

Module 4



Duty of a Disciple

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LEARNING OUTCOMES :

On completion of Module 4 you will be able to know what is your duty as a disciple

SPECIFIC OUTCOMES :

On completion of this Chapters you will be able to know:

Chapter 1 – Chapter 3

How to set the captives free

Chapter 4

How to proclaim the truth

Chapter 5

How to be a witness unto the ends of the world

Chapter 6

What is your duty to care, to love and to serve

MODULE 4

CHAPTER 1

M4C1

Setting the Captives Free

Part 1

Layout by E Cloete

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Luke 17: 10 So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'

From the outset, let us understand we are ALL involved in this spiritual war between the Kingdom of Light and the counterfeit kingdom of darkness, if we like it or not. As disciples we need to be aware of the spiritual war that is raging around us. As disciples of the Lord our participation in this spiritual war is not debatable.

Our calling and mandate and gifts empower and equip and determines how we operate and function in this war, but if we truly walk in authority and make a stand of authority against the power of darkness as the children of light then it should be naturally supernatural for us to come against forces of darkness and whatever bondage or yoke.

Let us also understand, setting captives free is very comprehensive, for it deals with deliverance from demonic activity, but also deliverance from sickness and the deliverance from wrong mind-sets (such as the religious spirit), deceptions, false perceptions, habits and behaviour.

This is why it is always important to remember we deal here with the spirit, soul and body, and all three needs to be healthy for us to serve God and all three needs to be liberated by the Lord. We are redeemed in the spirit on the day of our salvation, but the wrong mind-sets, ideas, believes, perceptions, trauma, hurt and pain rest in the soul while illnesses and sicknesses attack the body. We need to understand as disciples we are called to set the captive free in spirit, soul and body.

For now, let us look at setting the captive free regarding demonic activity. You may already cringe at the thought. The reality is that the world is flooded with the occult and Spiritism more than ever, and more people are being manipulated, oppressed, harassed and even possessed by demonic forces as society pulls further away from the Lord. So the chances are very good we as disciples will be encountering a demonic presence and we need to be able to set such a person free in the Name of Jesus.

Remember, Jesus sent out disciples to preach the gospel, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and TO CAST OUT DEVILS according to Luke 9.

Now let us be reminded of the following Scripture in *Mark 16: He who believes [who adheres to and trusts in and relies on the Gospel and Him Whom it sets forth] and is baptized will be saved [from the penalty of eternal death]; but he who does not believe [who does not adhere to and trust in and rely on the Gospel and Him Whom it sets forth] will be condemned. 17And these attesting signs will accompany those who believe: in My name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new languages; 18They will pick up serpents; and [even] if they drink anything deadly, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will get well.*

It says those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons ...

Those who believe imply the disciples of the Lord! And yes, what will they do ... cast out demons. Are you a believer, therefore a disciple? Then you have been called for deliverance. It may not be your ministry, but WE have all been called to set people free by driving out the demons, breaking strongholds and smashing the yokes that bind people.

This is after all the ministry of Jesus according to *Isaiah 61, and thus our ministry as disciples: "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, 3 To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."*

But wait, deliverance is not our calling we may cry! Surely the Lord has not called us to engage in spiritual warfare, or to tackle demons, or to deal with the sick or to deal with oppressions or afflictions. In Luke 9 Jesus said the following: 1 Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. 2 He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

The Church might be shocked by the following truth: EVERY believer has been called to be engaged in spiritual warfare, because we are all involved in this battle against darkness that seeks to destroy mankind.

Yes, you and I, as disciples of the Lord, are not just called to evangelise or lay hands on the sick, but to actually set the captives free, meaning those who are oppressed spiritually, and even those who are under the yoke of spiritual bondages. Casting out demons and breaking of spiritual strongholds is the work of any disciple. What is needed to cast out demons? One word... authority.

After all, a disciple walks in the authority of God. Who has such authority? God's children, who are the followers [disciples] of the Lord. How do we exercise our authority? Through a spoken command in faith directed at the unclean spirits.

The more faith we have, the more authority we can exercise. The work of the Lord is to set people free from spiritual darkness, from deceptions, lies and false believes.

Therefore, it is our work as disciples. It says in *John 8: 31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." ... 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth to demonstrate to the world that HE is the Way, Truth and Life. In Him there is not death and no damnation. He is the Light and He is Love. He is the hope of salvation and the answer and the solution to our bondages, afflictions and torments.*

And we as the disciples of the Lord should know that the true power and authority rests with the Lord to set the captives free.

We have to realise that Satan wants to place everyone under a yoke of slavery, under his dark dominion and he wants everyone to be spiritually imprisoned. He wants to be the false king who rules people's hearts, and he will do it any way possible. He is after all known as the one who steals, destroys and kills (John 10).

He is the father of lies right from the beginning and he will seek to deceive just to bring us into bondage. He got it right with Adam and Eve, with Cain, Judas and even Solomon. Why not us? The devil is a sly fox, so we need the wisdom and guidance of the Lord to overcome him.

The Church (you and I) is the answer to the spiritual darkness. There is no other answer. Paul was talking about the spiritual war in *2 Corinthians 10:: 1 Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you. 2 But I beg you that when I am present I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.*

Yes, we are all involved in this spiritual war, and we fight on a spiritual level, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in the power of the Lord, covered by the Blood and led by His wisdom. This is our mandate as disciples – to set the captives free.

Again, deliverance is NOT THE EXCLUSIVE WORK OF A SELECT FEW. Sure, some might be called unto a ministry of fulltime deliverance, but the reality is that ALL disciples are called to set people free from demonic oppression, manipulation, influence, harassment, infestation and affliction.

And you may say but this is surely not your place. Sadly, this is why the devil is having a field day. We believe deliverance is for a select few, instead for all disciples. We are called as the Lord leads to set the captives free. And you can only do so by the leading of the Spirit, under the command of God and by His wisdom and direction.

To stress, every believer has authority to cast out evil spirits, but it's also necessary to understand the importance of using the name of Jesus when driving out unclean spirits. It says in Mark 16:17, "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues."

Matthew 28:18: "And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." The word of God tells us that all power is given unto Jesus, both in heaven and in the earth.

According to Philippians 2:8-11 it pleased Almighty God, the Father, to highly exalt His Son Jesus and give to him a name that is above every name that is named, both in heaven and in the earth and also under the earth.

In other words, Jesus, the name of Jesus carries all authority and all power in heaven, in earth and under the earth. And all this power and authority come from Almighty God himself. The power that is behind this mighty name of Jesus is none other than the Father, with Jesus seated next to him in heavenly places. Unto the Son has been given authority over everything.

Jesus makes it clear that we are to cast out the spirits using His name. Now if we look into the early church, we see Paul using Jesus' name to drive an evil spirit out of a woman: Acts 16:18, "And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."

The word hour simply means 'time', and when used in conjunction with the word 'same' means instantly or now. This deliverance did not take all day. There was no long drawn out conversation, Paul did not bother telling this spirit who he was because this unclean spirit already knew that Jesus was in Paul and Paul had the right to use this mighty name. There is only ONE name that matters and there is only one name that demons, devils and unclean spirits must obey - Jesus. Paul had the right and authority to use the mighty Name of Jesus, and he did. This same right and authority belongs to every believer who knows enough about God's Word, and has 'enough' faith in what God said.

As disciples, we abide in the Lord and the Lord in us, and so we move in the authority of Jesus (note, not our own) in order for the captives to be set free

The disciples even found somebody who was not a disciple who was using Jesus' name to cast out evil spirits: *Mark 9:38-39, "And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me."*

Jesus sent us forth into the world as He was sent forth (John 20:21), to do the works He did (John 14:12), and He gave us the authority to do the work at hand (Mark 13:34). As said before, we need authority to drive out a demon. As we can see in Luke 4:35, Jesus was not afraid to exercise His authority either, "And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not."

Luke 10:17-19, "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you."

How strange is it that out of all these wondrous accomplishments, the thing that thrilled the disciples most was the power to cast out devils.

The part you must not miss, however, is to understand by 'what power' these followers of Jesus were able to do all these things. It was the power that God placed in the NAME OF JESUS. Do you realize that all these deeds were done by using that same power? They raised the dead by using that same NAME. They cleansed lepers by having faith in that same NAME.

Does every believer have authority over demons? Yes, but it is the authority of Jesus and that authority comes by our relationship with the Lord! We are all seated with Christ in the heavenly realm (Ephesians 2:6), which means we are above the demons in rank of authority. Mark 13:34 also tells us how we are given authority to carry out the work that is laid before us.

