



BODY BUILDING

KINGDOM PRINCIPLE STUDY KP9

READ THIS FIRST

In the last study we discussed battle tower construction and the foundation principles of tower life. In this study we get down to the practical day to day realities affecting relationships by which the assembly grows in quality of life. **Of all Jesus' principles, these are the least understood, the least taught and the least adopted.** No wonder the church of Jesus world wide exhibits weaknesses, division and poverty of spirit. The problem is that Jesus' ideas about relationships are the exact opposite to man's natural thinking. Subtle reversions to man's ways of doing things underlie most of the problems found in the church throughout its history. The Holy Spirit, though, knows only one way of doing things and it is His persistence, in the end, which will see us all grow up into the fullness of the stature of Jesus. Our privilege is to agree with Him quickly for Jesus' and our Father's sake!

Key Scriptures for this study include:

Daniel 9:3-20
Ezekiel 34:1-31
Matthew 20:1-16
Luke 12:35-48
John 10:1-29
Ephesians 4:1-32

Read these scriptures first. Then go through the whole study looking up all the other references as you go.

LEARN THESE SCRIPTURES BY HEART

'You know how the rulers of the heathen have power over them, and the leaders have complete authority. This is not the way it should be among you. If one of you wants to be great he must be the servant of all the rest, and if one of you wants to be first, he must be your slave, like Jesus, who did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life to redeem many people' (*Matt. 20:25-28*).

'He appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists and others to be pastors and teachers. He did this to prepare all God's people for the work of serving (obeying) the King; in order to build up the body of Christ. We shall all come together to oneness in our faith and in our knowing of the Son of God; we shall become mature people, reaching to the very height of Jesus's full stature' (*Eph. 4:11-13*).

THE SERVING PRINCIPLE

We know, from Study 2, that congregations of God's people consist of fathers, young men and children (1 *John 2:12-14*). While we are all still learning to serve Jesus better by letting Him have more control of our lives, some believers have greater maturity than others. But, God's end point is that we shall all finish up the same (*Eph. 4:13*). **This is the key to tower relationships.** Having been strengthened ourselves by Jesus's life we serve our weaker brothers so that they may be strengthened also. I have been emphasizing the words 'to serve' because that is the root word of this study. The Greek word is *diakonos*, from which we get the word deacon. Its ancient meaning is 'one who carries out the command of another, therefore, a servant, minister, attendant'. Think about this for a long time until you absolutely grasp that a true deacon (minister) is not one with an important office in a human sense but someone who is under authority and has awesome responsibilities towards his/her Master Jesus. A minister is only serving when he/she is obeying Jesus. If he/she is not doing that, he/she is not a minister of Christ (*Rom. 12:7*). If he/she does not have the objective of seeing everybody grow up at least to the same level of knowing God's life that he/she knows then he/she is serving himself/herself and the devil, not Jesus.

The spirit of Jesus is to serve the whole world; (1) by delivering Himself into the hands of the devil that the world could be exchanged and brought back into God's family; and (2) by sending His Spirit so that we might be instructed and trained in soul and mind to be the sort of people who can rightly be called God's sons (*Phil. 2:6-8*). There are no words to describe what Jesus put aside for our sakes, nor into what depths of poverty He sank (*II Cor. 8:9*). This same spirit must be in us if we are to serve our brethren, if we are to become Jesus' ministers. The memory scripture for Matthew's Gospel is absolutely necessary as a foundation to understanding everything else that is said of Christian leadership in the Bible. We cannot say we love/serve God if we do not love/serve the brethren. Jesus says to us 'If you love me, feed my sheep!' (*Matt. 20:25-28, Mark 9:35, I John 2:9-11; 4:19-21, John 21:15-17*).

WE GO FORWARD TOGETHER

Another idea which will help us develop a right attitude towards serving one another is shown to us in the Church in the Wilderness - that individual maturity has very little meaning in the long term. We go forward together or we do not go forward! Read the prayers of Daniel and Jeremiah. There is never any sense of them seeing themselves as 'better' than the rest. They were totally identified with the separation and punishment which their nation Israel was experiencing, because they were experiencing it personally! But they were also God's ministers in the situation, despite the treatment meted out by their own brethren. Knowing God better they served their

brethren by intercession and exhortation and by being a living example. (*Num. 10:1-36, Danie/9:3-20, Lam. 3:1-51*).

