



2020
THEMATIC SERMON NOTES

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THEME 1
**A GLORIOUS CHURCH TO
POSSESS THE NATIONS**

TOPIC 1

THE GOAL OF THE CHURCH

Key Texts: Ephesians 3:21, Ephesians 5:25-27

A. Introduction

1. The need for constructing a building or a structure determines the materials and the processes by which it is built. (PURPOSE)
2. In like manner, the church God sends into the world to possess the nations has a goal.
3. Unfortunately, many churches and para church organizations have substituted the goal of the Church with programmes, activities, meetings, problem solving, social gatherings, theological studies and the like.
4. Even though these activities are important, we are called to passionately express God's purpose for the church in a world that gropes in darkness in need of the Saviour.

B. What is a GOAL?

A GOAL is an intended purpose towards which all efforts are directed.

For example, all efforts put in place by a football team; training, camping, watching their diets, etc., is to achieve one intended purpose –WIN MATCHES.And so Christ has a goal for building His Church.

C. The Goal of the Church

1. The Church is called to become a beautiful bride prepared for her Bridegroom, who is Christ.
 - 1.1 The Church is God's special possession - Deut. 7:9
 - 1.2 The church is God's tool which He continually works on to make her credible in the full glare of the world, and to equip her to faithfully witness to the nations -Eph. 2:10

2. The working of the Spirit of God in the Church produces an outward beauty which is attractive to the eyes of the world - 2 Cor. 3:17-18.

The splendor that results from the relentless work of the Holy Spirit on the Church is described as the glory of God in the Church. Paul states this truth about the bride profoundly in Ephesians 5:25-27

3. Just as the wife is the bride of the husband, so the Church is the Bride of Christ
4. Just as the husband is to love his wife, so Christ loved the Church, His bride
5. The church is to be committed to the goal of becoming a Radiant Church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish. Rom 7:4, 2 Cor. 11:1-2, Rev 21:2&9, Rev. 19:6-9
6. To this end Jesus gave “Gifts of men” to the Church according to Eph. 4:11-13

These “Gifts of men” are co-labourers with God, the owner of the Church, who works in her (Php. 2:13; Php. 1:6) to get her to the ultimate goal.

D. Can the Glory of the Church Depart?

1. The glory in the Church can be pushed out (1 Sam. 3:1-2; 4:1-10; 21-22;
2. Ezekiel sees a vision of God’s glory departing from the temple and exiting the city of Jerusalem due to idolatry (Ezek. 8 to 11)
3. When the glory is lost, the church begins to have a form of godliness without the power to draw people to Christ (2 Tim. 3:5)
4. Church leaders are therefore positioned to “guard” the glory so the light doesn’t turn into darkness (Matt. 6:23)
5. The Law of the Temple(the Church), therefore is HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD (Ezek. 43:12; cf. Ex. 28:36-38). For this reason, the Church must perfect holiness (2 Cor. 7:1)

6. When we live in sin, we grieve the Holy Spirit (God's glory in us) and quench Him. As a result we deny Him the opportunity to be actively involved in our daily sanctification. (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19)

E. The Role of Christians in God's Church

1. We are to build a people of God who live for God's glory. Ephesians 4:11-13
2. The Christian worker as an architect or a builder should be able to ask himself or herself these questions;
 - 2.1 What am I building? The goal
 - 2.2 Why am I building? The purpose
 - 2.3 How am I building? The process

That is, for every programme or activity a leader at any level of the church undertakes, he or she must ask, "how will this programme give members greater personal experience of Christ so as to reflect God's glory in their communities?" Programmes must therefore be strategic, i.e., driven by real prayers and teaching on Christ so that members abide in Christ's presence (John 15:7)

3. The goal of a Christian is to consciously and diligently live for the praise of God's glory. Eph 1:9-12
4. God requires the entire Church to live their lives as fitting tributes to Him (1 Peter 2:9), reflecting His very character and nature.

F. Conclusion

Though we may need to build decent places of worship, grow our finances, fill our churches, and plant more churches. It is only a means towards that end - having a prepared bride, reflecting the glory of God. It is through commitment to the tenets of holiness and diligent service that the church can maintain her beauty to the glory of God. If the church misses this goal then she runs the risk of running in vain. Gal 2:2

TOPIC 2

MARKS OF A GLORIOUS CHURCH

Key Text: Ephesians 5:25-27

A. Introduction

1. The Church is the Bride of Christ.
2. The GOAL of Christ is to build a GLORIOUS CHURCH.
5. A Glorious Church is a Church that reflects the beauty or glory of Christ.
6. A Glorious Church is attractive – and draws lots of people to turn to Christ.
3. Watching a soldier, there are unique characteristics that distinguish him from other people. His uniform, dressing, smartness, principle, and alertness are some of the distinguishing features. These are what we termed as “Marks”
4. In this teaching, our focus will be on the “Marks of a Glorious Church” - characteristics that make her attractive to a corrupt and dying world, thus drawing many to Christ.

B. Marks of a Glorious Church

Marks are distinctive characteristics that set one thing apart from another. Like the temple Solomon built for the Lord (1 Chron. 22:5-7), the Church (temple of the Holy Spirit) must carry great magnificence, fame and splendor in the sight of the unbelieving world (Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19)

1. A Glorious Church experiences the Shekinah glory (manifest presence) of God
7. Though God is everywhere, a glorious church experiences the Shekinah glory (manifest presence) of God (Gen. 28:16) a repetition

2. A glorious church cultivates the divine presence of God through a life of consistent devotions, meditation and prayer (Ex. 33:13-16; Isa 64:1; Mk. 3:14)

A glorious church, therefore, sees prayer not as means of getting things from God, but as means to experiencing the manifest presence of God in her life by participating in the divine nature (Isa. 40:29-31; 2 Pet. 1:3-8; Col 4:12-13)

3. **A Glorious Church exhibits moral perfection**

This means, people around must see the Church as an institution that stands for the truth and separates herself from lies, deception, and corruption that are ongoing in society.

4. The Church must exhibit moral perfection (holiness) inspired by the love of Christ. This means, the Church must be a place where people show love rather than a judgmental attitude towards those who fall into sin. We must rebuke sinners with love, knowing that anyone can fall into temptation (Gal 6:1). The combination of holiness (separation from sin) and love of Christ makes a beautiful Church

5. **A Glorious Church exhibits doctrinal purity**

This means the church is guarded solely by the Word of God revealed in Christ (Jn. 7:17; 2 Cor. 11:2-4; Gal. 1:7-9). The rule for determining the right path in a glorious church is neither opinions of people nor the popular culture in society but, the Word of God as Christ as practiced, taught, and commanded it (Jude 3-4)

6. Any teaching that does not point people to Jesus Christ as the only Lord and Savior of the world is false teaching and must be rejected. Also, any teaching that does not point people to live the way Christ did while on earth is false teaching and must be rejected.

7. False teaching is like yeast; if it is allowed to go on, it can destroy the beauty of the glorious church (cf. Rev. 2:14; 2:20)
 8. A Glorious Church carries spiritual weight and distinction
The Hebrew word used for “glory” in the Old Testament is “Kabowd” which means “weight” or “heaviness”. It is used to denote the sense of splendor, abundance, honor and glory (Gen. 31:1; 45:13)
 9. A glorious church, therefore, has members who have spiritual weight – that is, they possess a mature, honorable, humble, just and beautiful character which makes them stand out from others.
 10. A Glorious Church expresses spontaneity of worship and sacrifice
Because of the glory of God in the church, people worship the Lord and make sacrifices out of love for Him (2 Chron. 5:13-14; 7:1-2; Ex. 33:9-10).
 11. A Glorious Church experiences transformation and the supernatural
The supernatural are manifestations of the inexplicable power of God in the life of the church (Acts 5:15-16; 19:12; 8:5-8; 12:5-17) while Transformation is the extent to which the church is able to radiate the very beauty and holiness of God in the communities they live in (Eph. 5:17; 1 Pet. 2:9-10)
- C. Conclusion: A glorious Church radiates the beauty and splendor of Christ, and by this attracts the world to Him for salvation. God expects His children to bear unique features which marka glorious church from all other organizations in the world. Cardinal among these are moral purity, doctrinal purity, sacrificial giving, brotherly love, spontaneity of worship, and demonstration of the supernatural power of God.

TOPIC 3

THE IMPACT OF A GLORIOUS CHURCH

Key Text: 1 Peter 2:9

A. Introduction

1. A glorious church is one where the Holy Spirit is allowed to work the Word of God in the hearts of her members such that both holiness and the love of Christ mark their daily lives.
2. In this lesson, we will look at the community life of a glorious church and her impact on unbelievers

B. Community Life of a Glorious Church

1. The watching world measures the church based on the understanding that, the church as God's possession, is required to reflect God's love and holiness at the same time.
2. Jesus states that the world has the right to judge whether the church is glorious – that is, whether the church is reflecting true discipleship or not (Jn. 13:34-35).
3. It is the observable love of Christ we extend to one another within the church that will convince the world that God the Father truly sent Jesus, His Son, to save humanity (Jn. 17:21).
4. If in building decent places of worship and planting churches, the church fails to reflect God's glory to a watching world, then she is running in vain. (Gal. 2:2)
5. When our community life does not reflect the life of Christ we teach and preach about, the watching world will judge us as hypocrites. The glorious church has and exemplifies purity of doctrine.
6. The Church must be a point of reference to anything great and beautiful. This means, the church must demonstrate righteousness in various ways. For example:

- 6.1 The church selflessly serves their nation with integrity, hard work and high sense of commitment
- 6.2 The church is a voice against established social order or system which are not in harmony with God's will revealed in Christ
- 6.3 The church generates creative ideas aimed at transforming the lives and economy of society
- 6.4 The church seeks to excel in every area of life – best worker, best student etc.
- 6.5 The church as well as her constituent members care for the poor and needy
- 6.6 The church is practically and willingly committed to environmental cleanliness, care and sustainability
- 6.7 The church is committed to building healthy families units with the view to making the home a seminary – husband as “priest”; wife as “assistant priest” and children as “seminarians” or “members”

C. Impact of a Glorious Church on her Community

1. When the church is glorious, her members make every sphere of society (family, government, education, media, entertainment, business etc.) a setting for ministry and a house of worship
2. The glorious church has the power to enter into the world and snatch sinners from the hands of the enemy without compromising her standards and beauty. The church does this “battle for the nations” by capturing the minds of people through teaching of God's Word(2 Cor. 10:3-6)
7. Satan captures the minds of people with deception (a combination of lies and corrupted wisdom); he does that through false teachings (Ezek. 28:12-17; Matt.16:5-12; Jn. 8:44; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim 2:14-18; 23-26; Rev. 20:1-10)

8. Nevertheless, the glorious church gives practical meaning to the kingdom of Christ on earth by uprooting evil seeds sown by the devil in the minds of people and replacing them with the Gospel seeds (Psa.22:27-28; Matt. 13:24; Rev. 11:15)
9. To capture and possess the nations for Christ, the Glorious Church battles false teachings of Satan with sound teachings of Christ (Rom. 12:2; Col 2:8)
10. Teaching gives rise to belief system of society which affects people's conduct and hence, results in culture of society. The glorious church therefore uses every means consistent with the Gospel - music, choreography, writing etc.- to teach about Christ (Jn. 8:30-32; Psa. 19:7-11)
3. To capture minds for Christ, therefore, the church must consistently teach sound doctrine based on Christ, raise godly children (Deut. 6:1-15), lament against bad societal systems (such as corruption and nepotism) which contradict God's will, and use other means abreast of the word of God, including music to propagate teachings about Christ.
4. When the church is glorious, nations set out to look for her just as Nicodemus searched for Jesus (Jn. 3:1-2; Isa. 2:3; 60:1-3).
5. The watching world has this testimony about a glorious church: "The Lord is there among them" (Ezek. 48:35; Psa. 126:2-3)

D. Conclusion

The church must demonstrate righteousness wherever she finds herself so as to plant the kingdom of God on earth. This implies exhibiting the character of Christ, taking care of the poor and needy, showing commitment to social services and community development, and contending for the faith to espouse doctrinal purity and right practices of members.



THEME 2

THE CHURCH CALLED TO A HOLY LIVING

TOPIC 1

CALLED TO A HOLY LIVING

Key Texts: 1 Peter 1:15-16[cf. Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2]

A. Introduction

One of the fundamental doctrines of Pentecostalism is the doctrine of holiness. Those who come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ by hearing the gospel message through the power of the Holy Spirit become new creation. The old life gives way to new life (2 Cor. 5:17), and the sinner is turned into a saint to live a holy life. As holy people, we share in the heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1).

B. What is Holiness?

Holiness, according to E F Harrison, is a 'Fundamental element in the distinctive nature of God as revealed in Scripture and a basic response to His grace on the part of the people of God as they become molded into His likeness'.

Holiness is simply:

- Living a holy life or to be holy.
- To be sanctified, consecrated, dedicated, or purified.
- To be morally blameless (as in Noah, Job and Daniel), separated from sin and consecrated to God.
- Being set apart from the world and unto God.

The term 'Holy' was first used in the Bible in Genesis 2:23. Later, this was included in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20).

C. Understanding Holiness or Sanctification

1. Nature

At salvation, God ensures the believer is cleansed or purified and given freedom from sin. That is Sanctification. It is seen variously as a one-time event and also as a process whereby

believers continually become holy and Christ-like in their behavior.

