



Part of The Living Hope Foundation Course

7 Things Seven Plus Series

This series is designed to give an introduction to key doctrines. There are several subjects covered with a minimum of seven points for each subject. We pray it will provide a clear foundation and that you will be encouraged to do more research on these key matters in Christian doctrine and life. Jesus had 12 disciples and so we have chosen 12 topics for this part of the foundation course.

7 Things Seven Plus Series

Contents Page

THE CHARACTER OF GOD	
<i>God Omnipotent</i>	7
<i>God Omnipresent</i>	9
<i>God Omniscient</i>	11
<i>God the Creator</i>	13
<i>God of Love</i>	14
<i>God of Holiness</i>	15
<i>Jehovah God</i>	16
<i>Questions</i>	17
WORSHIP.....	
<i>What is worship?</i>	18
<i>Whom do we worship?</i>	19
<i>Why do we worship?</i>	20
<i>How and where do we worship?</i>	21
<i>Corporate worship</i>	23
<i>Private worship</i>	24
<i>A life of worship</i>	25
<i>Questions</i>	26
GOD THE FATHER.	
<i>The Father's house</i>	29
<i>A house of prayer</i>	30
<i>Our heavenly home</i>	31
<i>The father's discipline</i>	32
<i>Father and new birth</i>	34
<i>The Father's prayer</i>	36
<i>The Father's approval</i>	38
<i>Questions</i>	40
GOD THE SON.	
<i>Jesus His birth</i>	41
<i>His name</i>	43
<i>His ministry</i>	44
<i>His miracles</i>	45
<i>Parables of the Gospel</i>	47
<i>His Death</i>	48
<i>Seven statements Jesus makes from the Cross</i>	51
<i>His Resurrection</i>	54
<i>His Ascension</i>	55
<i>Questions</i>	57

Content Page

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT	
<i>His Person</i>	58
<i>Comforter and empowerer</i>	59
<i>Counsellor</i>	60
<i>Sin, righteousness, judgement</i>	61
<i>Fruit</i>	62
<i>Gifts</i>	63
<i>Be filled</i>	65
<i>Questions</i>	66
THE FATHER SON AND HOLY SPIRIT—THE TRINITY	
<i>God the Father is a person</i>	67
<i>God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ is a person</i>	68
<i>God the Holy Spirit is a person</i>	69
<i>Completely and totally God</i>	70
<i>The Father`s act of Creation</i>	71
<i>The incarnation of the Son</i>	72
<i>The coming of the Holy Spirit and Grace</i>	73
<i>Questions</i>	74
HERMENEUTICS.	
<i>An introduction</i>	75
<i>What is the Bible?</i>	76
<i>Exegesis</i>	77
<i>Implications of the authority of Scripture</i>	78
<i>Interpreting different types of biblical literature</i>	79
<i>Approaching Scripture</i>	81
<i>Translations</i>	82
<i>Questions</i>	83
PREACHING / HOMILETICS.....	
<i>Prophetic preaching</i>	85
<i>Encouragement</i>	86
<i>Exposition</i>	87
<i>Authority</i>	88
<i>Preparation for preaching</i>	89
<i>Presenting the message</i>	91
<i>The presence of God</i>	92
<i>Questions</i>	93

Content Page

MINISTRIES IN THE CHURCH	
<i>Apostles, Prophets, evangelists, Pastors and Teachers</i>	95
<i>Prophets</i>	96
<i>Evangelists</i>	97

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

<i>Pastors and Teachers</i>	98
<i>Duties of Elders</i>	99
<i>The importance of a serving heart</i>	100
<i>Women in ministry</i>	101
<i>Questions</i>	103
LEADERSHIP.....	
<i>Keep focused</i>	104
<i>Keep listening</i>	105
<i>Balanced Fellowship</i>	106
<i>Keep disciplined</i>	107
<i>Be receptive to prophetic input and prayer</i>	108
<i>Maintain vision</i>	109
<i>Be vigilant</i>	110
<i>Statement of faith</i>	111
<i>Core values</i>	112
<i>Questions</i>	114
<i>Study Samuel</i>	115
<i>Study Joshua</i>	116
<i>Study Paul</i>	117
GETTING THE GOSPEL TO A DYING WORLD.	
<i>Bible evangelists</i>	118
<i>7 people who shaped church history</i>	121
<i>Seven great missionaries</i>	123
<i>Lessons learnt sharing the gospel</i>	128
<i>Key principles in the growth of Living Hope</i>	130
<i>Reaching the nations</i>	132
<i>Will you go?</i>	133
<i>Questions</i>	134
DEATH AND LAST THINGS.....	
<i>Death</i>	136
<i>Heaven</i>	137
<i>Hell</i>	138
<i>Judgement</i>	139
<i>Jesus second coming</i>	140
<i>Satan</i>	142
<i>Questions</i>	143
<i>Becoming a Christian</i>	144

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

The Character of God

1. **God Omnipotent**
2. **God Omnipresent**
3. **God Omniscient**
4. **God the Creator**
5. **God of Love**
6. **God of Holiness**
7. **Jehovah God**
8. **Key passage—Psalm 8, Hebrews 1, Colossians 1**

Clearly an understanding of who God is has to be vital for us as believers. There is only one God. Other faiths may speak about their gods but they are false gods; they have no power and in fact are the work of the evil one, Satan. The Ten Commandments pronounce very clearly that there is only one God alone that we should worship and that we should not attempt to create images or idols to try to represent Him. The majesty and glory of our God are so great that it cannot be measured and yet the love of our God is so deep that it transforms us to know Him. For Christians it is remarkable and unique that this God should leave Heaven and come to our earth. He was born as a baby at Bethlehem. When we look at Jesus, He is a man but He is truly God to be worshipped, honoured and adored.

7 Things

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God Omnipotent

The God of the Bible and the God whom we worship is all powerful; His greatness and His power cannot be measured. His ability to rule and reign over everything cannot be questioned. He is the ultimate King of the whole universe. We must remember that we live on a very tiny planet which is a very small part of the solar system in which we live. God's power is manifest in what He has made and His power is evident in simply who He is. There is nothing that could adequately describe the magnificence of our God. When we think about the power of a storm, a tornado or a raging sea, we are still falling short in comprehending the greatness of our God. When we look at sickness, illness and death we are aware of our tremendous frailty and we feel deeply inadequate but our God is far more powerful than any storm; His authority means that every sickness and illness have to bow before His majesty. Everyone and every nation will have to give an account to this God. Whatever people do, whatever they set up, we are helpless in the presence of this almighty God.

Revelation 19:6 'Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder', saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns."

Ephesians 1:19 'and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might.'

Daniel 4:35 'All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'

Isaiah 43:13 "Even from eternity I am He, and there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?"

7 Things

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God Omnipotent

Isaiah 14:27 "For the LORD of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?"

Matthew 19:26 'And looking at them Jesus said to them,' "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Genesis 18:14 "Is anything too difficult for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

Job 42:1-2 'Then Job answered the LORD and said,' "I know that you can do all things, And that no purpose of yours can be thwarted."

Luke 1:37 "For nothing will be impossible with God."

Acts 26:8 "Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead?"

Jeremiah 32:27 "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?"

Deuteronomy 33:27 "The eternal God is a dwelling place, And underneath are the everlasting arms; And He drove out the enemy from before you, And said, 'Destroy!'"

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

God Omnipresent

The God of the Bible is indeed everywhere in the world that we know and the rest of the universe that we do not know. We cannot escape His presence. If we climb to the highest height He is there; if we go to the lowest depths, He is there. He lives outside of time and therefore the time zones that we have in this world are irrelevant to Him. His incredible presence is not restricted to a time of day or to a part of the world; His presence is there in parts of the world where He is known, loved and worshipped but He is also present in the spiritually dark parts of our world where believers are persecuted, hated and even killed for their faith in Him. He is present when we sleep and He is present when we are awake, He is present when we are mindful of Him and He is present when we ignore Him. We cannot run away from Him.

Jeremiah 23:24 "Can a man hide himself in hiding places so I do not see him?" declares the LORD "Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" declares the LORD.

Proverbs 15:3 'The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Watching the evil and the good.'

1 Kings 8:27 "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!"

Acts 17:24 "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;"

Colossians 1:17 " He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together."

Matthew 18:20 "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."

Isaiah 57:15 'For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy,' "I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite."

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

God Omnipresent

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Psalms 139:3 "You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways."

Psalms 139:5 "You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me."

Isaiah 66:1 'Thus says the LORD', "Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest?"

Jeremiah 23:23-24 "Am I a God who is near," declares the LORD, "And not a God far off? Can a man hide himself in hiding places, So I do not see him?" declares the LORD "Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" declares the LORD.

Psalms 113:4-6 "The LORD is high above all nations; His glory is above the heavens. Who is like the LORD our God, Who is enthroned on high, Who humbles Himself to behold The things that are in heaven and in the earth?"

Acts 17:27 "that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;"

Matthew 6:6 "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you."

Psalms 32:8 "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you."

Job 34:21 "For His eyes are upon the ways of a man, And He sees all his steps."

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

God Omniscient

The God of the Bible is all powerful; He is ever present and He knows everything about the universe and each of our lives. He is an eternal God so He knows the end from the beginning. He knows our future, He knows everything about events in our world; He is aware of every power and every scheme that would seek to undermine and destroy His purposes. Everything is open to Him to see and to know. He knows our hearts, He knows our secrets, He knows our deceitfulness, He knows our longings and He knows our motives. His knowledge of us goes far beyond any human knowledge. He is aware of our hopes and aspirations; He knows our thoughts as well as our deeds. His knowledge is breath-taking. He knows the number of the grains of sand on the seashore; He knows the number of hairs on our head. His perception of our true condition is awesome but with all this knowledge, it is remarkable that He loves us and longs for us to come into relationship with Him.

Psalm 147:5 'Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.'

1 John 3:20 'For whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.'

Isaiah 40:28 'Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.'

Jeremiah 1:5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Psalm 139:1-6. ' O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, Behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. ...'

Jeremiah 23:24 Psalm 147:4-5

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

God Omniscient

Romans 11:33-36 Hebrews 4:13 Jeremiah 29:11 'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.'

Matthew 10:30, Isaiah 40:13-14, 1 Chronicles 28:9, Job 28:24, Acts 1:24, 1 Corinthians 2:11, John 21:17, Deuteronomy 29:29, Isaiah 55:8-9, Isaiah 46:10, Job 36:3-5, Romans 8:29, Acts 15:8, Numbers 23:19, Revelation 1:8, Job 37:15-16, 1 Samuel 16:6-7,
"For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

Daniel 2:22 'He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him.'

Ezekiel 11:5 Colossians 2:3 'In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'

Matthew 6:8 'Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.' Hosea 7:2 Isaiah 65:24 Genesis 8:22 Jeremiah 17:9-10 Job 23:10 1 Samuel 2:3 Revelation 19:6 Job 21:22

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

God the Creator

The Bible teaches that God created the world in 6 days. Ever since the powerful statement in Genesis 1, there have been many debates between a scientific view of creation and a biblical view of creation. I believe that we have a God who is able to do things as quickly as He wants and whenever He wants. He can make the world in 6 seconds if He chooses too! Therefore, any attempt to explain creation which diminishes or even excludes the presence of God cannot be accepted by a true believer. God has made the heavens and the earth. The universe as we know it is vast; however there remains the real possibility of galaxies and planets that are way beyond our solar system and our understanding.

Creation reveals an incredibly powerful God. His planning is far beyond anything we can understand. For us our understanding is confined primarily to the planet earth. We observe in the oceans, land masses and skies of our earth alone, plenty of evidence which reveals a God of incredible creativity, variety and beauty. Genesis tells us that when a part of creation was completed, God spoke of it as being good. The pinnacle of God's creation is man. Man is the object of God's love and man was placed upon the earth to care for the magnificent beauty of the earth. Man is unique; he is made in the image of God which does not mean we are God but that we have a spiritual dimension to our being which can only be fulfilled by being in a close intimate relationship with God. Man was made to rule and have authority and when he first arrived, made from the dust from the ground, he was sinless and living in a sinless environment. When sin and disobedience entered the earth through man's rebellion and disobedience to God, everything changed. God's solution to the chaos that this caused in man and in his creation was to come Himself into this fallen world in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

God of Love

It is true to say that God is holy, perfect and righteous and hates sin but it is obvious that the God of the Bible is a God of love. His love is shown in the creation that He has made. We see His provision in all its abundance to provide for man and his needs. A loving God could not abandon His world and mankind but had to find a way to deal with sin and all its consequences while remaining true to His righteousness. His love is most powerfully expressed in His willingness to become man and to be born into this sinful world. Jesus shows us the love of God. This love reaches out to us; it seeks to win us, to persuade us and to touch us where we really need to know we are loved. Jesus illustrates this when in Luke 15 He talks about the parable of the one sheep that is lost, the one coin that is missing and the son who wanders away from his father. God's love never gives up; He keeps pursuing and persisting, reaching out to fallen men and women. His love is unconditional; He keeps seeking us and loving us whether we love Him or not.

God's love is unlimited, He is willing to forgive and reconcile us even when our disobedience has reached terrible depths. His love is most powerfully displayed in that Jesus laid down His life for us. As Paul describes in Philippians 2, it was a great step for God to become man. It was amazing that He should choose to suffer death; it is beyond words to describe that He suffered the most terrible death including separation from His Father in order that we could be forgiven and reconciled to God. This love of God keeps no records of wrongs and always pursues what is best for us. Jesus continues to love even when we fail Him so miserably. The testimony of the Christian is summed up in 1 John 4:19, "we love Him because He first loved us." It is true that this love of God reaches out to us as individuals but the Bible teaches that Christ loves His church. We, each one are very precious to God but Jesus died for the body of Christ, His church and He cares deeply about our corporate life together and that we will spend together eternity with Him.

John 3:16— God so loved the world that He gave His only son is an amazing statement. The power of God's love will be clearly seen in all our studies.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

God of Holiness

The holiness of God is a description of the way that God is separate and different from anyone and anything. His purity is of such intensity that for sin to near Him is impossible. His righteousness is demonstrated in His actions, in His words and in His thoughts. The nature of holiness means that to approach such a God is totally impossible if we have even one sin in our lives. The level of purity is difficult to describe because we live in such a tainted world with tainted lives, tainted motives and uncleanness. It is not that God cannot tolerate sin; He is unable to exist in the presence of sin. This is where the step of becoming man is so massive.

In heaven as we have said, the very hint of sin means being immediately cast out. However when Jesus became man, He lived among sinners, He witnessed the evidence of sinful things and yet we are so grateful that He Himself never sinned. God's holiness also heralds God's judgement. As God is holy, His judgement falls on the sinful and disobedient which is all of us. God lives in heaven, an environment which is completely separated from sin. Hell is a place which is completely separated from God; words cannot describe how awful that place is. Also it is inexplicable how God should become man in Jesus and that Jesus should take our sin upon Himself and endure hell for us. We have the hope of heaven when we receive Jesus as our Saviour and Lord.

- Isaiah 6
- 2 Chronicles 5:11-14
- Acts 5:1-11

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Jehovah God

One of the names of God is Jehovah and this means that God is a God of covenant. He keeps His promises and He can be relied upon to be faithful and true.

Jehovah God our Provider

Jehovah Jireh. He is the Lord who sees all our needs and wants to meet our needs, physical, spiritual and mental. Key scripture: Genesis 22:12-14

Jehovah God our Healer

Jehovah Rapha. The Lord heals. Key scripture: Exodus 15:25. So many sicknesses and illnesses are in the world because of sin but the Lord is our Healer.

God our Banner

Jehovah Nissi. The Lord is our Banner. Key Scripture: Exodus 17:8-15. We are in a spiritual battle but there is a banner over us as we fight.

Jehovah Shalom. The Lord is Peace. Key Scripture: Judges 6:24

Jehovah Raah, The Lord is my Shepherd. Key Scripture: Psalm 23:1

Jehovah Shammah. The Lord is there. Key Scripture: Ezekiel 48:35

Jehovah Tsidkenu, The Lord our righteousness. Key Scripture: Jeremiah 3:16

Jehovah Mekoddishkem: The Lord who sanctifies you. Key Scripture: Leviticus 20:8

Jehovah Sabaoth. The Lord of Hosts. Key Scripture: Isaiah 1:24

Jehovah Elohim. Lord God .Key Scripture: Genesis 2:4

7 Things

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Questions

There are questions to answer concerning every topic. Some of the questions challenge you to have read and studied the notes and other questions are designed to encourage you to apply what you have learned to your own life and your church.

1. Prepare a short study on each of the 7 aspects of God's character.
2. See if you can find more verses on each of the characteristics.
3. Pray about each one of the characteristics of God's character. Ask Him to reveal them in a deeper way to you.
4. How can we see them applied to our lives today?

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Worship

1. **What is worship?**
2. **Whom do we worship?**
3. **Why do we worship?**
4. **How and where do we worship?**
5. **Corporate worship**
6. **Private worship**
7. **A life of worship**
8. **Key Passages Psalm 103, Psalm 150, Revelation 4:8-11, Revelation :9-14**

What is Worship?

Worship is an outpouring of adoration, love, thanksgiving, praise, honour to God. It is also serving God. Worship is being quiet, still and just being overwhelmed by His presence. It is also being noisy, exuberant, joyful expressing appreciation with informal unsolicited outbursts of joy and it is solemn moments of sheer wonder and being speechless in the presence of Almighty God.

Worship is sometimes organised, careful, thoughtful and sometimes chaotic, random and almost unseemly. 2 Samuel 6:14-16 (David) Worship often involves music and the use of musical instruments. Psalm 150. Sometimes the use of a particular instrument has the effect of drawing worshippers to a deep sense of the presence of God.

Bless the Lord O my soul, let all that is in within me bless His holy name.

Psalm 103:1

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Whom do we worship?

We can worship many things; it can be people, it can be a sport, it can be idols, and it could be ourselves. It can be witchcraft, it can be other religions, it can be philosophies, and it can be cultures or tribes.

Anything we prioritise and put before the God of the Bible is an idol and an object of worship.

We must worship the living one true God.

We worship the God who made us and the whole universe. Psalm 8 exhorts us to honour God's excellent majestic name. Despite being so small in the vast universe of stars, sun and moon our God loves us and knows all about us.

We worship a God who is almighty, all powerful and present in every place.

We worship the God who saved us, by sending Jesus to die in our place and who took upon Himself our sins and all our failures and weaknesses.

We worship the God who is eternal and who knows the end from the beginning.

- Hebrews 1
- Revelation 1

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Why do we worship?

