



Discovery Outlines

A flexible guide for Teachers

By

Stephen Matthew

Introduction



DISCOVERY is a flexible training programme based on the three Core Values of the *Abundant Life Church**, Bradford. These values shape all we do as a Church and wider ministry. We are committed to being:

- God Centred
- Purpose Driven
- People Empowering

DISCOVERY is designed for new Christians in particular. It aims to introduce them to the fundamental principles and values of the Christian faith in easy-to-understand segments.

These **DISCOVERY Outlines** are a set of 12 flexible session outlines. They can be developed by each individual teacher, taking into account the size of the group and their level of understanding. The material can be taught, discussed or chatted in the session as felt appropriate by the class leader, the idea being to 'scratch where it itches' rather than legalistically working through set material.

* NOTE: In 2012 *Abundant Life Church* changed its name to LIFE Church to coincide with a senior leadership transition which took the church into its next season of growth and development.

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Introduction

Welcome to *DISCOVERY Outlines*. These lesson plans are designed to help you explore basic Christianity together with a group of new Christians.

Each DISCOVERY Outline includes a clear aim, key scriptures, essential points of doctrine to cover and practical suggestions for discussion and illustration. However, they are not meant to be a comprehensive study of the subject concerned and must be tailored to your audience and local situation.

Teachers will need to do further personal Bible study in conjunction with each DISCOVERY Outline as they prepare material for their class.

The words of Jesus were '*Spirit and life*' (*John 6:63*). Each of your sessions should contain these two essential qualities. They must carry the *spirit* of God's Word, heart and purpose in their delivery and content. The *life* dimension comes through the practical application of truth, your personal examples, stories and illustrations.

As you develop each lesson, take special note of the composition of your class. Take into account how long people have been a Christian, whether they have any religious background or influences shaping their thinking, their general situation in life and the speed at which they seem to be grasping the principles you are discussing together. These factors should influence the level at which you pitch the material and determine the kind of practical examples you include.

We pray that these simple outlines will assist you in the training and development of the next generation of *God Centred, Purpose Driven, People Empowering* believers.

Stephen Matthew



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

Session 1

A Brand New start

Key verse:

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

Aim:

To understand something of what it really means to be a Christian. Most will have responded to Christ fairly recently and need walking through the implications, wonder and blessing of that decision.

Elements to include:

- ❑ Your personal testimony
- ❑ Explain the terminology God uses to describe your new start:
 - Old – New (2 Corinthians 5:17)
 - Lost – Found (Luke 15)
 - Darkness – Light (Acts 26:18, Ephesians 5:8))
 - Dead – Alive (Ephesians 2:1-5)
 - Blind – See
- ❑ What you actually did when you became a Christian: A simple explanation of repentance and faith:

The Basics of Repentance:

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

Use *Luke 15:11-20* (Prodigal son)

- Recognition of sin
- Remorse for wrong doing
- Redirection of life

You will never need to be saved again but may need to work the principle of repentance again if you sin (*1 John 1:9*). 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.

Distinguish between 'worldly sorrow' which leads to regret for being caught and efforts to deal with it yourself, and 'godly sorrow' which leads to true repentance and freedom from guilt. See: 2 Corinthians 7:9-11

The Basics of Faith:

- Faith is believing what God says.
- Faith is 'certain' because God says it (*Hebrews 11:1*) and he is all-powerful, unchanging and cannot lie.
- Faith comes from hearing God's Word (*Romans 10:17*)

You used to have faith in something! It may have been yourself, another person, another religion or whatever. Christianity is about putting your faith in the God of the Bible and trusting him above all others

It also takes faith to really believe that God has forgiven you for your past life and sin. When you have faith to believe that God has forgiven you, you are well on the way to being able to forgive yourself too.

The Christian life is one of faith *'from first to last, just as it is written, "The righteous will live by faith."'* (*Romans 1:17*)

Session 2

Start as you mean to go on

Key Verse:

'Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, 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)

Aim:

To establish that the way you start the Christian life is very important. If you mean business with God, you will want to obey him. And the first command is to be baptised in water (*Acts 2:38, Matthew 28 19-20*).

