

# Core Values Lessons

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# Core Values

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Every natural family promotes certain values to all its members. Some families are very strict and emphasize obedience to rules. Other families are more easy-going and allow greater personal freedom. Values make every family unique. In the same way, every church family also has distinctive values that set it apart from other churches.

The Core Values series of lessons covers what makes New Hope International Church unique. Our core values describe who we are as a community. While our goals and strategies may change according to the circumstances, our core values will not change. They guide how we treat each other and how we serve God.

Our church as six basic core values are as follows:

**1 We yield to the MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT and THE WORD OF GOD**  
In every church service and in our daily lives, we allow the Holy Spirit to guide and direct us. The more members experience the PRESENCE OF GOD, the more they will grow in their hunger for His Word and their love for Him. As a result of the FIRE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, God's people will experience spiritual revival, both individually and as a church. (Luke 3:16; Ephesians 5:18.)

**2 We are a HOUSE OF PRAYER**  
We believe God has given believers authority and power to accomplish His eternal purposes. Through intercession and prayer, Christians exercise this God-given authority and God manifests His resurrection power. (Matthew 21:13; Acts 4:23-31.)

**3 We encourage a spirit of GIVING and SOWING SEEDS**  
Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than receive." Just as Jesus gave His life for us, we want to be a people that follow His example and give to others. We believe giving not only involves giving our finances and material resources, but also our time and love to those in need. We also encourage giving to ministries that expand and help strengthen the kingdom of God. (Acts 20:35.)

**4 We encourage all believers to EVANGELIZE**  
In obedience to the Lord Jesus, our vision is to EVANGELIZE and share the gospel to our neighbors, our city and nation, and all over the world. We actively promote all members to be involved in missions, whether locally or internationally. We also believe church-planting is an essential element to fulfilling the Great Commission. (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8.)

**5 We believe the church is a FAMILY**  
Our church desires to give holistic care to its members and those outside the church. John the elder wrote, "I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well." Our desire is the same. A church family can vary in size; some families are big, some are small, yet they are equally important in value. We believe, therefore, in helping members CONNECT with one another in

SMALL GROUP FELLOWSHIP and ministries. We value one-on-one relationships with one another. Our members go beyond their comfort zone to reach out to one another and to those who need to be loved outside the church. We are determined to be the church that welcomes everyone regardless of their social, cultural, or financial status. (3 John 2; 1 John 4:11; James 2:1.)

**6 We encourage everyone to work together as a TEAM**  
We believe that every believer is called to serve and minister with different gifts and passions. It is significant to recognize and accept one another's gifts and work together in UNITY and harmony. We also encourage a spirit of EXCELLENCE AND DILIGENCE among the ministry teams. As fellow servants in Christ, we make ourselves ACCOUNTABLE to one another. Our Lord Jesus says that the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve. Godly leaders are servants of all. (Mark 10:45; Mark 9:35.)

The lessons in the Core Values series elaborate these values. The lessons are meant especially for teaching in a caregroup or one-on-one setting, but are also appropriate for self-study. If taught, the person teaching should read through the lesson beforehand and make notes about which Scripture references they want to emphasize. Some lessons have numerous Scripture references and it is not necessary to use all of them during the teaching session. If appropriate, they should share examples from their own lives.

# Lesson 1: The Word of God

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## Introduction

The Bible is the most widely distributed book in the world, but many people don't know where it comes from or what message it contains. The Bible explains how you can know God and be blessed in your life. Moreover, it tells how God wants to use you to bless others. When Christians obey God's Word in the Bible, and teach others to do the same, we will see God's blessings throughout the world.

## Discussion question

How does the Bible make a difference in your life? Why do you read the Bible?

### 1. The Bible is from God

God used people to write the Bible, but the thoughts are from Him. They are His instructions to us, to prepare us to do His good work.

#### **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

*All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work. (NLT)*

### 2. The Word of God is powerful to create life

God spoke and the world was formed, according to Hebrews 11:3. This shows that the words of God have power to create life and cause life to flourish. The Bible includes many powerful promises of life meant for us, both spiritual (eternal life) and physical (prosperity and healing). These promises come from God's mouth—they are full of life-creating power. We can claim these promises as our own through faith in God. Jesus said in John 15 that when we ask God according to His words, we will have those things.

#### **John 6:63**

*The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. (NLT)*

#### **John 15:7**

*If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.*

### 3. The Word of God is water that cleanses us

God cleanses His people from all sin according to His promise: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

This is the Word of God for us. When we receive His Word by faith, it cleanses us from our sin.

The Bible also instructs us to be perfect like God, and we are constantly challenged to turn away from our sin and unbelief. We should not dilute or compromise the message of the Bible to fit our lifestyle or worldview. Instead, we should change our lifestyle and mindset to fit the Bible.

***Ephesians 5:25-26***

*For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. (NLT)*

***Psalms 119:9, 11***

*How can a young man keep his way pure?*

*By living according to your word.*

*I seek you with all my heart;*

*do not let me stray from your commands.*

*I have hidden your word in my heart*

*that I might not sin against you.*

**4. The Word of God is light that guides us**

The Word of God is a light in a dark world. The word gospel means “good news” because it gives hope where there was no hope. Without God’s word, people will be lost and unable to understand God’s will.

The Word of God also guides us personally, day by day. The Bible says His word is like a lamp for our path at night, guiding us which way we ought to go in our lives.

***2 Peter 1:19***

*Because of that experience, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place—until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts. (NLT)*

***Psalms 119:105***

*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.*

**5. The Word of God is spiritual food that nourishes us**

The Bible says the Word of God is food that nourishes our spirits. In the same way we need physical food to strengthen our bodies, we need to read the Bible and listen to sermons prayerfully in order to strengthen our spirits.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, telling them that they were not ready for some spiritual instruction. They needed basic Christian truths, such as repentance, before they could go on to learn about how to work together in ministry, for example.

In the same way, the Bible contains spiritual nourishment that is suitable for different stages of our Christian life. The goal is that we will become mature, and attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ, as written in Ephesians 4:12-15.

**Matthew 4:4**

*Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*

**1 Corinthians 3:1-2**

*Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to spiritual people. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in the Christian life. I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger. (NLT)*

**Ephesians 4:12-15**

*Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. (NLT)*

**6. The Word of God is seed that produces good fruit in us**

Jesus used a parable in which he compared the word of God to a seed. When planted in good soil, a seed grows up and eventually yields a large crop. In the same way, when we receive the Word of God with faith and earnestness, it will eventually produce good attitudes and good works in our lives.

**Luke 8:4-8, 11**

*While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown." When he said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."  
"This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God."*

**7. The Word of God is a sword that cuts into our inner being**

**Ephesians 6:17**

*Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

The Bible says that God's Word is like a sword that we use to fight against the enemy. Of all the equipment listed in Ephesians 6:13-17, the word of God is the only thing that is compared to an offensive weapon. When we face a big obstacle or difficulty in life, we can claim promises in the Bible through faith. When our faith is mixed with the promises in God's word, it is like a sword that we can use to break through enemy lines.

The Word of God is also like a sharp sword that penetrates deep into our attitudes and motives. When we read or hear God's Word, it brings conviction through the Holy Spirit. We discover where we are right and wrong.

**Hebrews 4:12**

*For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. (NLT)*

**8. The Word of God is a foundation for our lives**

The Word of God also provides us with wisdom to make important decisions in life. God does not lie, and His word is sure. We can be confident of our future as long as we hold onto His word, even in the midst of the storms of life.

**Matthew 6:24-27**

*"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."*

**Conclusion**

The Bible is God's Word to His people. The Bible helps us overcome sin, live a holy life, understand and do God's will, and defeat the spiritual enemy.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Please share one thing you learned today.
2. Why is it important to know what is written in the Bible?
3. How has the Bible changed how you live?

# Lesson 2: The Holy Spirit in the Believer, Part 1

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## Introduction

Every Christian receives the Holy Spirit when they are born again as a seal of God's ownership of their lives, but the Bible teaches that we need to be further empowered and filled with the Holy Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit enables us to fully realize all the benefits that the Holy Spirit gives us.

In Old Testament times, the Holy Spirit would descend on special people on special occasions for particular purposes. At that time, only certain people were filled with the Spirit, in contrast to what God is doing among His people today. Now, every Christian can be filled with the Holy Spirit through the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the fire of God.

Being baptized in the Holy Spirit is the work of God. Once we are baptized in the Holy Spirit, we need to continually let the Holy Spirit control our lives fully. We should hunger for and welcome the presence of God in our lives.

## Discussion question

What role does the Holy Spirit play in your life?

### 1. Confidence in salvation

God has given the Holy Spirit as the seal of our salvation. Sometimes the devil comes to condemn us or sow doubt in our hearts. But if we let the Holy Spirit lead our lives fully, our doubts will melt away.

#### ***2 Corinthians 1:21-22***

*Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*

#### ***2 Corinthians 5:5-6***

*Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.*

When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you don't need human words to assure you that you belong to God. The Spirit will give you the assurance of your salvation. This confidence helps us be willing to give up worldly ambition and live only for the gospel.

This is why the ministry of the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential in the church. We do not want people in the church doing things for God mechanically, but we want God's Spirit to come and revive our hearts and set our hearts on fire for Him. When His Spirit is living in our hearts, there is no room for fear and doubt.

We should give time to the Holy Spirit in our meetings so that He can move freely and touch people's hearts. We need to give the Spirit room to touch lives fully. We should not run our services mechanically. God's people need the Spirit's touch, therefore our church must have meetings where the Holy Spirit will flow and touch His people.

## **2. Closer relationship with God**

When we let the Holy Spirit take control of our lives, our relationship with God the Father will be more vivid and real.

### ***Romans 8:15-16***

*For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*

### ***Galatians 4:6***

*Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."*

The key is to yield ourselves totally to God. Then the Holy Spirit can work in our lives and help us have a closer relationship with our spiritual Father.

### ***Ephesians 5:18-19***

*Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord ...*

## **3. Power to resist temptation**

Temptations come so that we can win a spiritual victory, not so that we can yield to them. God has given us the power to resist and overcome temptations through the Holy Spirit.

### ***1 John 4:4***

*You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.*

## **Jesus**

When Jesus resisted Satan's temptations, He received the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had victory over temptations. The Spirit of God gives you power to overcome the enemy.

### ***Luke 4:1-2, 14***

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. ... Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.*

## **Believers**

The Holy Spirit will help us in our weakness and at the time of temptation. Although the situation is uncomfortable, we should press into God and receive strength from Him.

### ***Ephesians 3:16***

*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being ...*

### ***Philippians 4:13***

*I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*

In order to resist the devil, we need the power of the Spirit. When we are consciously controlled by the Spirit, we will become stronger spiritually and able to overcome temptation.

## **4. The fruit of the Spirit in abundance**

God wants us to have the same life character as Jesus Christ. When the Holy Spirit lives in us, we have the potential to bear the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These are the natural product of a life filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul taught the Galatians that this fruit comes naturally when they allow the Holy Spirit to control their lives.