We worship God because He is worthy of all our praise. He deserves and should have our highest and deepest affections. We especially worship Him because He loves us so much that He came to this earth and lived and died so we could be forgiven. He didn't have to do that, but He chose to do that for us. We worship Him because He is truth. We are so grateful that in worshipping God, we worship someone completely and utterly reliable. The Westminster Catechism says that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever.

We worship because it is fit and right that the almighty God who has made us, rules sovereignly over His universe and sent Jesus to die for us, is worthy of all the love, affection and heartfelt praise we can give. However when we worship God it also makes us complete.

In His presence is fullness of joy and at His right hand are pleasures forevermore. Psalm 16:11. To worship God is to come into His presence. As Jesus has dealt with our sin we can draw near with confidence and without fear. Outside of God's presence is an awful place to be but in His presence is peace, and strength. When we worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24), there is an encounter which brings life and energy to our spirit. The power of God that fell on the people when the temple was dedicated was mighty (2 Chronicles 7:1-3) and although aware of God's awesome glory, they proclaimed that God is good. That's what happens when we worship and come into His presence.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

How and where do we worship?

John 4:24 is vital to bringing an answer to this question. The essential factor is worshipping God inspired by his Spirit and by being faithful to the truth He has revealed in His word. God's Holy Spirit is a creative Spirit. He, the Father and the Son made the universe and Genesis 1:26-27 says, "Let us make us man in Our image." We are the pinnacle of God's creation and were made to exercise authority on the earth that God made. Our worship of God is a natural response to being made by Him and will involve great creativity and variety. Our worship of God comes out of how God has made us and remade us through the redemption Christ has won for us on the Cross. We, having our different personalities can express praise and worship to Him.

Different cultures may have different things that are vital to their individuality and uniqueness. For some it will be dance, for others it will be music, for some it will be choirs and groups and for others very individual acts of devotion to God. Personally I love the enormous variety I experience in ministry. African people are incredibly exuberant but worship in the Congo will not be identical to worship in Kenya. Worship in Asia is different to worship in Europe; worship in Ecuador is different to worship in Pakistan but the key is sensing the presence of God. I have learned and am learning to appreciate God's active presence in many different settings. If I confine God's activity to a place which I find comfortable, I will limit God and spoil the glorious opportunity to meet with Him in ways that my background would be tempted to prohibit.

Psalm 139 encourages us that we can worship God anywhere we do not need a special place or building, Jonah worshipped in the belly of the big fish. David loved to worship God out on the hills, looking after the sheep and looking up to the night sky, inspired some of his Psalms. Again for me personally the joy of worshipping God in a bamboo hut, a great auditorium, a little chapel, a school hall does not distract from worshipping God. The venue does not prohibit or limit the opportunity to lift up the mighty name of Jesus. However there is indeed value in having a place set apart wholly for the worship of God.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

How and where do we worship?

We know the Tabernacle and the temple were extremely well planned and the dimensions, the building materials and the furniture were all ordered by God. Each part was carefully chosen and spoke powerfully of God's presence and desire to redeem. The structure of an outer court, an inner court and the holy of holies was again extremely significant and speaks strongly of the journey we can make in our times of worship as we draw closer and closer to God. The awareness of His holiness and perfection is so important. We are grateful to be able to come into His presence but we never come carelessly and flippantly. We come with humble hearts, knowing it is only the blood of Jesus that can enable us to stand in His presence.

Exodus 35-40

2 Chronicles 1-5

Acts 2

1Peter 2

7 Things

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Corporate Worship

Worship is very much part of heaven`s activity and there it is corporate worship. In Revelation chapters 5,6,19 the saints and many others worship and honour the Lamb of God, our Lord Jesus Christ for all He has achieved for us. In the Old Testament there were priests and Levites set aside to see that sacrifices of all kinds, grain offerings and burnt offerings were properly offered to the Lord. Many choirs were assembled to give praise to God and singers accompanied the armed forces to prepare the way for battle. All manner of instruments were brought together and a joyful noise dominated proceedings as the living God was worshipped. 2 Chronicles 20: 21-22.

In 1 Corinthians 12 -14 Paul speaks of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and exhorts that all the gifts should enhance our worship of God. No gift is singled out as more important but all play their part and it means that all members of the body of Christ are called upon to participate and share the gifts God has given them to the building up of the body of Christ. Ephesians 5:19.

Some find a fixed liturgy is helpful to guide and fix their focus; others find worship easier in a free flowing environment. However all must be done decently and in order and all styles have their value and worth. Personally again I find richness in the variety of worship styles I encounter in the body of Christ. To sense His wonderful presence and to know He is with us as we worship, is so important. Hebrews 2:11-12. ` We must not forsake getting together to worship Jesus as it is the opportunity for His manifest presence to be known among us'

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Private worship

Our worship with God alone is very important. In fact anything that is seen in my corporate life must have deep roots in my personal life. David had a very deep personal life with God. Many of the Psalms speak of his struggles with God and his desire to trust God in times of uncertainty and when things appeared to be going wrong. 1 Samuel 30:6. Psalm 42 & Psalm 43. He shares his frustrations as well as his joys. Worshipping God is indeed about praising, adoring and loving Him but the most important thing about worship is engaging with God, always respectful of who He is and deeply mindful of His power and greater purposes. To discover how I fit into the purposes of God is all part of my worship.

Jesus rose early to seek Father`s face. Mark 1:35 I don`t see that as simply prayer time; it is also worship time. Solomon responds to God in the dream where He tells God he needs wisdom to lead God`s people. 2 Chronicles 1:7-10. Paul seeks God in Acts 16 about where he should go next with the Gospel. Paul in Philippi praised God in prison when he was wrongfully treated. These are all examples of worship even in extremely difficult times. John was in the Spirit on the Lord`s Day when in exile on Patmos and this paves the way for a phenomenal worship time as the risen Christ appears to him in Revelation chapter 1.

Jesus encourages us to find a place where we can seek God`s face. Matthew 6:6.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

A Life of worship

Romans 12:1-2

These verses illustrate a life of worship very well. God's mercies and kindness deserve a reaction and response worthy of Him. What sacrifice can we bring? What can we offer to the One who is and has everything? We are at a loss but we can present our bodies as a living sacrifice. We can yield entirely to Him all that we have and all that we are. This is true worship.

We present our hearts to love Him and put devotion to Him as the major priority of life.

We present our minds and intellect to serve Him above all others. We desire that our thoughts and meditations, our preoccupations worship Him alone.

We present our eyes to Him so that all that we see desires to please Him and we refuse to look where things are unclean or distracting.

We present our ears to Him. We want to listen to His voice; we desire to be attentive to every word He speaks to us. We do not want to hear quarrels, scandals, bad talk, negative or destructive things.

We present our mouths. We want to speak that which edifies, strengthens and builds God's people up. We want to speak the truth however painful it might sometimes be.

We present our sexuality. We want to be pure in all our relationships and faithful in marriage.

We present our feet so that we walk in His ways and travel in the centre of His will. We present our hands so that our work and labour are for the Lord and Him alone.

Our whole lives can be a song of praise to God and a worshipful lifestyle means all of our being is engaged in adoring Him who is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

Jesus said "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself" Luke 10:27

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Questions

1. Carefully study each of the aspects of worship
2. How can your personal worship develop in the light of these studies?
3. What changes could you make in church life, to see your worship as God's people grow and develop?
4. What verses could you add to each of the sections on worship?

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

God the Father

1. **The Father's house**
2. **A house of prayer**
3. **Our heavenly home**
4. **The Father's discipline**
5. **Father and new birth**
6. **The Father's prayer**
7. **The Father's approval**
8. **Key Passages Luke 15, Hebrews 12, Luke 11:1-13**

The Father's heart Luke 15

There is perhaps no passage in Scripture that describes God's father heart better than the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15.

God so loved the world that He gave His Son. John 3:16. Giving His best so we could be rescued and put on the road to heaven is amazing love.

God is not willing that any should perish but wants all to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:8. Our heavenly Father will punish sin but is quick to show mercy to all who are truly penitent.

Jonah knew that despite the gross wickedness of the Ninevites, God's heart would reach out and forgive them if they repented. Jonah struggled greatly with that possibility and tried to run away from God.

The Father wants "all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" 1 Timothy 2:3-4.

These and many other Scriptures make a strong case that in the Father's heart is an abounding love for all people. He is the creator of all and can be the Saviour of all if we turn from our stubbornness to seek Him.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series



God the Father

The Father`s heart Luke 15

Luke 15 sums it all up:

The younger son is given the freedom to make bad choices as well as good ones. Our Heavenly Father is not manipulative and controlling. This again is amazing. What a risk God took to give us this freedom!

The son has left father`s home and has taken his inheritance; he chose a lifestyle which was rebellious and pleasure seeking, ignoring the values his father would have taught him.

The son begins to get into serious trouble; he has squandered his resources and is now desperate. He decides to go home and prepares a statement of confession and repentance. He has no expectation of privileges; he simply wants to be home.

Father`s response

He is looking for the son. When he sees the son, he is filled with compassion; he sees the dreadful state the boy is in. He runs to the son. He embraces him and kisses him. Here is the heart of God, no bitterness, no anger but a longing to restore his son.

A robe, a ring and sandals are quickly summoned to be available. Covering, status and protection are given to the son and a feast is prepared.

Having the son home and safe in the fold is the father`s priority. We know God was prepared to send His Son, to die upon the Cross ,bearing our sins to bring us back. What a wonderful loving Father!

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

The Father`s house

The tabernacles and temple

Although God is everywhere, the Bible shows us that places set aside specifically to encounter and worship Him are blessed with His presence. Moses constructed a tabernacle in the wilderness Exodus 25:8-9. It was a tent because it needed to be mobile but it was built for God and was a symbol of His presence with His people. All of the construction was to be according to the Lord's directions: the materials used, the various pieces of furniture were all to be beautifully made and were symbols of God's character and redemptive heart. In Samuels's time the ark was in Shiloh in a building but the Israelites were not valuing its presence. David built a tabernacle. It was a place where the ark was placed and undoubtedly a place where he worshipped God. Isaiah 16:5 "then a throne will be established in steadfast love, and on it will sit in faithfulness in the tent of David one who judges and seeks justice and is swift to do righteousness." Amos 9:11 : "In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old." Acts 15:15-19 the prophecy about David's tent is repeated. God will restore the tent of David. Christ is the One who will bring this about. His body will be offered in sacrifice for our sins and raised on the third day.

David longs to build a temple for Father God but as a man of war he is not allowed to do it. However he can prepare for it and his son, Solomon will build it. 2 Chronicles 7 describes fire coming down and the glory of the Lord revealed majestically and powerfully. Without doubt Father longed to dwell among His people and tabernacles and a temple were a glorious prelude to the most wonderful moment of all when Jesus came in human flesh and revealed the glory of God in an unparalleled way. Father still loves a house to dwell in: His redeemed people. He visits the Church and manifests His glory. May we welcome Him with all our hearts! 1 Peter 2:9-10, 4:17, Colossians 1:25-27, Ephesians 3:7-11

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

A house of prayer

Matthew 21:13, Luke 19:45, Mark 11:17, Isaiah 56:7, Luke 2:49

Jesus loved the Father`s house. As a young boy He loved to teach those gathered when He stopped by after his first visit to Jerusalem. He described it as a house of prayer. A place to seek Father`s face, to cry out to Him and discover His grace and His will. His reference recorded in Mark is particularly important when He describes the house as a `HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS.` The heart of the Father is for all nations, all cultures, tribes and people groups. He longs for all to come to Him in repentance and faith and when we pray for His kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, He will hear from heaven and move here on earth. Jesus taught us to pray: "Our Father" Matthew 6. Developing our relationship with our heavenly Father through prayer is an enormous privilege extended to us. Paul`s prayer for the Ephesian church is very much taking account of the fatherhood of God.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Our Heavenly home

John 14:1-4 is often quoted as a passage of great comfort and hope. It describes Father's house as a place with many rooms / mansions. Jesus through His death and resurrection has personally prepared a place for us in the Father's house. We will not take up residence until it is ready for us. Father's house is a place of great joy, great celebration, and great peace. Psalm 16:11. Our citizenship, the place we really belong is with our Father in heaven.

Revelation 21.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

The Father`s discipline

Our Heavenly Father loves us very much, so much so that He will correct us and discipline us. The Bible is full of illustrations of God working with His people. He does not readily abandon us but rather will allow various trials and difficulties to shape us and get us back on track so that His purposes can be fulfilled for us and through us.

John 15 paints the picture of Father God being a gardener. His objective is maximum fruitfulness. This requires sometimes cutting off unfruitful branches and burning them. This is a drastic measure but it can be avoided if we allow God`s gracious hand to have His way with us. There are things that cannot be tended; they must be cut out of our lives. Sin cannot be tolerated because if left alone and unchallenged, it will destroy us. Pruning and cutting back is a different measure. Father knows His plans for us and the gifts and talents entrusted to us. They need however to be refined and submitted to His perfect plan. It is spiritual fruit God is looking for not just natural fruit. My service for Him must come out of a broken and contrite heart.

God`s word cleanses us and brings us into relationship with His son. Father`s discipline is designed to deepen and strengthen our relationship with Him, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Without Him we can do nothing.

Hebrews 12 the writer to the Hebrews gives more insight into Father`s discipline. It comes from a heart of love. His disciplines are not to crush us but are His tool to shape us and correct us. It would be unloving to observe areas of weakness and failure and do nothing. It is a mark of His love to allow circumstances and trials which give us the opportunity to rest in Him and prove His grace. Discipline is not just a personal matter because the work of God, moulding, working and challenging us benefits the body of Christ. As people observe the work of God in my life, it encourages them that God will bring them through too.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

The Father`s discipline

Father`s disciplines also are a compliment that we are His sons and daughters. He is at work creating Christ in you because you belong to Him. Father invests in you, hopes for you, plans for you because you are His. As parents we have the right and the responsibility to bring correction and direction to our children. So our heavenly Father has the right to challenge us and provoke us to righteousness. Maturity comes through when we have responded to circumstances not with bitterness and questions but rather with humility and submission to God.

Our Lord Jesus was also no stranger to trials. His faith underwent extreme trial but He came through without sin. Jesus lives within us and His grace is sufficient for us.

Obedience to God regardless of the circumstances will bear the fruit of holiness which essentially means we are separated wholly unto Him. We are so distinct because we belong to Father and the Father`s likeness is seen in us. One day we will be with Father forever. This relatively short time of trial will be over and we will rejoice in His presence with unspeakable joy.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Father and new birth

Peter the apostle says "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In His great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The architect and planner of our salvation is God the Father. In eternity past He saw our plight and hopeless situation after Adam and Eve rebelled against Him and the whole human race fell into the devil's trap. God wanted us to have free will. He did not want robots programmed to obey Him but rather that we should choose to acknowledge Him, trust Him and put Him first in our lives.

Sin needed to be punished; the Father could not hide it or ignore it. The consequences of sin, eternal separation from Father also needed to be dealt with. The Father's holiness needed to be satisfied.

The devil needed to be defeated. His rights to dominate the human race needed to be broken. His defeat must be absolute. His hold is very serious and we must be set free.

Further consequences in terms of sickness in body and in mind also needed to be defeated. Physical, psychological, emotional consequences all stem from that initial rebellious act.

So what was to be done? The Father's heart, we have said was full of love. In the counsels of heaven Father, Son and Holy Spirit confer and the plan is as follows. God the Son, Jesus will be born a man. He will come and live on this earth; He will be subject to temptation and trial. He will suffer the restrictions, living in first century Palestine with its primitive lifestyle, huge lack of facilities and poverty. He will be born of a virgin; He will grow up under Roman rule. He will choose to live a sin free life and He will offer His life on the Cross. This means a public humiliating death, beatings, shame and intense suffering. He will be separated from His Father as He bears our sin and the sin of the world in His body. He will die, be buried but on the third day He will rise from the dead.

Jesus submits fully and totally to the Father's plan and it has gloriously worked! All the Father planned has been accomplished Hallelujah! What a plan! What a Saviour!

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Father and new birth

Father planned that we would be born again, we would become new creatures and our baptism symbolises the death of our old life and the creation of new life. We are freed from our sins and their power. We have been set free from the law of God which condemns us. Our acceptance with the Father is all achieved by Christ and the Holy Spirit seals the whole transaction and we repent and rest in Christ alone.

John 1:12 "As many as received Him; to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name. By nature we are children of wrath born into the kingdom of Satan but the wonderful plan of God makes it possible for us to be born again. "

- 1 Peter 1:1-3

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

The Father's prayer

We have mentioned prayer in the Father's house but let us take the opportunity to reflect on prayer, thinking of the Lord's prayer as in Matthew 6:9-15 and Luke 11:1-4. The contents of this prayer obviously please and touch His heart.

Our Father in heaven.

He wants us to know we have a heavenly father. Whatever our earthly father was like our heavenly father is very different. He has time for us, His counsel is always wise and for our best. He will never abuse us. He will never leave us or let us down and He will never die.

Hallowed be your name. Father's name is always to be honoured. We must respect it and not treat Him lightly. His name is wonderful, it is like a password and gains us entrance into many precious things. It is holy. He is separate from anyone else and His purity is without equal.

Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

Father's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. It can never be challenged; there is no election He is the King above all kings. Where He reigns, there is peace and joy. Demons have no place; they run and flee. In His kingdom there is no sickness and no death. Justice prevails right across His kingdom; there is no unfairness and no corruption. We are invited to pray that His kingdom be manifested here but particularly in our lives.

Give us today our daily bread.

Our heavenly Father is very concerned about our needs. As part of His disciplining of us, He requires us to trust Him on a daily basis. It does not mean He will prohibit forward planning but the principle of daily dependence and not looking too far ahead is a good one. It keeps us focussed on the here and now; the future is in His hands, even tomorrow!

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

The Father's prayer

Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Father forgives and teaches us that true forgiveness involves us forgiving others. If we truly taste His forgiveness which we do not deserve then we will find the grace to forgive those who have wronged us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

Father has a path for us to tread and if we listen carefully to Him and walk in His ways, we will not find ourselves in places of overwhelming temptation and falling into the devil's trap. This does not mean we will avoid temptation or the devil's attacks but if we are close to Him and in the centre of His will, we can have the confidence He will give us victory.

Praying in Father's agenda will mean victory for us, walking with Him.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Father's approval

In Genesis chapter one when the Lord God looks at the creation He has made, He considers that it is all good. It meets with His full approval; it is very good. 'Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who **only does wondrous things.**' Psalm 41:13.

