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Contents

2015 Introduction

Part 1 – God Centred

Session 1 – A Brand New Start

Session 2 – Start as you mean to go on

Session 3 – Getting to Know God

Session 4 – Getting to Know God More

Part 2 – Purpose Driven

Session 5 – God has a Purpose

Session 6 – A Purpose Driven Church: Our MISSION

Session 7 – A Purpose Driven Church: Our FELLOWSHIP

Session 8 – God's Purpose Shapes My Life

Part 3 – People Empowering

Session 9 – Know Your Power Supply

Session 10 – Know Yourself

Session 11 – Playing My Part

Session 12 – Taking Responsibility

2015 INTRODUCTION



Welcome to DISCOVERY, a twelve-part course to help you explore Christianity.

It has been written with the new Christian in mind and is equally useful as a personal study guide or as a group study curriculum. The more discussion you can engage in with other Christian friends about this material the better.

DISCOVERY was originally written in 2004 by Pastor Stephen Matthew when the *Abundant Life Church*, Bradford, was experiencing rapid growth under the leadership of Senior Pastor Paul Scanlon and his team. It was designed to take the timeless, foundational truths of Christianity and link them to the church's three core values of being *God Centred, Purpose Driven* and *People Empowering*. That is why the material is presented in the way it is. Each core value has four lessons attached to it.

In 2012 the *Abundant Life Church* changed its name to *LIFE Church* to coincide with a transition in the senior leadership of the church, which is now taking it into its next season of growth and development. The vision statement, mission statement and core values described in this course are therefore not as visible today as they were in the period between 1999-2012. However, they still underpin the vision, mission and culture of the current church but are simply expressed differently by the new leadership team.

Finally, where used for group study, the accompanying FREE publication *DISCOVERY Outlines: Flexible outlines for teachers* will be a helpful tool for the group leader.

I pray these simple lessons equip and enlighten you as you begin your personal exploration of the adventure we call Christianity.

Stephen Matthew



Part 1

God Centred

Introduction

These first four lessons explore the foundations of living as a follower of Christ – or of being a Christian.

Today the word ‘Christian’ means different things to different people. For example in many cultures it simply describes someone who is not a Muslim or Hindu, and has even become part of the name of political parties across the world. These broad generalisations are unhelpful and for that reason we often refer to ourselves as being ‘Christ-followers’ to better indicate that when we say we are ‘Christian’ we are actually talking about our personal relationship with God.

Christ is the centre of Christianity. It starts, continues and ends with him. It is all about Jesus and your relationship with him... and Jesus is God, something we will explore further on in the course. So when we say these first four lessons are about being ‘God Centred’ we also mean Christ Centred. It’s the same thing.

The key to a strong start to your life of following Jesus is to be totally God Centred. So read on...

Session 1 – A Brand New Start

Session 2 – Start As You Mean To Go On

Session 3 – Getting To Know God

Session 4 – Getting To Know God More



Session 1 A Brand New start

Congratulations!

Becoming a Christian – a follower of Christ – is the best thing you could ever have done. It is the beginning of a whole new life. It gives you a brand new start! The Bible puts it this way:

'If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!'
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

Understanding this is really important otherwise you may see your new-found faith as something you simply bolt on to your old life, the bulk of which remains the same. But it is much more than that.

If Christianity is simply an 'add-on' to your life, you will treat God and your spiritual life as just one compartment of your life – and that leads to all kinds of wrong conclusions about the Christian life. Instead, you must see your Christianity as a complete new start, one that affects everything about you. It will influence the way you think, act, speak, relate to people, do your work ... and more.

Of course, this will not happen all at once, but the seeds of a fundamental life change were sown the moment you put your faith in Christ and became a Christian.

Salvation in Pictures

To show you what I mean have a look at the following pictures used in the Bible to describe the process of becoming a Christian:

- **From old to new:**

*'If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; **the old has gone, the new has come!**'*
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

- **From lost to found:**

*'For the Son of Man [Jesus] came to seek and **to save what was lost.**'*
(Luke 19:10)

*'I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord ... I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ'
(Philippians 3:8)*

○ **From darkness to light:**

*'For once **you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord.** So live as people of light! For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true'.
(Ephesians 5:8-9 NLT)*

*'This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin'.
(1 John 1:5-7 NLT)*

○ **From death to life:**

*Once **you were dead** because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature ... But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, **that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life** when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!).
(Ephesians 2:1-5)*

○ **From being blind to seeing:**

*'I [Jesus] have come into this world, so that the **blind will see.**'
(John 9:39)*

Your Story

Everyone who becomes a follower of Christ has a story to tell.

If you are reading this with a friend or in a small group, take a few minutes to tell your story! You could include:

- How did you become a Christian?
- What events led you to the point of decision?
- How did you feel?
- What changes have you already noticed in your life?

Swap stories in your group and encourage one another by pointing out the changes you see in each other since putting your faith in Christ.

If you are reading this alone, then write your story down as a personal encouragement.

Just what happened?

All the pictures we looked at above describe what has happened to us. We do indeed have a brand new start in life as a Christian. But HOW did it happen? It is important you understand this because the principles that were at work in the process of you becoming a Christian will continue to work in your life as you grow as a Christian. The two most important ones are explained next.

The Bible uses two words to describe the process of becoming a Christian that you need to understand. They are *repentance* and *faith*.

○ **The Basics of Repentance:**

To repent simply means to *change your mind*, to turn 180 degrees. It is a turning *from* one way of thinking, living and acting, and a turning *towards* God's way of thinking living and acting.

One of the best examples of repentance was given to us by Jesus, who told a story we call the parable of the Prodigal Son. You can read it in *Luke 15:11-20*.

In this story we see that true repentance involves three steps:

1. **Recognition of sin** – the son had to reach a place of recognising that in his Father's eyes (a picture of God) he had done wrong.
2. **Remorse for wrong doing** – he then expressed genuine sorrow for the wrong he had done.
3. **Redirection of life** – finally he took responsibility for his actions and made a decision to change the direction of his life.

You will never need to repent again in this initial sense. You are now saved; you have turned to God and are with him forever.

However, you may need to apply the principle of repentance again if you sin. God says that if as a Christian we sin – which will be largely unintentional because we genuinely want to live a godly life now – we must confess our sin and he will forgive us (*1 John 1:9*). We do this because we feel genuine sorrow, a sorrow that leads us to true repentance, change and freedom from any lingering guilt (*see 2 Corinthians 7:9-11*). In this sense, we lay a foundation of repentance in our lives, always being quick to turn back to God's way if we stray from it.

People who continue to sin habitually after claiming to be Christians are probably not genuinely saved (*see 1 John 2:3-6, 3:6*). In fact Jesus said that the ultimate test of whether a person is a follower of Christ is that they obey his teaching and the fruit of that is seen in their lives (*see John 14:21-24, Matthew 7:16-20*).

○ **The Basics of Faith:**

Everyone has faith in something or someone. It is where they turn when the ‘chips are down’ and things go wrong in life. It is where they look for the answers to life’s ultimate questions. We all choose to believe someone, even if it is simply in our own personal judgement.

The Christian has put their faith in God. They believe that what God says is the ultimate truth about everything: people, life, death, the universe, etc.

So, faith is simply ***believing what God says***. That belief becomes a felt reality, and it is that deep conviction we call faith. What God says in the Bible becomes our guiding conviction even when we cannot fully explain or understand things with our human mind. For example, we believe God created the world simply because he claims to have (*Hebrews 11:3*). And in the same way, we believe Jesus died to give us a brand new life we did not deserve or could ever have earned. Faith is the essence of the Christian life and right at the core of living it successfully. In fact the Bible says we ‘*live by faith*’ (*Romans 1:17*).

Faith is so ‘certain’ for one good reason: it is rooted in what God says. Our faith is in the one speaking the truth we believe. God is unchanging, all-knowing, all-powerful and cannot lie. He is the absolute source of all life and truth. That is what makes faith so certain (*Hebrews 11:1*).

So, faith is ***believing what God says***, and is certain because of ***who God is***. This also teaches you where faith comes from: it ***comes from hearing God’s word***. That is why it is so important for Christians to read the Bible (God’s written word) and be with other Christians in Church where they can discuss and apply that word to life together.

Conclusion

Being a Christian is the best possible way to live. It has put us back into relationship with the God who created this world and everything in it.

Take some time to pray and thank God for saving you, for giving you a brand new start. Thank him for the people who introduced you to Jesus and determine in your heart to continue to grow a strong Christian life.



Session 2

Start As You Mean To Go On

The way we start things is important. If we start well, we will probably continue well. If we start slowly or reluctantly we will probably always drag our feet in that area of life!

God understands this principle and so asks every new Christian to make a strong start to their Christian life and then to continue with the same strength and enthusiasm. So how you start really matters. It sends a signal to God, your fellow Christians and most importantly to yourself, that you mean business with God and are determined to have a strong start.