Paul told the Galatians that when they lived according to the Spirit, they did not need to worry too much about following the law, or rules that tell us what is wrong and right. The Holy Spirit will always tell us to do what is right, and when our hearts are filled with the Spirit of God, we will naturally want to do the right thing.

### ***Galatians 5:22-23***

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

Through the Holy Spirit, we can exhibit godly qualities even in the face of difficulty, just like Jesus and the apostles.

### ***1 Thessalonians 1:6***

*You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.*

It is important to do things for God, but it is even more important to be like God in our character. God does not look at what we do, but instead looks at who we are. We cannot produce godly character by ourselves—it is the work of the Holy Spirit. The foundation of godly character is love.

### ***1 Corinthians 13:1-3***

*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries*

*and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

We should be filled with the Holy Spirit so that we can grow more into the likeness of Christ. When we walk by the Spirit, we will do things out of love, joy and peace.

## **Conclusion**

The Holy Spirit gives us confidence that we belong to God, helps us to overcome temptation, and changes our character to be more like Jesus.

## **Discussion Questions**

1. Please share one thing you learned today.
2. Describe your life with and without the Holy Spirit.
3. How have you changed as a result of the ministry of the Holy Spirit?
4. Why do you think love is the basis of godly character?

# Lesson 3: The Holy Spirit in the Believer, Part 2

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## Introduction

Christians must be spiritual people. The Bible says that God is Spirit and that Christians must rely on the Holy Spirit to understand the things of God.

### *1 Corinthians 2:10-16*

*But it was to us that God revealed these things by his Spirit. For his Spirit searches out everything and shows us God's deep secrets. No one can know a person's thoughts except that person's own spirit, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. And we have received God's Spirit (not the world's spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us.*

*When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths. But people who aren't spiritual can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means. Those who are spiritual can evaluate all things, but they themselves cannot be evaluated by others. For,*

*“Who can know the Lord's thoughts?  
Who knows enough to teach him?”*

*But we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ. (NLT)*

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God living inside Christians. God's Spirit can speak to us, revealing God's wisdom to us so that we can apply it in our lives and ministry.

## Discussion question

What do you do to make good decisions or gain wisdom?

### 1. God's wisdom and understanding

Both in the Old Testament and New Testament, Spirit of God gives His people wisdom beyond their natural ability or beyond the ability of others. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of wisdom and understanding. Therefore, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we will also have wisdom and understanding.

Joseph, Joshua, Daniel, and Jesus are all examples of people who had God's supernatural wisdom and understanding.

## **Joseph**

### ***Genesis 41:38-39***

*So Pharaoh asked them, “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?” Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you.”*

## **Joshua**

### ***Deuteronomy 34:9***

*Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD had commanded Moses.*

## **Daniel**

### ***Daniel 5:11-12***

*There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. King Nebuchadnezzar your father—your father the king, I say—appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners. This man Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.*

## **Jesus**

Long before Jesus was born, Isaiah prophesied that He would be filled with the spirit of wisdom.

### ***Isaiah 11:2***

*The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD ...*

Through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Jesus knew the right words to say. He listened carefully to what the Spirit wanted.

### ***Isaiah 50:4***

*The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught.*

Jesus was full of wisdom and understanding. Not even His enemies could deny it.

### ***Matthew 9:4-5***

*Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, “Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’?”*

**Matthew 13:54**

*Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. “Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” they asked.*

**Believers**

The Bible says that we can ask for a spirit of wisdom and understanding.

**Ephesians 1:17**

*I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.*

**Ephesians 6:19**

*Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel ...*

**James 1:5**

*If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.*

**2. Understanding of God’s Word**

The Holy Spirit opens our mind to understand what is written in the Bible. The Bible was written by people who were inspired, or “carried along by,” the Holy Spirit. It is His word, so that when we read the Bible and are filled with God’s Spirit, it will be as though He is speaking to us.

**2 Peter 1:20-21**

*Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would teach believers.

**John 14:26**

*But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

People who are filled with the Holy Spirit are able to understand God’s Word and teach it with authority.

**Peter**

After being filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit, Peter was able to understand the Scriptures he had heard and he was able to use a passage to explain what God was doing on the Day of Pentecost. He was not a Jewish scholar, but had supernatural insight into God’s Word. Even though we do not have the same inspiration as the original apostles,

God's Holy Spirit can still give us supernatural insight into the Scripture when we preach and teach.

**Acts 2:14-16**

*Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel ..."*

**Acts 4:13**

*When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.*

**Barnabas**

Barnabas is another example of someone who was able to successfully preach and teach God's word because he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 11:24-26**

*He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.*

**Acts 15:35**

*But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, where they and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord.*

**3. Speaking in tongues for self-edification**

From the day of Pentecost onwards, the Bible makes it clear that people are expected to speak in tongues when they receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with the Spirit, we have an advantage of praying in the Spirit.

**Acts 2:4**

*All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*

**Acts 10:44-46**

*While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said ...*

Speaking in tongues is not only given as a sign for the baptism in the Holy Spirit but also as a prayer language for believers. When we pray in tongues, our spirit

communes with the Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches us to pray in tongues in order to edify (build up, strengthen, enlighten) ourselves spiritually.

***Romans 8:26-27***

*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.*

***1 Corinthians 14:4, 14***

*He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. ... For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.*

Speaking in tongues then, is beneficial to us in our walk with God and we should do it as much as we can, like Paul who said that he spoke in tongues more than anyone else (1 Corinthians 14:18).

## **Conclusion**

The Holy Spirit gives us knowledge and understanding from God.

## **Discussion Questions**

1. Please share one thing you learned today.
2. According to the Bible, can we understand spiritual things without help from the Holy Spirit? Why?
3. According to 1 Corinthians 14:4, why is speaking in tongues beneficial for the individual?

# Lesson 4: The Holy Spirit in the Believer, Part 3

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## Introduction

The Holy Spirit is essential to our success in the Christian life. We cannot succeed without the Spirit of God. God told the prophet Zechariah that the Israelites would succeed only by relying on the Spirit of God.

### ***Zechariah 4:6***

*This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty.*

In the same way, Christians must rely on the Spirit of God and not their own wisdom or strength. We must learn to become less so that He can become greater in our lives. We must learn to yield ourselves to God so that He can use us in greater ways.

## Discussion question

What percentage of your success as a Christian is due to the Holy Spirit?

### 1. Heart to obey God

We cannot obey God by ourselves; we need the power of the Holy Spirit to help us. God had promised long before Jesus came that He would give His people a new heart and His Spirit to be with them so that they would have a heart of obedience.

### ***Ezekiel 36:26-27***

*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.*

When we are filled with the Spirit, we will obey God willingly and naturally, not grudgingly. Only God can change our hearts. We may be able to force people to do things, but we cannot change their hearts. The Spirit of God changes us to be obedient people.

### ***Romans 8:6-9***

*The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*

The key to being controlled by the Spirit is to be conscious of God all the time. Usually, we are only conscious of what we can tangibly see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. Because the spiritual realm is outside our natural perception, we tend to forget about it.

But when we are touched by the fire of God, we become more sensitive to God's presence. We can recognize how He is moving in our lives and what He wants us to do (or not to do!).

When we are filled with the Spirit of God, He will give us a burden to do His work. When it is a God-given burden, we will be able to go through difficulties in order to complete the task.

## **Israelites in the time of building the Tabernacle**

### ***Exodus 36:1-2***

*“So Bezalel, Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the LORD has given skill and ability to know how to carry out all the work of constructing the sanctuary are to do the work just as the LORD has commanded.” Then Moses summoned Bezalel and Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the LORD had given ability and who was willing to come and do the work.*

## **Israel's elders**

God put the burden He had given to Moses to the Israelite elders as well, so that they would be willing to take care of the Israelite people.

### ***Numbers 11:17***

*I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit that is on you and put the Spirit on them. They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone.*

## **The Israelites after they returned from Babylon**

### ***Haggai 1:14***

*So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God.*

At all times, we should be filled with the Holy Spirit so that we will always be willing to do whatever is required to extend the Kingdom of God. If we are not filled with the Spirit, we will be easily distracted by the temporary things of this world.

## **2. Ability to obey God**

When we are filled with the Spirit, God not only works in our heart, but He also gives the abilities required to complete His work. If we find ourselves struggling to finish God's work, we need to press into God and plead for the necessary abilities—the ability to plan, skill and talent, and physical strength. All these things come from God's Spirit.

The Bible offers many examples of God empowering His people to serve Him effectively.

## **The judges of Israel**

Before there was a king over Israel, God would fill a certain person with His Spirit to save the nation from their oppressors.

### ***Judges 3:10***

*The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war. The LORD gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him.*

### ***Judges 6:34***

*Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him.*

### ***Judges 11:29***

*Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah. He crossed Gilead and Manasseh, passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from there he advanced against the Ammonites.*

### ***Judges 13:25***

*... and the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him while he was in Mahaneh Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.*

## **The Israelites at the time of building the Tabernacle**

### ***Exodus 31:1-6***

*Then the LORD said to Moses, “See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts—to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship. Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given skill to all the craftsmen to make everything I have commanded you.”*

## **Samson**

Samson was given supernatural power in order to defeat the Philistines.

### ***Judges 14:6***

*The Spirit of the LORD came upon him in power so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat. But he told neither his father nor his mother what he had done.*

### ***Judges 15:14***

*As he approached Lehi, the Philistines came toward him shouting. The Spirit of the LORD came upon him in power. The ropes on his arms became like charred flax, and the bindings dropped from his hands.*

### **3. Ability to discern God's will and leading**

As in many other areas of life, believers go to two extremes when they want to know God's will. One group thinks, "I must hear from God before I do something. I won't do anything until God supernaturally tells me to." Another group believes, "God gave me common sense and a sound mind and expects me to use it. I just do what I think is best and it usually works."

Neither position is biblical and balanced. We need to use our common sense to obey God according to His will revealed in the Bible. For example, we know it is God's will to pray, evangelize, make disciples, and fellowship with other believers. We can use our common sense to understand God's will. But, we should not think that we can know God's will for everything only by our common sense. We must also listen to His Holy Spirit for specific instructions. God sometimes tells us to do things that we can't understand by our own reasoning.

#### ***Isaiah 55:8-9***

*"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."*

Common sense and intellectual deliberation can be helpful, but it is not a sure way to understand God's will for our lives. We should seek God's will and His ways. We should expect God to direct us, but at the same time we use God's principles to be boundaries of where we should go and what we should do.

#### ***Psalms 143:10***

*Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.*

The Holy Spirit knows the mind of God, therefore He is able to help us to know God's will.

#### ***John 16:13***

*But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.*

#### ***1 Corinthians 2:11-12***

*For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.*

### **Elizabeth**

Through the Spirit, Elizabeth knew that Mary was bearing the Savior. She gave Mary comforting words that helped confirm God's will.