1.1 Instant Sanctification: This occurs the moment one is born again, and therefore, is the work of God. One instantly becomes a saint (1 Cor. 6:11; Heb. 13:12)

1.2 Progressive Sanctification: This is on the part of the believer. It calls for total obedience to the Word of God; and absolute cooperation with the indwelling Holy Spirit in loving response to what God desires to make out of us. Believers participate in this work by:

- Consciously abstaining from evil (Rom. 6:1-2)
- Purifying themselves from things that contaminate the body and the spirit (2 Cor. 7:1)
- Keeping themselves from being polluted by the world (James 1:27).

2. Holiness in the Old Testament

‘It is no exaggeration to state that this element Holiness overshadows all others in the Character of the deity so far as the O T revelation is concerned’(David Powell).

2.1 In the O.T, objects, places, times, and persons were sometimes set apart for holy purposes. Some examples are: the Sabbath (Gen. 2:3); the First-Fruit (Ex. 13:2); the Tithe (Lev. 27:30); the Temple Articles and Priest (Ex. 40:10-13) and etc.

2.2 Holiness, was therefore God’s will for the Israelites in the Old Testament setting. They were to live holy and sanctified lives – separated and different from the lifestyles of the natives around them. (Ex. 19:6, Lev. 11:44; 19:2). God actually chose the children of Israel to be holy as Deuteronomy 14:1-2 and 26:19 suggest. The clarion call for them was to be holy because God is holy (Ex. 31:13, Lev. 11:44-45). Just as the combustion of fire cannot be experienced in a non-

oxygenated field, so the power of God could not operate in an atmosphere deprived of holiness.

3. Holiness in the New Testament

The Holiness of Jesus Christ is made abundantly clear in the New Testament from beginning to end.

- 3.1 The Incarnation of Jesus Christ; His Holy Birth (Lk. 1:35), His Holy Life, (Mk. 1:24; Lk. 4:34), His Holy Death and Resurrection (Matt. 27:54), etc.

3.2 The Early Church and the Early Church Fathers

In the New Testament, the Church has a high or heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1). This means that the level of Holiness required in the N.T or in the Church is higher than that of O.T times. The characteristics of the early church was evident in how they received the Holy Spirit baptism (Acts 2:1-4), united around the Word (Acts 2:42-47), the signs and wonders which followed them (Acts 3:1-3); and how sin was instantly repudiated (Acts 5:1-11). All these were pointers to the fact that God's holy presence was among them.

4. Holiness in The Church of Pentecost

- 4.1 Holiness became the hallmark of The CoP during its formative years. Pastor James McKeown often preached on holiness. According to Onyinah, McKeown laid so much emphasis on holiness during his teachings. He often cited Hebrews 12:14b: without holiness no one will see God, to the extent that it seemed 'without holiness salvation might be considered absent'. Consequently, holiness became a life-style of the church.

Through these teachings, the slogan Holiness unto the Lord came to be adopted as the official slogan of the Women's Ministry.

- 4.2 Holiness in character was also expected to be exhibited outwardly. Women especially were required to dress modestly

without the use of cosmetics. Cosmetics or make-up were seen as belonging to the 'world'.

Areas which attracted disciplinary measures were clearly outlined in the Ministers' Manual. These principles were jealously guarded and every member tried to live a holy life.

- 4.3 Members earnestly prayed for the baptism of the Holy Spirit because it was believed that the Spirit gave the believer the power to live a holy life. Furthermore, holiness was central to the understanding of the Second Advent, with the belief that it was through holy living that believers can assess the next life.
- 4.4 The Church of Pentecost today has no different course to chart than to uphold this holiness stance of the fathers, ensuring that the bride keeps herself clean, holy and without spot for her Groom.

5. Conclusion

Holiness is a basic condition in our relationship with God. It is obvious from the above that, the call does not come to the qualified. All of them, as they availed themselves to God's set standards of holy living, were qualified to be used for His purpose. God's call to His children unto holiness is an invitation to participate in His divine nature. In view of this, Augustine once said, 'Without us God will not; and without God we cannot'. As presented in Hebrews 12:14, let us make every effort to be holy; because without holiness no one will see the Lord.

TOPIC 2

LIVING IN HOLINESS AS CHRISTIANS

Key Texts: 1 Peter 1:15-16, 2 Timothy 1:9

A. Introduction

Jesus Christ who is the head of the Church is holy, hence Christians are expected to demonstrate His character of holiness as a lifestyle. Put in another way, the desire of God is that holiness would reflect in everything that we do as imitators of Christ. The Bible clearly states that, the Christian or the Church is called to a holy living.

B. The Call to Holiness - Areas to Consider

The following are a few highlights:

1. Holiness in Thought

As Christians, we need to think about good things that can shape our conduct to be like Christ who is holy. Paul said “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, and whatever is admirable if anything is excellent or praiseworthy think about such things” (Phil. 4:8, NLT). It is important for the Christian to cultivate pure thoughts. This helps to avoid nursing evil thoughts that could result in an evil action.

2. Holiness in what we See or Watch

Seeing is power but seeing correctly is powerful and beneficial. Elisha prayed that the eyes of his servant may be opened and when they did, his servant’s attitude changed (2 Ki. 6:17).

- 2.1 Christians must see correctly and see what God wants them to see. (Jer. 1:11-12)

- 2.2 Watching pornographic materials and acts of nudity or being involved in voyeurism must be avoided. This was the act that caused David to sin (2 Sam. 11:2-3).
- 2.3 Christians should make the conscious effort not to sin with their eyes (Job 31:1)
- 2.4 Jesus sums it up Matthew 5:27-30.
- 2.5 It needs to be stated that while Christians cannot avoid seeing certain images, we have the power to choose not to look at obscene things that we see accidentally.

3. Holiness in Conscience

- 3.1 Clear conscience produces boldness and helps the Christian to live a holy life before God (1 Cor. 4:3-4, 2 Corinthians 1:12)
- 3.2 We must be able to approach the holy God with all confidence if our moral conscience is clear (1 John 3:21).
- 3.3 We must be resolute about maintaining our righteousness and be sure that our conscience would not reproach us as long as we lived (Job 27:6).
- 3.4 We must keep a clear conscience before God and man (Acts 24:16).
- 3.5 We must serve God with a clear conscience like our fathers did (2 Tim. 1:3); and keep a clear conscience to be blameless (1 Pet. 3:16).

4. Holiness in Deeds

Whatever we do, we must know that our deeds are unto the Lord who is holy (Col. 3:17). The Church that is called to a holy living will do well if all her actions are measured by the word of God. As the church lives to obey every word of God, holiness is revealed in her daily living. This should affect how the Christian transacts business (Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-16; Pro. 11:1) and portrays Christ at the work place.

5. Holiness in Marriage

Holiness must be seen in our marriages. The Bible says, “Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral” (Heb. 13:4). Marriage and the marital home is one practical area that holy living can be practised to the fullest. Parents have a duty of living holy lives to show God’s way to their children while children have a duty to obey their parents as they obey the word of God.

6. Holiness in Ministry

- 6.1 Unlike the children of Eli who chose not to espouse and be committed to holiness in their ministry, Christian leaders should be holy and faithful in all their ministerial functions (Jn. 1:43-45; 1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7-8).
- 6.2 We must take pains to do what is right in the eyes of both God and men (2 Cor. 8:21).
- 6.3 Unlike Jacob the supplanter - a man who manipulated the system to be at the top, (Gen. 27:18-27), and used people to “save his skin”, (Gen. 32:1-8), church leaders must be sincere in their ministry and exhibit a high level of integrity and holiness.
- 6.4 To sum it up, church leaders must exhibit holiness in all their activities.

C. How to Maintain a Holy Life

It is important that the church continues to commit herself to holy living. In the midst of a corrupt world, Noah was found to be righteous, blameless – a man who walked with God (Gen. 6:5-9).

1. Ingredients for Holy Living

God expects nothing less from the church and the following ways could help the Church maintain holy living:

- 1.1 Maintain intimate communion with Christ (Jn. 15:4)
- 1.2 Engage in fellowship with believers (Eph. 4:15-16)
- 1.3 Devote yourself to prayer (Matt. 6:5-13; Col. 4:2)
- 1.4 Obey God's Word (Jn. 17:17)
- 1.5 Be sensitive to God's presence and care (Matt. 6:25-34)
- 1.6 Love righteousness and hate evil (Heb. 1:9)
- 1.7 Put sin to death (Rom. 6).
- 1.8 Submit to God's discipline (Heb. 12:5-11)
- 1.9 Continue to obey, and be filled with, the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14; Eph 5:18)

D. Benefits of Holy Living

1. Reaping the Benefits of Holiness - God demands holiness from His children (1 Pet. 1:16) and therefore the church can do no less. But the good news is that when we strive for holiness, we get rewarded. A few of them are as follows:
 - 1.1 Holiness brings intimacy with God and builds spiritual strength and stability (Ps. 15:1-6)
 - 1.2 Holiness brings promotion and anointing that leads to joy (Heb. 1:9)
 - 1.3 Holiness makes us useful, effective and set apart for a noble purpose (2 Tim. 2:20-21)
 - 1.4 Holiness makes us a preferred people who have received mercy and given the grace to declare the praises of God. Holy living, therefore, produces a heart full of praise (1 Pet. 2:9-10)
 - 1.5 Holiness pleases God and keeps us from the wrath of God and (Eph. 5:1-7)
 - 1.6 Holiness gives us hope concerning life on earth and the assurance of being part of the eternal Kingdom of God in the New Jerusalem (2 Pet. 3:10-13).

- 1.7 Holiness brings preservation of life and generational reward (Jer. 35)
- 1.8 Those who live holy lives are the delight of the Lord (Ps. 16:3)
- 1.9 Those who are holy lack nothing because they are in the position to communicate with God always (Ps. 34:9)
- 1.10 Those who live holy lives are called the redeemed and sought after (Is. 62:12)
- 1.11 Those who live holy lives have glorious inheritance and the incomparably great power of God working on their behalf (Eph. 1:18-21; Col. 1:12)
- 1.12 Holiness gives the believer power for victorious living (Eph. 3:14-19)
- 1.13 Those who live holy lives enjoy the grace of God (2 Tim. 1:9).

2. Conclusion

There are so many things that go through the human mind everyday which could be good or bad. Living a holy life out of reverence for involves watching our eyes, guarding our thoughts, our speech and conscience. Our readiness to espouse holiness in Christ in all facets of our lives brings us tremendous benefits.

TOPIC 3

VICTORY OVER OBSTACLES TO HOLY LIVING

Key Texts: 1Peter 1:16; 1 John 2:15-17

A. Introduction

Holiness is one of the communicable attributes of God. Humanity was created in His image – not the physical image, but in His moral likeness, that is, ‘created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness’ (Eph. 4:24).

B. Some Obstacles

Satan continues to place obstacles – opposing forces in the way of believers so that they will fail to demonstrate Christ’s character of holiness in everyday life. Let us examine some of these opposing forces and also appraise the avenues God has provided to overcome them. The attacks come from three main sources: The Enemy Above(Satan), The Enemy Around(the world) and The Enemy Within(the flesh). These have been termed the Triadic Force

1. The Enemy Above – Satan

This represents Satan and his demons. Jesus calls him the Prince or the Ruler of the world (John 14:30). He was cast out from heaven, together with his angels that rebelled against God (Rev. 12:7-17), and lost his holy estate as a result. His greatest weapon is subtlety – lies that looks like the truth. Some of the means he employs are as follows:

- 1.1 He causes believers (and unbelievers alike) to doubt what God has said about us
- 1.2 He engenders in believers bitterness arising from grievances and restrains us from forgiving those who might have offended us in a way.

1.3 He stirs up division among believers and persuades each of the feuding parties to decline offers to seek reconciliation. To be afraid and discouraged

1.4 He lies to us about what true freedom is

Thankfully, God has made provision for us to overcome Satan by

- applying the Word of God to all situations of life (Lk 11:28),
- submitting ourselves to God and resisting the devil (James 4:7),
- appealing to the blood of the Lamb and
- sharing our testimony of redemption by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

2. The Enemy Around – the World

The world around us with all its beauty and aesthetics can also be an enemy as far as our strife to holiness is concerned. The areas we need to pay attention to may include:

2.1 The Lust of the Flesh – the temptation to feel physical pleasure – (Gal. 5:19-21)

2.2 The Lust of the Eyes – this leads to covetousness (Gen. 3:6; Ex. 20:17; Mat. 4:8)

2.3 The Pride of Life – Humanity, taking God's position, Post-modernism, Humanism, syncretism, etc.

Worldliness defiles the soul and renders it conceited. We overcome worldliness by

- keeping our hearts clean from loving the world and things in it (1 John 2:15-17),
- resisting the temptation to be unequally-yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14) and by
- using the Word of God in keeping with His will (Mat. 4:1-11)

3. The Enemy Within – the Flesh

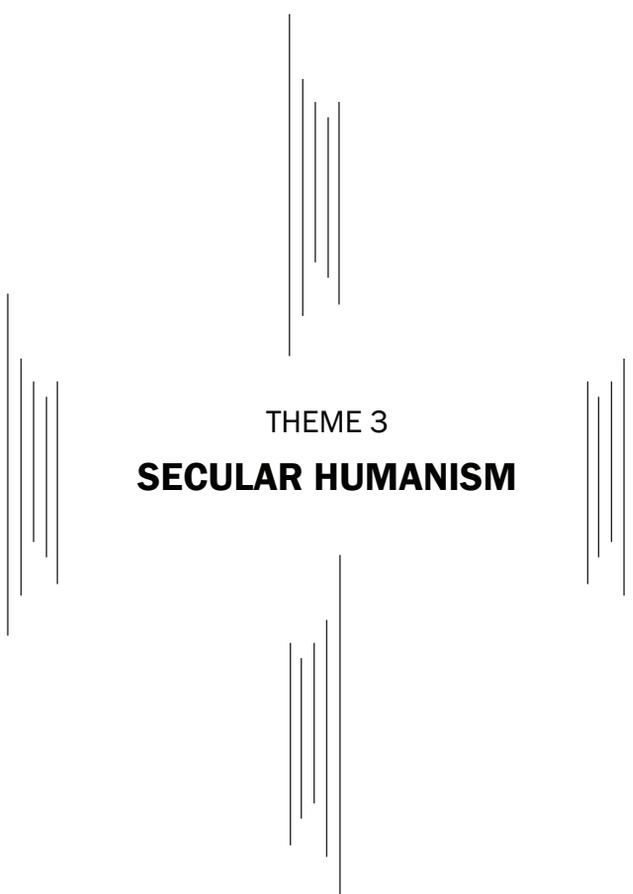
- 3.1 Modus Operandi of the The Flesh – The flesh is sometimes referred to as the Old Man – the Old Self – a term used by Paul to signify the un-renewed human/mind, the natural human in the corruption of sin i.e. the sinful human nature (Rom. 6:4-6; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:9). This is the most critical of all the enemies, because it has an ally within us. Our ability to overcome the flesh, therefore, places us in a more advantageous position in overcoming the other enemies.