Start right

As we saw in Lesson 1, the Christian life starts with a decision to repent and put your faith in Jesus. In that simple act of faith, Jesus takes all our sin from us and gives to us the righteousness of Christ. It is the great exchange: our sin for Christ's life. The Bible says:

'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.' (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Having put your faith in God, what comes next? Well, the Bible teaches that a strong Christian life is built on a very clear foundation. That foundation is that we repent, put our faith in Jesus and then do something to demonstrate we have done so. That 'something' is to be baptised.

When Peter preached in the Bible he said:

'Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' (Acts 2:38)

This shows just how closely baptism is related to your decision to repent. God expects all new Christians to be baptised as part of their initial commitment to Christ. In fact baptism is the proper response to believing in Christ (as opposed to putting your hand up in the meeting, which may have been your first step towards it). And baptism is part of the salvation process. So much so that in another part of the Bible Paul told his listeners to

'be baptised and have your sins washed away' (Acts 22:16).

Why baptism?

Why, then, do we get baptised as Christians? Simply, because God tells us to!

When we give our lives to Christ, we make him 'Lord' or boss of our lives. In fact the Bible teaches us that the essence of giving your life to Christ is to say 'Jesus is Lord':

'If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. (Romans 10:9-10)

Making Jesus 'Lord' is what saves you. It is your personal acknowledgement that he can run your life better than you! He is your creator, the one who knows how to live life best. He is your saviour too, the one who provided a way for you to be reconciled to God. So from now on, the best way to live is to do what God says. Our obedience to God shows we are truly his follower.

The first command Jesus gave to his new followers was to 'be baptised' (*Acts 3:38*). He sent out his followers to tell others the good news saying:

'Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you'. (Matthew 28:19-20)

Baptism is, therefore, seen by God as the normal and appropriate way to announce your new Christian faith. It is the first step of obedience we make in response to his commands.

The more we look at what the Bible teaches about baptism, the more we realise it is not just a piece of theatre! It carries with it some very real spiritual blessings which we take hold of by faith at the time of our baptism.

Life-changing drama

Baptism literally means 'to dip' or immerse. This becomes important when we understand what that 'dipping' represents.

Being put underwater for a few seconds is a picture; a drama that illustrates what is going on in the believing heart. The Bible puts it this way:

'All of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death. We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.'
(*Romans 6:3-8*)

When we are baptised, we identify with Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. He died and was buried, and by faith we have died to our old way of life and we are burying it in the water (drowning the old you!). Jesus then rose from the dead, and we come up out of the

water as a symbol that we are starting a ‘resurrection life’, a brand new life as a Christian. The old you figuratively goes down the plug hole or is washed down the river (depending on where you were baptised!) and the new you climbs out to live a new life with Christ.

This is a powerful act of drama, filled with promise, and when done in true faith it releases a deep conviction in the new Christian’s heart that *‘The old has gone and the new has come’* (2 Corinthians 5:17) as we saw in lesson 1.

If you haven’t been baptised in water yet, you need to be! It is a life-changing experience, a once-for-all statement to everyone that you are serious about your decision to be a Christian.

As you can see, biblical baptism is nothing to do with the practice of christening babies found in some churches today. This is purely a church tradition done in the hope that in adult life the child will make a decision to follow Christ. But it is not the believer’s baptism as we are describing here. So, even if you were baptised or christened as a baby, you should still be baptised in water by immersion once you become a Christian.

Let’s get practical

What happens at a water baptism?

Much depends on the church community you are a part of. There are no fixed rules or formulas beyond the simple steps given in the Bible. What really matters is what goes on in the person’s heart but in most churches today something like this will happen:

- You will be **dipped under water** by some fellow Christians. It may be in a tank in your church building, a river, the sea or even in someone’s bath! Anywhere deep enough to immerse you.
- It will be **done in public** and is a great opportunity to demonstrate your new-found faith to friends and family if it can be arranged for them to attend.
- Just before being baptised you will be **asked to confirm that you have put your faith in Jesus**. You are then baptised in response to that declaration of faith. The person baptising you will say something like ‘I baptise you in the name of the father, the son and the Holy Spirit’ being the words Jesus gave to his disciples in Matthew 28:21.
- In some churches you are given special robes to wear. It doesn’t really matter what you wear but do bear in mind that white clothes in particular become see-through when wet.

Next steps

Find out when your church is holding its next water baptism and get your name on the list. By so doing, you are ratifying your faith in Christ, taking a step of obedience to your new Lord and giving your Christian life a proper start. You are starting as you mean to go on!



Session 3

Getting to Know God

Being a successful Christian is all about developing a personal relationship with God.

We are not talking about following a religion here. Religion is organised spirituality, usually consisting of rules and regulations that people follow in the hope that God will accept them. This is not what the Bible teaches. It teaches that by faith we *are* accepted by God the moment we put our faith in Christ. From that point on, the Christian life is all about deepening our relationship with God and living in the light of that relationship.

Relationships develop

All relationships develop by *spending time together*, and what is true of our human relationships is also true of our relationship with God.

Over time you get to know a person really well. You gradually get to know how they will respond in certain situations, their preferences, likes and dislikes, their favourite things and the things they hate.

Your relationship with God is just the same. As your relationship develops you get to know what God loves and what he hates; you discover how he will react in a given situation and his attitude to people, their actions and things that happen in the world. You gradually discover how to live in a way that pleases the Lord.

Being a Christian puts you in relationship with God. In fact, it places you in God's family. We read:

'You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ'. (Galatians 3:26-27)

So, as someone who has repented, put their faith in Christ and been baptised, you are in God's family. You are in a special relationship with God as one of his children.

But just being in a relationship does not mean anything in real terms. Many family members have a very poor relationship with each other, and the same can be true of Christians and their heavenly father. Our challenge is to develop a deep working relationship with God, to become his friend and well as his child. Someone of whom it can be said, *'they are just like their Dad!'*

In this lesson and the next, we will explore the *two* main ways we get to know God better:

- **By reading the Bible**, which tells us all about God and how he relates to people
- **By talking with God** and spending time with him – which is prayer

We will cover the first in this lesson:

Getting to know God by reading the Bible

God makes himself known to people in a variety of ways. For example, through the creation, which speaks of his greatness and draws people towards him as a benevolent creator we should try to get to know. In fact the Bible indicates that the creation alone should be enough to attract people to God:

'Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.' (Romans 1:20) (also see Psalm 19:1-4)

But God went further than that. He sent Jesus to deal with our sin problem and he has also given us the Bible as a written record of his dealings with humanity, which is essentially the story of God wanting to restore relationship with people. So God has gone a long way to reach to us.

The Bible is an awesome book, unlike any other that exists. More than anything else, **it explains God to us**. So if you want to get to know God better you **MUST** read the Bible! Not because anyone says you should but because you want to. Bible reading must be driven by a desire to know God more and to deepen your relationship with him.

At first sight it is a big book! And it will take you a long time to fully understand. But that's not a problem. You have the rest of your life to explore it and to develop the adventure that is your relationship with God.

As Christians we believe that:

'There's nothing like the written Word of God for showing you the way to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.'
(2 Timothy 3:16-17 *The Message*).

All of the Bible is useful for something but some parts are more helpful than others in the early stages of your Christian life. That's why it is so important you are in a Church where older Christians can advise and help you in this regard.

Demystifying the Bible

The Bible is seen by some as being just too thick; it's got too many words in it! And it is certainly too complicated for them to tackle. So they sit in church each week living off things other people teach them from the Bible... at least they hope it's from the Bible! And there lies the danger. Every Christian must be reading it for themselves, learning from it, deepening their understanding of God and his ways ... and what the preacher brings on a Sunday is the added bonus, not the main thing.

Let's explain a few things to help you get your head into the Bible:

- **The Bible is Unique:** The Bible is like no other book in the world. It is the vehicle of God's life to us. As we read it, the same Holy Spirit who lives in us and who directed the Bible writers, helps us to connect with the truth we are reading about God and how he wants us to live. So you will get something from it.
- **The Bible has two halves:** It is laid out in 2 sections we call the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament covers the period before Jesus came and the New Testament the period from Jesus onwards. There is clear progression between the two and an understanding of both is eventually needed to understand the full scheme of things.

Putting it simply, the Old Testament shows that people cannot successfully have a relationship with God because of their sin. They fail constantly. Sin separates us from God. So sin is the problem. But God wanted a relationship with people, so he sent Jesus to deal with the problem. This is anticipated in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New. To use a picture from the Bible, the Old Testament was just a 'shadow' of the real thing - the 'substance' - which is Jesus and the teaching of the New Testament (*Hebrews 10:1*).

