



Radical Discipleship

Radical Discipleship

Author: *Jack Heppner*

Series editor: *Don Thiessen*

STUDENT MANUAL



Steinbach Bible College
Steinbach, Manitoba

Cover design - "Dirck Willems turns around to save his persecutor's life; was then captured, imprisoned, and burned outside Asperen, A.D. 1569."


For more details see page 741 of **Martyrs Mirror**.
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INTRODUCTION

here are various theological traditions within Christianity. Even though Christians read the same Bible and frequently use the same theological terms, each tradition has its own particular emphasis. Among these systems of belief and practice, one finds the Anabaptist tradition. The roots of this movement can be traced back to the early 16th century in the context of the Great Reformation initiated by Martin Luther.

Those involved in this movement were initially called “Anabaptists” or “Re-baptizers” by their enemies because they baptized adults who had already been baptized as infants. In later years they were also known as “Mennonites” because of the great influence Menno Simons had on the movement. However they preferred to be called “Biblicists” because their desire was to follow Christ faithfully in accordance with the teachings of the Bible. These early Anabaptists were later referred to as the “Radical Reformers” because they were committed to following the teachings of the Bible, no matter what the cost.

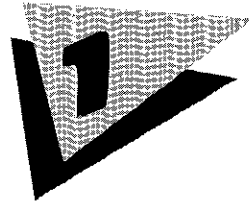
The story of the Anabaptists is nearly 500 years old. Since its beginning in 1525 the movement has grown considerably, but because of a variety of experiences and influences on it, various groupings have emerged. Differences among these groupings are perhaps most noticeable in the way they practise their faith. But within many of these groups there is a new search for spiritual roots. They are seeking to rediscover the biblical teachings which guided their forebearers to become “radicals” for Christ.

Early Anabaptists were in basic agreement with other Protestants with respect to such foundational doctrines as the trinity, sin, grace, and the inspiration of the Bible. But they felt that other

reformers of that time had either overlooked entirely or not considered seriously enough some important biblical teachings.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, an increasing number of Christians in many parts of the world are discovering the significance of these Anabaptist emphases. In the past, non-believers and believers of other persuasions frequently persecuted the Anabaptists. Now many have begun to reconsider Anabaptist understandings of faith and life because they are preceived to be increasingly relevant to the contemporary church context.

This series of lessons deals with ten theological issues which were important for Anabaptists and which are relevant for today. Each lesson includes a Bible study, a brief commentary and a set of discussion questions on one issue. This is not an exhaustive study nor does it claim to represent all views held by modern Anabaptists. These lessons present one way of understanding the theological heart of Anabaptist-Mennonite understandings of faith and life. As you grow in this understanding, you too may be challenged to follow Christ faithfully in all of life as a “radical” disciple.



The Centrality of Christ

BIBLE STUDY

1. I Corinthians 3:11 declares that Jesus is the foundation for faith (I Corinthians 3:11). In what ways is this true?

2. According to Hebrews 1:1-4, through whom has God spoken in "...these last days..."

Note four characteristics of the One through whom God has spoken.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

3. Read Hebrews 8, taking careful note of verses 6 and 13. What does this passage teach about:
 - a. The Old Covenant?
 - b. The New Covenant?

4. What was the work of Christ in relation to the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17)?

5. What did Peter declare concerning Jesus in his sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:22-24)?

6. What are Christians expected to do with reference to the teachings of Christ (Matt. 7:24-27)?

7. Whom does the Christian use as a model for life (Romans 8:29)? Why?

8. What are four ways in which believers are expected to follow Jesus (Philippians 2:5-11)?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.

COMMENTARY



The main characteristic of the New Testament is that it bears witness to Jesus Christ. Christ has established a new covenant which is more complete than the old one.

But in what ways is it more complete? Is it only the Jewish religious system that has undergone change, or has the witness of Christ cast a new light on the way believers are expected to live out their faith?

Some believers hold that apart from the Jewish religious system which was abolished by Christ, the rest of the Old Testament record represents a full witness to the will of God and can be appealed to directly with respect to matters of faith and practice without regard to the teachings of Christ. However, the entire Old Testament must be interpreted through the perspective Christ brings to it. With reference to ethical conduct, for example, Christians must regard the teachings of Christ as the final word. Questions relating to marriage, baptism and violence, for instance, must be answered in the light of the teachings of Jesus.

Others have asserted that the apostles, like Paul, developed their own ethical teachings because they considered the ethics of Christ to be too impractical. It is said, for example, that the Sermon on the Mount is the ethic that Christ hoped to establish on earth during his life time. Since he was unable to do so, these teachings are irrelevant for modern Christians. Either the Sermon on the Mount should be ignored altogether or relegated to a another age. This study maintains that all the teachings of Christ are relevant for all Christians in the present age, a position held by the apostles as well.

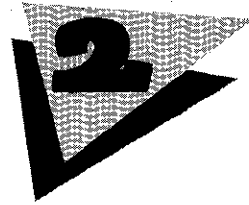
The Apostles Creed, an early statement of beliefs most Christians adhere to, makes reference to the birth, suffering, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and second coming of Christ. We gladly accept these assertions regarding Christ, but stress as well the importance of the life, work, and teachings of Christ. These must

be the foundation upon which Christians build their lives. True Christians not only believe in what Christ has done for them, but also commit themselves to follow Jesus in all of life.