Father's approval means everything and even Jesus benefited from it.

At the birth of Jesus. Luke 2:1-20

Not just one angel but a multitude of angels turn up to proclaim the birth of a Saviour Christ the Lord! Father as we have commented had planned to send His Son and now the moment has come. The skies light up with the glory of God.

The baptism of Jesus. Matthew 3:13-17

Matthew and Luke both record Jesus' baptism. It is a pivotal moment. Jesus has been in obscurity but now is going to be very much in the public eye. The transition is marked by His baptism which is a shock to John the Baptist who is used to baptising sinners not the sinless one! On this highly significant occasion the Spirit descends like a dove and Father speaks from heaven "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Father's words transcend the moment. Salvation's work is on course. Jesus is obeying Father and in His humanity Jesus is totally confirmed by His Father. Hallelujah!

The transfiguration of Jesus Luke 9:28-36

Jesus has been with the disciples a little while. He has been speaking about His impending death and takes Peter, James and John up the mountain to pray. Something of the glory He had in heaven comes upon Him; Moses representing the law of God and Elijah representing the prophets meet with Jesus. It is all glorious and amazing then Father speaks from heaven. "This is my son, my chosen one; listen to Him" again the Father's approval is manifest. There is to be no doubt Jesus has been sent by the Father; He is the Word of God from the Father and He must be listened to. In His humanity Jesus too benefited from Father's declaration.

7 Things Seven Plus Series

Father`s approval

For us to receive.

When Father looks at us, He sees us in Christ and the approval and love He has for His Son Jesus are now upon us. He is pleased with us and fully accepts us. Colossians 3:3-4, Ephesians 1:3-8, John 1:12

Our greatest joy will be to stand before God at the end of our lives and hear beautiful words of approval:

“Well done good and faithful servant!” Matthew 25:23

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Questions

1. Study carefully the seven areas of God the Father.
2. Reflect prayerfully how each one applies to your own life.
3. See if you can add more Bible verses to each of the sections.
4. How much is the Fatherhood of God a reality in your life?
5. How can you encourage your church to grow in the knowledge of God as Father?

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

God the Son

1. **Jesus His birth**
2. **His name**
3. **His Ministry and His Miracles**
4. **Parables of the Gospel**
5. **His Death**
6. **Seven Statements Jesus makes from the Cross**
7. **His Resurrection**
8. **Key Passages—Isaiah 9:6-7, John 1:1-14, Ephesians 1:1-7, Hebrews 2:4-18**

Jesus His birth

The Father planned to send His Son into the world, Galatians 4 v 4 tells us that Jesus came at just the right time as the Father had planned it. His coming was also predicted by the prophets in several places. Isaiah 7 v 14, Isaiah 9 v 6-7, Micah 5 v 2 all help us to see that the Lord Jesus would arrive in this world born of a virgin. He would be truly man and truly God and He would be the Son who would save us from our sins. The place of His birth, Bethlehem is of course where King David lived and Jesus has a family tree that includes so many people upon whom the hand of God was, as He prepared the way to send His Saviour. As Jesus is truly God His conception needed to be of God therefore God carefully chose Mary to receive conception not by any act of man but by a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. The life that began in Mary and proceeded to a birth was the very life of God the Son. In order for Jesus to be truly man He needed to be born of a woman. This is an incredible act of salvation that Almighty God achieved!

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

God the Son

Jesus His birth

Jesus was protected in the womb and in the fullness of time was born at Bethlehem. Jesus came into our world, a world of violence, a world of political turmoil and a world of religion which acknowledged God but did not know Him. Jesus was born into a world where there was no electricity, no running water or communication system as we have today so He tasted poverty and many challenges. He faced hunger, He faced thirst, He knew what it was to be tired and He knew about living in an environment of sin but He did not sin. He came to poor shepherds, He came to angry violent people, He came to wise men and the Bible records a very dangerous situation. Joseph and Mary need to get Him out of Israel into Egypt because Herod is threatening to find and kill the baby Jesus. We must make no mistake the baby born at Bethlehem is truly man and truly God. He would grow up and would resist sin, embrace righteousness and always do His Father`s will.

- Matthew chapters 1 & 2
- Luke chapters 1 & 2

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

His Name

As we read the Scriptures we become aware of many names and titles attributed to our Lord Jesus Christ

Jesus - Matthew 1: 18 Saviour

Emmanuel - Matthew 1:21 God with us

Son of God - Mark 1:11

Lamb of God - John 1:29

Son of man - Matthew 9:6

Bread of Life - John 6:35

Light of the World - John 8:12

Appointed Judge (Acts 17:31) Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2)

Author of Eternal Salvation (Hebrews 5:9) Bread of God (John 6:33)

Bridegroom (Matthew 9:15) Bright and Morning Star (Revelation 22:16)

Chief Cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20) Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4)

Door of the Sheep (John 10:9) Faithful Witness (Revelation 1:5)

Firstborn of every Creature (Colossians 1:15)

First begotten from the Dead (Revelation 1:5)

Good Shepherd (John 10:11) Head of the Church (Ephesians 5:23)

Head of all Principality and Power (Colossians 2:10) Heir, Lord of All (Galatians 4:1)

Holy One of God (Mark 1:24) Image of the Invisible God (Colossians 1:15)

Judge of the Living and the Dead (Acts 10:42) King of Kings (Revelation 19:16)

King of the Jews (Matthew 27:11) Lion of Judah (Revelation 5:5)

Living Bread (John 6:51) Living Stone, Chosen of God (1 Peter 2:4)

Lord of Glory (1 Corinthians 2:8) Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:16)

Only Begotten Son (John 1:18) Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7)

Power of God (1 Corinthians 1:24) Prince of Life (Acts 3:15)

Prophet of the Highest (Luke 1:76) Propitiation for our Sins (1 John 2:2)

Rabboni/Rabbi/Master (John 20:16)

Ruler/Prince of the Kings of the Earth (Revelation 1:5)

The Way, The Truth, and The Life (John 14:6)

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

His ministry

Jesus' teaching was with great authority and had immense impact. Significant teaching is found in the Sermon on the Mount Matthew 5-7 where Jesus explains the kingdom of God, its values and its importance. Practical teaching about how Jesus wants us to live is clearly presented. Jesus' teaching in the upper room John 13- 16 is powerful as He presents the coming Holy Spirit and prepares the disciples for His ascension. Jesus' prayer in John 17 again reveals His heart for us, the people of God.

The recipients for much of Jesus' teaching were His disciples. He chose the 12 and spent a lot of His time on earth with them. His discipleship programme was also very practical as they learnt things through His life as well as from His lips.

Much teaching is illustrated for us in the 'I AMs' of Jesus. 'I am the Bread of Life', John 6:35, 'I am the Light of the World', John 8:12, Before Abraham was 'I AM', John 8:58, 'I am the Door' John 10:9, 'I am the Good Shepherd' John 10:11, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life', John 11:25, 'I am the true Vine' John 15:1 The quiet but compelling nature of Jesus, declaring He is Jehovah God is fantastic.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

His miracles

The miracles of Jesus were obviously powerful in themselves but also provide tremendous lessons regarding listening to Father, being sensitive to people and declaring the power of God.

Here is a list of the recorded miracles of Jesus. It must be noted that John 21:25 comments that "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."

Jesus changed water into wine (John 2:1-11).
Jesus cured the nobleman's son (John 4:46-47).
The great haul of fishes (Luke 5:1-11).
Jesus cast out an unclean spirit (Mark 1:23-28).

Jesus cured Peter's mother-in-law of a fever (Mark 1:30-31).

Jesus healed a leper (Mark 1:40-45).

Jesus healed the centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13).

Jesus raised the widow's son from the dead (Luke 7:11-18).

Jesus stilled the storm (Matthew 8:23-27).

Jesus cured two demoniacs (Matthew 8:28-34).

Jesus cured the paralytic (Matthew 9:1-8).

Jesus raised the ruler's daughter from the dead (Matthew 9:18-26).

Jesus cured a woman of an issue of blood (Luke 8:43-48).

Jesus opened the eyes of two blind men (Matthew 9:27-31).

Jesus loosened the tongue of a man who could not speak (Matthew 9:32-33).

7 Things Seven Plus Series

His miracles

- Jesus healed an invalid man at the pool called Bethesda (John 5:1-9).
- Jesus restored a withered hand (Matthew 12:10-13).
- Jesus cured a demon-possessed man (Matthew 12:22).
- Jesus fed at least five thousand people (Matthew 14:15-21).
- Jesus healed a woman of Canaan (Matthew 15:22-28).
- Jesus cured a deaf and mute man (Mark 7:31-37).
- Jesus fed at least four thousand people (Matthew 15:32-39).
- Jesus opened the eyes of a blind man (Mark 8:22-26).
- Jesus cured a boy who was plagued by a demon (Matthew 17:14-21).
- Jesus opened the eyes of a man born blind (John 9:1-38)
- Jesus cured a woman who had been afflicted eighteen years (Luke 13:10-17).
- Jesus cured a man of dropsy (Luke 14:1-4).
- Jesus cleansed ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19).
- Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-46).
- Jesus opened the eyes of two blind men (Matthew 20:30-34).
- Jesus caused the fig tree to wither (Matthew 21:18-22).
- Jesus restored the ear of the high priest's servant (Luke 22:50-51).
- Jesus rose from the dead (Luke 24:5-6).
- The second great haul of fishes (John 21:1-14).

It is also important to note that because Jesus is alive today and because He is the same yesterday, today and forever, there are many more miracles done by the hand of our wonderful Saviour.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

The parables

Clearly parables were a major tool in Jesus' teaching ministry. These wonderful stories contained remarkable truth to those who had ears to hear and eyes to see what the Lord wanted to say to them.

PARABLES OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK AND THEIR PARALLELS

1. The parable of the Sower. Mark 4:1-20, Matthew 13:3-23, Luke 8:5-15.
2. The parable of the seed growing secretly. Mark 4:26-29
3. The parable of the Mustard Seed. Mark 4:30-32, Matthew 13:31-32, Luke 13:18-19.
4. The parable of the Tenants. Mark 12:1-11, Matthew 21:33-46, Luke 20:9-18.
5. The parable of the Budding Fig Tree. Mark 13:28-32, Matthew 24:32-36, Luke 21:29-33
6. The parable of the Faithful Servant. Mark 13:33-37, Matthew 24:42, Luke 12:35-48.

PARABLES OF MATTHEW NOT FOUND IN MARK

7. The parable of the Wheat and Tares. Matthew 13:24-30.
8. The parable of the Leaven. Matthew 13:33, Luke 13:20-21.
9. The parable of the Hidden Treasure. Matthew 13:44.
10. The parable of the Pearl. Matthew 13:45-46.
11. The parable of the Net. Matthew 13:47-50
12. The parable of the Lost Sheep. Matthew 18:12-14, Luke 15:3-7.
13. The parable of the Unmerciful Servant. Matthew 18:23-35
14. The parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard. Matthew 20:1-16
15. The parable of the Two Sons. Matthew 21:28-31
16. The parable of the Wedding Feast/ Banquet. Matthew 22:1-14. Luke 14:15-24.
17. The parable of the Ten Virgins. Matthew 25:1-12
- 17b. The parable of the Talents. Matthew 25:14-25:30

PARABLES OF LUKE

18. The parable of the Two Debtors. Luke 7:40-50
19. The parable of the Good Samaritan. Luke 10:25-37
20. The parable of the Rich Fool. Luke 12:16-21
21. The parable of the Lost Coin. Luke 15:8-10
22. The parable of the Prodigal Son. Luke 15:11-32
23. The parable of the Unjust Steward. Luke 16:1-8
24. The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Luke 16:19-31

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

His Death

The Gospels all record the crucifixion of Jesus. They describe His trial, His scourging, beatings and vulgar treatment before crucifixion. The two thieves present the awesome realities. To accept and acknowledge Jesus means life but to reject Him is judgement. The earthquake, the darkness, the curtain in the temple being torn in two and the haunting cry “ My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” all tell us that Jesus’ death is of massive significance. Jesus is taking our sin upon Himself. He is taking the wrath of a holy God upon Himself and He is paying the price to redeem us from Satan’s power. The blood of Jesus is precious beyond words and we will be eternally grateful that He shed His blood for us. Hallelujah!

The Cleansing Blood of Jesus & The Cross of Jesus

Our need for cleansing

To be washed, cleansed, refreshed is a very pleasant experience for us as human beings. After a hot, dry, dusty day to have a shower can make you feel so much better. However, we have a much greater need than just to remove the grime and dirt of the day. We need to have our sins forgiven and to be in a good relationship with the living God. We are unable to scrub out or remove our own sins. God has a wonderful answer. He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus and when He shed His blood for us, our sin problem was resolved.

Jesus’ blood satisfies the wrath of a holy God

God hates sin and His anger and wrath are provoked by sin. In His perfection He cannot be in the presence of sin. However God loves us and wants us to know Him. The death of Jesus and the shedding of His blood mean that God’s anger is satisfied. His wrath is turned away because Jesus is taking the punishment that we deserve.

The blood of Jesus cleanses away all guilt

When we sin, we feel guilty; we feel ashamed, we feel that we have let ourselves down and we have let others down. After time, we may convince ourselves that perhaps this doesn’t really matter, but deep down we are uneasy and we feel separated from God. We have no real sense of peace and it seems a hopeless situation. However, when we come to Jesus in true repentance, He forgives our sin. He no longer holds our sins against us, we are cleansed, we are renewed, our guilt is gone and now we enjoy God’s goodness.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

His Death

The blood of Jesus brings healing to sick bodies

One of the consequences of our sins is that our physical health and wellbeing are affected. When we confess our sins and renounce sinful habits, it is remarkable that we feel much better in ourselves. Not every illness is because of our personal sin. Sometimes living in a sinful world means that we are affected by the sinful environment around us. However, we can still call upon Jesus because His blood deals with sin; the consequences of sin are also dealt with through His wonderful sacrifice. We can come to Jesus with confidence, praying for healing for our bodies. We also know that what Jesus has done in His death and in His resurrection makes it possible for us to look forward to being in heaven which is a completely sin free environment. In that place there is no sickness, no sorrow, no pain, no suffering, no death, the blood of Jesus has made this possible for those who believe in Him.

The blood of Jesus defeats Satan and all his schemes and protects us

The devil was pleased when the first man disobeyed God. Man's rebellion against God placed him in Satan's kingdom. By nature we belong to the devil and we are in his power; we are slaves without hope but the blood of Jesus, the Holy One, the One who is God Himself releases us from Satan's grip. He hates the blood of Jesus. It has defeated him and now when we trust in Jesus we are transferred into the kingdom of God, free to serve Him. As people come to the Lord Jesus Christ who shed His blood and died in our place we come under His protection. We are able to plead the blood of Jesus and to proclaim His victory. We can pray "Lord Jesus I acknowledge that my sins have defiled me, they offend You and I am a slave to the evil one but Lord Jesus You shed Your blood for me. Please cleanse me, please forgive me, please deliver me from all the powers of the evil one. I give my life to You accepting that You are my Saviour, my Lord and my God." Romans 5:8-10, 1 John 1:7, 1 Peter 1:18-20 Revelation 12:11, Isaiah 53.

The blood of the lamb

In Exodus 12 we read of the night when the people were delivered from their slavery in Egypt. The instructions were clear. Their preparations were to be simple but thorough and it was essential that as households gathered they should take a lamb slaughter it and place its blood on the sides of the door frame and on the top of the doorframe. When the angel of death came he would Passover the homes where blood had been spilt but where there was no blood there would be death. Jesus is our lamb. When we plead His blood by turning from our sins and trusting in His death for us we are saved from death and judgement.

7 Things Seven Plus Series

His Death

John the Baptist`s testimony and John the Apostle`s letter.

“Look ,the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” John 1:29. Jesus is taking away the filth and grime of our sins past, present and future. His work as Hebrews says, is a once and for all sacrifice. Hebrews 7:27. In going to the Cross and shedding His blood, Jesus has dealt with sin but we avail of ourselves of this great sacrifice daily, knowing that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin and that “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1: 7-9

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Seven Statements Jesus makes from the Cross

“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” Luke 23:34

From the outset of Jesus' suffering, His heart was to forgive. They did not understand that Jesus was suffering in the will and determined plan of his Father and that He was in truth, the sin bearer and the Saviour of all who believe in Him. The fact is that Jesus is God and that the hands, nailed to the Cross, had created the entire universe. They did not really know who He was and what the implications were of His death. We know now and we worship Him and honour Him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

“I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in paradise.” Luke 23:43

Two thieves watched Jesus suffer; one reviled Him to the end but the other recognised that Jesus was innocent. He cried out for salvation, asking Jesus to remember him when he came into his kingdom. To be known, recognised and identified by Jesus is an immense privilege that comes to those who truly humble themselves and recognise Him to be who He is: Almighty God. We are also most encouraged by the immediacy of forgiveness and receiving eternal life. Today, praise God, we do not have to wait when we repent and truly believe; already we have passed from death to life!

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?” Matthew 27:46 Mark 15:34

The incredible agony of scourging and crucifixion, the awful humiliation of being stripped, spat upon and beaten so His face was not recognisable, the torment of the crowd, mocking and berating Him were not the greatest suffering for Jesus. Physical, mental, emotional and psychological suffering, severe though it was, did not compare with Jesus losing fellowship and communication with His Father. The sense of being cut off, abandoned and feeling the weight and filth of our sin was really hell. Surely He bore our sorrows and our sins in His body on the tree. This was what Jesus had anticipated in Gethsemane. This was the cup which He chose to drink, as He submitted to His Father's will. Indeed He loves us with an indescribable love.

“Dear woman, here is your son. Here is your mother.” John 19:25-27

Jesus' face had been horribly beaten and it was likely He would have had difficulty seeing. However, as He looked out from the Cross, He identified His mother, Mary and one of His disciples, John.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Seven Statements Jesus makes from the cross

Although the Cross was essentially a spiritual battleground where Jesus fought and won our salvation, this incident reminds us of Jesus' wonderful compassion and identification with our needs in this life, not just eternity. As He observed Mary, He ignored His own pain, to think of her. She agreed to conceive the Son of God; she had heard Simeon's chilling words in the temple as he warned that the Saviour in her arms would also be a source of great pain for her. She handles Jesus as a 12 year old being in His Father's house when she had been worried as to where He was! She handled His gentle rebukes when He seemed at first to ignore her request for help at the wedding feast in Cana and then His statement that His mother and brothers were those who did the will of God, rather than natural ties. Now she saw her Saviour born from her womb, dying on the Cross.