**Luke 1:41-43**

*When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"*

**Simeon**

Through the Spirit, Simeon knew that the baby Jesus would bring salvation. He confirmed the will of God to Mary and Joseph.

**Luke 2:25-27**

*Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required ...*

**Philip**

Philip was led by the Spirit to meet the Ethiopian eunuch.

**Acts 8:29-30**

*The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.*

**Peter**

Peter was led by the Spirit to meet Cornelius.

**Acts 10:19-21**

*While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them." Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?"*

**The church at Antioch**

The Spirit guided the church at Antioch to send Paul and Barnabas out into the mission field.

**Acts 13:2-4**

*While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.*

## Paul

When we look at Paul's life, we can see that at times Paul followed God's general principles if God did not tell him what to do specifically. He followed the general will of God. But when the Holy Spirit gave him a clear direction, he would follow His specific direction and instruction. He prayed in the Spirit a lot (1 Corinthians 14:18) and was very sensitive to the specific instruction of the Holy Spirit.

### **Acts 16:6-10**

*Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.*

### **Acts 18:9-10**

*One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.*

### **Acts 20:22-23**

*"And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me."*

With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can more precisely discern God's will for our lives. God wants us to spend our time and use our talents wisely to extend the kingdom of God. We don't want to waste our time in any way.

We can have a strong conviction that God is leading us to do certain things. We should move in the direction that the Holy Spirit convicts us to. We should not do things merely because they are good things to do. The Holy Spirit helps us to be one step ahead of the devil all the time. The devil's plans are frustrated when we are moving with the Holy Spirit.

## Conclusion

The Holy Spirit is essential to our Christian ministry. Through His Spirit in us, God gives us the burden to do His work, gives us the ability to accomplish the work, and guides us according to His plan.

## Discussion Questions

1. Please share one thing you learned today.
2. Can we serve God without the Holy Spirit? Why not?
3. Why do we need God's guidance in the ministry?
4. If we do not hear specific guidance from God, what should we do?

# Lesson 5: The Holy Spirit in the Church

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## Introduction

God's Holy Spirit not only guides and empowers individual believers; the Holy Spirit also guides and empowers the church. As each member of the church yields to the Holy Spirit in their own life, God orchestrates the activity and growth of the church. The church is described in the Bible as Jesus' body and that He is the head. This means that our activity must be directed and guided by Him.

Without His Spirit, the church would simply be a human organization that is destined to failure. But God is patient with our human failings and is faithful—He will keep purifying, growing, and strengthening His church so that it will be the beautiful bride ready for the return of the Lord Jesus.

## Discussion question

What role do you think the Holy Spirit plays in God's church?

## 1. Supernatural effectiveness in ministry

### *1 Corinthians 12:4-11*

*There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.*

*A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have. (NLT)*

The Holy Spirit gives each Christian supernatural abilities, or gifts. The gifts that we have are unique, but they are also complementary with the spiritual gifts given to others in the church. God gives us gifts so that together we can accomplish things that we could not do individually or without His power.

God gives us gifts to help the church accomplish His work. He wants the church to reflect His glory and power. Jesus had all the gifts of the Spirit, but no one today has all the gifts. We need to work together to do the complete work of Jesus. When people in the church let the Holy Spirit work through them, and cooperate together in using their gifts, the church will be vibrant and growing. People will hear the gospel, be healed of physical and spiritual sickness, and grow up into disciples of Jesus.

We should respect the gifts that God has given ourselves and others. Everyone in the church has a role to play. We should not disregard people whose gifts are different than our own. People have different gifts so that they can do different things. We should thank God that He made each one different.

God gives spiritual gifts to us so that we can use them in the way He wants, not the way we want. Every believer has a gift from the Holy Spirit, but they need to submit themselves to God and allow Him to use them. The more we submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit, the more effective we will be in using our spiritual gifts.

Besides 1 Corinthians 12, you can read more about the types of spiritual gifts that God has given His church in Romans 12:4-8.

## **2. Ability to testify for Jesus**

God desires to have a relationship with people and reaches out to them so that they can know Him. One of the main activities of the God's Holy Spirit is to point people to Himself. The Holy Spirit uses the church to testify that Jesus is Lord and Savior.

### ***John 15:26-27***

*“But I will send you the Advocate—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me. And you must also testify about me because you have been with me from the beginning of my ministry.” (NLT)*

The church must testify that Jesus is the Living God who cares for us. We should share about our experiences with the Lord. With the help of the Holy Spirit, the entire church can tell everyone about Jesus with power and boldness.

### ***Acts 4:29-31, 33***

*“And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word. Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness. (NLT)*

The Holy Spirit will guide us when we testify about Jesus. He will tell us what to say, and how to say it. This is the experience of many people in the book of Acts, including Peter and John (Acts 4:8, 12-13), Stephen (Acts 6:9-10), and Paul (Acts 9:20-22). We need to study and understand the gospel, but we should rely on the Holy Spirit when we speak. He will give us wisdom for each specific situation and help us effectively testify for Jesus.

### ***Mark 13:11***

*Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.*

**Luke 12:11-12**

*“When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.”*

When God’s church testifies boldly for Jesus, God will confirm the message through signs and wonders. We can expect God to manifest His power when we preach the gospel. We should preach boldly, having faith that God will confirm what we say through miracles. When people are healed by the power of God and set free from bondages, their lives are also a testimony to the gospel and God’s power.

**Hebrews 2:3-4**

*... how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.*

**Romans 15:18-19**

*Yet I dare not boast about anything except what Christ has done through me, bringing the Gentiles to God by my message and by the way I worked among them. They were convinced by the power of miraculous signs and wonders and by the power of God’s Spirit. In this way, I have fully presented the Good News of Christ from Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum. (NLT)*

**3. Unity**

The people in the church will be in unity when they let the Holy Spirit control their lives. God’s Spirit lives inside every person in the church, guiding them in ways that will build unity in the church.

**1 Corinthians 12:13**

*For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.*

**Ephesians 4:2-6**

*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

We should listen to the Holy Spirit as we interact with our brothers and sisters in the church. The Holy Spirit prompts us to love, forgive, respect, care for, and prefer one another. How can we have fellowship with God through the Holy Spirit, but fail see our brothers and sisters as God sees them?

### ***Philippians 2:1-3***

*If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.*

Ephesians 5 tells us to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. Whereas getting drunk on wine breaks up relationships, being filled with the Spirit builds up unity. We can speak to one another with gracious words and thank God for the good we see in others. We can submit ourselves to others instead of promoting our own agenda.

### ***Ephesians 5:18-21***

*Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

To read more about how people in the church should behave toward one another in the church, read Romans 12:9-21.

## **4. Maturity in Christ**

God wants to make His church strong and mature, not weak and confused. God's Holy Spirit works through us to help make the church mature and ready to do God's work. Paul asks people in the Corinthian church to desire spiritual gifts that help build up the church.

### ***1 Corinthians 14:12***

*So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.*

Elsewhere in Chapter 14, Paul says that prophesy is one spiritual gift that builds up the church. God speaks to His church through prophesy. Christians should expect to receive words of prophesy on a regular basis in the Sunday services or in their caregroup meetings.

We can also help build up the church of God by encouraging one another, helping one another in material ways, or correcting and teaching each other. Peter writes that we should use the gifts, abilities, and resources we have received from God to serve one another in the church.

### ***1 Peter 4:10-11***

*Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

## **Conclusion**

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary for the individual Christian life and also for the corporate church life. Without the Holy Spirit, the church will be guided by human wisdom and driven forward with human work. But God desires that the church follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, demonstrate His power, and preach His word dynamically.

The Holy Spirit guides believers to work together in unity, using their various gifts to build one another up so that everyone becomes mature. The Holy Spirit also empowers the church so that Christians can boldly testify for Christ and perform miracles to confirm the gospel message and set people free from the power of the devil.

## **Discussion Questions**

1. Please share one thing you learned today.
2. How can God use your unique gifts and abilities in the church?
3. What are some gifts and abilities that you appreciate in other Christians in the church?
4. What are some spiritual gifts that build up the church? How do they build up the church?

# Lesson 6: Prayer

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## Introduction

In Matthew 21:13, Jesus said prayer was the primary purpose of the temple in Jerusalem. He told the people there, "My house will be called a house of prayer." Because New Hope International Church is a house of God, it should also be a house of prayer.

Prayer is a powerful privilege for Christians. Through prayer, we exercise our God-given authority to accomplish God's eternal purposes. The prayer of faith from a righteous Christian is powerful and effective. Prayer unleashes God's power. This lesson shows that prayer is effective, that prayer is necessary for our spiritual life and ministry, and that it is our responsibility to pray.

## Discussion question

Why do you pray? What stops you from praying?

### 1. Prayer is effective when we have faith

Many people do not pray because they think God does not listen, is not willing to help, or cannot answer their prayer. When people think like this, they will pray half-heartedly and without faith. Our prayers are effective when we believe that God does listen, is willing help, and is able to answer our prayers.

#### *Hebrews 11:6*

*And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

Often, we allow the circumstances around us to weaken our faith. If we only believe when things are good, but don't believe when things go poorly, then we have weak faith.

#### *Matthew 14:28-31*

*"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "Why did you doubt?"*

When Peter was focused on Jesus, he was able to walk on the water. But when he focused on the winds and waves, he began to sink. When we pray, we need to focus on Jesus and what He has promised us through His Word. We should not let our faith be weakened by the surrounding circumstances.

Jesus promised that if we have faith, we can command mountains to move. When we pray, we should not focus on the size of the mountain, but on the God who can move mountains.

### **Matthew 21:21-22**

*Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."*

Sometimes we put our faith in something other than God. We should not “hedge our bets” by asking God and then making plans as though God will not answer. This is what James describes in James 1:5-8.

### **James 1:5-8**

*If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do. (NLT)*

We should be like the early church in Acts 4, who asked God to demonstrate His power on behalf of his church. They put their trust in God alone. After they prayed, God answered their prayer by sending His Holy Spirit to embolden and empower them.

### **Acts 4:23-31**

*On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:*

*“‘Why do the nations rage  
and the peoples plot in vain?  
The kings of the earth take their stand  
and the rulers gather together  
against the Lord*

*and against his Anointed One.’ Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”*

*After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.*

## **2. Prayer is necessary for our spiritual life**

Faith is necessary for effective prayer, but prayer is also necessary for our faith. Many people do not understand the purpose of prayer. They think that is for God’s

sake—for us to beg Him for our needs, as if He did not know or did not want to provide what we need. Instead, the Bible says that prayer is mainly for our benefit. Through prayer, we understand God’s perspective on our situation and receive wisdom and faith. We strengthen ourselves spiritually through prayer. Without prayer, we will be very spiritually weak.

***John 15:4-7***

*Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.*

*"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.*

In these verses, Jesus says that we must abide, or remain, in Him. We must be constantly connected to Him, like a vine branch connected to the vine trunk. Prayer is our connection to Jesus. We abide in Him through constant prayer. Without that continuous connection, we will not have the power and guidance of God in our spiritual life. Paul said, “Pray without ceasing.” We should have special quiet times to pray to God, but we can also pray to God throughout the day.

