

Bible Study Series on Church

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|-----|---------------|-----------|
| 1. | Worship | p 1 |
| 2. | Meetings | p 3 |
| 3. | Holy Spirit | p 7 |
| 4. | Unity | p 12 |
| 5. | Love | p 13 |
| 6. | Leadership | p 15 |
| 7. | Teaching | p 16 |
| 8. | Women | p 19 |
| 9. | Evangelism | p 22 |
| 10. | Prayer | p 23 |
| 11. | Lord's Supper | p 25 |
| 12. | Money | p 27 - 29 |

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1. Worship

1. What is the meaning of worship in common usage today?

Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament worship system. He made a new covenant to replace the old covenant, he is the perfect sacrifice in the perfect tabernacle/temple, he is our perfect High Priest, our mediator and our God. What is left of worship since Jesus has fulfilled it all? Paul writes about spiritual worship and living sacrifices in Romans ch 12. This relates to a Christian's own death and resurrection with Jesus in Romans ch 6. But Jesus spoke about worshipping in spirit and truth in John ch 4. We will look at these passages and try to work out how a Christian worships God.

Rom 12:1-2

Context: Paul has been writing about salvation for all of God's people which includes Israel (ch 11) even though they are hardened "in part" (Rom 11:25). Paul moves on in ch 12 to write about the proper response to this salvation from God.

Read Rom 12:1-2

2. Rom 12:1 uses the phrase "in view of God's mercy" (NIV) or "by the mercies of God" (ESV).
(a) What are God's mercies?

- (b) What is the proper response to God's mercies?

3. What does the language of Rom 12:1 remind you of?

4. (a) What was the point of the Old Testament sacrifices?

- (b) Is a sacrifice alive or dead?

- (c) What does it mean by "living sacrifices"?

Read Rom 6:1-11.

5. (a) Is there a connection between the ideas in Rom 6:1-11 and Rom 12:1? If so, what is the connection?

(b) How ought we to live?

Read Rom 12:2

6. If we are totally God's, how does this effect our thinking?

John 4:1-30

Context: On his way to Galilee Jesus passed through Samaria. Jews and Samaritans didn't like each other. The Jews looked down on Samaritans as sort of half caste Jews because they had intermarried with the conquering Assyrians after the fall of Samaria in 722 BC. The Jews saw their temple in Jerusalem as the most important place to worship but the Samaritans worshipped at Mt Gerizim. Also, it was not done for a Jewish male to talk to a woman on the street, not even if it was his wife. He was not supposed to even say hello.

Read John 4:1-30

7. What sort of water is the woman talking about?

8. What sort of water is Jesus talking about?

9. Why does the woman start talking about places of worship?

10. How does Jesus answer her?

11. What does Jesus mean by worshipping in spirit and truth?

12. From Rom 12:1-2 and John 4, how are we to worship God?

2. Meetings

I have selected a number of passages that speak of Christians meeting, gathering or assembling. After reading each passage write down what the Christians did when they met together so that we can get an overall idea of what we should be doing when we meet. Take note of whether or not "worship" is mentioned and, after looking at a few passages, decide whether or not there is a set formula or form for what happens and think about what this means for us when we "have church".

There is a lot of reading in this study. Don't get bogged down on individual passages, some of which will be dealt with in more detail in later studies.

1. Acts 2:41-46

Context: Jesus has risen from the dead and appeared to his disciples. Jesus asked the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit comes on them and they speak in other tongues. A crowd of Jews from other countries gather and Peter tells them about Jesus.

Read Acts 2:41-46

What did the Christians do when they met together?

(Aside: what does "breaking bread" mean? Is it a phrase for having meals together or taking the Lord's Supper or both? Read Acts 27:30-38 where Paul uses the same vocabulary and phraseology to describe the meal that Paul shared with pagan sailors. This suggests that "breaking bread" means eating a meal to satisfy hunger rather than taking the Lord's Supper. We will look at the Lord's Supper in Study 11.)

2. Acts 14:24-28

Context: During Paul's first missionary journey with Barnabus they travel from Syrian Antioch to Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe and back to Syrian Antioch via the regions of Pisidia and Pamphylia and the cities of Perga and Attalia.

Note: A Macedonian cavalry leader, Seleucus 1 Nicator (312 - 280 BC), named 16 Antiochs in honour of his father. The most famous of these was Antioch in the region of Syria (Syrian Antioch) and Antioch in the region of Pisidia (Pisidian Antioch).

Read Acts 14:24-28

What did the Christians do when they met together?

3. Acts 15:30-35

Context: The Jerusalem Council had to decide on the issue of circumcision for Gentile Christians and they produced a letter with details of their decision. Judas, Silas, Paul & Barnabus carried this letter to the church at Syrian Antioch.

Read Acts 15:30-35

What did the Christians do when they met together?

4. Acts 20:7-12

Context: During Paul's third missionary journey he spends a week at Troas and addresses the church there.

Read Acts 20:7-12

(a) What did the Christians do when they met together?

(b) From this and previous passages, is worship mentioned?

(c) From this and previous passages, is there a set form or formula?

(d) What does this mean for us when we "have church"?

5. Eph 5:15-21

Context: Paul begins this letter by describing the blessings they have in Jesus. He continues by praying for the Ephesians and reminds his readers what they used to be and compares that with what they are now as God's children, encouraging them to reject the sins of their past.