Elements to include:

- ❑ Baptism simply means 'to dip' or immerse. It is a picture, a drama that illustrates what is going on in the believing heart (*Romans 6:1-12*). Through it we fully identify with Christ's death, burial and resurrection.
- ❑ Water Baptism is the proper response to believing in Christ (as opposed to putting your hand up in the meeting which may have been a first step towards it). It is part of the salvation process: *'Be baptised and wash your sins away' (Acts 22:16)*.
- ❑ Water Baptism seals the step of faith that took place in their heart with a public ratification of their decision to be a Christian.
- ❑ Baptism is nothing to do with being christened as a child. It should only be undergone by a believer (who may be a child old enough to know what they are doing).
- ❑ Following Christ's command and being baptised sets in motion a good pattern of obedience to Him. You will learn that simple obedience is the key to successful Christian living. Trust Christ, obey Christ.

What happens at a Water Baptism?

Talk about the practical questions that surround being baptised.

- **Where?** Church service, in the river, in a bathtub. Anywhere deep enough to immerse the person!
- **What to wear?** White clothes become see-through when wet!
- **Who baptises?** Any other believer. Nice to have someone who has helped you come to your new-found faith.
- **Who comes?** Whoever you want. But it is a great opportunity to demonstrate your new-found faith to friends and family if it can be arranged that way.
- **When is the next organised one?** See Church diary.

Session 3

Getting to Know You

Key verse:

'But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of... from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.' (2 Timothy 3:14-17)

Aim:

To establish that being a Christian and living a God-centred life is all about developing a **relationship** with God. All relationships develop by *spending time together*. As the relationship develops, you get to know what God loves and what he hates; you discover how to live in a way that pleases the Lord.

This week and next week we will talk about the **two** main ways we get to know God better:

- *By reading* the Bible, which is the vehicle of God's revelation of himself to us
- *By talking* to God and spending time with him – which is prayer

We will cover the first this week: ***Getting to know God better by reading the Bible.***

Elements to include:

Note: This material is best presented *visually* with the help of charts, pictures, a Powerpoint presentation etc. Be creative!

- ❑ **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.
- ❑ **The Bible has two halves:** Explain simply the division of Old and New Testaments (Covenants) and something of the progression between the two. Emphasise the Old was needed to show us that we could not get into relationship with God without the intervention of Christ who removed the sin barrier. The Old was the 'shadow'; the New is the 'substance' (*Hebrews 10:1*).
- ❑ **The Bible is 66 books:** Explain that each has a contribution to make in the overall scheme of things. The books are of three main kinds:
 - *History* (The Story line is contained in 22 books)
 - *Prophecy* (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 (Wisdom, poetry and New Testament letters: 26 books)
 - Use a simple Overview chart to explain how the books are arranged.

- Use a simple Storyline diagram to explain the time-line of the Bible
 - Help them not to be put off by the strange names etc.
 - Be sure to explain how to use the index.
 - Help them find a reference – maybe have a competition!
 - Have fun along the way

 - **The Bible is Food:** Explain simply that the Bible is essential to good spiritual health and growth:
 - The Bible is like Bread (*Matthew 4:4*)
 - The Bible is like Milk (*1 Peter 2:2-3*)
 - The Bible is like Seed (*Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23*)

 - **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/dislikes and living accordingly. This takes time but will gradually influence how we think, feel and act in every situation life presents to us.
- Check they have a Bible:**
- Explain why there are different versions (translated from other languages)
 - Recommend a good readable version (NIV for all round use; NLT for even greater readability)
 - Encourage them to read a little each day. Refer them to publications like 'Every Day With Jesus' or 'Word For Today' or one of the many on-line reading plans offered by Bible Gateway or You Version.

Session 4

Getting to Know You More

Key verse:

'And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.'
(Ephesians 6:18)

Aim:

To further establish that being a Christian and living a God-centred life is all about developing a **relationship** with God. All relationships develop by *spending time together*. This week we explore how to get to know God better by *talking* to him – that is by prayer and learning to walk in conscious fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

Elements to include:

- ❑ Establish **what prayer is**. People with a religious background may need some help to understand that prayer is conversational and not something you repeat religiously from a Prayer Book.
- ❑ Use the following **two passages** to establish some or all of the points made below each of them.
- ❑ Use examples from your own prayer life to illustrate your points wherever possible.

