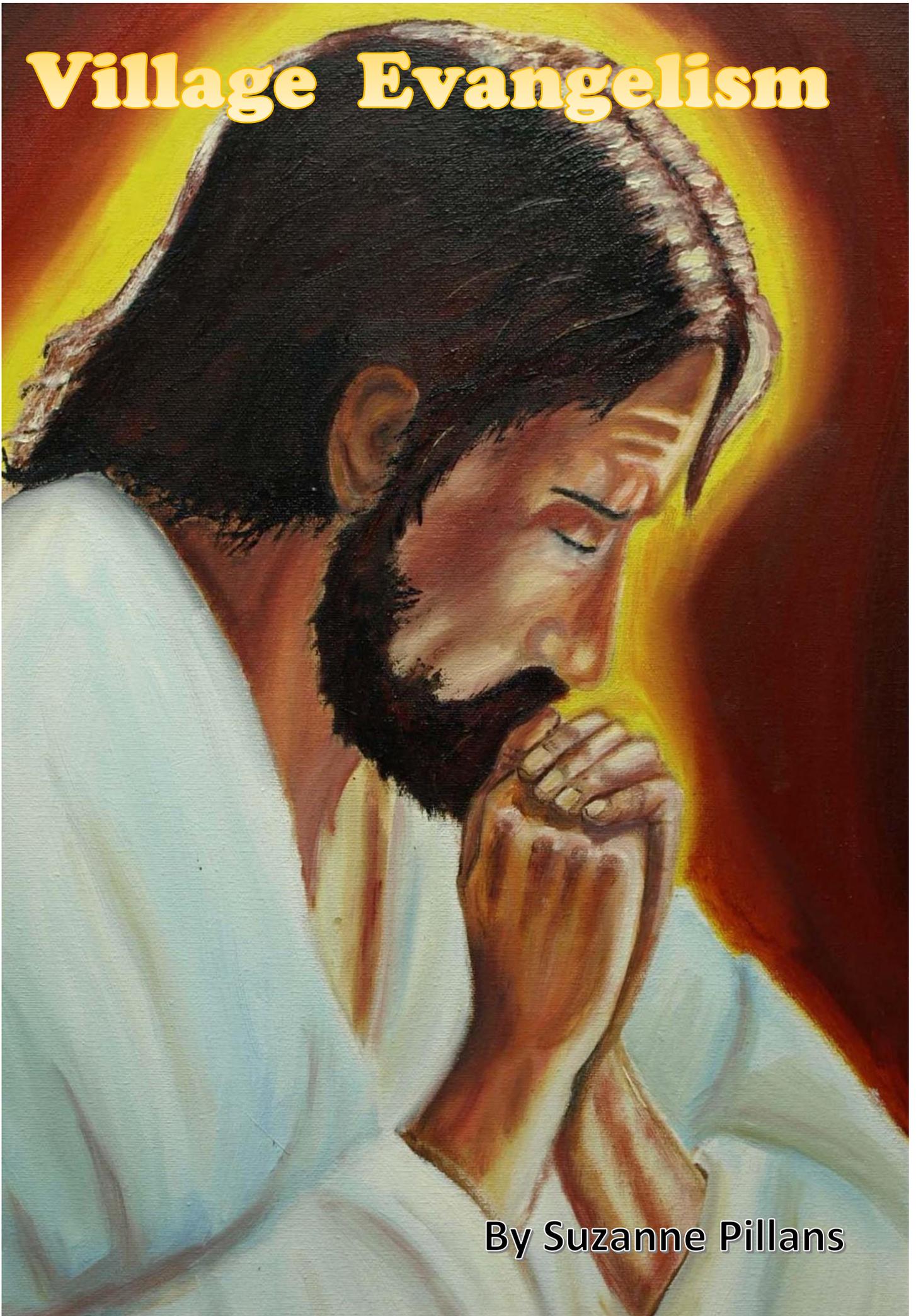


Village Evangelism

By Suzanne Pillans



**STEP OUT IN FAITH BIBLE SCHOOL
VILLAGE EVANGELISM**

Lecture One

Preparations for Village Evangelism

A. Pray, pray, pray

You cannot speak to man about God until you speak to God about man. The better your prayer preparations in God's presence, the better the results.

