

General Themes

OM's Core Values

Outcomes

At the end of the seminar, each person will:

1. Have met afresh with God in a personal and significant way,
 2. Have a deeper trust in God and renewed commitment to walk with Him, and
 3. be able to explain the core values of OM and have resolved to integrate the core values into everyday life
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What happens

Each morning a segment of time is scheduled to encourage an encounter with our living God. Firstly, we will come together to lift our voices in praise to our Lord; secondly, we will draw apart to spend time with God individually, and then thirdly, we will meet in small share/care/prayer groups.

Each morning one of OM's core values will become the focus of the personal study and sharing time.

As you read and meditate upon God's Word, may you encounter God in a personal and intimate way. Keep in clear focus, therefore, that the aim of each personal or group time is to enter into God's presence so that you might worship Him in Spirit and truth, and also so that you might be renewed in your minds through these truths.

It is our sincere hope and prayer that through these sessions, our core values will become more deeply rooted in your thinking and in turn become integral in your living and serving our Master, Jesus.

Time

The following time segments are suggested:

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| 20 mins | Group meeting for worship & preparation (including time to move to place for personal meditation) |
| 40 mins | Personal study and meditation (including time to move to small group) |
| 30 mins | Small group sharing & prayer-time |
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Materials & Resources

1. Songbooks or OHP songs (as organised by worship leader)
 2. Bible
 3. Handouts, including guidelines for personal meditation (first day), suggestions for small group leaders (also first day), and the day's personal Bible study and meditation notes and group discussion questions (according to the particular day's theme)
 4. Paper and pens if required for taking notes during personal Bible study
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How do I do it?

General guidelines:

1. Contact small group leaders (preferably the day before) to ensure that they understand their responsibilities and are making the necessary preparations. Give them HANDOUT #1 to read in preparation for this task. Encourage them to recognise the significance of their role in making the small group discussions fruitful and helpful. Ask them to prepare themselves for these sessions by reading and studying the questions beforehand and thinking through some helpful ways to facilitate discussion on each question.
2. Announce the time and place for the main group meetings clearly and also for the small groups. Some form of written announcement is definitely preferable.
3. Help people find appropriate places for their personal study and meditation if needed. Encourage them to move immediately to a quiet place, and then later to be on time for their small group discussion.
4. Give simple guidelines about ways to maximise their time for personal study and meditation. Use HANDOUT #2.
5. Distribute the questions for personal study & meditation for the day (or if they are already in the participants' folder, remind them to bring that day's questions with them). This also applies to their having on hand the questions for small group discussion. Make sure that they know the time when the groups are to meet and when they are to close.
6. At the appointed time for the small group meetings, check to see that all the seminar participants are in their groups and if any group leaders may need your help.

Study 1: “Knowing and glorifying God”

Part I: Personal Bible study

Introduction

The focus of our meditation and study today is the loftiest and most important subject we can ever give our minds to, namely, “knowing and glorifying God”.

We need God to help us know God! So let’s pause and ask our loving Father to prepare our minds and hearts to so know Him that all we are and do glorifies His holy name.

Our first OM core value calls us all, firstly, to ”know” God and, secondly, to “glorify” Him. We’ll come to see through this study that these two themes are like the two sides of a coin.

Let’s begin by asking ourselves: What does it mean “to know” another human being? Think of a specific person you know well like a parent, a brother or sister, a close friend, or your husband or wife if you are married. Try to describe your relationship with that person? Is it intimate or just superficial?

Now go a little further in your reflections and write down several thoughts on the theme: *What is the nature of a strong and intimate “knowing” relationship with another person?* (Keep these in mind as we’ll be referring back to them at a later point in this study.)

Shift gears momentarily now. What do you think it means “to glorify” someone? Who are the people or groups of people who receive lots of “glory” in your community? And why are they often praised or put on a high pedestal? Ponder the thought: Giving and receiving honour and glory is a desire deeply embedded within the heart of every human being. Could it be that you and I have been made this way?

Write a brief summary of your reflections on the fundamental meaning of “knowing” and “glorifying” as it is applied to people. Do you see any connection between what comes naturally to us and what we are called to as believers – a relationship of knowing and glorifying our Lord and Maker? Note any significant thoughts on this theme that come to mind.

Bible study on John 17:1-8, 24-26

Read slowly and meditatively through the entire 17th chapter of John’s Gospel.

Note: In our study of this passage, we will follow the order the two words “glorifying” and “knowing” are found in Jesus’ High Priestly prayer. Obviously our OM leaders who formulated our core values had a particular sequence of thought in mind with their choice of the words “knowing and glorifying God”.

How can a person glorify God if God is a stranger to him/her? But on the other hand, can it be said that a person has come to know God in truth if that person has little or no inclination to bring honour and glory to God? Reflect on your own spiritual pilgrimage and the divine interplay between these two themes in your life.

Read verse 1.

Express in your own words the consuming passion of the Lord Jesus as expressed in this verse. Read also John 12:28. Noting the similarity of Jesus’ words in both these verses, could it be that this prayer and longing was expressed from the lips of our Lord Jesus in prayer many times throughout His earthly life? Even as a daily prayer?

And what does this say to us as the deepest motivation in the heart and mind of our Master? At the beginning of each day, also in the midst of crises, could it be that this underlying motivation compelled Him to press on even when faced with many disappointments or opposition?

Application:

Any example for us to follow? Note down whatever the Spirit may put in your mind for you to live just as the Master lived.

Now it is helpful to be note how the apostle John uses the word “to glorify” in his Gospel with reference to Jesus’ work. John uses the meaning its synonym “to lift up high” to underline a deeper meaning of the word “to glorify” in Jesus’ experience. Read John 3:13-15;12:32 and meditate on the inseparable link between Jesus’ being glorified and His being lifted up on His cross.

Application:

You and I may have prayed the same prayer Jesus prayed before His cross: “Father, glorify Your name through my life”. Have we really understood what we may have been asking God to do? If Jesus’ glorifying His Father meant obeying the Father’s will to suffer on the cross, is it not possible that God will answer this prayer by asking us to take up our cross and bring glory to His name through some experience of suffering for Jesus’ sake? Think for a moment how down through the centuries, God has glorified His name miracles as much through the suffering and even death of some of God’s servants as through their lives. Think of one example from mission history. However, don’t hold back praying this prayer out of fear lest God will now answer this prayer only through filling your life with tough and painful experiences. Rather let us pray with confidence to our loving and all-wise God who knows how to answer our prayers both for His glory and also for our blessing.

Read verse 4.

Notice from this verse HOW Jesus brought glory to His Father while He was on earth. What did He DO? Find the answer in part from the following verses in Luke’s Gospel. Read one or more of the following verses, and if you can spare the time, read also the story related to each of these verses: Luke 5:25,26; 7:16; 13:13; 17:15; 18:43. (Note: In each of these verses, Luke uses the Greek word “to glorify”. You may find that in the version or translation of the Bible you are reading, a different word such as “to praise” has been used by the team of translators.)

Write a simple statement summarising how the different “works” of Jesus in these verses brought glory to the Father.

Take careful note also how Jesus said in His prayer that He had glorified His Father by “*completing*” the work the Father had given to Him to do, and that He would continue to glorify the Father by finishing this final and greatest work through His crucifixion.

Application:

Meditate on this theme: *Completing a work given us by God is Christ-like*. Is there a particular work or ministry that God has committed to you but you are now finding very hard to complete? Why? Are you possibly looking for a way out because you are finding it too hard to continue right through to the end? Obviously there are some tasks without a specific end, e.g. working in an office. But there are other tasks that God entrusts to us that He calls us to see through to a proper closure, e.g. helping a young Christian really get on his/her feet. Such ministries are fraught with ups and downs. It’s easy for us to give up and try some other ministry. Take a moment now to consider if there are any tasks God (through your leaders) gave to you to see through to the finish line. Let Him speak to your heart through the example of Jesus. Commit yourself to bring glory to the Father’s name by completing whatever work He gives to you to do.

Read verse 3.

What does Jesus reveal to us about the fruit of “knowing God”?

Application:

Today subtly influenced by western rationalism some Christians approach this subject of knowing God as an intellectual exercise. What have you learned from your life experiences about knowing a very close friend that you can apply to knowing the Person of God? How satisfying or real is a relationship with another human being if we go no further than just interacting about facts and ideas? What do you believe is in the heart of God when He makes Himself known to us? Ponder this thought: God has made Himself known to us so that we genuinely love Him. Let God's Spirit fill your heart with a deep passion for knowing and loving God and His Son, Jesus.

Read verse 6.

What does Jesus' prayer show us about how Jesus' early disciples came to know God and to know for certain that He had indeed come from God? Strengthen your conviction of this truth by reading one or more of the following Scriptures: Matt.11:25-27; John 1:18; 2 Cor.4:4-6; Eph.1:17; 1 John 5:20.