The ‘enemy within’ operates in ways including:

- Self-centeredness – loving the self more than God – the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-31)
 - Depravity – sinful desires, sexual impurity, exchanging the natural for the unnatural (Rom. 1:18-32)
- 3.2 Overcoming the Flesh - We overcome the self by crucifying it (Romans 8:13; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:5). Jesus gave the firm condition for following Him – ‘Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me’ (Mat. 16:24-16). As we follow, we need to make constant use of the Word which is the sword of the Spirit, to prune and keep us in shape for the Lord’s holy use.

C. Conclusion

The war of holiness is an everyday battle at home, at work, and in all other spheres of life. The three enemies that believers contend with on daily basis are Satan, The World, and the Flesh. Thankfully, we have at our disposal effective weapons of warfare to overcome the assaults of Satan. Therefore, let us, like Paul, cease from running aimlessly, and from fighting as one beating the air (1 Cor. 9:26); but to rely on the strength and power God has made available: The Word of God; the Holy Spirit’s Power and Prayer.

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THEME 3
SECULAR HUMANISM

TOPIC 1

EXPOSING EMPTY DECEIT ACCORDING TO HUMAN TRADITION: THE NATURE OF SECULAR HUMANISM

Key Texts: Colossians 2: 8-10, Ephesians 5:11

A. Introduction

It is easy enough to assume that God created the Earth for humanity, and that if we do our best as humans, we will master the use of its resources for our individual and collective peace and harmony. However, this assumption is a sure step to shutting out God and building our own Tower of Babel. A group of persons have, however, hijacked this assumption which they believe lies fallow at the heart of many people.

Further to this, they have cautiously developed philosophies and systems to achieve a God-free planet with humans as ultimate masters. In recent times, the effects of their works have become so clear and they seem no longer willing to conceal themselves or their intentions. Their philosophical framework is called Secular Humanism. Secular, because it is devoid of divinity, and Humanist, because it takes all its inspiration from human beings to work for the good of human beings. Secular Humanism is, however, empty deceit, as we shall see in this sermon.

B. Overview of Core Philosophies of Secular Humanism

1. Secular humanists first published their ideology in a book in 1933 and that document was considered as the basis of new “religion” to replace Christianity. There is no particular deity that is worshiped, but their ideas are considered as sacred and overriding any existing Scripture or sacred book. The official symbol of secular humanism is “the Happy Human”

that drives home the humanists teaching - that life must be explored through happiness. For them, "There is but one life that we know of and we should influence that life by being happy, and the best way to do that is by making others so!"

2. They teach things that are false, examples of which are that -
 - 2.1 Any belief in God, heaven, hell, soul, spirit, Satan, demons, and angels are mere fantasies and figment of someone's ideas.
 - 2.2 People need not be worried about salvation or anything that has to do with eternity - whether heaven or hell.
 - 2.3 The Bible is a compilation of pagan myths and Hebrews folktales written by a prescientific people.
3. Secular humanists believe in evolution so their position is that nothing is permanent.
 - 3.1 By their understanding of evolution, they argue that even criminals will also evolve from bad to good so there should not be capital punishment.
 - 3.2 Concerning marriage and family life, secular humanists believe that that marital relationship has not only outlived its usefulness, but it has also become so restrictive that it symbolises social slavery.

C. Exposition

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul addresses a number of false teachings, deceptive beliefs and pointless practices that could threaten the health of the church and sap its evangelism and discipleship strengths. He described them, showed how appealing they could be, and yet how ultimately destructive they could prove.

How was Paul able to do this, especially since some of the things he warned against still face us as Christians today? The answer lies in the fact that He took the Lord's words seriously, that the disciples should watch and pray, so they

could identify and avoid temptations. They were also to be light of the world, calling up and exposing any teaching, belief or practice that aims to keep people from the truth or to drag believers back into bondage.

D. Application

1. As Christians sent into the world as sheep to rescue wolves, we must also be on the lookout for the staples that feed the sinful attitude, and be ready to point out the saving alternatives.
2. We dare not be silent about teachings that directly seek to discredit the teachings of our faith. We must diligently expose them for the falsehood that they are in writing, in the pulpit and in ordinary conversations. Our light must constantly and actively engage and disarm the darkness.
3. We must not be scared by the massive scholarly background of those who seek to contradict the faith, knowing that all that they propose is, at best, for only the temporal life on earth. We have words of eternal life, worth wielding to debunk any alternative.

TOPIC 2

HOW SATAN DISGUISES HIMSELF AS AN ANGEL OF LIGHT: DISSEMINATION OF SECULAR HUMANISTIC IDEAS

Key Texts: 2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:14

A. Introduction

Satan's main means of operation is deception. He pretends to have the interests of humans at heart and proceeds to work shamelessly, even boldly with them to bring on grave degradation that is ultimately worthy only of God's wrath. Such is the operation of secular humanism. The operations of its adherents are enshrined in structures that are usually meant to bring improvement in living conditions, but they ultimately use same for their destruction. Take the following for example:

- 1. The Education System:** Today, many educational textbooks promote the theory of evolution and discredit the notion of creationism. Secular humanists believe that, any faith in God is misguided and harmful to Children. They, therefore, seek to destroy the children's trust in God by making them think that unless they save themselves, no deity will save them.
- 2. The Media:** Secular humanistic ideas have permeated the media landscape. As a result radio programs, television advertisements, talk shows, magazines, the internet, films, the social media platforms, movies, and other cultural-shaping fields have all been saturated with secular humanistic themes. A typical example is seen in the enthusiasm with which international media houses publicize issues concerning LGBTs especially when a country legalises their activities.

- 3. Book Publications, Articles, Magazines, Internet, etc.:** Secular humanists have several publishing houses that promote their teachings to the public and educational institutions. An example is the Prometheus Books, a publishing company with its headquarters in Amherst, New York, USA that was founded in 1969 by the philosopher Paul Kurtz, who also founded the Council of Secular Humanism. It mainly publishes books on secularism, humanism, skepticism, science and freethought.
- 4. Activists' Movements and Agencies:** The movement has numerous agencies such as the North-eastern Florida based First Coast Freethought Society, founded in 1998 to promote science and reason over dogma, faith, and belief in the supernatural. Other key agencies promoting humanistic ideas include the American Humanist Association (AHA), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Planned Parenthood Association, and the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS).
- 5. NGOs and Advocacy and Civil Society Groups:** Secular humanists have NGOs for virtually every aspect of human life. Its sponsored non-religious NGOs are involved in humanitarian and poverty alleviation activities, as well as relief, women's health, gender equality, education, health, agriculture, conservation, animal rights, children's rights, gay rights, HIV/AIDS, anti-discrimination support, and economic empowerment programs. This makes it difficult to know their true intentions and identities. Through these NGOs and advocacy programs, they are able to gain attention to lobby or pressurize governments and institutions to accept the secular humanistic philosophy. Christians are to be careful of the NGOs they work with.

6. The Role of United Nations and its Special Agencies:

Under the guise of promoting human rights, the United Nations and its agencies have knowingly or unknowingly been transmitting the ideas of secular humanism to its member nations. UNESCO has cleverly eliminated religious and Christian values from school curricula. Regrettably, it has been done so subtly that not many teachers and educators are aware of the secular humanistic ideas they are teaching.

B. Exposition

“Our help is from the Lord” was one key watchword of Israel. So, they were always wary of any help that had not proceeded expressly from the Lord. The only source of all good things is the Lord, and His agents we are. We must therefore be directly interested in any “blessings” that come upon the earth, checking for wholesomeness. We must be the first to flag corruption and be suspicious in systems and structures meant to bring good things. The world may not readily see the wiles of the enemy, but our eyes are opened by the Lord not to be ignorant of same.

C. Application

- 1. Exemplary Set-ups:** We must not take our commission to be agents of God’s love to the world lightly. Where we are capable, we must set up systems and structures that bring the relief that the secular systems promise, and operate them in exemplary fashion. This alone is even a big statement and a reference point for the world.
- 2. Vigilant Review and Active Engagement of Systems and Structures:** When secular systems emerge promising to serve the people good interests, we must be vigilant about what that “good” ultimately is and hold them accountable. We must be prompt with our contributions to social welfare systems, to give us the clout to voice our objections to moves that can ultimately prove detrimental to the overall well-being of society.

TOPIC 3

TRAMPLING DOWN A GATE OF HELL: THE CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSE TO SECULAR HUMANISM

Key Texts: Matthew 16:18, 19, 1 Peter 3:14-17, 2 Cor. 10:4-5

A. Introduction

The resources or weapons that are available to the church, chiefly, the Word of God and the Holy Spirit are most formidable and matchless against any human or demonic construct, philosophy or tradition. They are meant for setting people free indeed. The Christian therefore needs not feel helpless in the face of secular humanism or any such humanistic system that raises itself against the knowledge of God. We only need to wield our weapons well, and these gates of hell will be rendered so ineffective that they will lose their appeal to even their cherished target audience.

B. Exposition and Application

1. Understanding Secular Humanism and All That It Teaches and Practices: The reason is that without proper understanding of the philosophy, there is no way Christians can respond adequately to it. This underscores why Paul and Peter did not want the early Christians to be ignorant about so many things (Rom. 11:25; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; 2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Pet. 3:8). This enabled Paul to “become all things to all men” so that he could win some to the Lord (1 Cor. 9:20-23).
2. Responding to Political, Legal, Social, Moral and Bioethical issues: Since the laws of the country affect everyone, it is important for Christians everywhere to make conscious efforts to influence the decision-making process at all levels so that Christian values are protected. Christians should not take it for granted.

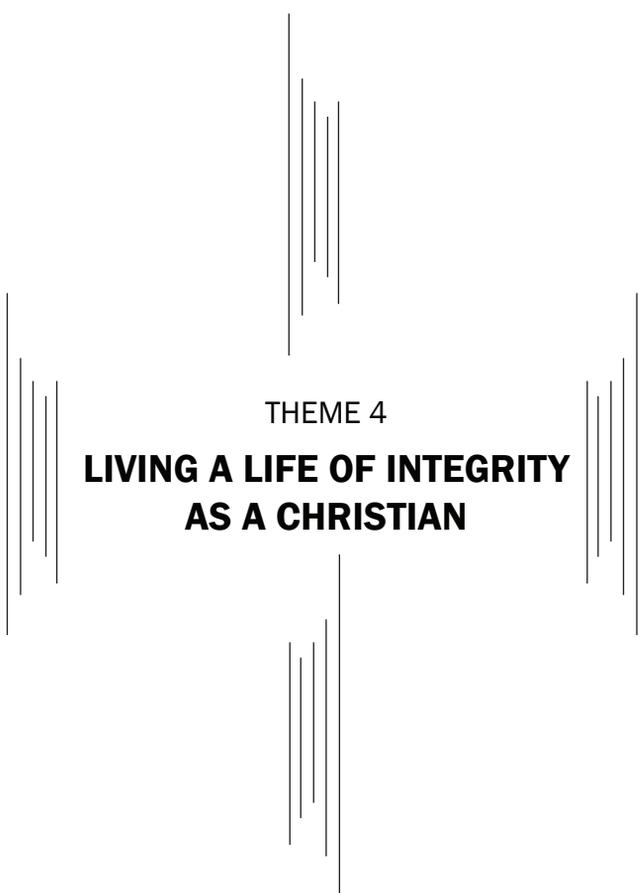
3. Encouraging Christians to Venture Political Positions: Churches may, therefore, have to consider identifying, encouraging and even sponsoring tried-and-tested Christians they consider mature and trustworthy to enter politics with a specific agenda to help consolidate good governance, and also influence decision-making that will promote Christian values and aspirations.
4. Establishment of Media Stations and Organisations: The churches must establish and operate radio and television stations, staffed with trained and mature Christian journalists to propagate the gospel so that biblical standards of morality will be promoted. These media houses and social media platforms should also be used to counteract the anti-Christian teachings and practices of secular humanism and other related philosophies.

