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Unit 1: Preparation to Serve

The Need for Equipping: Church Gone Fishing?

Do Christians Need This Class?

How Does the Church Take the Kingdom?

Jesus asked them, *“But who do you say that I am?”* Simon Peter answered, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God”* (Matt. 16:15-16 NKJV).

“On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it”
(Matt. 16:18 NKJV).

“Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken” (Is. 40:3-5 NKJV).

“Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness And rivers in the desert”
(Is. 43:18-19 NKJV).

The Lord God, full of majesty and glory, is about to invade planet earth with powerful revivals, awakenings, renewals, restorations, and revolutions. However, most of the church is not ready for the masses of people who will need help. In many churches, the wisdom of men and traditions of men are *“making the word of God of no effect...”* (Mark 7:13 NKJV). Future lay ministers, you are in this class to become equipped to help others, to tear down the walls of division, and to bring deliverance to the captive and sight to the spiritually blind. It is a tall order, but you have a multifaceted, glorious, all-powerful God who makes all things possible. Every New Testament Church should have signs, wonders, healings, miracles...do we? _____

Lesson 1 is a wake-up call to the church, because the church is not ready. In order to win the world, the church needs the true power and demonstration of God. There should be something going on in the church that man alone cannot do. That something should be done by the third person of the Godhead—the Holy Spirit of God. In almost all nations, people respond to and respect power. The church needs power in the pulpit and power in the pews. God wants a glorious church without spot or wrinkle (Eph. 5:27). Future lay ministers, in forty-two weeks you will be ready to minister in power. For those reading this book as a training manual in a class setting, there will be *Boot Camp Ministry* at the end of every class to help practice what is being learned and model it in a safe environment.

Has the Church Gone Fishing?

Read John 21:1-14 aloud, then re-read verse three: “*I am going fishing*” (NKJV). So, what is the tragedy here? So what? Gone fishing?

Peter lived with the God of the Universe, Jesus Christ. He ate with Him, walked with Him, camped with Him, loved Him, and ministered with Him for several years. He saw the miracles and healings. He saw the beatings, saw Him carrying the cross, saw Him crucified on the cross, and witnessed Jesus’ resurrection. Verse fourteen says this was the third time Jesus had manifested Himself to the disciples. Yet after the resurrection, Peter went back to fishing!

Body of Christ, are Christians doing the same thing—tasting the love and power of Jesus Christ and then going back to comfortable chairs and comfortable jobs? Have some decided it is easier to be a regular person than a witness for Christ? Have some denied His power? Have some said, “You are not the God I thought you were?” Is it easier to look for an earthly ruler to change things? Is it more fun to get caught up in what feels good? Is it easier to just coast into heaven?

Read John 21:15-17. Many Christians and even whole churches have “Gone Fishing.” When prayers do not get answered in the way wanted, is there a temptation to just give up? Do some hide in their comfort zones? Does rejection or discouragement stop the work of the Lord? Are some so wrapped up in selfishness that they forget to reach out to others? Does offense stop God’s work? The Lord said: “*Tend My lambs...shepherd My sheep...tend My sheep*” (John 21:15-17 NKJV).

Jesus did not come to judge us—He came to save us (Jn. 3:17)! But many reject Him. Through nature and through creation, God has shown who He is, yet men pretend not to see Him, so they won’t have to honor Him or obey His commandments. The truth is very evident—there is a God. Creation shouts that there is a God; therefore, people on this earth will be without an excuse:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things

(Rom.1:18-23 NKJV, emphasis added).

So, what are the consequences for mankind? Instead of having honor, they become dishonored. Instead of being pure, they struggle in impurities. Instead of truth, they believe lies. Instead of being human treasures, some are degraded and depraved with a reprobate mind:

Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the

lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason, God gave them up to vile passions...and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error, which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;

(Rom. 1:24-28 NKJV)

Has society given too many choices? Choice: go to church or sleep in. Choice: go to work or live off government entitlements. Choice: live together in sin or get married. Choice: kill the baby or let the baby live. Choice: be responsible and raise your child or let someone else raise the child and keep partying.

...being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them,

(Rom. 1:29-32 NKJV)

There are churches on every corner of every town and city in America; yet millions of people only have a *form of godliness* (2 Tim. 3:5), with no power, and some may not even be saved. Is the Holy Spirit running these churches? If so, where is the power and unity? Many young people have been seduced into every evil activity—alcohol, drugs, pills, premarital sex, and the occult—and adults are doing the very same thing. If the church has no power to change lives, why would people want to give up their pleasures to be bored stiff? Where is the application of the Scripture to everyday life, family, and the workplace?