Ephesians 6:18-20

'And 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. Pray 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 'spirit to spirit', your heart communicating with God
- **Verse 18** '*On all occasions*'. Prayer is not just for the difficult times! Involve God in all you do (See: 1 Thessalonians 5:17)
- **Verse 18** There are many '*kinds*' of praying. They reflect the situation you are talking to God about as you go through it.
- **Verse 18** Pray for other Christians, '*the saints*.'
- **Verse 19** Pray for Christian leaders and their ministry (and for all in authority so they rule well – 1 Timothy 2:1-4).

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.'

- **Verse 5-6** Prayer is normally a private thing, between you and God.
- **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** Pray in faith. God knows your situation already! So why pray? Because God has established things relationally; he 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.
- **Verse 11** Prayer deals with the immediate need.
- **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.

The practicalities of prayer:

- ❑ Make time for **private** prayer (in the car, bedroom, out walking, etc..)
- ❑ Also 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

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

Key verse:

'He purposed... to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ' (Ephesians 1:9-10).

Aim:

To establish that God has a purpose and what it is in broad terms. His wider purpose encompasses the whole world and within it we find our personal and corporate purpose, as individual Christians and church communities.

Elements to include:

- ❑ **Define 'purpose':** Collins Dictionary defines it as: *'an object towards which one strives or for which something exists; an aim or goal; an intention, determination.'*
- ❑ Explain that God has an all-encompassing purpose for humanity. Understanding this releases us as individuals and churches to find our particular purpose within God's greater one. True purpose is only found in harnessing your purpose to God's.

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. He wants the world to be filled with people like him (*'made in his image' Genesis 1:27*) 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 and sin. This plunged the world into serious problems because sin separates us from God.

For God's purpose to be achieved, the sin problem we are all now born with must 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**. In so doing, they enter into a New Covenant relationship with their creator and contribute towards a global momentum that has as its ultimate aim the filling of the earth with God's glory (*See Habakkuk 2:14*).

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 **our key verse best sums it up:**

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

2. God's purpose for the church

If God's ultimate purpose is to unite all things under Christ's headship, all people must be made aware of two things: **first** that God exists and **secondly**, 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 example of the ultimate universal unity that will one day fill the earth. 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, attitudes etc.

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.

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; to become compatible*
- 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, and 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

Key verse :

'Then Jesus came to them and said... "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)

Aim:

To develop the truth that God's greater purpose is what shapes, drives and informs everything the church does. The purpose of God is the context for everything the church does. If a particular church activity does not contribute towards achieving God's greater purpose, the church should not be doing it.

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

Elements to include:

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**'.

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**', our vision statement. This is the kind of church we are seeking to build.

Working towards this *vision* helps us to accomplish our *mission*.

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's 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, Bradford.

Pick out the **Mission** elements and develop them further: For example, the *Church I See* is 'growing', 'proclaiming' and taking 'God's life to a lost world'.

How do we do this? By aiming to **do good** to all people:

'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 all people in practical ways.
- How? Smile, encourage, help, give, support, empathise, share, write, hug, forgive, pray, be concerned, show interest, etc.
- Be like Jesus:

*'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

From this principle comes the wide range of community ministries in the church. They are the practical expression of God's love for people. Some ministries are openly evangelistic, others are simply vehicles for helping people – we keep them alive so they can continue to have opportunity to hear the gospel and respond.

Refer to current, local examples of community outreach ministries they can involve in.

The purpose of God therefore shapes, drives and informs everything we do as a church. Our primary mission is 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

Key verse:

'You are ... members of God's household ... being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.' (Ephesians 2:19-22)

Aim:

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.