It is also important for us to exercise our authority through faith. It says in *Matthew 17:19-20*: "Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why not we could cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief..." Obviously they had the authority, but they weren't able to use it because their level of faith wasn't high enough to access the level of authority that needed to be exercised to drive out that particular kind of unclean spirit. Some evil spirits are stronger and harder to drive out, and sometimes prayer and fasting is necessary to build our faith up so we can drive them out.

As believers, we have been given authority in Jesus' name to drive out demons. We access our authority through faith and exercise our authority with a spoken command directed at the unclean spirit. The reasons why the world is so afflicted by spiritual torment, and the reason why so many Christians are struggling with strongholds and oppressions is because too many believers have forsaken the notion that in fact, if one is a true believer then deliverance is a natural outflow of such a believer and that to engage in the spiritual warfare is not an option but our ultimate destiny and calling! It is actually amazing that for the believer the supernatural realm has become strange and weird, while in fact, if we are reborn in the Spirit and walk by the Spirit then the spiritual realm should be normal and be familiar to us! Let us also be reminded there is an authority that rest upon all disciples. It is the authority of Jesus Christ, made possible by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was poured out so that we can have power from on high.

When Jesus said in John 15 that if we abide in Him then He will abide in us, He was saying that the more we die to the self the more we will be living in the fullness of God, meaning the fullness of His authority, the fullness of the anointing and the fullness of His glory. His holiness and glory will then be manifested in us. And so we are reminded of Romans 8 that speaks of there being no condemnation for those who are in Jesus, but only if we walk in the Spirit and live according to the dictates of the Spirit.

The Lord has given us – His disciples - this authority according to Matthew 28 to firstly be His messengers and to be His instruments of service. The authority is given so that we can fulfil our purpose, our calling and our mandate. Again, let it be stressed, Jesus' first ministry work was to get rid of the devil out of His life. When the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus stood on the authority of the Word and put the devil in his place. Just so, we have the authority to make sure the devil has no part of our lives, and we have the authority to lead others also to freedom and liberty. The authority invested in Jesus, now invested in His disciples, is the authority over death, sin and the forces of darkness.

Jesus walked with authority, for He WAS authority. We, as the warriors of the Lord, have been tasked to make sure that we firstly are not ensnared once again by the devil's schemes and secondly to set others free who have become spiritual prisoners unto the devil.

It is important to note a deliverance ministry will glorify Jesus. Deliverance is not about the demons, it is about Jesus. It is about the person being gloriously set free in Jesus' name. The focus of the disciples was on the demons, instead of glorifying Jesus. And so always, but always, our attention should not be on the demons, but on Jesus, and how His work on the cross has defeated the demons and disarmed them. We are simply walking out the victory that Jesus won on the cross by exercising the authority that He gave us to drive the intruders out of our lives and the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We often seen the ministry of deliverance as being scary and negative, this is because our focus is not on the work of the Lord but on the work of the devil. When we work in the love of the Lord, deliverance is beautiful and glorious. It is after all about the liberty a person finds in the Lord.

Again, as a disciple you have been called for deliverance, for this will truly determine if you are walking in the Spirit and thus in authority. Authority comes as a result of our position in the Lord and by that position we mean our relationship with the Lord. Those who have a relationship with the Lord abide in Christ and Christ in them. Those who have a relationship with the Lord are those who obey the Lord and they follow His commandments and they will obey Him and they will stay faithful unto Him. A true believer is the one who is a true disciple of the Lord and he does what the master tells him to do.

The demonic presence (s) knows if someone is in Christ or not. Deliverance is not a game. It is a reality. When you are dealing with the demonic presence or demonic influence you are dealing with something which is ancient and very powerful and very strong. It is true that all power belongs to Jesus but then we must be in Jesus so that we may walk in the authority of Jesus and by that authority we can exert authority over the unclean spirits.

Why is the Church so afraid of the devil? It is because we are filled by doubts and fears and confusion which comes when we are not reborn in the Spirit or it comes when we are not walking in submission unto the Lord.

When we seek to dance with God and the devil [which also comes by seeking after the pleasures of the world] then we struggle to truly know our place in the Lord and we struggle to know the authority invested in us.

In conclusion, we as disciples have been called to set the captives free, even if it means from demonic oppression. It is part and parcel of the life of a disciple, for we walk in the authority of Jesus.

We have been called not to run away from setting the captives free or turn a blind eye. Jesus is the ANSWER to those who are afflicted so it is our duty as the disciples of the Lord to lead people to the Lord in the power and authority of Jesus.

MODULE 4

CHAPTER 2

M4C2

Setting the Captives Free

Part 2

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In part 1 of this teaching, we looked at how we are ALL involved in this spiritual war between the Kingdom of Light and the counterfeit kingdom of darkness, if we like it or not. As disciples we need to be aware of the spiritual war that is raging around us. As disciples of the Lord our participation in this spiritual war is not debatable.

Our calling and mandate and gifts empower and equip and determines how we operate and function in this war, but if we truly walk in authority and make a stand of authority against the power of darkness as the children of light then it should be naturally supernatural for us to come against forces of darkness and whatever bondage or yoke. Remember, when it comes to demons or sicknesses or whatever bondage or yoke, we are dealing here with taking up authority against it and by that authority casting it down.

In part 1, we dealt specifically with demonic oppression. In part 2, we look at how the disciple is called to lay hands on the sick. Now, let us understand sickness by definition if also a very broad term. You have sickness in the flesh but you also get sickness in the soul (depression, anxiety, fear, rejection, unforgiveness) and then someone who is not walking with the Lord has a sickness of the spirit, which is one of spiritual impoverishment.

In the Gospels we find approximately 30 to 40 individual healing events, depending on how you classify the event. We know that each healing event is significant because it was signalled out by the Holy Spirit to be recorded. Out of all the healings that Jesus did in the four Gospels, these individual cases were chosen to represent the basic healing concepts of the New Testament.

Each particular healing event demonstrates at least one important concept about healing. Sometimes Jesus drew attention to the important concept such as in [Mark 2:9-10, Mark 5:30, Luke 13:15-16, Matthew 15:26, Mark 5:36, Mark 10:52]. Other times the concept is demonstrated by Jesus, then explained [Matthew 17:19].

Many believers think of healing as a "fringe benefit". They don't realize that healing is part of the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

Let us understand that nearly one-fifth of the Gospel accounts are devoted to Jesus' healing ministry and the discussion occasioned by it. Scriptures therefore places a lot of emphasis on healing.

Healing is about restoration. And restoration is all about the Father's heart. When we are healed physically, we are restored in health. But then your soul and spirit is also uplifted and restored. All that God does is about restoration. This is why it is so important for disciples to lay hands on the sick, and to see them healed in the power of Jesus, because it is about restoration.

So when we lay hands on the sick, it is about declaring the Father's heart, which is about restoration, for restoration is about love, life and hope.

Not only did the early church drive out evil spirits with Jesus' name, but many were also healed using the name of Jesus: Acts 4:30, "By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus." Jesus walked in authority and exerted His authority, and we see this especially when He was dealing with demons and sicknesses. Jesus was all about restoration. And just so we must be disciples of restoration.

From the outset, let us understand God healed in the New Testament and still heals today. *"When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."* (Matthew 8:16-17)

The earthly healing ministries of Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 53: But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was crushed for our wickedness [our sin, our injustice, our wrongdoing]; The punishment [required] for our well-being fell on Him, And by His stripes (wounds) we are healed.

We also read in *Matthew 4:23: And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.*

Jesus therefore did more than teach and preach, He also operated in supernatural power with signs, wonders, healings and miracles coming forth in His life. Healing was an integral part of His ministry and cannot be side-lined or excluded.

The Gospels do not in any way side-line His healing ministry; but instead they show us clearly that it was a major part of His overall ministry. He healed then and He heals now. He never changes. And just so disciples are called to lay hands on the sick for the sick to be restored in the love of the Lord.

Jesus is referred to as the Balm of Gilead. It says in Jeremiah 8: Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has not the [spiritual] health of the daughter of my people been restored?

A balm is an aromatic, medicinal substance derived from plants. Gilead was an area east of the Jordan River, well known for its spices and ointments. The "balm of Gilead" was, therefore, a high-quality ointment with healing properties. The balm was made from resin taken from a flowering plant in the Middle East, although the exact species is unknown. It was also called the "balsam of Mecca."

In context to Jeremiah 8, there is no healing for the wounds of God's people (his creation), because it was not until Jesus, that healing came for only by his wounds (stripes) are we healed of our sin-sick state. The balm of Gilead in essence, refers to the Salvation (healing from being sick in sin) one gets in Jesus Christ.

Let us remember the Great Commission of Mark 16 includes healing. Jesus Himself has commissioned every Christian to be involved in healing. It says in My name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new languages; 18They will pick up serpents; and [even] if they drink anything deadly, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will get well.