Jesus occupies a central place in the Bible, as he must in the lives of his followers. He is the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Christians believe in Christ and are committed both to live and to die for Him. For them, Jesus Christ is central in every way.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did God chose to speak through his Son instead of through a prophet as he had often done in Old Testament times?
2. If Jesus is the same, yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8), why do Christians not follow today all that is taught in the Old Testament?
3. What might be the reason there is no reference to the life, work and teachings of Christ in the Apostles Creed?
4. How is it evident if believers have made Christ central in their lives?



Salvation/Discipleship


BIBLE STUDY

1. What was the angel's message to Joseph about the purpose of Jesus' ministry (Matthew 1:20-23)?
2. According to the following passages, when does a person receive salvation?
 - a. Romans 8:22-25
 - b. I Corinthians 15:2
 - c. I Corinthians 1:18
 - d. Romans 5:9-10
3. John 10:10 declares that Jesus has come to provide a full or abundant life for all. Does this refer to life in this world, in heaven, or both? Explain.

4. According to Mark 8:34-38, what is the relationship between "following Christ" and "saving one's life?"
5. Paul declares in Romans 10:9 that there are two things one must do to be saved. What are they and why are both important?
6. The Bible uses the example of Abraham to teach something about salvation.
 - a. According to Galatians 3:6-10, on what basis was Abraham justified?
 - b. According to James 2:21, on what basis was Abraham justified?
 - c. How can the different answers to the same question be reconciled (James 2:22-24)?
7. Biblical writers make use of various illustrations or "word-pictures" to help believers understand the significance of salvation. What images are used in the passages cited below and what do they teach about salvation?
 - a. John 3:3
 - b. John 10:9

7. continued...images and what they teach about salvation
 - c. 2 Corinthians 5:17-18
 - d. Acts 26:18
 - e. Acts 3:19
8. What warning does Hebrews 3:12-15 give to those who do not take discipleship seriously?

COMMENTARY

he salvation which Jesus offers will never be fully comprehended in this world. "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror, then we shall see face to face" (I Cor. 13:12). Nevertheless believers live with the assurance that this salvation is complete in every respect.

Some think of salvation as though it were nothing more than a ticket to heaven. They say all that is needed to secure a heavenly home is to give mental assent to the fact that Christ died for the sins of the world. Once secured, salvation carries with it little significance for life here on earth. Certainly, they agree, it would be preferable to follow Christ in life as well, but that is a secondary question. If a choice is made not to follow Christ, at least one's eternal destiny is secure if one has at one time declared belief in Christ. Yet, the Bible states that on the day of reckoning many people will be surprised. On that day, the Lord will say to some, "I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers" (Matthew 7:21-33).

It is true that persons are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). But this saving grace must be expressed in a life of faith. It is not enough to give mental assent to who Christ is. It is, in fact,

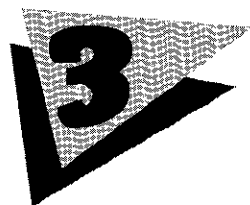
secondary to recognizing him as Lord (Romans 10:9), a matter which is not optional. Those declaring that "Jesus is Lord," are indicating their intention to obey him and open their lives to the experience of his grace.

In the Old Testament the word "faith" always carries with it the idea of "believing to the point of action." The Greek word for faith (as used in the New Testament) can be read to imply mere mental assent without reference to acting on that belief. Because of this narrower meaning conveyed by the Greek word for faith, some have down-played the importance of submitting to the Lordship of Christ. However, if the teachings of the entire New Testament about faith are considered, it becomes clear that "to believe" means to have a faith that leads to action. All the word-pictures in the New Testament describing salvation portray this understanding.

One of the early Anabaptists, Hans Denk, said concerning this matter, "No one can know Christ truly except he follow him daily; no one can follow Christ daily except he know him truly." The concept of knowing Christ should never be separated from the notion of following Christ. Only as one walks in the light of Christ is there a biblical basis for the assurance of salvation (I John 1:5-7).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is it important to follow Christ in all of life? Why?
2. Is it possible to be a Christian without being a disciple of Christ?
3. In what sense are believers saved already, and in what sense will they be saved in the future?
4. Are you in agreement with the statement made by Hans Denk? Explain.



The Kingdom of God

BIBLE STUDY

1. What is it that believers are to seek above all else (Matthew 6:33)?
2. In Matthew 19:23-24 reference is made to both **The Kingdom of Heaven** and **The Kingdom of God**. According to their use in this passage, do these two phrases refer to the same concept or to two different concepts? Explain.
3. Which of the following passages teach that the Kingdom of God is already present, and which that it will come in the future?
 - a. Revelation 11:15
 - b. Matthew 12:28
 - c. Mark 14:25
 - d. Luke 17:20-21

e. Colossians 1:13

How is it possible that the Kingdom of God is already present and yet to come in the future?

4. In Matthew 13, eight parables are used to expose the "secret" or "mystery" of the Kingdom of Heaven (13:11). What is the one major truth regarding this mystery?
5. There is another Kingdom believers do not belong to. How has Christ equipped his followers to fight against the Kingdom of this World (Colossians 2:15, Ephesians 6:12-18)?
6. What more is required of Jesus' followers than calling him "Lord" (Luke 6:46-49)?
7. Identify two of the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount as found in Matthew 5. In what way do these teachings apply to believers today?
8. In the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), Jesus taught his disciples to pray. What significance do the words "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven..." have for Christians today?

COMMENTARY



Jesus frequently taught his disciples about the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God. Some maintain that kingdom teachings are not relevant for Christians in the present age. However, the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God refer to the same reality, and the ethics of this kingdom are applicable today. The admonition to "seek first the Kingdom of God" must be a priority for Christians in any era.