Read Eph 5:15-21

What did the Christians do when they met together?

6. Heb 10:24-25

Context: Hebrews addresses Jewish Christians who are thinking about going back to Judaism. The letter encourages them to stay with Jesus who is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament religious practices.

Read Heb 10:24-25

(a) What are the Christians encouraged to do when they meet together?

7. James 2:1-9

Context: James is a practical letter written to a number of churches. James gives advice on various aspects on living the Christian life.

Read Jas 2:1-9

What are the Christians encouraged to do when they meet together?

1 Corinthians was written to help the Corinthian Christians with a number of problems and issues that they were struggling with i.e. divisions within their group, wisdom and foolishness, sexual immorality, lawsuits among believers, marriage and singleness, food sacrificed to idols, Paul's apostleship, idolatry, headship, eating meals together, spiritual gifts and the resurrection. Some of these issues came up when they had church which gives us a picture of what they did when they gathered together even though they did them in a way that had to be corrected by Paul.

Read the following passages and note what the Corinthians were doing and what they were doing wrong. Again, don't get bogged down on individual passages, some of which we will look at later.

8. 1 Cor 11:2-16 (We will look at this in more detail when we do the study on Women).

Context: Immediately before 1 Cor 11 Paul has been writing about idolatry and the issue of eating food that had been sacrificed to idols. Paul writes that Christians have the freedom to eat whatever they want but not to do so if it causes other Christians to stumble.

Read 1 Cor 11:2-16

("The passage presumes that women/wives pray and prophecy in the gathering. Men and women must behave/dress so as not to needlessly offend outsiders and bring the gospel into disrepute. Husbands and wives must ensure that their behaviour/dress upholds the husband's headship." Mark Strom, unpublished paper, Dec 1991.)

(Aside: what is prophecy in the New Testament? Tony Payne interviewed Peter Jensen and Peter O'Brien in an article on prophecy in *The Briefing* #170/171 5/12/1995 entitled "1 and 2 Peter on prophecy" where they reached the conclusion that prophecy today is "informal, spontaneous, open-to-many edification of one another in the application of the Word.")

What were the Corinthians doing and what were they doing wrong?

9. 1 Cor 11:17-34 (We will look at this in more detail when we do the study on the Lord's Supper).
What were the Corinthians doing and what were they doing wrong?

10. 1 Cor 12 (We will look at this in more detail when we do the study on the Holy Spirit).
What were the Corinthians doing and what might they have been doing wrong?

11. 1 Cor 12:31-13:13 (We will look at this in more detail when we do the study on Love).
How should the Corinthians love each other?

12. 1 Cor 14:1-25

(a) What were the Corinthians doing and what were they doing wrong?

(b) Is worship mentioned? What is worship in this context?

13. 1 Cor 14:26-40 (We will look at this in more detail when we do the study on Women).
What were the Corinthians doing and what were they doing wrong?

By considering all the passages we have looked at in this study we may be able to come to some conclusions. The following questions may help.

14. When they gathered together (a) is worship their purpose?

(b) was there a set form or formula?

(c) what does this mean for us when we "have church"?

15. (a) Is a small group Bible study just as much church as what we do on Sundays?

(b) Should we do different things as a small group than when we meet on Sundays (or Saturdays).

16. Thinking back to the previous study on worship, is there a connection between worship and church?

3. Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit was promised in the Old Testament. Read Is 44:3, Eze 36:22-27, 37:13-14, Joel 2:28-32

The Holy Spirit was promised by Jesus. Read John 14:15-27 and especially Acts 1:1-8 which will be referred to in question 5.

How did the Holy Spirit come upon the first Christians? Is there a pattern to the way things happened? Acts describes 4 events when the Holy Spirit came to Christ followers. We will examine what happened, answer the same 6 questions of each event and see if we can come to some conclusions.

Here are the four passages and their contexts:

1. Acts 2:1-41 (Pentecost)

Context: Jesus has risen from the dead and appeared to his disciples. Jesus asked the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit. While they are waiting they choose Matthias to replace Judas.

2. Acts 8:14-17 (Samaria)

Context: Persecution of the church in Jerusalem meant that all the disciples except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Philip went to Samaria, preached about Jesus and many were converted.

3. Acts 10:34-48 (Gentiles in Caesarea)

Context: Peter has a vision about eating "unclean" foods. He is asked to come to see a Gentile, Cornelius, in Caesarea. Being a Jew, Peter is not supposed to visit Gentiles but he does because of the vision. Cornelius tells how an angel told him to send for Peter.

4. Acts 19:1-7 (Ephesus)

Context: Paul has been traveling around telling people about Jesus. He left Priscilla and Aquila at Ephesus where they met and helped Apollos who had been preaching about Jesus but didn't know about the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

1. Read Acts 2:1-41

Note: There are two groups here: the disciples sitting in the house together and the people who were "cut to the heart" v37 after hearing Peter's speech. Answer the following questions for each group.

(a) Did they receive the Holy Spirit *when* they came to faith?

(b) Did they receive the Holy Spirit *after* they came to faith?

(c) Were they baptised in water?

(d) Was there a "laying on of hands"?

(e) Were any apostles present?

(f) Did they speak in tongues?

2. Read Acts 8:14-17

- (a) Did they receive the Holy Spirit *when* they came to faith?
- (b) Did they receive the Holy Spirit *after* they came to faith?
- (c) Were they baptised in water?
- (d) Was there a "laying on of hands"?
- (e) Were any apostles present?
- (f) Did they speak in tongues?