Application:

Humble your heart before God acknowledging before Him that the only reason you came to know Him is because He Himself in love drew you to Himself. Worship Him for pouring His love and grace upon you when you were totally undeserving of His kindness.

Read verses 6 – 8a.

When Jesus spoke about His revealing the Father to His followers, this is another way of saying that He has "made Him known" to them. Observe now some of the key verbs (= action words!) that Jesus uses in these verses: "revealed" (make known), "obeyed", "know", "accepted" etc. Consider this question: What link could have been in Jesus' mind between each of these key action steps? Note down some of your responses.

Application:

What is the link in your life between "knowing God" and "obeying Him" or "accepting His words"? Read also 2 Thess.1:8; 1 John 3:6; 4:6-8. Reflect on this thought: Whenever God reveals some aspect of Himself to us, we know this truth in reality only when we walk in it ("walk" = obey). If we give God any lesser response (e.g. apathy or mere intellectual interest), we close ourselves off from the deep satisfaction and joy of experiencing and enjoying an alive relationship with the living God. What aspect of God's character has God's Spirit been showing you lately? And what has been your response?

Read verse 8b.

Note from this verse the particular truth about who Jesus was that had been revealed to Jesus' followers through His life and words. Read also the last phrase in verse 25. Try to express this truth using your own words.

Do you not also "hear" a real note of rejoicing and thanksgiving coming through these words of Jesus?

Application

Have you been wrestling of late with some niggling doubts about the truthfulness or relevancy of the Gospel message that God has sent you to share with others? If so, admit such doubts to yourself. Don't be afraid of them. Rather take time now to ask God to give you a fresh certainty that Jesus is the true and only Way to knowing God the Father.

Read verse 25 & 26.

After reading verse 25, stand back in awe as you ponder what Jesus thanks the Father for. Be amazed how He, the Son of God, offers up a prayer of thanksgiving that He "knows" the Father. What do you imagine may have been in Jesus' mind when He prayed this prayer?

Then from verse 26, take careful note of the higher purposes or goals in Jesus' revealing the Father to His disciples. Write these down.

Application:

Take a moment to tell your heavenly Father how thankful you are to know Him. (Of course, don't just do it now. Do it often, over and over again! Bless the heart of your God through such prayers of thanksgiving.)

Now meditate on this thought: When we know God personally as Jesus prayed in this prayer, God's love will replace or displace all hate, bitterness and unforgiveness. This very fact will help us to know for certain that we know God in truth.

Reflect further that knowing and experiencing God's love will motivate us to pray and long that others will also know God, experience His amazing love and have Jesus living in them.

Conclusion

As you conclude this meditation, ask God the Spirit to help you make this core value the desire of your heart (as shown in Jesus' prayer) – to truly know God and glorify Him through your entire being and in every moment and situation of your life. The God who delights to hear and answer such prayers will without doubt give to you the desire of your heart as He has promised.

Part II: Small group discussion questions

- 1) Team leaders are normally people with a lot of differing responsibilities and tasks. It is easy for them to feel weighed down by a burden of busyness. What practical steps can we take to prevent this “tyrant” of busyness from robbing us of growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (see 2 Peter 3:18)?
- 2) Team leaders inevitably leave their mark on the life of the whole team -- for good or ill. Think of some Christian leaders you have known personally whose personal love for God stimulated you to have a deeper longing after God. What lessons can we learn from their example? (If there's time, share a story or example together.)
- 3) What are some ways that we can follow in our Master's footsteps bringing glorify to our Father through the words we share with others and the way we live on our OM teams?

Study 2: *“Living in submission to God’s Word”*

Part I: Personal Bible Study

Introduction

Have you ever thought of how many different choices we might make in the average day? Quite a few! Most are just ordinary and inconsequential, but sometimes we make choices with far-reaching and serious consequences.

“Major choices” would include such matters as the people I choose to make my close friends. Whereas “minor choices” might include such incidental matters as “what clothes should I wear today?” Some major choices are related to moral issues, whereas minor choices are mostly over the minor details of everyday life (even though in some situations our choice of clothes may have some definite moral implications).

Have you ever stopped and asked yourself: How do I go about making the more weighty choices in life? By myself? Or do I look to others for advice? Ask yourself the following question: Who in practice exercises the greatest influence over my thinking when I am working through those big, major choices in my life?

Your spontaneous answer to this question may be: God’s Spirit. Hopefully this is indeed the case, but let’s make sure we know what we are saying.

Reflect for a moment on this thought: “Submitting to God cannot be separated from submitting to His Word.” Can a person ever be separated from his/her words? Certainly a person’s words communicate to us the will as well as the character of that person.

This then means that if we make the Christian confession “Jesus is Lord”, we are acknowledging Him as the One who is the final authority over our lives.

Pause a few moments and ponder the question: How then does our confession influence our making those major choices in life?

Now let’s do a “reality check” for a moment. Think back to a recent important choice you made. How did you go about it? How much did you study the Scriptures or recall some key verses, passages or biblical principles directly related to the choice or decision before you? If you did, then you were living out your confession “Jesus is Lord” and practising this OM core value “living in submission to God’s Word”. Well done!

Let us now meditate on some verses from the pen of the apostle Paul so that we can further reinforce this truth in our minds and hearts.

Bible study from 2 Tim.3:10-4:5

Read through this entire section prayerfully asking God for the help of His Spirit to open your spiritual eyes so that you can hear and understand His truth and wholeheartedly receive it into your heart.

Read chapter 3, verses 15 & 16.

Look for those key words describing the Word of God and also how God communicated it to man.

Then contemplate this question: What do these special words tell us about God Himself considers His Word? For example, one key word describing the Bible is “the HOLY Scriptures”. What does it mean to you that God declares His Scriptures to be “holy”? (“Holy” means exclusively God’s; perfect;

transcending man's wisdom; without any of sin's polluting influences; set apart for God's purposes and glory.)

Take a few moments to check your own attitudes towards God's Word: When I read and meditate upon God's Word, do I approach it with holy awe and reverence in my heart? Read also Isaiah 66:2b.

Read verses 10,14,15.

Take careful note in verse 10 how closely Paul connects "my teaching" with "my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance". What does this say to us about how God wants us to think of the interconnectedness between His truth and our submission to His truth in daily life?

Note also how Paul links the teaching Timothy received as an infant with the lives (example) of the people who had taught the Scriptures to him. (Paul refers to these two people in 2 Tim.1:5.)

Paul isn't boasting when he uses his own example to encourage Timothy. Nor is he putting these two special women in Timothy's life on a spiritual pedestal. Rather in verse 14 his purpose becomes clear.

Reflect for a moment on the word "continue" in verse 14 (referring to the Word of God that had been taught to Timothy). How would you describe the meaning of this word? Write down one or two synonyms for "continue". Consider carefully God's demands upon us to continually position our daily lives under His truth. (Read also 1 John 2:24,28.)

Have you been facing any temptations of late to let go of some teaching in the faith that you once received? Missionaries are just as prone as anyone to being deceived by the enemy's lies believed and followed by the majority around them! Perhaps you are being tempted to regard certain truths in the Scriptures as "old-fashioned", i.e. not in keeping with modern ways of thinking. If that is the case, listen carefully (= "heed") to God's word to us through Paul's exhortation to Timothy. Determine that no matter what others do, you will let God's truths dictate to you the path you will follow.

Read verse 16.

Notice how Paul doesn't just talk about doctrine ("All Scripture is God-breathed") but also about the practical value and usefulness of the Scriptures in everyday life. How then are we to use the Scriptures both in our own lives as well as in our ministry to others? Take time to let the words Paul uses impact you: "teaching", "rebuking", "correcting" and "training in righteousness".

Read also 2 Tim.4:2 noting the direct link between "preaching the Word" and "rebuking, correcting and encouraging".

Write down brief responses to the following questions:

- ◆ How does God desire that our minds be shaped to think His thoughts? (Consider the significance of your receiving sound "teaching" from the Scriptures.)
- ◆ How can we in practice submit to the "rebuking and correcting" ministry of the Scriptures?
- ◆ What is our primary tool for training ourselves and others to live righteous, godly lives?

If you can possibly spare the time, consider also how God's Word links "wisdom" with "submitting to rebukes & correction". Read again verse 15. Take time to read through the following verses in Proverbs: 3:11,12; 9:8; 12:1; 13:1,18; 15:5,31,32.

Read verse 17.

In this verse, Paul refers to Timothy and God's servants as "the man of God". (Obviously "man" is here used in the generic sense.) This expression as used in this verse and context cannot but refer to a person who has been called to teach and lead others in the ways of God. A responsibility which no one among us can handle without God's help!

The joining words “so that” at the beginning of this verse (perhaps one word in your translation) show us the inseparable link between the inspired Scriptures and the work God calls His servants to do.