According to biblical teaching the Kingdom of God is already present and at the same time still to come. It is important to maintain both of these emphases. Not to do so is to run into the danger of claiming "too little" or "too much" with reference to the Kingdom of God. For example, those who claim that the Kingdom belongs only to the future tend to give little attention to the Sermon on the Mount. Why, they say, should one be expected to live by Kingdom values if the Kingdom has not yet arrived and so they claim "too little." Those who hold that the Kingdom belongs only to this age may have unrealistic expectations for the present. They may be disappointed because they are hoping for "too much" in the context of the present sinful environment. The Kingdom of the future is here already through the work of Christ. However it will be fully realized only when Christ returns to bring the Kingdom of God to its fullest potential.

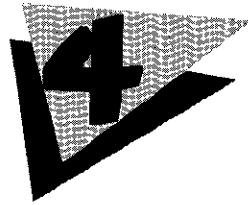
Because the Kingdom of God is already present in this world, it is in constant conflict with the Kingdom of Darkness. This is so because the values of the two kingdoms are not in harmony with each other. Christians live in this world but take their orders from the Kingdom of God. In other words they follow the wishes of King Jesus. Those not participating in the Kingdom of God can not understand its values and even work against them. Although it may be costly, believers have no option but to obey their king. And what King Jesus asks of them is to live by the principles of his Kingdom, that is, his teachings as found in Scripture.

When believers pray, as Jesus taught them, "Your Kingdom come!" they are not just asking Christ to come again. They are also asking that the principles of the Kingdom of God be demon-

strated more and more in their lives. This is possible only through the power of Christ within them, through whom they have "...victory over the powers and authorities..." To accept the teachings of the Kingdom of God is to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and to follow Him in all of life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the command to seek first the Kingdom of Heaven mean for Christians today?
2. In what respects has the Kingdom of God already come to this world? In what respects is it obvious that it has not yet fully arrived?
3. What does it mean to accept Jesus as King or Lord of one's life?
4. Why do some Christians feel that the Sermon on the Mount is not meant to be taken seriously in the lives of believers today?



Separation From the World

BIBLE STUDY

1. In John 18:36, Jesus stated that his kingdom is not of this world. According to this verse, how does this fact affect the actions of his servants?
2. Why does the world not always love Christians (John 15:18-21)?
3. What is the relationship between Christ's teachings about separation from the world and his statement "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14-16)?
4. Is it possible for Christians to live in such a way that they become enemies of God? How (James 4:4)?
5. What does the truth that the followers of Jesus are the "People of God" teach about separation from the world (1 Peter 2:9)?

6. According to 1 John 2:15-17, why is it important not to love the world?
7. If believers do not want to conform to this world, what must they do (Romans 12:1-2)? Why?
8. When Jesus prayed for his disciples in John 17, he mentioned "the world" eighteen times. He seemed to be preoccupied with the relationship between his disciples and the world. Note six things that this chapter teaches about the relationship of Christians to the world.
 - a. verse 6
 - b. verse 11
 - c. verse 14
 - d. verse 17
 - e. verse 18
 - f. verses 20-23
9. Who are the persons responsible before God for their actions (Romans 3:19)? Why is it important to understand this truth?

COMMENTARY



Those who live according to the principles of the Kingdom of God have a firm foundation upon which to stand. The God who created them established these principles and knows what is best for a fulfilled and positive way of life. But life lived according to Kingdom concepts does not fit well with general practices in society and calls for various degrees of separation.

Christ came to the world to offer salvation to all and to demonstrate a life pleasing to God. God has only one will for those he has created. He does not have one will for faithful Christians and another for those not ready to follow Jesus in all of life. It is God's will that all experience salvation and all follow him in life according to the ethics of the Kingdom.

Some have said that a holy and separated life is possible only for persons who isolate themselves from others and reject all social responsibility. Since this way of life is seen as a special calling from God, it is then considered acceptable for other believers to follow an ethic that is tainted by the world. To follow God fully in ordinary life, it is thought, is much too impractical.

Others have said that believers must follow the ethic of Christ in their personal lives, but in the exercise of their public duty they must set aside the teachings of Christ and instead follow common sense.

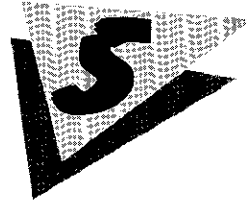
But those who want to follow Christ must do so in all of life's situations. The ethic of the Kingdom of God cannot be mixed with the ethic of the world. All actions, whether they be personal, domestic or civic must be based on the ethic of the Kingdom of God. Such a pattern of life will unavoidably set Christians apart from the ways of the world.

In order to live a life separated from the world, Christians must constantly be discerning God's will for his people. To live a separated life is not to separate oneself entirely from unbelievers, but to live among them as a faithful representative of the King-

dom. This does not necessarily mean clinging to an outmoded dress code, or refusing to use modern appliances. Rather it is to live in the modern context but refusing to be drawn into the patterns of life that are displeasing to God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can a life of "separation" be seen as "positive" at the same time?
2. Is it true that God has only one purpose for all people whom he has created, or are there various ethics for various groups of people?
3. Why is it not enough simply to practice outmoded customs in order to be "separated" from the world?
4. In what ways are believers tempted to assimilate with the world today? What might an "alternative" Christian lifestyle look like?