- **The Bible is 66 books:** Though presented as a single book, it is actually 66 pieces of writing collected together. Each has a contribution to make to the overall scheme of things. The books were written hundreds of years apart from each other by a range of human authors, yet they have a sense of unity and consistent themes from start to finish, which is part of the Bible's amazing uniqueness. It is either a massive coincidence or God was the real author of the books. And we believe the latter.

The various books represent different types of literature. There are 3 main types:

- *History books* - The Story line which is contained in just 22 books.
 - *Prophecy books* - These record what God was saying about events on earth at particular times in history: 18 books.
 - *Books of Experience* - Which teach us about the experience of individuals and the Church. These include books sometimes called the books of wisdom, poetry and the New Testament letters: 26 books.
- **The Bible is Food:** The Bible is more than words and teachings to apply. It is the 'word of life' to us who believe in God. Reading and thinking about the Bible is essential to good spiritual health and growth. In fact the Bible works in our life like:

Bread - 'It takes more than bread to stay alive. It takes a steady stream of words from God's mouth'. (Matthew 4:4 The Message)

Milk - Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good (1 Peter 2:2-3)

Bread and milk are staple foods, everyday foods, not luxuries. By describing God's word this way, he is teaching us that we need to read it daily to stay spiritually fed, strong and growing.

- **The Bible is a Teacher:** It teaches us about God; what God loves and hates; appropriate behaviour and attitudes for the Christian... and much more. Living a God-centred life involves getting to know what God likes and dislikes, and living accordingly. This takes time but will gradually influence how we think, feel and act in every situation life presents to us.

The practicalities

1. Get yourself a Bible:

They come in lots of versions simply because the original Bible was written in Hebrew and Greek, so we are reading a translation into English. Get a version that is translated in modern readable English like the New International Version (NIV), the New Living Translation (NLT) or the Message (MSG). At *Abundant Life Church / LIFE Church* we tend to use NIV when we are preaching.

2. Find your way around:

Use the *index* to help you find your way around your Bible. It can be helpful to get one with a *Concordance* at the back – this is an easy way to find verses with key words you may be looking for. Get a Christian friend to show you how to use it. Also, check out www.biblegateway.com and the digital app *YouVersion*, which are free web based bible study sites. There you can read lots of versions, search for key words and themes and find reading plans to guide your personal study.

3. Read a little regularly:

Make it your goal to read a section of your Bible regularly. Some people like to use one of the many daily reading plans. Check out 'Every Day With Jesus' or 'Word For Today'. Again, ASK your Christian friends for some guidance on this and you will soon be discovering that reading the Bible is great fun and deepens your relationship with God



Session 4

Getting to Know God More

This lesson further develops the point we made in the previous one, which is that being a Christian is all about developing a *relationship* with God. That relationship develops by spending time together and finding out as much as you can about him. We do this in a number of ways but primarily:

- *By reading the Bible* which teaches us all about God – explored in the last session
- *By talking with God*, which we call prayer – which we explore in this one

What better way to get to know someone than by talking with them!

What's more, we will explore it by reading two passages of the Bible together, so you continue to understand that reading it is the main way we get to know God better.

What is prayer?

But first let's be clear what prayer is.

People from a religious background sometimes treat prayer as a set of ritualistic words they have to repeat to attract God's blessing or to be heard by God. It thus becomes a formula and essentially boring – what Jesus once called 'empty repetition'. This is not true prayer.

Prayer is best described as *talking with God*. Notice I said 'with' God, not talking 'to' God. Prayer is a conversation, a process of speaking and listening. It is an expression of your relationship with him. Just like you chat with your friends, so you chat with God. It does not have to be expressed in special words – just your normal way of speaking. God wants to hear your heart, your feelings, thoughts, fears and aspirations. Remember, he wants a relationship with you.

The Bible has lots to say about prayer and we read of people praying right the way through it. So for this lesson we have to be selective! But we will start with what Jesus taught about prayer:

What Jesus said about prayer ...

Read the following passage through:

Matthew 6:5-13

'And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹ *This, then, is how you should pray:*

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

¹⁰ *your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

¹¹ *Give us today our daily bread.*

¹² *Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

¹³ *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'*

Now, think your way through this passage a little more carefully:

- **Verse 5-6** This teaches us that prayer is normally a private thing, between you and God. It is deeply personal. There is no benefit in praying loud, fancy prayers to impress others. Even if they are impressed, God isn't!
- **Verse 7** Effective prayer is not about the quality or quantity of your words but is simply you sharing your heart with God as you would someone else you love and trust.
- **Verse 8** This is important. God knows your situation already! So why pray at all? Because God has established things relationally and our prayer involves God in a process with us. We draw him in, asking him to be with us, to give us wisdom, strength and the breakthroughs we need – or whatever else you may be praying about. God wants to work with us 'according to our faith' in his ability to act and work with us. Prayer involves God in the process.
- **Verse 9** Prayer exalts God; it honours, praises and gives thanks to him.
- **Verse 10** Prayer calls heaven to earth. It connects with all that God is in heaven and asks that it will be outworked in our earthly life today. God's kingdom (the sphere of his rule) comes to earth as we live our lives under his kingship. So this is a very practical request.
- **Verse 11** Prayer deals with your immediate needs. God is interested in the detail of your life today.
- **Verse 12** Prayer confirms and affirms that we have forgiven others and are living in good relationship with people.

- **Verse 13** Prayer protects us from evil. A conscious awareness of God in your daily life, maintained through prayer, protects you from making bad choices and falling into sin.

All these points are confirmed elsewhere in the Bible's teaching on prayer, so watch out for them as you read and learn more about how to live a successful Christian life.

Now let's read what one of the greatest Christian leaders in the New Testament had to say about prayer:

What the Apostle Paul said about prayer...

Ephesians 6:18-19

¹⁸And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. ¹⁹Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.'

- **Verse 18** '*Pray in the Spirit*'. Prayer is a spiritual thing. Even though you are thinking of things to say and expressing them in words, prayer actually comes from deep in your spirit. It is a 'spirit to spirit' conversation, your heart communicating with God.
- **Verse 18** '*On all occasions*'. Prayer is not just for the difficult times. Involve God in all you do. In another place Paul tells us to 'pray continually' (*1 Thessalonians 5:17*). You do this by having a constant awareness that God is with you, and you are constantly chatting to him as you do life. In fact you can be talking to a friend about something or doing your job, and at the same time your spirit is praying to God about the situation or even something completely different that is on your mind. It is 'spirit to spirit'.
- **Verse 18** '*With all kinds of prayers*'. There are many '*kinds*' of praying. They reflect the situation you are talking to God about as you go through it. As you explore the Bible you will discover prayer described as *intercession* (praying for someone else), as *spiritual warfare* (praying against Satan's attempts to attack, stop or interfere with your spiritual progress, or a specific situation) and as '*requests*' (which is self explanatory).
- **Verse 18** Pray for other Christians, '*the saints*.' This stops prayer becoming selfish and becoming wrongly focussed on only getting from God what we want for ourselves.
- **Verse 19** Pray for Christian leaders and their ministry – some of the others we should pray for regularly. In fact Paul says in another place that we should pray for '*all in authority*' so they rule well (1 Timothy 2:1-4) and so create a stable society in which the good news about Jesus can be shared freely.

Some practicalities of prayer:

Finally in this lesson, here are a few practical pointers to help you pray:

- ❑ Make time for *private* prayer, whether it is whilst driving your car, when alone in your bedroom, when out walking the dog, etc.
- ❑ Pray '*continually*' (1 Thessalonians 5:17) which is where most people do the majority of their praying – on the move!
- ❑ Pray *out loud* whenever possible. Get used to the sound of your own voice. Then when you need to pray as part of a group or with a friend, you will be less nervous.
- ❑ *Listen!* Prayer is a two-way thing. Take time to meditate on the Bible as you talk to God and leave plenty of space for him to drop thoughts into your heart and mind.
- ❑ Keep a note of *specific requests* and enjoy ticking them off as God works with you to resolve situations.



Part 2

Purpose Driven

Introduction

The next four lessons begin to explain *why* we do what we do as followers of Christ.

To be meaningful, things must be purposeful. And this is especially true of the Christian life because we believe that by becoming a Christian we are now connected to God who gives everything its meaning and purpose.

The Collins Dictionary defines '*purpose*' as: '*an object towards which one strives or for which something exists; an aim or goal; an intention, determination.*'

We now find our personal purpose within God's overall purpose for his people and the world. So, in these next four lessons we will explain what the 'big picture' is – God's overall purpose – and then look more closely at how serving that purpose gives our personal lives their focus and meaning.

The truth is that God's purpose 'drives' everything we do as Christians, it informs how we live every day, how we do church, raise our families, work, rest and play!

Our desire is to live a life driven by God's purpose for us. So read on...