We know little of John's background but it would seem he was a young man and bereft of a mother, probably of a father too. It is inconceivable that Jesus would have spoken about Mary as a mother if John still had a mother alive. So Jesus spoke about Mary receiving support from John, and John receiving the love of Mary as a mother. This beautiful touch was so special at such a terrible time and reminds us that Jesus died so that we, the body of Christ could love and support one another in this life, weeping with those who weep and rejoicing with those who rejoice.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Seven Statements Jesus makes from the cross

"I am thirsty." John 19:28

Jesus had refused the earlier drink, which was laced with a drug, because He chose to bear fully the pain. Now after some hours, He was simply thirsty.

"It is finished." John 19:30

Jesus knew at this point that the work He came to do, had been completed. Salvation had been accomplished. Satan is defeated! Death is conquered!

"Father, into your hands I commit My spirit." Luke 23:46

Jesus now knew He could safely fall asleep, safe in the Father's love. This is how the Greek is translated. Jesus' victory was assured and He would amply demonstrate this when He rose from the dead. Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

His Resurrection

All four Gospels tell us that Jesus rose from the dead: Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24 and John 20-21. The facts are without question. Jesus was buried in a tomb lent by a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea.

On the third day, the heavy stone was rolled away and the body of Jesus was never discovered. The grave clothes were neatly folded.

Soldiers were bribed to spin the story that Jesus' body had been stolen by the disciples but the demeanour of the disciples amply proves they were in no state to make up such a lie.

The disciples began to proclaim Jesus as Lord and Saviour, risen from the dead and some lost their lives confessing Christ in this way. Why throw your life away if you knew where Jesus' dead body was?

Jesus appeared several times to the disciples assuring them He really was alive. His main greeting was "Peace be with you"

So what are the implications from this wonder that Christ rose from the dead? Jesus is everything He said He was and the Bible's record is true.

The key issue for our lives is how we relate to Jesus and the place that we give Him. Romans 10:9 "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead you shall be saved."

Jesus' resurrection means He has conquered death; the greatest enemy is defeated. If we trust in Jesus then we too will see victory over death just as He did.

Jesus rose with a new body. He could be recognised but His new body had no limitations. We will have new bodies that will not grow old, will never get disease or sickness and we will recognise Jesus and one another.

The grave is not the end; we have eternal life to enjoy beyond the grave.

Satan is conquered. He is the one behind death and sin and so Jesus' death and resurrection has totally defeated him and we can taste victory now and be in a sin free environment with Jesus forever in heaven!

Jesus now intercedes for us. Forgiveness of sins is now available. Jesus releases ministry gifts to build His church and make it mature. The Holy Spirit can now come and empower the church wherever God's people meet.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

His Ascension

Jesus left heaven and came to earth. He lived His life in purity and obedience to the Father. He taught the word of God and He went to the Cross and then rose from the dead. The next important stage was to return to the Father. In Acts 1, we have the record of Jesus leaving the earth to enter the heavenly realm. For Jesus this was an indication that His job had been done. He returns in triumph to sit at the right hand of the Father, having achieved all the purposes that the Father had sent Him to achieve. This was a glorious moment for Jesus and the angels worshipped Him and welcomed Him into heaven. They had not understood all that was happening on earth but were thrilled to receive Him back.

Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father. This is a position of authority and privilege and He is enjoying what He experienced before coming to earth. This position of authority is even more powerful because in His humanity, Jesus had faced every challenge. He had overcome every trial and temptation and He had conquered death.

For us He is now our Advocate. He is able to intercede for us and He is there to welcome us when our time comes to leave earth and go to heaven. The Bible says in Ephesians 4 that the ascended Christ gave gifts to men so that the Church could be well established and come to a place of maturity. The ministries of apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher and evangelist are precious gifts to strengthen the body of Christ.

We are able to rejoice with Christ that every single thing He had been sent to do has been accomplished and that He is there in heaven, pleading our cause and from this place, in the purposes of the Father, He will return to earth.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

His Ascension

His Second Coming

It is wonderful to know that the Lord Jesus Christ is going to return to this earth and then everything will be brought to a conclusion. We are going to look at end times in a separate section but for now here are the essential things that we need to know about the Second Coming of Jesus:

Jesus is returning and every eye will see Him and no one will be able to resist Him, He will overcome all His enemies and He will bring justice and righteousness upon the earth. For the church, this will herald a new age as we rule and reign with Christ. There will be a new heaven and a new earth for the saints to dwell in and where Satan and sin are completely absent. For the unbeliever, the Second Coming of Jesus will be a time of great dread and ultimate judgement where there will be eternal separation from God and therefore from all that is good. For us who believe, we must prepare for His coming seeking to live righteous lives and urging unbelievers to repent and find Christ before it is too late.

- Matthew 24
- Luke 21
- Revelation 1

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Questions

1. Consider carefully the birth, names, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension and return of our Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Prepare a message on each of these topics, explaining the importance of each area.
3. Pray over each of the aspects of Jesus and ask Him to reveal Himself more and more to you.
4. Select three miracles and three parables and prepare messages on them explaining the meaning and main lesson we are to learn from them.
5. Be sure to understand the centrality of knowing that Jesus died, Jesus rose and Jesus will come again.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

God the Holy Spirit

1. **His Person**
2. **Comforter**
3. **Counsellor**
4. **Sin, Righteousness, Judgement**
5. **Fruit**
6. **Gifts**
7. **Be filled**
8. **Key Passages John 14—John 16, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4-5**

His Person

The Holy Spirit is not an it, or a thing. He is a Person. He is part of the Trinity and Jesus refers to Him as a Person to be known and related to. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came upon people to anoint them and to help them with specific tasks. However the prophet Joel spoke of the time when the Holy Spirit would come upon all flesh: Joel 2 28-32. He will come upon men and women, old and young, slave and free so that they are able to hear from God and to speak His word. The wonderful Person of the Holy Spirit does not promote Himself but all of His ministry is to promote Jesus and to make the work of Jesus effective and relevant in the lives of men and women.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Comforter and Empower

The Holy Spirit is able to encourage us and to comfort us. He is able to keep us on track. He is able to give us peace within; He brings comfort through teaching us the ways of God and He corrects us and directs us into the ways of God: John 14 v 16. The Holy Spirit helps us to know the peace of God and His work in our lives enables us to be confident that we are in the centre of God`s will.

If we are to live effective Christian lives, we need the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in Acts 1 v 8 that the believers would receive power from the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. The Holy Spirit makes us bold to proclaim the good news of Jesus to our families and friends who are near and also to those that are far away. The Gospel must reach all people of all nations therefore it needs to be communicated in a meaningful and relevant way which is culturally sensitive and very accurate. Man`s power cannot possibly achieve this. It is only the power of God. This power will need to be replenished; you cannot receive all that you need of the Holy Spirit in one moment. We need to keep on being filled because as we testify to the wonder of Jesus, we will need fresh power continually.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Counsellor

We need wisdom to make right decisions and to discern good from evil. The Holy Spirit is able to give us counsel so that we are not led astray but are close to the heart and mind of Christ. The work of Counsellor, Comforter and Helper are very similar things but vital things for us as we seek to follow the Lord and to do His will.

- John 14,15 and 16

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Sin, righteousness and judgement

John 16 v 7 -11 God`s Spirit is a Holy Spirit and we, by nature are sinful. He has the work of opening our eyes to our sinfulness and our need for forgiveness. He has the ability to make us aware of our position before God. When He convicts us of our sin, it is always with the goal that we should repent and turn to God. The devil`s work may at times make us feel very guilty, full of failure and full of faults; he wants us to remain miserable, feeling helpless and useless. The Holy Spirit is not trying to make us miserable but His work of conviction is to bring us to forgiveness and hope. We must pray that this work of God will happen as we seek to urge others to turn to Christ. Men sometimes can bring people to a place of guilt but without Christ, this is like offering a diagnosis with no solution. Sin needs to be seen for what it is. It grieves God and it is an affront to His holiness and must be judged. We are so grateful that in Jesus we have a Saviour to rescue us from our sins.

The Holy Spirit also convicts of righteousness. He does not simply show us our faults but He teaches us what God requires. Righteousness and integrity are the standard that He presents to us. Again He will point us to Jesus, who in His life demonstrated the righteousness of God. We see in every way in the example of Jesus how He wants us to live and how He wants us to respond to the challenges that we are presented with in this world. If God demanded righteousness but He was not righteous this would be an impossible situation. However when I look at Jesus and consider His words, His actions and even His thoughts I see righteousness in every single area of His life. The Holy Spirit is able to help us to develop and grow in righteousness day by day.

The Holy Spirit also has the work of reminding us of judgement; it is important that we are very clear that God will judge sin. He cannot overlook it; He cannot ignore it. The enemy of God, Satan has been judged; he has been found to fall short of God`s perfect standard and has already been judged. He is separate from God now and ultimately will be separated from God forever. All of us will face judgement and all of us will have to give an account regarding our lives. God does not overlook or minimise our sins but He judges fairly and justly. Christ has taken the judgement we deserve. When we see that and receive Christ we are no longer under judgement but we enjoy the grace of God.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Fruit

The Holy Spirit is able to produce in us the character of Christ. We shall look at the gifts of the Holy Spirit but people often emphasise the gifts of the Spirit above fruitfulness. Sometimes people may move in powerful ways but in their personal character there is no evidence of Christ. To be like Jesus is our greatest joy. Jesus is looking for fruit and we do not want to disappoint Him. Therefore if we are in a close relationship with the Holy Spirit, sensitive to His promptings and guidance, we will see that more of Jesus is being formed in us. Galatians 5 v 22 - 23 describes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. All of these qualities are clearly evident in the life of Jesus. When all of these fruits are growing within us we are looking at maturity, stability and perseverance shining forth in our lives. We need to ask God to help us grow in all these areas and not be content with seeing one or two in our lives but desiring all of the fruits to be seen in us. Those who aspire to be leaders in the body of Christ must show evidence of these fruits. We may well find that we have to walk through difficult times to see these fruits emerge; they so often develop in the fullness of trial and pressure.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Gifts

The Bible talks about gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, in Ephesians 4 and in Romans 12 v 6 – 8. People do have different gifts. We need not be envious of anyone but must use the gifts we have whether they are few or many. Gifts are to be used with humility; we have done nothing to earn them so there is no place for boasting or pride. If people have a ministry gift, it is not a title or again something to convince people you are better than them. It is rather a function where you are serving the body of Christ. So if it is an apostolic gift, this is not superior to other gifts but more a description of how someone humbly serves the body of Christ. There are gifts of administration; the Holy Spirit has gifted some to maintain good order in the body of Christ, to deliver integrity in finances and to present things well so that we please the Lord. These sorts of gifts are able to release people with other gifts so that they can excel in what God has given them. As our world becomes complex and the need for transparency and accuracy becomes greater we will also need more administrators to keep the church on track. There are many practical gifts; when they are anointed it means that what is produced is functional and to the glory of God. The Old Testament temple required gifted people to use their talents so that the end product was a building available to God. In the New Testament when there was a need to supervise and care fairly for widows, people were set aside for the task; even though it was practical, the spiritual requirements were very high. These people were to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.

There are other gifts which are able to strengthen, encourage and build up the body of Christ. We are referring to those gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12. Words of wisdom come from the enabling of the Holy Spirit and they bring a resolution to a difficult and even frustrating situation. Words of knowledge may give answers but particularly they give insight and understanding, regarding a need or a problem. A gift of faith is when God gives the ability to trust Him and take positive steps regarding a particular situation. Stepping out in faith is not easy but God can give that gift which enables a person or indeed the church to begin to move in the direction of these purposes.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Gifts

Gifts of Healing: Jesus demonstrated the ability to heal all diseases however some in the body of Christ may find faith and courage to believe God for healing in certain areas perhaps a particular part of the body. We need healing for all parts of the body so it is helpful when there is a particular need to find someone full of faith to pray about it. Gift of Miracles: We know that Jesus still does miracles today and this gift is available in the body of Christ. Again it operates by faith to look to God whether it be a miracle of healing, a miracle of provision, a miracle of protection or any other situation which requires that which only God can do. Prophecy is the ability to bring a pertinent word at a particular time or place. The gift to bring the word is very much from God but also the gift to listen to hear the voice of God is very important. There is much deception and confusion in the body of Christ so learning to distinguish whether something is from God or the devil is very important. This is the gift of discernment.

Perhaps at this time in the Church's history, we need this gift more than ever before. There are so many false teachings and emphases that take people outside the word of God, we need to know what God is saying and to avoid the trap of deception. Tongues and interpretation of tongues: this gift is often highlighted because of its often exuberant nature. It is described in the word as a gift which encourages the believer to pray and not be distracted and if it is spoken out loud it requires interpretation so that the whole body benefits. It is just one of the gifts and should not be exaggerated or given a higher place than any other spiritual gift. The whole purpose of these gifts is to build up the body of Christ. Paul speaks about a need for order in the church services. If there is chaos and no time to evaluate what God is saying then it is just a lot of noise and of little value to the body of Christ.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Be filled

In Acts 2 Peter and the 120 in the upper room were all filled with the Holy Spirit there were manifestations of wind and fire and there were tongues of fire settling on the believers but the most significant happening was the boldness that came on Peter and others to proclaim Christ. 3000 were saved in one day.

In Acts 4 the church is at prayer because some of the apostles had been imprisoned and opposition has been hitting the church. We read that after prayer the place is shaken, they are filled again with the Holy Spirit and speak boldly the word of God. When Saul is converted on the Damascus Road Ananias prays for Him to receive his sight and to be filled with the Holy Spirit. In Acts 10 Cornelius and his household received the word of God and they are filled with the Holy Spirit. There are other occasions when people who have received the Gospel also receive a touch of the Holy Spirit filling their lives. We also are able to receive the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to grow in our Christian lives and to use God`s gifts and to boldly proclaim Jesus. Ephesians 5 v 18 exhorts us to go on being filled with the Holy Spirit. God`s Holy Spirit is at work bringing us to Christ; He is at work in our conversion when we receive Christ and He continues to be at work making us like Christ in all the ways that we need to be Christlike. There is no room for complacency and no room for pride we need the Holy Spirit right now to make us bold witnesses to preach without fear that our Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins, rose from the dead, ascended to the Father and one day will return to judge the earth. Alleluia!

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Questions

1. Study carefully each of the aspects of the Holy Spirit in these notes.
2. Note His names and Titles
3. Look at His character and His work in the lives of men.
4. Consider each of the fruits He seeks to grow in us. Spend time in prayer asking God to develop these fruits of the character of Christ in your life.
5. Understand the gifts He wants us to experience in our lives.
6. What gifts do you have experience of in your life?
7. What gifts would you like to experience?
8. How do you avoid seeking gifts and neglecting the Giver?
9. Are you consciously desiring the power of the Holy Spirit in your life, to increase your boldness to proclaim Jesus?

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit - The Trinity

1. **God the Father is a person**
2. **God the Son our Lord Jesus Christ is a person**
3. **God the Holy Spirit is a person**
4. **Completely and totally God**
5. **The Father's act of Creation**
6. **The incarnation of the Son**
7. **The coming of the Holy Spirit**
8. **Key Passages Matthew 3:16-17, Matthew 28:18-20**

God the Father is a person

We believe in one God but understand He is expressed in Three Persons. As Christians we have one God not three.

Each member of the Godhead is a Person

God the Father is a Person

Isaiah 64: 8 refers to the prophet's cry: "O Lord You are our Father." There is so much about the Father that we do not understand. Jesus who is fully God makes Him known. Jesus said "He who has seen me has seen the Father. I and the Father are one." (John 14: 9, John 10:30)

Father is not simply a name for God but speaks very much of relationship, a relationship we are invited to have personally with Him.

Our relationship with the Father is a work of God, the Holy Spirit. He is the One who works in our hearts, to create the testimony from within us "Abba Father" Galatians 4:6. He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rom 15:6, 2 Cor.1:3 and He is our Father too when we trust in Jesus as our Saviour.

7 Things Seven Plus Series

God, the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ is a Person

Psalm 2:7 declares it and this Scripture is repeated in the New Testament. Hebrews 1:7 Speaking to the Son we read, "Thy throne O God is forever and ever. Isaiah 9v.6-7 declares the Son born is "Wonderful Counsellor" and "Mighty God."

John 1 speaks of Jesus as the Word of God and in fact that He is God. Thomas' declaration: "My Lord and my God!" John 20:28: "He is the way, the truth and the life." John 14:6. Many Scriptures affirm the same; Jesus is God and Saviour.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

God, the Holy Spirit is a Person

David speaks of his fear that his sin would cause the Holy Spirit to be taken from him. Psalm 51:11. Isaiah speaks of the Spirit of the Lord anointing the Messiah for ministry. Isaiah 61: 1-2. Joel speaks of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that is characteristically God coming upon His people but now all of His people. The creation story speaks of 'LET US', saying Almighty God Father, Son and Holy Spirit are creating the world and mankind. Genesis 1

We read about the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of Christ. John 15:26 & Acts 2:33. He is God.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Completely and totally God

The Father is God, Jesus, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit, He is God but they are one so we speak of one God expressed in three Persons. God is love and these three Persons exhibit true love in humility and self-giving one to the other. Our triune God is to be worshipped, loved and adored.

He is to be honoured in everything so when we address Him whether it Is Father or Jesus we are referring to the same God.

Since they are one, they share the same characteristics and attributes: eternal, holy, loving, all powerful and all knowing. Their works too are reflected in their oneness for example in Creation, Salvation and Redemption.

Worshipping God means that whether we sing Father or Jesus, in fact we are not ignoring one and favouring another. ONE GOD

The persons of the Godhead are distinct Persons.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

The Father's Act of Creation

Father is the planner and essence of Creation. He is the prime mover but God the Son and God the Holy Spirit were all involved in the creation process. The creation of the whole universe, every star and planet, every solar system, all of them intricately placed by Father's hand. Earth and man are especially significant in Father's plans and eventually there will be new heavens and a new earth after Jesus returns.

- Genesis chapters 1 & 2

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

The Incarnation of the Son

It was God the Son who became man as Jesus was born at Bethlehem. Without ceasing to be God, Jesus became man. The Father gave the Son and the Son was conceived in flesh, in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit. Only God the Son became man but Triune God was active in all of this amazing plan to achieve our salvation.