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth(2 Tim. 3:1-7 NKJV).

All the while, the news media, entertainment industry, and even educational institutions mock Christianity, virginity, purity, holiness, church attendance, the Scripture, and the person of Jesus Himself. Jesus has been taken out of the market place and discussion. In most situations, if one dares allow the Scripture to shape an argument, he will be laughed off the platform. Daring to preach that homosexuality is wrong and curable through deliverance, or that a baby in the womb is a human person can result in vile persecution. The Truth:

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready

3. Recognize opportunities: Use spiritual weapons and manifestational gifts.

The Lord does not necessarily want to send a person back to college for a degree in ministry or send him to Africa. He wants to equip the layman to use His power, spiritual weapons, and giftings in an ‘as you go’ ministry. As you go, be sensitive to opportunities at school, at work, in the community, and at church. Be teachable and obedient, then reach out with the Holy Spirit anointing to help, serve, heal, deliver, set free, and prayer counsel (not counseling, but showing people how to fight using Scripture and prayer). A wise man once said, “If you see a hole, fill it...just don’t spend your time looking for the holes.” Just do what the Lord shows day by day.

4. Proclaim Jesus the Expected One, the Redeemer, Liberator, and Healer. Read Matthew 11:1-5 (NASB emphasis added). In verse three, John the Baptist asked, “*Are you the Expected One?*” and Jesus responded and said, “Go and report to John what you hear and see:

- “THE BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT”
- “the lame walk”
- “the lepers are cleansed”
- “the deaf hear”
- “the dead are raised up”
- “the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.”

5. There must be power and demonstration of signs and wonders

Can a church even be considered a New Testament church if there are no signs and wonders? The church must displace evil with good. Give God time and space to move in every meeting.

6. Make disciples. Teach the finished work of Christ (but one must still ask forgiveness).

7. Create an atmosphere for His Presence with praise and worship; demonstrate love.

8. Look beyond the four walls of the church.

The goal is to bring Jesus into the government, educational system, market place, entertainment industry, and all aspects of culture. If believers have the God of the universe, they should be the most just, brilliant, business savvy and creative humans on the earth. To show the Glory of the Lord, believers need to live up to their potential.

WAKE UP! WAKE UP! WAKE UP! A word for my country

Consider this message from President Abraham Lincoln on March 30, 1863, when he called the nation to prayer based upon 2 Chronicles 7:14:

We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us! It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness (Lincoln, March 30, 1863).

Was Honest Abe right? Have we forgotten God? _____



In *The Final Move Beyond Iraq*, New York Times Best-Selling Author Mike Evans explains: The hippies of the '60s have become the establishment against which they once railed. Even though they run the culture, the media, the educational system, the courts, the arts, and so forth, they are still self-destructing. America, the noble experiment, is under siege from the public to private sector, from mainstream Hollywood to the public schools, from Washington politics to local judges, from the arts to the sciences. A tidal wave of evil is sweeping over our nation: the self-injuring, spirit-destroying, conscious-searing practices of pornography, abortion, homosexuality, and drug and alcohol abuse are being supported as they never have been before. There is a vicious moral and spiritual war raging in the hearts and minds of Americans (Evans, p. 35).

America, the noble experiment, have we lost our moral compass? _____

William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army was concerned about Christianity in America. He said, the chief dangers that confront the coming twentieth century will be:

- “Religion without the Holy Ghost” • “Salvation without Regeneration”
- “Christianity without Christ” • “Politics without God”
- “Forgiveness without Repentance” • “Heaven without Hell”

Each concern was real then. Is each real now in the twenty-first century? Comment: _____

In the church, have reasoning and logic replaced the third person of the Trinity—Lord Holy Spirit? Have special effects, philosophy, and theatrics replaced the power and presence of the Spirit of God, the still small voice, the move of God, and the testimony of Jesus in churches?

We need to humble ourselves. There is need for the supernatural power of God at every service, prayer meeting, board meeting, choir practice, small group gathering, and meal. If we don't have the Presence, we might as well close and lock the doors. There has to be something going on in the church Comment: _____
that man cannot do alone!

