

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will do Bible study together about one important aspect of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. We will use a very easy Bible study method called the five steps method. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. The third series of 5 Bible studies is about the church. The topics are: “The cultural task of the church”, “The missionary task of the church”, “The evangelistic task of the church”, “The goals of the church” and “The leadership of the church”. Today’s Bible study is: A DISCIPLE IS OCCUPIED WITH THE GOALS OF THE CHURCH.

STEP 1. READ

Let us read Ephesians 4:1-16. Let us take turns to read one verse each.

(S) Ephesians 4:1-16. “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. (T) Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. (S) Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. (T) There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to one hope when you were called - (S) one Lord, one faith, one baptism; (T) one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (S) But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. (T) This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.” (S) What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? (T) He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe. (S) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, (T) to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (S) until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (T) Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. (S) Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. (T) From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

(S) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in this Bible passage. “Which truth in this passage is important for you?” or “Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?” Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(T) An important truth for me is that the growth of the Church is so much dependent on unity and on diversity. First. The growth of the Church is dependent on the unity of the Church. This unity of the Church is again dependent on the kind of life every Christian is living. When all the Christians live lives worthy of their calling, that is, live lives that are characterised by humility and gentleness, by patience and love, then the Church will more easily be a unity and grow. Second. The growth of the Church is dependent on the diversity of the Church. This diversity is again dependent on the functioning of the spiritual gifts. When every Christian serves the others with their special gifts, then the Church will more easily be a unity and grow. Every Christian will feel needed and will make the other Christians feel needed as well.

(S) An important truth for me is that the growth of the Church is dependent on the relationships, the maturity and the services of the Church. Relationships of truth and love will make the Church grow. Mature Christians, who have personal Christian convictions, will make the Church grow. And different kinds of Christian services will make the Church grow. The more Christian services there are, the more different kinds of Christians will have an active function in the Church. Unity based on uniformity stifles Church growth, while unity based on a great diversity of services promotes Church growth.

(T) **STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in this passage and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. “Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask?” Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. **The goal of the Church should be to urge Christians to live the Christian life.** Ephesians 4:1 says, “Live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” To what kind of a life has God called Christians in the Church?

(S) The life, which is worthy of God’s calling, is characterised by the following seven virtues: humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another, love, unity and peace. For example.

One. What is gentleness?

A Christian who is gentle or meek has the inner strength to rather suffer injury than to inflict it. A meek Christian is definitely not a weak or spineless person, who is ready to bow before every breeze. Instead, he is *submissive under provocation. He is not easily provoked to react negatively, nor does he quickly take things, which other people say or do, as personal attacks.* He is slow to insist on his rights. As a matter of fact, he realises that he has no rights at all that are his by nature and that all his rights are given to him by grace.

Two. What is peace? A Christian has peace with God and with other people. Peace with God is the freedom from guilt. It is the conviction that the past sins are forgiven. Peace is the freedom from fear. It is the conviction that the present difficulties are overruled for good. Peace is the freedom from the feeling of abandonment. It is the conviction that the future cannot bring about separation from God. Peace with God brings a restless mind to rest, fills an empty heart with contentment and makes a broken life whole again. Peace with other people means the absence of feelings of guilt, fear or rejection with respect to them. Peace with other people means that strife has been replaced by relationships of harmony and building one another up.

2nd Question. The goal of the Church should be to keep the unity in diversity. How should we understand the unity of the Church as it is described in Ephesians 4:4-6?

(T) One. In Ephesians 4:1-6, the emphasis is on *the unity of the Church*. The unity of the Church is not external and mechanical, but internal and organic. It is not superimposed by any kind of human organisation, but is the result of the indwelling Christ. And because the Church is spiritually a unity, the one Body of Christ, we Christians should make every effort to keep that unity! The unity is demonstrated, not by *organisational unity*, but by *spiritual unity*. Christians demonstrate the unity of the Church all over the world by worshipping the same God; by having the same Saviour of their sins; by having the same Holy Spirit, who dwells in them; by having the same faith, as recorded in the Bible; and by having the same love and the same hope.

Two. In Ephesians 4:7-11, the emphasis is on *the diversity of the Church*. The diversity is the result of the diversity of spiritual gifts, which Christ gave to the one Church. In

Three. In Ephesians 4:12-16, the emphasis is on *the growth of the Church*. The unity and the diversity of the Church are for the purpose of making the Christian Church grow.

3rd Question. The goal of the Church should be to allow the functioning of the spiritual gifts. How should we Christians view spiritual gifts?

(S) There is a great diversity of gifts of the Spirit among the members of the one Body. The list in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 is not intended to be complete, as Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:28-30 teach. This diversity of spiritual gifts promotes the unity of the Church, because every member uses his gift to serve others and he needs the services of others himself. Christians do not receive spiritual gifts for their own sake, but for serving one another, for equipping Christians for various works of service, for building up the Christian Church and for glorifying God.