When it comes to the Lord's commission to the disciples, it is not our place to decide that parts of it are more important than other parts. Jesus gave it all to us, and we are to follow it all.

Many people have no problem agreeing that we are called to preach the Gospel to the lost and unsaved but dispute whether we should also be bringing a message of healing. They try to indicate that really salvation of souls is what is important, and that healing is a side issue.

They are both part of the package and come included in what God wants to do in our lives, and believers need to be just as equipped to minister healing as they are to minister salvation to the lost and unsaved.

Remember, the Lord healed because the anointing was upon Jesus. *Acts 10:38: "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.* Just so, when we walk in the Spirit and abide in the Lord, the anointing is upon us to lay hands on the sick.

So what did Jesus do with the anointing upon His life? He did good and healed people! Just so we as His disciples with the anointing of the Spirit must do good, set the captives free and so see the Lord glorified.

Some of the general principles we can learn from the healing ministry of Jesus is that He is the will of God in action, for Jesus came to do the will of the Father God. John 8:28: Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. So when Jesus healed people and said that He would, He was doing and saying what the Father said and did.

His healings of people were a direct reflection of the Father's will and plan. Therefore, if we lay hands on the sick, we do the will of God and laying hands on the sick is therefore the will of God in action.

The Lord also healed to bring glory to His Father. Matthew 15: 30 And great crowds came to Him, bringing with them the lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others, and they put them down at His feet; and He healed them.

So the crowd was amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled restored, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they praised and glorified the God of Israel. So if Jesus healed because it is the will of God, then surely we as disciples must also lay hands on the sick to bring glory to God.

Jesus also healed to fulfil God's promises. Matthew 8:16 When evening came, they brought to Him many who were under the power of demons; and He cast out the evil spirits with a word, and restored to health all who were sick [exhibiting His authority as Messiah], 17 so that He fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "He Himself took our infirmities [upon Himself] and carried away our diseases." When the Master heals, it is a fulfilment of the prophecy spoken through Isaiah. On the cross, Christ took our sickness and infirmities.

Jesus healed to confirm His own Word. John 10: 37 If I do not do the works of My Father [that is, the miracles that only God could perform], then do not believe Me. 38 But if I am doing them, even if you do not believe Me or have faith in Me, [at least] believe the works [that I do—admit that they are the works of God], so that you may know and keep on knowing [clearly—without any doubt] that the Father is in Me, and I am in the Father [that is, I am One with Him]. Christ knew exactly why He was sent to earth. He came to perform the works of His Father. Miracles confirm the spoken word of Jesus. He heals to fulfill His personal word to you.

Lastly, Jesus healed to show us the power in His blood. The prophecy declared in Isaiah 54:4-5 was fulfilled 20 centuries ago on the cross. It also says in *1 John 3: 8 The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. So every time the Lord heals, the devil's defeat at the Cross is exposed once again. Indeed, there is power in the Blood, and so when we as disciples lay hands on the sick, we declare this is God's will, this is God's Word, this is God's Truth and this is the power of salvation, redemption and restoration!*

Be reminded again of *Luke 9: 1 Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. 2 He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. So it is clear that according to Luke 9 and Mark 16, that the disciple has been called to heal the sick.*

This is therefore the mandate and the calling of the disciple. It is our mandate because it was the mandate of Jesus.

Indeed, the Lord wants us to be healed. It is not the Lord's will that we be sickly, and be struck down by illness. To be sick is being held captive to that sickness, and you are in bondage to that sickness. It says in the Book of 3 John: 2 Beloved, I pray that in every way you may succeed and prosper and be in good health [physically], just as [I know] your soul prospers [spiritually]

Again, let us also be reminded when the Lord calls us to heal the sick, this deals not only with the outwardly illness of the flesh, but also one of the spirit and the soul. To heal the spirit is a matter of evangelising and leading someone to the Lord, because in the love, acceptance, grace and mercy of the Lord do we find our strength, redemption and restoration. To heal the soul is, however, a very complex matter for the soul is very complex.

For now, let us just look at the mandate of the disciple to lay hands on those who have a physical sickness, because this in itself is a complex matter. Healing is very important, because healing deals with restoration and atonement – if it be healing in spirit, soul or body.

We need to understand and to discern that God does not make you sick. Many do believe God brings sickness upon your path to teach you a lesson, or to refine you on your spiritual path.

This is not true.

God does not deliberately and willingly strike us with sickness or illness. What happens is that we will become sick or we become ill as soon as we step out of the will of the Lord, therefore step away from His Presence by not trusting, not obeying, not yielding, not listening and not abiding in Him.

Here is a simple example of we reap what we sow.

Do you know there at least 10 health problems relating to stress? This includes heart disease, asthma, obesity, diabetes, headaches, depression and anxiety, gastrointestinal problems and Alzheimer's disease. Stress causes low energy, headaches, upset stomach, aches, pains, and tense muscles, chest pain, rapid heartbeat, insomnia and frequent colds and infections.

So why are we talking about stress? Well remember Matthew 6: 25 “Therefore I tell you, stop being worried or anxious (perpetually uneasy, distracted) about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, as to what you will wear. Is life not more than food, and the body more than clothing?

You see, if we worry, and we stress, then our hope is not in God. In God we find our rest, our peace, our trust and our hope. Jesus was not really giving as an advice, but He was commanding us to stop being anxious, being stressed has a terrible impact on our physical bodies.

When we lay hands on the sick, we need to listen to the counsel of the Spirit, for if there is legal ground in a person for the devil to attack, it needs to be addressed. Let us make this clear – sickness is not from the Lord. Sickness is a result or the consequence when we live or abide not fully in the presence of the Lord through obedience, holiness or faithfulness.

For example, if we live unhealthy, we become sick. Whose fault is this? We first need to repent of living unhealthy, address our lifestyle and then allow God to restore. If someone smokes plenty of cigarettes a day and continues to struggle with his lungs, whose fault is this? Sure,

God can heal that person, but that person will continue to be sick as long as he or she smokes. If we do not sleep enough because of stress, or we are stressed because we are overworked in our pursuit of wealth, then we need to address the root of why we are sick so that we can walk in restoration.

A disciple who comes to a person who is sick needs to therefore listen to the Lord, and move in the Spirit to know what the right course of action is.

Maybe it is just to lay hands and pray be healed. Maybe it involves a word of wisdom or knowledge or discernment or prophecy. Either way, we need to listen to the Lord.

Remember, to be healthy implies not just physical health, but also health of the spirit and soul. Many times the body is sick because the spirit or the soul is not healthy. If we are bitter, angry, depressed, or we cannot forgive someone or we have taken offense, then these emotions in the realm of the soul can easily manifest in the realm of the physical. We need to therefore listen to the Lord.

Similarly, a sickness can be caused by demonic activity (directly or indirectly through witchcraft). And we can allow demonic activity into our lives when we are not fully under the Blood, when we give the devil a legal right to act against us and when we are out of the will of the Lord.

Therefore, a disciple needs to move in the Holy Spirit when laying hands on the sick. After all, are you dealing with a simple illness of the body, or a manifestation of a malady of the soul or is it a spiritual manifestation?

Let us understand, the Lord wants us to be healthy and so he calls His disciples to move in His power, wisdom and discernment to set the captives free for them to be restored. It says in Exodus 15: *There the LORD issued a ruling and instruction for them and put them to the test. 26 He said, "If you listen carefully to the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you." Indeed, for those who listen carefully to the Lord and do what is right in His eyes (not the eyes of the world or any church denomination) will be covered by the Blood of Jesus and will stand strong against the diseases, dread and pain of this world.*

Let us for now look at *Deuteronomy 30: The Offer of Life or Death: 11 Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. 12 It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" 13 Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" 14 No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.*

15 See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. 16 For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. 17 But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, 18 I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. 19 This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live 20 and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In the Old Testament life and death translated into blessings and curses for the Israel nation. Under the Law of Moses, the Lord presented to His people a very simple choice – follow God and live, or disobey God and die. Take note of verse 15: See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.

We are either going to follow God and live in abundance – spirit, soul and body – or we are going to choose to allow ourselves to become infested by the world and therefore suffer the touch of death – in spirit, soul and body. For those who fear Him, obey Him and who listens carefully to Him shall surely live here and in eternity.

It says in Psalm 1: Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, 2 but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night. 3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.

Indeed, we have a choice to walk in life or death by choosing to abide in the Lord (John 15) or abiding in the world. Sickness is not from the Lord, but it might not necessarily come directly from the devil. Most of the time it is the manifestation of us not always abiding in the Lord, not obeying, not listening, not doing as He commands us daily spiritually, emotionally and physically.

But at times, the devil might strike someone with sickness, illnesses and plagues, but this will only happen when a legal right has been given to the devil to act in such a matter.