3. Read Acts 10:34-48 and when Peter explains this event in Acts 11:15-18

- (a) Did they receive the Holy Spirit *when* they came to faith?
- (b) Did they receive the Holy Spirit *after* they came to faith?
- (c) Were they baptised in water?
- (d) Was there a "laying on of hands"?
- (e) Were any apostles present?
- (f) Did they speak in tongues?

4. Read Acts 19:1-7

- (a) Did they receive the Holy Spirit *when* they came to faith?
- (b) Did they receive the Holy Spirit *after* they came to faith?
- (c) Were they baptised in water?
- (d) Was there a "laying on of hands"?
- (e) Were any apostles present?
- (f) Did they speak in tongues?

5. What conclusions can we come to after looking at these 4 events (also consider Acts 1:8)?

Is there a common pattern for receiving the Holy Spirit?

Is there a common factor for each event?

What does the Holy Spirit do in the life of a Christian? What effect does the Holy Spirit have on our lives? We will try to answer these questions by looking at the following passages.

6. John 3:1-15

Context: John begins his gospel by describing the connection between Jesus and the Word. John writes about the baptism of Jesus, the calling of the first disciples, the wedding where Jesus turns water into wine and the anger of Jesus at how his Father's house is being treated.

Read John 3:1-15

What does the Holy Spirit do (in our lives)?

7. John 14:15-18

Context: Jesus has told his disciples that he is going away but they didn't understand that he was talking about his death. Jesus tries to prepare them for this event.

Read John 14:15-18

What does the Holy Spirit do?

8. John 16:8-15

Context: Jesus has been preparing the disciples for his death and the coming of the Holy Spirit. He tells his disciples to keep trusting in him and loving each other like he has loved them even when they are persecuted. Jesus says that it is good that he is leaving them because then the Holy Spirit will come to them.

Read John 16:8-15

What does the Holy Spirit do?

9. Rom 8:12-17

Context: Paul explains the gospel in the first 7 chapters and starts writing about the Holy Spirit in chapter 8. He contrasts living by the sinful nature with living by the Spirit.

Read Rom 8:12-17

What does the Holy Spirit do?

10. Rom 8:26-27

Context: Continuing from the passage above Paul writes that just as our hope helps us as we wait for the complete redemption of all things, so does the Holy Spirit help us.

Read Rom 8:26-27

What does the Holy Spirit do?

11. 1 Cor 12:1-11 and Rom 12:3-8

Context of 1 Cor 12:1-11: Paul has been giving advice on some of the problems with the Corinthian church and has just finished telling them that their meals together should be a gospel occasion.

Context of Rom 12:3-8: Paul has been writing about the gospel, the Holy Spirit and the place of Israel in God's plans. He urges Christians to offer their bodies as living sacrifices to God.

Read 1 Cor 12:1-11 and Rom 12:3-8

What does the Holy Spirit do?

12. 2 Cor 1:21-22 and Eph 1:11-14

Context for 2 Cor 1:21-22: Paul writes about his hardships and his joy. He explains his change in travel plans and even though it might seem he is saying yes on one hand and no on the other, the promises God makes are always yes in Jesus.

Context for Eph 1:11-14: Paul begins this letter by describing the blessings they have in Jesus.

Read 2 Cor 1:21-22 and Eph 1:11-14

What does the Holy Spirit do?

13. Eph 1:15-21

Context: Paul continues by praying for the Ephesians.

Read Eph 1:15-21

What does the Holy Spirit do?

14. Eph 5:15-21

Context: Paul reminds his readers what they used to be and compares that with what they are now as God's children and he encourages them to reject the sins of their past.

Read Eph 5:15-21

What does the Holy Spirit do?

15. Gal 5:22-25

Context: Paul blasts the Galatians for deserting the gospel. He defends his apostleship and explains about the relationship between law and faith. Paul explains that they are sons and heirs of God, they are free, they should live by the Spirit and reject the fruit of their sinful nature.

Read Gal 5:22-25

What does the Holy Spirit do?

16. 2 Pet 1:19-21 and 2 Tim 3:15-17

Context for 2 Pet 1:19-21: Peter is facing death and writes a letter of encouragement and assurance that the stories about Jesus are true because he and others were eye witnesses.

Context for 2 Tim 3:15-17: Paul is also facing death but he encourages Timothy to remain strong in Jesus, gives advice on his role in the church and warns him to beware of evil people and persecution. Paul tells Timothy to rely on what he has learnt from the Scriptures.

Read 2 Pet 1:19-21 and 2 Tim 3:15-17

What does the Holy Spirit do?

4. Unity

Eph 4:1-16

Context: Paul describes the blessings they have in Jesus. He says that it is by grace that they have been saved, through faith. He says that both Jews and Gentiles have been unified and reconciled to God. Paul prays that they will be strengthened through the Spirit, know the love of Christ and that glory be given to God.

Read Eph 4:1-16

1. What does it mean to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"?

2. What instructions are given to maintain unity?

3. How do our gifts help maintain unity?

4. (a) If some of us disagree on something, does that mean we are not unified?

- (b) What are the important things to agree on and what things don't matter?