1. Pray for the chief – for a favourable acceptance and an open door to the village
2. Pray for the people, that they have open hearts to receive the Gospel
3. Find out and bind down the strongholds of that village for the duration of your visit
4. Pray for your own safety and that of your team, for travel and proclamation of the Gospel
5. Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to be on your visit
6. Pray for the healing of the sick and that many come to Christ

B. Practical Preparations

1. Know the culture of the village and approach them according to their customs
2. Visit the village chief and get his consent to come and share the Good News
It is good to also invite the chief to attend, that he too may hear the Good News. It is also good to bring a gift to the chief and find out the needs of the people
3. Take note of the distance and the time it takes to get to the village and return
4. If you are providing a crusade and a meal, make preparations to buy melice meal, a goat and a few vegetables and make cooking arrangements beforehand
5. If you are providing clothing, make arrangements to collect it from your church-goers, transport it and give it out in an orderly manner e.g. 1 item each
6. If it is a small village and you are cycling, you can use a megaphone or arrange with your chief to send his gong gong beater to call the village together
7. If you are moving in the gift of healing, tell the village to bring the sick and watch Jesus heal them
8. If you are going in the rainy season, then arrange a place under cover or bring a tarpaulin with you to erect over some poles or between huts
9. Think through every possible thing so that you are well prepared, so that everything runs smoothly
10. Don't forget about thorough follow-up for the new converts and how you intend to do this.

Know your aims

- A.** Matt 28:19 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We need to bring them to accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour, baptise them and make disciples.
- B.** We therefore need to plant new churches
1. To reproduce more Christians and more churches
 2. To follow the principle of sowing and reaping
 3. To fulfil the Great Commission as in Acts 1:8 when Jesus said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." The rest of Acts shows that they went out to the nations in the power of the Holy Spirit and planted many new churches.

Different Methods of Planting Churches

1. Through Crusades by local evangelists, with the new believers that respond being visited weekly; they build a church and the church is planted
2. A Bible study group is started in the home or courtyard of a home and the Bible study grows into a House Church, which may stay at the same home or switch from home to home. When the Bible study group grows too large for a home, it can split into another house church and they grow, until it gets large and splits again. The church planter may also go into a new area and start a new Bible Study there, which will also grow into house churches. Sometimes this method is more effective than actually building a church
3. A mother and daughter church planting. One church sends some of its members to another village to plant a new church
4. Sending church planting teams from a local church to plant churches in other villages on a regular basis. Acts 10: Peter had 6 men with him when he planted a church in Caesarea

For you to think about

1. **Name 5 things to pray for**
2. **Name 5 practical considerations**
3. **What are your aims in Evangelism**
4. **Name 4 ways of planting churches**

VILLAGE EVANGELISM

Lecture Two

A. The Actual Visits

This will depend on your gifting, your reception, the locality.

This will direct you in what method you use to reach them.

If they are refugees, having relocated into this new area, it may be well to simply pray round the villages first as directed by the Lord. Often praying round a village or area of your first crusade, 7 times round, will break down all the strongholds in the spiritual realm; after this you may enter the village. There are then different ways of reaching the people.

1. Visit them home by home to make personal contact and friendship, then invite them to a small crusade. (This may not be in the first visits.)
2. Bring aid, or clothing, or a meal at a crusade where they stay after the crusade for a meal.
3. The bold approach for villages open to hear the Word; ask them to bring the sick. Once they see the healings are real, they will want to hear the Gospel and respond
4. One can also preach the Word first, then pray for salvations and then the sick last. This is for receptive villages who are open to hear and respond to the Gospel. At present I find most villages in Africa and the Far East ready and open to hear and respond to the Gospel of Jesus.