When we pray to God, we speak to Him but we also let Him speak to us. We listen to God’s Holy Spirit, which lives in us. We can pray in the spirit so that our spirits will be edified.

**3. Prayer is necessary for our ministry**

Prayer is necessary not only for our personal spiritual life, but also for our ministry. Jesus said, “Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me” and “Apart from me you can do nothing.” Jesus means that without an abiding, day-by-day relationship with Him, we cannot produce good results in our Christian lives. What we do for God must come out of our relationship with God. This is the type of fruit that will last (see verse 16).

It’s also important to note that in verse seven, Jesus says that when we have close communication with Him, then He will give us whatever we ask. Remember, the purpose of our communication is to produce good results in our Christian life. He answers our prayer when it will produce good results in our Christian life.

Jesus showed an excellent example to us in prayer. He prayed for guidance in selecting the twelve disciples and prayed for strength in the Garden of Gethsemane.

***Luke 6:12-13***

*“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles ...”*

**Luke 22:39-42**

*Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him.*

If Jesus prayed to God for his ministry needs, how much more do we need to diligently pray to God to help us do His work!

**4. Prayer is our responsibility**

Christians have a responsibility to pray to God for other people. Throughout the Bible, godly men and women prayed to God on behalf of others. There are several general categories of people we should pray for:

- **People we are spiritually responsible for.** We should pray for our family members because we have a special responsibility to look after them, whether young or old. We should also pray for the people we are discipling. When he stepped down as leader of Israel, Samuel told the Israelites that he would still pray for them. He knew it was his God-given responsibility to pray for the Israelites because he was their spiritual father.

**1 Samuel 12:23**

*As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you.*

- **Our brothers and sisters in the church.** Paul asked the Ephesians to pray for the family of believers all the time. We should regularly pray for our brothers and sisters. As we do, God will bless them and also grow His love in our hearts for the people in the church.

**Ephesians 6:18**

*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*

- **Our spiritual leaders.** We should pray for those who lead us in the church, that God will give them wisdom understand God's will. Pray that God will protect them and their families, and that they will have a zealous love for God. Paul often asked churches to pray for him.

**Ephesians 6:19**

*Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel ...*

***Romans 15:30***

*I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.*

- **Our country and our government.** God delegates authority to governments for peace and safety in society. We should pray for the country we live in that people will love God and obey His commandments, and that God will bless the country. We should pray that our governmental leaders will have wisdom from God in how they should rule.

***1 Timothy 2:1-2***

*I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.*

## **Discussion Questions**

1. What is your experience in regard to prayer strengthening your spirit?
2. How frequently should we pray?
3. Do you feel you have God-given authority when you pray? What does that mean to you?
4. When you pray for others, who do you pray for and how?

# Lesson 7: Giving

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## Introduction

Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than receive.” At New Hope International Church, we want to orient our mindsets to conform to God’s ideas. We should try to understand why giving is important in God’s sight.

We can see that our God is a giving God. He provides a beautiful creation for the entire world. He gave us the seasons, rain and sun, and air to breathe—He provides for our physical needs. He made us in His image, giving us a capacity to love and to create. He gave His only Son, Jesus Christ, to a world that was in desperate need of a savior. He freely forgave us when we put our faith in Jesus. He gives us wisdom and supernatural power through His Holy Spirit. He gives us all these things because He wants to and not because we deserve them.

God has not withheld any good thing from us. The more mature we become as Christians, the more we realize that everything we have—time, abilities, opportunities, material resources, love—comes from God. He has entrusted these things to us to use wisely, not on our own pleasures, but to bless others and build His church.

Christians should follow the example of Jesus. He gave His whole life for our sake in obedience to the Father. We should do the same and give our lives—our finances and material resources, and our time and love—to other people, especially our spiritual brothers and sisters in the church.

## Discussion question

Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than receive.” What is implied by this statement?

### 1. God is the source of Christian generosity

At its root, Christian generosity comes from God. God is the reason that we can give freely—He gave His all to us first, before we deserved it. He gave us more than enough. Through Jesus, we have access to abundant free blessings from God. Just like a king will provide everything for his sons and daughters, so God provides us with all good things.

We have access to all these good things through Jesus Christ, God’s precious Son. We should meditate on God’s love for us, that He gave His Son so that we could have abundant spiritual and physical blessings. When we do this, we will be able to understand why we should give freely to other people.

#### *1 John 4:10-11*

*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

## **2. Generosity is a result of the work of the Holy Spirit**

The Bible shows that when the Holy Spirit moved in the early Jerusalem church, the people were open-hearted and generous towards one another and toward the work of God. Read what happened after the Holy Spirit was poured out in the Jerusalem church at Pentecost.

### ***Acts 2:44-45***

*All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.*

### ***Acts 4:32***

*All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.*

The reason the believers in the early church could give so freely was because their hearts were cleansed and purified by the Holy Spirit. After we are touched by God's Holy Spirit, we can begin to understand God's mindset toward giving. We will be able to give generously without thought of what we will receive in return.

### ***Matthew 6:3-4***

*But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret.*

## **3. God gives to us so that we can give generously to others**

God does not want us to keep the things that we have received for ourselves. When God blessed Abraham in Genesis 12, He said "I will bless the nations through you." The principle we can learn from this is that God blesses us so that we can bless others.

In Matthew 10, Jesus told His disciples to give and serve others with what they had received from God. They received power and authority from God for a purpose—to share God's gifts with the world!

### ***Matthew 10:8***

*"Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."*

Paul compares giving to sowing seeds.

### ***2 Corinthians 9:6-10***

*Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. As the Scriptures say,*

*“They share freely and give generously to the poor.  
Their good deeds will be remembered forever.”*

*For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. (NLT)*

Paul says that God gives us what we need so that we can bless others. That’s what Paul means when he says that God supplies seed to the sower. When we sow generously, God will supply us with more seed.

#### **4. We must be faithful stewards of what God has given us**

We need to be faithful with what God has given to us. God blesses His servants who are diligent and hard-working, and who put what their master has given them to good use. (See the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30.)

##### ***Matthew 25:21***

*“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’”*

For example, if God has given us the ability to work, we should be faithful servants diligently work so that we can help others.

##### ***Ephesians 4:28***

*He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.*

We should be faithful to use whatever God has given us: the advantage of a good family background or education, material resources, intelligence or physical ability, time, or spiritual gifts. Everything we have is a gift from God. His intention is that we put what He has given us to good use. We should carefully consider how to best use our blessings to build His church and bless others.

##### ***Ephesians 5:15-16***

*Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.*

#### **5. God multiplies what we give**

When we give in faith, God will bless what we have given and multiply it. In the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, God gave even more talents to the faithful servants.

##### ***Matthew 25:29***

*To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. (NLT)*

Or, take for example the young boy who offered up his lunch to Jesus' disciples. Jesus used those five loaves and two fish to feed five thousand men, besides women and children! It's not the amount that we give, but the heart that we give with. We should not let our seemingly small resources or abilities stop us from serving God zealously.

## **6. Giving is a test of our hearts**

Money represents our life because we must spend our time and energy to earn it. Jesus said in Matthew 6 that when we store up our treasure in heaven, we demonstrate that our hearts are invested in heaven not in this world.

### ***Matthew 6:19-21***

*"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

The amount that we give is not important. Jesus commended the widow in Luke 21 because she gave all that she had, even though she only put two pennies into the temple treasury.

### ***Luke 21:1-4***

*As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."*

Through her giving, this woman demonstrated that her heart was wholly invested in heaven. God does not honor the absolute amount that we give; He looks into our hearts and discerns the faith and motives behind our giving. He wants to see that we trust Him more than our bank accounts and desire to see His kingdom expand more than material things.

In the Old Testament, God made many stipulations about how the Israelites were to give. These requirements teach us about the heart attitude we should have when we give. For example, God asked for the first harvests of the Israelites' crops and the firstborn of their herds (see Deuteronomy 26:1-15). These requirements signify three things:

1. The Israelites should trust God to provide them with an abundant yield from their harvest and herds. By giving the first crop that was ripe, or the firstborn of every cow or ewe, the Israelites reminded themselves that everything they produced was from God. They only gave back to Him a token of what was due Him.
2. The Israelites should put God before gratifying their own desires. By giving to God the first yields of their work, they demonstrated that He was a priority in their lives.

3. God required the Israelites to give the best to Him. The Israelites were not to give God the leftovers. They were not to sacrifice any animal that was maimed or sick.

We can apply these lessons to ourselves when we give. Do we trust God to provide us with all good things? Do we acknowledge that everything we have comes from Him? Do we put His Kingdom first before our own desires? Do we give God the best of what we have, or do we give Him what is left over?

## **Discussion Questions**

1. Are you challenged to give more to God? In what area: finances, time, abilities, etc.?
2. If you were a rich landowner in ancient Israel, would you entrust your riches to a lazy and foolish steward or a wise and faithful steward? What does this tell you about Christian stewardship?
3. What can you give to God that will make the most impact for His kingdom?

# Lesson 8: Evangelism, Part 1

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## Introduction

The primary purpose of God’s church, including New Hope International Church, is to spread the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. This message is called the *evangel* or *gospel*, which means “good news” in Greek and Old English, respectively. The good news is the message that God sent His Son Jesus to die and pay the penalty for our sin. Jesus made a way for us to have a relationship with God again.

## Discussion question

How would you explain the gospel to someone who had never heard of Christianity before?

## The Essence of the Gospel

The essence of the gospel is salvation. Primarily, this is a spiritual salvation because we are primarily spiritual beings. But it also includes salvation from mental and physical sickness. Jesus came to set us free from the ill effects of sin.

### *Isaiah 61:1*

*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,  
because the LORD has anointed me  
to preach good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim freedom for the captives  
and release from darkness for the prisoners*

For people to accept the gospel, they need to recognize their need to be saved from the effects of sin by Jesus. It is not necessary for people to understand the details of the gospel at the time of their salvation—they only need to understand their need of Jesus. You could compare it to a drowning person who grabs hold of a life ring that is thrown to them. They don’t need to know the color and material of the device—all they do is grab hold.

For example, the criminal crucified at the side of Jesus simply acknowledged He was God and asked to be remembered when Jesus ascended to heaven. The Bible never says that this criminal knew the details of the gospel. But He knew enough.

### *Luke 23:39-43*

*One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, “So you’re the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you’re at it!”*

*But the other criminal protested, “Don’t you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn’t done anything wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.”*

*And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."(NLT)*

The Bible promises that everyone who believes in their heart and confesses with their mouth will be saved.

### ***Romans 10:9-10, 13***

*If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. ... For "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (NLT)*

Even though it is very simple for people to believe and be saved, it is still important for people to understand the gospel message when they can. The book of Acts shows Peter and Paul explaining the gospel message to people before they make a decision to be saved. Christians should know the basics of the gospel to effectively evangelize. In essence, the gospel answers three questions:

- Who is God?
- Who is man?
- What is the plan of salvation?