The Church as a Voluntary Community


BIBLE STUDY

1. John 3:16-17 states clearly that it is God's will that the world be saved. Whose will, besides God's, is involved?
2. According to Acts 2:41, about 3000 persons were added to the church. What role did these persons play in the process of being added to the church?
3. What can we learn about the church from the word-pictures in Ephesians 2:19-22?
 - a. Fellow citizens with God's people.
 - b. Members of God's household.
 - c. A well-constructed building.

4. What does it mean for believers to be one body in Christ (Romans 12:4-5)?
5. For what purpose has God gifted individuals in the church (Ephesians 4:11-13 and 1 Corinthians 12:7)?
6. What specific things can be learned about the body of Christ from 1 Corinthians 12:12-26?
 - a. verse 13
 - b. verse 18
 - c. verse 25
 - d. verse 26
7. Acts 15 describes the process the early church used in making a decision. What can we learn from this example?

8. I John 3:11-24 addresses the topic of love within the body of Christ. What are five lessons that can be drawn from this passage?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
9. Why must Christians "obey God rather than others" (Acts 5:29)? Are there any exceptions to this principle?

COMMENTARY

he doctrine of the church takes a central place in Christian teaching. Some people do not pay much attention to it because their world view is rooted in a philosophy of individualism. They assume God's primary interest is in the salvation of isolated individuals. According to them, the church is a loose association of individuals who love God and get together occasionally to encourage one another. But the church is to be a community of love, accountability and mutual edification. A decision for Christ cannot ultimately be separated from a decision for his body, which is the church.

That is not to say that God is not interested in individuals. God's vision of a "people" who follow after him includes a specific

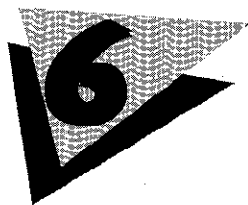
concern for the individuals of that community. But, it is not his intention that his followers be left alone in their struggle of faithfulness. Instead, his desire is to build up a people that demonstrates Kingdom values in its communal life. Thus God's people are a heavenly "colony" here on earth, demonstrating that the Kingdom of God is already present among them.

If the church is a voluntary community, it is important that its life be characterized by a community consciousness. All of its members depend on God yet lean on one another for support. They make decisions in a spirit of love and trust, confident that the Spirit of God among them will be their guide. They understand that the gifts of the Spirit are given to the church for its edification and ministry, rather than to individuals for their own fulfillment. The church is a family where love is demonstrated. If Christian community functions in these ways, not only will the needs of individual believers be met, but unbelievers will be drawn to following Christ by the quality of life displayed.

Based on this vision of the church as a voluntary community following Christ, the church and state must be separate entities. The church must function as a free and open community without compromising its allegiance to God, no matter what the cost. Civil religion cannot be faithful to the biblical mandate.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why are some Christians tempted to ignore the church?
2. In what ways is an "association of individual Christians" and a "people of God" different from each other?
3. The vision of heaven in Revelation 19: 1-10 is that of a people praising God together. How can this vision be instructive for the church of today?
4. If the church is a true community of love, how will that affect its evangelistic efforts?
5. What should be considered an appropriate relationship between the church and the state?



The Visible Church

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Matthew 5:14-16. In what sense are Christians the light of the world? What is the purpose of the light "set on a hill?"
2. How will it be evident if a person is truly a believer (Luke 6:43-45)? According to Philippians 2:14-16, how can believers be identified?
3. What must believers do in order to bear fruit (John 15:1-4)? How will it be evident if one is "walking by the Spirit" and "bearing the fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16, 22-23)?
4. Why is it so important to live like "...a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" (1 Peter 2:9-12)?
5. What does the Scripture teach about those who are unwilling to live openly for the Lord (Matthew 10:32-33)?

6. In Acts 2:42-47 we get a glimpse of the first church community described in the New Testament. Take note of at least six characteristics of this community.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.
- f.

Was this a visible or an invisible church? Why?

7. Read Matthew 18:15-20. Note the four steps a church must take if a brother or sister continues to live in sin.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

Why is such a process necessary?

COMMENTARY

From the call of Abraham in Genesis 12 to the scene around the throne in Revelation, it is clear that God desires to have a people of his own—not a hidden, but a visible community. Through this church, God wants to display the quality of life he offers to the whole world. The calibre of life in the Christian community in which Christ dwells is attractive to unbelievers.

Throughout the story of the Old Testament God seeks to establish and maintain a people for himself. However this was to be a community that followed him openly as Abraham did. In the end, the greater part of God's chosen people rejected his way, preferring human kings who often led them into sin. But God selected a remnant from among this disobedient people that demonstrated a willingness to follow him openly (Isaiah 10:21, Romans 9:27-28).

Christ came to pick up that remnant in order to re-establish a people for God (Luke 1:17). The Acts of the Apostles further demonstrates how God fulfilled this purpose through the power of the Holy Spirit. Once again there emerged a community willing to follow God openly, no matter what the cost.

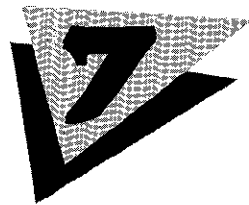
Many years later, when the church had grown cold through neglect and direct disobedience, some began to ask: Where is the true community of Christ? Some thought it could not be identified! The real church was that "invisible" group of faithful persons among the masses of church members, which no one could recognize. This concept must be rejected. Those who belong to the people of God can be identified by their fruit. Christians must seek to live in such a way that others will know where they stand in relation to God and the church.