Therefore, listen to the Lord and follow the Spirit when laying hands on the sick!

Praise God. He is our Deliverance from our enemies, from darkness, from sickness, from injustice, from our strongholds, from our weaknesses, from our inadequacies, from our troubles, from our woes, from our spirit afflictions, from our fleshly torments, from our sin, from our iniquities and from a life without meaning. He is our DELIVERANCE from the second death [domain of fire].

He is our hope and salvation and light.

You can only set people free when you know God as your Deliverer. Praise the Lord! He is our Deliverance. Nothing else will deliver us - not psychology, not money, not status, not doctors, not anything, but only God!

He is the Balm of Gilead, so go forth as a disciple and lay hands on the sick!

MODULE 4

CHAPTER 3

M4C3

Setting the Captives Free

Part 3

Layout by E Cloete

LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

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In the previous two chapters of this module, we looked at how the disciple has been called to set the captives free, which means laying hands on the sick, and also laying hands on those who are under spiritual attack.

This is the mandate of the believer according to the Great Commission of Matthew 28 and Mark 16.

We looked specifically at how healing, however, is not just about outward illness. Many people are “sick” when it comes to the spirit and the soul. To heal the spirit is therefore a matter of evangelising and leading someone to the Lord, because in the love, acceptance, grace and mercy of the Lord do we find our strength, redemption and restoration. To heal the soul is, however, a very complex matter for the soul is very complex.

We also need to keep in mind healing is about restoration. And restoration is all about the Father’s heart. When we are healed physically, we are restored in health. But then your soul and spirit is also uplifted and restored. All that God does is about restoration.

This is why it is so important for disciples to lay hands on the sick, and to see them healed in the power of Jesus, because it is about restoration. So when we lay hands on the sick, it is about declaring the Father’s heart, which is about restoration, for restoration is about love, life and hope.

A disciple is not just called to lay hands on those who are outwardly sick, but to help those who are suffering in the spirit and the soul to find healing and therefore restoration. Let us be reminded healing is very important, because healing deals with restoration and atonement – if it be healing in spirit, soul or body.

To fully comprehend setting the captives free from the ailments of the soul, and the scope and the magnitude of such deliverance, we need to consider that man is a spiritual being and he was first made in spirit before he was encased in flesh and by that flesh and by his physical birth his soul began to breathe and become alive.

And to speak of the soul speaks of intelligence and our will and our emotions and our thoughts and our feelings. Man has a spirit and man has a soul. They are not the same. Life is in the spirit, yet your soul is the trinity of the will, thoughts and emotions. Just as our Lord is the Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are also one person yet we are flesh, soul and spirit.

We cannot set the captives free unless we understand and discern in Spirit and Truth the concept of spirit, soul and body. The day that we are redeemed and saved by the Blood of Jesus is the day that our spirit has been redeemed and reborn. Our spirit therefore becomes righteous and holy by the blood of the slain Lamb [Jesus]. This is part of the healing process.

Let us revisit Mark 16: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." The very concept of preaching the gospel implies evangelising, and therefore leading people to Jesus, for then as they are led, they are restored by the Blood of the Lamb, redeemed, and they are now under the headship of the Lord. A spirit not redeemed is apart from God, therefore wounded, bruised and broken.

So we are called by the Blood of Jesus to eventually be reborn in the spirit (John 3), which means for our spirit to be sanctified and consecrated. And once our spirit has been reborn, we embark on a journey of our soul to come into alignment with God so that our mind and heart and will are one with the Lord.

The disciple is therefore called to lead people to the Lord in salvation for this is the process of healing of the spirit. And once the spirit is healed and restored, one can begin to deal with the soul, and of course also the flesh (body).

Let it be stressed that once the spirit is redeemed, this does not mean that our soul is in a state of holiness and purity.

Our soul (mind, will and emotions) also need to be renewed, healed and restored. The mandate of the disciple is therefore not only to pray to bring healing not only to the flesh, but also to the spirit and the soul.

Whatever the form of deliverance, it always produces HEALING – for a person is made whole and complete when delivered from the afflictions of the spirit, soul and body. When we submit to the Lord and follow Him then our lives become whole, stable and without inner affliction. Leading someone to Christ is deliverance, for that person is led out of the spiritual darkness and into light. Such a person is afflicted by the curse of sin, but under the Blood of Jesus, he has a right standing with God.

Deliverance is therefore not just about deliverance of a demon. Deliverance has many forms and shapes and shades, and it deals with the realm of the spirit, soul and body. A person is only really DELIVERED when the spirit, soul and body are dealt with, and most of the times this can happen simultaneously.

All three dimensions are intertwined. Many times the flesh is in bondage because the spirit is in bondage, or the soul can be in bondage which leads to a corruption of the spirit, or the corruption of the soul which can lead to the decay of the flesh.

Throughout His ministry on earth, Jesus dealt with deliverance on all levels – be it delivering someone from a demon, from a physical affliction or from the stronghold of the soul (manifested in the mind, heart or the will).

This is also part of our mandate. The mandate of the disciple deals with specifically healing of spirit, soul and body, because the disciple has been called to not only lay hands on the sick, but also deal with the realm of the soul and the spirit.

Many people, including believers these days are still suffering from bondages of the soul, which are caused for example by trauma, unforgiveness, false perceptions, teachings, upbringings and habits.

The way we think and operate is a result of what has happened to us throughout life. Traumas and painful experiences can radically alter our perceptions and reality when we view life. It says the truth shall set us free (John 8), and everyone, be it a Christian or a heathen, needs deliverance from strongholds that has taken hold of our thoughts and emotions.

The disciple's mandate is to lead someone on that path of the restoration of the soul, by walking in the wisdom and discernment of the Holy Spirit.

After all, a sickness or illness or whatever other bondage of the soul needs to be addressed and needs to be challenged by the Blood of Jesus, which translates into deliverance by authority. At times such torment within a person will be demonic, at other times the answer will be found in the soul or merely in the flesh. For this reason we need to seek to walk in the gift of discernment, word of knowledge and word of wisdom.

Remember, as disciples it is our mandate to walk in the glory of the Kingdom of God, establish its dominion in the hearts of man, take up the keys of authority, bind the works of the devil, loosen people from the chains that bind [soul and spirit and body] and ultimately see the lost come the Throne Room of Grace.

When it comes to the restoration of the soul, our minds needs to be renewed DAILY, and we need to submit to the Lord, deny the self, guard the heart, and tame the tongue (James 3), because these things speak of yielding to the Lord within the realm of the soul. It is in the soul where we think and where we feel and where we form habits and where our traditions are birthed. Out of the soul comes the way that we speak and operate and function. It is the soul where our truth and reality is shaped and moulded, and by this truth and reality we shape our lives.

We at times wonder how we can keep on sinning or keep on feeding our wrong habits, even after we have been redeemed in the spirit. The problem lies with the soul. If our soul is not renewed and not cleansed and not submitted to the Holy Spirit - meaning conformed and transformed by the inner working of the power of a divine King - then it means that our flesh and our body (meaning our five natural senses) will also not be submitted to the Lord and will therefore be subjected and susceptible to the ways of the world.

We will therefore remain vulnerable and open and subjected to the influences of the world and we will act upon these influences because our soul is still caught between the divine kingdom of God and the sinful world.

We need to therefore from the outset understand that when we speak of setting the captives free we speak of a deliverance that needs to take place within the spiritual realm and also the realm of the soul.

If we fail to discern the difference between the soul and the spiritual realm and we fail to discern that there is a difference between the realm of the spirit and the realm of the mind and heart then we will fail to truly bring ourselves or someone to complete deliverance.

The greatest battlefield in a believer's life is the mind. Our mind determines our actions, behaviour, thoughts, and reality. If our mind is not submitted to God, we will follow the ways of the rebellious world.

This is why Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10: 3 For though we walk in the flesh [as mortal men], we are not carrying on our [spiritual] warfare according to the flesh and using the weapons of man. 4 The weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood]. Our weapons are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are destroying sophisticated arguments and every exalted and proud thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought and purpose captive to the obedience of Christ, 6 being ready to punish every act of disobedience, when your own obedience [as a church] is complete.

Take note of how he writes about taking thoughts (your soul) captive and to punish every act of disobedience (our will). Spiritual warfare is not just dealing with demons and fighting the powers of darkness, but a lot of it deals with bringing healing to someone's soul. And this means that a person has to learn to bring his or her mind under the subject of the Lord, to align their will with the higher will of the Lord and to allow the Spirit to lead and not be solely led by the emotions.

The mind is a very powerful agent and so are the heart and the free will of man. Satan loves to attack free will, for to submit to the Lord means submitting one's will to seek the Lord's will. A person who holds onto free will, therefore holding onto control, are those who walk in rebellion, which in its own right is idolatry [exaltation of the Self above God].