5. If a church has different factions, does that mean it is not unified? What about cliques?

6. How can we solve the problem(?) of factions/cliques?

5. Love

1 Cor 12:31-13:13

Context: 1 Corinthians was written to help the Corinthian Christians with a number of problems i.e. divisions within their group, wisdom and foolishness, sexual immorality, lawsuits among believers, marriage and singleness, food sacrificed to idols, Paul's rights as an apostle, idolatry, headship, eating meals together, spiritual gifts and the resurrection. Beginning with ch 11 Paul writes 4 chapters on what is happening in their gatherings: headship of a husband/man over his wife/woman, how they were eating meals together, spiritual gifts and how the church is made up of many parts like parts of the one body, then this passage, then a comparison of prophecy and speaking in tongues.

Read 1 Cor 12:31-13:13

1. Why does Paul put a passage on love in the middle of these passages on church?

2. What does this say about the role of love in the church?

3. How does this passage help us understand what the "higher gifts" are (12:31)?

4. What things can we do in the light of this passage?

From an article in *The Briefing* #122 October 7, 1993 by Tim Thorburn.

"12:31b: "And now I will show you the most excellent way". It is a fairly extravagant way to introduce chapter 13; it is the way par excellence, that outstrips any other way your mind might dredge up. It is fairly obvious that "the most excellent way" is the way of love. But what way is it replacing? When you read chapter 12, the "way" under discussion is the way of gifts. What Paul appears to be counteracting in chapter 12 is the Corinthian propensity to approach church and ministry from the starting point of gifts - "What gifts have I got? How can I get to use them, especially the exciting, spectacular ones?". The way of gifts starts with me and what I have. . . .

In chapter 13, Paul erects a whole new building. He replaces the way of gifts with the way of love. The way of love doesn't start with me and my gifts, but with others and what will benefit them. Instead of starting from what I want to do, it starts from other's needs. . . .

In chapter 14, Paul applies this new way of approaching ministry and church to the question of using gifts. If you start with the needs of others, then the central question becomes: "What can I do, if anything, to edify my brothers and sisters?". What each of us needs most is to be built up in Christ. On that basis, tongues become next to useless but, in comparison, prophecy becomes very valuable. Now it is possible to understand how Paul can rank gifts (12:28), because some gifts more than others are inherently capable of edifying the church. . . .

In a society that values people by their abilities, we will always be tempted to want to use our gifts in order to become a somebody. But God says to us to start with people's needs instead. We each ought to ask what needs doing rather than lining up to get a chance to do what we think we do best. If we can't do the needful things, we will pray that God will provide people who can. When it comes to giving people roles and jobs around our churches, we won't start with those with the gifts; we will start with those who have a genuine commitment to the welfare of others (i.e. love). Such an approach will help us avoid the all-too-frequent pitfall of folk getting resentful because they aren't given the recognition they want for their efforts. Often the best person for the job will be the man or woman with the vision because they have perceived that something is needed or would be useful."

6. Leadership

Jesus is our leader and our leadership in church should be based on the same principles Jesus used to lead his disciples. In regard to this we will look at passages from John chapters 10 and 13 as well as a passage from 1 Peter which is about the way elders should lead.

John 10:11-16

Context: Jesus has healed a man born blind. The Pharisees won't believe it and confront Jesus who tells them that they are guilty of sin because they can see but not believe.

Read John 10:11-16

How does Jesus lead us?

What does Jesus mean by "other sheep that are not of this fold" in verse 16?

How is Jesus going to bring them in?

John 13:1-20

Context: Jesus is cheered into Jerusalem. The crowd had heard that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus talks about his own death and is answered by a voice from heaven but still the Jews would not believe in him.

What is it that Peter doesn't understand?

What aspects of leadership are demonstrated here?

What should our leaders be like?

1 Peter 5:1-3

Context: 1 Peter is about the hope we have in Jesus, holiness, submission, suffering for our faith and this passage gives advice to leaders of the church.

How does someone lead without "domineering" (ESV) or "lording it over" (NIV) others?

Titus 2:11-3:7

Context: Written to Titus and the churches in Crete, Paul gives advice on the qualifications for leaders in the church, home life, Jesus' return, Christian relationships in public life and warns against false teachers. This passage tells us why God's people live godly lives.

Read Titus 2:11-3:7

8. How does God's grace teach us or change us to live godly lives? (This passage doesn't really answer this question but see if you have an answer before reading the article below.)

The following is from an article by Tim Thorburn called Changing People which appeared in *The Briefing* #143 20/9/1994.

How [do] we try to change people? When we want to train people to be good, we humans have only two weapons in our arsenal: **carrots and whips**. Just like trying to get the proverbial donkey moving, we can offer people rewards (carrots) or we can threaten them with punishments (whips).

...
Carrots and whips can never change people's hearts. They only change external behaviour, and even then only for as long as the carrot and whip are in force. Speeding fines can never change people into drivers who want to drive safely; they just keep people watching their rear view mirrors and their wallets.

Most Australians see God as the master of the carrot and whip. By threatening hell upon those who step out of line, and by offering heaven for those who do the right thing, he keeps evil under control and gets some to heaven. That's why he gives us so many rules to keep - so he can crack the whip if we step out of line. Now it is true that one of the incentives God gives us for quitting our rebellion and becoming a Christian is the carrot and whip - to escape his righteous wrath and receive eternal life. But that is not how God continues to relate to us as Christians. . .