Based on this understanding of the visible church, believers who openly practise a sinful life-style must be dealt with according to the "Rule of Christ" (Matthew 18). Those who sin openly and

remain unrepentant become a stain on the body of Christ, and should not have the comfort of saying they are members in good standing. Such persons must be disciplined so that they will repent and return to a way of life that gives full expression to the "visible" community of faith.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Of what use is a light if it remains hidden?
2. Why does Christ want his followers to bear fruit?
3. What problems enter a church community no longer concerned about members who live in sin?
4. Why is the church so often afraid to use the "Rule of Christ" with those who are living in sin?
5. What must be the attitude of those who exercise church discipline (Galatians 6:1-5)?



The Ordinances of the Church

BIBLE STUDY

1. Describe the extraordinary event that happened immediately after Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:13-17). Why was it necessary for Jesus to be baptized?
2. According to Ephesians 1:13-14, what is the role of the Holy Spirit with reference to believers?
3. What is the significance of "...the pledge of a good conscience toward God" with reference to baptism (1 Peter 3:21)?
4. According to 1 John 5:6-8, what three witnesses have a role in testifying about Christ? What does each of these refer to?
5. According to Romans 6:1-14, what is the significance of baptism for the individual believer? In what sense does baptism relate to the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13-14)?
6. According to Acts 2:41, what did persons who were added to the church need to do?
7. Read Mark 10:35-40. What does "baptism" refer to in this passage? How should Christians expect to participate in this "baptism?"
8. Read Luke 22:14-20. What does the phrase "This is my body..." (v. 19) signify? Why? For what reason should believers celebrate the Lord's Supper?
9. 1 Corinthians 11:23-33 is the passage most frequently used in connection with the Lord's Supper.
 - a. What is the context in which these instructions are given (vs. 17-22)?
 - b. Why are believers to "...wait for each other..." (v. 33)?
10. According to 1 Corinthians 10:14-17, in what respects does participation in the Lord's Supper involve more than an individual experience?

COMMENTARY



The New Testament teaches believers to practise certain ordinances, which are, in effect, human activities bearing some significance to a life of faith. Some call these activities "sacraments," because they believe they are vehicles of divine grace for individual believers. Those who don't agree with this concept prefer the term "ordinances" because they understand these activities to be symbols of truth experienced in the context of the church community.

One of these ordinances is **baptism**. Some hold that baptism itself is the instrument of salvation and therefore try to baptize everyone, including infants, to ensure their salvation. Evangelicals generally view baptism in a more symbolic way, stressing that it signifies an individual's commitment to leave the world and follow Christ. This also includes a communal understanding of baptism in that it symbolizes an identification with God and his people.

Based on I John 5:8 baptism is a three-fold witness, "...there are three witnesses, the **Spirit**, the **water**, and the **blood**; and the three are in agreement." Just as Christ received the **Spirit** at his baptism, so a person must be baptized or "sealed" by the Spirit, making one's commitment evident to the community. Just as Christ was baptized with **water** in order to be identified with God and his purposes in the world, so a believer receives water baptism in order to identify openly with the body of Christ and the ministry God has given it. And finally, as Christ was baptized with **blood** in his death, so in baptism believers commit themselves to stand firm in their struggle against sin even to the point of death. Only persons understanding the significance of such a three-fold commitment should be baptized. On this basis we hold to "adult, believers' baptism" because we feel children are not capable of making such an all-encompassing commitment.

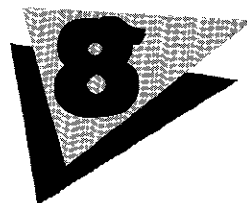
Another ordinance is the **Lord's Supper**. Some churches teach that the elements in the Lord's Supper are the literal body and blood of Christ which gives salvation, or at least provides spiritual nourishment for the believer. We consider the Lord's Supper to be

a memorial to the death of Christ and a celebration of the unity of the body of Christ. The individual grains of wheat must lose their identity in order to be integrated into the bread, and each grape must be crushed in order to make its contribution to the wine. Therefore it is thought most proper to celebrate the Lord's Supper in the context of the community of faith which is demonstrating unity and love.

Some churches believe that **foot washing**, as taught in John 13:1-7, is also an ordinance. These churches consider the command given to be as strongly prescriptive as those relating to baptism and the Lord's Supper. Churches that practice footwashing usually do so as a part of their Lord's Supper celebration.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are the ordinances of baptism and communion important for the individual, the church, or both? In what way?
2. Why should a believer be prepared for a "baptism of blood?"
3. Is it really essential that the church community be walking in love and unity when it celebrates the Lord's Supper?
4. How might the ordinance of footwashing fit well with that of the Lord's Supper?



Leadership as Servanthood

BIBLE STUDY

1. According to Luke 22:24-27, what was the manner in which Jesus lived among his disciples?
2. Read John 13:1-17.
 - a. What did Jesus do to demonstrate his servant attitude?
 - b. What is the lesson he expected his disciples to learn from his example?
3. In Matthew 16:24-26 Jesus cited three things those who follow him must do. What are they, and what significance do they have for spiritual leaders?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

4. What did Jesus want to teach his disciples by using the example of a child (Mark 9:33-37)?
5. Read Mark 10:35-45.
 - a. According to this passage, what is a big temptation leaders face?
 - b. In what sense is leadership to be different among Christians than among unbelievers?
6. What does Luke 7:28 teach us about membership in the Kingdom of God?
7. Why did God give leadership gifts to the church (Ephesians 4:11-13)?
8. Who chose the persons to send with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to inform them about the decision made at the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15:22)?
9. According to I Corinthians 11:1, whom did Paul suggest the Corinthians should follow?
10. According to Hebrews 13:7, in what manner should leaders of the church live their lives?