Check to see that you have been allowing God’s Word to carry out its purifying ministry in your life.

Of one thing the Scripture is unmistakably clear: The primary “equipment” that a servant of God needs is a careful, thorough knowledge of the Scriptures AND a heart that is open to be cleansed and renewed daily by its truths. Take time to make absolutely sure that you are properly equipped for your God-given ministries.

Read chapter 4, verses 1-5.

Note especially in these verses Paul’s use of the following expressions: “the Word”, “sound doctrine” and “the truth”. Take a brief moment to understand the significance of these key references to the holy Scriptures.

Read verse 2. You like Timothy have been set apart to communicate God’s Word with others (Christians & non-Christians). Focus your meditation upon the approach and attitude you are to adopt as you speak to others about God’s Word.

If you sometimes have difficulty with patience or with the discipline of giving “careful” instruction, then think how you yourself expect others to correct you! Haven’t you found that when corrections and rebukes are given with “great patience” and “careful instruction”, your heart is much more receptive to receive them gladly? Determine then in your heart to follow Paul’s advice whenever you need to exercise this difficult ministry to your team members.

How relevant are Paul’s warnings in verses 3-5 to our post-modern world today? Consider the weight of Paul’s counsel to each one of us, namely, that no matter how other people may just want to listen to whatever makes them feel good, a true and faithful servant of God is one who gives people what they NEED, not what they want!

Conclusion

Therefore, recommit yourself to remain faithful to God’s truth no matter what others around us may think – both in your own life and also in your ministry. If you do so, you will be among “the blessed” of the Lord.

II. Small group discussion questions

- 1) Share together a few examples of our natural rebellion against God’s Word that cause conflicts and tensions on OM teams. Then take one of these examples and discuss how practically a team leader can use the Scriptures to help team members submit their wills to God. (Read 2 Tim.2:15 together.)
- 2) No Christian leader is without his or her blind spots. It is inevitable that there will be certain areas in your life that are not yet in submission to God’s Word. In what ways can the fellowship of Christ’s body help you to pinpoint such areas in your life for your good and God’s glory?
- 3) Discuss together how Christian leaders can (and need to) allow themselves to be open to the help of their own team members in seeing their spiritual or moral blind spots. Consider also how a leader’s stubbornness and resistance to the help of his/her team members will not only hurt them personally but also have negative repercussions upon the life of the whole team.

Study 3: “Being people of grace and integrity”

Part I: Personal Bible Study

Introduction

Could it be that as you begin this particular study, the very title causes you to feel troubled? Any ideas why? Have you been struggling recently with some issue in your life related to “grace” or “integrity”? Remember the Lord knows everything about our lives (Ps.139:1-4; Heb.4:13), but His knowledge of us is not “against” us but “for” us. He longs to and is able to help us work through any barrier to our being people of grace and integrity . . . if we are willing.

Therefore, pause for a moment before you go any further and settle this issue with your heavenly Father. Tell Him what He already knows but now you are admitting to. Don’t hide or run from Him. Talk over with Him any struggle or barrier. Open your heart up to receive both His forgiveness and also His mighty, unfailing grace.

Today we God’s people often face a real tension between what we read in the Bible as God’s standards and the standards we see practised by the many people we have contact with each day. For example, one standard or value that many people believe and live by in today’s world is: “Whatever will make me more happy or prosperous is permissible regardless of how I get it.”

Have you heard fellow-Christians also talking like this? Ask yourself: Has this worldly value even crept unnoticed into my thinking? The bottom-line issue is: Who sets the standards for God’s people to follow? Who determines our basic core values as believers (inside and outside of OM)? Hopefully you will immediately see the link between yesterday’s study about “living in submission to God’s Word” and today’s topic.

Bow in God’s presence right now and commit yourself anew to living by God’s standards regardless of the flow of popular opinion and practice around you both in the world and also in the church.

A study and meditation on “grace” & “integrity”

Let us ask a simple question: What will “a person of grace and integrity” look like”? How are these two words used in God’s holy Word? As you read and study the following verses and passages, try to grasp the meaning of these two key words by understanding their meaning within their biblical context (i.e. surrounding verses & chapter). Note also the literary form used by the particular biblical author:

“Grace”

Read John 1:14,17.

Pause a moment to worship our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ for the grace that God has lavished on you (see also Eph.1:6-7; 2:5,8-9; Titus 2:11).

Read 2 Cor.8:9.

Contemplate for a moment the incredible wealth of spiritual riches that you have inherited in Christ as a sinner who deserved nothing but God’s fiery judgment and condemnation. Spend a few moments worshipping and praising God for saving you when you could not save yourself from His wrath. Try writing this verse out inserting your name in place of the personal pronouns “you” and “your”.

Now consider how being on the receiving end of God’s grace is linked inseparably with also being on the giving end. For example, think of how Paul could never forget God’s great grace and mercy (see 1

Tim.1:14; 1 Cor.15:8-10) and how this truth continually motivated him to show and pass on God's grace to others.

Think of a specific situation in your team relationships when a fellow-team member "dispensed" God's grace to you, e.g. you had failed to keep a promise and knew that they had good reason to feel very disappointed with you. He/she could have condemned you for your failure with strong, harsh words. Instead you were forgiven immediately and encouraged with healing words. Remember how you were so deeply touched by this act of grace?

Now think of a situation that you may be presently facing where God is calling you to act as a channel of His grace in someone else's life (see Matthew 10:8). What in specific terms is God asking you to do for this person? Ask God for the will to do His will -- perhaps even today!

Or perhaps you are among those believers who have a tendency towards perfectionism so that when people fail or disappoint you, you often respond with angry, harsh, judgmental, condemning words. You find it very difficult to accept other people's mistakes and failures, and also your own.

But that is exactly when "grace" makes all the difference. None of us are without our failures, and above all, in God's sight we are hopeless failures if we apply the standard of perfectionism. We cannot save ourselves from failure no matter how hard we try. But our Gospel is about "failures" called to come before the God who doesn't condemn us as failures, but rather reaches out to accept us and transform us. That is "amazing grace" in action in everyday life.

If you are prone to condemn others for their failures, then open up your own heart to let God's grace deeply touch your mind and heart. Only as you come to see yourself as you really are -- a miserable failure if God's acceptance were to be based on your performance as a Christian -- that you will be ready to manifest God's grace to people who disappoint or fail you in some way. That is, to live as "a person of grace" instead of condemnation.

Read Col.1:2; 4:18.

Note how the apostle Paul extends God's grace to his fellow-believers through his words of greeting. Was this just a customary greeting of his day like we say "hello" or "good-bye"? Yes, it was that! Ponder for a moment how Paul's use of a custom of his day included taking ahold of an everyday greeting and making it a uniquely Christian greeting -- with rich, new meaning.

Do you think that we 20th century believers may have missed an early church practice of "blessing" our fellow-believers through using such meaningful Christian greetings? Perhaps our words have more power than we realise in bringing blessing to others. Ponder this thought for a moment. May God help us to bring a blessing to others rather than a curse through the words we speak.

Read Col.4:6.

In this verse Paul stresses still another dimension of "grace" which is to be evident in the lives of God's people. Firstly, consider what emphasis Paul is seeking to make through his use of the qualifying words "always" and "full of . . ." Write your own expanded paraphrase of this verse.

Summary:

Having now read these different verses (and there are many others that could also be referred to!), write down a couple of practical steps that you personally could take, even today, in order to live as a channel of God's grace. Be specific. Be real. Then ask God for His grace ("His divine enabling") to keep growing into a person of grace.

"Integrity"

Read Proverbs 10:9; 11:3; & 13:6.

In Hebrew poetry a truth or statement in the first line is sometimes highlighted by contrasting it with a second statement (found in the second line). This means that we can find the meaning of a particular statement by reading the opposite or contrasting statement.

Example: Prov.10:9

Line 1 -- "The man of integrity walks securely,"

Line 2 -- "but he who takes crooked paths will be found out."

Consider for a moment what you can learn about God's definition of "integrity" by contrasting "integrity" with "taking crooked paths". What does the word "crooked" mean? Think of a crooked object.

Describe it (e.g. not straight).

Then write down a simple biblical definition of "integrity" relating it to the opposing or contrasting thought of "crookedness".

Using the same approach, read and meditate upon Prov.11:3 & 13:6. Write down any further insights God gives you concerning His understanding of "integrity".

Read Psalm 15:1-3; 24:3-6.

From this verse answer the question: What actions or ways of "a person of integrity" are set before us in these verses? What particular areas of your life relate specifically to living out these "fruits" of a heart of integrity? Again write down whatever the Spirit shows you, then commit yourself to becoming a man or woman of integrity.

Conclusion:

Close this study by reading Romans 12:9-21 with a prayerful and open spirit, allowing God's Spirit to use these basic statements to renew your mind and to establish more firmly His values and ways as normal standards of conduct in your life. And praise Him that He will continue to help and guide you in this life-long process.

