

TITLE: Knowledge, Wisdom And Understanding

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Leadership Series

Book 4

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PREFACE

Welcome to the discipleship / leadership series. These little booklets were designed to give basic information concerning various topics about our Christian faith in Christ Jesus.

The purpose of this series is to stimulate thought and to foster a clearer understanding of discipleship and servant leadership. These booklets can be used as a discussion tool for personal study, family devotion, youth meetings or in cell groups. Our hope is that this information will stir the readers and encourage them to go deeper into personal research and study.

Our desire is that these booklets will be a blessing to the reader and a tool that can be shared with others as a gift of encouragement.

Please feel free to mail or e-mail us for more copies or to just write to us with any feedback concerning the content of these studies. We hope you enjoy this offering of knowledge and experience. We pray that Christ will draw you into an ever deeper personal relationship with Himself as you study.

Your servants in Christ,

Rev. Dr. James and Hkaw Win Humphries

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INTRODUCTION

*They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they **understood** the reading...All the people went away to eat, to drink, to send portions and to celebrate a great festival, because they **understood** the words which had been made known to them. Nehemiah 8:3, 12*

The door to a joy-filled life is understanding. The key is to keep focused on whom we serve. God must be first and foremost. He is the foundation we build upon. As He calls, we need to respond and be open to undergoing a change that is totally cross-culture in nature. I believe God speaks to us and gives us a passion that aligns with His will.

In the times of Ezra and Nehemiah the people had been released from bondage to freedom. They had spent a number of years in Babylon in captivity and the city of Jerusalem had been destroyed. The temple and the walls had been totally levelled. Now they were going back to the city of peace known as Jerusalem. God had moved in the heart of King Cyrus of Persia. He was not only sending them back, but was giving back to the people the possession of the temple plus provision and a tithe to be given to the priest. This home going was a fulfillment of a prophecy that Jeremiah had given concerning the people of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. God now was moving the people who had been under slavery and bondage back to a place that had been previously destroyed. But they had seen the hand of the Lord and there was a renewed faith and optimism. Their focus needed to be changed if they were going to move forward.

God has a will and a plan for our lives but it starts by a shift from being self-centred to being God-centred. As the Lord's Prayer

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states, it is "not my will be done but His will to be done here on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9). People who live in oppression or under bondage see things differently. When they are released, their eyes look forward and they desire not to get back into bondage again. They also want to review their past and understand what must change if they hope to move on into the future life of freedom and blessing from the hand of God. Life is full of challenges, but hardship does not have to be a place that we stay in. We can do something about it as we look to God and His Word, and be willing to move from fear to a life of faith. We can overcome because we are born of God. This means we have the victory through Christ Jesus our Lord (1 John 5:4-5).

I believe that Ezra and Nehemiah will show us from their writings that this is possible. Most of the people who were coming back to Jerusalem had been born and raised in a life of bondage and slavery in and around Babylon. They were reaping the harvest of the sin of their forefathers and that of their own lives. The people of God had once again turned their backs on God and forgot the One who had delivered them out of the land of Egypt. But God had not given up on them. He began again to speak into the leaders' and the people's hearts. They knew that there needed to be a change if they were to survive and move forward. The only way was to turn back to Jehovah God.

The people of Myanmar and especially those of the Kachin State whom I have lived and worked with, have been under bondage for over 60 years. They have been forced to give up much of their identity and culture. Their traditions and culture have been smothered by other countries and by various people groups within their own country. They have fought and died for freedom through many wars and presently have a shaky ceasefire with the ruling Junta of the land. (As of June 2011 the ceasefire has been broken.) Their only hope is to return to the Word of God and to its Author,

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Jesus Christ, and to begin to undergo change that comes through repentance. There is a great need to make Jesus Christ the true Lord of their lives. They do desire this and want to move forward but it will take a Nehemiah experience if they hope to come out of the endless circle of bondage and despair.

I have been blessed to travel to various parts of the world and I have discovered that people are hungry for more of God. In their hearts they desire to know more about who God is and how to live a Godly life. Some people have a little knowledge about God and others have even some wisdom of who He is; but what God desires is that we understand and have an intimate personal relationship with Him. I have learned that people know in their heart where they are falling short and going wrong. But what they want to know is how to get back on track and move forward again.

How do we know this? In Scriptures, we are told that people will produce fruit from the kind of tree that they are. Jesus told the disciples that by their fruit they will be known. All they need is someone to show them a way out of these endless circles of despair and destruction. Scripture teaches that in true fellowship with God, He will show us and direct us. This results in a daily change that will take place in one's life. The process of growth will happen each day. As you look back you will see that you have changed and are different from who you once were. The reason is because God desires you to become more like Him. It is a two-step process. First, we must come to a place of clearly understanding who He is and, secondly, from that understanding will come change. This is change that will flow out from the heart, through your mind and even into the body which will change your outer countenance for others to see.

Each day we will undergo some type of change. This change comes through various types of communication.

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Communication can help us to learn more about ourselves and about who God is. We can learn how to personally relate and walk with God each day. It does not matter where we have been or what we have done – all that matters is that we are willing to change. Put yourself into the hands of God who desires to move you from a sinful nature of this world to being a new creation for Him that is unique and special in His eyes.

All change is cross-cultural and lifestyle-changing. You are moving into a different way of thinking and living. The Bible challenges us with wisdom and knowledge from God to live differently. God also uses people to be teachers, to help others to understand. Many things get forgotten or misplaced and there are times that we are too busy just trying to survive what life throws our way. God does not want us to go through an endless cycle of reinventing the wheel over and over again. We must learn from our past history and take that knowledge, wisdom and understanding and build on it for the present and for the future. What we do will affect and influence those who will follow after us.

What I desire to communicate is how something old can change the present way people are living. In the book of Nehemiah we see two men that God had teamed together to bring people back from bondage to life and freedom in Him. The people needed to see their calling and potential as a people again. They needed to work and serve God and each other. They had forgotten the Word of God and the freedom that it brings to the individual and to the people as a whole. The people had become desperate again for more of God. But the key was that people needed to understand clearly what God was trying to say to them.