Even if you have been saved [redeemed in the spirit], the devil can and will scheme and trick and manipulate and deceive in order to corrupt the soul. He will lie and cheat for the purpose to see our soul become alienated from the living Lord. For if someone's soul is still influenced by the world, then one's thoughts and emotions and your will eventually runs counter to the ways and thoughts of the Lord.

Our soul – be it the soul of the believer or the non-believer – therefore remains an open battleground. When we speak about casting our mind on the Kingdom above, and when we are speaking about taming the tongue and when we are speaking about renewing the mind, then we are speaking of action because the word 'taming' and 'renewing' and 'casting' is a verb, therefore by implication a momentum and progression of action is needed to enforce such a decision.

When disciples like Paul and James and Peter speaks about perseverance and diligence and keeping guard, they speak of action that needs to be taken in order for us to be submitted to the will and to the plan and the purpose of the Kingdom of God. And such action translates into the choices and decisions we make and what we believe, how we act, how we speak and our general attitude.

We are called to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for we are ultimately responsible for our own walk of salvation and spiritual growth. The decision WE make can either destroy or prosper us; therefore the devil seeks to influence us so that we can make the wrong decision. The Holy Spirit, however, wants to lead us in all truth to His glory.

Paul realised that one's soul remains the gateway through which Satan can attack and corrupt us. Satan will always attack the world and the believer through the soul. And let it be known that the devil can attack and he can corrupt the spirit of the believer once he has found enough footholds within a soul. Once Satan has found a legal foothold into a believer's life, he can exert his negative influences.

This is why Ephesians 6 speaks of the armour of God, for we are reminded of the helmet of salvation and it speaks about the breastplate of righteousness and it speaks of the belt of truth and the sword of the spirit and the shield of faith.

Paul speaks about such armour because we need to guard and protect and shield our mind and heart against the schemes and plots of the enemy. If we fail to do so, then Satan will simply continue to attack the realm of the soul.

Man has been given a free will and a free choice and by our choices and by our actions and by our thoughts we dictate the condition of our soul. Satan uses his influences in the world to deceive and to lie and to distort the truth of God so that man will live in a false reality and a truth.

And when man lives by his own false sense of reality and truth, he sets himself up for a fall. If we seek not God's way, we walk in idolatry and rebellion, and so Satan will bring darkness upon our path and he will present us with choices and he will present us with a journey of self-destruction (Romans 1).

Ultimately the condition of our soul, if we can be brutally honest, is the product of our own choice. What we choose will dictate our lives. It is the product of our free will because we have chosen to listen to lies and deceptions and we have chosen to submit to the pain or the bitterness or the hurt that has come across our paths in so many different forms.

We can choose to be offended, we can choose how we react to trials and tribulations, and we can choose to either fight evil with evil or we can counter the evil with good. To hold onto pain, anger, bitterness and unforgiveness is a choice, and the devil wants us to make the wrong choices so that we give him the legal ground and the permission through hate and darkness to destroy us.

Satan cannot force us to embrace anger or bitterness or rage, but he can bring it on our path and he can tempt us to give into the evil or the pain in order to embrace the darkness and spiritual corruption. We cannot just wake up one day and walk in supernatural love or a hope or a peace or forgiveness, but we first need to address these issues within the soul realm, by submitting not to the world but to the Spirit and to the Truth of the Living Lord.

When it comes to setting the captives free and healing of the soul and the spirit, you will find someone who does not forgive or refuses to forgive is often in terrible bondage. Jesus' expression of love was to die on the cross so that we as sinners may be forgiven and be redeemed. If we fail to forgive, we mock God's sacrifice and His price of love. Unforgiveness is the opposite of love and mercy, and Satan knows this. The devil thrives upon unforgiveness, for it opens doorways of anger, hate, bitterness, envy, jealousy and loathing which can even lead to greater emotional turmoil such as depression and murderous rage.

One of the greatest battles anyone faces, especially believers, is the matter of the will. For in the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6 it speaks about seeking the Lord's will and for His Kingdom to come. When we serve the Lord, only His will, purpose and plans must prevail in our lives. We need to therefore lay down our own kingdoms and crowns of self-control and self-glorification, as we seek the Lord's Kingdom.

If we fail to do so, we walk in rebellion, and so often our choices, decisions, plans and agendas lead to trouble. As a disciple of God we need to firstly make sure we are abiding in the perfect will of the Lord but then also to help others to discern and to walk in the will of the Lord. For there is life, peace, hope and power in His will, for He has only goodness planned for us.

There is power in the soul because of free will. A believer can wake up one day and decide by free will not to follow the Lord. And the devil knows this and he knows how powerful the mind and the heart are and how powerful the soul can be. So he will attack the soul every day, all day long. Satan has a field day with those who has not yet submitted to the Lord because they have chosen by free will not to follow the Lord and by that choice they have therefore chosen a path of rebellion and idolatry.

Therefor their spirit and soul remains open ground through which the devil can attack and corrupt. But sadly for so many Christians it remains clear they are not guarding the soul and they are not wearing the armour of God and they are not being mindful of the influences of the world or the influences of the devil.

The disciple needs to walk in discernment, so as to know what plagues a person and how to set a person free. And the disciple needs to walk in the authority of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit, to understand the complexities of the spirit, soul and body and how they are intertwined.

With all of this in hindsight, consider it is the mandate of the disciple to preach the Gospel, which deals with redemption of the spirit, but also to go and make disciples. To make a disciple is about teaching someone the Scriptures, but even more importantly, healing someone to walk in the Presence of the Lord as a worshipper in Spirit and Truth.

For when that new believer begins to abide and dwell in the Almighty Presence, and learns to submit, and learns to hear the voice of God, then they will begin to learn about God's will, about the heart and mind of the Lord, and they will begin to learn what it means to yield, to submit, and to work out one's salvation with fear and trembling.

To be a disciple means we need to be able to lead someone on that road of restoration of the soul, by teaching and showing them how to lay down the old self, how to deal with unforgiveness, rage, bitterness, anger, and all the other works of the flesh. We need to be able to disciple someone so that they learn how to walk in the Spirit, how to walk in the will of the Lord and how to bring their soul under the submission of the Spirit. We need to be able to walk with someone a path so that through counselling, love and fellowship they can find their healing, and therefore find their restoration.

You see, we all have a choice to make. A choice in what we believe and how we are going to act, and we have a choice regarding our attitude, a choice regarding our walk and a choice if we are going to live for God or Satan. Free will that functions hand in hand with our mind and heart is incredibly powerful, because it means man is free to decide and to choose what he wants to do.

Young believers need to understand the dynamics and the challenges of the spiritual walk, and the importance of free will, choices and the consequences of our decisions.

Everything comes down to choices and to the decisions that we make, and by these choices we either give the devil a foothold into our soul or we give the Lord the right to abide in our lives.

These spiritual principles need to be taught, and thus it is the mandate of the disciple to do so. Jesus said in Matthew 28 in verse 20 teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you. The mandate of the disciple is to teach the truth of God, and therefore also the principles of the Kingdom that impacts our spirit, soul and body. Again, this is the duty of the disciple – to teach and to also show how to guard the heart, the mind, how to tame the tongue, how to deal with emotions and how to deal with the free will. Jesus came and healed and delivered people from their afflictions, setting them free from their bondages and strongholds so that they may walk in the glory and liberty of the Kingdom of Heaven.

This is what the Kingdom of God is about – restoring the lost and the broken unto the divine embrace of the Lord by loosening them from the bonds of sin and darkness. The Kingdom of God is also about the restoration of the soul – helping people to be restored in their mind (thoughts), heart (emotions) and in the will.

The strongholds of our soul are real and Jesus dealt with it and He has given us the authority to also deal with them. Jesus demonstrated that He HAD the discernment to know when He was dealing with a demon, or when he was dealing with a mere physical illness, or when He was dealing with a stronghold of the mind which is caused by our wrong mind-sets, habits, perceptions, worldly knowledge, upbringing and education. This is why we NEED spiritual discernment.

As disciples of God we need to therefore listen to the Lord and act accordingly to His Glory and for His Glory. It remains the mandate of the disciple to set the captives free, but not only to lay hands on the sick, but to make sure they are delivered in the spirit and soul in order to walk in the life and victory of our Lord Jesus.

MODULE 4

CHAPTER 4

M4C4

Proclaim the Truth

LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

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Layout by E Cloete

Matthew 28: 20 teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you ...

There is a saying that goes ... if you don't stand for something then you might fall for anything. More than ever the disciples of the Lord need to stand for the Truth, and they need to uphold the Truth, defend the Truth and proclaim nothing but the Truth of the Lord. This is a time that people fall for all and anything which is unnatural, immoral and deceitful, for they know not what to stand for. The disciples need to therefore show what to stand for.