The Leader's Prayer:

Father, you sent Jesus...Thank you. Jesus, You are Christ, the Expected One. Hebrews 13:8 says, *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”* Jesus, would you do the same things in your church today that you did yesterday? Father, equip us to minister to the thousands who will be coming into the church during this coming revival. Make us a lighthouse on a hill where all people can be saved from destruction. We want to be kingdom-minded and prepare for kingdom work. Just as Jesus preached the kingdom, we want to preach the kingdom. We want your people set free. We want blind eyes open. We want miracles and healings. Do not let our words fall to the ground but let them accomplish all for the furtherance of your kingdom. Equip the Saints, Lord, for your service. Build up the body of Christ, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Notes: (Used with permission. All rights reserved.)

Mike Evans, *The Final Move Beyond Iraq* (Lake Mary, FL: Front Line, A Strang Co., 2007)

Abraham Lincoln, *Proclamation 97 - Appointing a Day of National Humiliation, Fasting, and Prayer*, March 30, 1863 (Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=69891>, accessed January 25, 2015.)

Alice Smith, *Beyond the Veil*, (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, Gospel Light, 1996, 1997)

Note on Life Long Lesson:

David A. Seamands, *Healing for Damaged Emotions* (Colorado Springs, CO: David Cook, 1981)

Good books to lend to the sinner/seeker, or the new Christian:

O.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* Josh McDowell, *More than a Carpenter*

For the Pre-Christian who needs scholarly evidence:

Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* or Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*

Good Books to help with emotional healing:

Neil Anderson and Dave Park *Overcoming Negative Self-Image* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2003)

John Bevere, *The Bait of Satan* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 1994, 1997)

Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Boundaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992)

Ron Ross, *Growing Beyond Life's Hurts* (Stony Point, NC: Stony Point Christian Pub., 1990)

David A. Seamands, *Healing for Damaged Emotions* (Colorado Springs, CO: David Cook, 1981)

Mark/Patti Virkler, *Prayers that Heal the Heart* (Alacha, FL: Bridge Logos Foundation, 2001)

Glory Stories

Not to make us look good, but to make Him look good.

Prayer at the Pole...the Flag Pole, that is!

When I was a high school teacher, September was the month for an event called "Prayer at the Flag Pole" to ask God's blessing on our new school year. One year at 7:45 a.m., when many students gathered around the pole, a construction team working on a new wing of our school fired up a jack-hammer. It was unbelievably loud! I asked one of my senior girls to ask the men if they could wait thirty minutes, so we could have our September prayer.

The first man said, "Girl, time is money!" A second man said, "Absolutely not, but you can ask my foreman!" Before she had a chance to ask anyone else, the jack-hammer totally died. I believe God shut it down, and they could not get that thing started for the next thirty minutes!

It was so quiet we could hear the birds singing, and the wind rustling the grass and trees. The morning was cool and crisp, the sky was blue, and God was in His Heaven smiling down on our high school. What a God moment! Some say our story went around the world on the internet.

HOMEWORK – Due next week

Please complete this and bring to Lesson 2, 3, or 4. (Feel free to write on this sheet or type it.)

1. Give a quick outline of your life story. (Parents, birth, childhood, position in the family, youth, education, spouse, your children, geography, location, jobs, church, and so on.)

2. Tell about your salvation experience—when you received Jesus Christ as Savior.

3. Tell about your experience when you made Jesus Christ not just your Savior, but your Lord and Master, the time you truly surrendered to Jesus. Or tell about the time you were baptized in or in-filled with His Holy Spirit, by the laying on of hands.

4. How has your personal and public life changed since that time?

5. Why is God going to allow you into heaven?

6. In one word, describe your relationship with the Lord. _____

7. How do you acknowledge God in your life?

8. Child of God, you are in this class to become equipped to minister the gospel. You are already called a “*minister of reconciliation*” (2 Corinthians 5:18 NKJV). What do you want to get out of this class?

HOMEWORK – due in two months:

Every Christian should have a testimony prepared. Choose from the following: Write a two-minute testimony, a five-minute testimony, or a twenty-minute testimony. It should include highlights of your life and how Jesus changed it. You can type it or write it out on notebook paper. Store it in a plastic sheet protector and put in this notebook for safe-keeping. Be ready in season and out of season—you may go on a mission trip or you may be asked to give testimony or speak. You will have a head start with this testimony prepared. You could even type it into your smart phone or tablet, so you have it all the time.