- John 1
- Hebrews 1

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

The Coming of the Holy Spirit and Grace

The Holy Spirit was sent by the Father through the Son. He came upon people in the Old Testament times and indwells and fills people from Pentecost onwards. Jesus when teaching on prayer said, "how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" Luke 11:13. The Holy Spirit is an amazing resource to all believers. He is fully God and He empowers us to testify boldly to Jesus and opens our eyes to comprehend God as Father.

- Acts 1:8
- Acts 2

"May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." 2 Corinthians 13:14

These words conclude many a gathering of Christians. They do not explain the mystery of the Trinity but when we say them, we simply state time and time again that we believe in One God who is expressed in Three Persons. Although we do not understand, we rejoice to enjoy relationship with the Father, with the Son and with the Holy Spirit. Hallelujah!

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Questions

1. Why is it important to believe in the Trinity?

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Hermeneutics

1. **An Introduction**
2. **What is the Bible?**
3. **Exegesis**
4. **Implications of the authority of Scripture**
5. **Interpreting different types of biblical literature**
6. **Approaching Scripture**
7. **Translations**
8. **Key Passages Psalm 1, Joshua 1, Matthew 13, Luke 24: 25-49, 2 Timothy 3: 10– chapter 4:8**

Hermeneutics

An introduction as to why hermeneutics is important.

A verse given to me early in my Christian life was 2 Timothy 2v15: "Be diligent (study) to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth".

This verse inspires us to take seriously the subject of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the science of interpreting written texts and especially in our context, Scripture. We thank God for His word but very much want to understand it clearly and to interpret it correctly.

Two things to consider from the outset.

We want to know what the word meant when it was written.

We want to interpret the word in the context of today and apply it correctly now. We are involved in Exegesis --- studying a passage.

Exposition --- preaching it.

We have many aids to help us: concordances, commentaries of the whole Bible, commentaries on a book of the Bible, dictionaries, handbooks, history books and of course many versions of the Bible.

However the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

What is the Bible?

It is a collection of 66 books, a library of books. The Bible was written over a period of 1,500 years and God used 39 different people in the writing of it.

The Old Testament has 39 books written in Hebrew.

The New Testament has 27 books written in Greek.

The Canon

This refers to the decision as to which books are considered as Scripture and which are not. The fact that other literature appeared particularly around the time of the N.T. meant that it was necessary to decide what was Scripture and what was not. Jesus and the Jews never quoted the Apocrypha and the reformers did not regard it as Scripture either. Various other documents have been relegated as not inspired by the living God.

The Jews readily accepted the 39 books we call the O.T. as Scripture and were deeply devoted to caring for the scrolls of these books. They also, as necessary, painstakingly made copies so carefully as they believed they were literally words of God.

Joshua 1 v 7 & Psalm 1 reveal how highly Jews regarded the O.T. Jesus quoted from 24 O.T. books and rebuked Satan with O.T. Scripture. Other N.T. writers quote from the O.T. e.g. Peter and Paul. Jesus treated the O.T. as fact.

The apostles regarded the O.T. as fact as well and the apostles' doctrine revolves around a clear understanding of who Jesus is, why He came, what He achieved, where He is now and what He will do in the future.

The Carthage Council of 397A.D. officially ratified our N.T.

Jesus and those who met with Him plus those like Mark and Luke wrote with care to demonstrate the logic and power of Scripture.

We maintain the Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit and is God breathed. Men were inspired by God to write, not as robots but guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit .

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Exegesis

Medieval exegesis

This was a time when the authority of the Church was felt to supersede the authority of Scripture and also that only the priests and bishops could properly interpret Scripture. Therefore Bibles were withheld from “ordinary” people as they were considered to be in danger of interpreting incorrectly. The reality was in fact the people were deceived by those interested only in undergirding their own position.

Reformation exegesis

This turned things around from medieval thinking to restoring the Bible as the ultimate authority for all matters of faith and conduct.

This also meant making the Bible available for everyone to read in their own language looking to the Holy Spirit to guide them, not just the priest.

Philosophical suppositions

This is where certain theologians began to interpret Scripture on the basis that the Bible contains the word of God rather than it is the word of God. By saying it contains the word of God people like Bultman helped to decipher what was fact and what was fiction and myth distinguished from truth. Miracles therefore are disposed of, the virgin birth is highly questionable and the Resurrection is merely a conjuring trick with bones. Oh how foolish men are!

God’s word is our final authority for all matters of faith and conduct. As believers we rejoice in an ultimate authority. God has spoken through His word. We respond not on the basis of reason, experience or tradition but simply because God has spoken. Historically there have been times when church structures have been placed above the authority of the Bible but God’s word must determine our beliefs and structures. Liberal theologians place store on the human mind as the ultimate authority. They argue the Bible is a flawed human product, and highly emotional.

Fringe Charismatics would tend to regard prophecy as more important than the Scriptures. This is again unhelpful.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Implications of the authority of Scripture

Scripture takes precedence over tradition, our experience & our opinions/philosophies.

Scripture is God speaking to us .

We need the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

We treat the Bible with respect, giving it time and attention.

We must exercise real faith in what God says.

Why is hermeneutics so important?

The Bible is God's word so we must handle it with awe and a desire to interpret it accurately.

What the Bible is not?

It is not a science textbook. However it is reasonable and tells us who made the universe. It speaks of why things exist rather than give details of how things happen.

It is not purely a history book though it contains various historical accounts from different angles.

The Chronology and the calendar used were different, so that needs to be taken into consideration.

Principles of hermeneutics

The Bible is God breathed and God inspired so my task is to seek the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who is the author.

I bear in mind the culture of the time and interpret with that understanding.

I recognise that Scripture is expressed in poetry, narrative, letters, prophecy, parable and allegory. An accurate exegesis comes out of recognition of what sort of literature is presented, for example: a parable is a story with a hidden meaning. Therefore the meaning is the key, not the story itself.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Interpreting different types of biblical literature

The Epistles

The New Testament consists of letters, which were widely circulated and read among the churches, and have clear apostolic links, as did the Gospels. These letters were written to answer certain questions and to address issues faced by Christians in their local churches. When we receive a letter, we read its entire contents then perhaps reread it, a portion at a time. It is good to read the whole letter before seeking to understand and interpret the teaching that it brings.

Old Testament narratives and history

Much of the Bible is history it is His story of His dealings with men. What happens to God`s servants and indeed His people is there to encourage and if need be, warn us in terms of our walk with God. It is significant to note the ruthless honesty of Scripture. People`s faults are there to be seen as well as their successes.

Acts of the Apostles

This history of the birth and early life of the Church shows us what God is able to do and the whole dynamics of signs and wonders, persecution and suffering, paint a full picture of what life in the early Church was like.

The Gospels

This of course is unique history of the life and ministry of our LORD JESUS. The four Gospels put together, give us a clear picture of Jesus and His ministry. We note that His parables are stories with meaning not necessarily literal events. His miracles we see as a literal description of the power He has working in the lives of men and women.

The Law

The five law books give us a clear insight into the character of God and what He requires of us. To obey God`s law pleases Him, creates health in us and causes us to be a distinctive people from those in the world who do not regard His law.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Interpreting different types of biblical literature

The Psalms & Wisdom literature

People enjoy reading the Psalms and Proverbs because they describe all the emotions and realities of life. We can identify with the psalmist and see the obvious wisdom of the Proverbs in terms of what is right and wrong.

The Prophets & Revelation

A prophet hears the word of the Lord, speaks the word of the Lord and then faces God`s people. When interpreting prophecy, we discern what God was saying in the historical context of the prophecy when given.

What is God saying now? What is God saying which is yet to be seen?

Revelation is a record of words from the Lord given to the Church going through immense suffering and persecution. There is comfort and hope given in the truth that Jesus will return in all His glory for His bride, the Church. We still wait for this and so we can see that certain judgements are still to be revealed but our hope is undiminished. Jesus will come back!

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Approaching Scripture

When we read Scripture, we should ask God for an open mind and desire to meet with Him. Pray for His presence to be known. We read with the Author sitting beside us. What better help could we have?

Questions to ask when studying a passage of Scripture.

What does this passage teach me about God, Father, Son & Holy Spirit?

Is there an error to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there a warning to take note of?

Is there an example to follow?

What do I feel God is saying to me?

7 Things Seven Plus Series

Translations

Today there are many translations of the Bible. Which translation do we use? First of all it is important to find out whether the translation has gone back to oldest Greek and Hebrew documents. These are known as codices and the most well-known ones are the Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Alexandrinus. Some Bibles are paraphrases therefore not strictly translations. It is also necessary to question the integrity of the scholars because some of the sects and cults have produced Bibles but wherever possible they have deliberately chosen to use words that underline their theological position rather than pursue truth. It has to be said that although the Authorised Version is very old and its English is outdated, it remains an incredible reliable and scholarly work.

Clearly this is not an exhaustive study but hopefully there are some helpful pointers here and enough to develop an appetite for further study.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Questions

1. Read carefully the notes and consider how you should interpret the Scriptures.
2. What types of Scripture are there?
3. How do we balance teaching from the Old Testament as well as the New?
4. Consider the questions we can ask of Scripture. Do you ask these questions? What questions do you think a congregation could be asking of a passage you are preaching from ?

7 Things Seven Plus Series

Preaching / Homiletics

1. **Prophetic Preaching**
2. **Encouragement**
3. **Exposition**
4. **Authority**
5. **Preparation for preaching**
6. **Presenting the message**
7. **The Presence of God**
8. **Key Passages Matthew 5, 6, 7, Acts 2, Acts 10:30-48**

What is preaching?

When we look at Scripture, we see that many times God speaks through people. There are records of God speaking directly from Heaven and they are amazing and very exciting. They are usually accompanied with great demonstrations of power for example on Mount Zion when God spoke, the earth shook. The Father speaks at the Baptism of Jesus and declares that Jesus is His chosen Son in whom He is well pleased. Most of the time God speaks to us through other people.

Exodus 20:18 - 20

Matthew 3:17

John 12: 28-30

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Prophetic Preaching

In the Old Testament people like Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel were in the presence of God and He gave them very specific messages which warned God's people of impending judgement if they did not repent. It took much courage to deliver these messages to people who were apathetic and far from God. The prophets were courageous; they did not seek to be popular. They spoke God's word and what they said came to pass. Sometimes more was happening than they realised. Their words did have immediate relevance to the people at that moment in history but within the message were insights about Christ, the Messiah who would come, who would suffer and die and rise from the dead.

Amazingly within some of these prophecies are statements about eternal judgement, the return of Jesus to this earth and the end of all things. We still wait for their fulfilment. It is true today that some messages brought from faithful men and women of God have relevance for the here and now, for the immediate future and the long term future. Prophetic preaching in the New Testament and now has a different emphasis. It is not so often to be predictive and talk about the future but a prophetic word today can be described as a word from God that speaks directly into a current situation. This has not been contrived but as the preacher waits on God, God reveals and shows a message that is totally appropriate for a situation or a church which the preacher had no knowledge of in the natural. This kind of preaching is very special and brings an awareness that God does know all about us and everything that we are handling and that He has something to say.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Encouragement

Some preachers are bringing messages which encourage and exhort the saints to keep following Jesus. Such preaching can be very inspired, very dynamic and full of life. These messages are often very practical but overall content is small. This does not mean that it is unimportant but it does demonstrate that sometimes people need a simple message which lifts their spirit and their heart to have faith, to overcome their problems and to move forward with God. It is very valuable to have a preaching team and for one of the team to be gifted in this way.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Exposition

It is so valuable to have messages that clearly open up and explain the word of God. Such preaching is often methodical and will involve working through a series, perhaps a Bible book, taking chapter by chapter and even verse by verse. A detailed study which helps us understand the background to the passage, any historical references, or meaning of words enable us to be true students who, as it says in 2 Timothy 2:15, are true students who have learnt to handle the word of God correctly and accurately. This kind of preaching is sadly lacking in many churches. People hear talks about favourite passages and favourite Bible characters but do not embark on the journey of serious study which really gets to grips with what Scripture is saying. Our doctrines and our basis of faith come out of this kind of preaching.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Authority

People noted what Jesus said but what they noted most was the authority with which He spoke. It is good to seek to bring a prophetic word; it is good to encourage and exhort God's people; it is good to explain clearly and simply what the Bible says. However to speak with authority, is to do with our walk with God and our life and relationship with Him. Preaching with authority is not to do with the loudness of our voice or even the passion of our hearts; it is when people have the sense that this is not simply a man or a woman speaking to me, God is speaking to me. In the Church, we need this preaching with authority; it will make it clear what we should believe and how we should behave in the house of God.

Many may participate in seeking God's people to progress but He has given some His authority which brings security to the flock of God.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Preparation for Preaching

We are held responsible to God regarding what we say; we must not be careless or foolish when addressing the people of God.

Preparation of the heart

The most important thing to consider when you are about to bring God's word is your heart before God. When I stand before God's people, I need to know that there is no secret sin or bad attitude in my heart before God. I must also be sure that my relationship with my husband or wife and children is in a good place. How can I speak to God's people if I am harbouring resentment, unforgiveness, even anger towards others in the body of Christ? The purpose of preaching is to bring people to God. How can I bring people to God when I am not in a good place with Him myself? The Psalmist says "Search me, O God and know my heart, test me and see if there is any wicked way in me". Psalm 139:23-24. I must walk in the light as God is in the light and not deceive myself but if I confess my sin He is faithful and just to forgive my sin and cleanse me from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:6-10

The Subject

It is important to know the main message that you want to bring. If you are working in a series then the next chapter or section will have been assigned to you. If you have been given no guidance then you have an extra responsibility to prayerfully seek God about what you should bring. Read the passage carefully and if possible read it in more than one translation of the Bible. If you have access to commentaries or notes from other preachers on this topic, it can be helpful to read them. It is important to be very sure what the core message is going to be. You may touch on many other topics but when people go home what is the most important thing that you feel the Lord wants them to remember?

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Preparation for Preaching

Sermon craft

A good sermon is well constructed and thoughtfully put together. It is good to think about how you will introduce the teaching you wish to bring, to have a main section of the points you wish to make and a conclusion that you want to present. Many preachers can ramble with no structure, you cannot see where they are going and the conclusion can seem unrelated to what they have said. Obviously we want to hear from God and to be open even when we are speaking, to Him dropping ideas into our mind. God speaks very clearly to us, there is no confusion, and we know what He is saying. If we want Him to speak through us, those same things must be present, a clean heart and wide open ears to hear His voice. We must have willing lips to speak His word.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Presenting the Message

It is important that we know the grace of God to be comfortable and be ourselves. We can learn from other preachers but to try to copy their style is foolish. People will be far more blessed to hear us rather than a copy of someone else.

Humour

Humour does create involvement but it needs to be very carefully used. Some preachers are remembered because they made us laugh but we have not remembered what they said so there is no point in that. Again be yourself, if you use humour let it be natural but generally if you are speaking through an interpreter, unless you know them very well, the use of humour is very difficult.

Length of message

It is absolutely vital to say what you have to say and then stop. If you have been allocated a certain amount of time and you are a few minutes short of that time, stop. If you do not stop you will lose your way and people will not be blessed. If you use a translator of course it will take longer. You must keep that in mind. Be courageous and if you are speaking and you sense that God is touching people, be prepared to pause and pray for them. It may be too late at the end of the message to do this.

Ministry after the message

God's word requires a response. James 1: 23-24 exhorts us to not just hear the word but to obey the word. However, although there should always be a response, the way people respond needs careful handling. If we regularly ask people to come to the front, it may just become a habit rather than a genuine response. People may seek us after the meeting for prayer. Some messages are calling for everyone to respond and sometimes there may be just a small number who need to respond. Our desire is that people respond to God. We must not manipulate people or consider that the extent of a response is a measure of how well we have preached. We must leave that to God.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

The Presence of God

In my opinion the most significant thing about preaching the word of God is that people encounter God. I must do my best to prepare my heart and to prepare my message and to present that message as clearly as possible. However, the most important thing is that when the word is proclaimed, people meet God. The sense of His presence and the reality of His being must totally transcend any other thing. We don't want people to meet us; we want people to meet God. When the word of God is proclaimed in spirit and in truth, God will use it to address people's needs regardless of whether we have mentioned those needs. The grace of God means that people will have a sense that what is being said is almost as if they were the only person in the meeting.

In Acts 2 when Peter proclaimed Christ the crowd asked the question, "what shall we do?" They were meeting with God. In Acts 10 Peter is preaching to Cornelius and his household and while he is speaking, the Holy Spirit falls upon the congregation. When Jesus spoke, He was the message; what He said and who He was were wonderfully and uniquely combined. No wonder people knew they were in the presence of God. I want to remind you that the preparation of your own heart and life is so vital if we are to see God use us as we share His word.

A final warning: God will always bless His word and truth. We must never allow ourselves to be deceived, and sometimes God speaks through us even when there are things that are not right in our lives. When we stand before the Lord, He will not ask us about our messages but He will talk to us about our relationship with Him, so watch your life and doctrine closely.

1 Timothy 4:16

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Questions

Read carefully the notes.

1. What is the goal of preaching?
2. What types of preaching are there?
3. How do you prepare yourself to preach and what you preach?
4. How do you respond to criticism of your preaching?
5. How do you feel your preaching could improve?

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Ministries in the church

1. **Apostles Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers**
2. **Prophets**
3. **Evangelists**
4. **Pastors and Teachers**
5. **Duties of Elders**
6. **The importance of a serving heart**
7. **Women in ministry**
8. **Key Passages Ephesians 4:11-16, Romans 12:1-8, 1 Peter 5:1-7, 1 Timothy 3**

The Bible speaks a lot about different ways of serving God. Whatever role we have, the key issue is always about function not about power. We may have a different function in the body of Christ but we are equally loved and valued. The way we fulfil our function is always with a servant heart. However big the responsibility we may have, we are there to serve God's people, not to dominate and oppress them. Each local church will develop a structure around these principles under the leading of the Holy Spirit. Some churches may refer to ministry gifts in different ways but structure is like scaffolding. It is there to assist in the construction of the building, but it is not the building.

The Ministries in *Ephesians 4:11-13*.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers

(Some put pastor and teacher as separate - hence '5 fold ministries')

These different functions are to equip all believers to do the work of ministry.

"Ministry" means simply "service"; we have given it a religious connotation not found in Scripture. Sometimes the Greek word is translated "serve" or "servant" and sometimes "minister". If you are a Christian you are in the ministry! There is no such thing as clergy and laity. The job of a pastor is to equip you to pastor; the job of an evangelist is to equip you to effectively share your faith.(1Cor.3:4-7)

1.

The word 'apostle' comes from the Greek word 'apostolos' which literally means "sent one".