If we have a good understanding of these three things, we will be able to explain the gospel to others.

## **Who is God?**

God is the Creator of the entire universe. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and present everywhere. He is outside of the boundaries of time—the Bible describes Him as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end. There are three characteristics of God's personality:

1. **God is holy.** No one is more righteous than God. If sin is darkness, then God is light. No sin can exist in His presence just like no darkness can remain in the presence of full light. (Leviticus 19:1-2)
2. **God is just.** God is the true arbiter of right and wrong. When people judge, they look at the outward appearance and judge according to their best knowledge. But when God judges, He looks into people's hearts and judges them according His own perfect standard. God Himself is the standard of righteousness. (1 Samuel 16:7, Romans 3:25, Acts 17:31)
3. **God is loving.** The Bible says that God is love. His love is defined in 1 Corinthians 13 and is for all people. (1 Corinthians 13:4-6)

## **Who is man?**

People are created by God to have a relationship with Him. But we are separated from God by our sin.

1. **Man is created in God's image.** We are unique among animals. We have a moral conscience, an appreciation for beauty, artistic abilities, and a sense of eternity.

All these characteristics are evidence that we are created in God's image. God gave us a free will so that we could love Him. (Genesis 1:27, Ecclesiastes 3:11)

- 2. Man is sinful.** Even though we are created in God's image, we inherited a sinful nature and are slaves to sin. The Bible says that Adam was created perfect and sinless, but that he rebelled against God. We inherited that sinful nature so that we are inclined toward sin even from birth. Although we can do some good in comparison to other people, nothing we do can be considered good measured against the perfect, holy standard of God. Furthermore, we all sin in some ways and therefore rebel against God. Therefore, we deserve the eternal punishment that is reserved for those who are in rebellion against God and break His perfect law. (Romans 3:10-12, 23, 6:23; Isaiah 53:6, 1 John 1:8)

## **What is the plan of salvation?**

God made a plan to restore His relationship with people. His plan is the only way to salvation, and is revealed to us by Him through His Bible and the Holy Spirit. The plan of salvation centers around the person and work of Jesus Christ.

**Jesus is the perfect sacrifice.** God sent His Son Jesus to die as a payment for our sin. A good way to explain this is through the story of the Passover lamb whose blood saved the Israelite families from the Angel of Death. Jesus is called the Lamb of God because His blood saves us.

### ***John 1:29***

*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

Only a perfect sacrifice would be able to take away people's sins. Jesus was fully God and so could live a perfect life, completely without sin. At the same time, Jesus was fully human, so that he was tempted as we are and suffered as we do. Only Jesus was able to die as a perfect payment for our sin.

Just like we all became sinful because of Adam, so we can all become holy because of Jesus. The Bible says that Jesus is like a second Adam, and that, just like we inherited a sin nature from Adam, we can inherit His righteousness when we are born again as Christians.

### ***Romans 5:19***

*For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.*

**Jesus is the only way.** All other world religions depend on people *earning* God's forgiveness—Christianity is the only religion that teaches people cannot earn their own salvation. Only Christianity offers a way to deal with sin completely—through faith in the saving work of Jesus. At New Hope International Church, we believe people must confess Jesus as their Lord and Savior in order to be saved. We do not believe that other religions will also lead to God (that is called *universalism*, and it is a heresy).

**John 14:6**

*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

Instead of depending on their own righteousness, Christians believe salvation is completely by grace, through faith. It is by grace because it is completely unmerited on our part—all the work has been done by Jesus and not by us. We cannot take any credit for our salvation. It is through faith because we trust in Jesus alone as our Savior. We believe His atoning sacrifice is sufficient to pay for all our sins.

**Ephesians 2:8**

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*

**Conclusion**

The main purpose of the church is to spread the gospel, or the good news of God. Although it is easy for people to be saved, it is important that we understand the details of the gospel. We should understand how the gospel answers three questions: Who is God? Who is man? And, What is the plan of salvation?

**Discussion Questions**

1. What is necessary for people to believe in order to be saved?
2. Name some characteristics of God.
3. What is one thing you learned about human beings?
4. Why is Christianity different than other religions?

# Lesson 9: Evangelism, Part 2

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## Introduction

Evangelism is the main task of the church. Every member of New Hope International Church should be involved in evangelism in some way.

## Discussion question

What are the different ways that you can be involved in evangelism in the church?

## The Nature of Our Evangelism

Our church believes that every member should be involved in evangelism in some manner. The heart of God is such that His foremost priority is to seek and save the lost. When Jesus saw the crowds of people that came to see Him, His heart was moved to compassion for them, and He asked the disciples to pray for more Christian workers.

### ***Matthew 9:36-38***

*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”*

The basic problem that Jesus saw is still present today—people living apart from God and subject to the spiritual and physical effects of sin. Therefore, there is still a need for workers to be sent out to God’s harvest field to seek and save the lost. In our church, we believe that everyone can play some role as a worker in God’s harvest. Even if we are not specially gifted as an evangelist, we still are charged to carry out the work of an evangelist. This was Paul’s charge to Timothy, a young pastor, that he carry out the work of an evangelist.

### ***2 Timothy 4:5***

*But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*

There are different types of evangelism depicted in the Bible.

## ***Personal evangelism***

Personal evangelism is informal and occurs between individuals or groups of people. The Bible is full of examples of personal evangelism. There are two types of personal evangelism described in the Bible: relational and impromptu. The difference is that relational evangelism is based on people’s relationships with one another, whereas impromptu evangelism is spontaneous and not based on prior relationship.

## 1. Relational evangelism

Relational evangelism is where the people involved know one another already. People are more willing to listen to the gospel from someone they know than from a stranger. For example, when Andrew found out about Jesus, he shared the news with his brother, Simon Peter. When Philip meets Jesus, he goes and tells Nathaniel.

### ***John 1:40-45***

*Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).*

*The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."*

We practice relational evangelism in our church in the caregroups, where we form relationships with people and introduce them to Jesus. Oftentimes, when one person becomes a Christian, they will bring others in their circle of relationships—classmates, friends, and family—to know Jesus, just like Andrew and Philip did.

Another example of relational evangelism is Matthew, who hosted a party where he invited all his unsaved friends to meet Jesus. We should follow this good example in our caregroups by often hosting parties and other events where we can share the gospel with our unsaved friends.

### ***Matthew 9:9-10***

*As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples.*

Relational evangelism is very powerful. Most Christians are saved in part because of relational evangelism. However, it also requires a lot of commitment on the part of the believer. Sometimes it is very easy for a Christian to gradually get wrapped up in church activities so that they have no more time for relational evangelism. We should always be conscious of the need to share God's love with people that we know, and many times this requires that we make a sacrifice of time and effort. We should look for opportunities to show God's love with actions and not only words. For example, we can visit people, invite them to dinner, or give them help when they need it, such as helping them move or counseling them during hardship.

## 2. Impromptu evangelism

Another type of personal evangelism is impromptu evangelism where the people involved do not have previous relationships. A good example of this is found in Acts 8:26-39, where the Spirit of God led Philip to share the good news with an Ethiopian eunuch on the road to Gaza. We should be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit to share the gospel with people that we meet throughout the day—at the bus stop, in class, at work, at the park, on a plane, or at the shopping mall.

We can see another excellent example of impromptu evangelism when Jesus shared the good news with the Samaritan woman at the well. Even though Jesus was very tired and hungry, he felt that doing God's work was even more important (John 4:34). Read how Jesus approached this woman in a non-confrontational manner, presented the gospel in a way that was relevant to her, and relied on the power of the Holy Spirit to give Him insight into this woman's life. After Jesus spoke to her, she shared her testimony with her friends and neighbors, and eventually many people met Jesus and believed in Him as their Savior.

### *John 4:4-18, 28-30, 39-42*

Jesus broke many social conventions when sharing the gospel with this Samaritan woman, and we may also feel that we are being impolite or “politically incorrect” to share the gospel with strangers. However, the same Holy Spirit that was with Jesus is now with us. The important thing is to listen to the Holy Spirit and obey Him. We should be His workers here on earth to seek and save the lost. Who knows how many people may be saved when we obey Him?

### **Mass evangelism**

The Bible also records examples of mass evangelism, where crowds of people listened to a preacher's message or witnessed a miracle (usually the two came together) and believed in the good news as a result. On Pentecost, Peter spoke to a crowd of Jews gathered in Jerusalem from all over the world. The Bible says that 3,000 people responded to his message.

### **Acts 2:36-41**

*"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*

Not long after, Peter and John miraculously healed a cripple and then preached Jesus to the crowd. The Bible says that thousands of people responded to the message.

**Acts 3:9-10, 4:4**

*When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him ... But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.*

We can practice mass evangelism in our church by hosting evangelistic outreaches and events in the community, using online video, broadcasting on television or radio, or distributing evangelistic literature. Every church service is also a potential opportunity for mass evangelism if there are large numbers of nonbelievers present.

**The role of the Holy Spirit in evangelism**

Jesus commissioned Christians to evangelize to their family, friends, community, nation, and the entire world. Whenever God calls someone to do something, he also gives them the ability to complete it. Jesus gave us the authority to spread God's message of salvation (Matthew 28:20) and also the power to do so (Acts 1:8).

Whenever we preach the gospel and yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, we can be confident that God is working to accomplish His purposes. We may not understand how, but we trust that God's power is at work.

**Mark 4:26-29**

*He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."*

**1 Corinthians 3:6-7, 9**

*I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow ... For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.*

Paul understood that it was only God could produce spiritual fruit. We are God's co-workers and are used by Him to do His work. When we tell people about Jesus on God's behalf, we should have confidence that God is working with us. When we are responsible to do our part, He will be responsible for producing the fruit.

God often authenticates gospel preaching through signs and wonders performed by the anointing of the Holy Spirit on believers. Jesus preached and healed at the same time—many people believed in His message because of the miracles they saw. Moreover, many people that experienced deliverance from sickness or demonic oppression acknowledged Jesus as their Lord and Savior even without explicit preaching. The Bible confirms that signs and wonders authenticate and empower the preaching of the gospel.

**Mark 16:15-18**

*He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be*

*condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."*

***Hebrews 2:3-4***

*... how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.*

Although we should try to explain the gospel message as clearly as possible, we need to realize that people are converted by the power of God and not by wise or persuasive words. Similarly, people are not converted by amusing or inspiring messages, talented worship singers, or extravagant service productions. None of these things are wrong in themselves, but there is a danger that we might falsely think these things will convert people. Instead, we should be like the Apostle Paul, who relied entirely on the power of the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel.

***1 Corinthians 2:1-5***

*When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.*

The Holy Spirit works in Christians when they are evangelizing. In the book of Acts, God empowered the disciples to preach boldly.

***Acts 4:31***

*After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.*

The Holy Spirit also works in the hearts of people we are evangelizing to by convincing them of their guilt and bringing them to repentance.