Part II: Small group discussion questions:

- 1) Consider any possible link or connection between “grace” and “integrity”. Discuss possible reasons for placing these two character traits side by side in this OM core value.
- 2) Consider in what particular ways God desires leaders among His people to be “people of grace and integrity”? If God has put His finger on some particular issue in your own life through this study, consider sharing it with the whole group for their edification and encouragement.
- 3) Team leaders have a responsibility not only to live as people of grace and integrity but also to motivate their team members to reach out towards this goal also. For example, how can a team leader graciously help a team member who is being “two-faced” or “harsh”?
- 4) Discuss together the connection between the exercise of your God-given authority as a leader and your being a person of both grace and integrity. For example, think together how your past experiences with your leaders and your desire to follow them have been influenced by such issues as whether they kept a promise or not. Encourage one another to take such matters to heart.

Study 4: “Serving sacrificially”

Part I: Personal Bible study

Introduction

“Serving sacrificially” as a core value cannot but cause us to remember the person and example of our Lord Jesus. He is given the title of God’s holy and exalted Servant (see Isaiah 52:13-14).

So at the beginning of this study, read Phil. 2:5-11, reverently reflecting on both the sacrifices, the sufferings and also the glory of God’s Servant, Jesus. (Suggestion: Don’t rush through this familiar passage but rather pause along the way in order to worship and adore our Lord Jesus as His beauty and glory is unfolded before your spiritual eyes.)

Today we come to our Lord Jesus in order that we might learn about sacrificial servanthood or about true service with sacrifice. And as we are just about to see, this was one of the most important lessons that He taught to the first group of disciples in preparation for their becoming apostles and leaders in His church.

Pause now and ask God to guide you as you think, meditate and apply His truths to your life.

Bible study on Mark 10:32-45

Begin by reading this passage through meditatively and prayerfully.

Read verse 32.

What was the significance of Jesus’ going to Jerusalem (after having spent the majority of His time and ministry in the northern regions)? Take note of Jesus’ clear stance or position as “leader” as He together with His twelve disciples set His face to go up to Jerusalem to become God’s perfect “sacrificial Lamb” and in this way to serve or minister to our deepest need, our sin problem. Stand back in awe and marvel!

Contrast the attitude and responses of His disciples as they followed. What was their dominant emotion at the time according to this verse? Have you ever felt afraid when the Master’s leading for you seemed to involve pain, suffering and sacrifice?

However, let us note what these disciples experienced -- Jesus was leading the way, and they went to Jerusalem with Him. What difference do you think it should make when we know that we have an Unseen Presence with us no matter how apparently dangerous or difficult the ministry ahead may appear to be?

Ponder these truths letting the Master’s promise to be always with us as we go in His name (see Matt.28:19,20) to banish fear of not being able to cope from our minds. How wonderfully Jesus took care of these disciples when they witnessed His capture (see John 18:8). And He hasn’t changed!

Read verses 33-34.

Jesus who knew perfectly the Old Testament Scriptures also knew full well what Isaiah had written about this very moment in God’s plan for His “righteous servant”. Read Is.53:10-11.

If Jesus sends you out to serve Him as He was sent by His Father (see John 20:21 “Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you’”), what does this tell us about the realities of following and serving Jesus? Take a moment to once again consider seriously before God the cost of serving Him. He hasn’t called us to a nice, easy or popular mission but a mission that demands even our willingness to serve His highest purposes through giving our lives. Read Acts 20:24.

However, remember also the privilege. Read Phil.1:29. Meditate upon the supernatural help that God gives generously to any servant of His servants to whom He gives the privilege of serving Him in the midst of pain, suffering or through the ultimate sacrifice. See 2 Cor.12:9.

Read verses 35-41.

We have already read and noted from verses 32-34 the compelling passion of Jesus to go to Jerusalem in order that He might finish His Father's will.

Now contrast this passion with what was captivating the attention of Jesus' disciples. How would you summarise the disciples' concerns highlighted in verses 35-42? Write down in your notes a simple summary statement of the focus of the disciples' attention.

Now ask yourself if you ever see a similar spirit arising in your heart also? If this be so (what true and honest servant would miss seeing clear traces of "self" in their hearts?), realise that God will want to work with us in dealing with this wrong attitude and spirit lest it corrupt our service for Him.

Take a moment to contemplate how "self" stands diametrically opposed to the very basic nature of "servanthood". Consider how hard it has been for you to devote yourself wholeheartedly to serving Christ and others whenever your heart has been fixed on your self and achieving your own personal ends. The two don't mix together as water and oil cannot mix!

Let the Spirit of God help you now confess any such tendency so that you can put on the mind of Jesus, the great, humble Servant of God, who was ready to do the Father's will no matter how great a sacrifice was required. Read Phil.2:3-5.

Read verses 42-44.

Write down Jesus' message to His disciples in your own words. Then answer these questions honestly:

*** In my willingness to lead a team is there any element of wanting to "climb the ladder" of success and recognition or gain a position of power and influence over others?

*** Is there any element of "lording it over" people in the way I serve my team?

If so, listen carefully and respond to the words of Jesus in verses 43 & 44.

Read verse 45.

What is the heart of Jesus' leadership style as highlighted in this key verse? Take a moment to write it down so that it can impact your spirit powerfully.

Read John 13:1-17 while trying to put yourself in the place of those early disciples as if you were one of them receiving Jesus' ministry that day. Can you imagine how this would have affected the way you served Him from that day forwards? The picture of your Messiah washing your dirty feet would never have left your memory. And His concluding words: "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them" would have continued to ring in your ears motivating you to follow His example. Truly, to be like Jesus means to serve sacrificially and humbly just as He did!

Conclusion

Close your personal study simply by thanking God for Jesus and all His sacrificial service on your behalf. Then commit yourself to experience the highest dimension of significance in life by losing yourself in order to serve others sacrificially.

Finally, ask God's Spirit to show you one specific act of sacrificial service that you can do today. Then go and bless others -- and yourself -- by doing it!

Part II: Small group discussion questions

- 1) A mission leader wrote recently: “If you’ve been asked to lead, you’ve been asked to serve.” (Doug Lucas) Share your responses to this comment.
- 2) In the New Testament, the word “to serve” is often associated with some very practical task, e.g. Onesimus’ help for Paul in prison (Philemon 13) or Paul’s serving the very poor in Judea by gathering aid from the non-Jewish congregations (Rom.15:25; 2 Cor.8:10-15). Share together different practical things that team members and also team leaders can do as a service to one another and also to the world?
- 3) There is a close link between “practical service” and “spiritual service” or ministry. (“Ministry” is a synonym for “service”.) But some believers tend to elevate “spiritual ministry” above “practical service” as if doing everyday, mundane things for others is less important than, e.g. going to preach the Gospel to them. Discuss any negative effects of this way of thinking in team life and ministry. Close by praying for one another, asking the Lord to give you the willingness to serve Him and your team members faithfully no matter how seemingly ordinary your “service” or ministry may appear to be.

Study 5: “Loving and valuing people”

Part I: Personal Bible study

Introduction

What better way to begin today’s Bible study than to read and meditate upon a few of the MANY Scriptures that declare how deeply God loves us, His precious people! Ask God to use these wonderful truths like a mighty waterfall to drench you with the sheer wonder of His pure and perfect love for you.

Read Psalm 36:5; 103:8-11; Jer.31:3; Col.3:12; 1 John 4:10,11; Eph.3:16-19.

This is the one and only place to begin our meditation upon “loving and valuing people”. Why? Consider for a moment the inseparable link between God’s reaching down to pour out His love upon you lavishly and your reaching out to love others. (Don’t rush on to the next paragraph until you have allowed this truth to impact your heart and mind in a fresh way.)

Reflect also upon this truth: If God loved YOU so deeply and longs so intensely to have you with Him for all eternity that He would sacrifice His very own beloved Son’s life’s blood to make that possible, what message does this act of profoundest love communicate to you about how much He values you as a person?

Consider the following statement and then write down one or two brief responses: We may not find in the Scriptures a specific command to “value” other people. Rather Christ’s command to love others is a powerful, visible expression of a biblical conviction that all men are worthy of our love. Loving others, therefore, is founded upon the truth that every human being has infinite worth in God’s sight, created in His own image. God’s view of man’s worth is seen supremely in His giving His own Son to die as man’s sinless Substitute in order that all who believe might be reconciled to God and experience the full extent of His everlasting love.

Bible study on John 13:34,35; 15:9-14

Read these verses while trying to picture in your mind the living Lord Jesus speaking to you face to face to you right now. (And He is!) What do you hear Him saying to you personally within your present circumstances of life?

