earth, He is still looking for you to labor with Him. When you get to heaven, few things will have really mattered on earth with the exception of the disciples you made. All the money, success, and honors that you can accumulate will mean little or nothing in light of eternity.

12. What steps to making disciples does Paul offer? (2 Tim.2:2)

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Evangelism without discipleship is only addition; evangelism with discipleship is multiplication. One plus one plus one etc. does not even approach the exponential growth of one plus two plus four plus eight, etc.! Training others to train others results in multitudes coming into God's kingdom.

13. What is the goal of disciple making? (Col.1:28; Gal.4:19)

14. How did the apostles treat younger believers? (1 Thess.2:7)

15. What did the apostles want to impart to other believers?  
(1 Thess.2:8)

16. What did Paul encourage others to do and what was the result? (1 Cor.11:1; Phil.3:17, 4:9; 1 Thess.1:6-7)

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Making disciples was not limited to only the apostles. The apostles were examples for you to follow so that others in turn can imitate you. For you to make disciples of Jesus, you must first become a disciple. Ask your pastor to help you find an older Christian who can instruct and advise you on how to follow Jesus. Learn from the more experienced believer's successes and mistakes as you grow in your walk of faith.

17. What charge did Paul give to those he trained? (2 Tim.1:13)

18. What kind of attitude should you have in training others?  
(Phil.2:3-4)

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Disciple making is not one Christian telling another what to do. Instead, disciple making involves the mature Christian laying his life down to serve the younger believer. The primary goal of discipleship is to make followers of Jesus mature enough to mentor others. Disciple making is in many ways like an apprenticeship where an older believer models Christianity for a younger believer. The relationship can be formal or informal with a foundation built upon trust.

Trust and faith are the keys. You should have the same confidence in Jesus to change the lives of others as you do for your own life. This type of faith in God's transforming power will win the world. For further instruction on how to mentor others in the walk of faith see the fifth study book in the Victory Foundation Series, Leading in Victory.

### **Digging Deeper**

Matt.10:32-42; 1 Cor.3:9; Isa.60:1-7; Ps.126:5-6; Prov.27:17;  
Eph.4:11-12; 1 Cor.4:14-16; Titus 2:1-8

**-Notes-**



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