***Acts 2:37***

*When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"*

**John 16:8**

*When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment ...*

**Discussion Questions**

1. How do you feel about evangelizing to people?
2. What is one thing that you learned about evangelism from this lesson?
3. What are the different types of evangelism?
4. When we preach the gospel on behalf of Jesus, what does the Bible promise?
5. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelism?

# Lesson 10: Evangelism, Part 3

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## Introduction

Because God commanded us to go and evangelize the entire world, we have to think about how we can do this practically. We should look at the example of the early church shown in the New Testament.

## Discussion question

Why do you think Christianity spread so quickly in the first century?

## God's Plan for World Evangelization

Just before Jesus ascended to heaven, He commanded His disciples to go and make disciples of people from every nation. This command is called the Great Commission. It communicates the heart of God for the entire world, not just a specific people.

The reason why Jesus came to earth was to make the good news possible by paying for our sin. However, Jesus did not stay to tell the world about what He had done. Instead, He established the church and sent His Holy Spirit to help the church spread the good news. The Bible records Jesus' last instructions to the church in three places: Mark 16, Matthew 28, and Acts 1. In each of these places, Jesus commands the church to evangelize the entire world, and promises that His Holy Spirit will empower them.

### **Mark 16:15-20**

*And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone. Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned. These miraculous signs will accompany those who believe: They will cast out demons in my name, and they will speak in new languages. They will be able to handle snakes with safety, and if they drink anything poisonous, it won't hurt them. They will be able to place their hands on the sick, and they will be healed."*

*When the Lord Jesus had finished talking with them, he was taken up into heaven and sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand. And the disciples went everywhere and preached, and the Lord worked through them, confirming what they said by many miraculous signs. (NLT)*

### **Matthew 28:18-20**

*Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (NLT)*

### **Acts 1:4-8**

*On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

In all three of these scriptures, Jesus commands all the disciples that come after Him (including us) to go and evangelize the entire world. In each of these Scriptures, there is the assurance that God will be with us, confirming what we preach with signs and wonders.

## **1. How can we evangelize the entire world?**

How can we put this command into practice? In Acts 1:8, there is an indication of the strategy that Jesus intended for His disciples to use in world evangelization. In this verse, Jesus tells the disciples to start in their local community, then expand their efforts to the surrounding countryside, and eventually have the goal of reaching the entire world.

In the New Testament, we can see this is the approach that the apostles Paul and Barnabas took. They went to major cities in each province, preached the good news, gathered the converts into churches, and then helped those churches grow and mature. Their method was so effective that they were rightly accused of affecting the entire world!

### **Acts 17:5-6**

*But the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting: “These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here ...”*

## **2. Church-planting is the New Testament model for world evangelization**

We believe the story of the New Testament church reveals principles that we can use today. It's important to note that for Paul, simply preaching the gospel and saving souls was not enough. He did not consider his job complete until he had helped to establish local churches. He made sure to form the disciples together in groups and to appoint elders over the churches in each city.

### **Acts 14:21-23**

*After preaching the Good News in Derbe and making many disciples, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia, where they strengthened the believers. They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that we must suffer many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God. Paul and Barnabas also appointed*

*elders in every church. With prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. (NLT)*

**Titus 1:5**

*The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.*

Paul understood that short-term missions produce converts, but only churches produce disciples. Paul wanted to make disciples for Jesus who would be trained and multiplied. When they were ready, the disciples in these churches would be sent out to evangelize the regions that surrounded them, just like Jesus instructed the Jerusalem church to evangelize Judea and Samaria. In turn, these disciples would establish local churches wherever they went. In this way, the gospel would spread over entire nations, and eventually over the entire world. From church history, we know that within 100 years, the gospel had spread throughout the Roman Empire and possibly reaching even India.

In every place where the Holy Spirit led them, the early disciples established churches. This type of organic, Spirit-led church-planting was critical in the establishment of the early church. It did not depend on government support, seminaries, or money. Early Christians understood that a church did not need many resources to start—it just needed Spirit-led people who shared the gospel and established new churches wherever they went.

### **3. Examples of church planting in the Bible**

There are many examples of Christians planting churches in the New Testament. When the disciples in Jerusalem faced severe persecution, some of them escaped to Antioch in Syria and started a local church in that city. This church became a base for many other church-planting missions.

**Acts 11:19-21, 25-26**

*Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.*

*Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.*

Aquila and Priscilla are another good example of church-planting in the Bible. When Paul met Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth, he started a church together with him. Later, when he travelled to Ephesus for the first time, Aquila and Priscilla accompanied him and then stayed in that important city. Paul himself only stayed for a short time, but Aquila and Priscilla applied what they had learned about planting a church in Corinth to their new situation in Ephesus.

***Acts 18:2-3, 18-19***

*There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.*

*Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because of a vow he had taken. They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.*

According to these verses, Paul only stayed in Ephesus for a short time, but trusted Aquila and Priscilla to pioneer a new church in that important city. Sometime later, on Paul's third missionary journey, he visits Ephesus and stays for a longer period. By this time, Aquila and Priscilla have established a church and he says that there is "a great door for effective work" open to him.

***1 Corinthians 16:8-9, 19***

*But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.*

*The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.*

We can see from these examples that normal people (even tentmakers!) can help to plant churches through various circumstances in their life. The people who started the church in Antioch were running away from persecution in Jerusalem, and then they started sharing Jesus with their friends and neighbors. Aquila and Priscilla were in a similar situation after being expelled from Rome and meeting Paul. They simply opened their lives to what opportunities God had for them.

**4. The local church is the primary vehicle for world evangelism**

Like Paul, we at New Hope International Church believe that planting churches is an essential part of fulfilling the Great Commission. The local church is the primary vehicle for bringing the good news to the world. There are many parachurch organizations that do missions work and partner with local churches. These organizations do important work and their work is needed at this time. But each local church should also realize their primary purpose is to help fulfill the Great Commission.

***Ephesians 3:10-11***

*His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Local churches are vital to world evangelization. Local churches take care of new believers, train disciples, preserve the right doctrine, and send apostles. If we do not

understand the critical role of the local church in world evangelization, then we may think that we can evangelize the world only through radio or television programs, or by holding concerts and other large gatherings, or through short-term missions. All of these things are good, but they cannot be done without the local church.

At New Hope International Church, we want to help establish new local churches all over the world. We believe it is not enough to simply get people saved—they need a spiritual family in which they can grow, become strong disciples, and go out and plant more churches. We believe this is God’s method for world evangelism—making disciples and establishing local churches.

## **Discussion Questions**

1. Please share one thing you learned through this lesson.
2. Why do you think church-planting is important for world evangelization?
3. How do you think a church could be planted?
4. Would you like to help to plant a church one day? If so, what are some things that you need to do to prepare yourself?

# Lesson 11: The Church Is a Family

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## Introduction

Just like every human baby should be placed in a natural family, Christians should join a local church where they can be part of God's family. At New Hope International Church, we desire to give holistic care to its members. We believe that the church functions like a family in this regard. We also want to bring people outside into God's family. This lesson shows how we should function as part of God's family.

## Discussion question

In what ways is the church like a family?

### 1. Commit to our Lord Jesus and to one another

The Bible says that the church is the body of Christ. If we love Jesus, then we will love the church, which is His body. We should commit to a local church that teaches correct Christian doctrine and where members are actively putting Jesus commands and teachings into practice. No one can love the universal church without loving the local church first. Christians should be attached to the local church as a way to attach themselves to the universal church.

#### ***Ephesians 5:23***

*For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. (NLT)*

Commitment is necessary for deep relationships where we can mature and grow. Members of the church family need to commit to one another if we want to mature and grow spiritually. We all need to commit ourselves to Jesus first, and then based on that commitment, we commit ourselves to our brothers and sisters. Commitment means: "I am going to pursue your best interests not because I feel like it, but because I make a decision to." Commitment in the church means we are willing to sacrifice for the benefit of our brothers and sisters. For example, you may not feel like going to caregroup because everyone is boring and the group is studying lessons about basic Christianity. But you go because you are committed to your brothers and sisters.

God demonstrated His commitment for us by sending His Son Jesus to die for our sins on the cross. Because of this, John says we ought to love one another with the same type of unselfish love.

#### ***1 John 4:9-11***

*This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

## **2. Receive training and get equipped**

The church is a place of nurturing and equipping. Ephesians 4 says the five-fold ministries are given to the church to equip and build people up so that they can be mature and do God's work. Therefore, we should see the church as a place where we all receive training and get equipped to do God's work. We should not see God's work as only the leaders' responsibility.

### ***Ephesians 4:11-13***

*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

## **3. Take responsibility for God's work**

When we join the church family, we should join wholeheartedly in the vision of that church and take responsibility for doing the work of God. We should not ignore something that needs to be done and leave it for others to do. We should treat the church like our own home, not like a hotel. We should treat other members of the church like our brothers and sisters, not like strangers. The church is our spiritual family and we must take responsibility for the welfare and work of the family.

### ***Romans 12:10-11***

*Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. (NLT)*

We should decide what we can contribute based on the church's need and our ability. We should not only do things that we like or that we are good at—we should also recognize the needs of the church. On the other hand, we should also look for opportunities to contribute to the church family our own gifts that God has given us.

### ***1 Peter 4:10***

*God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. (NLT)*

## **4. Maintain close relationships with one another**

Family members should share the joys and sufferings of each other. In the same way, we should have close relationships with our brothers and sisters in the church so that we share the ups and downs of our lives together.

### ***Romans 12:15***

*Rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with those who mourn.*

We can maintain close relationships with our brothers and sisters by joining caregroups. One reason caregroups are important to church life is because they bring the church into our homes. Home fellowship is very important. In fact, the early Christians

frequently met in people's homes and even today there are many churches that start in homes and continue to meet in homes. New Hope International Church started in Ps. Lao and Ps. Da's home. In the early church, they celebrated "love feasts" in homes. This was their communion, or breaking of bread. We can experience close relationships with one another through caregroups in people's homes.

***Acts 2:42,46-47***

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ... Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

## **5. Follow the example of godly leaders**

We should follow the examples of godly leaders and submit to their God-given authority for our own benefit, just as children submit to their parents' authority for their own benefit. We should allow ourselves to be trained by our leaders.

***Hebrews 13:7, 17***

*Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith ... Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit. (NLT)*

At the same time, we should realize that God has given us a responsibility to take care of younger believers and to serve as an example for them as well. We all have some level of pastoral responsibility in the church.

***1 Peter 5:2-3***

*Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example. (NLT)*

## **6. Support the church financially**

We should gladly give one tenth of our income (a tithe) to the church to help support the ministry of the church. God promises to bless us when we make His work a priority by giving faithfully to the church instead of spending that money on other things.

***Malachi 3:10***

*Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.*

## **7. Show hospitality to those in the church and outside**

We should show hospitality to one another in the church. That is why our caregroups are often located in people's homes. We should welcome everyone in the church as family—there should not be exclusiveness in God's family.