B. People who accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour

1. Take down their names and arrange straight away a meeting for follow-up, ideally the following weekend, either at the same venue or wherever you have already arranged for it.
2. Arrange with someone in the village or within the ones who have accepted Christ who can read, to read the Bible to them in a central place once or twice a week or even daily, give this person a Bible to read to them
3. Also take note of the ones healed and from what and do a follow-up x-ray, medical report etc to confirm the healing
4. Arrange with the chief and /or people the date and time of your next visit

C. At the Crusade

1. Call up some of the ones healed to share their testimony of healing
2. Counsel the new believers to pray daily and how to pray, to read the Bible or make arrangements to meet and to hear the Bible read to them.
3. To share with one another or someone else what Jesus has done for them which helps to reaffirm their new found faith
4. Thank the Lord with them in prayer and praise the Lord in song
5. Arrange the time and place of the next visit before closing

For you to think about

1. Name 4 different ways of visiting the villages
2. How do you deal with the new believers
3. How do you arrange for follow up
4. How do you arrange for the next visit

VILLAGE EVANGELISM

Lecture Three

How to share the Gospel

1. How to approach the subject. If you simply share what Jesus did on the cross without letting the people know their need of the Gospel, it may come across to them either as foolishness (since if they don't realise that they are sinning, they don't understand their need) or offensive (because you are insulting someone by calling them a sinner when they don't think they are).
2. If you follow the footsteps of Jesus, and the great men of God down the centuries, you will open the divine Law of the Ten Commandments to show the sinner what he has done wrong and when he realises he is a sinner, then the Good News will not be foolishness or offensive but the power of God to salvation. When I share the Good News, I will often start at Genesis and the Fall of Man, the Ten Commandments and then what God did about it on the cross.

The Gospel Outline

Romans 3:20 explains that by works of the Law no human being will be justified in His sight, since through the Law comes knowledge of sin. This leaves the sinner guilty before God.

A. God's Law tells us what sin is: Romans 7:7: *'What then shall we say? The Law is sin! Yet if it had not been for the Law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the Law had not said, 'You shall not covet.'*

B. The Law brings us to Christ. Galatians 3:24: So then, the Law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

1. The Fall of Man in Genesis through Adam and Eve brought sin into the world. God then gave the Law built around the Ten Commandments, which leaves us helpless as the Law does not justify us but leaves us guilty before God.
2. What did God do about this? John 3:16 tells us *'For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through Him.'*
3. People who accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour are therefore not just accepting Jesus for life enhancement and some extra peace and love, but to flee from the wrath to come, from the consequence of sin, from eternal Hell. There is no need to take the cure when you are not convinced you have a disease. We therefore need to convince the people of the truth that they are sinners and Jesus is the only one who can set them free.
4. True Biblical evangelism is always Law to the proud and Grace to the humble. With the Law the hard hearts are broken, with the Grace Gospel the broken hearts are healed.

Examples of Jesus giving Law to the proud

Luke 10:25. The Lawyer tempted Jesus, Jesus gave him the Law. The lawyer wanted to justify himself and asked 'And who is my neighbour?' Jesus told him the story of the Good Samaritan and the lawyer was silenced as he did not love his neighbour as himself.

Luke 18:18 A certain man told Jesus he had kept the commandments. Jesus showed him that money was his God.

Examples of Jesus giving grace to the humble

John 3:1-15: Nicodemus was humble

John 1:47-51: Nathaniel was a humble Israelite "Behold, an Israelite indeed in whom is no deceit".

John 4:7-26: Jesus approached the woman at the well in the natural realm first then the Law of God, for the Law shows sin in its true light and this leads to repentance

Charles Spurgeon said, *"They will never accept grace until they tremble before a holy and just law. They will never take the cure unless they are first convinced they have a disease."*

For you to think about

1. Apply how Jesus gave the Law to convince a proud person of his need for the Gospel, to people in our day
2. Apply how Jesus gave grace to the humble to a person of our day
3. Prepare a sermon for around 100 people using the Law summarised in the Ten Commandments and what Jesus did for us to set us free.
4. Think about how you came to Christ and what this meant for you.