5. Emphasise Scripture and Discipleship

- a) Christians must place emphasis on the knowledge and application of Scripture as a means to withstanding the onslaught of the prevailing permissive culture being promoted by secular humanism.
 - b) The reason is that Scripture is useful for teaching in righteousness and holy lifestyles (2 Tim. 3:16). It is also useful for rebuking and making people aware of their sins. Additionally, because Scripture is useful for correcting, it makes it possible for people to want to change their evil ways of living for righteous lifestyles. Being useful for training in righteousness, Scripture is the only means by which depraved human beings can change their evil ways and adopt lifestyles of godliness, integrity, holiness and faithfulness.
6. Focus and Teachings about Eternal Life: The church should focus on teaching on eternity. What happens after our earthly life is very important and it can cause the repentance of secular humanists as has been the case since time

immemorial. By this, Christians themselves should behave as people who are yearning for eternal life in Christ. “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world” (1 Tim. 6:20, 21, ESV).

7. Being Circumspect in Dealing with Them: Paul’s advice to Timothy applies to us as we respond to the attacks on Christianity by secular humanists. Much as there is the need to respond to them, it is equally important to be circumspect in how we do it and what we say: “O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,” for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you” (1 Tim. 6:20, 21, ESV).



THEME 4
**LIVING A LIFE OF INTEGRITY
AS A CHRISTIAN**

TOPIC 1

LIVING A LIFE OF INTEGRITY AS A CHRISTIAN

Key Texts: *Gen. 27:22; Prov. 10:9.*

A. Introduction

Vision 2023 is geared towards equipping the Church to transform every sphere of society with values and principles of the Kingdom of God. As part of rolling out the broader vision, “A Glorious Church to Possess Nations” (Eph. 3:21; 5:27) has been chosen for the year 2020. One way the church can cause societal transformation that glorifies Christ is to ensure that each member is living a life of Integrity.

1. Integrity: The word “integrity” is from the Latin word *integritas* meaning, wholeness, perfection, soundness, simplicity, completeness and sincerity.
 - 1.1 Our generation critically needs leaders with integrity – people who cannot be bought, who uphold high moral standards regardless of the cost, walk their talk, and are completely honest.
 - 1.2 God expects his children to stand out and be counted as people who do not yield to corrupt practices but always uphold ethical values in every area of their lives – at home, in the work place and in the church.
2. Corruption: According to Vorster (2011:1), Corruption is the misuse of a public office or authority for private or personal gain. Corruption is not limited to taking bribe, but includes embezzlement, fraud, favouritism, extortion, illegal contribution, nepotism, conflict of interest, abuse of discretion and the likes.

As Christians, It is expected that,

- 2.1 We become salt and light of the earth (Matthew 5:13-16)
 - 2.2 We learn to be content with whatever God gives to us (1 Timothy 6:6)
 - 2.3 We understand that it is only the blessings of God that makes a person prosperous (Proverbs 10:22)
- B. Conclusion: In our bid to stand out as a glorious church in a corrupt society, there is the need for the church to practically demonstrate a life of integrity. Such a lifestyle enables the constituent members of the church to cherish and maintain lifestyles free of corrupting tendencies. Statistics on corruption in Ghana and Africa is very disturbing. This offensive revelation should serve as a distress call to Church of God to demonstrate her role as salt to the earth and light of the world.

TOPIC 2

CONFRONTING INTEGRITY CRISIS IN THE CHURCH

A. Introduction

Christians are expected to be upright and “whole” without the stain of corruption and vileness. They are expected to be wholesome examples to a decaying world so that they will be in the position to confront the integrity crisis that seems to have penetrated all spheres of life.

1. Warren Buffet has said, “Look for three things in a person – intelligence, energy, and integrity. If they don’t have the last one, don’t even bother with the first two.”
2. Christians are expected to avoid all kinds of scheming because it is not godly (Ecc. 7:29; Gen. 27:21-24; 1 Tim. 6:6-10). In particular, church leaders are to stay clean of all the ignoble schemes that plague their work in God’s vineyard. When presenting periodic reports, there is the need to espouse all diligence to stick to accurate facts and figures as a form of reverence to God. It is also prudent to take pains to pay all designated funds as stipulated, without any recourse to massaging figures for intended selfish benefits.
3. Ezra 7:10 says “For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.’ We have no business teaching the word of God if we do not walk in it ourselves.
4. Paul advising his son Timothy said, “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.” 1 Tim. 4:16.
5. Some other critical areas that should engage our attention to be confronted are immorality; handling of the opposite sex, misappropriation of church funds etc.

B. Conclusion

From the discussions above, we have recognized the need to present ourselves as credible examples to a decaying world. It is by this means, among others, that we can confidently set the agenda for them to seek after and walk by values and principles of the kingdom of God. Then together with those who we bring to the saving knowledge of Christ by our lives of integrity, we will have the confidence and the moral courage to confront corrupt and unacceptable practices in our societies.

TOPIC 3

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF CHRIST-LIKENESS

A. Introduction

To be like Christ is the highest ideal that every child of God should aspire to. The idea behind this is to motivate Christians to make every effort to walk in the teachings of Christ and be genuinely identified with Him in service to God and humanity. Under no circumstance should we relax portions of his teachings that we find unpleasant to live by. Beyond this we should also be prepared at all times to suffer rejection, humiliation and deprivation in union with Him.

B. The Christian Life: The word “Christian” is used three times in the NT (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16) to denote a “follower of Christ.” Unfortunately, over time, it has lost a great deal of its significance and meaning. It is now often used to denote someone who simply attends a church or lives in a “Christian” nation.

C. The Concept of Christian Integrity: In 2 Corinthians 5:17, we read, Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

1. Meaning - The word “therefore” refers us to verses 14-16 where Paul asserts that all believers have died with Christ and no longer live for themselves. Our lives are no longer worldly; they are now spiritual. The true Christian life is a life of repentance — completely turning from self to focus on living a life that brings glory to Jesus.

2. Integrity - This is a mark of true repentance. We can reflect on integrity as

2.1 maintaining a consistent lifestyle whether people are watching or not;

2.2 maintaining a pure conscience before God and man;

- 2.3 doing everything without prioritising personal gain;
- 2.4 having no hidden agenda in our actions;
- 2.5 walking in clear conscience before God and men
- 2.6 being “wise as serpent” and “innocent as dove” .

D. Practical Christian Integrity – the Salt against Corruption:

- 1. Christians are not supposed to withdraw from the world but should actively participate and transform all areas of society.
- 2. At the personal level, we must practice the daily renewal of our minds as we meditate on the word of God with the help of the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:2).
- 3. At the public level, Christians must be ready to blow the whistle in love, damning the consequences and be ready to suffer persecution.

E. Conclusion: If we truly understand Christ-likeness, our lives will reflect His teachings. By that we shall be the salt of the earth and the light of the world as Christ intends us to be. We must endeavour to live lives devoid of hypocrisy, dishonesty and duplicity. People should not struggle to know who we are; the voice of the Christian should be consistent with their lifestyle.

TOPIC 4

A SURVEY OF BIBLICAL VIEWS ON MAINTAINING A LIFE OF INTEGRITY

A. Introduction

Both the Old and New Testaments emphasize the need for God's people to live in integrity. The Bible specifically enjoins us to avoid all kinds of moral evil and corruption because it is only righteousness that exalts a nation (Proverbs 14:34). The best way that we can give expression to our belief in the authority of the word of God is to live by its tenets. This is the meaning of integrity from God's perspective.

B. Old Testament Perspective on God's People and Corruption

1. Our God values honesty and truthfulness because they ensure a just society (Ex 23:1; Lev. 19:1).
2. Moses cautioned the Israelites against bribery to prevent abuses in their legal system (Ex 23:8; Deut16:19).
3. Corruption jeopardizes righteousness and justice in society. In Proverbs 17:23, Solomon portrays the evil intent of bribery and how it perverts justice.
4. Samuel presented himself as a credible role model to Israel in matters of integrity. He was therefore confident enough to cite God, the king and the people as his witnesses- 1 Samuel 12:1-5.
5. Samuel's sons presented themselves as bad examples to Israel in matters of godliness and integrity. The people therefore rejected them as judges and requested for a king - 1 Samuel 8:1-5.

C. New Testament Perspective on the Church and Corruption

1. In Luke 3:10-14, John the Baptist underscores contentment with one's pay as the way to live, to demonstrate genuine love and justice.
2. James advises Christians in a corrupt and perverse world to rid themselves of all moral filth and evil and humbly accept the word planted in them, which can save them (Jas 1:21)

D. Conclusion

Both the Old Testament and New Testament uphold the value of integrity. For, each provides examples of either those who lived by it (or otherwise) or reinforcement to cherish and demonstrate it on daily basis. Believers are expected to be people of integrity, honest and truthful. Those who live such lives glorify God and receive his blessings, while those who are corrupt; shrewd, greedy, dishonest, unfaithful and abuse their office, receive God's punishment. The church must work to raise people of integrity and equip them to serve as agents of transformation. It is in pursuance of this noble agenda that the church can truly be said to be a glorious one equipped to possess the nations.

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THEME 5

**THE CHRISTIAN AND THE LORDSHIP
OF CHRIST**

TOPIC 1

THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

Key Texts: Acts 2:36, Philippians 2:6-11

A. Introduction

The primary goal of the Church's theme for 2020 -A Glorious Church to possess the Nations- is to help prepare the Church as a beautiful bride (spotless, blameless and without any blemish or wrinkle) for Christ – the bridegroom. In this vein, it is very important for the church to understand the relationship that exists between herself as a bride and Christ Jesus, her groom. This relationship is one that presents Christ as the Lord of the Church.

B. The Lordship Of Christ

Many believers struggle so much to live their lives in absolute/total submission and obedience to the Lord Jesus. This can be evidently seen through our lifestyles and actions that are wrapped up in sin and all kinds of evil. Victorious Christian living thus depends on our acknowledgement of, and commitment to, the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

C. What is the Lordship of Christ?

The Lordship of Jesus Christ means we acknowledge Him for who He is and give Him the honour and glory that is due Him (Ps. 96:7-8, Rev. 4:11; Rev. 5:13). It implies we are willing and ready to submit ourselves to fully obey Him and do his will. His Lordship makes Him worthy of total reverence (Ps. 110:1) and recognition as carrier of utmost authority and power (Matt. 28:18).

D. Why is Jesus Christ, the Lord?

1. Jesus Christ is Lord because He is God (Jn. 1:2-3; Jn. 10:30; Phil. 2:6, Col. 1:16-17).

2. Jesus Christ is Lord because God has highly exalted him and given him a name that is above all other names (Acts 4:12; Phil. 2:9-10).
3. Jesus Christ is Lord because all the fullness of the Godhead now dwells in Him (Col. 2:9-10, Col. 1:19)
4. Jesus Christ is Lord because He has supremacy over all things (Col. 1:15-18; Heb. 1:3-4)
5. Jesus Christ is Lord because of His victory over sin, death and Satan (Col. 2:13-15; Hebrews 2:14-15; Heb. 4:15, Rom. 16:20, Rev. 20:1-2)

E. Actions to be Taken

1. Christians must appreciate and recognize Christ as the true and only Lord of their lives.
2. Christians must live in obedience to his word and do His will all the time
3. Christians must not only confess Christ with their mouths but must also live lives that glorify him as the Lord of their lives.

F. **Conclusion**

Jesus Christ is undoubtedly the Lord of all things, a position which he attained through His obedience and submission to God. Therefore, as Christians, we must acknowledge Him as such and make his Lordship a reality in our lives by completely submitting to Him and abiding by his Word.

TOPIC 2

SUBMISSION TO THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

Key Texts: Luke 6:46; Phil. 2:6-11; Eph. 5:24

A. Introduction

The goal of the Church's theme for 2020 -A Glorious Church to possess the Nations-seeks to help prepare the Church as a beautiful and befitting bride - spotless, blameless and without any blemish or wrinkle, for Christ – the bridegroom. The aim is to help make the Church ready for the second coming of Jesus Christ and this can only be achieved when the Church completely yields and surrenders to the Lordship of Christ

B. What is Submission?

Submission implies obedience, being put under or being subject to. Submission means a willingness to place oneself under a superior authority. In submission therefore, we are called to put ourselves under the command and authority of Christ as Lord of our lives.

C. How do we submit to the Lordship of Christ?

1. By resolving to fully obey him, follow his commands and yield our lives to Him (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:2; 2 Cor. 5:9).
2. By denying ourselves of our perceived rights and privileges in acceptance of whatever He has for us (Lk. 22:42; Matt. 16:24; Lk 5:8, 11; Phil. 3:7-8).
3. By allowing Him to be in full control of our lives. We submit by absolutely surrendering everything we have and own to the Lord (1 Cor. 6:19-20; Eph. 3:1; Col. 3:24).
4. By giving our all in the services we render both in the Church and in the world of work. We are entreated to serve Christ all the time, in all facets of life, with all our hearts (Col. 3:23; Jn. 12:26; Col. 3:17; Matt. 22:37).

D. Benefits of Submitting to the Lordship of Christ

1. We are empowered to resist the devil (James 4:7)
2. God gives grace to those who submit and yield to Christ (1 Pt. 5:7-8)
3. Submission to the Lord brings about success for His Church (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 3:10)
4. Submission to His Lordship leads to fresh and continual insight and revelations from the Lord (Eph. 1:17-18; Rev. 4:1; Col. 1:26-27)

E. Actions to be Taken

1. All believers must surrender to Christ and obey His instructions unconditionally.
2. All believers must serve Jesus Christ with all their possessions.
3. Christ must be given all the glory in all our life victories and successes.