Session 5 – God has a Purpose

Session 6 – A Purpose Driven Church: Our MISSION

Session 7 – A Purpose Driven Church: Our FELLOWSHIP

Session 8 – God's Purpose Shapes My Life



Session 5

God Has A Purpose

1. God's purpose for the world

God's purpose for the world has never changed. He created the world and the people in it to live in relationship and harmony with him. His intention was that the world would be filled with people like him (*'made in his image' Genesis 1:27*) and who choose to live in relationship with him because they *want* to, not because they *have* to. That's why he gave us a free will.

Sadly, the first people created made a bad choice; they used their free will to disobey God; they sinned. That sin became part of their being and was passed on to their children, plunging the world into serious problems because sin separates people from God.

For God's purpose to be achieved, the sinful nature we were born with must now be dealt with (*Psalms 51:5, Romans 3:23*). We cannot deal with it ourselves BUT God sent Jesus to deal with it for us – that's what the Cross is all about. The *'wages of sin are death'* (*Romans 6:23*) and Jesus received our wages for us. He got what we deserved; he died instead of us (*See: 1 John 4:9-10 and 2 Corinthians 5:21*).

So, **God's purpose** – to live in relationship and harmony with humankind – **is fulfilled every time someone becomes a Christian and begins living a life that pleases him**. In so doing, they enter into a new relationship with their creator and contribute towards a global momentum that has as its ultimate aim the filling of the earth with people who love and glorify God.

Eventually, everything on earth and in heaven will be united under the headship of Christ. This can be a difficult concept to explain simply but the following verse best sums it up:

'And he made known to us the mystery of his will ... which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ' (Ephesians 1:9-10 NIV).

The Message translation puts it this way:

'Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, his blood poured out on the altar of the Cross, we're a free people—free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds. And not just barely free, either. Abundantly free! He thought of everything, provided for everything we could possibly need, letting us in on the plans he took such delight in making. He set it all out before us in Christ, a long-range plan in which everything would be brought together and summed up in him, everything in deepest heaven, everything on planet earth' (Ephesians 1:9-10 MSG).

You became part of that great plan when you became a Christian; you have made Jesus Lord of your life, your boss, your king, your head.

2. God's purpose for the church

Because God's ultimate purpose is to unite all things under Christ's headship, people must be made aware of two things:

- **first** that God exists and
- **second**, that he wants them to enter a personal relationship with him.

How will they ever know? Through various ways, but **two main ones**.

- a. **Through the *creation***. The creation is part of God's revelation of himself to us (*See Psalm 19:1-4, Romans 1:20*). It prompts us to ask questions and draws us towards belief in a great and glorious creator God.
- b. Of greater importance to our subject in this session, God reveals himself to people **through the *Church***:

'His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Ephesians 3:10-11).

As Christians live in united, thriving church communities, they become a living demonstration of how God wants people to live and the unity he wants them to live in. So, the Church has a great responsibility to outwork God's purpose as a sign to all unbelievers. People should look at the church and think: *'I want to be like those people.'*

God has chosen to express his awesome fullness through the Church (*See Ephesians 3:19*). We flesh out all that God is and bring his wisdom into the every sphere of life we touch. We are God's words, arms, legs, and attitudes; we are the Body of Christ.

In the scripture above, *'manifold'* means multi colored. The church is not meant to be a monotone, religious, traditional institution, it is meant to be exciting, full of life, a place where people can flourish and discover who they really are and what God has for their lives. The church is to be an expression of God's love for all men in a diverse, creative and *'multicolored'* way. God wants us to live in unity but certainly not in uniformity! He loves diversity.

3. God's purpose for you and me

God's purpose for you and me is to play our part in making all we have said above happen. We do this through our unique gifts, abilities and personality, something we take a closer look at in Part 3 of this DISCOVERY course.

But in this wider context, ***God's purpose for us individually is that we are used to help other men and women find their way into a relationship with God:***

'All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins

against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. **We are therefore Christ's ambassadors**, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God' (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

We are 'ministers of reconciliation', Christ's ambassadors.

- **Reconciliation** means: *to re-establish a close relationship*
- An **ambassador** is: *an authorized messenger or representative*

God's greater purpose is therefore dependant to a certain extent on the **Church** doing its job as the corporate expression of his life on earth, which means each **individual** within the church truly living for God. The responsibility is great and we must not take it lightly. If people are to find God and their true purpose within his greater one, we must outwork the authority we have been given to be the messengers of God's love and hope in the world.

How we do this, is the subject of our next two sessions.



Session 6

A Purpose Driven Church: Our MISSION

God's greater purpose is what shapes, drives and informs everything the church does, it is the context for everything we do together as the *Abundant Life Church / LIFE Church*. So, if a particular church activity does not contribute towards achieving God's greater purpose, we should not be doing it.

To illustrate this, over the next two sessions we will explore the original mission and vision statements of the *Abundant Life Church*. In this session we focus on the *mission* emphasis contained in them.

Our MISSION:

Everything we do at *Abundant Life Church* helps us to achieve at least one aspect of our mission.

This is expressed in a simple acronym based on the word **REED**. We developed this from *Revelation 11:1* where God asked John to take a reed and measure God's House. We believe that these four things are the 'measure' of how we should build the church. As such they constitute our mission:

Reach the Lost
Establish the Church
Equip the Saints
Disciple the Nations.

Our primary mission is therefore to '*reach the lost*'. We first and foremost seek to obey Jesus' command to:

'Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.' (Matthew 28:18-20).

Our VISION:

We accomplish the *mission* by having a very clear *vision* towards which we are working.

This is summed up by '*The Church I See*', a vision statement written by Pastor Paul Scanlon and his team some years ago now. Here it is:

The Church I See...

THE CHURCH I SEE is God centred, purpose driven and people empowering.

THE CHURCH I SEE is exciting and full of life. It is a church that is both numerically large and spiritually deep.

THE CHURCH I SEE is non-religious, naturally supernatural and incredible fun to be in. It is a church of renowned character and integrity. A church whose number one priority is to glorify God and bring his wonderful life to a lost world.

THE CHURCH I SEE is attractive, confident, victorious and overcoming. It is a church whose powerful proclamation and awesome worship are broadcast to the nations by every modern means possible.

THE CHURCH I SEE equips, enables and releases ordinary people to live extraordinary lives.

THE CHURCH I SEE is a deeply committed, loving, caring, family amongst whom the lonely and the broken find new hope and belonging.

THE CHURCH I SEE could well be this church, the Abundant Life Church.

This is the kind of church we are seeking to build. As we look forward, plan, strategise, reach the lost and build the church over time, this is what we see.

We are not there yet but we are working towards it, one step and one day at a time.

Outworking the Mission

Our mission is to first reach the lost. If we don't do this, the vision will never be a reality! The vision is to have a large church, a growing church and one that takes 'God's wonderful life to a lost world'. So we must be reaching lost people all the time.

How do we do this? There are potentially many answers to this question but they can all be summed up in just one. We outwork our mission to reach the lost by first aiming to **do good** to all people. As the Bible says:

'Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people' (Galatians 6:10).

Every day is an opportunity to 'do good' for someone. We are here to make a difference in our community by loving people in practical ways. It is really simple: we can smile, encourage, help, give, support, empathise, share, write, hug, forgive, pray, be concerned, show interest in them... and more.

This then becomes the basis of developing friendships and relationships, which may or may not result in us leading a person to Christ. That is not the measure of our success or failure at this stage, our aim is simply to do good to all people and in so doing, be just like Jesus! Of Jesus we read:

*'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and **he went around doing good** and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.'*
(Acts 10:38)

Because Jesus was good to people, they loved him. They began to listen to him and many eventually became his followers. But it started by simply doing good for people.

All of our community outreach ministries are rooted in this principle. They are the practical expression of God's love for people. Some ministries are openly evangelistic, others are simply vehicles for helping people – we just do things to keep people alive so they can continue to have opportunity to hear the gospel and respond in due course.

Have a look at the church website to see what community ministries you could get involved with. And if there is a way of helping people not listed that you have a heart to develop, please contact our Community Outreach Pastor to chat about your ideas. Together we can help more people, reach more people and fulfil our mission.

The purpose of God therefore shapes, drives and informs our mission as a church. Think about how you can help us continue to reach the lost with the wonderful love of Christ by finding a need and filling it.



Session 7

A Purpose Driven Church: Our FELLOWSHIP

In the previous session we saw that God's purpose shapes our *mission*; we now explore the fact that God's purpose also shapes our *fellowship* as God's people.

For the church to fulfil God's greater purpose (see session 5), it must *model for the world what living in relationship with God is all about*. The church must be a united, harmonious, supportive, thriving community. Therefore, part of our vision is to be an attractive community; one that the world sees and wants to be a part of.

It is a massive responsibility we carry. We are God's address here on earth and when people come visiting, we want them to meet the genuine article, God in his irresistible fullness – nothing less than that.