Elements to include:

❑ Family:

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.'*

The 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. (See: Romans 8:14-17, 1 Corinthians 1:3, 1 Timothy 3:15, Matthew 6:32)

❑ Building:

Closely related to this is a second picture, that of a **building**. Our key 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)

❑ Body:

A third picture used to describe the church is 'The **Body** of Christ.' (See: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27)

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.

Explain that practically this means things like:

1. Being Together

See: *Hebrews 10:25*

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.

Explain that you will never know everyone in the church. 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.

Unpack *Psalms 92:12-15* especially verse 13:

'Planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God.'

2. Learning Together

See: *Acts 2:42, Colossians 3:16*

As a church family it is important that we sit under God's Word together. This is feeding spiritually together, 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

See: *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 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

See: *Ephesians 6:10-18* noting the references to '*standing*'.

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

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

Session 8

God's Purpose Shapes My Life

Key verse:

*'And we pray this in order that you may **live a life worthy of the Lord** and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God'. (Colossians 1:10)*

Aim:

To establish that once you understand the purpose and will of God as revealed in the Bible, it begins to shape your **whole life**. It affects the choices you make, the relationships you develop, the way you work, play and look after your health – in fact, everything! You become a truly **Purpose Driven** person.

Elements to include:

Explain that living God's way is essentially an issue of personal **choice**; we choose to do things God's way because it is the best way to live. **These choices will influence:**

1. The people I spend time with

See: *1 Corinthians 15:33; Proverbs 12:26*

Explain the concept that *relationships are spatial*; there are many people in our lives but they must be in the right spaces so that we maximise our potential.

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 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 start. Make it a priority to develop new God centred friendships for this new season of your life.

2. How I do my job

See: *Colossians 3:22-24*

Becoming a Christian changes your attitude to work. The way we work is part of our witness. We need to be responsible and work hard.

Work is also an act of worship in one sense; we should therefore work as if we are doing it for God.

3. How I raise my family

See: *Ephesians 5:22-6:4, Proverbs 22:6*

Scripture has guidelines for mothers, fathers, children, husbands and wives. Some of these are indicated above. 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! Etc.

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 also our witness to the world around us.

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 to humanity.

4. How I conduct relationships

See: *Ephesians 5:1-10, 1 Thessalonians 4:1-7*

The aim is to live a life that pleases God. *Unpack these verses* a little and explain the process of sanctification (change into Christ-likeness) and how this impacts on our relationships.

Note:

Mention the biblical process of restoring broken relationships if appropriate (See *Matthew 5:23-24* and *18:15-17*) emphasising the point that you have a duty to try and restore things whether you are the one who did the offending or the offended person. This is covered in more detail in Session 11.

In **conclusion**, affirm that all we do relates to God's purpose and will. Being a Christian is the best way to live and so we must commit ourselves to learning how to live it to the max!



Part 3

People Empowering

Session 9 – Know Your Power Supply

Session 10 – Know Yourself

Session 11 – Playing My Part

Session 12 – Taking Responsibility

Session 9

Know Your Power Supply

Key verse:

*'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)

Aim:

To introduce people to the person, presence and power of the Holy Spirit. He is our 'power supply' for effective Christian living and the felt sense of 'God with us' in our daily walk with God. Christians are 'naturally supernatural' because God the Holy Spirit dwells in us and works through us.

Elements to include:

❑ Who is The Holy Spirit?

A simple explanation of the *Trinity*. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead. The doctrine of the Trinity is quite complicated to explain, 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: *Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:32-33*

The point to establish is that the Holy Spirit is 'God with us'. He comes to dwell in us when we are saved (see: *Ephesians 1:13; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Timothy 1:14*). The 'power supply' we have is therefore the Holy Spirit within. God in us – what a mind-blowing concept!

❑ What does the Holy Spirit do?

- 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*)

❑ What is baptism in the Holy Spirit?

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is part of the 'package deal' of salvation (*Acts 2:38*), along with repentance and faith, and baptism in water as a believer in Jesus. It is God's means 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.

Explain simply that *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*). But the Baptism in the Spirit is something *additional* to that.