Apart from Jesus, Moses is the greatest example of a servant in scripture. He could have had all God's blessing to himself but he chose to abandon it so that his rebellious brothers might retain their birthright. He did not always find it easy! But his complaint was to his Master not to the sheep! One of the most subtle temptations we can know is to forget the sheep and take the blessing for ourselves. That may be our right but it is totally against the Spirit of the serving Jesus. We need to watch it! (*Num. 14:1-20; 16:12-50; 11:10-15*).

In any local tower/assembly, it is worth remembering you will only go as far as the weaker brethren will let you. We serve God and ourselves then by concentrating on helping the Holy Spirit make the weaker brethren strong. This applies equally to the world wide church. The Spirit of Jesus says that those nations which have had the light of the Gospel for centuries should share it with other nations in a spirit of serving, denying themselves so that all things come to maturity. 'The first shall be last and the last first'! God has reserved the best for the African believer and those in China, India, South America and the Pacific Islands who have been in darkness while the peoples of Shem and Japeth have been in the light. They are coming to maturity quickly these days as we lay down our lives for them. (*Matt. 19:27-30; 20:1-16, Mark 10:28-31, Luke 13:29-30*).

JUDGEMENT ON LEADERS

In the final analysis: whether we enter into the riches of the Kingdom will be determined by our faithfulness to Jesus in serving our brothers. 'Whenever you did (or did not) do this for one of the least important of my brothers, you did it (or did not do it) for me!' Jesus' statements about unfaithful servants need to be read extremely carefully and taken to heart. Not in fear but in soberness. His statements to religious leaders of His day reflect the severity of His judgment on unfaithful leaders. Paul knew these principles and ordered his life accordingly (*Matt. 25:31-46; 24:45-51, Luke 12:35-48, Ez. 34:1-31, Matt. 23:1-36, Rom. 14:10-13, I Cor. 5:9-10*).

FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

The Bible picture of the 'local church' is that of Jesus and His disciples (*mathetes* = a pupil, one who follows the ideas and instructions of another). He called them and drew them to Himself. He had many followers but from them He selected twelve to be those He would train and send out to begin new communities. With these twelve He shared His whole life for nearly three years; so that John could say 'we have heard it, we have seen it with our eyes and looked upon it, and our hands have touched this Word of life'. He sent them out with power and authority,

teaching them to walk as He walked; first the twelve, then seventy. But it was with three of the twelve that He shared His most precious moments and secrets: Peter, James and John (*Matt. 17:1-8, Mark 9:1-8, Luke 9:28-36, II Peter 1:16-18, Matt. 26:36-46, Mark 14:34, Luke 9:1-6, Luke 10:1-12,17-24*).

As we shall see later, He placed much less emphasis on instruction by talking than by example. **His greatest joy was when He observed that His Father had taught them.** With the multitude He spoke in parables that were hard to understand only sharing the principles with His disciples when He knew that His Father had opened their eyes and their ears to see and hear the things of the Kingdom. He often used the illustration of the shepherd with sheep. He walked ahead, He called them by name and led them in the way that they should go. He knew them and they knew Him in a close, intimate and fruitful way (*Matt. 16:17, Luke 10:21, Luke 13:10-17, Matt. 13:36, John 10:10-18*).

This is the experience to which every believer is called; first as a sheep to learn and grow to maturity, secondly as a minister in obedience to Jesus that others may grow into His likeness also. It is intimate, it is totally fulfilling, it is abundant living, it is *koinonia*, i.e. common-union, fellowship. Such an experience is obvious in the lives of believers in Paul's letters. Note how Paul refers with love to his brethren, sometimes with tears, sometimes with rejoicing. He prays for them, travails for them, encourages and admonishes them as a good shepherd. It was not his practice to travel alone either. When he moved, his travelling fellowship group went with him: Luke, the beloved physician, Mark, Barnabas, Silas, Aristarchus - also Timothy, Titus and Epaphroditus. Paul, above all else, appreciated his brethren! (*Rom. 16:1-16,21, I Cor. 16:1-26, Col. 4:1-17, Phil 2:24-30*).