11. Read Galatians 2:8-9

a. How many specified leaders were there in the church at Jerusalem (Galatians 2:8-9)?

b. How many leaders were there in Antioch (Acts 13:1)?

c. What might this teach us about leadership in the church today?

12. What should church leaders learn about leadership from the example of the Pharisees (Matthew 23:1-12)?

COMMENTARY



The New Testament does not offer one fixed form of leadership for all times and places. However, biblical leadership has distinctive characteristics and is based on the example and teachings of Christ. It recognizes that leadership is one gift among many given to the church, a shared responsibility, and is to be exercised in a spirit of "mutual subordination" (Ephesians 5:21).

Jesus came into the world, not to be served, but to serve. He humbled himself and became obedient even to the point of death. This was clearly evidenced when he washed his disciples' feet. Consequently, the most important symbols of leadership are a towel and basin. Some churches practise foot washing in order to remind each other that all within the community are servants of Christ and one another.

It was difficult for Jesus' disciples to understand this "up-side-down" approach to leadership. They sought positions of power

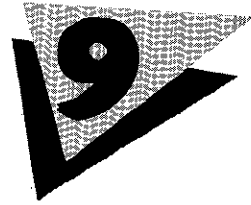
and authority, but Jesus always taught them the way of servant leadership. The Apostles sought to follow Jesus in this respect, although imperfectly.

Leaders must stand "in the midst of God's people" rather than above or apart from them. They build trust in their leadership by being responsible to God in the context of the community of faith. By drawing on the resources of this community, they furthermore empower and help to disciple it. This model of leadership frees them to work humbly with other leaders and the entire church community.

Some place much emphasis on a hierarchical or "chain-of-command" approach to leadership with conferred authority passed on to office holders. Others downplay the need for leadership, maintaining that the Holy Spirit is the only leader needed among us. However, leadership is a gift to be practised in the context of a community where all members are servants of Christ. In that respect, church leaders are, in effect, servants of servants. Biblical leadership is always rooted in servanthood.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How important is the example of Christ in adopting a leadership style in the church? Why?
2. What is the biggest temptation facing church leaders? Why?
3. How can leaders build trust in their leadership?
4. What does it mean for leaders to be servants of servants?



Love in all Relationships— The Teachings of Christ

BIBLE STUDY

1. In what sense was Christ like a sheep (Isaiah 53:7)?
2. Why did Jesus heal the servant of a Roman centurion even though Romans were enemies of the Jews (Matthew 8:5-13)?
3. In Matthew 21:1-11 we encounter the story of the triumphal entry. What is significant about the fact that Jesus asked to ride a donkey instead of a horse?
4. When the Jewish crowd came to arrest Jesus, one of his disciples used violence to protect him. How did Jesus respond to this disciple (Matthew 26:47-56)?

5. Why did Jesus rebuke Peter when he did not want to accept the idea that Jesus would have to suffer at the hands of his enemies (Mark 8:31-33)?
6. What attitude did Jesus have toward those who were crucifying him (Luke 23:32-34)?
7. After the resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples and showed them his wounds (John 20:19-20). Then he said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you (v:21). What possible relationship is there between the wounds of Christ and the commissioning of the disciples?
8. According to the words of Jesus, with what should the saying, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" be replaced (Matthew 5:38-42)?
9. With what are believers to replace the saying, "Love your neighbour and hate your enemy" (Matthew 5:43-48)?


10. According to Luke 19:10, Jesus came "...to seek and to save what was lost."

a. If this was Jesus' goal, what should be the Christian's goal with reference to those who do not know Christ?

b. Does such an attitude permit them to harm their enemies? Explain.

11. Why are peacemakers called blessed by the Lord (Matthew 5:9)?

COMMENTARY

 God is Love (1 John 4:8), and Jesus Christ came to this earth to demonstrate that love. It was not easy for the disciples to understand the love of God and for this reason they tried to persuade Jesus to abandon the way of love.

They always wanted to identify their enemies and hurt them, but Jesus would not allow them to do so. Instead, Jesus tried to get them to understand that the life he modelled for them was the only worthy way to live in the world. By his example and his teaching, Jesus showed the world that the way of God is not a way of violence, but of peace and love.

For many centuries some Christians have taught that it is not necessary to follow Christ's example of peace and love in order to be faithful to him. Some continue to hold the idea that the ethic of Christ would have been possible as an interim measure if Christ would have returned quickly. But, because Christ has not come, they assert, we must seek a more practical ethic. Others say that the ethic of love will be the ethic of the future when Satan is no longer present, but for now, the ethic of Christ is impossible to follow.

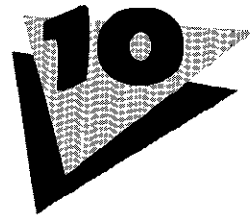
Others maintain that the facts of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension overshadow his example and teaching about the way of peace and love. Belief in the former is essential, but taking the latter seriously is optional. Still others argue that Jesus' ethic is applicable in our personal lives, but not in our public lives. However, both Jesus' teachings and examples of peace and love are applicable today in every area of life. In other words, it is better to suffer than to use violence against enemies.

There are biblical texts which some use to legitimize the Christian's participation in violence. However, if these passages are read in the larger context of the life and teachings of Jesus, they support the ethic of love as the standard for Christian behaviour.