VILLAGE EVANGELISM

Lecture Four

Follow up

1. The visits must be regular. Once a week is ideal.
2. Find a central place to do this. This may be called an outstation or a house church
3. If the whole village responds, a church will need to be planted straight away. Sometimes this will be under some mango trees with stones as boundaries to start with, to give some shade
4. Get the people involved in building the church. It brings about great excitement and community spirit. Build traditional style as this gives the people ownership of their church. Also use traditional grass or mud roofs to keep the church cooler.

The Actual Meetings

1. Involve the people. Give time to testimonies of healing or weekly connections with God
2. Get them singing and praising God. You can also form a choir as Africans love choirs, get the children involved too with their own choir
3. Get them witnessing of what God means to them, to the church and to their friends that their friends come too.
4. In the sermon or when teaching ask questions to get a response; involve them in the talk, relate to them, use some action and involve them in it; it brings things alive. It is good to get excited.
5. Never talk down at them. Talk with them, get them excited about Jesus with you, this is contagious since, if you are excited about Jesus, they will get excited too. When they too get excited about Jesus, they will tell their friends in other villages, suddenly those villages also want Jesus and they will invite you to come and share Him even before you have decided to go there. Truly knowing Jesus becomes infectious.

Follow up teaching

1. Matthew 28:19: *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”*. The first thing we must do for the new believers is to get them baptised, where they die of the old life, get buried with Jesus under the water and come up into the new life as believers in Jesus.
2. Make disciples, not just converts. To make disciples you will need to teach them on a regular basis to bring about the following fruits in their lives being motivated by love and gratitude, rooted and grounded in Him, bringing forth fruit in our lives.

The fruit of repentance. Matthew 3:8: *‘Bear fruit in keeping with repentance’*

The fruit of good works. Colossians 1:10: *‘So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bringing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God’*

The fruit of thanksgiving. Hebrews 13:15 *‘Through Him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name.’*

The fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, against such things there is no law*

The fruit of righteousness. Philippians 1:10: *So that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.*

By aiming our messages to bring about this fruit in the new believers we can produce, by the grace of God, fruit-bearing Christians.

Good follow-up and teaching will produce real results:

1. A true convert who has weighed up the issues and who understands what he or she is doing. Mark 4:8 *‘Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times.’*
2. They will thirst for God. In Luke 8:8 we read this same message but it adds afterwards: *When He said this, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”*
3. They will have depth of character – we are warned in Matthew 13:6: *But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.*
4. They will receive the word with gladness. Note though in Mark 4:16-17: *Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble and persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.*
5. We want to disciple people so that they become strong in tribulation, temptation and persecution. Luke 8:13 likewise warns: *Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.*

For you to think about

1. **Why is fellowship important**
2. **What should you aim for in follow-up**
3. **Name 4 practical things you can do**
4. **Name 4 spiritual things you can do**

VILLAGE EVANGELISM

Lecture Five

Church planting

The converts have built the church, the roof is on, they have heard and experienced the basics of the Gospel; now comes the next phase which is to make disciples and become an established church.

The evangelist now has a new job to do

- He has to teach the new believers the foundations of our faith
- He has to teach the new believers how to pray
- He has to raise up leaders within the church and train them in leadership
- He needs to get everyone involved in choirs, tasks, prayer etc
- He needs to teach the children and train leaders to take over
- He can also introduce the Bible School to the leaders and help them through the training
- He can then encourage the new believers through getting them all baptised in the Holy Spirit to start preaching and praying for the sick

The evangelist will then work his way out of the job in order to do the same again in other villages he has led to the Lord and is planting churches in.