God's grace is his undeserved generosity toward us, his determination to act for our good even when we were enemies. It finds its ultimate expression in sending his own Son to give his life to redeem us from hell. It results in our justification - "justified by his grace" (Titus 3:7) - God's pardon which is free to us, but purchased at great cost by Jesus.

God's grace means that no whip remains, because it has already fallen on Jesus. And, by God's grace, we have the carrot in our grasp, having already passed from death to life. We may not have tasted the whole carrot yet (just to push the metaphor!), but it is ours now. God doesn't stand over us, threatening to withdraw the carrot and get the whip back out if we don't quite come up to scratch. If we are justified by grace (and not our efforts) then we can neither earn it *or un-earn it*. . . .

If God frees us [from the carrot and stick scenario], what will stop us likewise sinning freely and endlessly?

The answer is that God's grace changes us. There are three main changes which grace brings about.

Firstly, grace gives us the **freedom** to do good because we want to. As long as I live under the carrot and the whip, I will always be behaving in order to avoid the whip and get the carrot. I will simply continue to be selfish. Even when I serve people, it will be for my benefit and so it won't be genuine love. But if I know that God doesn't relate by carrot and whip, I am free to serve others because they need it. I can do good simply because it is good.

Secondly, grace gives us the **incentive** to be good. There is a logical incentive that comes out of what Christ has done for us. He gave himself for us "to redeem us from all wickedness" (Titus 2:14). If Christ died to redeem me from wickedness, it is pretty illogical to jump back into wickedness. When I wake up to the destructive effect upon me of my wickedness (it brought me under God's wrath in the first place) and on those who share this life with me, and realise that Christ died to rescue me from that whole destructive scene, why would I want to return to it? . . .

If the Spirit has brought you life but the flesh has brought you death, which one will you side with as you decide how to behave? Surely you'll go with the Spirit.

There is also the incentive of **gratitude**: gratitude to God for his amazing grace; gratitude to Christ for his willing sacrifice. . . .

Thirdly, by God's grace we have the **Holy Spirit** (Titus 3:5-6). The Spirit gives us rebirth and renews us, making us new people alive to God. Each of us is a new person who is being changed from the inside out, as God's Spirit transforms us into people who are genuinely loving, patient, kind, gentle and self-controlled. Although our old nature is still alive and kicking, the power of the Spirit is at work creating a new nature in us,

At the heart of God's way of changing us is his grace. Grace is not simply the way we come into God's family; it is the way we live the totality of our lives as Christians. In Paul's words, we live under **the reign of grace** (Rom 5:21). Without grace, sin reigns (aided and abetted by the law), but now grace reigns and it has robbed sin of its power over our lives.

God's way of changing us is not the carrot and whip. **Nor is it by rules and regulations.** As soon as we become Christians, God doesn't throw a whole heap of laws at us; instead he keeps throwing grace at us.

God's approach is very different to how we often treat new Christians. One of the remarkable things about the New Testament is the absence of explicit regulations about how to live. It tells us the sort of lifestyle that God wants and the character that the Spirit is producing, but we don't find detailed rules on how often to go to church, the length that prayers have to be or how much money to put in the plate. . . .

God doesn't force us to do anything - he has taken the whip away. He gives us the choice. Yet, I suspect that most of us (myself included) live as if God doesn't give us this choice. We have lists of all the things that we have to do. . . . But we don't *have to*. If I fail at praying today, God won't kick me out. He won't punish me by not answering my prayers for a week, just to get even.

We are free. The question is, "What do I want to do?" . . . And because I want to do it, I'll discipline myself (with God's strength) to pray. But the discipline doesn't mean my life isn't free, and I need to be careful I don't start to think of it as something I *have* to do.

What's more, **we are free to fail**. So often we won't try things, especially in ministering to others, because we are afraid that we'll muck it up and so get dropped from the team by God. But God has qualified us, so he won't disqualify us. If we muck things up, we can try again till we get it right. The carrot and whip have gone forever.

And isn't this the way we should relate to each other? Instead of using the carrot and whip, attempting to conform people's external behaviour to what we want, shouldn't we use grace (God's and ours) and encouragement and prayer to change them? The aim of ministry is to change people's hearts, not just their behaviour. This is why God's word is central in changing people - because it is the word of God's grace.

The freedom of being a Christian: it is a surprise in many ways, because becoming a Christian involves bowing the knee to Christ and submitting to his rule. It means becoming a slave to the one who owns me by creation and by redemption. But, having submitted, we discover that this king always rules with our best interests at heart. He rules by grace, refusing to coerce or manipulate us. Instead, he sets us free to serve him with all our hearts. We have his favour: we can't lose it or win it, we just have it.

8. Women

Let's take a look at what women can or can't do in church and their role in leadership. Some considerations of the Greek for "men" and "women" have been overlooked in the past so we need to re-examine the appropriate passages.

1 Cor 11:2-16

Context: Immediately before 1 Cor 11 Paul has been writing about idolatry and the issue of eating food that had been sacrificed to idols. Paul writes that Christians have the freedom to eat whatever they want but not to do so if it causes other Christians to stumble. Immediately after 1 Cor 11:2-16 Paul is critical of the Corinthian church for the way they conduct themselves when they have meals together and not considering others' needs. He says it is not the Lord's Supper that they are eating.