### ***Romans 12:13***

*Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*

In the same way, we should be welcoming and hospitable to those outside the church, realizing that God's heart is for His lost sheep. Our spiritual family is different from the natural family in that we seek to bring as many as would come into our spiritual family. Our heart should be that of our Father God, which is to seek and save the lost. We want everyone to come and know our heavenly Father.

Practically, we should go outside our comfort zone and reach out to those who need God's love and are outside the church. We should not discriminate according to the basis of financial, social, ethnic, or cultural differences.

### ***Galatians 3:28***

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

## **Conclusion**

The church is like God's family, with fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters. We all are members of God's family and committed to each other on that basis. When we become part of God's family, we receive benefits and responsibilities.

## **Discussion Questions**

1. Please share one thing you learned from this lesson.
2. What is one benefit you receive as part of God's family?
3. What is one responsibility you have as part of God's family?
4. Do you have a special gift or ability that you can contribute to God's family?

# Lesson 12: The Value of Teamwork

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## Introduction

God created people to be dependent on one another. This is especially true in His church. The Bible says that the church is like a body where every individual part is dependent on the others.

### ***Romans 12:4-8***

*Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.*

*In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly. (NLT)*

At New Hope International Church, we want to practice teamwork in accordance with the Bible. We believe that by recognizing and accepting one another's gifts, we will be able to fulfill the purposes that God has for our church. This lesson teaches the value of teamwork according to the Bible.

## Discussion question

Why do you think teamwork is valuable?

### **1. Teamwork is required for some tasks**

God created us to do work together with others—each of us has a need for companions because we are limited physically, intellectually, and spiritually.

### ***Genesis 2:18***

*Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him." (NLT)*

Adam could not fill the earth and subdue it by himself; he needed his wife, Eve. In the same way, we need others to fulfill some things that God calls us to do.

In the church, God has given each of us unique gifts and abilities. We should not think that we alone have everything that is required for the church. Only one person in history ever had all the gifts of the Holy Spirit: Jesus Christ. We each reflect separate aspects of God's spiritual gifts to the church.

The Apostle Paul took time to explain what this meant for how people ought to treat each other in the church. He used the analogy of a body to teach this lesson.

### ***1 Corinthians 12:4-6, 12-13***

*There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us ...*

*... The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit. (NLT)*

We each have unique backgrounds, experiences, and skills. We may be from Thailand, China, Mexico, or America, but we all share the same Spirit of God that unites us in His body.

### ***1 Corinthians 12:14-27***

*Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body? If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?*

*But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. How strange a body would be if it had only one part! Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you."*

*In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.*

*All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it. (NLT)*

Paul says that we all are necessary to function as the body of Jesus Christ. Just as no part of our physical body is unimportant, no person in the church is unimportant or expendable. We all have something to contribute. Therefore, we should respect each other and treat each other with care.

## **2. God calls us to do things corporately, not just individually**

When God deals with people, He deals with them corporately and not just individually. When we join the church, we join a corporate body that God deals with together.

For example, in Revelation chapter two and three, Jesus sent a unique message to each of the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia (which is in modern-day Turkey). In each of these letters, Jesus spoke to the entire church as a single entity. In New Hope International Church, we believe that God views our church as a corporate body and that we are accountable to Him like the seven churches in Revelations chapters two and three.

God expects us to work together as a united group with a common spirit and purpose.

***Philippians 1:27***

*Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel ...*

### **3. The Bible says that two are better than one**

Working as a team is far superior to working alone.

***Ecclesiastes 4:9-12***

*Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken. (NLT)*

We should help our brothers and sisters in the church, and not ignore their problems. If someone is discouraged, we should think how we can encourage them. We should consider the needs of others as well as ourselves. We should not only think about what is good for our caregroup, but also what is good for the entire church. This mutual care and concern is crucial to our corporate success.

### **4. Teamwork multiplies our efforts**

The Bible shows that when people work together for a common purpose, the result is more than the sum of their individual contributions. Teamwork multiplies our productivity and success.

***Leviticus 26:8***

*Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand! All your enemies will fall beneath your sword.*

In Leviticus 26, God promises to multiply the Israelites' success. It is interesting to notice that the return on their effort is increased with greater teamwork. Five soldiers chasing one hundred is a 1:20 ratio, but one hundred chasing ten thousand is a 1:100 ratio. If we follow God's will, share a common vision, care for one another, and respect each others' roles, then God will multiply the product of our teamwork.

Discipleship is one another way of multiplying our efforts through teamwork. The Bible says that Jesus had many disciples at different levels. At the broadest level, there were the 500 people who saw Him ascend into heaven. Then, there were the 12 disciples that Jesus chose at the beginning of His ministry. Finally, Jesus chose Peter, James, and John as His closest disciples.

Why did Jesus spend all this time making disciples? Because He knew the impact of His ministry would be multiplied through His disciples.

### ***Matthew 28:18-20***

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

When Jesus went up to heaven, He left His disciples the Great Commission to work as a team and continue making disciples throughout the whole earth. We are the product of His multiplied effort.

Jesus' example of making disciples teaches us an important lesson: We should not measure our success in ministry by the amount of work we can do individually, but rather by the people we leave behind who can function as well as or better than ourselves. We should always try to train people to do the things we are doing so that the work of God can grow and move on. We should not remain doing the same thing year after year. We should remember that God will multiply our efforts through discipleship.

## **EXAMPLES OF SUCCESS IN TEAMWORK**

### **Towel of Babel**

Even without God, the principle of teamwork yields results. Whenever people apply God's principles they get God's blessing. Babel is a good example of how people applied the principle of unity in teamwork, making them dangerously effective!

### ***Genesis 11:6***

*"Look!" he said. "The people are united, and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them!" (NLT)*

### **Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Hur**

Moses was interceding for God's people, and Aaron and Hur held his hands up while Joshua fought the battle. Everyone played a unique role for a common purpose. By cooperating, they won a great victory over the Amalekites.

### ***Exodus 17:11-13***

*As long as Moses held up the staff in his hand, the Israelites had the advantage. But whenever he dropped his hand, the Amalekites gained the advantage. Moses' arms soon became so tired he could no longer hold them up. So Aaron and Hur found a stone for him to sit on. Then they stood on each side of Moses, holding up his hands. So his hands*

*held steady until sunset. As a result, Joshua overwhelmed the army of Amalek in battle. (NLT)*

### **Moses and seventy elders**

Moses served as judge but needed the help of the elders of Israel. The difficult cases they delegated to Moses, while the simple ones they decided among themselves. Their team effort ensured that all the people were well looked after.

#### ***Exodus 18:24-26***

*Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. They served as judges for the people at all times. The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves.*

### **Nehemiah and the Israelites**

Nehemiah and the Israelites worked together to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem after they returned from exile in Babylon. The Bible says that every family played a part in the defense of the city and rebuilding the walls, even in the face of severe opposition.

#### ***Nehemiah 2:17-18***

*But now I said to them, "You know very well what trouble we are in. Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire. Let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and end this disgrace!" Then I told them about how the gracious hand of God had been on me, and about my conversation with the king. They replied at once, "Yes, let's rebuild the wall!" So they began the good work. (NLT)*

### **The disciples of Jesus**

Jesus sent the disciples out to do ministry in pairs. He did not send them out alone. We should not aim to do Christian ministry by ourselves, although that might be necessary sometimes. Whenever possible, we should seek Christian companions and coworkers for accountability and to share the work.

#### ***Mark 6:7***

*And he called his twelve disciples together and began sending them out two by two, giving them authority to cast out evil spirits. (NLT)*

### **Paul and his coworkers**

Paul and his coworkers worked together with the same purpose and mind. Paul knew that he could trust his coworkers to faithfully represent their joint ministry even when he was not with them. Sometimes, we may be required to work apart from one another, but we can still work as a team for the same purpose and with the same spirit.

#### ***2 Corinthians 12:17-18***

*Did I exploit you through any of the men I sent you? I urged Titus to go to you and I sent our brother with him. Titus did not exploit you, did he? Did we not act in the same spirit and follow the same course?*

## **Conclusion**

By working in a team, we are able to multiply the results of our efforts. Working in a team is always better than one person doing everything on their own. We see greater results, learn from one another, draw encouragement from one another, and protect one another from mistakes.

It is crucial that we learn the value of teamwork. The success of our church depends on our ability to work together as a team. We should pray to ask God to help us flow together in unity and for each one of us to faithfully play our part.

## **Discussion questions**

1. What is one thing you learned from this lesson?
2. What are some things at church that require people to work together in teams?
3. Why does God want us to work together in teams?

# Lesson 13: Unity Is the Key to Teamwork

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## Introduction

Unity is essential for effective teamwork. Our church will not achieve its goals if we lack unity. We must be careful to cultivate unity in the church. Building unity takes deliberate effort on everyone's part. It also requires us to submit ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit who helps to create God-centered unity. We must be aware of what builds unity and what tears down unity. To help build unity, each person must:

- Put the purpose of the team ahead of his or her purposes.
- Share a common passion to make disciples and build glorious churches, full of the fire of God.
- Have a common concern for lost souls.
- Prefer others over ourselves and look out for the interests of other people on the team.
- Yield to the Holy Spirit and be cleansed from wrong attitudes by the fire of God.
- Recognize and respect the different gifts that God has given to each of us.

### ***Psalm 133:1-3***

*How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.*

## Discussion question

What are the key factors that create unity in a team? What brings disunity?

### **1. A common goal**

Having a common goal is a prerequisite for unity on a team. Any group of people must first agree on their goal before they can start working together.

### ***Amos 3:3***

*Can two people walk together without agreeing on the direction? (NLT)*

If we can choose who to work with, the most important criteria should be whether those people share our goals or not. Having a common goal is more important to unity than how gifted a person is, how zealous they are, or even how much we like them as a person. Those other things are nice, but we cannot base our teamwork on those things. The foundation of our teamwork is a common goal that we agree on.

In our church, we need to be careful about who we allow to become leaders. We must be careful to choose people who share our values and church vision of making disciples and building glorious churches all over the world. If we allow people to rise up

to become leaders who do not share our common heart and vision, we risk having a split in the church in the future.

This principle of having a common goal is true in the church, but it is also true in other areas as well. For example, we need to choose a spouse that agrees with us in the goal of serving God wholeheartedly. Otherwise, our marriage will face turmoil in the future. Paul warned the Corinthians to be careful about entering into commitments—such as marriage or business ventures—with unbelievers because the Corinthians could not expect to share common goals with unbelieving partners.

### ***2 Corinthians 6:14***

*Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?*

To summarize, the extent that we can commit to work together as a team with others depends on the extent that we agree in our goal. If we share little in common as our goal, we have little basis for our teamwork. However, if we completely share a common goal, then we have a strong basis for teamwork.

## **2. One mind and one heart**

It is not enough to have a common goal—that is just the basis for teamwork, but it's not enough to make it work well. To be an excellent team, we must share the same heart and mind. This means we must be motivated by the same desires and work together in unison.