1. After a few months to a year, the leader in the church will have been trained and ordained as pastor of that church with possibly a co-pastor and other leaders within the church already raised up.
2. The evangelist will now only visit the church every 3 to 6 months or on special occasions
3. The evangelist will also encourage the pastor and leaders of that church to also witness to other villages and plant churches also.

Each evangelist can plant up to 3 churches at one time and each church will take from 6-12 months to get established and for leaders from within the village to get trained up to take on the running of the new church.

The evangelist will need to keep in contact with all the churches he plants in order to sort out any problems that may arise and to encourage the new pastors.

The evangelist needs to stay on fire for God with the following

1. Faith in God's promises. Romans 15:13: May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. The depth of faith that we have will be expressed in the amount of joy that we have and the joy of the Lord will be our strength.
2. Motivating love for God. Acts 20:24: *However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.* Paul's attitude towards all he had to bear for Jesus was out of God's love within him for perfect love casts out all fear.
3. Comparison Revelation 20:11-15 is about the Great White Throne Judgement. We need to understand and persuade men to repent of their sins by getting to know them, and by living out our Christian lives as God wants us to. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 speaks of weakness, fear and much trembling, with no excellence of speech, but you in God and God in you which puts fire in your bones and enables us to become His ministers, flames of fire.

For you to think about

1. What should one consider when planting a new church?
2. Why should an evangelist work his way out of a job?
3. How many churches can an evangelist plant at one time?
4. How does the evangelist stay on fire for God?

VILLAGE EVANGELISM

Lecture Six

Spiritual Warfare

Ephesians 6:10-13 speaks of the whole armour of God

'Be strong', 'Put on the whole armour of God', 'We wrestle...' It is a fact that spiritual warfare is a part of the Christian experience whoever you are. It is not a special calling and it goes on 24 hours a day. It is knowing that Jesus already has the victory, which is what gives us the victory. Ephesians 6:10: *Finally be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power.* Turning this into a prayer for ourselves makes us strong in His might. We need to know who we are in Christ and live responsibly in Him.

Ephesians 6:12: *We do not wrestle against flesh and blood..*

It is not people we must fight but the principalities of evil in the spiritual realm. The battle is not natural but supernatural. We *must* therefore put on the full armour of God.

1. So we can stand against the devil's plans and strategies, against the intelligence and personality of the devil behind the plans to trip us up.
2. All good in the universe comes from God. All evil in the universe comes from personalities. These are human personalities and demonic personalities that influence humans
3. Demonic personalities can talk, listen, think and reason and devise evil strategies.
4. James 4:1 says '*Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*'
5. Spiritual warfare is learning to recognise strategies of the enemy and refusing to co-operate with them but instead to resist them in Jesus' name. John 10:10: *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.* Not only does the devil come to steal, kill and destroy, but he is also the accuser. We need to see what the devil is trying to do and resist him in Jesus' name.

How did Paul handle Spiritual Warfare?

Ephesians 6:14-20: We can read in Acts 19 that many in Ephesus practised witchcraft as well as the idolatry and immorality of the Greek world at that time. The Ephesians asked Paul how to live in such a place as Christians. They wanted to know how they could experience victory. Paul was clear and vivid in his answer and told them about the spiritual armour they would need to keep on.

1. We have a relationship with God
2. We are saved eternally
3. God is able to keep us from falling
4. We are new creatures in Christ

These scriptural truths give us faith to overcome the enemy.

The Bible goes on to teach us

1. Don't let the sun go down on your anger
2. Humble yourself in the sight of God
3. Forgive one another
4. Love one another
5. We need to know we are in Christ for our armour is Christ
6. We need discernment and pray for wisdom

Ways to do Spiritual Warfare

1. Direct confrontation with the devil – resist him in Jesus' name
2. Exalt the Lord, obey the word and exercise faith
3. Pray in the Spirit, speak in the Spirit, in the anointing of the Holy Spirit
4. Live in the Spirit because here is the victory

How do we pray in the Holy Spirit?