Read 1 Cor 11:2-16 keeping in mind that, in the original Greek, there is not one word for "man" and another different word for "husband" (similarly for woman/wife). The one word "gune" is used for both "woman" and "wife" and the one word "aner" is used for both "man" and "husband". The Bible editors have to decide when to print the English word "man" and when to print "husband" (similarly for woman/wife). In this passage the NIV uses the words "man" and "woman" and never "husband" or "wife" but, for this same passage the ESV mixes it up, sometimes using "man", sometimes using "husband", sometimes "woman" and sometimes "wife".

1. (a) What is the main point of the passage?

(b) What does it mean to be the "head" of someone?

(c) Who is the head of whom - who is the head of a man?

- who is the head of a woman?

- who is the head of all women?

- who is the head of a wife?

Does this apply in all situations or just when we have church?

2. (a) From v5 what are women/wives allowed to do in church?

(b) What is New Testament prophecy? (see note in Study 2 Meetings).

1 Cor 14:26-40

Context: Before 1 Cor 14:26-40 Paul has been discussing the relative merits of speaking in tongues and prophecy. After 1 Cor 14 he goes on to remind them of the gospel and of Jesus' resurrection in particular.

Note, by way of background, that a husband's headship over his wife was a legal fact and upheld as desirable in (all?) social contexts and women, especially the poor, often took part in outlandish (and noisy!) religious cults and practices. Some provided occasional forums for venting frustration with male dominance in the home.

Read 1 Cor 14:26-40

3. What does everyone have when we come together (v26)?

4. Given the answers to questions 2 (a) and 3, and thinking of "women" as "wives" and "men" as "husbands", under what possible circumstances should wives remain silent in church (v34)?

1 Tim 2:8-15

Context: Paul is giving advice to his companion and friend, Timothy, who has been left in Ephesus to stop the false teachers. Paul writes about the gospel and how his own life has been saved by it. He writes about prayer and the conduct of men and women / husbands and wives. Paul gives advice on the necessary attributes for overseers and deacons and on how to handle Timothy's authority, false teachers, young and old, widows, elders, slaves and masters, money and the rich. When we come to v8 Paul has been writing that he has been appointed a preacher, apostle and teacher of the gospel.

Note that the traditional understanding of 1 Tim 2 is that it is about church but considering that "man" can be interchanged with "husband" and "woman" with "wife" and considering the variety of topics Paul covers in this letter, this passage could be understood as relating to home life.

Read 1 Tim 2:8-15

5. (a) Given the less traditional understanding of the passage, what is Paul trying to say?

(b) Compare the answer above with the traditional understanding of the passage?

Read 1 Tim 3

6. (a) What are the qualifications for overseers and deacons?

(b) If someone doesn't have any one of those qualifications (e.g. not married) does that mean he can't serve as an overseer or deacon?

(c) What is at the heart of the matter for the qualification for a overseer/deacon?

(d) Compare your answer in part (a) with the qualifications necessary for ministers in our church?

Background (from Mark Strom, unpublished paper, Dec 1991):

- 3 writers, Plato, Plutarch and Musonius hold "in tension" equality among the sexes, an approval of women praying, prophesying and serving as priests and a disregard of women as teachers.
- Women had no immediate legal rights but they could and did attain positions of great social and political influence.
- Poor women had little access to education (neither did poor men). Women of higher social status could be full members of the "colleges" and were encouraged to do so.
- Paul, the apostle, and others like him, functioned as evangelists, prophets and teachers as they traveled the world planting churches. These "Paul types" enlisted co-workers to accompany them and to go to other places without Paul. They did the same things as Paul with the possible exception of "apostolic" things like testifying as an eyewitness of Jesus' resurrection, perform signs and wonders and give the Holy Spirit. Women were included among the co-workers (Rom 16) and, most likely, among the apostles (Rom 16:7).
- Priscilla (Prisca) and Aquilla are the best example of wife/husband co-workers. Both teach Apollos (Acts 18:18-28) and probably lead the church in their house (Rom 16:3-4).
- Paul and the co-workers started gatherings as soon as people were converted. These met in the homes of converts who would have a social status somewhere between "middle class" (free men/freedmen with trades and/or business interests) through to the ruling classes. Often the churches began and/or continued in women's houses (possibly but not necessarily wealthy widows). It would be culturally acceptable for such women to take a leading role in the gatherings.
- Luke and Paul sometimes used the terms brother and diakonos ("deacon") to describe the co-workers as distinct from the gatherings. This is probably the intent in calling Phoebe a diakonos (Rom 16:1-2).

7. (a) To sum up, what can or can't women do in church?

(b) What areas of a woman's role in church are you still uncertain about?

9. Evangelism

To a non-Christian our efforts in evangelism often make them feel like they are being Bible bashed or manipulated. While stressing the importance of speaking the gospel (Rom 10) we can be a little more subtle (John 13) than we have been in the past.

John 13:34-35

Context: It is close to the time of Jesus' death. Jesus says he is going away to a place where the disciples cannot follow him. He says they are to love one another.

Rom 10:12-17

Context: In this section of Romans Paul is particularly focusing on the salvation of the Jews. He says it doesn't matter who you are - everyone who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved.

Read John 13:34-35 and Rom 10:12-17

1. From Rom 10:12-17 how does Paul describe the sequence of events leading up to a person's salvation?

2. How does this sequence fit in with John 13:34-35?

3. How do you think we can do evangelism if we start a church designed to help mature Christians grow?

10. Prayer

Prayer is so important in the life of a Christian (Phil 4) but do we change anything by praying? We will look at some passages that seem to suggest we do and some that suggest we don't. Tony Payne sums it up for us in a section from his Bible study booklet, "Bold I Approach".