### ***1 Corinthians 1:10***

*I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose. (NLT)*

### ***Philippians 2:2***

*Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. (NLT)*

As we work together, we will have differences in opinion. However, God desires unity in teamwork that comes from having one heart and one mind. As a church made up of all kinds of people, how can we work together with one heart and one mind?

- 1. Common heart desire.** First, we must look at the example of Jesus in the Bible. By examining what He said and did, we can find a basis for like-mindedness. For example, we read in the Bible that Jesus died for the sake of the church and even now is building up the church as a perfect bride for Himself (Acts 20:28, Ephesians 5:25-27). Therefore, we should have a common passion to build glorious churches that are ready for the coming of our Lord Jesus.
- 2. Cleansing by the fire of God.** Another way that we can have a united heart and mind is by being cleansed by the fire of God. When we are filled with the holy

presence of God, He burns out all the impure attitudes and desires. Instead of sinful desires, we are guided by the Holy Spirit to do the will of God.

The early church shared the same heart and mind because they were cleansed from self-interest by the fire of God. Acts 2 describes how the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples in the upper room as tongues of fire. Afterwards, the Bible describes how the growing church, cleansed by the Holy Spirit of self-centeredness, lived to build the church and obey the Great Commission that Jesus had laid down for them before He rose to heaven.

***Acts 2:42-47***

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

***Acts 4:32-33***

*All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.*

When we are united in the purposes of God with one heart and one mind, He will bless us. God blesses unity.

### **3. Humility and mutual submission**

We must be willing to lay aside our personal preferences, selfishness, and pride for the sake of unity in the church. We must be willing to yield to consensus unless it is a matter of conscience before God.

***Ephesians 5:21***

*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

To practice mutual submission, we must have humility toward one another. Being humble will help us to work together with others. Proud people often have trouble working well with others because they are unwilling to share the spotlight or submit to other people who they think are less smart than they are.

We should remember to be humble like our Lord Jesus. If we are leaders, we should be careful about giving responsibilities to proud people because it will destroy unity. A proud and capable person will be less effective in the church than a less competent but humble person who knows how to work well with others. God has grace on the humble, but resists the proud.

### ***Philippians 2:3-5***

*Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. (NLT)*

## **4. Respecting each person's ability, gift, and calling**

God made us all unique and put us together in the church body to complement one another. We may have a tendency to exaggerate our own area of interest, experience, or ability and to minimize the importance of other people's gifts and calling. If unchecked, this tendency can limit our effectiveness.

### ***Romans 12:3-6***

*Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.*

*In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. (NLT)*

We need to understand how we fit into God's overall plan and not force ourselves to the forefront. Instead of trying to make everyone else a cookie-cutter replica of ourselves, we must recognize the value of each person on our team and encourage them to excel in the ability, gift, and calling that God has for them. When we build up others and free them to function in their own ability and gift, we actually enhance our own efforts because God uses each person's strengths. We should encourage diversity of gifts and abilities, but unity in vision and purpose.

### ***1 Corinthians 12:14-21***

*Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body? If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?*

*But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. How strange a body would be if it had only one part! Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you." (NLT)*

## **5. Supporting one another**

Finally, to build unity in the church, we need to support one another as we work together. We are coworkers, brothers and sisters, and fellow soldiers in the cause of

Christ. We can show our support for one another by providing loving correction, encouragement, and patience with our brothers and sisters when they need it.

***1 Thessalonians 5:14***

*Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone. (NLT)*

We should not abandon our brothers and sisters when they stumble or fall into trouble. Instead, we should think like soldiers on the battlefield who will not leave their wounded comrades.

***Galatians 6:1-2***

*Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*

This type of loyal commitment to one another gives us confidence as we face challenges together. We know that our brothers and sisters will provide accountability and support when we need it.

## **Conclusion**

Unity is essential for successful teamwork. We must be careful to try and build up unity in the church. Each of us plays a critical role in fostering either unity or disunity in the church. We should make a deliberate effort to do the things that build unity in the church.

## **Discussion questions**

1. Please share one thing you learned from the lesson.
2. What do you appreciate about unity in the church?
3. Why do you think having a common goal is the most important basis for teamwork?
4. What are some situations in which you can support your brothers and sisters?

# Lesson 14: Teamwork and Delegation

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## Introduction

For the church to work in unity, everyone in the church must have a delegated task. The church leaders should not try to do everything themselves. Instead, leaders should delegate tasks that others can do so that more work can be accomplished.

Delegation is not assigning away tasks that are not important or unappealing. Rather, a good leader will delegate tasks that others can do well so that they can take on tasks that no one else can do.

Nehemiah and the Israelites rebuilding Jerusalem's walls provide us with a good example of teamwork and delegation. We can see how Nehemiah effectively directed the work of rebuilding the wall by delegating all the work to all the people. He assigned people tasks that interested them and put them to work together in natural groupings.

## Discussion question

Why do you think delegation is important for teamwork?

### 1. Everyone should join in the work

Nehemiah 3 describes all the people involved in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and the specific portions assigned to different groups. Reading the dozens of names listed, we have the impression that every Jew living in Jerusalem participated in the work. Altogether, Nehemiah records 75 names of people who were responsible for specific areas of the wall, but that does not include the many unnamed townspeople, priests, family members, merchants, and other people that helped rebuild the walls.

The principle we can learn from this chapter is that everyone in the church should be involved in doing the work of God. We should be able to know the assigned tasks for each committed member of the church, just as Nehemiah knew the responsibilities of each of his team members.

Sometimes, we might feel that people are not ready to take on responsibility. It may seem that the church is like a hospital where wounded and sick people go to get better. That is true—the church is a place of healing and strengthening. But, it is also like an army or other place where people are trained, equipped, and assigned work.

### ***Ephesians 4:11-12***

*Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. (NLT)*

In these verses, we can see that the role of the leaders is not to do the church work themselves, but rather to prepare everyone else to do God's work and build up the church. Church leaders need to help others to find responsibilities that are suitable to them, according to their level of maturity, ability, and interest. This requires prayerful consideration and sensitivity. We need to learn how to encourage the timid and motivate people to fulfill their calling in Christ.

### ***Acts 6:1-4, 7***

*But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.*

*So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, “We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program. And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility. Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word.”*

*So God’s message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too. (NLT)*

The early church in Jerusalem faced a serious organizational problem that was solved through effective delegation of work. The apostles recognized that they needed to delegate this important responsibility. Luke records in verse 7 that the Word of God spread and the church grew as a result of effective delegation.

Ideally, everyone in the church will be like the seven chosen to oversee the distribution of food. They were full of the Holy Spirit and God-given wisdom to solve problems. We should tackle our responsibilities with initiative and creativity, and try to complete tasks assigned to us as quickly as possible so that the work of the church will not be held up.

## **2. Delegate to small groups of people**

Besides listing all the people involved in rebuilding the walls, Nehemiah 3 also describes how these people often worked together in small groups, not just as individuals. In the church, we can work together in small groups such as caregroups to accomplish small goals that are part of the larger church goal.

Working together in small groups improves morale and helps people feel accountable to one another for their work. When we delegate, we should delegate work to small groups of people because they are more likely to get the job done than if we delegate a task only to an individual.

When forming groups, we should think about how people relate together. Ideally, all Christians should be able to work with each other, but in reality we are not perfect yet. It is a good idea to group together people who share some things in common, such as language and age. Also, we should think about people’s God-given gifts and how they fit together. We should try to group people with complimentary gifts.

## **3. Delegate according to a people’s interests and abilities**

### ***Nehemiah 3:28-30***

*Above the Horse Gate, the priests made repairs, each in front of his own house. Next to them, Zadok son of Immer made repairs opposite his house. Next to him, Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, the guard at the East Gate, made repairs. Next to him, Hananiah son of Shelemiah, and Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. Next to them, Meshullam son of Berekiah made repairs opposite his living quarters.*

Nehemiah assigned people to work on the sections of the wall opposite their homes. It is natural to think that these people would have an interest in the protection and safety of their own homes.

In the same way, we can wisely delegate responsibilities to people according to their natural interests if they flow together with what the entire church is doing. For example, people who have artistic abilities will more likely enjoy and do a good job when completing tasks that require artistic abilities. When people do things that they are interested in and competent to do, they have more motivation and confidence.

#### **4. Set leaders at each level of delegation**

##### ***Exodus 18:24-25***

*Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.*

##### ***Nehemiah 3:14-16***

*The Dung Gate was repaired by Malkijah son of Recab, ruler of the district of Beth Hakkerem. He rebuilt it and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. The Fountain Gate was repaired by Shallun son of Col-Hozeh, ruler of the district of Mizpah. He rebuilt it, roofing it over and putting its doors and bolts and bars in place. He also repaired the wall of the Pool of Siloam, by the King's Garden, as far as the steps going down from the City of David. Beyond him, Nehemiah son of Azbuk, ruler of a half-district of Beth Zur, made repairs up to a point opposite the tombs of David, as far as the artificial pool and the House of the Heroes.*

To effectively delegate large tasks, we must set leaders at each level to supervise, coach, and assist in the work. Moses set up a leadership structure that would represent him to the Israelite community. Nehemiah assigned leaders to oversee the rebuilding of large sections of the wall of Jerusalem. The church will be more successful at every task that we attempt if we have delegated leadership responsibility to the right people.

#### **5. Delegation with supervision and accountability**

Nehemiah knew the people to whom he delegated tasks and kept track of the progress they made on those assigned tasks. When we delegate responsibility, we should let people know that they are accountable to us and that we will help them if they need assistance.

##### ***Acts 14:21-23***

*They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.*

### ***Acts 15:36-37***

*Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing."*

Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every new church they established. After they delegated the responsibility of overseeing the local church to those elders, they did not consider their job done. After some time, they decided to go back and check to see how the new churches were getting along. In Paul's letters, we can see that he often sent Timothy or Titus on his behalf to check on churches under his supervision. And, when he sent Timothy or Titus to do something on his behalf, he followed up with them through letters, giving them advise and encouragement.

In the same way, we should supervise work that we delegate to others. People who receive delegated responsibility should know who they are accountable to. Supervision does not mean that we are looking to find fault with these people, but rather that we are there to help them accomplish their delegated task. We should keep track of the progress that people are making and encourage, advise, and assist as needed.

## **Conclusion**

Delegation is essential for effective teamwork. We can see many examples in the Bible where effective leaders delegated work to others. Nehemiah is a great example because he got everyone involved in the work, selected the right people for the right job, and followed up to make sure the work was getting done right.

In our church, we believe God blesses teamwork, and we want to follow biblical principles to receive that blessing, such as coming together in unity and understanding delegation. We believe that God can do great things through us as we submit to Him.

## **Discussion questions**

1. What is the primary responsibility of church leaders, according to Ephesians 4:12?
2. What are the benefits of working in small groups compared with working as individuals?
3. What are your interests and abilities? What do you have the motivation and confidence to do in the church?
4. If you have to delegate a task, what can you do to supervise and follow-up?

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