For example, it is not likely that Jesus used a whip on persons in the cleansing of the temple in John 2. Verse 15 can legitimately be translated to suggest that he used the whip only on the animals (NIV). And the use of violence can not be defended on the basis that Jesus said that two swords were enough for the walk to the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:38). It is clear in that context that Jesus was not thinking of using the swords to defend himself (v.51). All believers are sent into the world in the same manner that Christ was sent—in a way that demonstrates love instead of violence.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. It seems to be natural to react violently when hurt or threatened by others. Why?
2. Why is it so popular in Christian circles to evade Christ's example and teaching about loving enemies?
3. What are the implications of the way of love for the personal lives of believers?
4. What are the implications of the way of love for the civic or public lives of believers?



Love in All Relationships— The Teachings of the Apostles


BIBLE STUDY

1. In Colossians 1:15-23, the Apostle Paul discusses Christ and his work. In what respect should the example and power of Christ become evident in believers' lives (v:22)?
2. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.
 - a. If persons have been reconciled with Christ, what has changed?
 - b. Does this include human relationships?
 - c. What is the ministry they have received from God?

3. Why did Christ die for us "while we were yet sinners" and "enemies of God" (Romans 5:8)?
4. In Ephesians 2:11-22, Paul discusses relationships between Jews and Gentiles. What happened to believers belonging to these two very different groups who considered themselves mortal enemies:
 - a. according to verse 14?
 - b. according to verse 15?
 - c. Why was such a reconciliation possible?
5. Read Galatians 5:22-23
 - a. In what contexts should the fruit of the Spirit be evident—in our relationship with God, with others, or both?
 - b. One fruit of the Spirit is peace. How should this fruit be evident in human relationships?
6. Why do Christ's followers not fight using the "weapons of the world" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)?

7. Read Ephesians 6:14-18.
 - a. Name the seven weapons that the church community is to employ in its fight against evil.
 - b. In what respect are these weapons different from the weapons the world uses?
8. Romans 12:17 teaches that Christians are not to return "evil for evil." Does this refer to relationships with unbelievers as well as believers? Why?
9. According to Romans 13:10, "Love does no harm to its neighbour." Who is our neighbour?

COMMENTARY

uring their ministry with Christ, his disciples found it difficult to understand the message of love and peace. But after Pentecost, with the help of the Holy Spirit, things changed. Now they began to grasp the significance of this new way.

The Apostle Paul spoke freely about the gospel of reconciliation. He held that those who receive the Lord are reconciled to God. That means that those who formerly were enemies of God now love God and follow in his way. But, they not only walk hand-in-hand with God, they also carry the responsibility to be ambassadors for God, announcing the gospel of reconciliation.

Some place much emphasis on being reconciled to God, but less significance on being reconciled to others. However, being reconciled to each other is also of great importance. God's love for

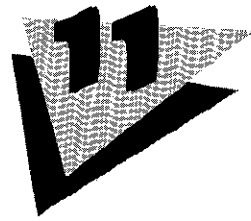
humanity, as demonstrated in Jesus, must be the example for the love his disciples show one another as well as to unbelievers. A key New Testament example of the effect of such love is that when Jews and Gentiles received Christ they stopped being enemies. They became as one—reconciled. Believers today must always seek reconciliation wherever there are broken relationships.

Followers of Christ believe that every human being has the possibility of being reconciled to God. This vision lies at the heart of evangelism. Thus, in order to be true evangelicals, believers must love every person, friend or enemy. All are loved by God and must also be loved by his people. According to Myron Augsburger, "It is clearly counter-productive to harm or kill those persons we are seeking to win to Christ."

And what about the members of the church around the world? Is it right to kill believers of another country? No! Believers must seek a life-style that demonstrates peace and love in all relationships, both with unbelievers and believers. Alexander Clement of Alexandria stated in 200 A.D., "With his blood, Christ is gathering up an army that does not shed blood." This is still true.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the concept of reconciliation throw light on the meaning of salvation?
2. If I love my neighbours as myself (Matthew 19:19), is it likely that I will harm them intentionally? Explain.
3. Is it possible for Christians of two or more races to form a church in which they love one another? Why might it be difficult? Why might it be possible?
4. Is the statement made by Myron Augsburger valid?
5. Is the statement made by Clement of Alexandria valid?



Love in all Relationships— What about the Old Testament

BIBLE STUDY

1. When God created the world, there was peace in at least three sets of relationships. What were they?
 - a. Genesis 1:29-31
 - b. Genesis 2:24-25
 - c. Genesis 3:8a
2. What was the greatest temptation that ultimately brought the downfall of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:5)?
3. What happened to the peace in the three sets of relationships Adam and Eve had known?
 - a. Genesis 3:16-19


b. Genesis 3:7

c. Genesis 3:8-13

4. What was one of the earliest evidences that the Fall had affected human relationships negatively (Genesis 4:8-9)?
5. In what respect was Lamech's murder of a young man different from Cain's killing of his brother (Genesis 4:19-24)?
6. What unconventional means did God use to fight for his people:
 - a. according to Exodus 14:13-14?
 - b. according to Judges 7:19-21?
 - c. according to Joshua 6?
7. According to God's plan, who was to drive out the residents of Canaan (Exodus 23:20-33)? What happened when the Israelites tried to enter Canaan in their own strength (Numbers 14:36-45)?
8. Why did God grant the request of the Israelites to have a king even though he was opposed to the idea (1 Samuel 8:19-22)? Did God abandon the Israelites when they did not follow his plan for them perfectly? Why not?