The Truth of God, no matter the times we live in, will always shine like a screaming siren in the night. It is that lighthouse on the seashore that desperately shines its light as we navigate through the storms of life, enduring wave upon wave and storm upon storm. The Truth of the Lord never changes, and it never alters – it is constant.

Take note of verse 20 in the above verse - teaching them to observe everything. The Lord has not called us as His disciples to preach or teach or proclaim some of the truth, but all the truth as led by the Spirit and as established in the Scriptures. We as disciples of the Lord have been called not only to set the captive free, but to stand for the Truth of the Lord, declare the Truth and teaching all the Truth of the Lord.

For this reason, the Holy Spirit was poured out according to John 16 to lead us in the complete Truth.

After all, a disciple cannot walk in any deception or lie, for a disciple is the one who follows Jesus and Jesus is the Word and the Word is the Truth. We cannot be disciples if we do not follow the Truth and therefore speak it and teach it and declare it!

In this postmodern world of shifting sands and leaders who are but wolves in sheep clothing, in this world where truth finds itself at the mercy of the godless, it has become imperative to urgently find spiritual truth that grounds us.

Mankind also finds itself at the mercy of an existentialist journey, enduring an ever-increasing angst over the meaning of life, his purpose, global warming, political upheavals, death and personal loss.

However, when done against a background of trying on their own to create the meaning and essence of their lives, as opposed to deities or authorities creating it for them, poses further challenges to the quest for truth.

Truth. Such a simple word. Such a simple concept, yet so complex with a myriad of connotations.

What is truth?

After all, this is the postmodern world of pluralism. This world will simply say your truth and my truth do not need to clash and conflict. My truth in this age is said to be my space and in my time is the truth.

Whatever I deem the truth to be is the truth after all for it only applies to me and is therefore beneficial to me. This is pluralism. Fear and loathing, intolerance, supremacy and elitism have driven mankind to this intersection of rather seeking a contextualized truth rather than a universal one.

Yet a contextualized one radically influences our search for meaning and spiritual truths as compared to that of a universal option.

Truth more than ever is under attack.

You may wonder what is then so special about these days. Wars and conflict is after all nothing new. Natural disasters and plagues are old. Kingdoms still rise and fall. Leaders still come and go. Indeed, we find history repeating itself, therefore life continues as is.

The answer is therefore not in this natural world, but in the spiritual. It is within the hearts and mind of man where things have changed. The wiles and schemes of man in his quest for truth have actually led him along a path of spiritual self-destruction, simply because absolutes have been eradicated. Uncertainty is the order of the day and with uncertainty comes greater confusion and fear.

Fear breeds insecurity, which leads us to an emotional and spiritual vulnerable state. Sordid events in politics, philosophy, arts and religion have also blurred the lines of universal rights and wrongs.

Man, in the post-modern world is in effect spiritually impoverished, holding on to false comforts and placing his love, faith and hope solely in the perishable, not tangible. Whereas man in the past found his solace in divinity, now man lives in a state of constant emotional and intellectual hype, devoid of divinity.

It is a world of smoke and mirrors, as man is lured by illusions of truth and enlightenment. Mankind has systematically become to believe in his own mortal powers and that they have become more powerful than divinity. History attests to man placing so much faith and trust in philosophies or dreams of grandeur only to come to the realization it is void of true power or hope.

This process of seeking and finding answers beyond the realm of divinity has intensified to a point of concern. More than ever the disciples of the Lord therefore need to preach and teach the Truth of the Lord.

The Hebrew word most used for truth is emeth, which implies certainty and trustworthiness. For the truth we adhere to and fight for must be certain and must be trustworthy. The truth that we seek and the truth we seek to share is not some temporary knowledge, yet it is something eternal and which gives eternal life. It is a truth that abounds with possibilities where the secrets of the supernatural realm are unlocked to be manifested in the natural realm.

Why is the Truth so important? *John 8: 31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

If we walk in Truth, we are the disciples of God. And the Truth makes us free. Free from what? Free from the lies, the deceptions, the bondages, the spiritual prisons and being held captive to the fallen ways.

For this reason, the devil seeks to destroy God's Truth in the heart of man, even in churches, because freedom lies in Truth, because life, light, hope, power and restoration rests in Truth.

We live in a world of mixed generations, consisting of people known as the baby boomers (born out of 1950's and 1960s), Generation X (1970s and 1980s, X referring to the variable, thus times of constant change) and the New Millennium babies (1980s and 1990s). Each generation, as generations gone by, are faced with the challenges of finding truths and answers. Yet, the modern world is one of progression and changing values. As long as man seeks the truths in technology and science instead of the divine, then the truth will be hidden among the folds of darkness.

It is the mandate and the task of the disciple to constantly guide people along the right path of Truth, because it is so easy these days to get lost in this age of so much spiritual darkness. It is the mandate of the disciple to keep on teaching all to observe everything Jesus taught, because the Truth truly sets free while anything else outside the truth only enslaves.

Never before has mankind lived in such a false sense of spirituality. Never before has man been so spiritually impoverished, holding on to false comforts and placing his love, faith and hope solely in the perishable. Yet, the deceit of the world tells a sordid tale of fulfilment. The world lives in a state of emotional and intellectual hype.

The world lives in a time of smoke and mirrors, being deceived with a false sense of the power and peace. These are indeed days of false spirituality and great illusions. The voice of the false prophet and the false teachers have for some time now replaced the true voice of the Father in the hearts and minds of many. Never before has mankind lived in such deceptive times, being exposed to so much falseness.

Humanity continues to strive to seek the meaning to life, even looking to the stars, yet so often have placed their trust in vain philosophies or hopeless dreams. This process of seeking and finding answers beyond the realm of the Lord has intensified to a point of great concern.

Once again, the events of the last 2500 years have driven man to this point of total spiritual ignorance and blindness. We are reminded of *1 Corinthians 1: 20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.*

You see, all the wisdom of this age does not lead someone to salvation, to joy, to fulfilment and to peace. Only the truth of God remains our true beacon to find a state of rest and spiritual hope and fulfilment.

In Christian circles, since the early struggle between the disciples and Pharisees, to the threat of the Gnostics to the birth of Islam and from the struggles of the mystics and scholars has this battle for spiritual truth waged.

It has been carried forth by the struggle between Catholic and Protestant, between philosopher and the carrier of the cross. The Ages of Rationalism and Enlightenment, along with the storms of Romanticism, have opened new doors for alternating truths of enlightenment. Jesus was attacked by the traditionalists for claiming that He was the truth, while the early disciples were constantly under attack for defending the truth against the truth as proclaimed through myths, legends and philosophies of the Romans and Greeks.

During the early and high Middle Ages the monks retracted from the world to find the truth in the monasteries. Philosophers of the ages have sowed a theory in terms of the universe, man, destiny, substance and matter, sometimes beyond the realm of divinity.

There is a warning sounded by Paul hundreds of years ago ... It says in *2 Timothy 4: 1 charge [you] in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, Who is to judge the living and the dead, and by (in the light of) His coming and His kingdom: 2 Herald and preach the Word! Keep your sense of urgency [stand by, be at hand and ready], whether the opportunity seems to be favorable or unfavorable. [Whether it is convenient or inconvenient, whether it is welcome or unwelcome, you as preacher of the Word are to show people in what way their lives are wrong.]*

And convince them, rebuking and correcting, warning and urging and encouraging them, being unflagging and inexhaustible in patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when [people] will not tolerate (endure) sound and wholesome instruction, but, having ears itching [for something pleasing and gratifying], they will gather to themselves one teacher after another to a considerable number, chosen to satisfy their own liking and to foster the errors they hold, 4 And will turn aside from hearing the truth and wander off into myths and man-made fictions. 5 As for you, be calm and cool and steady, accept and suffer unflinchingly every hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fully perform all the duties of your ministry.

This warning by Paul is surely more than ever for this time and season.

There has been a lot of false doctrine and gospels being preached over the last 2000 years, but nothing is more scarier than what is happening in this day and age. Now, we have thousands of different denominations, with thousands of teachers and preachers sharing their own brand of truth. Some of these doctrines may be closer to the Truth than other, but any doctrine which is not 100% in alignment with God is still deception and false.

The Truth is constantly twisted, manipulated, exploited and falsely interpreted for the single purpose of 'selling' it to a mass audience. A true disciple is a follower of Jesus, who is the Truth and the Truth sets you free. We must preach and teach nothing else but the Truth of the Lord.