Jesus, for example, 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*), conscious of the Holy Spirit's working within them (*Matthew 16:17; John 20:22*) and used in healing and exorcism (*Luke 10:17*). But they were told to wait in Jerusalem until the power of the Spirit came upon them. You can read **Acts 2** and 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 Christian.

❑ 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 Holy Spirit baptism in the same way as we receive all the blessings of God - **by faith**.

Explain simply how to receive the Baptism in Holy Spirit. Use your own testimony as appropriate but be sure to *present the principle of scripture as normative*, not your personal experience which may have been influenced by your particular church environment. **You could include:**

- 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.

What is speaking in tongues?

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 should. 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)*.

In this way we experience for ourselves what happened at the beginning, 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 (*Romans 8:26*).

Living filled with the Holy Spirit

Explain the difference between the initial encounter of being baptised in the Holy Spirit and the need to live each day as a person who is filled with the Spirit. We are to *'live by the Spirit' (Galatians 5:16)*.

'Be filled with the Spirit' (Ephesians 5:18) is literally translated as, 'Go on *being* filled with the Spirit.' How does a drunkard stay drunk? He keeps drinking! And we stay filled with the Spirit by being every day 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.

Session 10

Know Yourself

Key verse:

'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)

Aim:

This session aims to establish that 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!

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

Elements to include:

By way of introduction explain the key verse above. Establish that even if you share common abilities with other people, *you* will express them uniquely. Each person is a product of their journey in life, shaped to serve God in a fruitful and fulfilling way.

The process of *sanctification* – which continues from the moment you are saved until you meet the Lord face to face – is one 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. It is these ***five things*** we will consider in this session.

❑ Where do I fit?

All Christians at some time in their journey ask, 'Where and how do I put myself into the life of the Church and wider ministry?' Ministry simply means 'serving' and everyone can do that – it is just a question of finding what suits you best, where is your niche? The answer lies in understanding yourself, the gifts God has given you and the value of your unique heart and personality. 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 ministry comes from what you **are**.
- Your personal *'shape'* will therefore determine the *'niche'* you serve in.

Your ministry 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 indicate where you can best serve at this time in your spiritual journey.

❑ 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’.

NICHE is an acronym for:

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 are some examples:

Preaching

1 Corinthians 9:16

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 14:3

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.

Evangelism

Acts 8:26-40

The ability to communicate the gospel to unbelievers in a positive, non-threatening way, and to be able to sense opportunities to share Christ with people and lead them to respond in faith and be born-again.

Mission

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

The ability to adapt to a different culture in order to reach unbelievers and help believers from that culture.

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

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 2:1,6-16; 12:10

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 John 4:1-6, 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, from the human self, or the Holy Spirit.

Knowledge

Daniel 1:17, John 4:15-18, 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.

Service

Acts 6:1-7

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

Mercy

Luke 10:30-37, 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.

Hospitality

1 Peter 4:9-10

The ability to make others, especially strangers, feel warmly welcomed, accepted, and comfortable in the church family. The ability to co-ordinate factors that promote fellowship.

Pastoring/Shepherding

1 Peter 5:2-4, Ephesians 4:11-13

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

Giving

2 Corinthians 8:1-7, Romans 12:8

The ability to give generously resources and/or money beyond the normal tithe and offering so that the church and/or individual Christians grow and are strengthened.

Music

Psalms 150

The ability to celebrate God's presence through music, either vocal or instrumental, and lead the church in worship.

Intercession

Colossians 1:9-12

The ability to pray for the needs of others over extended periods of time on a regular basis. The ability to persist in prayer and not be discouraged until the answer arrives.

Healing

Acts 3:2-10, Mark 6:12-13

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

John 2:1-11

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

Leadership

Hebrews 13:7,17. 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 14:40

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

Romans 4:18-21, 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 personality type as two of the essential elements that make you, you.

There are many methods of personality assessment. 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. My 'heart' determines why:

- I **say** the things I do *Matthew 12:34*
- I **feel** the way I do *Hebrews 4:12*
- I **act** the way I 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 also gives you motivation... What do 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)*

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 in the past.