4. Conclusion

Submitting to the Lordship of Christ is a mark that shows that He is the Lord of our lives. Christians must be willing to be under his dictates and control at all times. In submission therefore, we are called to put our desires aside and yield to his leadings.

TOPIC 3

POSSESSING THE NATIONS BY THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

Key Texts: *Is. 9:6-7; Is. 11:1-10; Matt. 6:10; Ephesians 3:10*

A. Introduction

The overarching theme for Vision 2023 is Possessing the Nations – Equipping the Church to transform every sphere of society with values and principles of the Kingdom of God. The spirit of the vision is to ensure that the rule of Christ prevails in every facet of our lives, our families, societies and the nations.

Accordingly, we need to ask make every effort to ensure that the Lordship of Christ is influencing our Personal devotional lives, our marriages and families,our work lives and ethics,and the Nations. The Lordship of Jesus must be exhibited in the kingdom principles of love, integrity, honesty, faithfulness and discipline.

B. A Nation Possessed and Brought under the Lordship of Christ

From Isaiah 9:6, we can see a prophetic picture of the Lordship of Christ. He indicates in the text that His government shall be on His shoulders. This means there is no limit to the domain over which He exercises authority. In contemporary times, the Church serves as the shoulders of Christ by whom God's kingdom is being built and established.

In Eph. 3:10, Paul explains that through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God is made manifest to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. It is only then that the kingdom of God will be seen as having come, and his perfect will being done on earth. This is what has been revealed to the prophet Isaiah as captured in Isaiah 11:1-10. It paints

the perfect picture of what will happen when the nations are possessed by the church and brought under the Lordship of Christ. These are as explained below:

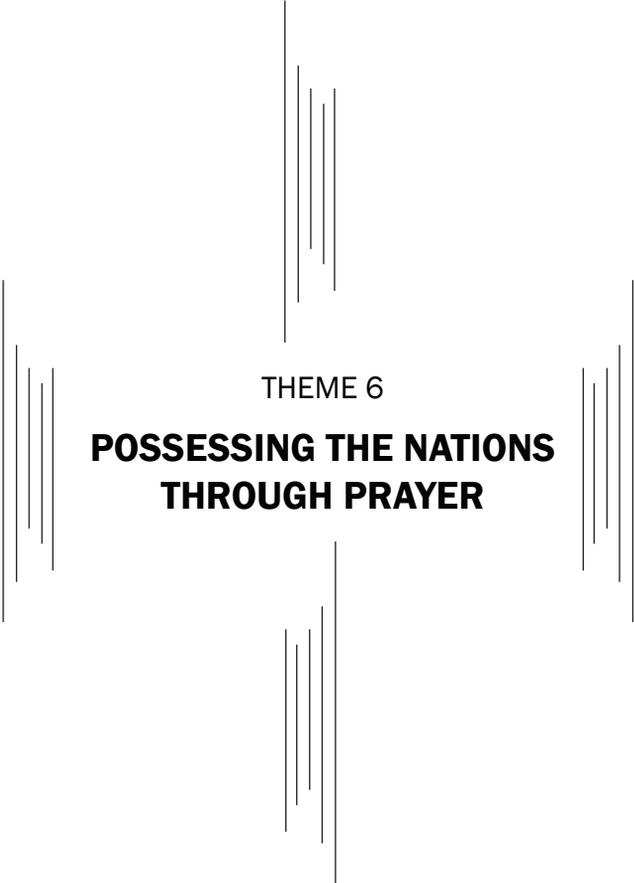
1. There will be support and equity for the poor and vulnerable in the society and decisions will be made based on the fear of God, righteousness and justice (Is. 11:4-5).
2. The weak and the strong will co-exist together, without the strong taking advantage of the weak to suppress, oppress and repress them. (Is. 11:6).
3. There shall be a fair distribution of resources and meaningful consultation in decision making and development of families, societies and nations (Is. 11:7).
4. Individuals, families, societies and nations will dwell in an environment free from crime, risk, wickedness, and any kind of evil (Is. 11:8-9).
5. The kingdom of God that will draw the nations to Jesus Christ shall be deemed to have been established. (Is. 11:10 Matt. 11:28, Heb. 4:3).

C. Actions to be Taken

1. We must consciously work on any weakness and sins in our lives that do not portray Christ as lord of our lives.
2. We must consciously demonstrate the Lordship of Christ such that it will be felt and seen through our acts of love, integrity, honesty, faithfulness and discipline
3. We must ensure that our lifestyles cause a change and bring people to Christ wherever we find ourselves.

D. Conclusion

It is incumbent on Christians to possess their societies with kingdom values and principles. We can only do this if we allow Jesus to lead and guide us as our lord. This calls for total surrender to Him and the readiness to do His pleasure unconditionally. Possessing the Nations therefore implies that the Lordship of Christ must be felt and seen to be influencing every aspect of our lives.

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THEME 6
**POSSESSING THE NATIONS
THROUGH PRAYER**

TOPIC 1

THE EXAMPLE OF THE EARLY CHURCH IN EFFECTUAL FERVENT PRAYERS

Key Texts: *Jas 5:15-16; 1 Thess. 5:17; LK 18:1; LK 24:48-49.*

A. Introduction

One potent weapon at the disposal of the church in waging spiritual battles is prayer. Jesus showed us the importance of prayer while He was with His disciples. Not only did He teach them about the need and how to pray, but He also showed them how to pray by personal example. As ambassadors of Christ, we are to represent His interests on earth. To do this effectively and efficiently, we depend fully on God for the needed resources, hence the need to pray fervently and without ceasing.

- B. Prayer was important in the ministry of the Apostles and the operations of the early church
 - 1. From Mt Olives (i.e. just after the ascension of Jesus) they entered into prayer (Acts 1:12-14).
 - 2. Prayer played a key role in the choice of a replacement for Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:15-26). Later the choice of Missionaries and Elders for the Church was also carried out in prayer and fasting (Acts 13:1-3, Acts 14:23).
 - 3. The Holy Spirit descended when the apostles and some disciples were gathered in prayer (Acts 2:1-4).
 - 4. Prayer was one of the four (4) key activities the early church devoted themselves to (Acts 2:42).
 - 5. Peter and John were on their way to the temple for prayer when they healed the cripple at the beautiful gate of the Temple (Acts 3:1-10).

6. When opposition arose as a result of the healing of a cripple, the church gathered together for prayer, producing remarkable results (Acts 4:23-31).
7. The Apostles resisted the temptation to be drawn away from prayer (and the ministry of the word) into a social ministry (the distribution of food) Acts 6:1-7. For them “prayer was the work, and the work was prayer”. Nothing should take them away from prayer!
8. All the Holy Ghost baptism sessions recorded in the book of Acts occurred in an atmosphere of prayer:
 - The Day of Pentecost: (Acts 2:1-4).
 - The Samaritan Experience: (Acts 8:14-17)
 - Ananias’ Ministry to Saul in Damascus: (Acts 9:1-20).
 - The Household of Cornelius: (Acts 10).
 - The 12 Disciples of Ephesus: (Acts 19:1-7).
9. Prayer caused jail breaks and effected the release of imprisoned apostles (Acts 5:12-26; 12; 16:16-40)
10. Prayer brought revelation and direction about the church’s missionary efforts (Acts 13:1-3, 16:6-15).

C. Conclusion

Prayer is a key tool in the work of God; Jesus demonstrated the importance of prayer to his disciples while He was with them. In obedience to the great commission to make disciples of all nations, it is imperative that we make prayer an indispensable tool in our engagements with the forces of darkness with the view to liberating blind and imprisoned souls from the dungeon of Satan and ready them for heaven. May we as a church not just talk about prayer but fervently engage in it to advance our vision of possessing the nations for Christ.

TOPIC 2

THE ROLE OF INTERCESSORY PRAYERS IN POSSESSING THE NATIONS

Key Texts: *Is 62:1-7, Is 64:1-5, Eze. 22:30-31*

A. What is Intercessory Prayer? (1Tim 2:1-5).

1. Intercessory Prayer involves putting oneself in the place of another to plead with God to do something on their behalf; or
2. Stepping into the gap to do battle with spiritual forces on the behalf of others.

We cannot neglect intercessory prayer in our vision to possess the nations.

B. Examples of Intercessory Prayers in the Bible

1. Abraham interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah when he got information that the cities were to be destroyed (Gen 18:20-33).
2. God saved Lot and his family because of Abraham's intercession (Gen 19:27-29).
3. Abraham interceded for Abimelech (Gen. 20:17-18).
4. Moses and Aaron often interceded for the Israelites for God to spare them His fierce anger and judgment (Ex 32:1-2, 30-32; Ps 106:19-23; Num. 16:20-23, 41-48).
5. Daniel interceded for the restoration of the nation of Israel after 70 years in exile (Dan 9:1-33).
6. The Early Church interceded for Peter when he was imprisoned awaiting execution (Acts 12:1-5).
7. Our Lord Jesus was a great intercessor in His earthly ministry
11. He prayed for the disciples with Him and those who would later believe in Him (John 17)
12. He prayed for Peter and his colleagues (Lk 22:31).

13. He interceded for transgressors (Isaiah 53:12; Lk 23:24).
14. He still intercedes for believers (Heb. 7:25).

C. Conclusion

The invaluable nature of intercessory prayer should place on members of the church the burden to carry individuals, the nations and the church on our knees in prayer. In so doing we show in practical terms our identification with Jesus Christ in His priestly ministry. We also reinforce the examples set us by the early church and affirm that intercessory prayer forms part of the tradition of the church. There must be a willingness on the part of all of us to step into the gap and intercede until heaven responds to our cries. The frequent mobilization of corporate prayer at all levels of the church to lift up holy voices in prayer for divine intervention is a clarion call.

TOPIC 3

FASTING AND PRAYER AS KEY TOOLS IN POSSESSING THE NATIONS

Key Texts: Mk 9:28-29; Eph. 6:18

A. Introduction

Effectual fervent prayer is often accompanied by virtues like unyielding faith in God, persistence, righteousness, right motives, the spirit of unity etc. One vital supplement that propels prayer to its desired level of effectiveness is fasting. It is a discipline which must be given its due importance and space as we seek to use prayer as a means of possessing the nations.

Fasting involves conscious abstinence from food and other sources of physical nourishment to the body over a period of time in order to devote oneself to prayer.

B. How does Fasting help our Prayer?

Prayer is a spiritual activity and must not be approached simply as a physical action. It is a “spirit-to-spirit” activity. Prayer involves man’s spirit communicating with God who is Spirit. This activity cannot be undertaken in the flesh and that is why prayer can at times become such a difficult and unpleasant activity to undertake.

When we fast, the flesh is humbled and this causes the inner man (spirit) to be quickened and made alert and sensitive to God. This helps the one fasting to concentrate and communicate better with Him. Thus humbled in the presence of God, the supplicant attracts God’s favour (Jas 4:6-10; 1 Pet 5:5-6).

C. Examples of Remarkable Fasting and Prayer Results

1. Jehoshaphat and Judah: 2 Chr. 20
2. Daniel: Dan 9:1-19
3. Esther and the Jews: Est. 3:8
4. Ezra and the Returning Exiled Jews: Ezra 8:21-23, 31-32

D. Conclusion

Moses fasted for forty days twice (Ex. 24:12-18, Ex 34:28). Jesus did it once before He commenced His earthly ministry Mt 4:1-2; Lk 4:1-2. To the extent that fasting facilitates prayer and has been proven to be a potent weapon for the pulling down of satanic strongholds, it must be encouraged and practiced in our efforts to possess the nations.

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THEME 7
**RAISING GODLY CHILDREN TO
POSSESS THE NATIONS**

TOPIC 1

RAISING GODLY CHILDREN

Key Texts: Proverb 22:6, 1 Timothy 4:16, Ephesians 5:1-2, 2 Timothy 1:5

A. Introduction

In some societies having and raising children could mean gaining societal respect or acceptance, feeling fulfilled or being burdened due to the challenges of children upbringing and education. However, true respect, fulfilment and dignity come from raising godly children (whether as parents or guardians) raising godly children. This is the “process of promoting and supporting the physical, social and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood” (Gen. 18:19).

Raising children involves training and imparting on the physical characteristics of the child’s personality, the social and emotional learning of the child and the intellectual capacity of the growing child. Two elements dominate in the raising of godly children - NURTURING and TRAINING. Nurturing involves empathy “seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another and feeling with the heart of another” (Alfred Adler). Training on the other hand is more about teaching.

B. The Value of the Child (Psalm 127:3, Gen 1:28a, Psalm 127:4-5)

Children are described as “arrows” - potent ammunitions which have been used in battles and in pursuing animals for generations till now. As arrows, children form very important elements in achieving the Vision 2023 of the Church. As arrows, they are very powerful and potent, but need to be well nurtured and trained to enable them become the effective and efficient future generations and leaders of the Church.

C. The Role of Godly Children in Possessing the Nations

The objective of raising and training godly children is to make the children fit well into society as persons who, having been brought up in godliness, will so live to impact their spheres of influence to the glory of God. While under training, children can pick up vital moral and spiritual lessons and share these with their peers. By the time they become adults they would have been fully equipped to appreciate socio-cultural, spiritual, and contemporary issues through the lenses of God's word. Their advocacy for recourse to godly values in all facets of life will provide the needed paradigm shift for societal transformation.

D. Conclusion

Raising children and more especially godly children can be delicate, difficult, demanding, stressful and yet beneficial, commendable and satisfying. It requires commitment and hard work, takes a lot of time, resources, patience and love. Therefore, Christian parents and guardians should be prepared for this task which the Lord expects of them. Just as farmers enjoy the fruits of the labours after periods of ploughing their fallow grounds and sowing, so can the church together with parents and guardians invest their time and energy and other resources in raising and developing godly children who will be well positioned to possess the nations in the near future.