1. remove things that will hinder the Holy Spirit's flow in our lives, check that we do not quench the Spirit or grieve the Spirit so check our lives
2. yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, allow Him to flow through us, come under the anointing and give ourselves totally to Him
3. Be led by the Spirit, allow Him to lead us in prayer. The Holy Spirit will show us how to pray (Romans 8:26). ***Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities for we know not what we should pray for as we ought but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered.*** He leads us to subjects and details of a subject, for a person, country, for someone sick, allowing the Holy Spirit to energise or empower our prayer. This may also include praying in tongues or known language.

Crashing the gates of hell

The devil can only do what we allow him to do. We need to shut the gate on him

1. The mind: shut the gate to our mind in the sense of not allowing negative thoughts from the devil to enter in; we must analyse our thoughts and chase out any bad thought

The heart: Our attitudes may be causing activities that can open the door to the enemy; deal with negative attitudes and take them to the cross.

2. The mouth: Don't allow evil spirits to operate through our speech in criticism, slander, curses or any negative thing, only use your mouth for the Holy Spirit to speak through.
3. Relationships: Disunity will give the devil an entrance, agreement will close the door on the enemy. Keep these 4 doors well shut.

We can now take aggressive action against the enemy

1. The Great Commission: Go to every creature, nation to preach and disciple nations, teach them all things
The Bible does not only tell us how to get saved but how to run the government, the family, the economy and how to use land properly
2. If the enemy shuts doors on the Gospel, we can either go home or we can break down the doors in Jesus' name in prayer and penetrate

Strongholds and Powers

Ask the questions

3. What is this village known for?
4. What is the biggest problem here? How long has it been here?

Our job is to break down these powers in Jesus' name.

Our job is to avoid their influence, pray more specifically, intercede for repentance, break down the strongholds that have built up over many generations. God has promised to give us victory all the time as we listen to Him for strategies and march out against the enemy.

5. Take authority in Jesus' name. The devil knows how much authority we have, so we must use our authority to throw off all counter-attacks of the devil for God gave us authority at creation. Jesus rose from the dead and gave authority to the Church (John 20:21-23), so the church must exercise authority over the devil, by praying, fighting in prayer and the Lord will give you the victory.

For you to think about

1. What is the whole armour of God?
2. Why do we put on the armour of God?
3. How do we pray in the Holy Spirit?
4. What 4 things must we do to stop the evil entering into us?
5. How can we take aggressive action against the devil?

BEING LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Lecture Seven

Introduction

Whatever we do for Christ we must be led by the Holy Spirit not by the flesh, nor by human intelligence. God has designed that those who are in leadership be led by His Holy Spirit. He will help us make the right decisions, what land to buy for buildings, whom to employ etc. We need to hear Him and obey Him in everything we do.

Ways God Leads Us

- A. **Through the written word:** our God-given wisdom (Luke 11:49), our success (Joshua 1: 7-8), our shining light on our pathway (Psalm 119:105). God leads us by His word, never contrary to His word, so our attitude should be obedience (Isaiah 8:20) for you alone will have to answer to God for your decisions. Our decisions can affect others so we need to go to the word of God, walk in integrity and with the peace of God and counsel of others.
- B. **Through Our Spirits**
 1. Man is a spiritual being (Zechariah 12:1). Man has a spirit within him (1 Thessalonians 5:23) teaches that man is spirit, soul and body. The spirit is the real person that lives inside the body. The soul is made up of a will, mind and emotions. The body is the house man lives in.
 2. God is the Father of our spirits (Hebrews 12:9). Jesus confirms that God is spirit (John 4:24). If God is spirit and man is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27 and 2:7) then man must be spirit. James 2:26 says that the body without the spirit is dead.
 3. The spirit in man died in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15-17 and chapter 3). God is speaking about spiritual death to Adam and Eve. This means to be cut off from God (Genesis 3:8-9). Adam and Eve caused man to become by nature *children of wrath* (Ephesians 2:1-3)
 4. God's plan of redemption changed man's nature (Ezekiel 36:26-27). The plan was fulfilled in what Jesus did for the cross for us. He then put a new spirit in man (John 3:1-8). Man must be born again to recover this new spirit. This speaks of spiritual birth through the Spirit of God. When a person receives Christ, he receives a new spirit.
 5. We contact God through our spirits. He contacts us through His Spirit. God will lead us through His Spirit.