ELDERS

An elder is a mature aged person in any society but to call a person a Christian elder is to say that he/she is an older person who is 'known of Christ and knows Christ'. Christian elders are mature in what they are; they set an example by being an example. Their life is transparent; they do not wear their life superficially like the Pharisees but expose their heart to their close brethren to display the inner quality of their life. To put it simply: their life at home is the same as their public life (*Acts 1:8, Matt. 23:5*).

Such people know what it is to die daily; they have the marks of the Lord Jesus on them, being made conformable to His death. They are free enough inside to let their light shine. They can say boldly 'be followers of me as I am of Christ'. They are fathers/mothers, not instructors; they are makers of disciples. Paul's relationship with Timothy is an excellent example. Timothy was Paul's disciple, i.e. he did the things that Paul did; he was like Paul, who

was like Jesus; so much so that Paul could send Timothy to represent him just as the Father sent Jesus!! 'If you have seen me, you have seen the Father' (*II Can 4:11-15, Gal. 6:17, Phil 3:10, I Cor. 11:1; 4:14-17, John 14:7-11*).

And yet it is not us but the Holy Spirit who makes disciples. Paul understood this: 'There is nothing in us that allows us to claim that we are capable of this work; the capacity we have comes from God; it is He who made us capable of serving the New Covenant which consists not of written laws but of the Spirit!' (*11 Cor. 3:1-5*).

Again we remind ourselves of the New Covenant and are careful not to try to shape the stones ourselves! John is our example; though wishing to remind his brethren of the need to watch out for the spirit of the antichrist he is careful to remind them that they must look to God for their instruction through the Spirit. In a real way this is the cross that all elders must bear daily, putting to death the impulse to direct and instruct others according to their own ideas so that the Holy Spirit has the freedom to speak through them. The Christian world is full of people who want to instruct others, there is a short supply of leaders who will lay down their lives for the sheep (*Jer. 31:34,1 John 2:18-27*).

A final point: true elders are never dependent on their sheep; they are dependent on their Father in heaven for all things, as Jesus was! There is much teaching about the 'laborer being worthy of his hire' in such a way that encourages young pastors to go out, establish a flock and live off their tithes. Actually Jesus made the above statement in relation to accepting hospitality from strangers and Paul quoted it only in relation to elders being given due respect. Jesus never intended it to be a principle among brethren and both He and Paul showed by their actions and exhortation how they thought it should be done. Paul describes the attributes and qualities he would expect of elders and ministers, both men and women! But these are not guidelines to follow. They are the evidence (fruit) of inner quality of life. No-one can learn to be an elder by following these instructions; we learn by inner teaching worked out in relationship with those elders God has given us (*Luke 10:7, 1 Tim. 5:18, Acts 18:3; 20:33-38,11 Thess. 3:6-12,1 Tim. 3:1-16, Titus 1:5-16; 2:1-6, 7-8*).

THE TEACHING ELDER

A fellowship will not grow quickly or well if there is no teaching elder present. That is why Paul suggests they be especially valued. Teaching elders are those who have been taught by the Holy Spirit in scriptural principles against which everything that happens in the community must be judged. All apostles (missionaries) need to have the gift of a teaching elder, so that they can impart sound doctrine to the new communities formed as a result of their going out. Peter and Paul had very different backgrounds

educationally but both had the truths of Christ's teaching within them. Paul's education did not necessarily give him the advantage over Peter in the things of God, although they had their odd differences! Rather, after his conversion, Paul was taken 'into Arabia and back to Damascus' for three years before he was released to listen to the doctrine of men, even God's apostles. This was because God insists on revelation personal and direct when He prepared a teaching elder that God's Son might be revealed in him! (*1 Tim. 5:17, Gal. 2:11-14; 1:10-24; 2:1-10; 1:12,16*).

OTHER MINISTRIES

While the presence of a teaching elder is vital for good growth, it would be a sad thing if there were only teaching elders. No, the provision of the Spirit is very rich and every type of ministry is **equally important** for balanced life in the tower.