TOPIC 2

THE CHILD IN POSSESSING THE NATIONS

Key Texts: Deuteronomy 6:1-2, 6:7; 4:9, 11:19-22.

A. Introduction

To possess means to have ownership, to occupy in person, to hold or actually have in one's own keeping, to have and to hold. Simply put, it is about ownership, occupation and influence. Thus, possessing nations is defined by the Chairman of the CoP, Apostle Nyamekye as A system where members possess their nations by transforming every worldview, thought and behavior with values, principles and lifestyles of the kingdom of God, turning many to Christ. By this, the "Possessor" must first have the values, principles and the lifestyle of the Kingdom. To effectively achieve this with the children requires - "focused and purposeful raising of children". The family (parents or guardians) have roles to play:

1. Responsibilities of Parents

1.1 Nurturing through communicating the Word of God, worth of God, ways of God and works of God. This must be done –

- consistently – purposefully and orderly (Isaiah 28:10);
- continuously – saturating every opportunity with the words and commands of God (Deuteronomy 6:7);
- convincingly– done persuasively (Deuteronomy 32:46 (NIV)) and
- contextually- with a personal testimony and experience. Communication of one's personal experience with God persuasively in a practical way is a powerful tool to impart our children (Deuteronomy 4:9 (NIV)).

1.2 Explicit obedience to divine instructions - the type of instructions, mode of communication during the teaching,

training and nurturing as well as obedience to these instructions are very important (Deuteronomy 11:19-20,22-23).

- 1.3 Coaching children – expose children to the realities of the times we live in through training, practice and living of the Word.
- 1.4 Provision of Mentorship for children
- 1.5 Training, Discipline and Admonition

B. Responsibilities of the Church

Godly children raised today constitute the foundation of the church tomorrow. Therefore, the church is supposed to give priority to serious training of children. For the church to effectively achieve this there should be:

1. Mindset change about the Ministry
2. The Pastorate and Leadership should not consider the Children’s Ministry as a second-class church.
3. The church needs to provide the environment for the focused training and nurturing of the young ones. The church must be an example of Christian community and love - the creation of Bible reading and study clubs; creation of reading clubs; opportunities for extra classes (academic work).
4. The church must also create an environment for the children to see faith being practiced and for them to also practice the Christian faith.
5. The church must provide the resources both in terms of finances, logistics and quality human resource to support the Children’s Ministry in their task of training and nurturing.

C. Conclusion

The times we live in are very challenging for children and the youth. There is the need to build the capacities of the children, both in the knowledge and skill of the faith, to

enable them discern the times and be able to respond to contemporary issues; this means invariably developing a new breed of children with the Joshua and Daniel character. Our efforts in this wise should be pursued consciously, consistently, convincingly and contextually, among others.

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THEME 8
I AM AN AGENT OF TRANSFORMATION

TOPIC 1

CHANGE AGENTS IN THE MARKETPLACE

Main Text: Nehemiah 5:14-17; Mathew 5: 13

A. Introduction

On the 22nd May, 1787, twelve Christians formed the committee for the Abolition of Slave trade. Acting on the word of God, they considered it unfair for fellow humans to be subjected to inhumane conditions because of the perception of racial inferiority. Fired on by godly zeal, they used several means such as publications, sermons, tracts, petitions and campaign in the House of Commons. This campaign and bold activism against slave trade led to the eventual abolishing of the slave trade in the United States of America twenty years later in 1807. Christians are God's change agents in society.

A change agent is a person who initiates and assumes the responsibility of bringing about change in behaviour or social structures of a community or nation. Let us take note of the key words in the definition: initiates, responsibility, changed behaviour, social structures, community. These key words connote an action that is intentional, spurred on by the conviction to bring about changed behaviour in a society to conform to the values and principles of the Kingdom of God. Thus, Christians as change agents in the marketplace are not only heralds of Kingdom values but also active agents in bringing this kingdom values and principles to bear on their spheres of influence.

B. Nehemiah as a Change Agent in the Marketplace

Today, we shall look at Nehemiah who is a good example of how Christians can work towards becoming change agents in their respective spheres of influence. He used his leadership position and influence to bring about change in governance structure that broke the backs of peasants for the comfort

of the royalty. The leaders enjoyed emoluments and benefits which were supported by taking from the little the poor had to live on. To put it bluntly, the system allowed for the poor to bear the burden of the sophisticated and ostentatious lifestyle of the people at the helm of leadership.

Thus, we can observe from the text in Nehemiah 5: 14 -17 that previously, these ignoble acts were perpetuated:

- i. The governors exacted more than the people could bear in food items and money to cater for the benefits of the governors.
- ii. Servants of the governors took the law into their hands to rule the poor with cruelty.
- iii. People in authority bought the lands of the people for a pittance because the latter could hardly make ends meet. These acts of wickedness happened against the backdrop of a despondent nation which was under reconstruction due to the return of the exiles.

C. How Nehemiah acted as an Agent of Change

It is obvious that, Nehemiah could have continued to enjoy the largesse afforded by the exploitative structure because of his position. However, he chose to sanitise the system rather than perpetuate the insensitivity demonstrated by his predecessors. His actions were undergirded by love, compassion and personal integrity.

D. He initiated change through the following concrete steps:

1. During the twelve years Nehemiah stayed with them, he forfeited his salary and ate none of their bread. Rather, he provided food for the people.
2. He instructed his servants not to take anything unjustly from the people.

3. He did not use his influence to buy the lands of poor people who would have gladly parted with their lands for a pittance.

E. Lessons and Application

1. **Sacrifice** – A change agent will need to make a great deal of sacrifice. The high moral standards expected of a change agent demands sacrifice of comfort, benefits, fame and sometimes friends. Nehemiah forfeited the benefits he could have enjoyed without being questioned.

- 1.1 Never should we take advantage of the system to plunder the poor and disadvantaged. People who work under us should not be taken advantage of because they are helpless.

- 1.2 We should not live off their sweat by refusing to give them what is due or delay their payments without just cause.

2. **Initiative** – Nothing gets done unless it is started. Change may look herculean and sometimes impossible, but when started in the interest of promoting the values and principles of the Kingdom of God, it will surely come to pass.

- 2.1 Nehemiah took the initiative to change the system of providing for the benefits of the governors because he thought it was unfair.

- 2.2 We must not only complain about the ills of society but take the initiative to bring about change.

3. **Boldness** – Boldness is the willingness to get things done despite the risks involved. Without this quality, we cannot be agents of change. Obviously, it must have not been easy changing an existing structure that catered to the interest of the high and mighty. All who benefited from this unjust system would definitely offer some form of opposition. Likewise, one is expected to face considerable opposition when initiating change especially when other people benefit from the unjust system. Change agents are bold and not afraid of being called funny names or tagged as bad people. It will take a great

deal of boldness to follow through with initiatives aimed at bringing change for overall societal profitability.

- 4. Fear of God:** Nehemiah refused to levy the people unjustly because he feared God. Without the fear God, a person is likely to condone the ills that go on within their sphere. Once we fear God, and seek to promote his interest, He will help us to bring change to our sphere of influence.

F. Conclusion

Though the benefits were due him as a leader, Nehemiah refused them because he feared God. He couldn't enjoy the largesse created by the penury of the masses. We represent God at the workplace and as such, cannot condone what Christ would have blatantly spoken against. To end the sermon, I would like you to repeat this after me:

- i. Christians as change agents in the marketplace are not only heralds of Kingdom values but active agents in bringing this kingdom values and principles to bear on their spheres of influence
- ii. Nothing gets done unless it someone initiates the process. Change may look herculean and sometimes impossible, but when started in the interest of promoting the values and principles of the Kingdom of God, it will surely come to pass.
- iii. The high moral standards expected of a change agent demand sacrifice of comfort, benefits, fame and sometimes friends.

Ephesians 2: 10 states that we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for every good work. We are salt of the earth, light to the word and God's ambassadors everywhere we find ourselves. To do this, one requires boldness, selflessness, contentment and above all, the fear of God.

TOPIC 2

I AM AN AGENT OF TRANSFORMATION - EVERY LITTLE CONTRIBUTION COUNTS

Key Texts: Nehemiah 3: 1 -31; Nehemiah. 4: 6

A. Introduction

Often one sees people who are indifferent about the grand vision of a church, organization or nation. Sometimes, such people have the erroneous impression that their contribution is insignificant and that, the vision would be achieved with or without their involvement. With this notion, they fail to contribute their quota. It is important to note that it takes a person or leadership to dream but the concerted efforts of all stakeholders lead to the realization of the dream. This is because, if each person considers their contribution to be insignificant, then collectively, the vision would be left in the hands of few people leading to its eventual failure. Against this backdrop, we should make every effort to contribute to the transformation agenda of the church. No contribution is too small or insignificant to the grand vision of transforming every sphere of society with kingdom values and principles.

In Nehemiah 3:1-31, Nehemiah lists forty-three different groups of people who worked to bring the wall to completion. These groups which included families, priests, and artisans present us an example of how much we can achieve if everyone is committed to the transformation agenda. Collectively, our individual efforts will lead to the transformation of all spheres of national life. A brief review of the background to the rebuilding will help us appreciate the importance of getting everyone involved in the transformation agenda.

B. The Broken Walls of Jerusalem (2 Kings 25: 1-10)

The walls of Jerusalem were destroyed when Babylon led by King Nebuchadnezzar and army commander Nebuzaradan attacked Jerusalem. During the siege, the following happened;

1. The Temple of the Lord was broken down (Verse 9)
2. The walls of Jerusalem were broken down and burnt (verse 10)
3. People left in the city were deported by Nebuzaradan (verse 11).

C. Rebuilding the Walls of Jerusalem

The Jews in exile returned to rebuild the city of Jerusalem after King Cyrus issued a decree for the Jews to return to rebuild the Temple. Led by Zerubbabel, the Jews rebuilt the Temple. However, many years passed with the broken walls lying in ruins. Many had given up hope of turning the rubble into a formidable fortress that will protect them and take away their reproach.

Nehemiah, burdened by the task to rebuild the walls returned to Jerusalem with the sole purpose of leading the people to rebuild the walls. To accomplish this task Nehemiah would need the people. It would take the contribution of Jews who lived in the city to bring this vision to pass.

D. How the People helped Nehemiah to rebuild the walls

1. They accepted the Vision

Nehemiah had the interest of God at heart. He wanted to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem which lay in ruins due to the people's affliction and fear of their enemies. After communicating with them, the people shouted 'we shall arise and build'. This refrain symbolised a reawakening of the communal spirit of the people, a resolve to contribute their quota to the realisation of the vision put out by Nehemiah. Each saw the project needful and thus, responded positively to the vision.

Application:

The vision to possess the nations by being agents of transformation has been shared by leadership. It behoves each person to find out more about the vision and embrace its contents. Each person should see how this vision can be contextualised in their sphere of influence.

2. The People had a mind to work:

When people make up their minds to work, they are able to focus on the work and encourage themselves even in tough times. The Scriptures say the people had a mind to work. This implies that each was determined to contribute their quota in bringing the vision to reality. They braved mockery and opposition from their detractors because they had a mind to work.

Application:

Verbal acclamation of the vision statement would have to be backed by a strong decision in the mind to work towards its realisation. In the absence of a strong personal commitment to the vision, we can easily be discouraged or lose focus. Every member of the church must have a mind to work that is, a concrete decision to follow through with aspects of the vision applicable to their sphere of influence.

3. Each family or Group Built their Section of the Wall: The whole circumference of the wall had been distributed in sections to various families and groups of people. In Nehemiah 4:6, we learn that work progressed according to plan because every family or group committed themselves to the section assigned them. No one fell behind schedule, thus when the various sections of the wall joined, progress was observable.

Application:

Can you imagine how the picture would look like even if just one section of the wall had been left unattended because

one family decided not contribute their quota? Progress would have been delayed and with some following their bad example, the project would have suffered a great deal. When everyone contributes their quota, a big task is easily accomplished. In the transformation agenda, we have different groups of people. Health workers, traders, teachers, youth, children, etc. This implies that, we need the contributions of Christian's in all sphered of life to bring about total transformation. Without this, our approach to possessing the nations would be haphazard and disjointed.

E. Conclusion

The solution to fixing broken families, homes, institutions of learning, professional ethics and nations may seem overwhelming. Nonetheless, God's method has always been humankind. Realizing the vision to possess the nations lies in each one becoming an agent of transformation in their spheres of influence. As we can observe in the Scriptures, one after the other, next to each other, the wall was built in fifty two days.

These people were not professional builders; they were ordinary people willing to follow an extraordinary vision of a visionary leader. We are all people with unique gifts but when we use our gifts and work together as a team, we can make much more progress than any one of when working alone. This is the power of synergy. With each transforming their sphere, we can transform societies and together possess the nations. The agenda requires the participation of every person, family, profession, tribe, local church, gender, age group and stakeholders in our communities. Every contribution counts. Let us all be agents of transformation in our own small way.