In the New Testament we have:-

(a) Jesus (**Hebrews 3:1**),

(b) The twelve, appointed by Jesus (**Luke 6:13-16**) will always have a special place (**Luke 22:30, Revelation 21:14**). All had been with Jesus had witnessed His resurrection. Matthias replaced Judas (**Acts 2:14**).

(c) There is still apostolic ministry today. There are over 80 occurrences of the word "apostle", Those sent out by the Holy Spirit and the church (Barnabas, Paul, Silas, James, Sylvaniaus, Andronicus etc.).

Their purpose is to plant churches and /or lay foundations in the church, making sure people are truly saved, taught and overseen (they appointed elders in every church. - **Acts 14:23**).

The Bible doesn't use the word 'missionary' - this term has caused much confusion in missions. Some great missionaries of the past were truly apostles.

Apostles always travelled in teams with other ministries, never a one- man show accountable to no-one.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Prophets

Someone who hears from God and speaks what he hears. A seer (Old Testament term) - someone who sees as God sees and declares it.

He will bring God's word "Now"; stir up that which has settled down, pull down that which is unnecessary, will encourage and strengthen people to follow Jesus.

Jesus and others warned us about false prophets and said that we will know them by their fruit. This means that their character is godly and their words are fulfilled. A true prophet will take responsibility for and identify with his words. He will live his message. What he says will be constructive and productive. (false prophets often bring guilt, condemnation and fear). He will build up, clear up messes and encourage God's people. Just because someone brings a prophetic word does not mean they are a prophet. We can all exercise the spiritual gift of prophecy (**1 Cor.14**) and are encouraged to do so - especially by prophets - but some are called to this office.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Evangelists

An evangelist is someone who is gifted in sharing "the good news" (The Greek word 'Evangel' literally means 'good news'. He/she is able to bring people to faith in Jesus **and** equip all believers to do the same.

Only one evangelist is specifically mentioned in the New Testament - Philip but we can be confident that there are others. The task of equipping and inspiring others to share their faith is vital for a church to grow. Churches must grow by new people coming to Christ not by believers leaving one church and joining another. That is not real growth.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Pastors and Teachers

The Greek word "poimen" is only translated as "pastor" once in our translations (**Ephesians 4:11**). All other occurrences it is translated "shepherd". Two other words are used - "elder" and "overseer" (or bishop). (Greek 'presbyteros' and 'episkopos')

Read **1 Peter 5:1-3** and note the use of these three words:

Pastor , Elder, Overseer

Acts 20 :17,28 uses the same three words.

These 3 words can be used to refer to the same office, and can be interchanged. However we can see from N.T. usage that :- "elder" refers to the person; "overseer" designates his position in the church (he sees over); "shepherd / pastor" describes his work - to feed and care for the people.

Elders (plural) are appointed in every local church (**Acts 14:23**) and have oversight of it. They are appointed by God through the Holy Spirit, set in place by apostolic ministry and recognised by the church.

Qualifications for Elders are found in **1 Tim 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:5-12**. People above reproach; husband of one wife and rule own household well, temperate; prudent; self-controlled; respectable; not quarrelsome; gentle; free from love of money; not a drunk; hospitable; good reputation with those outside church; able to teach and reprove from the word of God; not a new Christian; proven and tested. It is important to see the emphasis is on character, not gifting.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Duties of Elders

Acts 20:28 They guard the flock. 1Tim 5:17 They bring order and preach and teach. 1 Thess. 5:12 They work hard and instruct. 1Peter 5:2 They shepherd God's people. 1 Tim 3:2; 5:17. They are hospitable and lead their family well. James 5:14 They pray for the sick.

Hebrews 13:17 - Elders give an account to God for those in their care. If a church has a membership and people are committed to it, then elders are able to know more clearly who they are pastorally responsible for.

Duties of Church toward Elders

1 Thess. 5:12, 1 Tim 5:17, Hebrews 13: 17,24, 1 Tim 5:9, Gal 6:6 We must esteem them highly and give double honour to those who rule well; remember, submit to, salute and encourage them; don't receive an accusation against one except with a witness, and also financially support.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

The importance of a serving heart

"The church is here for you to serve, not to serve you"

In the Kingdom of God most things are upside down to our modern, western way of thinking.

Servant & Leaders.

Read **John 13 2-17. Matthew 20:20-28** Jesus came to serve, not to be served.

Jesus demonstrated His love for us by serving us, and in His service He laid down His life for us. We are encouraged to do the same.

Galatians 5:1, 13-15. We have a wonderful liberty in Christ and can express it by serving, caring and supporting one another to attain maturity in Christ. How are we to use it?

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Women in ministry

First of all it is essential to recognise that before God men and women are equal. Jesus loves men and women equally and He values them equally. His attitude is deeply respectful of them both and in creation, the Genesis account makes it clear it was not good for men to be alone. They needed to have a suitable helper. The fact that men and women are different should not affect at all our desire to value both in their contributions in the body of Christ and to His church.

Gifting – in every area of ministry both men and women have gifting. They both plant churches; they are both prophetic, they are both pastoral, they are both evangelistic and they are both teachers.

They are different. Man can provide sperm which can lead to the creation of a new life but a woman is needed to receive and nurture that sperm releasing an egg which, when fertilised will result in a new life being lovingly cared for and protected in her womb till birth. A woman is equipped to be able to provide milk for the newborn infant; a man is not. These are differences but do not constitute women to be regarded as second class or inferior.

In marriage the Scripture is clear: Ephesians 5:22-25. The wife is to be subject to the husband and the husband is the head of the wife. In Bible days there was no confusion about what that meant but there was a massive lack of teaching that husbands should love their wives as Christ loves the Church. Sacrificial, unselfish love which pays the greatest price, laying down one's life is very lacking, especially by men who demand unquestioned obedience from their wives! The vast majority of successful marriages come from a partnership and mutual respect. Decisions are generally reached by a consensus and it is a foolish husband who disregards the concerns and views of his wife. However before God the husband is accountable to God for the marriage. If on I what I consider to be a very rare occasion, a necessary decision is not reached by mutual prayer and discussion, then the husband needs to make it.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Women in ministry

So in the church, my own conviction is that women need to be encouraged and strengthened to serve with all the gifting that God has given to them.

On the issue of authority in the Church, just as in marriage, men have a responsibility and an accountability before God to give the lead but again, to ignore the counsel and wisdom the gifted sisters offer is sheer folly.

Husband and wife teams are not obligatory in Christian ministry but offer an excellent balance. Certainly no man or woman should exercise their gifting in isolation; we must have godly people around us.

In conclusion, it is my conviction that a man takes the leading position in the Church, giving every opportunity for the woman to exercise all the gifts deposited in her.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Questions

Study carefully the different ministries mentioned in the notes.

1. Write in your own words the definitions of each ministry: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.
2. Make sure your definitions indicate a serving heart. These ministries are not about personal importance.
3. What is your view of women in ministry? Make sure you aim to support it from Scripture.
4. Other ministry gifts including administration, gifts of helps and encouragement must not be overlooked. What steps can you take to see that all these gifts are honoured?
5. Write a job description of all works of service in your church. Look at the teaching notes and above all, your Bible. Are your church members functioning biblically?

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Leadership

1. **Keep Focused**
2. **p Listening**
3. **d Fellowship**
4. **p Disciplined**
5. **receptive to prophetic input and prayer**
6. **Vision**
7. **vigilant**
8. **studies on Samuel, Joshua and Paul at the end of the study**

Keep Focused

We have a big responsibility to keep our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. What is Jesus saying? Where is He pointing? Above all remember who He is. The revelation of Jesus granted to John in Rev 1: 12—18 is the same Jesus we serve. Jesus' face shines like the sun in full strength. Jesus' voice is like the sound of many waters, calm but so powerful. Jesus is clothed in majesty, robed in splendour, dazzling and glorious. Jesus' eyes are like flames of fire, burning, penetrating, all consuming; nothing is overlooked. A preoccupation with the Lord Jesus will always keep our perspective right.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Keep Listening

Psalm 46 outlines a lot of turmoil in the world: much uncertainty and tremendous eruptions in nature. However there is a source of refreshment for God`s people in the midst of even chaos. There is a river. There are streams. The Holy Spirit is waiting to flow over us, to wash, refresh, clothe us and strengthen us but we must be still to know that He is God.

Making time to be still is a real effort for leaders. We make demands of ourselves and others are constantly requiring things from us. The question is to know what God is saying. As leaders, we have God`s agenda on our agenda. The nations are very much on His agenda. We must love and care for everyone as an individual but a heart for the nations is God`s heart. To know God`s strategy and wisdom we need to be still. Do not run after every detail but let Him provide the bigger picture.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Balanced Fellowship

One thing essential for us in serving God and avoiding burnout, is keeping close to Him and to be balanced in all we do. We cannot and should not avoid every trouble but it is good to make sure our week is not filled with people whose situations require answers now– right now!

Make sure you build in time with people who will lift and encourage you rather than tax and drain you. Paul in his letter to Philemon refers to him as one who refreshes the saints. Balance is not just having less demanding people but is also having those people who provoke and stir us to do better: people who challenge us.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Keep Disciplined

Those precious disciplines that we were taught when we first came to Christ need to be maintained: time in God's word, time in prayer, time with God's people, time to fast, time to witness to others about Christ and time to give. That is giving our tithe and beyond. We know that without the anointing of the Spirit, disciplines can be lifeless structures. However maintaining disciplines enables us to be in a place when God touches and moves upon our lives and lifts us out of complacency.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Be receptive to prophetic input and prayer

It is very important to humble ourselves and to ask for prayer. Sometimes we are so used to praying for others that we forget to ask for prayer for ourselves. It is also important to be in an environment where we know people who listen to God and are open to sharing what the Lord would say now. The prophetic is always in line with Scripture and will confirm what the Lord is saying in other ways but it is so encouraging.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Maintain Vision

Where there is no vision, the people perish and without faith it is impossible to please Him. If we were undertaking a journey, it would not be a bad thing to occasionally check you were on course. What is my vision? Am I trusting God or have I fallen into a pattern that has no element of faith but is just routine? It is important to take in the word of God. Spending time in His word and dwelling on the Scriptures will rekindle our vision. (Proverbs 29: 18)

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Be Vigilant

A) There is a danger of what I do becoming more important than who I am. The Lord is not impressed by what we do but more by our Christlikeness. Everything we do and everything God does in us is to make us more like Jesus. It is so important that we see Christ being formed in us. The activity of the Holy Spirit is all about Jesus in me. Of course the more Jesus is seen in me then the more like Him my actions will be.

B) The danger of having a name that I live but am dead. Rev 3:1. It is deeply disturbing that so much of my Christian life can appear to run on when the fuel ran out a long time ago. Outer patterns can appear unaltered for some time when our heart has gone very cold. It is important to keep asking the Lord to examine our motives. If we really live to please Him only, fresh fire will touch our soul.

C) Isolation. We have been placed in the body of Christ and we do not have to live on our own. When we isolate ourselves, our standards and values can be warped and our assessment of right and wrong gets confused.

D) Running away from challenges and avoiding suffering. We do not have to look for suffering or pain but Jesus warned us that in this world we will have tribulation and trial. John 16:33 Sometimes these very trials are the instruments God uses to shape our character. James in his first chapter and 2 Peter chapter 1 both illustrate the grace of God at work in us when we endure hardship and need endurance to fully see the victory of God emerge. We can be certain that no suffering in this world for Christ will be overlooked by Him. All difficulty and temptation is watched over by Him. We know for sure heaven will not present us with any trial.

E) No accountability. This is often linked with isolation. We need to make ourselves genuinely accountable to others. Our personal lives, our family life, our ministry life should all be open to scrutiny by a trusted friend and this prepares us to give an account to God. I do not have to see others speaking into my life as an intrusion but rather as a preparation to face the One who is Holy and Just: Jesus.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Statement of Faith

Evangelical Alliance Statement of Faith used by Living Hope Ministries

We believe in...

1. The one true God who lives eternally in three persons—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
2. The love, grace and sovereignty of God in creating, sustaining, ruling, redeeming and judging the world.
3. The divine inspiration and supreme authority of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, which are the written Word of God—fully trustworthy for faith and conduct.
4. The dignity of all people, made male and female in God's image to love, be holy and care for creation, yet corrupted by sin, which incurs divine wrath and judgement.
5. The incarnation of God's eternal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ—born of the virgin Mary, truly divine and truly human, yet without sin.
6. The atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross: dying in our place, paying the price of sin and defeating evil, so reconciling us with God.
7. The bodily resurrection of Christ, the first fruit of our resurrection; his ascension to the Father, and his reign and mediation as the only Saviour of the world.
8. The justification of sinners solely by the grace of God through faith in Christ.
9. The ministry of God the Holy Spirit, who leads us to repentance, unites us with Christ through new birth, empowers our discipleship and enables our witness.
10. The Church, the body of Christ both local and universal, the priesthood of all believers—given life by the Spirit and endowed with the Spirit's gifts to worship God and proclaim the gospel, promoting justice and love.
11. The personal and visible return of Jesus Christ to fulfil the purposes of God, who will raise all people to judgement, bring eternal life to the redeemed and eternal condemnation to the lost, and establish a new heaven and new earth.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Core Values

The word of God

The Bible is the final authority concerning doctrine and behaviour. Everything taught must be in line with God's word. Salvation and heaven are available through our Lord Jesus, who is the Living Word. Sin, judgement and hell are realities to be dealt with.

The Cross

Always we preach Christ – and Him crucified! All of our messages should contain the good news of salvation through Jesus, who died for our sins and rose again!

The Church

Jesus never promised to build L.H.M. but He did promise to build His church. The purpose of L.H.M. is to build up the church of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, our teaching and input should always seek to build up the local church, not the ministry of L.H.M. The biblical ministries of apostles, prophets, teachers and evangelists are actively encouraged and the groups we work with should aim to have this balance. We want local churches to be free from false teaching, so that they can serve their communities effectively.

The Nations

God's heart is for the nations and all nations are open to the ministry of LHM as the Lord leads.

The Holy Spirit

His empowering, gifting and anointing are essential to see signs, wonders and lasting fruit in the ministry.

Relationships.

L.H.M. is committed to encouraging those who are taught and touched by the ministry and to build strong and deep personal relationships with the Lord Jesus Christ. All the people we work with are friends, not contacts, and our service for Jesus is greatly enhanced by our being in good relationship with one another. We honour marriage as taught in Scripture. Marriage is to be safeguarded in every way and is a powerful picture of the relationship between Christ and His church. Holiness and purity are hallmarks of that relationship.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Core Values

Service

We believe valid Christian ministry comes out of a serving heart. People working with us must not be empire builders in any sense but servants of the Lord Jesus.

Leadership Training

Local churches need to be led by godly leaders, whose vision is clear to build God's church, not theirs! Seminars, TV, Radio, Bible Studies, Prayer and Fellowship are all provided to achieve that goal.

Humility

LHM serves very poor people in other countries but in no sense do we want to adopt a colonial style. Rather, we count it always a privilege to work with God's people in whatever economic state they find themselves.

Focus

LHM was called by God to train and equip leaders – teaching them to build churches that reflect the New Testament model. We recognise the many practical and material needs that are faced by these leaders and we help where we can. However, this can never be at the expense of our goal to train and equip God's servants and to establish churches that honour Jesus.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Questions

Apply each of the principles of leadership mentioned in the notes.

1. Write a practical follow up, showing that these principles operate in your own leadership work.
2. Choose a favourite leader from Scripture and prepare a study of their life to teach other leaders.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Leadership lessons from Samuel, Joshua and Paul

Samuel – Learn to Listen

Three main learning areas for Samuel

1. He learned as a boy God was speaking to him not the priest Eli. Three times God speaks. God calls him by name. Jesus said my sheep hear my voice and know me. God wants to speak about judgement and a true assessment of things. Samuel has to listen to uncomfortable truth. As leaders God wants to speak to us and somethings will be hard to hear. The old priest has not been responding to God and his sons are behaving very badly. They are not being corrected. Do not despise yourself but let God do with you whatever He decrees.

2. Gods will regard a king... Samuel found it hard to believe God would allow the people a king. He was their king so how could anyone take that role. God allowed it to bring discipline into the lives of His people. We need to listen to God as leaders, sometimes he is allowing things which we struggle with. He is using things to bring His people to their senses. He knows His people so well. Of course he did not want to be replaced but the Lord knew the people would only understand by walking through trials and testing.

3. Gods will in relation to a new king. After some time Saul has fallen to such a low that the Lord decrees he will be replaced. This is going to take time and is a painful process. Saul tries to be priest and king which was clearly forbidden. We must operate within our calling and humble ourselves to do that. We must obey fully what the Lord says. We must not fall short of his requirements. We must never resort to other gods or any form of witch craft. Saul did and the Lord would eventually remove him. Samuel faithfully exhorted Saul to obey God but he rejects his counsel. Samuel is asked to go and anoint a new king who will have to sit and watch Saul fall deeper into the mire before he is crowned publicly King. Samuel shows courage. When he heads for Bethlehem and Jesse's home if Saul knew he could have tried to kill him. He sees Jesses sons and is convinced is convinced the new king is among them. Then he learns another key leadership lesson. Man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart. David is called in from the fields and the Lord speaks to anoint him. He is young but His heart pleases God. Sometimes we will be led to appoint and work with people who outwardly do not appear ready but ask God to show you their heart. I have often found praying with people and hearing them pray is a good way to discover what is in their heart.

Scriptures to read 1 Samuel 3, 4,8,9,13,16,28:17-19, Acts 13:22

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Leadership lessons from Samuel, Joshua and Paul

Joshua man of vision

Joshua was learning to pick up responsibility from others and to have courage. Joshua had been disciplined by Moses. He had watched Moses and seen his leadership skills.

Moses was God's servant and God's friend. He had learned from his mistakes and was very humble in the way he served God. His relationship with God had grown so much and his encounters with the Lord on Mount Sinai were extraordinary. He saw God's glory so much so that his face needed to be covered to protect God's people when he came down from the mountain. Despite much affliction from God's people he interceded for them to escape the wrath of God. However one moment of frustration was to disqualify him from leading the people into Canaan which is what Joshua was called to do.

God's plan The people were to enter the promised land and the promise to Joshua was that God would be with him EVEN AS He had been with Moses.

Meditation and the word.

Joshua is exhorted to be bold and courageous and to meditate on the word of God day and night. The apostles said in Acts 6 that they needed to focus on the word and prayer. Leaders need to be rooted in the word and to be focused on scriptural principles. Above all the word of God reveals God Himself. It is a wonderful way that we get to know Him.