Phil 4:4-7

Context: Paul writes about Jesus and how the Philippian church should reflect his light. Paul encourages the church to work towards maturity and warns against false teachers. Paul tells them to rejoice, pray and practise godliness.

Read Phil 4:4-7

1. What should we pray about?

Ps 139:15-16

Context: The psalmist marvels at the personal knowledge that God has of him and enjoys the security he has in God. The psalmist hates the people who hate God and prays for their destruction.

Read Ps 139:15-16

2. Can we change God's will?

Read **Gen 18:16-33, Ex 9:27-33, Num 12:1-15, 2 Kings 20:1-6, Amos 7:1-6, Matt 18:19-20, Luke 18:1-8**

3. Can we change God's will by our prayers?

Job 42:7-9

Context: Job's three "friends", Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, have been arguing with Job to explain/blame why all the disasters have happened to Job. God intervenes and Job replies with humility and submission (42:1-6).

Read Job 42:7-9

4. How does Job's prayer fit into God's plans?

5. Rather than changing God's will, how do our prayers fit into God's plans?

From Bold I approach by Tony Payne p 35: "Although mysteries of God's sovereignty and human action will always be somewhat mysterious to us, this much is clear - God uses our prayers as part of his work in the world. God does not *need* us to do anything for him - and that goes for everything we do as Christians, whether teaching, preaching, evangelizing, helping, serving or praying. The amazing thing is that God lovingly includes us in his plans all the same. To the enormous privilege of having access to his presence, he adds the privilege of participating with him in his historic plans for the whole world."

6. "Prayer is how I build my relationship with God. When I pray, I get close to him, and when he answers my prayers I know that he loves me." What is wrong with this statement?

11. Lord's Supper

1. Why do we have the Lord's Supper?

Based on two articles by John Woodhouse, we need to re-examine traditional ideas on the Lord's Supper. We will look at how the Passover relates to Jesus and the relevant passages on the last supper Jesus had with his disciples.

Ex 12:1-14

Context: God's people are in slavery in Egypt. Moses and Aaron have asked Pharaoh to let their people go so that they can worship God in the dessert. Pharaoh refuses and God sends 9 plagues on the Egyptians. God tells Moses and Aaron what his people should do when the 10th plague comes.

Luke 22:7-23

Context: Jesus is in Jerusalem for the last Passover before his death.
Read Ex 12:1-14 and Luke 22:7-23

3. What are the similarities between the Passover and Jesus' death?

4. What were the Jews remembering when they had the Passover each year?

5. What is Jesus asking the disciples to remember?

The following comes from John Woodhouse's two articles in *The Briefing* #123 & #124 "What is this meal?" 23/10/1993 and "The body of the Lord, The Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians" 4/11/1993:

It is sometimes argued that the Greek present tense in "Do this" indicates that Jesus was referring to an ongoing practice. This is too much to read into the tense of a verb. The words make perfect sense as an instruction to the disciples on that occasion, without any suggestion that what they were to "do" that night was to be repeated. Jesus was telling his disciples, on the occasion of that Passover, when it was the Jewish custom to remember the exodus, to remember *him*. It is a paradox, of course: to remember the one who was still with them but since the Passover was already a meal of remembrance, Jesus' words shift the focus of their remembrance from the exodus to the new exodus that is to take place in him. The emphasis would then be "Do this in remembrance of *me*", rather than "Do this in *remembrance* of me".

Why did Matthew and Mark (and possibly Luke - there is some doubt whether the words belonged to the text of Luke's Gospel originally) [see Matt 26:17-30, Mark 14:12-26, Luke 22:7-23] not consider it important to record the words in question? If the Lord's Supper was a widespread practice of the churches when these evangelists were writing, it is surprising that they omit the only words that supposedly made the Last Supper into "the institution of the Lord's Supper".

1 Cor 11:17-22

Context: Paul has been writing about Christians having the freedom to eat whatever they want but not to do so if it causes other Christians to stumble. He then writes about women showing proper respect towards their husbands before changing to the following topic.

Read 1 Cor 11:17-22

In v 20 the Greek can be translated literally as "When you come together, it is not to eat a supper belonging to the Lord..."

6. What are they doing that does not belong to the Lord?

Read 1 Cor 11:22-34

7. Why does Paul quote Jesus' actions at the Last Supper?

8. What has Jesus' death got to do with the way the Corinthians were eating meals together?

9. What is the "unworthy manner" in v 27 that Paul writes about?

10. How could eating meals together be a demonstration of what the gospel is all about?

Again from John Woodhouse:

Taking note of the context of the passage, Paul quotes this tradition in order to teach the Corinthians not to be selfish and greedy at their meals. At Christian meals we are to remember Jesus and his death. How can you claim to be eating a Christian meal (a supper of the Lord) and not care for one another? In other words, the point of Paul's reference to the last supper is not Jesus' act of institution. The problem in Corinth was not that they were getting a ritual wrong. Paul's point is that the last supper shows up how wrong the Corinthian's *behaviour* was at their meals (note the logical connection between v. 22 and v. 23: "For ...").