Meditation

Based on these verses from John’s Gospel, give clear and definite answers to the following fundamental questions taking time to think through the implications of each truth for you personally:

1. **Who is the One who is making these statements?** Just a good friend? Or rather Someone with authority to tell you what to do?
2. **In what manner is He speaking to you?** Is He merely making a suggestion? Or is He rather setting before you a specific mandate for action?
3. **Who is He asking you to love?** Any exceptions?
4. **How does He expect you to love others especially fellow-believers?** According to whose example or pattern? Read also 1 Cor.13:4-8.

Application

How have you personally experienced the many differing dimensions of God's love? Consider Jesus' words: "As I have loved you" Consider both the cross as the ultimate demonstration of His work for you (see Rom.5:8) AND also the innumerable ways He continues to demonstrate His love for you right to this very moment. Record these in your notes, then take time to rejoice in God's presence with thanksgiving for each manifestation of His great love for you.

Based on John 15:12,13, consider one practical way to demonstrate your love for a fellow-believer (within the next day or week) by "laying down your life" for him/her, i.e. to make some real sacrifice on his/her behalf in order to help meet a particular need.

Pause a moment and ask God to confirm this plan as His plan and guide you in carrying out His will.

Easy to do? No way! Jesus never promised that following Him would be easy-going. And this includes obeying His command to love one another. However, remember that the rewards are far-reaching. Reflect how your relationship with an individual is deeply affected whenever they show love to you in some sacrificial way.

Right now you might feel as if you have often disobeyed God's command to love others God's way. Be encouraged that you are not alone in this struggle. However, don't allow this comforting fact to dull your desire and motivation to genuinely love others.

To help you, consider the following possible reasons for this on-going struggle:

1. That you have been more taken up with "finding love", i.e. seeking to have your own needs of love met, rather than sacrificing this need and desire to be loved so that you might become a channel of God's love to others?
2. That you have held on to some "good reason" (in your own eyes!) for not loving another, for example, they deeply wounded your spirit with their unkind, insensitive words, rather than sacrificing your own pain in order to bless them with some act of love and kindness?
3. That you have worked hard to show kindness and love to some difficult-to-love people but have relied on your own limited human energies and resources of love rather than the Spirit of God?

Conclusion

In closing, meditate upon God's message for you from Rom.5:5 and Gal.5:22. What do these verses tell you about God's wonderful Resource for our obeying His command?

Recall to mind one particular person whom you have not been able to love God's way. Now take the courageous step to open your life up to God's Spirit, confessing your inability to love this person (or any person!) **God's way**, offering up yourself to become a channel of God's love in the life of this needy individual. Then believe God to do it regardless of your feelings.

As you follow-through with these steps, get ready to experience one of the hidden wonders in the Christian life: The more we give ourselves to loving and valuing others, the more God the Father's love will be poured out upon us in ever-increasing measure. Read John 14:21.

Close by lifting up your voice in humble praise to God for so great a love, an eternal, undying, unquenchable love in your life.

Part II: Small group discussion questions

- 1) Missionaries in general tend easily to focus upon “work output” (“work” = “ministry”) rather than upon “people development”. One could argue that when we work hard in God’s kingdom ministries, we are showing our first love is for Him. What do you think it means to give Christ your “first love”?
- 2) Team leaders wrestle with the tension of fulfilling the expectations of their country or field leaders and the wide variety of different expectations of their team members. In the work environment of Christian missions, how can a team leader keep from falling into one extreme or the other, i.e. becoming totally consumed with his/her “work” or becoming taken up with helping his/her team members “feel loved”?
- 3) Consider the following scenarios and how to respond biblically:
 - a) When the team leader senses that he/she is not really valued (both personally or for their ministries) by the country or field leader; and
 - b) When the team leader often feels put down by a team member who acts and reacts in ways that communicate this message: “I don’t like you as a person; furthermore, I think you are a very poor leader.”

Study 6: “Reflecting the diversity of the body of Christ”

Part I: Personal Bible study

Introduction

As you come to explore the uniqueness of our diversity as His people, begin by offering up your offerings of thanksgiving to your Father in heaven.

Firstly, give thanks to the Lord for all He has done in your life to make YOU the unique and special person you are:

- for His creating you just the way you are, with a special blend of personality differences, abilities and gifts;
- for the way He has so carefully and lovingly planned the family into which you would be born, the country where you would grow up (though we cannot escape from the dark realities caused by sin and evil in each of these);
- for the positive influences upon your life through the many relationships God has blessed you with over the years;
- for the life-changing experiences He caused to touch your life (no matter how difficult some of these may have been at the moment); and
- for the church family where you have been nurtured in the faith.

Secondly, give God thanks for His church, the body of Christ, especially those who belong to your home church and intimate fellowship of believers and supporters. As a basis for your thanksgiving, read 2 Thess.1:3 & 2:13,14. Note Paul’s thanksgiving for his fellow-believers who came from a wide variety of racial and social backgrounds, remembering that once Paul hated every Gentile and also his fellow-Jews who deviated from their long-standing religious traditions.

Thirdly, give thanks for Christ’s body who are among those fellow-believers closest to you right now, i.e. the members of your OM team. Offer up thanks to God for the rich blessings He has brought and continues to bring into your life through them (refusing to allow your mind to focus on any tensions or conflicts that might be troubling you right now).

Lastly, give thanks for the members of Christ’s body in the local church where you are presently worship and fellowship, for all that He is teaching you through national pastors, believers and co-workers.

As a further preparation for studying God’s Word given to the apostle Paul, consider how God opened his eyes and revealed to him the amazing truth that we, God’s people, are in truth “the body of Christ”.

Remember in particular how God gave to Paul the great honour and privilege to witness the birth and growth of His body among a great variety of peoples -- from differing racial and ethnic origins as well as many differing sociological and religious backgrounds.

Remember how God revealed to Paul His awesome plan which He carried out through the death of His Son, Jesus, to bring together in ONE BODY both Jews (those He had called “My chosen people”) and Gentiles (those who had been for so long “outsiders” to the promises of the covenant, i.e. the “peoples” or nations of the world). Read Ephesians 2:11-16 knowing that most of us were at one time among the “outsiders” and “foreigners” to God’s blessings.

Praise God for His mercy upon you that through simple faith in all that Jesus has done for you through His cross, you are now a full member of His body.

Bible study questions related to 1 Cor.12:12-27

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians partially to correct errors that had arisen within this particular body of believers, such as a misunderstanding or misuse of their diversity. Before looking briefly at this passage, we will look at the wider context within Paul's first letter to the Corinthian believers

Read 1 Cor.1:7,26; 12:13.

According to these verses, think for a moment of the various groups and classes of people who belonged to the fellowship of believers in this ancient Greek city of Corinth at the time of Paul. For example, in verse 7 Paul refers to the abundance of spiritual gifts God had given to these Corinthian believers. Write down other groupings of people that would have been found in this congregation. Reflect upon their diversity. This was a normal church family!

Application

Do you see similar aspects to these in your OM team? Make a brief list of the diversity that you find on your team. Have you personally recognised these as God's doing? What is an indicator that we are in tune with God's heart or not? For example, how much time do we spend with people from our own ethnic background in contrast to people from other cultural and national backgrounds?

Read and reflect upon 1 Cor.1:10-13; 3:1-4; 11:17-18.

How had some of the Corinthian believers responded to this diversity among them? Reflect upon their tendency to turn these differences into "dividing walls" rather than using them as "bridges" to celebrate a rich level of fellowship.

Application

Is there also a tendency in your OM team to see the diversity of gifts and personalities as "walls that divide" rather than "bridges that draw people together"? How does it normally occur? What steps can you take to counteract this tendency? Note these down in order that you may share them with your team at a later date.

Read 1 Cor.12:12-27.

What key word or words do you find recurring throughout this entire passage? And what does this tell you about God's desire for His people? Read also 1 Cor.12:12; also Gal.3:28 & Col.3:10,11.

What is Paul's passion for the church as revealed in these verses? Is it that they would focus more on spiritual gifts? What is this compelling desire or passion? Or who is it? Note how Paul does not trivialise the existence of their diversity, but he also does not pretend that this diversity has somehow disappeared.

Application

How would God have you express this same passion as you lead and serve your team? Be real and specific. Write only those things that you are willing to put into practice.

Do you personally find yourself responding to the tough realities of diversity within the body of Christ with frustration rather than celebration? Think of a specific person or group who have become for you personally "a source of irritation". Ponder what step(s) you could take to respond to him/her/them in a more godly manner. Ask God to give you His eyes to see the great value in this diversity both for your own sake as well as for the sake of the ministry you have all been called to do together.

Conclusion

God's plan to create such a diverse yet united group of people is so beautifully seen in the analogy of the human body and how it functions in a perfectly coordinated way. Indeed God's ways are full of wonder.

Yet behind all of this wonder is God's deeper plan to unfold the "unity in diversity" of the Triune God. Conclude this study then in worship of this awesome God Who is One though Three and Whose glory is manifested in the perfect unity of all Their purposes and plans.