9. What was God intending to do through the Israelites (Isaiah 49:3-6)? Why did this purpose fail again and again?

COMMENTARY

any times God showed his people that it was not necessary to fight like the nations around them did. He wanted to defend his people with other weapons such as plagues, wind, hornets, lamps, and trumpets. But the people insisted on fighting like the rest of the world fought. So God accompanied his people into the wars of their choosing.

Yet this raises the question, "If the New Testament teaches the way of peace, why do we find so much violence in the Old Testament?" Some say that the violence of the Old Testament was blessed by God, and because God does not change, it must be his will that believers today practise violence. Others say that the God of the Old Testament is not the God of the New Testament.

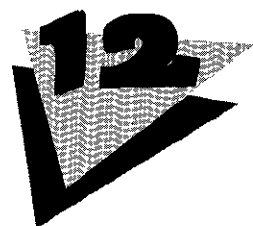
Both Testaments reveal the same God, but the history and teachings of the Old Testament must be interpreted through Christ because he is the ultimate revelation of God (See Lesson #1). From this perspective, it is clear that God's primary desire is for peace: between God and all persons, between all persons on earth, and between God's people and the environment. But this peace has been destroyed by sin. For this reason God embarked on a great project of restoring peace.

But how would this be possible? The extent of the Fall made it difficult to effect immediate reconciliation in these areas of brokenness. Therefore God chose a special people and began to show them his will in a progressive manner. Because his plan was that this people would obey his will and then spread it throughout the whole world, God always urged his people forward and upward. In many cases, God's people chose not to follow his direction. They practised polygamy, slavery, divorce, monarchy and violence. And what did God do? Instead of abandoning them, he continued to work with them, always demonstrating his desire to effect reconciliation wherever possible.

During the times of the kings in Israel, God used his prophets to remind the people that they should trust in Him, not in their weapons. Through Isaiah, God showed his people that in the ultimate sense, victory is not gained by the sword, but through suffering and death. Most people of that time rejected this truth. But when Christ came, he demonstrated and taught this way of peace and non-violence—the way that had been God's will from the beginning. Even if we are not able to understand all of God's ways in the Old Testament, we must follow the Christ of the New, and that is the way of peace and love in all relationships.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did God not abandon his people even though they did not listen to his advice? Why was it so hard for the people of God to understand his will?
2. Why do you think that God used different weapons in war than those of "the nations?"
3. How should Old Testament wars be interpreted in relation to Christ's message of love and peace? Explain.



The Mission of the Church


BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Matthew 28:18-20.
 - a. What is the mandate for the disciples of Christ as they spread throughout the world?
 - b. Why are new believers to be baptized?
 - c. Why is it important to teach them all the things which Jesus taught?
 - d. Of what significance is Jesus' promise that he will be with the disciples to the end of time?
2. Why are the "feet of those who bring the good news of the gospel" considered to be beautiful (Romans 10:14-15)?

3. Read Acts 8:1-5.
 - a. Who were the persons scattered throughout Judea and Samaria?
 - b. What did they do wherever they went?
4. According to James 1:27, what responsibility do believers have towards those experiencing various kinds of hardships?
5. Read I John 3:16-20.
 - a. How should the love of God be expressed in the lives of believers?
 - b. Why does such action set their hearts at rest (v. 19)?
6. Read Matthew 25:31-46.
 - a. Why did those on the right inherit the kingdom (v:34)?
 - b. Why were those on the left cast aside (v:41)?
 - c. To whom does the phrase "the least of these my brothers" refer, only to Christians or also to unbelievers (v:40)?

7. Read the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37.
- What was the question that the "expert in the law" posed for Jesus?
 - How did Jesus respond (v:27)?
 - What can be learned from this parable about Christian ministry in the world?

COMMENTARY

he true Christian church must work together with God in what he is doing in the world. God's purpose is "...to unite all things in him..." (Ephesians 1:10). He wants all of his creation to reflect his glory. The nature of God is such that he wants to do everything possible to save the fallen world, and he wants his body, the church, to have this same concern.

Some hold that the Great Commission applies only to a select group of individuals like the early apostles or modern-day missionaries. However, all disciples of Christ are ambassadors of the Good News. All persons are called upon to respond voluntarily to the call of Christ, not only to gain eternal life, but to glorify God through discipleship.

In the act of baptism believers commit themselves to participate with God in his work in the world. As they live at peace within the community of faith and with those on the outside, they demonstrate to the world that the gospel works in all relationships. When those on the outside observe the quality of life among believers, they will seek an explanation. In such a context it is natural to present the gospel and invite those on the outside to receive Christ and join them as members of the body of Christ.

Some say the only worthy service for the Lord is "spiritual" work. However Christ was concerned for the welfare of the whole person. All persons are created in the image of God, even those who do not receive Christ, and are therefore worthy of receiving help in their time of need. Believers must be ready to do good to all. Even those who persecute us should be shown the love of God. The gospel is the Good News that Christ has come to this world to offer abundant and eternal life. The whole church is responsible to take the whole gospel to the whole world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are those things that God wants to unite in himself (Ephesians 1:10)?
- If a church demonstrates a life of peace and love, how does this affect its invitation to unbelievers to receive Christ? Explain.
- Why is it important to help persons in their physical, social, and spiritual needs? How can this be done?
- What is the impact of the statement, "The whole church is responsible to take the whole gospel to the whole world?"

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