We read of the first believers in Acts 2 that they steadfastly persevered, devoting themselves constantly to the instruction and fellowship of the apostles, to the breaking of bread [including the Lord's Supper] and prayers. There is only one TRUTH and that is the truth of God. There are no other shades or interpretations. We are so involved in mythology, methodology, programmes and philosophies that Jesus Christ is no longer the focal point of our Salvation and existence.

And the reason why 'believers' can gather to them so many teachers to please their itching ears, is because there are so many flavours of truth. Yet a disciple has a mandate to hear the Truth from the Lord and to walk in such Truth.

In the seven letters to the seven Churches, every letter begins with the reminder that they who has an ear then listen to what the Spirit of the Lord is saying. We cannot walk in God's victory, triumph, hope or glory if we do not listen to the Holy Spirit. That is simply rebellion if we tune ourselves not in to God but to man.

We will then never grow spiritually, and we will remain in bondage, susceptible to the attacks and deceptions of the Devil. Unless we listen to God and heed His Word, we will continually walk in idolatry and rebellion.

The Kings James Version of 2 Timothy 4 verse 4 reads as follows: *And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. The Greek word used for fable is muthos, which suggests something which is a story, or an invention, thus a falsehood. Paul makes it clear that people are teaching doctrines which are but an invention of the mind and it is a story invented by man. A disciple is never called to speak fables, myths or imaginations, but only the pure truth of the Lord.* We find Paul warning countless of times in his epistles to Timothy and Titus, and also the assembly in Thessalonica of those who will come and teach doctrines which are false and that resembles fables.

We read for example in *1 Timothy 6: 3 But if anyone teaches otherwise and does not assent to the sound and wholesome messages of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah) and the teaching which is in agreement with godliness (piety toward God), 4 He is puffed up with pride and stupefied with conceit, [although he is] woefully ignorant. He has a morbid fondness for controversy and disputes and strife about words, which result in (produce) envy and jealousy, quarrels and dissension, abuse and insults and slander, and base suspicions, 5 And protracted wrangling and wearing discussion and perpetual friction among men who are corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth, who imagine that godliness or righteousness is a source of profit [a moneymaking business, a means of livelihood]. From such withdraw.*

And also ... *1 Thessalonians 1: 16 But avoid all empty (vain, useless, idle) talk, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness. 17 And their teaching [will devour; it] will eat its way like cancer or spread like gangrene. So it is with Hymenaeus and Philetus,*

18 Who have missed the mark and swerved from the truth by arguing that the resurrection has already taken place. They are undermining the faith of some. 19 But the firm foundation of (laid by) God stands, sure and unshaken, bearing this seal (inscription): The Lord knows those who are His, and, Let everyone who names [himself by] the name of the Lord give up all iniquity and stand aloof from it.

Paul reminds us in 1 Timothy 4 of the following: But the [Holy] Spirit distinctly and expressly declares that in latter times some will turn away from the faith, giving attention to deluding and seducing spirits and doctrines that demons teach.

Thus, at the end of days, we will have to deal with a lot of fallacy, fables, deceptions and lies. This is because Satan drives this agenda. He is the Father of lies. His mission, from the days of Adam and Eve, is to deceive and to steal and to destroy.

Satan wishes to destroy the Church through sowing deception, and when we act upon deception, we reap deception. And such deception takes us further away from God and His Truth. We therefore need to remain in Truth by remaining in the Lord. After all, we are disciples because we remain and dwell in our Lord Jesus.

It says in 2 Peter 2 of the false teachers who sow discord: *20 For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through [the full, personal] knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they again become entangled in them and are overcome, their last condition is worse [for them] than the first. 21 For never to have obtained a [full, personal] knowledge of the way of righteousness would have been better for them than, having obtained [such knowledge], to turn back from the holy commandment which was [verbally] delivered to them.*

This Scripture out of 2 Peter 2 sums up Satan's ploy. He wants the believers to become entangled in all kinds of deceptions, traditions and fables. Once this happens, then we will drift further away from the Lord, for we give the devil a foothold to act and to influence our lives. It is time we turn our ear back to God. It is time we listen and we obey. It is time we stop running after man and start running after the Lord. It is time that put an end to fables and deceptions and walk in truth.

For the truth we adhere to and fight for must be certain and must be trustworthy. The truth that we seek and the truth we seek to share is surely not some temporary knowledge, yet it is something eternal and which gives eternal life. It is a truth that abounds with possibilities where the secrets of the supernatural realm are unlocked to be manifested in the natural realm.

As disciples it is our mandate to therefore go and teach all truth, for again, it is the truth that sets us free. It is the truth that leads us to the Lord. It is the truth that leads to a relationship with true divinity and therefore everlasting hope on earth and in heaven. In a world of so much confusion and deceit and lies, we as disciples of the Lord need to declare the Truth so that a broken world can truly know the Lord and be led out of captivity in the light of His Glorious Presence.

Indeed, let us stand firm on the truth of the Lord, for Jesus who is the Truth is the hope of our glory, the hope of the world and the hope of the lost.

MODULE 4

CHAPTER 5

M4C5

Witnesses unto the Ends of the Earth

Layout by E Cloete

LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

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So far we have looked at what is the duty of a disciple. And part of such duty is to set the captives free in the power of the Kingdom, but also to proclaim the truth of our Lord.

Fundamentally, the duty of a disciple is to be a witness to the Kingdom of God. It is that simple. We read of the outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2. What was the purpose therefore of Pentecost?

Was it for self-enrichment, self-glorification, for self-improvement and self-exaltation? The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples to empower them to BE WITNESSES for the Kingdom of God on earth.

After all, it says in Acts 1: 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Did the Holy Spirit come in order for us to build huge churches, to start well-known ministries, to be known, to be praised, to be lauded, to be rich or famous? No, the Holy Spirit was poured out so that we can be witnesses unto the ends of the earth.

We are not here to draw attention to ourselves, but to show the way to the Kingdom. After all, is that not what the Great Commission is all about? To go and make disciples and to teach all that the Lord has taught? So by implication, this implies go out and be witnesses!

It says in Matthew 5: 14 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

To be the light of the world implies being a witness for the Lord and of His Kingdom in this earth. The Lord admonished His disciples not to hide their light, meaning we must make sure that we remain bold in our spiritual journey of declaring His Truth.

Take note of the fire that came upon the disciples which confirmed what was said by John the Baptist in *Matthew 3: 11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.* This is the fire of the Holy Spirit ... a power, an anointing and a cleansing.

So the empowerment by the Spirit is for us to be witnesses ... it is that simple. Yet we try and manipulate the Spirit of the Lord for own gain, instead of realising here for are here merely to bring honour and glory to our Lord Jesus.

It says the following in *Luke 10: After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. 2 Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. 3 Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. 4 Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. 5 But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.' 6 And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you ... 9 And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'*

Jesus sent out the 70 to be witnesses of the Kingdom. He did not send them to draw attention to themselves or to be self-exalted, but to act as a vessel of God through which the Kingdom may be manifested. After all, the Kingdom is one of power, and of righteousness, love and peace.

For this reason, the Spirit was poured out so that we may walk in power as a demonstration that the Kingdom is one of power to save, to deliver and to redeem. What we therefore purpose with the sending out of the 70 is exactly the fulfilment of the Great Commission, thus a demonstration of disciples being witnesses.

The outpouring of the Spirit continues this mandate of the believer, but now the disciple is empowered to be a witness in a hostile world of depravity, carnality, trials, tribulation and suffering.

This is why we are empowered with the outpouring, for the reason that we can be witnesses in the strength of the Lord.

Immediately following the outpouring of the Spirit, what then happened? Those in the upper room began to be witnesses of God's Truth and of the New Covenant! We read in the same chapter: *38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. Peter spoke the Truth that the Church as we know it – Jew and Gentile under the banner of Jesus – was birthed on the day of Pentecost.*

At the time of the outpouring, the revival spreads out from the Jerusalem epicentre as the disciples go out into the streets, as witnesses, of the city proclaiming the Good News of salvation.

Whereas 3 000 had died under the Law on the previous visitation at the time of the Golden Calf when so many people had rebelled against God and the Law, now thousands of years later, 3000 are now saved by grace after the Pentecost as the Apostle Peter preaches to the crowds.

And so on this awesome day in holy history, which has been recorded as the 7th day of Sivan on the Hebrew calendar, the Feast of Pentecost comes to its appointed New Covenant fulfilment. There are plenty of examples of disciples being witnesses unto God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We read for example in *Acts 4: 23 And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. 24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? 26 The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.'*

27 “For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. 29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.” 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Here we find the disciples, who were being threatened with imprisonment and who knows what else, standing up for the Truth of the Gospel in the strength of the Holy Spirit. Because the disciples were willing to be witnesses, not backing down, not flinching away from their duty, we read how *the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.*

God wants His disciples to stand up in boldness in faith and truth! Jesus said in Mathew 10 v 33: *But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father who is in Heaven.* Therefore, we are called to be witnesses, never denying the Lord no matter what. And we can do so in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We need to understand it would have been for these disciples a huge challenge to declare the Lord’s Truth within a hostile environment. You had the Roman authority exerting control, while the religious leaders were driven to quell the Christian movement. Saul, who became Paul, was mandated to persecute the disciples. Yet in the midst of all these trials and tribulations, the faith grew. Why? The disciples had one purpose – to declare the Truth of the Lord in the power of the Spirit to the ends of the earth.