Note: The ministries of the Spirit are **not** a hierarchical structure as found in worldly government. (Unless we view it as an upside-down hierarchy! Apostles being the *doulos* - the bottom row of rowers in a Trimiran boat). Rather, the ministries are members of the body, in particular. The lists Paul gives in his letters are better viewed as chronological order of manifestation of the gifts. Naturally apostles are needed at the beginning, also prophets who tell us what God wants us to know. Later we see the lord raise evangelists who bring in new believers. As the number of believers increases pastoring and teaching ministries are brought about by the Spirit, then miracle workers and healing gifts to keep the body in health; as numbers get larger still, assisting ministries (helps) and governments (administrators) are needed. Apostles tend to show greater diversity of gift because they often have to work alone or in smaller communities. But this does not put them at the top of some tree. Rather, like Paul they are called to suffer more for Christ's sake, both in the world and amongst the brethren. In any successful assembly you will find someone who has laid down his or her life for the sheep in obedience to Christ. Encourage one another in the ministries that God has given each one; and let no man think more highly of his own gift than he ought. Faithfulness is what counts, not how much gift we have. (*Matt. 20:25, I Cor. 12:27; 12:28, Eph. 4:11, Acts 6:1-7, II Cor. 11:23-33; 12:11-21, Phil. 2:4, Rom. 12:1-8, Luke 12:48, Matt. 25:14-30, Acts 6:1-8, I Cor. 2:4*).

MINISTER IN THE SPIRIT! PLEASE!

Let us emphasize again that able ministers are Spirit filled people. To be such is necessary even to wait on tables! For, only the word by the Spirit gives life in the community. We should never rest on old patterns based on experiences, as good as they were. Much of the confusion in the world wide church is based on men 'setting in concrete' some old instruction by the Spirit appropriate to a specific situation. Seeing the

power of God operating we think that following the external method will produce the same result at another time and place. It will not! Blessed is he that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high! (*Rom. 2:27-29; 7:6, II Cor. 3:6, Acts 8:12-23; 19:13-16, Ps. 91:1*)

THE MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT IS GLORIOUS AND FREE

Only those who have had the benefit of leaders who have ministered in the freedom of the Spirit can really know what Paul is sharing with the Corinthians about the glory of it! (*II Cor. 3:6-18*). Suffice to say that a transparent elder filled with God's Spirit has the *Shekinah* glory on their face. Its presence is enough to bring about change in an assembly of saints who are fortunate to share fellowship with him/her! Imagine then, when all the brethren are reflecting the glory of the Lord with uncovered faces; that same glory coming from the Lord, who is the Spirit, transforms us into His likeness in an even greater degree of glory. This should be the normal life of the tower!! Note that what begins as inner freedom in individual saints becomes augmented as the saints are built into a holy temple which edifies (builds) itself up by the power of the Spirit. It is worth working towards, brothers! I leave you with Paul's encouragement: 'God is able to do it exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us!', (*Eph. 2:19-22; 4:11-16; 3:20-21*).

This glory and freedom is easily lost, however, as soon as man puts his own hand on God's work. The dreadful testimony of the church is that while God always proves completely faithful to the New Covenant, men continually allow the flesh and the mystery of iniquity to take over the very ground that God has possessed. However, our God is not confounded; He has His own ways of chastening us which we will discuss in a later study. (*II Thess. 2:1-12, Rev. 2:4-6; 2:14-16; 2:20-24; 3:15-19*).

AN APPEAL TO THE SHEEP

Most instructions in the New Testament are to the shepherds because they should know them by revelation. While we are still young in the Lord we know the Lord little so cannot be expected to be faithful in much. Jesus demanded very little of His disciples. The apostles dared a little pleading even though they knew they had no rights as such. The problem is that true servants of Jesus are so meek that unruly sheep can take advantage of them!

THE COMMISSION TO SERVANTS

Servants GO! As the Spirit leads of course! The general commission gives us the ground rules of our calling. 'Go to all peoples, baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; and teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you!' (*Acts 8:26-40, Matt. 28:19-20*).

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the Bible concept of a minister.
 2. What does the phrase 'the first shall be last and the last first' mean to you?
 3. What principles of relationship are revealed in the Gospels as we read of Jesus and His disciples?
 4. What is an elder? What is his/her function in the body of believers?
 5. Why is a teaching elder necessary for body building to proceed fruitfully?
 6. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty'. What does this mean? Why is liberty necessary?
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Post your answers to:

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