The silence of the rest of the New Testament, and the different wording of the Gospel accounts of the last supper are good reasons not to jump to the conclusion that Jesus was here instituting a sacramental meal. [A sacramental meal is an occasion in which the focus is on some symbolic elements. In the Lord's Supper the bread and wine are specific symbols of Jesus' death.] The key expressions are "Do this in remembrance of me" (exactly the same words as in Luke 22:19), "whenever you drink it", and "whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup". Does this mean "whenever you re-enact in some sense this last supper", or "whenever you eat bread and drink from the cup together (i.e. as often as Christians share a meal together) you are to remember the basis of your fellowship, Jesus death, and act accordingly, and thus demonstrate the power of his death until he comes again."?

11. If it is not certain that Jesus instituted a sacramental meal, what attitude should we adopt towards the Lord's Supper?

12. What should be our attitude when we have meals together?

12. Money

The tithe

Read Lev 27:30-33, Num 18:21-24, Deut 12:6-7, 14:22-29

From Cash Values by Tony Payne p 30:

The Israelites were to put aside ten percent of their produce and offer it to the Lord. This ten percent was, in effect, a form of national taxation. It served as income for the Levites, who were set apart to do God's work in the temple. There were various regulations surrounding the collection and use of these offerings, such as the desirability of having a good party out of some of it, and the importance of providing for the poor, the widows and the fatherless. . . . These laws relating to 'ten percenting' are not more or less binding on Christians today than any of the other Old Testament laws, such as the food regulations or the laws regarding ritual uncleanness and animal sacrifices. . . . There is nothing in the New Testament that commands, or even implies, that ten percent (net or gross) should be the standard for Christian giving.

Before working out how we should give and to whom, we need to look at our responsibilities. Check out each of the 5 passages below?

1 Tim 5:3-18

Context: Paul is giving advice to his companion and friend, Timothy, who has been left in Ephesus to stop the false teachers. Paul writes about the gospel and how his own life has been saved by it. He writes about prayer and the conduct of men and women / husbands and wives. Paul gives advice on the necessary attributes for overseers and deacons and on how to handle Timothy's authority, false teachers, young and old, widows, elders, slaves and masters, money and the rich. This passage gives advice on how to handle widows.

Read 1 Tim 5:3-18

1. From the specifics of this passage can we get a general idea of some of our responsibilities?

1 Thes 4:9-12

Context: 1 Thessalonians gives advice on Christian behaviour and the return of Jesus. Chapter 4 begins with instructions on how to please God, abstain from sexual immorality, love one another and work.

Read 1 Thes 4:9-12

2. What are our responsibilities?

2 Thes 3:10-13

Context: 2 Thessalonians reinforces the teaching of the first letter, offers encouragement in the face of persecution and clears up some misunderstandings about Christ's return. This passage is from a section giving instructions to idle/lazy people.

Read 2 Thes 3:10-13

3. What are our responsibilities?

1 Cor 9:3-15

Context: 1 Corinthians was written to help the Corinthian Christians with a number of problems and issues that they were struggling with i.e. divisions within their group, wisdom and foolishness, sexual immorality, lawsuits among believers, marriage and singleness, food sacrificed to idols, Paul's apostleship, idolatry, headship, eating meals together, spiritual gifts and the resurrection. This passage is from a section dealing with Paul's apostleship.

Read 1 Cor 9:3-15

4. From the specifics of this passage can we get an idea of some of our responsibilities?

Rom 13:1-7

Context: Paul has been writing about salvation for all of God's people which includes Israel (ch 11) even though they are hardened "in part" (Rom 11:25). Paul moves on in ch 12 to write about the proper response to this salvation from God - devotion to God, use of gifts, love, facing persecution and evil.

Read Rom 13:1-7

5. What are our responsibilities?

6. What other responsibilities do we have that will effect our giving?

1 Cor 16:1-4

Context: After writing about the resurrection in ch 15 Paul gives suggestions for the collection for the mother church in Jerusalem which had been suffering for a long time because of a severe famine.

Read 1 Cor 16:1-4

7. What practical principles should govern the Corinthians giving?

2 Cor 8:1-15

Context: Paul has had his ups and downs in dealing with the Corinthian church and writes this letter to explain his motives and actions and express relief at their change in attitude. Paul compares the old covenant with the new, writes about the implications of being reconciled with God and is happy that his stern letter led them to repentance. In ch 8 he moves on to the matter of their gift to the church in Jerusalem.

2 Cor 9:6-15

Context: Paul writes about who will carry the collection and he wants the Corinthians to be prepared to make the gift so that it is ready when they arrive.

Read 2 Cor 8:1-15 and 9:6-15

8. What motivations are there for giving?

9. How is our attitude to giving related to our understanding of the gospel?

10. How do you determine how much to give?

11. What is God's attitude toward giving?

12. How does God bless those who give, and why?

Again from Tony Payne, p 36 & 37:

These marvellous verses in 2 Corinthians 8-9 are all the more marvellous because of their paradoxes - they speak of begging for the privilege of giving money away (which is not the kind of begging you normally see); they speak of One who became poor to make others rich through his poverty; they speak of God repaying the generous giver with more riches . . . so that he or she can give even more away.

This last paradox is perhaps the most profound of all: that the key to true riches is not to hoard wealth, or to spend it on our pleasures, but to give it away. God blesses the generous, cheerful giver by providing more resources and opportunities for giving. In becoming like Christ who gave away the riches of heaven so that we might ultimately share in them, we receive far more than we ever give away.