Part II: Small group discussion questions:

- 1) Team leaders need to face their own natural preferences towards members on their team, e.g. the tendency to more easily understand and identify with those who have a similar personality to theirs. Consider together your answers to the following questions: How does this tendency negatively affect team life and ministry? What precautions should a team leader take in order to prevent this from becoming a stumbling-block to healthy and harmonious relationships with his/her team members?
- 2) This God-given diversity is a rich resource that God desires us to utilise for the purposes of building His kingdom. What can an OM team leader do in order to turn this potential for harm into a mighty resource for the good of God's kingdom?
- 3) Many leaders (including OM team leaders) tend to be strong or dominant people. One way this tendency can express itself is manipulating people and circumstances (often unconsciously) so that their team members will think and act according to the vision or desires of the leader. Would you agree that this tendency short-circuits the benefits of the diversity among his/her team members? What can a strong, dominant leader do to overcome this tendency? Conclude by praying for one another that God will give grace to celebrate through your leadership the rich diversity of His body as found among your team members.

Study 7: “Evangelising the World”

Part I: Personal Bible study

Introduction

When we become very familiar with a topic, it is easy to fall into the trap of assuming we know all there needs to be known! The name “Operation Mobilisation” is strongly linked historically with a zeal for “evangelising the world”. Hopefully OM’s vision is also yours.

However, we often find ourselves very busy in God’s work but without a strong and compelling vision for it. For this reason it is important for us to take time to reestablish God’s vision in our mind and heart.

Therefore, pause now in God’s presence allowing His Spirit to imprint His vision for the evangelisation of His world more firmly upon your mind and heart. Ask the Father to reveal any fresh dimensions of His vision for the evangelisation of the world, to convict you of possible lethargy in pursuing His vision, and to stir your heart towards specific action steps.

Understanding the key biblical words

Before we meditate upon a particular a passage of Scripture, let us take a few moments to the biblical meaning of the key words: **evangelising** and **the world**.

“To evangelise”:

What do you presently believe the writers of Scripture meant when they used this word?

The word “evangelise” is the verb (indicating action!) of the word “Gospel” (or “the evangel”). An “evangel” is an announcement of some extraordinary news that is good for all. For that reason, it is usually translated “Gospel” or “Good News”. On this basis, suggest an even more alive word for “evangelising”? What about “gospeling”?

Read Acts 8:12; 10:36; 11:20; 13:32; 15:35.

In each of the above verses, the author Luke used the verb “to evangelise” (even though in our different modern translations other words may have been used by the translator or team of translators). Observe then how Luke uses this word in these different verses, especially noting a) the FOCUS and b) the ACTIVITY of evangelising in the New Testament era. Write down some of these observations.

“The world”:

Write down some of the different ways we use the word “the world” both in Christian and also non-Christian circles. The Bible writers also use this word in several different ways. Like the apostle John.

Read John 1:9,10; 3:16; 15:18; 1 John 2:2,15-17.

Observe the variety of meanings for this word in these verses. Which meaning is implied in our core value “evangelising the world”?

Based on what you have just observed as the scriptural meanings to “evangelising” and “the world”, write a simple description of this core value in your own words.

A meditation upon Luke 24:45-49

So what is the central focus of “evangelising the world”? What is this Good News that is at the heart of the work of “gospel” the unsaved? This question is answered by our Lord Jesus Himself in some of His final words to His disciples before He returned to His Father. In Luke 24:45-49 Jesus gave explicit instructions to His disciples concerning the work that He was entrusting to them .

Read this passage, then use the following commentary as a guide to your personal meditation on this passage. Take time to add your own notes and commentary. Keep asking yourself: What is the connection between these thoughts and my work of evangelising unbelievers in the world? The questions at the end of each section are intended to help you wrestle with the truth and stimulate thoughtful and biblical responses to each key thought.

1. The Gospel as truth revealed and received by divine enlightenment:

See verse 45: *“Then he (Jesus) opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.”* Jesus’ disciples had been through the most stressful and painful time in their whole lives. Their minds had turned from high anticipation of the dawn of the kingdom age to a feeling of total loss, defeat and confusion. They were hardly ready to go out to share “Good News” with the world! Into their confused world steps the risen Jesus. The result? He “opened their minds” so that they could truly believe the Good News.

Question: What does it mean to evangelistic ministries when we understand that people can only know Jesus personally as God’s “Good News” when He by His Spirit opens their minds to this fact?

2. The Gospel as truth rooted in God’s holy Word:

See verse 45-46a: *“Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written...’”* Jesus was speaking to a group of men who had a deep reverence for the holy Scriptures. Using these Scriptures, He now sought to confirm in their minds that they had witnessed and experienced was not some evil scheme of man but rather in fulfillment of God’s Word as had been recorded in their Scriptures by the prophets. Jesus took time to explain the Scriptures to them.

Question: What difference does it make to you that the Good News is rooted in the very words of God?

3. The Gospel as the message about Jesus:

See verse 46b: *“The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day....”* “To ‘gospel’ the world” means to announce to all nations the truth as revealed in God’s Word about who Jesus is and what He has done, especially through His sufferings and resurrection. Jesus now openly declares Himself to be “the Christ” (or “Messiah”), the long-awaited Anointed One or coming Ruler.

Question: What is the central theme in your Gospel message? Do you focus people’s attention upon all the benefits that they may have if they believe, or upon the wonder and glory of the risen Lord Jesus Christ?

4. The Gospel as a message to be proclaimed:

See verse 47a: *“And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name....”* Jesus now refers to the proclaiming or preaching of these truths. In particular, He says that two central elements in their proclamation are to be the call to repentance (see also Acts 2:38; 17:30) and the announcement of the Good News of God’s offer of forgiveness to all who are truly repentant (see also Acts 2:38). At the very heart of the “evangel” and therefore of our task to evangelise the world lies our responsibility to proclaim or announce God’s call just as Christ gave it to His early disciples.

Question: How faithful are you and your team being to announce to the world around you God’s call, first, to repent and then to receive God’s gift of forgiveness?

5. The Gospel as a message proclaimed with divine authority:

See verse 47 *“And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”* Jesus also includes these key words “in his name” as He calls them to go and announce the Good News. He had begun this work Himself, but now this small band of disciples

was to go on His behalf and continue this work of announcing the Good News of the Kingdom. As if Jesus Himself was there present speaking through them, calling people to repentance and faith in Christ's finished work for the salvation of all who will receive His gift. (See also 2 Cor.5:20.)

Question: To what extent are you personally aware of the authority of the name of Jesus the Lord as you and your team members evangelise the lost around you? Or are you more aware of how insignificant you feel in the face of so many people who do not believe the Gospel?

6. The Gospel as a message to be proclaimed to all nations:

See verse 47: *“And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”* Without doubt, Jesus' reference to the scope of their mission “to all the nations” (implying both the Jewish nation and also all the Gentile nations or peoples), beginning at Jerusalem, was beyond the farthest imagination at that time. Nevertheless it is our special privilege to be living in a day when this mission is moving close to its final realisation and fulfillment. However, there is still much work to be done. And yet God is opening doors and providing new ways and means for the accomplishment of His task that began way back there in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost.

Question: Are there any people-groups for whom Jesus came around you who for some reason are being neglected in the distribution of the “living Bread”? Ask God to open your eyes and give you and your team a strong sense of your responsibility to be involved in reaching the nations for Christ.

7. The Gospel as a message rooted in history:

See verse 48: *“You are witnesses of these things.”* Jesus then reminds them how they had personally witnessed all that He had said and done, His perfect life and His sacrificial death and victorious resurrection. In other words, what He was sending them out to announce to the nations was NOT just some “religious experience” of a few faithful devotees of this Jewish rabbi but rather as events that they could bear witness to as “eye-witnesses”. God entered the stage of human history and had carried out His great salvation plan before their very eyes. (See also Luke 1:1,2; 1 John 1:1-3.)

Question: How significant and relevant is this very fact within the world where you and your team are called to preach the Gospel? Is your message clearly rooted in the facts of Christ's life, death and resurrection? Or are you feeling a subtle pressure to focus people's attention upon “religious experiences” Christ can give to them?

8. The Gospel as proclamation with divine power:

See verse 49: *“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”* Finally, Jesus tells them to wait expectantly for “the promise of my Father” (see Acts 1:4), the coming of the very same Spirit Who had descended upon Jesus at the outset of His earthly mission and had empowered Him hour by hour for every part of His work. Though their work would be difficult and dangerous from a human perspective, nevertheless it would bear much fruit because His Spirit would be working powerfully through them as they proclaimed the Good News to all nations.

Question: When evangelising the lost, how much to you consciously depend upon God's Spirit to work through you? What does it mean to you in real-life situations of witness to be working hand in hand with the Spirit of God?