God does not give up on us but the problem so often is that we give up on trying to hear and understand what it is He wants us to learn and do. That is why, as Scripture tells us, we need to keep

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looking, seeking and knocking. If we do this, Christ promises us that the door will be opened to us (Matthew 7:7).

People in bondage need to know how this change can take place in their lives today. It comes by desiring to learn and to understand what was being taught to God's people and by His Word, the Bible. The people needed to move from just having head knowledge, or having a certain type of wisdom in their hearts, to actually understanding and doing what God was speaking to them to do. True discipleship is a journey of understanding God and His word. As we do, the result will be that we will bear forth precious fruit of change. It will take time and it must be something that we desire above any other thing in our lives. Change comes with challenges but if we persevere, we are promised that "the joy of the LORD will be your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

There are at least four key words that will give a clearer view of the picture that I am trying to portray. As you study these words you will see a lot of similarities, but they also hold within their meaning some very specific differences. If we take the time to understand these words clearly it will open up our eyes and ears to more of God and the presence He desires to have within us.

Key Words

Knowledge – to know in one's mind

Understanding, comprehension, grasp, grip, command, mastery, apprehension; expertise, skill, proficiency, expertness, accomplishment, adeptness, capacity, capability.

Wisdom – to internalize in one's heart

Intelligence, understanding, insight, perception, perceptiveness, penetration, discernment, sense, good sense, common

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sense, shrewdness, astuteness, smartness, judgement, foresight, clear-sightedness, prudence, circumspection; logic, rationale, rationality, soundness.

Understand – able to do and act out through one’s life
Comprehend, apprehend, grasp, see, take in, perceive, discern, make out, puzzle out, recognize, keep up with, master, get to know, follow, fathom, get to the bottom of, penetrate, divine, interpret, unravel, decipher.

Translate – cross cultural communication in word and actions
Interpret, render, gloss, put, express, convert, change, construe, transcribe, transliterate. paraphrase, reword, rephrase, recast, convert, decipher, decode, gloss, explain, unravel, reveal, elucidate, expound, clarify, spell out.

Now that we have some key words locked into our minds let us start by looking at the account that takes place in Nehemiah chapter 8 and see if we can pull from it some truth that will possibly bring about change in our lives.

Key Scripture

*And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel. Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who could listen with **understanding**, on the first*

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*day of the seventh month. He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could **understand**; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law. Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam on his left hand. Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, explained the law to the people while the people remained in their place. They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they **understood** the reading. Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law. Then he said to them, "Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved." All the people went away to eat, to drink, to send portions and to celebrate a great festival, because they **understood** the words which had been made known to them. Nehemiah 8:1-12*

Did you notice the word "understand or understanding" and how often it was used in these twelve verses? Also, did you see the

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hunger the people had for more of God? I believe that as we break this passage of Scripture down into its smaller pieces we will glean from it principle and truth that will help us to change the way we think, act and live our daily lives. What follows is a reflection on what is needed for the disciple and for the church of today and how Nehemiah chapter 8 verses 1-12 can be an answer to any people group that desires to be restored back to walking in the will of the Lord and having the joy of the Lord as their strength. It is my desire to shed some light on what I believe are twelve principles that can help us to understand who God is and will also open a door for personal revival and renewal within our lives.

1. Unity: men and women (children) gather as one. v.1

*And all the people **gathered as one** man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel.*

We see that the people came together in unity and harmony, there was a oneness. They knew there needed to be change and it was time to implement those changes. They saw a need and together they were coming to learn what they needed to do, so that they would not have to remain in bondage. Their past was clear and they had learned that God wanted to bless them but they needed to understand who He was and what His will for their lives was.

There is a great need for the disciples of Christ to come together as one -- to have unity and harmony to seek God's face for a clear call that will not only change us, but also greatly impact the people and world around us. We have been called to be part of one body where Christ is the head (1Corinthians 12:12-14). Throughout the New Testament we have the "one another

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principle” that shows that we must connect and become channels for God’s blessing (1 Thessalonians chapter 4, 5). We have to gather together under the umbrella of God’s protection and get back into His hand of love. His arm is outstretched to all who will receive (Deuteronomy 33:27).

We are also told that they gathered in front of the Water Gate. This was one of the closest gates to the temple mound. Water is a basic need for all life. The people needed it for their daily existence. Water was used for cleaning and washing. In the Bible water makes things pure and fresh. Water is life giving to the physical body but it is also the same for cleansing the spiritual man. We need the water of the Word of God daily in our lives if we hope to exist and to grow. The Holy Spirit comes to us like refreshing rain falling down from heaven to refresh God’s people.

Another interesting point is that this event took place at the beginning of the New Year for the people of Israel. For many the New Year is a starting point for new beginnings. It is a place where we hope to leave the old behind and start off fresh into a New Year full of hope and expectations.

This was going to be the setting where God was going to dramatically step back into the people’s lives as their Chief Shepherd. One who would take them back under His protection and would touch them once again with His healing hand, as a loving Father would for His children. It would be an open air meeting -- no building or finely built things to give special effects or atmosphere. It would be open under the heavens and the only thing built was a pulpit for the leaders to speak from. It was the people, God and His Word.

It is interesting that this revival was instigated by the people. They were hungry to know their God. Through their oral

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tradition and the teachings that they had received in the past, they were moved by God to proceed – a letting go of the past, a new opportunity to get it right. A stirring began deep in their hearts to make a change in their thinking and in how they had been living. They came as one to their leadership and asked them to bring out the books of Moses and begin to read and teach them. They somehow knew that the only hope for change was to get back to the books that God had given them, together as men, women and children.

Like the Kachins of Northern Myanmar, there was a great move of God that brought them out of animism to a faith in one Creator God (Karai Kasang). (I now live amongst these people with Hkaw Win my wife, which in itself is a real miracle and blessing that God has truly done.) Their history as Christians is only 135 years old but during that time they underwent terrific changes. Some changes brought about freedom but others brought bondage and enslavement to themselves and others. Some of their teachers and leaders were removed and others just left the country. They were left alone to begin the journey of moving forward. They knew that God was with them and He could help them along the way. Great improvements were accomplished, but their enemies did not stop trying to overcome them with compromise and false teaching. The early church fathers (in Myanmar) walked from village to village teaching the few words that they understood concerning the Gospel of Christ. Out of that effort came a great harvest. But just as it so often happens, the generations that follow did not know God the way their patriarchs did. It has only been in the last few years that the elders have seen the need to come back once again to a place of unity and harmony, to become one voice and to seek after that which is good for the group and not just for various individuals. They have formed organizations to promote this truth amongst the people.