Learning from mistakes

Jericho is a major victory but Ai turns out to be an unexpected loss. Joshua seeks God and he is guided to uncover the sin behind the failure. Joshua confronts the situation and like Peter in Acts 5 the perpetrator is dealt with. Bringing discipline to the body of Christ is painful for the leader as well as the one being disciplined. We must with great humility be resolute to deal with sin but also recognise there is mercy for those who truly repent.

A household committed to serving God

Scriptures to read Joshua 1, 6, 7, 24:15 Acts 5 & 6

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Leadership lessons from Samuel, Joshua and Paul

Paul – Courageous Leadership

Building on the foundation of our conversion.

Paul's life and ministry is deeply impacted by the knowledge of Christ's love for him. He regards himself as the chief of sinners. He is constantly amazed that God should choose him despite his rebelliousness and hostility to God's people.

Prophecy over him regarding his call to speak to those in authority is taken very seriously.

Planting churches building on new ground. Paul's strategy was to preach the gospel, especially the cross then he gathered the new converts to teach and disciple them. If by God's grace he could stay long enough he would lay hands on elders to leave them in charge. If that was not possible he would send ministers like Timothy or Titus to establish leadership.

Raising up Timothy's. The letters to Timothy and Titus are great teaching to those who have been called to carry on the work he has done. He urges they should watch their lives and teaching closely.

Courage to persevere and Facing death. Paul handles beatings, imprisonment, threats, cruelty and shipwreck. Nothing stops him sharing Christ

He is ready to go home to Christ at the end believing a reward is laid up for him

He has fought a good fight, he has kept the faith and he has run the race. He is a real inspiration to us and we are assured that our glorious Saviour says to him well done good and faithful servant.

Scriptures to read. Acts 9, 13, 1&2 Timothy, Titus, 2 Corinthians 4, 6, 2 Tim 4:6-8

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Getting the gospel to a dying world

1. **Bible evangelists**
2. **7 significant people from Church history**
3. **Seven great missionaries**
4. **Lessons learnt sharing the Gospel**
5. **Key principles in the growth of Living Hope**
6. **Reaching the nations**
7. **Will you go?**

**Key Passages—Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:15-20, John 20:19-23,
Acts 1: 4-8**

Key Bible Evangelists

Jesus is the greatest Evangelist. Here are seven encounters:

Jesus with Nathaniel. John 1: 43-51.

Jesus' insight of knowing about Nathaniel, even though they had never met, persuades Nathaniel that Jesus is truly the Messiah.

Jesus with Nicodemus. John 3.

Jesus, with this very religious Pharisee, makes it clear that to be born again is a necessity. Spiritual birth, not just natural, paves the way for eternal life.

Jesus with the woman at the well. John 4

Jesus' knowledge of the woman's past and his willingness to accept her, touches her heart and humbles her to see that He alone is to be the object of true worship.

Jesus with the woman caught in adultery. John 8

Jesus' alertness to all sin, not just the woman's and His challenge that those without sin should throw the first stone, disarms all and brings mercy to a woman thinking she is facing death. His exhortation for her to leave her life of sin is very clear.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Getting the gospel to a dying world

Key Bible Evangelists

Jesus with Zacchaeus Luke 19:1-10

Jesus, reaching out to someone despised and hated wins Zacchaeus' heart and repentance follows.

Jesus with the rich young ruler. Mark 10:17-31.

Jesus' clarity about the cost of being a follower with no compromise reveals sadness that the young man says "No" but shows that Jesus will not lower His standards to get disciples.

Jesus with the thief on the Cross. Luke 23:32-43.

Even at the point of death, Jesus reaches out with hope to the repentant thief.

These illustrations are good examples of how we should seek God for compassion, wisdom and insight as we reach out to the unsaved.

The Bible mentions some other key people who preached the Gospel.

Peter leads the way with powerful preaching on the day of Pentecost. In Acts 2, the believers have been filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter stands up and boldly presents Christ as the true Messiah, Christ and God.

The core of his message was "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ". Acts 2:36. Three thousand repent and receive Jesus. After the healing of the lame man, five thousand receive Christ. At the home of Cornelius, the Roman centurion, many come to Christ. The key to Peter's preaching was the centrality of Christ and His personal witness to Christ's Resurrection.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Getting the gospel to a dying world

Key Bible Evangelists

Philip was one of the seven chosen by God's people as one to help resolve the crisis over food distribution to the widows. This strategy from the apostles was highly blessed by God and the church grew considerably. However there was a time of persecution which led to Philip leaving Jerusalem and heading for Samaria. He preaches Christ as the only Saviour and God and many find Christ as Saviour and there is revival in the city. Acts 8.

Philip also sets us a great example by being willing to leave a flurry of exciting ministry, salvation, healings and deliverance to go to a desert road to meet one man. This Ethiopian has been prepared by God and is hungry for the Gospel. Philip's anointed ministry sees him taking the Ethiopian from the book of the prophet Isaiah chapter 53 to Christ, the Lamb of God. This results in the salvation of this man and his baptism as a Christian. Many believe this changed man took the Gospel back home to Ethiopia.

Paul preaches the Gospel in many places and people turn from idols and false religions to the living, true God. In Philippi the work begins with Lydia (Acts 16) whose heart the Lord opens. In Thessalonica (Acts 17), many trust Christ even though there is strong opposition and in Corinth, Paul is told there are many in the city who will respond (Acts 18:10).

He again makes it plain that his burden is, through the foolishness of preaching, to proclaim Christ and Him crucified.

We understand all the other apostles apart from Judas Iscariot were martyred for their faith and boldness in proclaiming Christ. John was initially exiled on the island of Patmos.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Seven people who shaped church history

Here are seven key characters that have shaped Christian history. There are of course many others.

Constantine the Great (272- 337) Constantine was the first Roman Emperor to convert to Christianity. This did have the effect of helping the spread of Christianity throughout Western Europe. He also convened the Council of Nicaea in 325 to unify the Christian creed.

John Wycliffe (1330 -1384) translated some of first versions of Bible into English. Wycliffe was an early critic of the Papacy, becoming a precursor for the reformation of Martin Luther. He had followers called Lollards who took Scripture and preached, often at the risk of their lives.

Martin Luther 1483 -1546 *Luther was a German theologian whose writings inspired the Protestant Reformation.* He was ordained in 1507, began teaching at the University of Wittenberg and in 1512 was made a doctor of Theology. In 1510 he visited Rome on behalf of a number of Augustinian monasteries, and was appalled by the corruption he found there. Luther became increasingly angry about the clergy selling 'indulgences'. These documents promised absolution punishments for sin, either for someone still living or for the one who had died and was believed to be in purgatory. On 31 October 1517, he published his '95 Theses', attacking papal abuses and the sale of indulgences. Luther had come to believe that Christians are saved through faith in Christ and not through their own efforts.

William Tyndale (1494–1536) was one of the first persons to print the Bible in English. He worked on translating the Bible into English even when it was considered to be illegal. He was executed for blasphemy after years of avoiding capture. His desire that ordinary people should have the Bible in their own language cost him his life.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Seven people who shaped church history

George Whitefield (1714-1770) George Whitefield was a clergyman of the Church of England. He was had a small frame but was known for his huge preaching voice. Some refer to him as one of the greatest evangelists of all time. He was used to like a spark to bring America's 1st Great Awakening. He had an amazing way of simplifying the message of Christ to a very large population but always being clear and accurate. He is considered a great contributor to our Christian heritage.

- George Whitefield is best known as an aggressive evangelist who was the fire behind America's Great Awakening.

- George Whitefield was the Founder of the movement called Methodism

George Whitefield said: *"The reason why the Son of God took upon him our nature, was, the fall of our first parents."*

John Wesley (1703-1791) A member of the Anglican Church, Wesley inspired the creation of Methodism, which became a separate church to the established Anglican Church. Wesley was a great preacher and encouraged unordained followers to preach and evangelise with the Gospel. He encouraged a disciplined Christian life, urging followers to be wholly committed to Christ.

Billy Graham (1918 -) an American evangelist preacher, Billy Graham has spoken to millions around the world and called many to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour. He served as spiritual adviser to many U.S. presidents and supported the civil rights movement of Martin Luther King.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Seven great missionaries

Of course there have been hundreds of men and women who have laid down their lives for the Gospel. Just seven are chosen here:

Hudson Taylor 1832-1905 He popularized—in the face of severe criticism at first—the now commonplace idea that missionaries should live and dress like the people they seek to evangelize. When Taylor arrived in China in 1854, many Protestant missionaries were content to minister in the coastal cities. Taylor's example of pushing into the vast interior was one reason other missionaries began doing so as well. Taylor—contrary to the mission conventions of his day—believed that single women were fully capable of managing distant mission outposts without the help of male missionaries. Taylor's China Inland Mission was founded in 1865 on the premise that it would never solicit funds from donors but simply trust God to supply its needs. Today, 131 years later, though the organization has changed its name (to Overseas Missionary Fellowship [International]), it has not changed this policy.

William Carey 1761-1834 As a missionary to India, He translated the complete Bible into 6 languages, and portions into 29 others, yet he never attended the equivalent of high school or college. His work was so impressive, that in 1807, Brown University conferred a Doctor of Divinity degree on him. William Carey is often called the Father of Modern Protestant Missions but the first European Protestant missionaries to Asia arrived almost a century before he did. By the time Carey established his mission community, there were thousands of Christians in a Pietist-led settlement in southern India. William Carey's ministry sparked a new era in missions.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Seven Great Missionaries

Mary Slessor 1848-1915. She was a hard working Scottish mill girl and an unorthodox Sunday School teacher, who, inspired by David Livingstone, became a missionary in Calabar, Nigeria, an area where no European had set foot before. Despite several bouts of illness and constant danger, she lived with the tribes, learned their language, and traditions, earning their respect and putting an end to some barbaric practises, such as the killing of twins. She adopted many Nigerian children (particularly twins) who had been left to die. When Southern Nigeria became a British Protectorate, she became the first ever female Magistrate in the British Empire and a skilful diplomatic emissary. Mary died in 1915, aged 67, with great mourning amongst the tribes to whom she had dedicated her whole life.

Gladys Aylward 1902-1970 She was raised in the Anglican Church. Her schooling was adequate. She never married; she went into 'service', attaining level of parlour maid in rich West End manors before being 'born again'. At 26 she failed the school of China Inland Mission. In 1930 she took a train across Russia to China to help aging missionary Agnes Lawson and founded an inn. 1932 the Mandarin appointed her 'foot -inspector', a job she used to evangelize villagers all over his province. Prison riot valour in 1933 cemented her reputation as holy person and miracle worker. She became known as 'Ai-weh-deh', Chinese for 'Virtuous One'. 1936 she became a Chinese citizen. In 1940 she was wounded by Japanese soldiers; only months before she had shepherded 100 orphans across mountains to safety. Nearly dead she 'recovered' to evangelize until Communists evicted her in late 1940's. She founded an orphanage in 1958 in Taiwan, where she died, January 3, 1970.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Seven Great Missionaries

David Livingstone 1813-1873 Born on March 19, 1813, in Blantyre, South Lanarkshire, Scotland, David Livingstone pursued training in medicine and missionary work before moving to Africa in 1841. He crossed the continent from east to west and would ultimately come across many bodies of water previously uncharted by Europeans, including the Zambezi River and Victoria Falls. He was a staunch abolitionist after witnessing the horrors of the African slave trade, and returned to the region twice after his initial voyage. He died on May 1, 1873, in Chief Chitambo's Village, near Lake Bangweulu, North Rhodesia (now Zambia). Livingstone has been positioned as a staunch abolitionist who believed in the dignity of Africans, the viability of commercial enterprises for the continent and the imposition of Christianity, despite indigenous spiritual beliefs. His findings contained hitherto unknown details about the continent that led to European nations seizing African land in imperialistic zeal, which some speculate Livingstone would have opposed.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Seven Great Missionaries

Bishop James Hannington 1847- 1885 In 1875 James became curate-in-charge at St. George's, Hurstpierpoint where he stayed until 1882 when he volunteered for service in Uganda with the Church Missionary Society. He had by then been married for five years. He left England in May 1882 and arrived in Africa on June 29th. The next year was one long trek into the heart of Africa during which James suffered recurring fevers from which he was never to completely recover. He returned to England in 1883 to be told that he must never again visit Africa, but by April 1884 his specialist told him that he was well enough to return. On June 24th he was consecrated Bishop of Eastern Equatorial Africa and returned.

His last expedition was into Masai territory with a group of about 200 porters, and William Jones, a native clergyman whom Bishop Hannington had recently ordained. The journey of his 'army of peace' left base on July 23rd but on October 12th James left the main party with 50 picked men to visit missionaries in Uganda. On the 21st his party was ambushed.

His journal tells what happened next: "...suddenly about twenty ruffians set upon us. They violently threw me to the ground, and proceeded to strip me of all valuables. Thinking they were robbers, I shouted for help, when they forced me up and hurried me away, as I thought, to throw me down a precipice close at hand. I shouted again in spite of one threatening to kill me with a club. Twice I nearly broke away from them, and then grew faint with struggling and was dragged by the legs over the ground. I said, 'Lord, I put myself in Thy hands, I look to Thee alone.' Then another struggle and I got to my feet and was then dashed along. More than once I was violently brought into contact with banana trees, some trying in their haste to force me one way, others the other, and the exertion and struggling strained me in the most agonizing manner. In spite of all, and feeling I was being dragged away to be murdered at a distance, I sang 'Safe in the Arms of Jesus' and laughed at the very agony of my situation. My clothes were torn to pieces so that I was exposed; wet through with being dragged on the ground; strained in every limb, and for a whole hour expecting instant death, hurried along, dragged, pushed at five miles an hour, until we came to a hut..."

After exhibiting him as a trophy for a week, his tormentors speared him to death on the 29th. We know most of this detail because one of the Ugandans kept Hannington's journal and sold it to a later expedition. His last recorded words were "go tell your master that I have purchased the road to Uganda with my blood", he was 38 years old.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Seven Great Missionaries

Jim Elliot 1927-1956 January 2, 1956, was the day that 29-year-old Jim Elliot had waited for most of his life. He jumped out of bed, dressed as quickly as he could, and got ready for the short flight over the thick Ecuador (Eck-wah-door) jungle. Almost three years of jungle ministry and many hours of planning and praying had led Jim to this day. Within hours, he and four other missionaries would be setting up camp in the territory of a dangerous and uncivilized Indian tribe known then as the Aucas (Ow-cuz), known now as the Waodani (Wah-o-dah-nee). The Aucas had killed all outsiders ever caught in their area. Even though it was dangerous, Jim Elliot had no doubt God wanted him to tell the Aucas about Jesus.

News quickly spread around the world about the five missing missionaries. A United States search team went to the beach, found the missionaries' bodies, and buried them. Operation Auca did not end because in less than two years Elisabeth Elliot, her daughter Valerie, and Rachel Saint (Nate's sister) were able to move to the Auca village. Many Aucas became Christians. They are now a friendly tribe. Missionaries, including Nate Saint's son and his family, still live among the Aucas today. Here are two quotes from Jim Elliot.

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."
"God, I pray Thee, light these idle sticks of my life and may I burn up for Thee. Consume my life, my God, for it is Thine. I seek not a long life but a full one, like you, Lord Jesus."

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Lessons Learnt sharing the gospel

You are never too young or too old

At the age of 13, I had my first experience of praying with someone to receive Jesus. I was considered too young to be a counsellor at a crusade but I was given the training. The joy of this preparation and subsequent experience was tremendous and a great privilege.

God knows the heart

Only God knows what has happened in someone's heart. We can talk about responses or professions of faith but it is God who saves, not us, so let Him have the glory!

Size of meeting

My early experiences as a teenager taught me to not be concerned about how many are in the meeting. The smallest gathering deserves our best. We are to be as thorough sharing Christ with a handful as we would be with crowds. Open air preaching is often reaching people you cannot see as well as those you can. People can be tucked away out of your sight, in their houses with the windows open. God can see them. I remember two occasions particularly. Once, in Kampala in a very poor part of the city we preached the Gospel to people who came out of their mud hut dwellings but in the background were large modern buildings. A handful responded to the Gospel. The next day the pastor was very excited. He said after dark, others came professing they received Christ. They were not yet ready to be public about Christ but still wanted to receive Him. In India we preached the Gospel at the opening of a new church. Several responded to the Gospel. The following day the pastor visited many who had attended the meeting and found there were more people who had or were willing to receive Christ. Hallelujah! I have preached to thousands and also to very small numbers but the Gospel does not change. Our part is to proclaim Christ and make sure we are not in the way of what He wants to do.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Lessons Learnt sharing the gospel

When the lights go out

We must proclaim Christ in good times and hard times, if the weather is fine or not and if people want to listen, we must preach Christ. I remember preaching in a meeting outside and I could see a storm threatening. It was impossible to time my message to co-coincide with the storm breaking. I had to just trust God, not shorten the message or miss anything out. I declared the word of God and gave an appeal. People responded and then there was a deluge of rain. Once preaching in the west of Kenya the generator failed and we were in darkness. I could hardly see the people but they stayed and some received Christ. We are God's servants; we are dependent on Him. Jesus did not have a microphone, floodlighting and generators but He proclaimed the Word of God, with great power.

Appeals

If you make an appeal for people to come to Christ, be very clear. Comments too general will attract a response but are the people responding, already Christians? It is better to be very specific and have no response than to be vague and not be sure why people have responded. Remember too you will be judged by God according to your faithfulness handling His word and not by people's responses.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Key principles in the growth of Living Hope

These are things that have become important to me and may be useful to you.

Discover where God wants you to go. As we pray and seek God, He will show us. Obedience is key. If God says, "Go!" Then go! Be prepared to go to the remote places. It is all too easy to go to the capital cities and forget the rural areas. Physically it is usually much more demanding with long journeys and challenging places to stay but spiritually it is massively rewarding.

Book your ticket. I have found that this is the next step. It is a statement of intent to those you are visiting and a step of faith. The programme may still require development but you are coming!

Work on the programme. Clearly you want to use your time well and to be as effective as possible.

Be open to changes when you arrive. Of course we want our hosts to be responsible but often flexibility is required especially in timings!

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Key principles in the growth of Living Hope

Finances So often I have found the Lord provides for what He has planned. It can come at the eleventh hour but it will come. Once on a trip, someone in the team said after a few days that they had some money for me. It was just what was needed. In my flesh I wished that they had given it to me earlier but God is to be trusted; the bills are always paid.