TOPIC 3

SALT OF THE EARTH

Key Texts: *Matthew 5: 13, Luke 14: 34-35, Mark 9:50*

A. Introduction

In Jesus' ministry he used several illustrations, parables and imageries to teach spiritual truths. After the beatitudes in Mathew 5: 3-10, Jesus used two metaphors to depict the influence and impact his followers must have on the world. He stated clearly that his audience which included his disciples are 'salt of the earth'. What does it mean to be salt of the earth? To grasp the meaning and implication of this metaphoric statement, we have to understand the nature of salt in Jesus' day. Salt was very valuable in the ancient world such that Roman Soldiers were often paid their wages in salt. It is also said that the expression 'worth your salt' owes its origin to the treasured value of salt and its use as legal tender in ancient times. Other uses of salt included food preservation, and flavouring. It was also used for cleaning purposes due to its antibacterial properties.

In Jesus' use of the metaphor, he sought to draw attention to the influence they were to make on the world around them. The metaphor was a pointer to how indispensable they were to his overarching plan to establish the reign of God's Kingdom on earth.

To appreciate the phrase salt of the earth in contemporary times, we shall look at the properties of salt and see how they relate to our role as agents of transformation.

- 1. Cleansing aid (Eze. 16:4)** – To clean is to rid a surface of dirt, impurities, and unwanted matter. It also includes an action meant to sanitise, disinfect and make pleasant. Salt has been used throughout history as a natural cleaning agent

due to its antibacterial properties. As an example, new-born babies were washed in salt in ancient times to cleanse their bodies.

By implication, Christians are expected first to be clean and also promote physical, moral and spiritual cleanliness wherever they may find themselves. Being salt of the earth demands that we confront all forms of uncleanness in the form of corruption, immorality, and spiritual apathy in our homes, communities and workplaces. The words and conduct of Christians should be wholesome and graceful so as to spur people on to good works and Christ-like character.

- 2. Preservative (Lev. 2:13, 2 Chron. 13:5)** – Food preservation involves any action meant to keep food from decay and make it last for a period of time. Food preservation methods prevent the growth of micro-organisms responsible for visual deterioration and rancidity of food. Salt has been used as a preservative for ages. It has preserving properties because it draws water out of food and therefore prevents the growth of micro-organisms which could cause food to go bad. Thus, the presence of salt in meat or fish is expected to halt any activity that causes food to go bad.

Christians as Salt of the earth have the responsibility to cure and halt any canker in their spheres of endeavour. It is expected that our mere presence as agents of transformation would be enough deterrent to all who want to persist in doing evil just as salt inhibits the growth of micro-organism. When we boldly stand for what we believe, the rot and canker in our respective spheres will cease.

Secondly, it is the duty of Christians to guard and preserve timeless virtues and biblical practices which are being challenged by contemporary worldviews and new age movements. In recent times, the institution of marriage and other Christian's virtues such as chastity are being watered

down by humanistic philosophies. As salt of the earth, it is our duty to preserve these virtues in their purest forms.

By extension, we are also expected to preserve doctrinal integrity and hand it over to the next generation without any influence from the kingdom of darkness. In upholding doctrinal integrity, officers must be careful what they preach and members what they hold on to as sound doctrine. As salt of the earth and agents of transformation, we must be bold to halt doctrinal deterioration in order to preserve sound doctrine for the next generation.

3. Flavour and Seasoning (Col. 4:6) – Tasteless food is difficult to eat. Salt, when added to food brings out the taste. Similarly, Christians bring joy and the peace of God wherever they are. As salt, we are to conduct ourselves in ways that bring out the best in those around us. A little salt added to food flavours it. Likewise, few Christians who stand for the truth can bring significant transformation to their spheres of influence.

iv. Salt can lose its Saltiness: Having stated that his disciples are salt of the earth, Jesus was also quick to caution them to guard against losing their saltiness. In ancient times, when salt lost its saltiness, it was then taken out and cast onto the footpaths just as gravel is used in contemporary times for people to walk on. It is amazing that something of much worth would be trampled underfoot.

Guarding our uniqueness and sanctity identifies us. It gives us the moral right and authority to speak up and confront wrongs in our homes, communities and workplaces.

- To lose our saltiness is to forfeit our credibility, reputation and moral right through bad behaviour and apathy.
- Losing our saltiness also connotes becoming like the world around us such that there exists no definable distinction between us.

- When we lose our saltiness, we lose our usefulness to the Lord as his agents entrusted with the core mandate to transform our spheres with kingdom values and principles. The effect is that our testimonies and advocacy would be disregarded and treated with contempt.

B. Application

- 1. Our Preserving Ability** - As agents of transformation we are supposed to engage in order to halt the rot, corruption and immorality in our homes, communities and nations. We need to have the understanding that we are likened to salt in many ways and we must live up to that.
- 2. Our Purifying Ability** – As agents of transformation, our words and conduct should be graceful and pure such that our hearers and observers would be instructed in the way of the Lord.
- 3. Our Pleasing Ability** – As salt, we are to so live our lives such that we bring the best out of hopeless situation just as salt makes food palatable. The world we live in need us as agents of change. We, therefore need to change our communities to reflect the image we carry.

Don't lose your saltiness - We must never give anyone cause to say, "If that is a Christian, then I never want to be one." Instead, our lives ought to motivate people to say, That is what I want my life to be. We need to strive to do good works wherever we find ourselves.

C. Conclusion

Today's sermon seeks to relate what it means to be salt of the earth to our call to be agents of transformation. Lessons from the foregoing discussions indicate strongly that having numbers without influence contradicts our status as salt of the earth. God's will is not to only have the numbers but to use our numbers to establish the reign of His kingdom

on earth. This is possible only if each member of this church play their role as salt of the earth. Let us resolve to be agents of transformation in every sphere of society through our preserving ability, purifying ability, and Pleasing ability. With integrity, let us guard the Christian testimony and our reputation so that we don't lose our saltiness with its attendant implications for the vision to transform every sphere of society with kingdom values and principles.



THEME 9

**THE POWER AND BEAUTY OF
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP**

TOPIC 1

THE POWER AND BEAUTY OF FELLOWSHIP

Key Texts: Acts 2: 42-46, 4:32-37. Heb. 10:24-25

A. Introduction

In our Christian faith, coming together in fellowship to support and encourage one another is inevitable to our sustenance in the faith. (Heb 10:25-25). Apart from encouraging and strengthening one another, fellowship allows us to show the beauty, love of Christ to the World. We should be able to celebrate our diversity in unity to portray the glory of God. In our world today, however, church members are becoming increasingly individualistic in attitudes and lifestyle. This has given rise to the need for us to take a critical look at the Power and Beauty of Christian Fellowship.

B. What is Christian Fellowship?

1. It is any gathering of the saints who come together to glorify God the father, the son and the Holy Spirit and to edify one another.
2. It refers to a meeting for corporate prayer, biblical instruction, demonstration of brotherly love, mutual care and generous sharing of resources for the overall spiritual nurture of the saints for effective outreach. (Acts 2:42, 4: 32-37)
3. Fellowship is a life-long relationship that should exist between believers physically and spiritually at all times. In this relationship everyone benefits both spiritually and physically.

C. How to Develop Christian Fellowship.

1. Each member should know Christ as their Lord and personal Saviour and have a relationship with him, which is a foundation for building a relationship with one another.

2. Each member should develop love for God as this will bring them closer to God and allow them to be united with one another. (Rom 8:35-39)
3. Each member should develop love for their neighbour. This flows from the Love of God and enables us to support, encourage, defend and protect one another.
4. We should be willing to live in peace with one another, forgo some of our rights and to forgive one another (Heb. 12:14,Rom 12:16-18)
5. Teaching on the importance of fellowship is another way by which we will develop fellowship (2 Cor. 5:18)

D. Conclusion

As hammer and saw are tools the carpenter can do without, fellowship in the Church remains an indispensable part of our Christian walk. Every effort must therefore be made for effective fellowship to take place in the Church. Our fellowship as a people of God activates and puts in motion the supernatural power of God that is within us. A clear understanding of what Christian Fellowship is helps us to takes steps to strengthen its development and maintenance among us.

TOPIC 2

POSSESSING THE NATIONS THROUGH EFFECTIVE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Key Text: Acts 2: 1-4, 41, 4:33, 5:12, Psalm 133.

A. Introduction

Effective Christian fellowship is essential to the spiritual, social and doctrinal sustenance of the Church. It begins with loving God and extending this love to our neighbours. This demonstration of the love of God is expected to help achieve the ultimate aim of God for us to reach out to the world with the gospel.

B. Benefits of Effective Christian Fellowship - The following are some of the ways effective Christian fellowship will help the church to possess the nations for Christ.

1. Effective Christian fellowship reveals the beauty and power of God to the World.
2. Unity among church members is such a powerful force that cannot be defeated by any human effort (Gen 11: 6-8). As long as the church lives in submission to Christ, it remains a strong force that no one will be capable of defeating.
3. When brothers live together in unity, it is pleasant, it is beautiful, it is admirable and attractive. Such beauty of the church attracts and draws others closer to God (Psalm 133).
4. On the day of Pentecost, the coming together of the disciples created the right atmosphere for the coming down of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-2). The Holy Spirit is the one who empowers believers to witness and He came at the time the disciples were gathered in fellowship.
5. The unity of the people of God brings down the presence of the Holy Spirit and as we preach the gospel under such

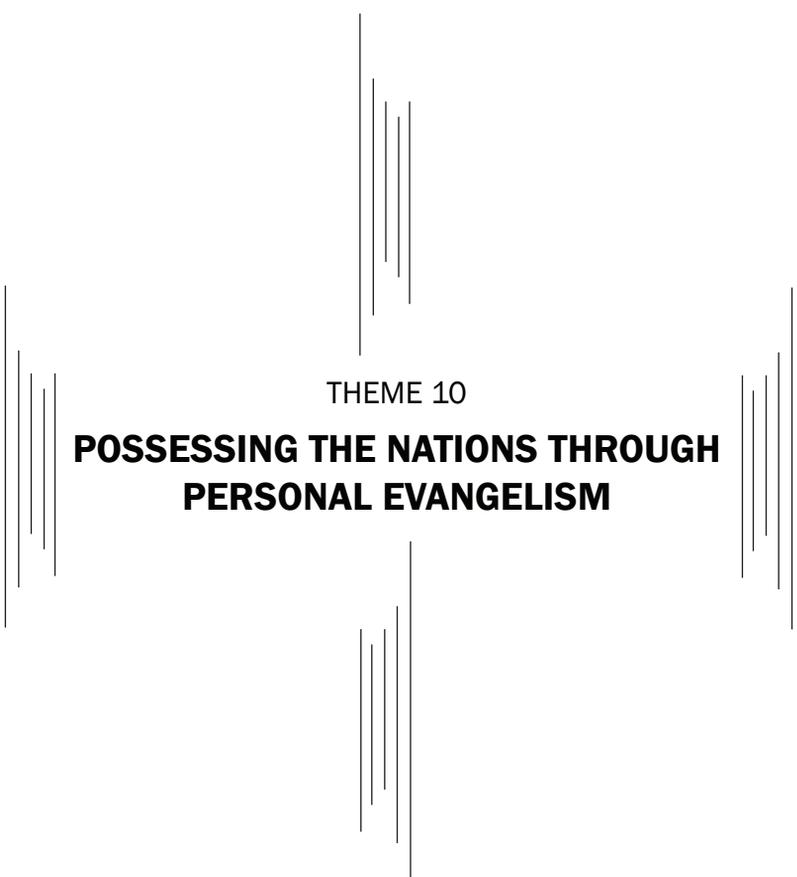
atmosphere, healing, deliverance, working of miracles and the harvest of souls into the Kingdom of God take place (Acts 2:1-4; 4:33, 5:12).

C. Some Hindrances to Effective Fellowship

1. The greatest enemy of effective Christian fellowship is sin which separates us from God and eventually affects our fellowship with one another. (Gen 3:8-10)
4. Self is another serious force which hinders Christian fellowship. The desire to pursue the path of selfish interest for self-glory and exclusive recognition sometimes make leaders take decisions that feed their ignoble intentions.
5. Unhealthy competition and strife among brethren break fellowship and the sweet relationship with one another. (1 Cor 3:3)
6. Other hindrances to effective Christian Fellowship are Jealousy and anger (Gen 4:3-8), bitterness and unforgiveness (Mathew 18: 21-22), favouritism (Lev 19:15), pride (James 4:6) and gossip (Pro 11:13).

D. Conclusion

Jesus restored our fellowship with God through his vicarious death. He has subsequently committed us to the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 15:19). In view of this the importance of Christian fellowship cannot be overlooked. We are urged not to forsake fellowship (Heb 10:25) because by it we are able to encourage and build one another. We should therefore rely on the Holy Spirit to overcome all the hindrances and allow effective fellowship to prevail among us.

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THEME 10

**POSSESSING THE NATIONS THROUGH
PERSONAL EVANGELISM**

TOPIC 1

THE URGENCY OF EVANGELISM

Key Text: Mark 16:15-16

A. Introduction

In the main text, we read about the final words of the Lord Jesus to the early apostles just before He returned to heaven after His resurrection. He instructs them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation, with the intention of winning the lost for Him. Although Jesus spoke directly to His disciples, He also commanded or commissioned the entire Church of all generations to make disciples of all nations.

It is important to note that the scope of this mandate is all creation; this implies that every nation, people-group/tribe and everyone everywhere must hear the gospel. Though the Church (in general) has, over the years, been doing well in fulfilling this mandate, the truth, however, is that there is still much more work to be done, especially in our time.

B. The Current Status of World Evangelization

We often carry the wrong impression that everyone around the world has by now heard about the gospel of Christ and that majority of people in the world are Christians. However, the current (2017) status on world evangelization, as revealed by the Joshua Project, indicates that of the 7.4 billion people in the world...