Conclusion

Close your time alone with God and His Word by praising Him for the Good News that has changed your life, and also for the honour and privilege given to you and to many OM workers to take this divine message to many nations all over the world. Then commit yourself to pressing on with this God-given task.

Part II: Small group discussion questions

- 1) Sometimes an OM team leader with the gift of pastoral care has so much concern for his/her members that they fail to motivate and become involved in the work of evangelism. What positive steps can OM team leaders take to ensure the presence both of a caring environment and also an environment of faith and expectancy that stirs up zeal for sharing the Good News with unbelievers?
- 2) Discuss briefly the relationship or link between “team administration” and “evangelising the world”. How in practical terms can the one help or support the other?
- 3) Often an OM team leader feels burdened down by the weight of their differing responsibilities. As a result, they suffer from an “energy crisis”, feeling tired and weary with depleted physical, emotional and spiritual reserves to devote their attention to the task of evangelising the world. How should a team leader face and deal with this struggle within himself/herself?

Study 8: “Global Intercession”

Part I: Personal Bible study

Introduction

One day Jesus’ early disciples asked their Master: “Lord, teach us to pray.” (Luke 11:1) Though you might have been a believer for many years, probably you feel the need, as the Twelve did, to learn more from the Master about praying effectively.

So take a moment now and earnestly make the same request of our Father: “Holy Father, teach me to pray more as Jesus prayed.”

However, it could be that this isn’t a prayer that you can pray right now with any deep longing. Perhaps your prayer needs rather to be: “Father, stir up within my heart a fresh longing for Yourself, a fresh desire to spend time alone with You.”

Then ask the Father to fill you with His Spirit in such a way that you will become a mighty warrior for God through your prayers for the peoples of the world -- inside your team, in the local church and wherever God calls you to serve Him in the years to come.

What comes to your mind when you first read the words “global intercession”? Suggestion: Write down any word or thought that comes to your mind as you read these words. Then look back over these words and thoughts, asking yourself: What do these tell me about my present attitude to and understanding of this core value? (Don’t be harsh on yourself if some of your thoughts don’t appear to be too profound or even spiritual.)

Was the weekly OM prayer meeting among your initial thoughts? Good! But is that all we in OM think of when we refer to “global intercession” as one of our core values? In other words, is this core value primarily expressed when we pray together for world missions with other OM-ers?

Consider this possibility: If you identify “global intercession” with OM prayer meetings, you limit your ability to receive something fresh from God through this Bible study. If this would apply to you, simply open your heart and mind up to God’s Spirit and let Him show you new avenues for your own personal global intercession.

Bible study on Eph.6:10-20 & 1 Tim.2:1-8

Focus on Eph.6:18-20

Read verse 18:

What do you observe about the verses you read immediately before verse 18, i.e. verses 10-17? What is the major theme of these verses? What then does this fact tell you about God’s view of the spiritual activity called “prayer”? Read also Col.4:12-13 concerning Paul’s close companion, Epaphras, and his ministry of prayer.

Application

Meditate on this truth and its significance in your own life. Don’t draw back from being honest in God’s presence. He won’t judge you for your honesty. Rather it is hypocrisy (i.e. pretending to be something we

aren't!) that He hates. If you know very little in practice about "wrestling in prayer", then He will lovingly and gently lead you into an experiential knowledge of this deeper dimension of prayer. If you seek after this level of praying with all your heart, you will find it slowly becoming a reality in your life.

Read verse 18 once again:

According to this verse, who does Paul instruct the Ephesian believers (and us!) to pray for? When Paul mentioned "all the saints", try to imagine some specific groups of people whom Paul may have had in his mind when he wrote this instruction to these early believers.

For example, he would probably have thought of those believers who were being persecuted for their faith, or the Christians in Judea who were suffering from severe economic hardships. Write down other groups or categories of believers that come to your mind.

Application

Consider who "all the saints" mean in your own world today? Think first not of the names of individual Christians but of different categories of people, e.g. national pastors and church leaders, believers suffering various forms of persecution, new or young believers, etc. Think locally and globally! And be specific. Then contemplate the fact that this is also God's word to you!

In this same verse (verse 18), note also how Paul does not ask these Ephesian believers to pray for all the non-Christians in the world but rather for "the saints". (In fact, in all of his letters, Paul seems to more frequently encourage prayer for believers than for unbelievers, though he also does mention his own praying for the unsaved among his own nation and people; see Romans 10:1.)

Ponder this thought: To pray for individual believers and for the life and ministry of local churches all over the world is inseparably linked with praying for the growth of God's kingdom ("Your kingdom come!"). How would you express this link in your own words? Write down your response in a brief sentence.

Application

Record one or two specific prayer requests related to world evangelisation that Paul might have prayed for the saints anywhere. For example, based on Jesus' own teaching and prayer (see John 13:34,35; 17:21), "Our Father, help Your people in (name the place where they live and serve) to live together in harmony and love one another so that many unbelievers around them can see how awesome is Your love and come seeking after the same life in Jesus, Your beloved Son."

Take a moment now and offer up these same prayer requests for people and situations that are very close to your heart. Pray fervently for these saints so that God's love, truth, power and glory might be revealed through them -- as individuals, families and churches -- so that many will put their trust in our glorious Saviour.

Read verses 19-20:

In this verse, Paul seeks the help of the Ephesian believers' intercession. Write out this verse as if you were one of these believers praying for Paul. Note again how closely connected these requests are with the success of Paul's mission work as an apostle. (If you have time, read also Col.4:3,4 where Paul also encourages the saints to pray for him.)

Application

What kind of prayer requests do you include in your own prayer letters? Do you also include in your prayer letters similar struggles such as Paul experienced? Hopefully you are willing like Paul to admit to your prayer partners that you sometimes struggle with knowing just what to share with people or with a lack of courage.

Take Paul's prayer requests right now and turn them into brief prayers both for yourself and for the others members of your team. Expect God's answer as you are praying according to the will of God.

Focus on 1 Tim.2:1,2

1 Timothy is a letter from the older and more experienced servant of God, Paul, to his younger and beloved fellow-worker, Timothy, whom Paul had appointed as the leading elder or "pastor" of the church in Ephesus. Paul guides him regarding what he is to teach to these believers both concerning their "faith" (i.e. "sound doctrine" or what they are to hold on to as basic Christian beliefs), and also concerning their "walk" (i.e. how they are to speak, relate and behave in their everyday lives).

Read verse 1.

For whom were these Ephesian believers in Timothy's congregation to pray and intercede? Meditate briefly on the meaning and significance of each word that Paul uses concerning "prayer".

Read verse 2.

Which particular or special group of people were these believers to bring before God's throne of grace?

Application

Think for a moment: Who are among "those who are in authority" within your community and nation? Think of a way or method that you can use to remember to pray regularly and consistently for these people.

Read verse 2 again. Specifically, what was Timothy to teach the believers to pray for when praying for those holding positions of influence in society? Write your own expanded paraphrase for his words: "*that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.*"

Recall the situation in the Roman empire in Paul's day as expressed in the Latin words *pax Romana*. Reflect for a moment how different the success of the early apostolic witness would have been if Paul's apostolic mission to the far-flung regions in the Roman empire would have been hindered by war, bloodshed and political confusion. Praise God for the awesome wonder of His plan to bring the Gospel to all the peoples of the world.

Conclusion

All Paul's exhortations and instructions from Ephesians and 1 Timothy form the basis for our "global intercession" today. Close this study by thanking God, the great King and Lord of all, for the privilege that you as one of His redeemed children have together with all the saints around the world to co-labour together with Him through your prayers and intercessions. That's an awesome honour. Rejoice in it and "go for it"!

Part II: Small group discussion questions

- 1) To encourage your OM team members to be faithful in praying globally is just one among many responsibilities entrusted to you. What can a team leader do to ensure that the priority of prayer is truly kept as a high priority amid the many other pressing demands and responsibilities, beginning in his/her own prayer life?
- 2) Many times we find it difficult to keep up with praying for the constant stream of prayer requests for the many (often unknown) people and people groups around the globe. Discuss together some realistic parameters as a guide for OM team leaders as they direct and encourage their team members in interceding “for all men” and “for all the saints”.
- 3) Up to date information is to effective praying what fuel is to a fire! If the ministry of your team members is to bear much fruit as God wills, then it is imperative that each team member communicate regularly with his/her group of “intercessors”. What then is your responsibility as team leaders on the basis of the analogy of “fueling the fire”? Discuss some creative ways how you as team leaders can stir your team members to be disciplined in providing the relevant and up to date information their prayer partners need.

Study 9: “Esteeming the Church”

Part I: Personal Bible Study

Introduction

Have you ever noticed how your thinking about different people is coloured by the various experiences you have had with people in the past? Perhaps you once had a very upsetting “encounter” with a not-so-pleasant official in a consulate or visa office. Soon after you may have discovered yourself fighting back unkind thoughts about everyone who comes from that nation.