Finding the right people to work with. This has been a major step in Living Hope. God has sovereignly brought this to light. Very often as I have prayed with people, sometimes over the telephone, you perceive their spirit. We must go deeper than words. Sensing the heart and spirit of someone is much more significant. Finding people who share your heart is wonderful joy. You must be patient.

Honour the interpreter. Respect they are the means for you to share what God has laid on your heart. Honour them by adapting to their style. Quicken or slow down your pace; think carefully about your vocabulary; work out whether to speak short sentences or long paragraphs. Above all pray for flow which the Holy Spirit alone can give.

Trust God's word. I have found that if God wants me to speak on a certain passage then I must look to Him and trust Him to help me deliver it with conviction. If I believe Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever, I must not spiritualise everything but believe Him. So for example if one is led to preach on a deaf man being healed by Jesus, I must be open to praying for any deaf in the meeting. This requires courage and wisdom but God is God. We do not want to build false expectations in people or to quickly condemn their lack of faith, if healing is not immediately forthcoming BUT Jesus is alive and He is the same! People need to meet Jesus as He is, not a Jesus we have shaped for our comfort. Expect God to honour His word. I have no right to expect Him to honour me but if His word is in my heart, if it nourishes my life and is upon my lips, He will honour His word. It will always achieve the purpose for which He sent it. Isaiah 55:10-11

Be creative. Realising the mobile phone was being used for destructive purposes, I felt a burden to use it to share the word of God. Now about 12 different groups wait for a message from God's word by telephone and an amazing number have responded to the Gospel in Sierra Leone, Kenya and Malawi.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Reaching the Nations

By the grace of God, Living Hope has sought to respond to the heart of God for the nations with a particular burden to train leaders who will build churches with the nations deep in their focus.

“You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth” Acts 1: 8. When I look back, I can see that God`s plan was for me to reach out to the nations. Words of prophecy spoken in my teenage years, I now can see what it was God was saying. The sense of privilege and grace in knowing Jesus and serving Him is immense upon me. It is not our human compassion or energy that can achieve anything but only when God puts His Spirit and His heart into our lives.

Reaching the U.K.

The nation which brought many the Gospel now needs the Gospel. As I travel and communicate with about 30 churches, it is so important to preach the Gospel.

Africa

We have friends now in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Congo DRC, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Burundi, Guinea, Malawi, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Liberia and in addition we email regularly people in Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, South Africa and Zambia.

Europe

Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Latvia, Poland, Romania and contacts in Ireland, Finland, Germany, Cyprus

Asia

India, Pakistan, Philippines and we are in touch with a church in Nepal.

New Zealand

We have good fellowship with a house of Prayer in Wellington which supports our friend in Malawi.

USA

We are blessed to partner with Meadow Grove Baptist Church, Brandon, Mississippi with the work in Ecuador.

South America

Ecuador.

Go into all the world!

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Will you go?

We all must play our part in the Great Commission. God has something for you to do to make Jesus known. We are not all called to travel overseas but we are all called to be a witness for Jesus. We are not all called to stand in a pulpit to preach but we are all called to live lives that speak of Jesus to all who observe our life.

We are to be creative using all the talents that God has given us. We are all called to deny self, take up the cross and follow Jesus. Our obedience can hasten the day when Jesus returns and brings in new heavens and a new earth.

2 Corinthians 3: 2, Acts 1:8, Matthew 28: 18-20, Mark 16:15-18, Luke 9:23, 2 Peter 3:11-12,

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Questions

Read carefully the 7 examples of great people from church history.

1. What do you consider was the impact of their lives and work?
2. Is there someone else you want to include?
3. Look at the 7 missionaries.
4. What stands out to you about their lives?
5. Is there a missionary you want to include?
6. What is your church`s evangelistic strategy? How could you improve it?
7. Is the whole church involved or just a few of the people?

7 Things

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Death and Last Things

1. **Death**
2. **Heaven**
3. **Hell**
4. **Judgement**
5. **Jesus` Second Coming**
6. **Satan**
7. **Becoming a Christian**
8. **Key Passages—John 14, 1 Corinthians 15, Matthew 24, Luke 23:39—43, Revelation 21:1-8, Revelation 22:12-17**

We have the task of going into all the world and making disciples of all nations. We do this with the real awareness of God’s incredible love for mankind but must also be aware of Death, Final judgement, Jesus’ return and an enemy, Satan to contend with. Our task is to build the Church: Matthew 16 and Acts 2 and to make Jesus known until He comes.

7 Things

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Death

The reality of death is very powerful. The fact that at some time all will die is something we become aware of, often from earliest years. Physical death is when the body that we were given at birth is no longer able to function. After man sinned, part of the curse was that our bodies would not live for ever. We know a sudden accident, disease or sheer old age causes a body to stop working. We are very grateful that Jesus is able to bring healing to our sick and weak bodies. Our bodies as Christians are a temple of the Holy Spirit. We need to care for them as best we can. Diet and a careful lifestyle can all help. God has numbered our days and we can pray for the health and strength to live every one of those days ordained for us. The devil is a thief and a murderer. He will aim to curtail our lives but we can overcome through faith and prayer but eventually our time will come to leave this life.

There is a part of us that will live for ever. We have a soul and a spirit. It is this part of us that we need to be most concerned about. Physical death is a minor problem in the light of eternity. The deeper issue is where will we spend eternity? It is appointed to man once to die and after death, the judgement. Hebrews 9:27. Spiritual death is to be eternally separated from God. To be in hell is to be lost and cut off from God in eternal agony because we refused the Salvation and Forgiveness that God has offered us in Christ.

In the Scriptures we read that Jesus tasted death so that the power of death could be destroyed. He is God and it seems impossible that God should die but that is what happened when God, the Son entered our world on our behalf: Hebrews 2v9,14 and15. The devil has power because of man's disobedience but Jesus's death breaks that power and means that we can be freed to know Eternal Life!

- 1 Corinthians 15

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Heaven

The Bible says that heaven is where God lives. It is a place of great peace, joy and where fellowship with God is not disturbed. In heaven there is no sickness, no death, no pain, no suffering and no sin. When someone dies who loves Jesus, they will be with Him in this wonderful place. We don't know a great deal about heaven but we know we will never want to leave once we have arrived. It is a place of worship, a place where Jesus is honoured and it is the ultimate seat of authority where God the Father, God, the Son and God, the Holy Spirit rule and reign. Scripture intimates that we will rule and reign with the Lord; we have no detail but we know there will be no rivalry and no sin. It is a place of glorious light, a place of purity and a place of fellowship. Paul spoke to the Thessalonians and encouraged them that they would be together with the Lord. It is so exciting to think about all the wonderful people that we will meet but of course to be with Jesus, is more wonderful than words can say. Once we are in heaven, it is a permanent dwelling place for us; we are secure with the Lord forever. John 14 v 1-3, 1Thessalonians 4 v 13-17, Revelation 21 v 1-4, 1 Peter 1 v 4.

We also know we will have bodies that will never be sick and that God is creating new heavens and a new earth. 1 Corinthians 15 and 2 Peter 3.

We have so much to look forward to. Hallelujah

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Hell

This is an awful place which was in fact intended for the devil and his angels. It was not designed for man but when man sided with the devil, his fate with the devil was sealed. This is an eternal place from which there is no escape. Jesus spoke more about hell than heaven and referred to it in the most severe terms. He spoke about purity and righteousness being part of our lives, and ruthlessness in our attitude to sin because He wants us to avoid this eternal suffering. The parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man in Luke 16 v 19-31 gives us some vivid descriptions of a lost soul in hell. First of all the Rich Man is separated from God and the gap cannot be bridged. It is a place of torment and it seems to be a place of fire. The Rich Man is so desperate that he wants his brothers to be warned so they can avoid this fate. However he is told that even if someone rises from the dead, they will not listen.

Jesus went to hell when He died on the Cross. He spoke harrowing words when He cried out "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?", Matthew 27 v 46, and Psalm 22. A sense of torment and separation from His Father as He bears our sin and the sin of the world is too terrible for words. When the question is asked, "How can God send people to hell?", we need to refer them to the fact that His own precious Son went to hell so that we could escape hell. It is crucial that we warn people in this life that they should repent of their sins and turn to Christ. It is in this life that we have the chance to find salvation because once we have died, there is no salvation available for us.

7 Things

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Judgement

The Bible distinguishes between the judgement of the believers and the judgement of the nations and the judgement of those who do not know Jesus.

Judgement of Believers

For the believer, there is a wonderful sense that judgement has passed. We have been saved! We are heading for heaven; the wrath of our holy God is satisfied and the devil's power over us is broken. However Paul speaks of the judgement seat of Christ; this is not a judgement regarding salvation but it is a judgement regarding how we have lived our Christian lives. There will be rewards for those who have served faithfully and whose works in Christ are revealed as gold, silver and precious stones, 1 Corinthians 3 v 10-15. Paul also used the analogy of a race and talks about achieving the prize by running according to the rules and completing the course set before us by Jesus.

Judgement of Nations

We do not have much detail but we know God loves the nations whether they are small or great; each one is important to Him. Nations can behave in our world righteously and helpfully but they can also behave selfishly and destructively. When God brings final judgement to our world, the nations will give an account to Him. As citizens of a nation, we need to pray for our government and for our leaders and that our nation is a great blessing to the world and not a curse, Matthew 25 v 32.

Judgement of Unbelievers

The Bible speaks in Revelation, of a great white throne. At the end of all time, everyone will be called to give an account of their lives to the Lord. There will be nothing hidden and there will be no appeal; those who are not in the Lamb's Book of Life will be cast into hell, described as a lake of fire. God's judgement is righteous; it is severe but again we must remember that the sacrifice of Jesus was immense. Ultimately this judgement is to do with our attitude and relationship with Jesus. If we have received Jesus, we have Life but if we have rejected Him, we are in death. See John 3v16-21 and Luke 12:3.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Jesus and the Second Coming

There is a great deal written about this subject but for the purpose of this foundation course, let us consider the essential facts.

1. When Jesus ascended into heaven, the record in Acts 1 tells us that He left physically, He left suddenly and He entered the clouds and we know that He sat down at the right hand of the Father, having completed the work that God the Father had sent Him to do.
2. The angel said that even as the disciples had seen Jesus go, He would come in the same manner. So He will return physically. Every eye will see Him and those who have rejected Him will be devastated on that day. Revelation 1 v 7. He will come suddenly. The Bible speaks about Him coming like a thief in the night and many will have no idea as He appears in all His glory. He will come out of the clouds even as He left in the clouds.
3. There will be signs that indicate His coming is near. In Matthew 24 Jesus refers to a number of these signs. He speaks of false messiahs, He speaks of wars and rumours of wars, He speaks of famines and earthquakes, He also speaks of tremendous persecution. In the world, men will be in despair because of the terrible things that are happening. There will be amazing events on earth which will bring deep distress but Jesus spoke of one more sign: Jesus said that this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come. With many of the signs, we feel completely powerless as to what we could do but what we can do is fulfil the Great Commission and take the Gospel to all peoples. When the Lord is satisfied that all those that He planned to save are saved, then the end will come. Matthew 24 v 14

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Jesus and the Second Coming

4. Various Bible commentators speak of a rapture. This is where the saints are removed from the earth before the final judgement of unbelievers and the destruction of the heavens and earth, making way for new heavens and the new earth to be created. Without doubt Jesus speaks of two people in the field; one is taken and the other left. He speaks of two women grinding with a handmill; one is taken and the other is left. 1 Thessalonians 4 v 13-18 describe the Lord Jesus, summoning those who have died but are now with Him in heaven, to come back to the earth and at the given moment, those believers who are alive on the earth will join together with all the saints and we will be with the Lord forever. This is a great encouragement to know. Nobody will miss out on the great celebrations of Jesus` return and the end of all things.
5. The timings of all events, relating to the Second Coming of Jesus, are in the Father`s hands. We do not know the day or the hour and it is not possible to be dogmatic about all of the events which will unravel to herald Jesus` return. We can be content to know that He is coming, we need to be ready and we need to preach the Gospel until He comes.
6. The Bride of Christ. The Church is referred to as the "Bride of Christ." This picture is there in the Gospels, in The Letters and the Book of Revelation. It is a very important picture as we appreciate that salvation is all about relationship. Christ loves His Church and has given Himself for her. He wants us to be ready to receive Him, living pure lives in godly fear and able to give an account for the hope that is within us.
7. Ruling and reigning with Christ. The Scripture reveals that this is our destiny to reign with Him; we know that we will be involved in the final judgement. 1 Corinthians 6 v 1-4. When we look at creation, God`s plan was that Adam should rule over creation. His rebellion and disobedience resulted in that authority being undermined, but Christ who is the second Adam and who totally obeyed the Father`s will, He will restore us to this place of authority.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Satan

As we read Scripture, we become aware that God has an enemy who is described as Satan, the Devil, the Serpent, the Father of Lies, the Murderer and the Thief. John 10:10 There are many illustrations of his work but it began in the garden when he enticed Eve and Adam into doubting God`s word. For Satan himself, his fall began in the heavens; he is described as a worship leader who found in his heart a desire to resist God and to try and take his place. The worshipper wanted to be worshipped. Pride filled his heart and rebellion filled his soul. Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:12-18. Almighty God deals swiftly with this rebellion. Satan is cast out and he comes to the earth and soon is scheming as to how he can hurt God who has judged him. Luke 10:18 To attack man as we have already described was his way of getting back at God. If the pinnacle of God`s creation, mankind could be turned against God what a victory that would appear to be for Satan. Satan continues to try and bring destruction to everything that God loves and has done but he has been defeated.

When Jesus went to the Cross, Colossians 2 v 15 wonderfully describes the manner of his defeat. Satan is disarmed of all his powers; his defeat is public and the Cross with Jesus` shed blood, overcomes every accusation he would make and undoes every trap and evil scheme that he has devised. We can say that legally, he is thoroughly and totally defeated. However God has allowed him to remain in existence until the end of time. The devil protests and questions his defeat but he is defeated. It is for us to remind him that he has no power over us because of what Christ has done. At the end of time, he will be thrown into the Lake of Fire. He is desperate to take as many of the human race into this fate with him. How we need to make Jesus known and to urge people to receive forgiveness and cleansing from Jesus who has died and risen to overcome sin, Satan, death and hell!

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Questions

Study very carefully the notes on this subject.

1. The reality of death is powerful. How do we help people to face it?
2. Be clear about hell. What does the Bible say about this place?
3. Be clear about heaven. What does the Bible teach about heaven?
4. Distinguish between the judgement of believers and unbelievers. What are the main differences?
5. What do we know about Jesus' Second Coming? What do we not know?
6. What does the Bible teach us about Satan and his final defeat?

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Becoming a Christian

1. **Becoming a Christian ; discovering God's love.**
2. **Sin has fatal consequences.**
3. **We cannot solve this problem ourselves.**
4. **Christ has died for us and has personally taken our sins upon Himself.**
5. **We need to respond.**
6. **Be Baptised.**
7. **Join a church.**

Becoming a Christian ; discovering God's love.

1. We need God's forgiveness. God is a holy, perfect God without any sin at all. Paul says in Romans 3:23, "all have sinned and fall short of God's glory." Sin is every act, word and attitude which indicates independence from God. When our stubborn prides refuses to agree with God that we are wrong, we are in trouble. The human heart has an inbuilt bias towards wrong. Selfishness, greed, lust, jealousy all reside in us in some shape or form. We are dead to God and live without purpose or meaning.

2. Sin has fatal consequences. There is no comfort in saying that we are no worse than anyone else. Sin has brought us death in that we are separate from God and have no relationship with Him. However there is worse to come. Sin reaps eternal death, hell, separation from God forever but there is hope. Romans 6: 23 "the wages of sin is death."

3. We cannot solve this problem ourselves. By grace we are saved by faith. It is not of ourselves. No works or human effort can resolve our sin problem. Ephesians 2 : 8 – 10. Some take a lot of convincing that we are in a hopeless position, even believing religious rituals can help. However there is nothing, no deed, no penance and no amount of remorse can alter our plight. Only God can help us.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Becoming a Christian

4. Christ has died for us and has personally taken our sins upon Himself. Now here is really good news! Romans 5: 8. "God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Christ came and He went to the Cross for us. In His death, He takes all our sins and completely removes them from us. His blood cleanses them away. The punishment we deserve has been taken by Jesus. Jesus has taken our vileness and we are free! God`s righteous anger is satisfied and the devil, God`s enemy who wants to keep us in his dark kingdom, has to release us from his grip. This forgiveness, salvation, deliverance and rescue are completely free to us. It cost Christ who is God, everything. He left heaven and became a man for us, with the mission of going to the Cross for us. His death deals with rejection, addiction, bondage and all the consequences of sin. What a wonderful Saviour Jesus is!

5. We need to respond. Acts 2:38, Romans 10:9 & John1:12

We must repent. This means a change of mind and attitude towards God and sin. It means we agree with God`s verdict and do not argue with Him. Our sin problem is serious. We must believe that Jesus is Lord, that He has died for us and is risen from the dead and so we commit our lives to Him.

Here is a prayer we could pray:

Lord Jesus,

I am sorry for my sins. I realise I have displeased You and rejected You. Today I invite you to come into my life as my Saviour, to cleanse me and as my Lord, to take charge of me. Thank you for dying for me and rising from the dead. My life is now yours.

7 Things

Seven Plus Series

Becoming a Christian

Thank you Jesus for hearing this prayer.

JESUS HAS PROMISED TO HEAR OUR CRY

John 6 v 35-37 Those who come to Him, He will never cast away; He will meet our needs and bring peace and satisfaction.

I John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

6. Be baptised & be full of the Holy Spirit! Acts 2:38&39, Matthew 28: 18-20.

Now you have received Christ, be baptised! This means being fully immersed in water as a sign that you follow Jesus who was crucified and who rose again. It also is a symbol that your old life before becoming a Christian has ceased.

Ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit. God will provide you with power to live your Christian life and boldness to witness for Jesus. The Holy Spirit reveals more of Jesus; He has special gifts to help you develop your relationship with Jesus.

7. Join a church.

Jesus loves His Church so very much. The church is the body of people all over the world who acknowledge Him as their God and Saviour. In becoming a Christian, you have joined a very large family. Find a local church where the Bible is preached and Jesus is honoured. The church is where we are disciplined. That means we are shaped and helped to become more like Jesus. It is where we discover our gifts and how we can help our fellow Christians. Acts 2: 40

Showing people the way to become a Christian and discover God's love is our goal for people in all nations. Equipping leaders to build churches which reach their communities for Christ is how we achieve that goal until Jesus comes again.