1. Only 10% (750 million) are committed Christians;
2. 22% (1.64 billion) are nominal Christians;
3. 39% (2.91 billion) have heard the gospel but not responded to it; and
4. 29% (2.17 billion) virtually have no exposure to the gospel –

that is, they have not had the opportunity to hear the gospel, let alone to take a decision on it.

Putting the figures together shows that there are still some 5 billion people (representing 68% of the world's population) yet to make the decision to follow Christ. Of this number, 1.5 billion belong to Islam, 1.1 billion are non-religious (that is to say they do not believe in the existence of God or are not interested in knowing whether He exists or not), 900 million belong to Hinduism and some 376 million are Buddhists.

C. The Situation in Ghana

According to figures from the 2010 population census provided by the Ghana Statistical Service, of the 24 million Ghanaians at the time,

1. about 17.6% are Muslims,
2. 5.2% belong to the traditional religion while
3. 5.2% belong to no religion.

This means, the Church in Ghana has close to 7 million Ghanaians to reach out to with the gospel.

D. Biblical Reasons Why We Must Be Engaged In Soul Winning

The Bible provides many reasons why every true Church must be actively involved in the task of evangelism and soul winning. Here are twelve (12) of them.

1. We must obey the Great Commission(Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:46-47; 5: 32; Matt. 28:18-19)
2. Christ has given us the power to witness (Acts 1:8)
3. Our Lord Jesus Himself was a soul winner (Luke 19:10; 1 Timothy 1:15; Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38)
4. The early Church was actively involved in evangelism and soul winning (Acts 2:14-41; 5:42; 8:25; 13:32; 14:7, 15, 21).

5. The value of a soul is so precious in the sight of God. (Luke 15:10; Daniel 7:10; Mark 8:36-38)
6. Humanity is totally lost without Christ (1 Tim. 2:5, John 14:6).
7. God's greatest desire and will is that no one perishes, but that all come to repentance (2 Pet 3:9); He wants everyone to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4).
8. Until we witness about Christ, the unsaved shall not hear about Him, believe in Him and be saved (Rom. 10:14, 17).
9. The certainty of the return of Christ for judgment (Matt. 10:7, John 14:1-3, Acts 1:9-11, James 5:8, Heb. 10:37, Rev. 22:12, 20).
10. The realities of heaven and hell (Luke 16:19-31, Heb. 9:27, Rev. 21:8).
11. To prove our love for God (John 14:15).
12. The ministry of reconciliation has been given to the Church (2 Cor. 5:18).
13. There are promised rewards and crowns for the soul winner (1 Thess. 2:17-20; Daniel 12:3; John 4:36; 1 Corinthians 15:58; John 15:16)
14. Soul winning brings great joy to heaven (Luke 15:3-7).

Conclusion

Considering the current statistics on world evangelization, the huge number of the unsaved the world over in general and Ghana in particular should awaken the church from her slumber and complacency. Going by the many biblical reasons mentioned above as motivators for evangelism, it is clear that the task of evangelism and soul winning is a very urgent one. The Church as a body, and individual Christians must hence commit their time, energies and all other resources towards fulfilling it.

TOPIC 2

UNDERSTANDING EVANGELISM

Main Texts: Luke 24:46-47

A. Introduction

As we seek to reignite the passion for aggressive evangelism and soul winning in the hearts of all members, it is important we take a look at the basics of evangelism. In this study therefore, we shall learn about what evangelism is about, the types and examples of it.

B. What is evangelism?

Evangelism has been defined by several people as follows

1. Introducing our friends or others to Christ (Manley Pippert)
2. A presentation of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit so that people will put their trust in God through Him as their king in the fellowship of the Church (Michael Green).
3. It's one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread (C. H. Spurgeon).
4. The proclamation of the historical biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view of persuading people to come to Him personally and so be reconciled to God (The Lausanne International Congress). In other words, we may describe the work of evangelism as sharing, witnessing or preaching about Christ to the unsaved for the purpose of presenting them with an opportunity to believe in and accept Him as Lord and Savior so as to be saved.

C. Three Things To Note In Every Evangelistic Venture

1. The one evangelizing must have had prior personal encounter with Jesus resulting in their salvation.

2. Every evangelistic interaction should primarily point the target audience to Christ, not the preacher or the preacher's denomination.
3. The ultimate goal should be to win souls and disciple them to become like Christ.

D. Types of Evangelism

There are mainly two (2) types of evangelism - Mass Evangelism and Personal Evangelism. We shall take a cursory look at Mass Evangelism but delve more into Personal Evangelism.

1. Mass Evangelism

This is an outreach programme targeted at a large group of people whether gathered at one place or different places but who are reached at the same time with the gospel message of Christ being proclaimed by a preacher. This could take the form of a crusade, rally or convention. A typical biblical example is what happened on the day of Pentecost, when Peter, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, rose up and proclaimed the gospel of Jesus to the crowds that had gathered in Jerusalem for the feast (Acts 2:4-41).

2. Personal (One-on-One) Evangelism

This is an outreach endeavour in which an individual Christian witnesses about Christ or shares his/her faith with another person who is unsaved. There are several examples of this type in the Bible. They include the following.

1. When Andrew heard about Christ from John the baptizer and followed Him, he went to look for Simon his brother and brought him to Christ (John 1:35-42).
2. Jesus witnessed about Himself to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4).
3. When Jesus healed the demon-possessed man at Gadarenes, He instructed him to go home and share the great things the

Lord had done for him with his friends and relatives (Mark 5:19).

4. Philip shared the gospel with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-35).

E. Why Personal Evangelism is so Important

Personal evangelism featured very prominently in the outreach activities of the early disciples/Church. (Acts 8).It was the main method by which the gospel spread in the early Church, and has many advantages as compared to Mass Evangelism. These include the following.

1. It is less expensive because it does not involve huge capital unlike the mass type.
2. It can be done by all – male or female, old or young, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, etc.
3. It can be done anywhere – in our homes, neighborhoods, on the streets, in shops and buses, at the workplace, market center, etc.
4. It can be done at any time – in the morning, afternoon and evening.
5. It is easier to follow up on the souls won.
6. More souls won through personal evangelism are retained in the church than those won through mass evangelism.

F. Action Points

The following steps must be taken for effective Personal Evangelism: The church needs to:

- a. Create the climate for evangelism in the Local Church:
- b. Encourage periodic evangelistic training and equipping of every member for witnessing and soul winning. (Eph. 4:12; Act 8:26-37; John 1:41; Act 20:20; 17:17).
- c. Build a good rapport in all her contacts with people.

- d. Move from what is familiar to what is unfamiliar. (John 4:7; John 3).
- e. Bring the people to the point where they will see the need for eternal life. John 4:14-15.
- f. Train her members to be gentle and loving in their interactions with all manner of people (John 4:40-41).

G. Conclusion

Knowing that God's greatest desire is for the salvation of humankind should motivate us as His children to be actively involved evangelism and soul winning. Our deepest desire as followers of Christ should be to witness about Him to our unbelieving friends, relatives, colleague workers, etc. and bring them to Him. Doing this would bring Him much joy (Luke 15:7,10).

TOPIC 3

HOW TO BECOME EFFECTIVE SOUL WINNERS

Key Text: John 4:5-15

A. Introduction

Personal evangelism is clearly a more effective way to witness about Christ to others. Many Christians, however, fail in their attempts to engage in it. This usually happens because they do not know how to go about it. Knowing how to share our faith is what often makes the difference between effective and ineffective witnessing. In the passage read, we find how Jesus effectively witnessed to the Samaritan woman and won her unto Himself. We can do likewise if only we learn the processes and strategies involved. Today's study is about these processes and strategies.

B. Preparing To Engage In Personal Evangelism

Before we ever engage an unbeliever in our quest to bring them to Christ, we must first meet the following criteria as part of our preparations:

1. Genuine Conversion – the one who wants to introduce others to Christ must have first been genuinely born again. This involves the following:
 - i. Accept that we are sinners by birth and hence our need for a Savior;
 - ii. Repent of our sins and confess them to Christ for His forgiveness;
 - iii. Confess our faith in Jesus and receive Him into our lives as Lord and Savior.
2. Transformed Character (Matt. 5:13-16)
3. Spirit-filled Life (Acts 1:8; Acts 4:31; Galatians 5:22; John 14:26; Luke 12:11-12; John 14:8).

We can be filled with the Holy Spirit by often waiting on Him in prayers(sometimes with fasting).

4. Love and compassion to Pray for the Lost (Matt. 12:29, Mark 3:27).
5. A Clear Understanding of the Gospel – this enables us to clearly communicate it to others. The message of the gospel can be explained in the following six points:
 - i. The fall and sin of humanity (Rom. 3:23);
 - ii. The separation of humanity from God as a result of our sin and fall (Isaiah 59:2);
 - iii. Humanity’s need for a savior;
 - iv. God’s love for humanity and His provision of a Savior through the death of Jesus on the cross (John 3:16, Rom. 5:8);
 - v. Humanity’s need to accept and believe in Jesus so as to be saved (Rom. 10:9-10, Acts 16:31, 1 John 5:13);
 - vi. The return of Jesus as Lord and King to judge both the living and the dead (Acts 1:9-11, Rev. 22:12).
6. Commitment to building healthy relationships with the unsaved
7. Alertness to make use of opportunities.
8. Making efforts to develop good communication skills and calmness
9. Respect for proper recordskeeping.

C. Hindrances to Effective Personal Evangelism

The following are some factors that hinder many Christians from becoming effective soul winners.

1. The fear of failing or being intimidated/rejected by our listeners.
2. Lack of compassion for the lost.
3. Lack of adequate knowledge of the Bible.

4. Lack of training or resource materials to serve as a guide.
5. The pressures of life – many people are too busy with social and economic activities.
6. Having a questionable public life.
7. Overcrowded church activities.

D. Conclusion

The early Church was able to possess villages, towns, cities and nations for the Lord because they took the work of evangelism and soul winning seriously. They were not confined to their church buildings but daily went out of their comfort zones to share their faith – in homes, neighborhoods, on the streets, and all other public places. The greatest need now is for every member to allow themselves to be empowered by the Holy Spirit through the Church for effective witnessing. To do personal evangelism effectively, we ourselves should be born again, understand the message we intend to share with our prospective converts and live transformed lives.

TOPIC 4

HELPING NEW BELIEVERS TO GROW IN THE LORD

Key Text: Matthew 28:18-20

A. Introduction

Reading from the main text, we find that Jesus is not just interested in having converts, but disciples. Converts grow to become disciples after going through a time of nurturing by mature believers, and eventually being committed to live like Christ and allowing themselves to be equipped to also help other new believers grow in the Lord. One of the ways to develop disciples is by teaching converts to obey all that Jesus has commanded in His Word. In our studies today, we shall discuss some practical ways by which we can help converts grow into disciples.

B. How To Help New Believers To Grow

Here are a few essential steps we can follow to guide new converts to grow into disciples.

1. Pray with them and for them

Throughout the Gospels Jesus prayed for His disciples. Paul also prayed for those who had come to Christ through his ministry, being confident that God was going to complete the work He had started in them (1 Thessalonians). In the same way it is important for us to pray for new believers, trusting God to work in their lives. Praying with them shows that we care for them, and set them an example of what it looks like to communicate with God. 1 Thess. 5:17, Matt. 26:41

2. Teach them the Word of God

Paul indicated that he continued to share the Word of God with Thessalonians even after their conversion (1 Thessalonians: 2). It is essential for new believers to learn how to read the Bible and listen to God from His Word. We must teach them

to do that, because it is in spending time studying the Word of God that they would grow in the knowledge of Christ. Josh. 1:9, Psalm 1:1-3, 2 Tim. 2:15

3. Build a Loving Relationship with them

Another way to help new converts to grow is to share our lives with them, being open and honest about our personal encounter and relationship with the Lord. We must make time to visit them regularly, and sometimes get together for fun. We must become like spiritual parents to them, caring for them, watching over them, encouraging them and politely correcting them when it is needful. 2 Thess. 2:7

4. Encourage them to Fellowship with other Believers

Helping new believers to grow in their new faith requires that we introduce them to particularly, our denomination or church so they can find other Christians who can encourage and support them in their new life. In the gathering of other believers, they get the opportunity to listen to the Word of God, pray and share friendship with other Christians. Acts 2:44, 46-47, Heb. 10:25

5. Encourage them to Witness about Christ to others

It is never too early to encourage new believers to share with others the changes that their encounter with Christ has brought into their lives. This would help make their faith solid and motivate them to live upright. John 1:35-42; 4:28-30, 39

6. Baptism in Water and in the Holy Spirit

These are very essential factors in Christian living. As a member, you may want to introduce new believers to either your presiding elder or pastor who will in turn help them to be baptized both in water and in the Holy Spirit. This would greatly enhance their Christian growth. Matt. 28:19, Mark 16:16, Acts 2:41; 9:2

C. Conclusion

Babies grow when their mothers are committed to providing them intentional care. This includes timely and appropriate breast-feeding, bathing, cleaning, and provision of comfortable clothing and sleeping environment. These and other factors contribute to the overall growth and health of the child. Over time, natural bonding develops between the baby and the mother. Similarly, mature Christians need to be intentional in providing spiritual nourishment to new converts by teaching them sound doctrine. We can help them to develop their spiritual lungs by introducing them to prayer and getting them committed to it at the personal devotions level. Introducing them to Christian fellowship will help them exercise their spiritual limbs and improve their heart efficiency. With time they will develop the appropriate spiritual muscles to be able to stand on their own as fully-baked disciples of Christ.