So, a purpose driven church will work hard to have a corporate life that reflects all God wants for us relationally. To make it easy to understand, God has given us a number of pictures to illustrate how we should live as his community. Here are three of them:

Picture 1: A Family

Our *The Church I See* vision statement says:

'THE CHURCH I SEE is a deeply committed, loving, caring, **family** amongst whom the lonely and the broken find new hope and belonging.'

Family imagery is used extensively in the Bible to illustrate our relationship with God, our heavenly father, and our relationship with each other – we are members of the same household:

'God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth'
(1 Timothy 3:15).

(See also: Romans 8:14-17, 1 Corinthians 1:3, Matthew 6:32)

Our responsibility is therefore to be a functioning family, a place with people of all ages, life stages, nationalities, races, educational backgrounds and upbringings. A place where there is protection, nurturing and personal encouragement to develop in a balanced and healthy way. A place where I have brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers and a multitude of

aunts and uncles! A place where I can be corrected too, because we all need tough love sometimes.

Picture 2: A Building

Closely related to this is a second picture, that of a **building**. The following verse combines these two pictures:

*'You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and **members of God's household**, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the **whole building** is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him **you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives** by his Spirit' (Ephesians 2:19-22).*

So when I said earlier that we are God's address, I was speaking literally! God lives in you and me. So when we meet together – something we should do regularly (Hebrews 10:25) – we can rightly say that 'God is in the building'. We are where people come to find God, have him explained and have their questions answered.

Picture 3: A Body

A third picture used to describe the church is 'The **Body** of Christ.' This is a powerful metaphor. We read in 1 Corinthians 12:12

'The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ... 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.'

Turn this passage up in your Bible and read verses 12-27 for the full picture.

These **three pictures** all speak of belonging, interconnectedness, unity, harmony and a willingness to work together. They describe what the church must be like if it is to serve God's purpose.

The pictures in practice

Practically outworking the truth contained in each of these pictures means things like:

1. Being Together

The Bible teaches that we should 'never give up the habit of meeting together' (*Hebrews 10:25*). To be a family, building and body, we must be together... and not just 'in spirit' but in real relationships, functioning groups and communities.

Jesus called the disciples first to be 'with him' before sending them out to share the message of the Kingdom. He wanted fellowship, friendship and relationship before they did any ministry together (See: *Mark 3:14*).

Being together regularly cultivates a sense of belonging. It brings security, stability and strength to us as individuals within the church family.

In a large church you will never know everyone, so you must find your relationship network within the larger body. It will tend to be with those of like mind and interest and especially those you serve with. The great thing about a large church is that your relationships can keep growing and changing as you involve in various aspects of life and ministry over the years.

Here at *Abundant Life Church* we believe that a commitment to being together regularly, sharing life - including both the good times and the bad - and having fun together, carries a great promise: It will cause you to flourish in life:

'Planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God.'
(Psalm 92:13)

2. Learning Together

The first Christians were known for 'devoting themselves to the apostles teaching' (*Acts 2:42*). This means they wanted to be together to learn (*see also Colossians 3:16*).

As a church family it is important that we listen to God's Word together. This is feeding spiritually together and corporately sensing God's Word to us as a church. We are then able to talk about it together and keep provoking one another to walk in it.

3. Growing together

The Bible says:

'Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him'
(*Colossians 2:6-7*).

Individual growth and change are hallmarks of the Christian life (*2 Corinthians 3:18*). However, as we spend time together and sit under God's Word together we inevitably also grow together. So, as a body of people we grow in our understanding of how to live out our Christianity to the full.

4. Standing together

At times, being together, learning together and growing together will also involve battling together! By this we mean standing together against an enemy.

Turn to *Ephesians 6:10-18* and note all the references to 'standing'.

The enemy can look like many things: People causing division in the church; sickness and ill health; poverty and shortage of resources; people or organisations that oppose the spread of the Gospel; etc. Spiritual forces lie behind many of these attacks and we must therefore deal with them as Spirit filled, God-empowered people.

But we need not fear. When we stand together we prevail together. I am just so glad that I do not have to stand alone on those occasions, I have my spiritual family with me! And we must never forget the words of Jesus who said:

'The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; but I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full' (John 10:10).

So, for the church to fulfil God's greater purpose, it must ***model for the world what living in relationship with God is all about***. That is the essence of why we believe we must have a strong corporate life; great fellowship!



Session 8

God's Purpose Shapes My Life

The way you live your Christian life is ultimately an issue of choice. God gave you a free will – the power to choose – and he wants you to choose to love him and live his way because you want to, not because you feel you have to out of duty or fear. This is a love relationship.

As we have been discovering, the best choice you can make is to live in line with God's purpose. When we do, life is meaningful, our mission is focussed and our fellowship strong. The more we make this choice, the more the purpose of God will shape all we do. It becomes our aim to:

'... live a life worthy of the Lord and to please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God' (Colossians 1:10).

As we become more God-centred, we increasingly discover what God's specific purpose is for every aspect of our lives: our family life, work ethic, finances, relationships, use of our resources, and so on. This is purpose driven living because all we do lines up with God's purpose to fill this world with people like him.

Purpose driven choices

Let's look a little more closely at some of the practical choices we make to live in line with God's purpose.

Living a purpose driven life will influence your choices about:

1. The people you spend time with

The Bible says that *'a righteous man is cautious in friendship' (Proverbs 12:26)*. That's because the people we do life with have a great influence on us. So having chosen to follow Christ and live a God-centred life, it is important that we have friends with similar aims and values.

We all have – and need – a broad range of relationships to enjoy a happy and balanced life. But they must all be in the right spaces in our life. Relationships are 'spatial', that is to say we need the right people in the right spaces in our lives, especially those who are close to us. Your closest friends should be people who will encourage, correct and protect

you. Spend your quality time with people of integrity and good character; people who are truly for you and who will provoke you to live out your God-centred destiny.

Don't be exclusive but do be careful. Scripture teaches that you should, '*not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good*' (Romans 12:21). So, do not let your non-Christian friends influence you to sin, you should be influencing them to be good!

Inevitably, in this process you will find that some friendship come to an end, you just grow out of them. But others will start. Make it a priority to develop new God-centred, purpose driven friendships for this new season of your life.

Living a purpose driven life will also influence...

2. How you do your job

Becoming a Christian changes your attitude to work. The way we work is now part of our witness; it says something to others about our Christian beliefs. Also, God has a lot to say about our work ethic as Christians and how it can strengthen or weaken our fulfilment of his purpose. For example:

'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving' (Colossians 3:23-24).

That means Jesus is your real boss! So we need to be responsible and work hard. In one sense our work becomes an act of worship; we should therefore work as if we are doing it for God.

Living a purpose driven life will also influence...

3. How you raise your family

Scripture has guidelines for mothers, fathers, children, husbands and wives. See for example *Ephesians 5:22-6:4*. It is good to discover what God's will is for each status that affects you. So, Dads, find out what God says about being a good one! And as you outwork your family relationships and responsibilities keep in mind God's promise that if you:

'Train a child in the way he should go... when he is old he will not turn from it' (Proverbs 22:6)

In the family we:

- ***Teach*** our children how to relate to God, authority figures and each other
- ***Learn*** consistency, self-discipline, practical skills, manners and good attitudes
- ***Model*** God's desire for well functioning families, the principles of which we carry into the wider church. Together the natural and spiritual family contribute to revealing God's better way of life to humanity.

Families are the building blocks of society. They are a God-given training ground for life. A God-centred family life is therefore very important for your personal progress and is also part of your witness to the world around you.

Living a purpose driven life will also influence...

4. How you conduct relationships

The Bible has a lot to teach us about the way we conduct relationships. He wants our relationship with him to guide us in the way we relate to each other and the Bible gets very practical on this subject, For example:

*'But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving...
... For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light and find out what pleases the Lord' (Ephesians 5:1-10).*

The aim is to live a life that pleases God. So just as God has forgiven us, we should forgive those who offend us. Our heart should always be to live in peace with people, to restore broken relationships where we can and to relate appropriately to everyone. That can be a very difficult thing at times, and we will all make mistakes along the way. But gradually we will learn the skill of handling relationships in a godly way because we are committed to bringing our whole life into line with God's purpose.

Conclusion:

These last four lessons have explained that *all we do relates to God's purpose*. God's purpose drives our personal and corporate lives as both individual Christians and as the Church family.

So now we move to the final part of this DISCOVERY course and consider the truth that as a God-centred, purpose driven Christian, God has *empowered* you to live life to the max!



Part 3 People Empowering

Introduction:

We explored something of what it means to live a *God Centred* life in **part 1** of this course. He is now your reason for living. He saved you from your old life and has given you new life, new hope and an eternal future. Awesome! So you are now working on deepening your relationship with God by reading the Bible and praying, as well as getting involved in a great church.

Part 2 explained that everything we now do is *purpose driven* because we do life in a new context, and that context is the purpose of God for the world. He wants people to be reconciled to him and to choose to love him for who he is. His purpose affects everything we now do, both as individuals and as a church family. It shapes our mission and our fellowship; it shapes our personal lifestyle and relationships. We are truly becoming a purpose driven people.

The good news is that God has not done all this for us and set his purpose out for us, without giving us the power to accomplish it. He has given us everything we need to be the men and women of God he created us to be! That's an exciting prospect and the theme of the final part of this DISCOVERY course.

So lets explore what we mean when we say God is *people empowering*...

Session 9 – Know Your Power Supply

Session 10 – Know Yourself

Session 11 – Playing Your Part

Session 12 – Taking Responsibility



Session 9

Know Your Power Supply

After Jesus had risen from the dead he prepared his disciples for the fact that he was going to be returning to heaven and leaving them. They were understandably worried. But he told them not to be because he was going to send the Holy Spirit to be with them in his physical absence. He actually said that this was a better arrangement because the Holy Spirit would dwell in every single Christian, whereas when Jesus was human he could only ever actually meet a limited number of people (*see: John 13:25-29*).

Jesus confirmed this just before he ascended to heaven saying:

'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' (Acts 1:8)

That power came upon them at Pentecost (Acts 2) and they were each filled with the Holy Spirit. That encounter, which came some time after they had put their faith in Jesus, gave them the power to live the Christian life effectively.

God the Holy Spirit is therefore our 'power supply'. He dwells in each of us; leading, guiding and empowering us to do his will and make a difference in our lifetime. He is the presence of God with us. This makes us 'naturally supernatural' because we have a resource in us that unsaved people do not have.

So, let's explore what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit a little more:

Who is The Holy Spirit?

Christians believe in the *Trinity*, which states that God exists as three distinct persons yet remains one! The three persons are God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of the Trinity can be quite hard to explain, as it is truth for the heart not the head! It is an expression of God's awesome majesty that there are things about him that we cannot understand with our human logic; we just have to believe them because the Bible reveals them to us.

The doctrine of the Trinity comprises three basic truths:

- *There is one God.*
- *God exists eternally in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

- *These three are equal in every way. All possess the fullness of the divine essence.*

Examples of the Trinity can be found in: *Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:32-33*

The point to establish here is that the Holy Spirit is ‘God with us’. He comes to dwell in us when we are saved:

‘Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God’ (1 Corinthians 6:19 NLT)

(see also: *Ephesians 1:13;; 2 Timothy 1:14*).

The ‘power supply’ we have is therefore the Holy Spirit, God in us – what a mind-blowing concept!

What does the Holy Spirit do?

The Holy Spirit leads us from the inside out! His role is described in various ways. He:

- Guides us into God’s truth (*John 16:13-15*)
- Teaches us (*John 14:26*)
- Empowers us to do what Jesus did (*John 14:11-14*)
- Helps us to outwork the Christian life (*Philippians 2:12-13*)

When does this start?

All Christians have the Holy Spirit in one sense, because no one can become a Christian in the first place without the work of the Spirit within them. We are 'born of the Spirit' (John 3:5), and Paul tells us that 'if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ' (Romans 8:9).

However, the Holy Spirit in you needs to be consciously connected with to fully do his work. This moment is described in the Bible as being **baptised with the Holy Spirit**. You will remember from session 2 that ‘baptism’ means to ‘immerse’. And just as you were consciously immersed in water, you also need to consciously ask God to immerse you fully in the Holy Spirit.

This is part of the ‘package deal’ of salvation, along with repentance and faith, and baptism in water:

‘Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’ (Acts 2:38)

It is God’s way of placing us in the realm of spiritual power so that we can not only enjoy the new life he has given us but also be effective messengers of the gospel.

We see this same pattern in **Jesus’ life**. He was conceived by the Spirit and lived by the Spirit throughout his youth, but before he embarked on his public ministry he had a

distinct experience when the Holy Spirit came upon him in a special way to empower him for the task (*Luke 3:21-22; 4:1*).

It was the same with **Jesus' disciples**. They were unquestionably God's children, made clean by the teaching of Jesus (*John 15:3*), and conscious of the Holy Spirit's working within them (*Matthew 16:17; John 20:22*). But they were told to wait in Jerusalem until the power of the Spirit came upon them as we described earlier. If you read Acts 2 you will see the difference it made.

What was true for Jesus and his disciples is true also for us. Born again though we may be, we need to be baptised in the Holy Spirit. Ideally, being born again, being baptised in water and being baptised in the Holy Spirit belong together, part and parcel of the single business of becoming a follower of Jesus Christ.

How does a person receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit?

Sometimes the Lord baptises believers in the Spirit by a sovereign act, as on the Day of Pentecost in *Acts 2* and at the household of Cornelius in *Acts 10*. At other times it is received by the laying on of hands, as in Samaria (*Acts 8*).

From the seeker's point of view, we receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the same way as we receive all the blessings of God - **by faith**.

Everyone has their own story to tell about how it happened for them. But somewhere there was a moment in which they released faith to God and consciously received this empowering from God. Their story will probably include steps such as the following:

- Ask the Lord to cleanse you from all outstanding sin so that you can approach him with confidence. In other words, clear your conscience (*Acts 24:16*).
- Ask him for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said: *'If you . . . though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him'* (*Luke 11:13*).
- Praise God and worship him with thanksgiving. This is a powerful means of drawing near to his presence to receive the Holy Spirit – *'Come near to God and he will come near to you'* (*James 4:8*).
- Expect a positive touch from God and to speak in tongues. No one in the Bible was ever baptised in the Holy Spirit and didn't know it!
- Speak or sing your praise out loud. At this point someone may lay hands on you as a point of contact for your faith, just as *'when Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied'* (*Acts 19:6*).
- Relax, enjoy God and let your new language flow. When the Lord baptises you in the Holy Spirit you can, and will, speak in tongues provided you don't let prejudice and fear hinder the Spirit.

People's actual experience will vary. The key thing is to accept that baptism in the Holy Spirit is normal for all Christians. You are not trying to replicate anyone else's particular experience, just seeking your own clear encounter with God that leaves you knowing deep in your heart that you are baptised and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

What is speaking in tongues?

Speaking in tongues, is speaking in a language you do not understand. When the Holy Spirit baptises us, our lips form strange syllables or words as we yield to his prompting. Our own natural words seem inadequate to praise God as we want. The Holy Spirit then leads us and encourages us (but never forces us) to speak out in tongues.

Once we begin, we should expect the language to start flowing naturally. We will not understand the words we are saying, nor should we expect to, *'for anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit'* (1 Corinthians 14:2). This is you speaking to God 'spirit to spirit', in a new and deeper way.

In this way we experience for ourselves what happened at Pentecost, when *'all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them'* (Acts 2:4).

Speaking in tongues is a powerful **personal devotional tool**. It builds you up in your faith (Jude 20) and helps you pray deeply when you cannot find appropriate words in English or your native/mother language (Romans 8:26).

Living filled with the Holy Spirit

This initial encounter of being baptised in the Holy Spirit leads us into living a life more consciously filled with the Holy Spirit. Each day we are to *'live by the Spirit'* (Galatians 5:16).

The Bible teaches us to *'Be filled with the Spirit'* (Ephesians 5:18) which when literally translated means, 'Go on *being filled* with the Spirit.' We are to remain in a place of closeness to God and a conscious awareness that his power is ever-present within us. We are empowered to live an effective Christian life.

How does a drunkard stay drunk? He keeps drinking! And we stay filled with the Spirit by being constantly alert to his presence and letting him fill our lives. We yield to his influence by prayer, speaking in tongues, thanksgiving, worship, fellowship with other Christians, and feeding on God's Word.

This is living life filled with the Holy Spirit, your personal power supply!



Session 10

Know Yourself

Having explored the one who empowers us – the Holy Spirit – let’s now turn to the other element in the equation: YOU.

God works through people. He never overrides our gifts, personality or unique character. Instead, he works through them. So we must have a clear understanding of how he has made us. *You must know yourself.*

Every individual Christian is unique and as such, they have a vital part to play in expressing the life of God through their unique personality, gifts and abilities. No one is better at being you than you! Once you understand this, you are well placed to connect with the specific things God has equipped you to do for him:

‘For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do’ (Ephesians 2:10).

In order to fulfil the *‘good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do’* we need to understand ourselves, what we might call our *‘spiritual shape’*. Once we know ourselves, we are then well placed to find the *‘niche’* where we can serve God most fruitfully.

Where do I fit?

The challenge is to understand ourselves so we can serve God to the best of our ability. That journey takes time. Along the way you will probably conclude that you actually share common abilities with other people, however you will express them uniquely. Each person is a product of their own journey in life, shaped to serve God in a fruitful and fulfilling way.

You must also bear in mind that from the moment you became a Christian, a process started. The Bible calls it *sanctification*. This word describes the process of becoming more and more like Jesus, a process of continual growth and change. Along the way you discover that God uses everything about you to serve his people and greater purpose. This includes your experiences, the things you love, your natural and spiritual gifts, and your personality. Understanding these is the key to understanding yourself and thus finding your best fit in the service of God – your NICHE. As God said to Moses, *‘What’s that in your hand?’* Because that is what God will use! (*Exodus 4:1-6*)

- What you **do** in serving God comes from what you **are**.
- Your personal '*shape*' will therefore determine the '*niche*' you serve in.

Your service for God will be most effective and fulfilling when you are using your

- **GIFTS** and
- **ABILITIES** in the area of your
- **HEART'S DESIRE**, in a way that best expresses your
- **PERSONALITY** and
- **EXPERIENCE**

You need to 'Know Yourself' in these five areas. Together they will point towards where you can best serve at this time in your spiritual journey. Let's explore each of them:

Tools to help you Identify your NICHE

The rest of this session is aimed at helping you think through these five factors that make you who you are, and shape you for your ministry 'niche'. I have developed NICHE as an acronym for them as follows:

Natural abilities
Imparted gifts
Character and personality
Hearth
Experience

NICHE - Natural abilities

Here is a list of words that describe abilities you may possess. Use this list to start you thinking and make a note of YOUR abilities and skills.

Entertaining	Recruiting	Interviewing	Composing
Researching	Artistic	Graphics	Landscaping
Evaluating	Planning	Managing	Decorating
Counselling	Teaching	Writing	Public relations
Editing	Promoting	Repairing	Welcoming
Feeding	Machine operating	Counting	Classifying

NICHE - Imparted spiritual gifts

Spiritual gifts are special abilities given by the Holy Spirit to help every believer minister to others, both in the church and wider community. They equip and enable individual Christians, and the corporate church, to fulfil their vision and purpose.

(See: *1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, 1 Peter 4:10-11, Ephesians 4:11-14*)

Here is a list of the main spiritual gifts found in the Bible:

Evangelism (Ephesians 4:11-13)

The ability to communicate the good news of the gospel to unbelievers in a positive, non-threatening way and to be able to encourage and equip other believers to do the same.

Teaching (Ephesians 4:11-13)

The ability to educate Christians by clearly explaining and applying the Bible in a way that causes them to learn. The ability to equip and train other believers for ministry.

Encouragement (Acts 14:22, Romans 12:7)

The ability to motivate God's people to apply and act upon biblical principles, especially when they are discouraged or wavering in their faith. The ability to bring out the best in others and challenge them to develop their potential.

Wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:8)

The ability to understand God's perspective on life situations and share those insights in a simple, understandable way. The ability to explain what to do and how to do it.

Discernment (1 Corinthians 12:10)

The ability to distinguish right from wrong, truth from error, and to give an immediate evaluation of a situation based on God's word. The ability to discern whether the source of an experience is evil, in the human self or the Holy Spirit.

Knowledge (1 Corinthians 12:8)

The ability to discover, collect, analyse and organise information that is vital to individual believers or the church family. The ability to hear specifically from God a word that is supernaturally relevant to the particular circumstances of a person or people, unknown to yourself.

Preaching (1 Peter 4:11)

The ability to publicly communicate God's word in an inspiring way that convinces unbelievers and speaks to believers. The ability to persuasively declare God's will.

Prophecy (1 Corinthians 12:6; Romans 12:10)

The ability to speak a specific word received from God and directed by the Holy Spirit to share with other people in order to challenge, strengthen, encourage or comfort them.

Prophetic tongue and interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:12-14)

The ability to speak a word from God in tongues and expect the tongue to be interpreted by someone else or yourself in order to challenge, strengthen, encourage or comfort God's people.

Service/Helps (Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28)

The ability to recognise unmet needs and take initiative to provide practical assistance quickly, cheerfully and without need for recognition.

Mercy (Romans 12:8)

The ability to detect hurt and empathise with those who are suffering. The ability to provide compassionate and cheerful support to those experiencing distress, crisis or pain.

Pastoring/Shepherding (Ephesians 4:11)

The ability to care for the spiritual needs of a group of believers and equip them for growth in their Christian life.

Giving (Romans 12:8)

The ability to give generously resources and/or money beyond the normal tithe and offering so that the church grows and is strengthened. The ability to earn and manage money so it may be given to support the ministry of others.

Healing (1 Corinthians 12:9)

The ability to pray in faith specifically for people who need physical, emotional or spiritual healing and see God answer. The ability to sense when God is prompting you to pray this kind of prayer.

Miracles (1 Corinthians 12:10)

The ability to pray and see the suspension or acceleration of natural law take place.

Leadership (Romans 12:8)

The ability to clarify and communicate the purpose and direction of a ministry in a way that attracts others to get involved. The ability to motivate others by example to work together in completing a ministry goal.

Administration (1 Corinthians 12:28)

The ability to organise and manage people, resources, and time for effective ministry. The ability to co-ordinate many details and execute the plans of leadership.

Faith (1 Corinthians 12:9)

The ability to trust God for what cannot be seen and act on God's promise, regardless of what the circumstances indicate. The willingness to risk failure in pursuit of a God-given vision, expecting God to handle the obstacles.

NICHE - Identifying your Character and Personality

God has 'wired' our temperament in a unique way and this is another important element in matching you to the right ministry. God loves variety – look at the created world about you. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' personality type.

Character is developed and added to your inherent personality type. Together they constitute the two essential elements that make you, you.

There are many methods of personality assessment available, especially on the internet. But you can make a simple start by considering are you:

- Introvert OR Extrovert
- Self-controlled OR Self-expressive
- Do you like routine OR Do you like variety
- Do you like working in a team OR Working on your own

NICHE - Monitoring your heartbeat

The Bible uses the term 'heart' to represent the centre of your motivation, desires and inclinations. Your 'heart' determines why you:

- **say** the things you do - *Matthew 12:34*
- **feel** the way you do - *Hebrews 4:12*
- **act** the way you do - *Proverbs 4:23*

God has given each of us a unique emotional heartbeat that races when we encounter activities, subjects and circumstances that interest us. We instinctively feel deeply about some things and not others. Your 'heart' response determines what will bring you most satisfaction and fulfilment, and loving those things also gives you the motivation to do them.

Here are a couple of things to think about that will help you understand your heart; the things you love to do:

- **Think about your PAST accomplishments** – what did you really enjoy doing well? These are pointers towards what you love doing the most.
- **Think about what CURRENTLY motivates you:** Do you love to...
 - **Design/develop** – make something out of nothing.
 - **Pioneer** – test and try out new concepts, not afraid to risk failure.
 - **Organise** – bring order out of chaos, organise something already started but in a mess.
 - **Operate/maintain** – efficiently maintain something already organised.

- **Serve/help** – assist other people in their responsibility, help others to succeed.
- **Acquire/possess** – to shop, collect, obtain things, getting good value for money.
- **Excel** – to be the best and make my team the best, setting and attaining high standards.
- **Influence** – to convert people to my way of thinking, shape the attitudes of others.
- **Perform** – be on a stage and receive attention of others.
- **Improve** – make things better, develop something already started.
- **Repair** – to fix what is broken and change what is out of date.
- **Lead/take charge** – to lead the way, oversee, supervise, enjoy determining how things will be done.
- **Persevere** – to see things to completion, persisting until something is finished.
- **Conform** – to operate by policy and procedure, enjoy meeting the expectation of an organisation or boss.
- **Prevail** – to fight for what is right and oppose wrong, overcome injustice.
- **Please** – to know that what I did brought great pleasure to someone else.

NICHE - Examining your Experiences

'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose' (Romans 8:28)

'Now I want you to know brothers that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel' (Philippians 1:12)

We are all a product of the experiences we have had in life so far. Yours, however good or bad, can be used by God to help you serve him better. You have been shaped by:

- Your *spiritual* experiences – meaningful decisions/times with God.
- Your *painful* experiences – problems, hurts and trials that have taught you.
- Your *educational* experiences – in school, college, training and employment.
- Your *ministry* experiences – how you have served God in the past.

Next steps...

Having thought about yourself in these 5 areas, now share them with a trusted Christian friend or leader. Begin to apply yourself to practical serving that best fits your personal profile and before long, you will have found your NICHE!



Session 11

Playing Your Part

The Christian life cannot be successfully lived in isolation from other Believers. Following Christ is a 'team event'. We need each other in order to reach our maximum individual and corporate potential.

The main context in which we work together for maximum impact is the *local Church*.

Some Christians shy away from this truth, claiming it is enough to be part of the wider Body of Christ that includes every Christian on the planet. But that is intangible and unworkable. The Bible makes it plain that we thrive when '*planted in God's house*' (*Psalm 92:13*) - which is the church - and that we need to be living, working and growing in a spiritual family unit – which is the church. We covered this in Session 7.

Of the first Christians it was said:

'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.' (*Acts 2:42*)

Devotion is a strong and specific thing. It has a focus, and for those believers it was the church. How about you? Where are you devoting yourself? Where are you expressing your empowered life in practical involvement?

Playing Your Part is a Choice

People are always free to choose how great a part they will play in the life of the church family; how much they will '*devoted themselves*' (*Acts 2:42*).

The church can seem to be a bit like a number of concentric, ever-widening circles: some get involved right at the centre, but others stay nearer the fringe of things. Some move in and out from time to time because of other commitments in life.

The church leaders will respect the level at which you want to get involved. Our heart is that everyone gets fully involved in our life and mission, but we must be considerate and allow everyone to play their part at a level which suits them best. 'Putting your self in' is actually a heart attitude and not measured by the amount you do. Some are unable to do much practically, but their heart is 100% for all the church is doing. Whereas others can sometimes work non-stop but can have a hidden agenda or wrong motive and are not fully committed to the church in their heart.

When we talk about ‘playing your part’ we therefore mean ***being a functioning part of a thriving local church*** community, like the one here at *Abundant Life Church*. It is good to know you belong!

Play your part by choosing to:

1. Be Together

When Jesus appointed his disciples, he chose them first of all to ‘*be with him*’ (*Mark 3:14-15*). There were other reasons, too – to ‘*send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons*’ – but those activities arose out of time spent in fellowship with him. Similarly, whatever other activities Christians may engage in together, the basic ingredient of fellowship remains ‘*being together*’.

Practically, this means attending meetings, supporting church events and activities, putting yourself in wherever you can. And not because you have to, but because you want to!

Play your part by choosing to:

2. Be Friendly

It is easy to come to a meeting, sit through it and return home without having had any real communication with anyone. Small groups like *LIFE Groups* or meetings based around an aspect of mission or ministry avert this danger to some extent but we should also seek each other’s company outside of meeting times (See *Hebrews 10:24-25*).

Reaching out in friendship to others will help to break down any barriers caused by differing personalities, social backgrounds, upbringing, education and so on. Here is an area where Christians can show society a better the way (see *James 2:1-4*).

Play your part by choosing to:

3. Be Loyal

By definition, the church is distinct from the world. Those who are in the church are light; those still in the world are darkness (*Ephesians 5:8*). So, we have a special loyalty to those we share Christian values with generally and especially to those with whom we have a relationship in the local church. No gossip concerning a fellow Christian should be entertained.

See: *Philippians 2:4, 1 Corinthians 12:24-27, James 4:11*

If you do fall out with someone in the church, *Matthew 5:23-24* and *18:15-17* explain how personal grievances and offences between Christians should be handled. Simply stated, Jesus taught us to work in straight lines with each other and to always be willing to admit it if we are wrong and forgive those who do the same to us.

Trust no other way. Once division, rivalry or gossip begin, the whole church is liable to collapse, becoming a laughing-stock to the world and a source of grief to Jesus.

Play your part by choosing to:

4. Be a Servant

Every Christian has some means of contributing to the life of the church, some ability which can be for them a means of obeying Paul's exhortation to '*serve one another in love*' (*Galatians 5:13*).

Fundamentally, we serve one another, doing whatever job needs doing, just because we love Jesus and the wonderful people he has joined us with in the church family (*1 Corinthians 14:26, 31*).

'Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms' (1 Peter 4:10).

Play your part by choosing to:

5. Be a Giver

The Christian message is all about giving. If God had not given his only son to die for us, we would still be lost in sin (*John 3:16*). God loved us so much, he gave. We now give back to God and his people from the same motivation – we love God and his people.

We are in the church not primarily to receive but to give. We shall be at the receiving end of blessing too, of course, but only in proportion to our service. If you want a special blessing, begin to serve – '*It is more blessed to give than to receive*' (*Acts 20:35*).

You can give many things: money, time, skills, energy, prayers, advice, practical help – and so on. No one is disqualified. The more I give, the more I feel I belong. The more I give, the more I am a functioning partner.

Though our whole attitude is now one of being a 'giver', the area of giving **finance** is one we need to be particularly clear about. Jesus said, '*Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*' (*Matthew 6:21*). Your money goes to the things you love the most!

Even a casual reading of the New Testament reveals that money is very important in the kingdom of God. Scripture has a great deal to say about it. It is not money itself but the '*love of money*' which is the root of all evil (*1 Timothy 6:10*).

The Bible teaches us some important general principles of giving. See: *2 Corinthians 9:7*, *1 Corinthians 16:2* which establish that God intends our giving to be: (a) In proportion to our income (b) Systematic, and (c) With a willing cheerfulness.

These principles are expressed through the giving of *Tithes* and *Offerings* which we do not have space to explore in detail here. But we would recommend the *Abundant Life Skills* study guide called **Money Matters** by Pastor Stephen Matthew, which takes you

simply through what the Bible has to teach on these important principles and a how to practically manage your money.

Finally, play your part by choosing to:

6. Keep Growing

As you choose to ‘play your part’ you will grow in your relationship with God and the church. Choosing to be: Together, Friendly, Loyal, a Servant, and a Giver, is therefore a choice to Grow!

Right at the start of your Christian life, make a commitment to God that you will never stop growing. In that way you will serve his purpose and have the most fulfilling life possible:

‘In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to be a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit’ (Ephesians 2:20-21).



Session 12

Taking responsibility

Being empowered by God, and your local church leaders, to express all that God has put in you is a serious business. As we saw in the previous session, it means we have to make clear choices. Doing so is **taking responsibility** for our personal spiritual development and the way in which we demonstrate the Christian life to those we do life with.

Your spiritual progress and development is ultimately your responsibility. Never leave it to others, expecting the church to somehow grow you, open a door for you, or suddenly put the spotlight on you. Expect nothing, and when encouragement does come, it will be a blessing and a bonus. Simply take responsibility for your spiritual life, make great choices and remain in a place where you sense God's smile on all you do.

Paul said to some of the early followers of Christ:

*'I urge you who have been chosen by God to **live up to the life to which God called you.** Always be humble, gentle, and patient, accepting each other in love. You are joined together with peace through the Spirit, so make every effort to continue together in this way' (Ephesians 4:1-3 CEV).*

This is us taking appropriate responsibility for our fellow Christians and playing a responsible part in our corporate mission of reaching the lost and building a great church.

Let's get a bit more specific about the areas we need to take responsibility in:

1. **Take responsibility for your... Personal Devotions**

Your personal relationship with God is just that – personal! How you develop it is therefore entirely up to you. To maximise your growth and God's blessing in and through your life:

- ❑ Keep reading God's Word, the Bible.
- ❑ Pray constantly, talking with God as you live each day and fully involve him with you in the process of life.
- ❑ Listen to the Holy Spirit as he responds, leads, guides and educates you.

Beware of letting your personal relationship with God drift, especially when you get busy in life. Be particularly mindful of this when you are busy doing God's work, serving in Church. Never let doing things *for* God (serving) replace time *with* God.

2. Take responsibility for your... Personal Integrity

Your life is your witness. Your aim is to *'live a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him'* (Colossians 1:10). You must be a living example of the abundant life of Christ because unbelievers are watching you and you can influence them positively for Christ more by your example than your words (1 Thessalonians 4:12, Colossians 4:5).

See: *Ephesians 4:17-5:16* which is a long passage mentioning many aspects of how to live as 'children of the light', that is, walk in biblical integrity.

Integrity is seen in the way you *spea*k and do your *work*; in the way you handle your *money* and deal with life's *problems*; in your *attitudes* and basic *honesty*. Be faithful, loyal, fair and reasonable. Have clear standards and abide by them.

3. Take responsibility for your... Personal Relationships

Take responsibility for the proper outworking of your side of every relationship in life.

For example:

- ❑ Be a good friend
- ❑ Be a great husband or wife
- ❑ Be a good father/mother
- ❑ Be an excellent employer or employee

Get to know what the Bible teaches about each of these relationships and be determined – with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives inside you - to live that way.

Be your *brother's keeper*, encouraging and admonishing him/her if appropriate. As the scripture says:

'Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives' (Colossians 3:15-16 NLT).

This enriches our personal relationships and contributes towards protecting our corporate relationship as a church

4. Take responsibility for your... Personal Outreach

If the lost are to be reached with the wonderful life of Christ, every individual must play their part by living out the Christian life – being *naturally supernatural* – and by sharing their faith with others in a natural and positive way.

'Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers' (Galatians 6:9-10).

Conclusion:

Let's be a people who are responsible stewards of the great empowerment God has given us and play our part in advancing his purpose in our generation.

I hope this **DISCOVERY** course has helped you get to grips with something of what it means to be a dedicated follower of Jesus Christ.

- Remain totally **God Centred**
- Be **purpose driven** in all you do, and
- Responsibly outwork the new life, freedom and future you have been **empowered** with in Christ.

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