How does God speak through our spirit?

1. Being troubled in spirit (John 13:21) When around people with a wrong spirit. your spirit will feel troubled. Though they are saying and doing the right thing. Be on your guard for God is warning you.
2. Being grieved in spirit (Acts 16:16-18). A certain place or people can cause this. Be on your guard and this will keep you out of trouble.
3. Being restless in spirit (2 Corinthians 2:12-13). There will be no rest in your spirit if things are not right. If you don't have rest in the direction you are going, stop and wait on God.
4. Being provoked in spirit (Acts 17:16-17). When this happens, open your mouth, share, get involved, God is directing you. The word 'provoke' means to prod or softly push. If you learn to listen to God this way, your ministry will be well-defined.
5. Being compelled in spirit (Acts 18:5). An inward compulsion to speak. To become more sensitive to how God deals with your spirit is to spend time in God's word and spend time in prayer, especially praying in tongues. When you pray in tongues, your spirit is praying. Pray and get into the word. Listen.

Hearing in difficult times

(1 KINGS 19:1-19)

1. DON'T QUIT, LISTEN TO GOD. CUT AWAY UNNECESSARY THINGS. RETHINK, RE-EXAMINE, RE-EXPERIENCE, REALISING A NEW DIRECTION FROM GOD WILL COME FROM AN OVERFLOW OF THE OLD. FIND STEP ONE FIRST THEN YOU WILL FIND STEP TWO.
2. REST IN GOD FOR WORRY WILL CUT OFF THE FLOW OF GOD'S WISDOM INTO YOUR LIFE.
3. SPEND TIME IN THE WORD OF GOD AND PRAYER. REMIND YOURSELF HOW GOD LEADS (1 KINGS 19:11-12). GOD SPEAKS IN A STILL, SMALL VOICE. ACT ON THE DIRECTION YOU RECEIVE (1 KINGS 19:19).

FOR YOU TO THINK ABOUT

1. NAME TWO WAYS GOD LEADS US.
2. WHO ARE WE? EXPLAIN.
3. HOW DOES GOD SPEAK THROUGH OUR SPIRITS?
4. NAME THREE THINGS TO DO IN DIFFICULT TIMES

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4. DON'T QUIT, LISTEN TO GOD. CUT AWAY UNNECESSARY THINGS. RETHINK, RE-EXAMINE, RE-EXPERIENCE, REALISING A NEW DIRECTION FROM GOD WILL COME FROM AN OVERFLOW OF THE OLD. FIND STEP ONE FIRST THEN YOU WILL FIND STEP TWO.
5. REST IN GOD FOR WORRY WILL CUT OFF THE FLOW OF GOD'S WISDOM INTO YOUR LIFE.
6. SPEND TIME IN THE WORD OF GOD AND PRAYER. REMIND YOURSELF HOW GOD LEADS (1 KINGS 19:11-12). GOD SPEAKS IN A STILL, SMALL VOICE. ACT ON THE DIRECTION YOU RECEIVE (1 KINGS 19:19).

FOR YOU TO THINK ABOUT

5. NAME TWO WAYS GOD LEADS US.
6. WHO ARE WE? EXPLAIN.
7. HOW DOES GOD SPEAK THROUGH OUR SPIRITS?
8. NAME THREE THINGS TO DO IN DIFFICULT TIMES

LECTURE 8

SPIRITUAL MATURITY

God wants every believer to be fruitful and useful to Him; there are no exceptions. The call to maturity is for everyone. Hebrews 6: 1-2:

'Therefore leaving the discussion of elementary principles of Christ, let us go onto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgement;

1 Corinthians 14:20 is also important:

'Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice, be babes, but in understanding be mature;

Look up 2 Peter 1:2-11

1) Moral Excellence is moral purity. Loose morals will hinder our spiritual growth.