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The Bible teaches that there is strength in numbers. When we come together as one we also bring together our diversity, talents and gifting which then, through Christ, become our strength. The body of Christ becomes strong and the church can stand against whatever the enemy would do to try to destroy it. The enemy's biggest strategy has always been to divide and conquer. He does it in marriages, families, churches, people groups and throughout the nations of the world. But Scripture teach another truth:

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! It is like precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, coming down upon the edge of his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon coming down upon the mountain of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing -- life forever. Psalm 133:1-3

Today the Kachin people are hungry for the Word of God, and are crying out to their leaders to train and equip them for service; but the leaders themselves have lost some of their ability to understand and to interpret the Word so that it may bring about the needed change. Just as the Kachin, we too must call upon our leaders to teach us and bring us back into a deeper understanding of what it means to have Christ as our personal Saviour and Lord. Leaders also need to deepen their relationship with God through prayer and the studying of His Word. We must be willing to confess our sin and our shortcomings as individuals and as a people and as churches. We can only take people as far as we have gone ourselves. We need to set and live the example if we hope for others to follow.

As a people, we must be willing to keep asking and knocking at the door (Matthew 7:7-8) and to search out those pearls of truth (Matthew 13:45-46) that will open to us a greater

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freedom in Christ. We are not to walk alone, but together be willing to learn so that we can better understand. This is what will become the true foundation that will keep us firm and anchored in the greatest of storms of life.

2. Helping hand: men and women (children) asked to be helped and taught. v.1

*And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and **they asked** Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel.*

Another thing that is important to understand is that these people came asking for help. They saw a need and wanted help to understand what to do. They desired to walk in God's blessing as individuals, as families and as a nation. Children were there with their parents receiving instruction, coming together as a family. The children would be able to see and hear, but most of all they were learning by example from their parents and from those who were their spiritual leaders. Their lives were going to change as a result of the teaching of God's word. From the scrolls they would learn the history of how God walked with them and delivered them over and over again. As the leaders read the Scriptures they explained them in detail to the people. This was the Word of God living, being lived and giving life to all who could hear and understand.

The people went to their spiritual leader, Ezra. He was well versed in the Scriptures (Ezra 7:6). The people knew that he could give them answers to their many questions because they knew he was a man who sought the heart of God diligently. Ezra's name means "the helper". The Bible also tells us something very powerful about the life of Ezra, "*for the gracious hand of God was on him. This was because Ezra had determined to study and obey*

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the law of the Lord and to teach those laws and regulations to the people of Israel” (Ezra 7:9-10).

It seems that the key to understanding is to keep asking questions until it makes sense in our minds and hearts. The Bible we are told is a treasure of great value and within its covers are the keys that will unlock the chains that have kept us bound up for so many years.

The New Testament tells us that the Jewish people reasoned with Paul. Paul would stay with them for months or even years so that the people could ask their questions. As people got to know the words of the Old Testament they became able to understand that Christ was truly God. From that, churches were birthed in many places. The people in Paul’s time and back in Ezra and Nehemiah’s time knew that the only hope of deliverance, freedom, peace and joy was to get themselves taught and equipped with the Word of God.

We should never fear to go to our leaders and ask them questions. It is also true that the leaders must make time to answer these questions, not just with a pat answer, but with patience, time, love and hope. We need to make time and take time. People are more important than programs. All we do should be seasoned with prayer and the Word of God. We are not here as leaders to entertain, but to train in His Word. When this takes place change will come and the church will grow.

As a young pastor I learned that where the carcass is the eagles will gather. What this mean is, if we are feeding the people and giving them practical understanding of how this food can give them life and freedom, they will come (Luke 17:37).

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3. Listen: men and women (children) listen. v. 2

*Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and **all who could listen** with **understanding**, on the first day of the seventh month.*

We are told that they listened. They had just come from bondage, living in another land under slavery and now God had opened the door for them to come back. It was time to hear for themselves what God was expecting from them. They were not just going to accept what people said. They wanted to hear and understand how they should live from God's Word themselves. We also need to know that there is a big difference between hearing and listening. Listening comes with the idea that you are hearing so intently as to understand what it is that you are hearing. We also need to learn how to listen and focus on what is being said. Jesus challenged his listeners over and over again with this saying, "he who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15).

We hear with more than just our ears. The other four senses must also be involved if we are to grasp the truth of what another person has said to us. People desire to understand and we need to be patient as the words are planted into people's hearts.

We are told that all who could listen with understanding came to learn and to hear from the books of Moses. But to hear with understanding we also need to be able to ask questions. When we ask question after question it helps to focus our hearing which in turn builds the proper file in our minds which then affects our lives in the future.

It is also important to see that this teaching was open to all not just the Jews alone. It would be an open air meeting and all would be welcome to listen. Jerusalem was the hub for trade.

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People from many nations would be there doing business and traveling through. As I travel to various countries of the world I have found that people are interested to learn. There is a built-in desire to learn about God.

We must see that words are a conduit that truth flow through. However, it is important that we learn the meaning and culture behind the words that are spoken. Words can put people to sleep or they can awaken them from their slumber. It will be up to us to hear what the Spirit has to say to us. Whatever we listen to or feed our minds and hearts with, will often be what will come out through our words, character and actions.

The Psalmist wrote these words, “*The unfolding of your words give light; it gives **understanding** to the simple*” (Psalm 119:130). When we as people (who are teachers and leaders) make sense of the Words of God in a childlike way so that people can understand, this in turn brings about freedom and change in their lives. This is what is needed amongst the Kachin people. Not more theology or intellectual teaching that no one is sure what is being talked about but clear understanding. Scripture needs to be taught in such a way that even a child could understand. We need to pray that God would give us this wisdom to be able to carry out the great task of helping the people to be able to grow and mature and produce fruit that will last.

4. Patience: men and women (children) not in a hurry. v.3

*He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate **from early morning until midday**, in the presence of men and women, those who could **understand**; and all the people were **attentive** to the book of the law.*

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Learning takes time. The best gift we can give to God is our time, if we want to understand who God is, who we are in Christ and how to serve and do His will. As leaders and teachers, we also need to take time to train other people. Learning is a challenge and does not come easily but in the end, the effort that we make pays off in great dividends. Today we are so busy doing things that will have no lasting value. We need to get back to focusing on what is important and lasting.

The disciples and the church have lost the art of two things. One is waiting on the Lord. Isaiah reminds us of this truth, *“Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary”* (Isaiah 40:31). We see it again in Acts when the disciples waited for the coming promise of the Father, the day the church of Christ was born and empowered (Acts 2:1-4).

The second art is meditating on the Lord. David in Psalm 1:2-3 teaches us this truth that was so dear to his heart. He states, *“And in his law he meditates day and night for he will be like a tree firmly planted by the waters, which yields its fruit in its season”*. As a king he knew that the best thing he could do with his time was to wait on the Lord. As the hymnist George C. Stebbins tells us,

“Take time to be holy, speak often with thy Lord;
Abide in Him always, and feed on His Word.
Make friends of God’s children; help those who
are weak;
Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.

Take time to be holy, The world rushes on;
Much time spend in secret With Jesus alone;

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By looking to Jesus, Like Him thou shalt be;
Thy friends in thy conduct, His likeness shall see.
Take time to be holy, Let Him be thy Guide,
And run not before Him, Whatever betides;
In joy or in sorrow, Still follow thy Lord,
And, looking to Jesus, Still trust in His Word.

Take time to be holy, Be calm in thy soul;
Each thought and each motive, Beneath His
control;
Thus led by His Spirit, To fountains of love,
Thou soon shalt be fitted, For service above.”

(Taken from the "Living Way Hymnal" p.112,
I.C.F.G., Los Angeles, California)

Another interesting fact was that this place of meeting was a place where almost all people would pass by because people needed water. The place where people would go to get water would also be the place where people would share news and important information with each other. It was the center of communication, the hub for the exchanging of information. People would visit and take the time to hear and pass on information.

I have learned that whatever is important in one's life is where one will invest one's time. These people were willing to give of their time and be very intent on learning and understanding all they could. They were planting in their minds the needed details to live a Godly life. Change can only come when you have all the facts and by faith take those facts and apply them to your life. To listen attentively is to be patient in hearing and seeing the whole picture. The Bible is a book that does not contradict itself but its pages work in unity and harmony with each other so we can have a clear picture concerning the truth and nature of God. It is a living organism of truth that is introduced to the disciple of Christ.

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In the past, people attended catechism, a form of studying and understanding God's word through the use of questions and answers. This took time and a lot of hard study by the student and teacher; but it created the foundation that people could build their lives on. Time is a gift from God but it must be used wisely. We are entrusted as stewards to take time and use it and invest it in the best way possible. Today our clocks and watches have become our God. If a pastor or teacher preaches past the allotted time people get up and walk out of the service. They say that they have other important things that they have committed to but what can be more important or more relevant to one's life than the study of God's word. The watch has become the devil's tool that binds us and keeps us away from learning and understanding God's living word. We cannot expect to change into a beautiful creation of Christ without first giving all our time over to Christ. The Hebrews all had jobs and families to work at and look after, but they also knew that deep in their hearts something was missing.

There is one more thing that I believe is important in our study concerning the word "understanding". I have learned that students do not truly understand what you have taught them until they can reproduce that information you have given to them. Whether it is through instructing someone else, building into them, or repeating what you have taught them. Until they have reproduced it in a specific way they have not clearly understood what it was that you were telling them to do or make.

5. Leadership: men and women (children) recognize the importance of leadership and teaching of the Word. v.4

*Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose. And **beside him stood** Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah **on his right hand**; and Pedaiah,*

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Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam on his left hand.

Another important truth is to understand the place of leadership. People need to see and understand that God puts in place leadership that will help to train and equip us for service. We are on a pilgrimage that we have not travelled before and without true understanding of who Christ is from the Word, we will remain in darkness. Leaders must also be willing to give of their time. They must have a servant attitude and heart if they are to help others. The leaders also saw the importance of team teaching and ministering to the people. We are all part of one body, which Christ is the head of. We are all joint heirs, part of one worldwide family. When we minister to each other we are ministering to all the members. Ezra and Nehemiah knew it was going to take people, helping people, if the job was going to get done and lives were going to be changed.

Leadership equipping and dedication are the keys to growth and longevity of the church. People are all uniquely different and this is also true of leadership. The New Testament tells us that elders and deacons need to be apt to teach. This does not mean we are to have the gift of teaching but it does mean we need to help in the instructing of others that we oversee and lead. All leaders are to be able to teach, train and give to others. True communication is teaching – passing on information to help equip others for the journey of life that lies before them. Often it is the older teaching the young through words and action.

Leaders must also take the time to build other leaders. We need internship programs that people can get involved in, in order to help mature their gifts and learn their strengths and weaknesses. God has called forth leadership and we as disciples must put our faith and trust in those who God will use to help us grow and

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mature. There must also be accountability amongst leaders as well. But we must remember that we are all teacher/learners and learner/teachers. We will make mistakes; but it is more important that we step out in faith and try, than do nothing. Remember the account of the three men who were given the different talents (Matthew 25:14-30). It is important to remember that two took what was entrusted to them and doubled it, while the third hid his. In the end he lost what he was given plus everything that he had. It is better to do something and fail than to do nothing at all.

The books of Corinthians and Ephesians both show that God has put within the church leaders who are different and unique in order for the church of Christ to be equipped for the work of service (Ephesians 4:12). Leaders must also see that they have been appointed not just to run an organization, but also to guide and train the people. I have seen that most leadership, others than pastors do little or no ministry directly to people. They meet in their meeting rooms but little is done in a practical way with the people. Most of this communication ends up coming through a cold piece of paper called the church bulletin. Yet God desires for our leaders to be His hands and feet to the people in our communities.

6. Holy Word: men and women (children) had respect and honour for God's Word. v.5

*Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, **all the people stood up.***

Reverence for God's Word has been mostly lost in modern North American society. We treat God's Word like a lunch buffet at a restaurant where we take what we want to eat and leave the rest behind. Our forefathers believed in the inherency of the total

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Word of God from cover to cover. It was truth that was both binding and freeing to all who would receive it. When we respect the Word of God we honour the Author of that word. He has given us a complete “love letter” that shares both tough love and merciful love. It is a letter that gives us hope and a future.

The Bible is a testimony of people’s lives and their interaction with God in a personal way. In the time of Ezra and Nehemiah they only had the first five books of the Hebrew scrolls (referred to as the Old Testament or known as the Pentateuch). History is full of stories of how lives have changed because of contact with the Scriptures. The Gideons know this truth and work hard to get the Scripture into the hands of school children and into every hotel room around the world if possible. When the Scriptures are read, they become the channel through which the Holy Spirit can reach our hearts. This is why the enemy wants to keep you away from studying the Word, to keep your life so busy that you do not have time to even read a little of it each day. Remember that reading is not studying. Studying is digging deep into the Word of God and getting out the precious gems of life that are within its pages. It is a well of living water for all who desire to drink from it.

The Word of God must be respected as inspired and holy. Paul told Timothy that, *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work”* 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

The book must be open and read if we are to begin to understand the heart of God. As we get into it, it will get into us. These people had an attitude concerning the Word of God that when Ezra opened the Book, out of reverence they stood up. This was a sign of respect and honour for God’s word.

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7. Worship: men and women (children) worshiped God. v.6

Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

It is interesting to see that once men and women understood the Word of God, they began to worship. They saw the beauty and magnificence of the LORD and desired to worship and glorify His name. They bowed down before the LORD humbling themselves before their Creator. They wept before their LORD and confessed their sin. The tears that came forth were a washing away, before the LORD of their pain and sorrows. They lifted up their hands as a symbol of praise and surrender, to show that they had nothing to give to the LORD other than their complete devotion to Him as the LORD of lords. They also kept saying to the Lord the word "Amen", which means "let it be so". They were telling the LORD, "Whatever You say we will do." When we understand, we desire to surrender to and worship the Lord with all our hearts.

True worship must come from the heart. When a worshipper has been deeply moved he will not care what others around him may think or say. He will express his heart openly before the Lord as a gesture of love and thanksgiving. Today many people in the churches are too worried about what others may think or say but it is time for the church to get its eyes off people and back onto God.

Often true worship does not take place because one has not totally died to oneself and made Christ Lord of lords. Christ taught the disciples that a grain of seed must first die and then out of that will come forth the real fruit of life (John 12:24). Jesus says a lot about worship to the women at the well. He makes these

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comments, *"The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He"*

John 4:19-26.

Again the woman at the well had some knowledge and even some wisdom about God and the coming Messiah. Yet she did not understand how to worship Him and that the Messiah Himself was standing in front of her! But at that moment the light came on, a change took place and this sinful woman who now became a new creation in Christ was going to become a channel of God's grace and love to her village. We are told that she went back to the town and gave a testimony. The result was that the entire village came out to hear Christ, for they wanted to understand who He was. The result was that they believed and worshiped Him as God Almighty. The Scripture says, *"It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Saviour of the world"* John 4:42.

When one meets God face to face things change. Out of a changed heart comes a river of worship and praise. There is nothing more beautiful or powerful than knowing and understanding that your sins have been forgiven and you belong

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for all eternity to the family of God. This is why new believers have such impact on their community – people see the dramatic change that has taken place.

8. Explanation: men and women (children) asked to be helped and taught. v.7

Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, explained the law to the people while the people remained in their place.

The key to understanding the Word of God is to have it clearly explained to us. Do not try to express until it is clearly known in your mind and heart, what it truly means. We are not to accept what we think it might mean. As you go over and over it again, it becomes buried deep in your heart and will become part of your lifestyle and culture. David in the Book of Psalms encourages the believer to meditate on the Word, which means to think it through to its final conclusion. The English word “meditate” comes from the Latin word that means “to rehearse”. Paul tells the Philippians to practice these things (Philippians 4:9). Do it over and over until one understands. When we do this we become like a tree that is firmly planted by the river (Psalm 1:2-3). We should not be afraid to ask questions. We should not be saying yes to something until we understand it, until someone clearly explains it to us. We need to be learning point by point, line upon line and precept upon precept (Isaiah 28:10). We are told that we have not because we ask not (James 4:2). We have to consider our future and what is most important in our lives.

The people of Israel remained because they needed the Word of God explained to them in such a way that they could clearly understand. The word “explain” means, “to make plain or

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clear; show the meaning of; give account for.” Again this shows that it will take time and a lot of effort on behalf of the teacher and the student. Notice how God works through people. We have here listed a group of Levites, names that God wanted us to see, to remind us that He works through ordinary people and shows us the truth about who He is.

It is not so much the kind of people that matters, but people who are in the Word. Paul tells Timothy an important truth about ministry. He says, “Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). The key is the Word of God. We need it explained to us and we need to commit to staying anchored to it.

Leadership needs people who have a desire to help and serve others. It takes discipline in study and sacrifice of one’s time. It takes a heart that is willing to give and minister whenever and wherever. This list of names has been locked into the history and teaching of the Bible, preserved to show that our names are also important to God. He has called us and we need to say “Here am I. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:8). These names also remind us of the importance of people in the body ministry of Christ. They must have felt inadequate, yet there was a ministry to be done. Now was the time to reach out and help these hungry people for God.

9. Translation: men and women (children) needed translation and understanding of the word. v.8

*They read from the book, from the law of God, **translating** to give the sense so that they **understood** the reading.*

The Word of God comes to us from a different culture and tradition, its roots are Jewish. Yet before it came to us by way of

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the Jews, it was God who breathed and spoke into men and women's hearts. We were sinners living in the world and doing the things of the world. Now we are being asked to change, to live a new way, to take on a different lifestyle that has a culture and tradition that is different from the previous. This is why it takes a translator, one who can explain what the needed change and lifestyle should sound and look like. We need the older Pauls (older teachers) to teach with understanding to the Timothys (younger teachers) so they can go out and teach others also.

As we have already seen, the word translate means, “*to interpret, to render, to express, to convert, to change, to transcribe, to transliterate, to paraphrase, to reword, to rephrase, to decipher, to decode, to explain, to unravel, to reveal, to expound, to clarify, to spell out.*” We can see from this meaning the depth of information that one is to give to another if we hope that they will be able to understand what it is that we are trying to communicate to them. The key is that when we speak to people they must learn in such a way that makes sense to them. It needs to be spelled out in their language with words that will act like a light switch, in order to turn on the information in their minds and hearts.

Translation is often required when one moves from communicating in one language to another. This is what my wife Hkaw Win does for me when I am preaching or teaching to the Kachin people in the country of Myanmar. She is gifted to take that which I speak in one language and use words in another so that those who listen will be able to have understanding about what I am communicating to them through her. She is the conduit or channel that the information goes through so that the people can make a decision about what they are hearing. The purpose of communication is to bring about change and understanding to the hearer.

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The Scripture states that they translated to make sense of what they were saying. The word "sense" means to “appreciate or understand the value and worth, to give direction.” What they were hearing and learning was to be like gold, very precious and important in life.

In this passage there is not so much interpreting from one language to another but translating from a worldly point of view to a heavenly one. This is the idea behind the use of parables. They are earthly teachings with a heavenly meaning, a truth that the hearer needs to think through and reflect upon to understand. Jesus was a master at teaching people through the use of parables. We live in the world but we are told that we are to live as a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). We are joint heirs to a Heavenly King who has a kingdom that one day we will live in (Romans 8:17). We are to be part of God’s kingdom living here on earth. Although no longer our home, we are pilgrims and ambassadors who are passing through on our way to an eternal kingdom (2 Corinthians 5:20).

This is why Christ exhorts us not to build up treasure here on earth where moth and rust can destroy, but to lay up treasures in heaven that will reap an eternal reward (Matthew 6:19). Our perspective on life must change. We are to live a different culture, one that has a lifestyle that is unlike that of the world. We also live differently than the Jewish people during the time of Ezra. They lived under the law but we through Christ are under the “grace righteousness” of God. For by grace you are saved; it is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8).

The Israelites got into the Word line by line and precept by precept. The Word was now breathing spiritual life into their mortal bodies. Things were becoming clear and change was beginning to take place. The seed was being watered and soon it

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would sprout, bringing forth fruit that would bring honour and glory to their heavenly Father.

The role of the teacher is to bring truth and understanding to the disciple concerning the principles of God. In this day and age we are translating from a Hebrew culture and tradition to a Gentile way of culture and tradition. God's Word shows us a new lifestyle to live by. We are a new creation in Christ Jesus. We should not see how closely we can live like the world but show a way that is totally different, so that people will desire to follow also.

10. Heartbeat: men and women (children) were touched deeply in their hearts. v.9-11

*Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; **do not mourn or weep.**" For all the people were **weeping** when they heard the words of the law. Then he said to them, "Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; **do not be grieved.**"*

The heart has to be touched deeply before change will take place. There needs to be a death, a breaking open of the heart before it can receive the life and fullness of God within it. Jesus told the people, unless the seed of grain falls into the ground and dies (or breaks open) it will produce nothing (John 12:24-26). We can become hard-hearted where nothing touches or moves us anymore. We can live in bondage even as believers. We can live our will and not God's. The Israelite people were willing to lay

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everything down before the Lord and admit their failures and sin and as they did, God entered back into their everyday lives.

When we meet with God, the things He calls us to do become holy. Each day should be one where we come into the presence of the Lord and desire to worship and to do His will in our lives. There is a time for weeping a time for rejoicing. The people saw their sinful hearts but Ezra and Nehemiah wanted them to see also the God who forgives all to the ones who confess their sin before Him. This new insight and understanding was a cause for celebration and rejoicing.

It was also a time that they needed to understand that God was their strength -- that they did not have to do things by their ability, but through God's anointing and power. He is able to do all things. That is why Jesus said, "*Greater is he that is in me than he that is in the world*" (I John 4:4). Yes, they had walked away from God; and yes, they had been in a land of bondage, but now God once again intervened and called His people back to the Promised Land, to a way of living that puts God central to all things in their lives.

In the New Testament we see this happening again. Jesus called the disciples to wait in the upper room for the coming of the promise. On the day of Pentecost there was a great outpouring that changed these people's lives. They became even hungrier for the Word of God. They wanted to fellowship and worship together and wanted to bless God's people and those in need with their giving. The Holy Spirit had empowered these people and out of that came a heart of service and ministry an openness to help and build up each other through the name of Christ. The joy of the Lord truly became their strength.

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As we see, this was not a time to mourn but a time to celebrate. It was time to rejoice and be glad. Again it was not just Ezra and Nehemiah saying this but it was those speaking through all the other leaders and Levites who went out to comfort the people and encourage them to change their thinking. It was now a time to rejoice; they changed from sorrow to gladness and rejoicing.

11. Giving: men and women (children) gave to others. v.10-12

*Then he said to them, “Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.” So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved.” All the people went away to eat, to drink, **to send portions** and to celebrate a great festival, because they **understood** the words which had been made known to them.*

When understanding comes, a change of heart follows. One of the first things you will want to do is to give and share what you have with others. Our world teaches us to keep for ourselves but those who live as part of God’s kingdom will want to give. The rich young ruler struggled with this concept. He had done everything right morally but Christ was asking him to sacrifice all that he had physically (Luke 18:18-25). We need to give of our time and our resources not only to the church, but also to each other and to those we may not even know in other parts of the world. Just like Acts we need another outpouring of the Holy Spirit. A new wave of missionaries is needed, especially for the Asian Rim Countries. People who are Holy Spirit-led and on fire for the Lord Jesus Christ, who see the harvest and are committing themselves as labourers to do all it takes to bring the crop in. I tell you, the harvest is ripe. The people are hungry for understanding.

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We are the lights of the world – Christ desires to shine forth through us (Romans 10:14-15).

The Kachin often ask me, “Why do those Christians in Canada want to just help and bless us? They do not even know who we are. They have never seen us face to face.” I tell them that we are all brothers and sisters and God has blessed the Christians in Canada at this time and they want to help and give out of a heart of joy and thanksgiving because of what Christ is doing in their lives.

Everyone needs to enter into celebration. No one should be left out. We need to enter into His gates with thanksgiving in our hearts and as we do we will have a heart that will care for others.

As we look back to the Israelites, we see that they gave because they understood the words that had been made known to them.

Team leadership and group responsibility as a body under the headship of God are what brought about a great revival and renewal amongst the people. We know when true revival has taken place. People want to give of themselves (time) and of their possessions. They understand that all that they have is not theirs but God’s and they want to bless others with God’s blessings. They took time to prepare food for those who had none. Through the blessing of giving they could testify to others what the Lord had said and promised to them.

We are not to keep things just to ourselves but should be like the woman at the well, where we go back to our homes and villages and give a testimony to the people around us. Again the Church in Acts gave and even put all things in common so they could bless others. Giving is a fundamental root that is part of

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every disciple and for every church (Acts 20:35). We are told that we should give joyfully. Jesus once again tells us to give for as we do, the measure will be pressed down, shaken together and it will be given back to us in greater measure (Luke 6:38). Remember it is better give something than to do nothing. Even the widow's mite was praised by Jesus because it came from a heart of love and of great sacrifice to herself (Mark 12:43).

As people of the world, we so often wait to collect something big so we can give something big, yet it is not the size of the gift that counts, but obedience to the will of God. Do what He asks, for as we are faithful in little things He will entrust us with more. Jesus said if we give a cup of cold water in His name we would receive a blessing from God Himself (Matthew 10:42). We need to have faith in how the Holy Spirit speaks to us. He has been sent to be our teacher and guide, to help us along life's journey. He tells us that he will never leave us or forsake us but all we have to do is to become humble before our Lord. The heart of God is to pour out on his people a blessing that they will not be able to contain (Malachi 3:10). Giving was a blessing that the disciples had the opportunity to do. They were investing and putting up treasures in the Kingdom of heaven.

I plead with you as a fellow disciple of Christ: do not quench what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. Do not keep making excuses. It only takes one truth to make a change; it only takes a spark to get a fire going. It is time to rise up in faith and go forth on the promises of God. Paul tells us that, for He who promised is faithful to do it (Hebrews 10:23). This same passage points out how to live a new way here on earth. We are also encouraged not just to do it for ourselves but to stimulate others in love and good deeds. Find a few others and meet together and press in through prayer and study and watch what God Almighty will do through you. All He desires is a channel to flow through (Hebrews 10:24).

12. Celebration: men and women (children) celebrated. v.12

All the people went away to eat, to drink, to send portions and to celebrate a great festival, because they understood the words which had been made known to them.

When we read through the Old Testament we can see that God is a God who desires His people to celebrate. We need to let go of our fears and struggles and let God flow through our lives with song and dance. Celebration is the time when people come together for a common purpose – to rejoice over something that has happened. Celebration is the ground that all people stand upon equally. All were welcomed rich or poor.

The Jewish people had in their calendar times of celebration in order not to forget what God had done. It was a time to remember covenants and blessings that God had given to His people. If you continue to read on in this chapter you would see that the next action that the people did was to celebrate the Feast of the Booths. This was a time to celebrate the harvest and God blessing. Verse 18 tells us that during this time it was a time of great rejoicing amongst the people. They reached out to God and for a week focused on who He was and what He had done in their midst.

In the New Testament the communion service was to be a celebration of the covenant between Christ and His disciples. It causes us to remember that the King of kings conquered death for all mankind and it is a victory celebration. Our Saviour and Lord had to first die, yet it is not death that we are to focus on, but the eternal gift of salvation that was paid for us through the shedding of Christ's blood on the cross. It is a time to celebrate that the curtain to the Holy of Holies was now torn open and that whosoever wanted to come in could have a wonderful personal

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relationship with Jesus Christ (Hebrews 6:19). We need to understand this and share the Good News with others and begin to celebrate what our Creator has done for us. It is a time to praise, to sing, to dance and to rejoice with all our hearts, because He is truly worthy of our praise and worship. It is time to shout it from the rooftops that Jesus Christ is Lord. Through Christ we are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37). “Oh God it is time! Lord our hearts cry out to you and we ask that you now turn your people back to your Word and I pray that you start first with me.”

It is interesting to note that one of the first things that will take place on the day of the church rapture is a great celebration when Our King presents His bride to the Father at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-10). Every tongue and nation will be present and it will be a great, great time of celebration (Revelation 5:9). This is what the disciple has to look forward to. Soon and very soon we are going to meet our King (Philippians 2:10-11). We will be presented to the Father as Christ’s chosen bride. What a day of celebration that will be!

Conclusion

We have to be willing to seek God to enter into His presence. When we do, the joy of the Lord becomes our strength. The key that unlocked the door is an understanding of God's Word. The last line of Nehemiah 8:12 sums it up, "*because they understood the words which had been made known to them*". We miss out on a blessing that God wants to give us because we do not take the time to clearly understand what God's will and desire is for our lives.

Many hours are lost each year because of two things – one, the people who taught did not make sure that the hearer understood. Two, people who receive instruction say they understand when in reality they do not. It is time to enter in with the power of the Holy Spirit and let our great Teacher fill us and empower us with all of Who He is. The day we do this will be the first day of our journey, walking out hand in hand with Christ. This is when we can experience our own personal book of Acts flowing through our lives and touching the lives of those around us.

I have the great joy of living in Myanmar. For me it is like living out the book of Acts. Thousands are turning to Christ and even thousands more are being baptized. People are very hungry for the Word of God but we have so few trained labourers who understand the Word clearly. Pray with me that the Lord of the Harvest will send more labourers (Matthew 9:37-38).

In my study of past revivals and awakenings I have found one common thread. These events were birthed forth by a small group of people who were hungry for God's Word and were studying with all their hearts and seeking the Author of the Bible. When the Word became alive and applied in their hearts things

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started to happen. Change became the tool that touched people's lives. These people combined faith with the Word of God and as a result all kinds of things occurred.

As disciples of Christ we need to be asking if we really understand the Word. If not what are we doing to get the truth clearly into our hearts? Whom should we ask questions of? How and what are we reading and how do we pray and seek God concerning these matters? It is through a relationship with God and studying of God's Word that sets the captive free (John 8:32). So much truth becomes lost when we do not hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matthew 5:6).

Often we do not want to hear because it will mean we may have to change something in our lives or the way we live in this world (James 1:22). We as disciples need to take time to look in the mirror of the Word to see what God is really trying to reveal to us as individuals and as a body of believers. God is looking for channels that He can flow His life and truth through.

There needs to be a move of the Holy Spirit upon our lives each day. We need to ask Him to fill us and give us greater understanding. As we do there will be great peace and freedom. I promise you that if you will enter into the Holy of Holies (Hebrews 6:19-20) you too will be able to truly proclaim like the people of old that, **“the Joy of the Lord is my strength”**.

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Prayer of Dedication

Lord, I ask that You begin with me. I am praying like David that You would restore unto me the joy of Your salvation. That You would put within my heart a new song, a song of praise that springs forth like living water. Lord, I too feel that I have been living in Babylon under the slavery and worldly teaching of others. Lord, I need Your help and I ask that You would put back into my heart a true and lasting hunger for Your Word. Bring people into my life so that as we come together a new fire would be kindled and let a revival begin to be birthed forth. Lord, I confess that I have fallen away from Your teaching. The truth of Your precepts is far from my heart and my faith has become lukewarm. Help me not to walk in my strength but in Your strength to once again break free from the chains that bind. Lord, I also want to pray and confess that in many areas I have denied the work of the Holy Spirit. I ask that You fill me once again with Your power and authority. Lord, I want to worship You with all my heart and I want to stand in front of all and proclaim that “the joy of the Lord is my strength.” Lord, I bring myself back to the foot of your cross and I pray that You will give me the boldness and faith to enter once again into the Holy of Holies. It is in Your presence that true life begins. Lord, I need You every hour, help me I pray. I wait once again for You to speak to Your servant. Show me what I must do and where I should go.

Your servant _____

Project L.A.M.B.S. International

Making disciples is the call and mandate of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus urged the disciples to follow Him. He laid down before us the teaching and the walk that we need to follow with Jesus as our supreme example. It is imperative for every believer and the church to know that disciples are not born but they are made. For the church to be strong in the last days, we must be about the business of equipping the saints (disciples) for the work of service.

Dr. James Humphries has been ministering for over 40 years, and has experience in a variety of ministries including church planting, children's ministry, street ministry, youth ministry, camp ministry, pastoral work and directing and teaching in schools all over the world. In addition, he has taken part in traveling and ministering in the USA, Mexico, Ukraine, Myanmar, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Thailand and across most of Canada. He completed his B.R.E. and his M.A. from Briercrest, and his Doctorate of Ministry from Providence Theological Seminary in the spring of 1999.

In January 1996, Dr. James Humphries resigned as pastor of a local church with a vision to reach further abroad with the Word of God and to use it to train labourers for Christ (Matthew 9:36-38). He shared this with Dr. David Smith and Dr. Chuck Nichols of Providence Theological Seminary and they greatly encouraged Dr. James Humphries and his wife Irene to develop what God was laying on their hearts.

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In March 1997, they traveled to Jamaica where they met several pastors who were very concerned about the need for training and disciplining their young people as leaders in their churches. Dr. James Humphries and Irene did not know this would be the starting point to an international ministry of discipleship training around the world known as Project L.A.M.B.S. International.

To date, Project L.A.M.B.S. has ministered in Canada, Myanmar, Ukraine, Africa, Jamaica, Mexico, Israel, Thailand, Japan, Dominican Republic, Naga Land and China. We offer over 30 different courses. Our graduates number over 1000, and are serving worldwide. Out of this group of graduates, we have equipped and trained directors, teachers and pastors who in turn are carrying out II Timothy 2:1-2 to an even larger group of people.

In 2002 it was discovered that Irene had cancer again. God gave Irene another three years and because of that she was still able to travel and teach in many different countries. Shortly after what was to be her last trip, Irene was hospitalized in February, 2005. A few weeks later she went home to be with her Lord and Saviour on March 9.

My second wife Hkaw Win was raised and trained mostly in the land of Myanmar. She has earned B.th, University Degree and a master of Divinity Degree in Myanmar. In April 2007 she finished a second Master's Degree at Providence Theological

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Seminary in Christian Education. After July 1st, 2007 she headed back to Myanmar to head up the Christian Education Department for the Myitkyina Kachin Baptist Association and oversaw various ministries to 62 churches. After her four-year term was completed, she has been traveling and working as an interpreter and doing translations concerning various kinds of discipleship books and materials.

Over the last ten years we have lived in the countries of Myanmar and Thailand preparing a variety of resources in the Burmese (Myanmar) and Kachin Languages. To date we have published over 20 different kinds of books. Our goal is to equip and establish people as Disciples of Christ. Please pray for God's leading and wisdom. Our walk with Christ has taken us down many challenging pathways but we have seen the faithfulness of our Lord and Savior in every area. His grace has been sufficient.

Founder and Director,

Dr. James and Hkaw Win Humphries

Discipleship / Leadership Booklets

1. My Call with Christ
2. Called to His Purpose
3. Abiding in the Vine
4. Knowledge, Wisdom and Understanding
5. Scripture: The Disciples' Anchor
6. Baptism: The Disciples' Testimony
7. The Disciples' Church
8. Servant Leadership
9. Teacher / Learner, Learner / Teacher
10. Being Wise Builders
11. Shepherds of God's Sheep
12. End Times
13. Relationship Pilgrimage
14. Christ's Disciple
15. Disciple's Prayer Life
16. Communion
17. Ambassadors for Christ
18. Full Armour of God
19. Good News for Challenging and Changing Times
20. Christ our Mediator
21. Jesus our Deliverer
22. Mission and Missionaries
23. Full Gospel Discipleship
24. Romans Road of Discovery

Bible Tools

1. Bible Information (18 different languages)
2. Bible Dictionary and Concordance (Kachin, Burmese)
3. Disciples' Principle of Faith (Kachin)
4. Called

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www.discipleshipempowerment.com

Teaching Videos:
James Paul Humphries YouTube Channel