We Christians should remember three important things concerning spiritual gifts. **One.** We should recognise a spiritual gift as a gift, not as the product of our own skill or ingenuity. **Two.** We should view our spiritual gift as only one among many spiritual gifts and as limited in extent, “a measured gift”, as Ephesians 4:7 teaches. **Three.** We should be eager to use our spiritual gift not for our own glory, but for the benefit of the entire Christian Church in the world and to God’s glory.

4th Question. The goal of the Church should be to build up relationships among Christians. How does a church build up relationships among their Christians?

(T) One. Every member of the Christian Church should be involved in building relationships! We Christians build one another up by fulfilling the “one another responsibilities” to one another. For example, we love one another, we carry one another’s burdens, we encourage one another, and we teach and admonish one another with all wisdom. Etc.

Two. Ephesians 4:13 says, “Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God.” The unity in our relationships should be based on “the faith”. This means, that unity in the Church should be based on the teachings of the Bible, which make up “the Christian faith”.

Three. The unity in our relationships should also be based on “the knowledge of Jesus Christ”. This means, that unity in the Church should be based on every Christian knowing Jesus Christ personally as Saviour. And this “knowing of Jesus Christ” implies that we Christians maintain a continual personal and intimate fellowship with him.

Thus, the relationships among the Christians should be based on Christ, the teachings of the Bible and doing what the Bible says.

5th Question. The goal of the Church should be to disciple new Christians to maturity in Christ. How does a church disciple their Christians?

(S) The mature Christians disciple the new Christians with the help of all the other Christians. Ephesians 4:13-14 say, “Until we all ... become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by the every wind of

teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.” We make them “disciples of Christ” by helping them to have a growing relationship with Christ, by growing in their character and by growing in their obedience to Christ. The measure of maturity is Christlikeness. According to Ephesians 4:14-15, some visible results of maturity are stability, truth and love. A disciple of Christ is characterised by stability in the teachings of the Bible, by truth in his beliefs, words and deeds, and by love in all his relationships.

6th Question. The goal of the Church should be to equip all Christians to do some work of service. How does a church equip their Christians?

(T) All Christians, who have received spiritual gifts of equipping, should equip the other members of the Church to do at least one practical service within the Church. Such Christians are not necessarily only the leaders of the church. Ephesians 4:11-12 say, that those Christians, who have received the spiritual gift of doing missionary work or the office of a missionary, should equip the other members of the Church to be involved in missionary work. Those Christians, who have received the spiritual gift of prophecy or the office of a New Testament prophet, should equip the other members in the Church to preach the message of the Bible. Those Christians, who have received the spiritual gift of evangelism or the office of evangelist, should equip the other members in the Church to be involved in evangelism. Those Christians, who have received the spiritual gift of caring and teaching or the office of a shepherd and teacher, should equip the other members of the Church to be involved in caring and teaching. Thus, all the Christians should be equipped to do some work of service in the worldwide Church. Thus, some Christians are equipped to do evangelism and others are equipped to do discipleship. Likewise, Christians are equipped to do preaching, teaching, counselling, serving, giving, caring, etc. No member of the Church should just passively “attend Church”. Every member should eventually function in the task that Christ has assigned to him. If every Christian in the world today would do one work of service, then the Christian Church would be the most influential group of people on earth! They would be telling everyone in the world about Jesus Christ. They would be involved in building up healthy families and societies. They would make a positive contribution to schools and hospitals. They would give the world good books and newspapers to read. Every Christian would be God’s instrument in the establishment of his kingdom, that is, his sovereign rule in the hearts and lives of people on earth. When a local church implements these goals, it will grow in spiritual *quality* as well as in numerical *quantity*. And that church would bring much glory to God.

(S) STEP 4. APPLY

After brainstorming with one another and recording a list of *possible applications*, consider which possible application does God want you to turn into a *personal application*.

From now on, I want to dedicate myself to disciple some new Christians to maturity in Christ. I want to help them to grow in their relationship with Christ, to develop Christian virtues and to obey the teachings of the Bible.

(T) I want to continue to equip more and more Christians to do some work of service in the Church. I want to equip some to evangelise, others to disciple new Christians and again others to preach and teach. Etc.

(S) STEP 5. PRAY

Let us take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in Luke 8:4-15.

Dear Father in heaven, thank you for teaching me the biblical goals of the Church. Give me now your grace to commit myself to one of these goals, so that your Church may be built up and you may be glorified on earth.

(T) Dear Father in heaven, together we pray that you will raise up more gifted people who will equip your people to do your work on earth. We pray that evangelists, pastors and teachers everywhere will learn how to equip the Christians under their care to do different works of service. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

(S) ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. Choose one of the above-mentioned goals of the Church and practise it in your local church.

Second. Prepare next week’s Bible study. The Bible study topic is “The leadership of the church.” And the Bible passage is 1 Peter 5:1-7. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks “Go and make disciples” and Internet on www. Etc

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to “Discipleship training on the air”.