The word of God lays down a standard of holiness and righteous living which all of us must obey. Never think you are above temptation. Read 1 Corinthians 10:7-11 as a warning.

1 John 2:15 'If a person wants to grow in Christ, he must grow in holiness and keep pure in every way. Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him'

The words holy and sanctified mean 'separate' or 'set apart for God'

We have to make a choice to follow God and His standards, not the standards of the world where sin has corrupted every aspect of society. A believer must live and function in the world without sharing the world's values and moral standards. 1 Peter 2:11

'Beloved, I beg you as sojourner's and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

Read Philippians 2:11

2) Forsaking sin. Never take a neutral attitude towards sin and immorality.

Be aggressively against it, refuse even a thought of sin to enter your mind, then you will not have a problem.

Sin does not just happen. Sin has its roots in thoughts that are meditated on rather than rejected.

Read Romans 6:11-13, James 4:4, and John 17:15.

3) Establish God's standard. We all need to establish God's standards of moral excellence in our own minds.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

We cannot live for God while dabbling in sinful practices. When we practice God's of moral excellence, we are on the way to spiritual maturity.

God calls us to remove from our lives every hindrance of sin so that we can be mature. Hebrews 12:1-2

4) Knowledge. To our moral excellence, add knowledge which is essential to our growth.

Hosea 4:6 *'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being a priest for me.'*

Also read Isaiah 5:13

Many today are devastated by the enemy because they do not realise who they are in Christ. This prevents them from taking their stand against evil. Read Ephesians 1:15-19 and Colossians 1:9

These passages show us that God wants us to be filled with knowledge. There are two kinds of ignorance.

A) Lack of information, Believers are destroyed because they have never been taught the complete truth regarding their redemption, leaving them a prey to the enemy. This causes Christians to live defeated lives, especially in the West. We need to live in our freedom from bondage.

B) A hardened heart. This ignorance involves a choice of complacency towards knowledge or a complete rejection of knowledge.

Read Isaiah 5:11-13 and Ephesians 4: 17-19, and Proverbs 1:20-33.

Pursue Knowledge. Read Luke 11:9-10 and 2 Peter 3:18.

There is no end to this growing since the depth and wisdom and knowledge of God is infinite. The truth sets us free just as Jesus promises in John 8:31- 32

If we have the knowledge of what Jesus has done for us on the cross, we can stand our ground against the enemy.

Read Hebrews 2:14 and 2:9.

Also read 1 Peter 2:24, John 1:29, Mathew 8:17, Isaiah 53:4 and 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

5) Self-control. Self-control is self-discipline to do those things one does not want or like to do.

Self-denial is not doing what may gratify the flesh or mind, in order to gain a higher goal.

Read Mathew 16:24, 2 Peter 1:5-8, 1 Timothy 4:7, 1 Corinthians 9:25-27.

Self-control is to make your body your slave. Then our determination to be self-controlled will be rewarded by success and our disciplined lives will be a testimony to God's power and not to our own abilities. Add to self-control perseverance and steadfastness.

6) Godliness and Godly devotion.

Deuteronomy 6:5 'you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might.

Also read Ephesians 1:4-5 and Revelation 3:15-16

Be wholly dedicated to Jesus in thanksgiving and praise for all He has done. Depend on Him, Live in His presence in whole hearted devotion and you will have a rich fellowship with Him.

Read Psalm 34:1-3, 103:1-5, 9:1-2, 30:1-2, 8:1-3 and Acts 13:22.

THINK

- 1) Name four things we need to work on to reach maturity.
- 2) How do we achieve moral excellence?
- 3) Why should we pursue knowledge?
- 4) What is the meaning of godliness?
- 5) Why is self-discipline important.