Session 11

Playing My Part

Key verse:

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

Aim:

To establish that the Christian life cannot be successfully lived in isolation from other Believers. Christianity is a 'team event'. We need each other in order to reach our maximum individual and corporate potential.

Elements to include:

1. Set the context – The Local Church

Revisit Session 7 where we established that becoming a Christian brought you into relationship with lots of people. In fact, every single Christian is your spiritual brother or sister – you all have the same heavenly father (*John 1:12-13*). **The family** is therefore one of the best pictures of how Christians should relate together (*1 Peter 4:17*). In addition to this, the Bible uses many more pictures to describe God's people, for example:

- **A Body:** *1 Corinthians 12:12-27* explains this and concludes, *'Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.'*
- **A Building:** *1 Peter 2:4-9* says that, *'You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house.'*

This relationship is outworked primarily within the local church you regard as your spiritual home – though you must never forget that you are meant to enjoy good relationship with all of God's people. In a thriving church you will learn, grow, serve and develop to achieve all that God has for you.

2. Playing Your Part is a Choice

People choose the part they will play in the life of the church family (*'They devoted themselves to ...'* Acts 2:42). The church is like a number of ever-widening circles: some get involved right at the centre, others 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 involve at any given time. 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 at any given time. 'Putting your self in' is actually a heart attitude and not measured by the amount you do. Some are unable to practically do very much, but their heart is 100% for all the church is doing. Others work non-stop but they 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:

▪ **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!

▪ **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 meeting around an aspect of mission or ministry avert this danger to some extent but we should 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 the barriers caused by differing personality, social background, upbringing, colour, education and so on. Here is an area where Christians can show society a better the way (see *James 2:1-4*).

▪ **Be Loyal**

By definition, the church is distinct from the world. Those who are in the church are light; those in the world are darkness (*Ephesians 5:8*). So, our loyalty must be primarily to our fellow-believers 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. 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 the Lord.

▪ **Be a Servant**

Every Christian has some means of contributing to the life of the church, some ability which can be for him or her a means of obeying Paul's exhortation to *'serve one another in love'* (*Galatians 5:13*). We explored this in **Session 10** called ‘Know Yourself.’

Fundamentally, we all 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*)

■ 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 means; (b) Systematic; (c) With a willing cheerfulness

Taking into account the group you are teaching, explain as far as is practical how these principles are expressed through the giving of **Tithes** and **Offerings**. The following scriptures will be helpful:

Tithing

- ❑ The tithe is an offering of our 'Firstfruit': *Genesis 4:2-5; Genesis 14:18-22; Genesis 28:22*
- ❑ The practice was included in the Law of Moses: *Exodus 13:12-13; Exodus 23:19; Leviticus 27:30; Numbers 18:21; 2 Chronicles 31:4-5; Malachi 3:8-10*
- ❑ Jesus affirmed tithing: *Matthew 22:21; Luke 11:42*
- ❑ Today we tithe to Jesus, the High Priest in the order of Melkizedek: *Hebrews 7:1-19*

Offerings:

Matthew 6:2-4; Mark 12:43-44; Luke 6:38; Acts 11:29; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8:2-3; 2 Corinthians 9:7-11

▪ **Be 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

Key verse:

'I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace' (Ephesians 4:1-3)

Aim:

To establish that every individual Christian must take responsibility for their own personal spiritual growth and development. They must also take appropriate responsibility for their fellow Christians and play a responsible part in our corporate mission of reaching the lost and building a great church.

Elements to include:

This final session provides an opportunity to tie up any loose ends, draw in any additional areas of Christian discipleship which may be of particular relevance to your group, or aspects you feel have been neglected earlier in the Discovery course. All this is done under the broad theme of *Taking Responsibility*.

Delegates should be left with a clear understanding that their spiritual life and progress is primarily their own responsibility and this includes, at the very least, the areas mentioned below.

Taking 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 to God as you live each day, involving 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.

▪ *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 integrity.

Integrity is seen in the way you speak 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.

▪ ***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 to live that way. Be your *brother's keeper*, encouraging and admonishing him/her if appropriate (*Colossians 3:15-16*). This protects our corporate relationship as a church.

▪ ***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).*

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