Fortunately the opposite is also true. When we have had positive interactions with different people, these experiences help us significantly to think and feel positively towards those individuals as well as towards others who are like them.

Think back for a moment to your past experiences and relationships in local churches. Have they been mostly positive or negative? When the word “the church” comes to mind, what are your first feelings and responses? Take note of these.

However, before talking about negative experiences (and we can all come up with enough of these, right?), begin by thanking God for all the many positive experiences He has given to you. Ask Him to give you a spirit of thankfulness even for those stressful situations -- just like Paul was able to sincerely thank the Lord for the Corinthian believers despite all the headaches and heartaches they had give to him (read 1 Cor.1:4-9).

But we also need to come to grips with our painful memories from past involvement with local churches (though hopefully you have already begun this process before this). For example, you may be among the not-so-few Christians who have suffered a lot from division and “cross-fire” within a local church.

Answer this question honestly: Do you think at times: “I could really do without the ‘church’ (i.e. belonging to a local church)”? If this is the way you are feeling right now, don’t rush ahead with this study. Rather respond to God’s gracious call to cast all your burdens on to Him for He cares for you (1 Peter 5:7). Don’t forget that though you may have even questioned His wisdom and concern at the time, He was right there with you as you passed through those deep waters (Isaiah 43:1,2). His heart was even more deeply grieved than your heart was. Honour Him and love Him as your faithful Shepherd who knows what He is doing in the life of each local church all over the world.

Take time right now to throw this heavy burden on to Jesus’ shoulders and to receive His promised presence and power to enable and empower you to serve Him together with His people wherever He places you now and in the future.

Understanding the key words: “esteem” and “church”

“Esteem”:

Bring to mind the name of a person you “esteem” very highly. Think why you esteem this particular individual. Is it because you were taught or encouraged by someone else to esteem him/her? Or is it because of something they said, or did, or wrote?

Apply this to your thinking about the church: Do we come to esteem because someone has taught or encouraged us to do so, or because of what that person has said or done or written? No doubt you will see the more than obvious answer to this question. However, take a moment or two to give a thoughtful answer, then write it down briefly.

Read Eph.5:25-27.

Consider the link between our esteeming the church and Christ's esteem for the church as demonstrated in His sacrifice for her redemption.

Meditate on this thought: Our esteem for the church is NOT to be based on whether we think the church deserves our respect or not, but rather on the esteem that our Saviour has for her. That esteem was so high that He was willing to offer up His very own life's blood for her redemption.

“The church”:

What do we mean when we use the word “church”? Write down a few of the different meanings that people give to this word, e.g. organisation; local.

Read Matt.16:18 and 1 Cor.1:2.

The same word “church” is used in both these verses. Do they have identical meanings in both verses? Try to understand what Jesus was referring to when He spoke about His church in Matt.16:18. Then compare this with Paul's use of this same word in 1 Cor.1:2. Summarise your thoughts on both these usages of the “church”.

On the basis of these two Scriptures, answer this question: Who in reality is the church we are to esteem? Note that the one common denominator in both verses is PEOPLE, people who follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Contrast the thinking of the church as a building, or a denominational organisation.

Bible study questions based on Eph. 4:1-16:

Read through this passage in search of a biblical answer to the following question: How am I in practice to show my esteem for Christ and His church?

Read verses 1-6.

What is clearly the burden of the apostle Paul's heart? Pay attention to words that he uses repeatedly or with particular emphasis. Then complete this sentence: “According to God's Word I am to show esteem for Christ's church by”

On the basis of these verses, consider also how a believer shows disregard or disrespect for Christ's church (= including himself/herself!) as well as for the Head, Jesus. For example, when he/she divides a church family through the evil of gossip. Pause now and ask God to give you a strong commitment to the unity of His church.

Read verses 7-13.

Who within the church are highlighted in these particular verses? And what do these verses tell us about the significance of their role within Christ's body? Read also 1 Thess.5:12,13, then complete the following sentence (see above): “According to God's Word I am to show esteem for Christ's church by”.

Now ask yourself the hard question: According to these verses, am I personally esteeming the leaders of my church (regardless of all their faults)? Again pause a moment to make a fresh commitment to esteem the leaders of the congregations that you attend and participate in.

Read verses 14-16.

What work of the enemy is highlighted in these verses? What action step are you to take continuously in order to keep the enemy from achieving his evil desire -- to bring harm upon Christ's body?

On the basis of verses 15 & 16, in what ways are you to esteem the body of Christ? Again write your responses out by completing the same sentence: "According to God's Word I am to show esteem for Christ's church by".

Conclusion

It's one thing to write these notes down; quite another thing to do them. But God has promised to help us both in the willing and also in the doing (see Phil.2:12,13). Therefore, with the challenge before you to love and esteem Christ's church -- whether or not you have had positive or negative experiences, very happy or sad associations with different churches -- ask your heavenly Father to fill your heart and mind with a holy resolve to esteem His church.

Commit yourself also to setting a godly example among your team members as one who esteems Christ's church, in spite of all her imperfections and problems.

As you take these steps now, you can be confident that God will indeed help you and answer your prayers, because your prayers will result in the honour of Christ's name as His people grow in their love and esteem for one another just as Christ calls us to do.

Part II: Small group discussion questions

- 1) OM-ers (and many evangelical believers) tend to think idealistically about what the church should be like. Discuss how this affects their ability to serve effectively when faced with the ever-present imperfections of a local body of believers. Think together how you would help a team member who constantly runs down the church.
- 2) Often we struggle with the tension between being committed to our mission work and also to our local church. Discuss this comment: If a mission team leader is so busy organising mission work that there is no time to be an active participant in a local church, then that busyness is hindering him/her from showing esteem for Christ's church.
- 3) Some OM-ers come from home churches who show them very little or even no support (financial, prayer and encouragement). In reaction to this, they may be tempted to cut off communication links with the leaders of their home church. What can an OM team leader do to help team members in this predicament show esteem for their home church leaders?

Overheads, handouts etc.

Handout #1

Guidelines for leading the small groups

1. Give clear and sensitive leadership aimed to facilitate the maximum level of participation from all members of the group. Avoid having the dominating voice throughout the discussion.
2. Give your group members time to settle into the small group atmosphere.
3. Give opportunity to one or two people to share briefly an insight or blessing received through their personal study and meditation.
4. Especially on the first day, share some basics for the smooth running of a small group, e.g. you invite all to take part (though not applying any form of pressure upon them to do so); you assure them that all their comments and responses will be listened to and received openly; that they keep their responses brief and to the point etc.
5. Read each question aloud (or ask one of the group to read the question) before inviting their responses.
6. Keep the issues down to a very practical level. The intent of the small group discussion is to help people wrestle with the application of our core values for team leaders. Therefore, it is imperative that you encourage open and honest sharing that will provide help and encouragement in finding biblical responses to everyday struggles in the life and ministry of a team leader.
7. If a member seems to have an overly strong voice in the discussion or there are any with an argumentative spirit, redirect the discussion by asking a quiet person for his/her comment.
8. Refrain from open criticism of a person's response. If you believe that a particular response may have diverted the discussion from the main issue, then make a brief positive response to that person's contribution and then move on immediately to someone else's response or to the next question.
9. Summarise the main point of each question before moving on to the next one.
10. Finish each study with a time to pray and commit oneself to living according to God's truth.

Handout #2

Basic Guidelines for Personal Bible Study & Meditation

1. This is a time for you to be alone with God. Therefore, do not allow yourself to become distracted with small talk with others.
2. Find a quiet place and begin by sitting quietly in God's presence, waiting upon Him. Seek His face with all your heart. Prepare your mind and heart to hear God speak to you. Put aside any distracting worries or concerns. Invite God's Spirit to take control over your whole being (your thoughts, feelings, intentions/will, and even your physical state including possible weariness or sickness).
3. Begin the study at the beginning! Seek to stay in a worshipful and prayerful attitude throughout this entire period. Whenever we read and study God's Word, we are in the presence of God.
4. Engage both your mind and heart in each part. Wrestle with God's truths in your minds but let them permeate deep into your heart.
5. Respond openly to the truth of God as it touches your own particular needs.
6. Make an effort to move through all parts of the study. If the Spirit begins to speak in a special way through one part of the study, then let Him take control of your thoughts and heart as you respond to what He is saying to you.
7. Conclude your time with thanksgiving and praise. Don't assess the value of the time on the basis of how many "new facts" or special insights you discovered. Rather give God thanks for the sheer privilege of meeting in His presence and hearing Him speak to you through His Word. Have faith that His truths have been nourishing your spirit whether or not you are fully aware of this fact or not. Of far greater importance is that fact that God is delighted to receive the sincere praise of your heart and will be honoured through your obedient responses to His truth.