We also read in *Acts 5: “Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!” 26 Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. 27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them,*

28 saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"
29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. 31 Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

Peter and the other apostles simply refused to back down from preaching Jesus. They were even forbidden to do so, but in the power of the Holy Spirit they obeyed the Lord. Indeed, because they were willing to be witnesses, they *filled Jerusalem with your doctrine*. How we need such disciples again who will fill the streets, cities and nations with the Gospel of the everlasting Kingdom!

They did so because they *ought to obey God rather than men*. As a disciple, we can never fear man, but we must always fear God and obey.

We even read the following in Acts 4 when Peter and John were arrested: *1 Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, 2 being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. Addressing the Sanhedrin: 5 And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, 6 as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.*

11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Note when Peter and John were asked "*By what power or by what name have you done this?*" that they replied "*filled with the Holy Spirit*". Indeed, there and then, in the midst of persecution, they were witnesses of God's Kingdom and so declared the Truth of the Gospel, in boldness! This is the duty of a disciple – declaring the Truth of the Lord throughout the world.

We also read of an example of Paul being a witness of the Kingdom in *1 Corinthians 15: The Risen Christ, Our Hope: 12 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. 14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. 15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. 16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! 18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.*

To be a disciple therefore calls for obedience unto God. If we truly follow the Lord then we shall surely speak out and declare His Truth no matter what. Following Pentecost, the Holy Spirit revival spreads out from Jerusalem into Judea, Samaria, and thence onward to the utmost parts of the world.

This was that promised Light to the Gentiles Isaiah spoke about. *Isaiah 49: NKJV 6 Indeed He says, ' It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth. "'*

Take note the disciples were called to first be witnesses in *Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria*, meaning they were first to declare the truth at home and then the outward regions.

We are all called to be witnesses of the Lord, but it starts firstly in our own homes (among our direct family – thus Jerusalem), and then we must declare His Truth outwardly – among our indirect family, friends, colleagues and then the lost in our towns, cities, provinces and country.

To be a witness does not always mean being a missionary in a foreign country, but rather declaring God's Truth right where God has placed you. And we do not need an education to do so; we just need to follow the Lord in spirit and truth. The 70 were sent out and told not to carry much, meaning we simply go in the power of the Lord, and be prepared to be a witness and to declare of His goodness and glory.

The devil and the world cannot stop a disciple who moves in the power of the Holy Spirit to be a witness and to declare God's Truth and His Kingdom! Yet it must all be about the Lord, and not about us. It must be to glorify Jesus, and not man. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will fill our hearts with a new passion and zeal so that the Kingdom of Heaven may consume us, so that we may walk in righteousness and truth, so that we may truly be reborn and may truly be witnesses for the Lord in this world.

MODULE 4

CHAPTER 6

M4C6

Duty to Care, to Love and to Serve

Layout by E Cloete

LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

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As disciples, sometimes we forget that while we are called to be witnesses of the Kingdom and to set the captives free, we are also called to be servants.

We read in Acts 6: Seven Chosen to Serve: 6 Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. 2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. 3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; 4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, 6 whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

In Acts 6 we find the 12 disciples of the Lord choosing disciples to "serve tables". They were looking for men with good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.

We might say but surely such men should be equipping other disciples full time, and they should be shaking the gates of hell! But no, they were chosen to merely serve, because the widows were neglected.

It is very easy to become so spiritually lofty that we forget that we are also called to serve, and to look after the needy, the poor and the downtrodden. Even if you are called as a disciple to lead the thousands to Christ through powerful preaching, you should always be willing to serve.

This is after all the great act of humility, and seeking the Lord above all else. If we reach a point where we are so puffed up that we can no longer serve, and that we can no longer be so humble to take care of the needy, then we are not fulfilling our role as a servant.

In John 13 we find the story where Jesus, the Son of God, washes the Disciples' feet. *5 After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. 6 Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?" 7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this." 8 Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." 9 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" 12 So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.*

Here we find the Almighty God – the Lamb to be slain for all our sins and the one who returns as the Lion of Judah – willing to bow down and wash the feet of His disciples. Now that is the heart of the servant! And so Jesus told the disciples they “also ought to wash one another’s feet”.

Jesus was saying to His disciples they must always be willing to serve others, to be a blessing, and to remain humble. A sure test of one’s humility and willingness to serve is when the Lord calls one to wash someone’s feet. And then it may be a stranger, a beggar, a murderer or someone you have failed to forgive. Either way, we are called to serve and to remain humble.

To serve is not an act of weakness, but of strength. Remember, Stephen, among others, was a man who was full of the Spirit and wisdom, but he was prepared to serve tables and so look after the widows.

It says in *James 1: 27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.* While Jesus speaks of the duty of a disciple in Mark 16 and Matthew 28, which deals with evangelising, discipleship and leading the captives free, James reminds us that a disciple must always be willing to help and to serve.

James also wrote in chapter 2:2-6: *"Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, 'Here's a good seat for you,' but say to the poor man, 'You stand there' or 'Sit on the floor by my feet,' have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom He promised those who love Him?"*

There is no greater example of how we are called to serve and to look after each other as demonstrated in the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Luke 10: (NKJV): 25 And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" 27 So he answered and said, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.' " 28 And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." 29 But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. 33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' 36 So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" 37 And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

The Greatest Commandment states the following according to our Lord Jesus: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

If we love the Lord as disciples, we shall first above all love the Lord but secondly love our neighbour, meaning those in our family and our community. And to love speaks of serving, and taking care of them and to support as the Lord calls.

For it says in *1 Corinthians 13* regarding the importance of love: *1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.*

In the Old Testament, the Lord spoke through prophets like Jeremiah and made it pretty clear that God is unconditionally for those who cannot defend themselves. The Lord has a heart for the poor, the widows and orphans, even the slaves. In Jeremiah 7,

God threatened the people that if they don't change the way they are doing things and the way they treat those people; he'll leave the Temple.

It says in this chapter *verse 5-7: For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever.*

The Old Testament laws stipulate duties of the people to look at the poor, the widows and the orphans.

This is the heart of God, and God has never changed. This is the same attitude we must have as disciples. There are specific stipulations in the 613 Laws of Moses regarding the poor and unfortunate. This includes not to afflict an orphan or a widow, not to reap the entire field, not to refrain from maintaining a poor man and giving him what he needs and to give charity according to one's means.

Take note for example the following Scripture regarding taking care and serving the needy:

Exodus 22:22: "Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan."

Exodus 23:11: "During the seventh year, let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove."

Deuteronomy 10:18: He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing.

Deuteronomy 14: 28 "At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. 29 And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do."

Again, the Lord does not change. God still expects of His disciples to serve, to be a blessing and to take care of the poor and the helpless and the needy. When Jesus came on the scene and started talking about the kingdom of God some 600 years after Jeremiah,

He also enacts these criteria that God had requested long ago. God was trying to get them to look beyond the Temple and out into the world but they still weren't looking and many of us still aren't today, either.

The ministry of Jesus was always focused on those who were outsiders and those who could not take care of themselves, much less fight for themselves. Jesus was showing us what true faith was and how we are called to serve, just like Stephen did.

He said for example in *Luke 12:33*: "*Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys,*" and also *Luke 14:13*: "*But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind.*"

Paul wrote in *Romans 12:20*: "*On the contrary: If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.*"

We need to be willing to help the needy and the outsiders just as Jesus was. Those "widows and orphans" are loved and cherished by God just as we are. But the relationship doesn't end by acceptance; it only starts there. God wants participation and partnership in order to bring God's kingdom here on earth.

The Scripture that truly encapsulates the call of the Lord for disciples to serve is found in *Matthew 25: The Son of Man Will Judge the Nations*: 31 "*When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'* 37 "*Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'* 41 "*Then He will also say to those on the left hand,*

'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 43 I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' 44 *"Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'* 45 *Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'* 46 *And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."*

Take also into consideration the following Scriptures:

Luke 17: 7 And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? 8 But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'? 9 Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded]him? I think not. 10 So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.' ” It is therefore the duty of a disciple also to care, to serve and to love.

Galatians 5:13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Matthew 19: 21 Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.

Mark 12: 38 Then He said to them in His teaching, "Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, 39 the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, 40 who devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation."