



STUDENT CHRISTIAN ORGANISATION OF MALAWI

RAISING AN UPRIGHT GENERATION...

10 Studies for small groups or individuals

Jesus Loves You!

Preface

The theme for 2022 - 2023 SCOM Year “RAISING AN UPRIGHT GENERATION...” is taken from Philippians 2: 14 -15: *Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may be innocent and pure as God’s perfect children, who live in a world of corrupt and sinful people. You must shine among them like stars lighting up the sky; (TEV - Good News Bible).*

The theme was decided in order to help Christian students, SCOM Associates and all other Christians to act as the children of God and to shine as stars in the world that is full of darkness. When we look around us, sin is everywhere - greed, materialism, corruption, disregard for humanity, sexual immorality, lawlessness, violence and crime, etc., seem to be the order of the day in our nation, even among professing believers. All these are indications of a serious bankruptcy of godly morals and values in a society that claims to be 80% Christian, and they point to a serious lapse in our discipleship efforts as the Church. The current situation in our nation demands that those who fear God/ children of God should step up and be the source of light that we are meant to be.

For us to understand what this theme means, we need to understand the meaning of each of the key words:

The word **‘upright’** is synonymous with straight, honest or decent. To be upright therefore means: To be honest at all times even when there is an opportunity for one to do otherwise;

- To remain straight when others are falling or bending;
- To be without fault, innocent of any accusation, or blameless in one’s dealings, conduct, or speech.

“Generation” in this context shall mean:

- Individuals/ students / Associates belonging to the same cohort, age group or profession;
- Peers or individuals belonging to the same group who continue to influence each other positively beyond the present.

Through this theme therefore, SCOM seeks to encourage all of its sections, zones, branches, and individuals to consider doing specific programs/ activities (systematically, intentionally and consistently) that aim at producing disciples of Jesus Christ among our members who will live a life that is exemplary and beyond reproach; believers who will inspire, influence and challenge those around them to do the same through their actions and lifestyle, both in the present and beyond. And this Bible Study Guide has been prepared to help us understand how we can do that.

This study guide is divided into three sections. All Scripture references are taken from the Good News Bible, unless otherwise indicated. However, we encourage participants to read several Bible versions during study for a deeper understanding of the texts being studied.

We wish you a fruitful study!!!

SCOM Secretariat

SECTION 1

A CALL TO UPRIGHT LIVING

Introduction

The Bible reveals that “*All of creation waits with eager longing for God to reveal his sons ... to be set free from its slavery to decay ... (Romans 8: 19 – 21).*” In a world that is full of corrupt and sinful people (Phil. 2: 15) and everything seems to be permissible, it will take the revelation of the true sons and daughters of God for things to fall back in their rightful place. We murmur/ grumble in our hearts when we see wicked people prospering using crooked means while innocent people suffer for the crimes they have not committed. However, instead of murmuring and grumbling, the Bible is encouraging us to rise up and act so that we can make a difference.

If the vision of SCOM “*To be a vibrant student movement on every campus capable of impacting the whole society for God*” is to be fulfilled, it will require members and everyone who is associated with SCOM to live and walk uprightly before God so that their testimony in society is not questioned. In a world where sin and lawlessness seem to be the norm; where holiness and righteousness seem to be old fashioned and it becomes difficult to tell the difference between the children of light and of darkness; In a world where students resort to violence and vandalism as a way of expressing their grievances instead of dialogue; where school/university campuses have become centers of sexual immorality/prostitution, lying and cheating, drug and substance abuse, lawlessness and all sorts of unruly behaviors; In a world where business/ work places are known to be places of corruption and harassment, and it becomes too difficult to get business contracts/ accommodation on campus/ employment/ promotions, and even good grades, etc., without corrupting someone, in the form of money or sex; it will only take the righteous and upright among us to reveal the perfect will of God for mankind and reverse the evil trends in society. The world needs believers who can prove to the world that God exists and that he has standards; believers who will demonstrate to the world that it is possible to keep one’s light shining despite the darkness that surrounds it. We need believers who can represent God and be used as agents of transformation in their generation by demonstrating and upholding godly values and principles in everything they do and wherever they go.

In this section, we will look at our call to upright living, why we should live an upright life, the indicators of upright living and what it will take for us to live an upright life.

STUDY 1
A CALL TO UPRIGHT LIVING
Philippians 2: 12 - 18

Introduction

You have possibly learned that stars shine both at night and during the day. However, we don't see them in the sky during the day because their light is overshadowed by the brightness of the sun. It is at night, when the sun is no longer shining that we are able appreciate the beauty and presence of stars in the sky. Likewise, the impact of Christianity cannot be appreciated if it is practiced among those who are already Christians and are living in the light. It is among sinners and unbelievers that our light should shine brighter so that they can appreciate the difference. Since we live among corrupt and sinful people, we are called to shine among them like stars that light up the sky at night. May this study help you to understand your responsibilities as children of God and how you can fulfil it as you live among different people each day!

Read Philippians 2: 12 – 18

1. What is Paul encouraging the Philippians to do now that he is away from them, and why?
2. In Verse 12 – 13 Paul says “... *keep on working with fear and trembling ...*” because “*God is at work in you ...;*” how do you relate the two statements?
3. In your own understanding;
 - a. What is the meaning of the following words/ phrases? (You may refer to dictionary).
 - i. Complaining or arguing
 - ii. Innocent and pure
 - iii. Corrupt/ crooked/ depraved
 - b. What do you think causes complaining or arguing among Christians? What effects does complaining have on your image as Christians?
 - c. Mention the signs or indicators of corruption/ crookedness/ depravity that you see in your generation (school/ university campuses, work place, or business environment).
4. How should Christians live in the environments you have mentioned in 3 (c)? (V. 14 -16)
Why do you think it is necessary for Christians to live a life that is blameless and pure?
5. From the passage, point out the steps one can take to live a blameless life.
6. As you reflect on your own spiritual journey;
 - a. When do you find it difficult to obey the Word of God?
 - b. What steps are you going to take to remain obedient and blameless/ upright before God in a generation/ world that is corrupt and sinful?

Prayer: Talk to God about the corruption or crookedness in your own generation and ask him to give you the grace and help you to live a life that is blameless and pure.

STUDY 2
CONTRASTING THE UPRIGHT AND THE WICKED
PROVERBS 11: 1 – 11

Introduction

We are living in times when it is hard to tell the difference between a Christian and non-Christian simply by watching what people do when they are not in Church. Malawi claims to be 80% Christian, yet corruption, cheating and lying are almost everywhere, even in Churches. Though wickedness may seem to thrive in a nation, the truth is that there are always some people who choose to please God and whose life is straight/ upright. The question is, how can you tell that someone is upright or not? The Bible presents many differences between the righteous and the wicked, and this study will help us to discuss some of them.

Study questions

1. **Read Proverbs 11: 1 – 11:** Identify the two groups of people that are addressed in the passage.
 - What characteristics distinguish one group from the other?
2. Compare and contrast the characteristics you have identified with what you see in your own generation (in your campus, work place, business place, Church and community).
 - Which of the characteristics are more prevalent/ dominant in your generation?
3. From the passage, list all the good and bad things that happen to either the righteous or the wicked. What impact do the righteous and wicked have on their communities or nation?
4. Look around your school/university campus, office, business, home or community; what evidence do you see that righteous/ upright people still exist?
 - Give examples of people you know whose life is evidence of upright living.
5. It is almost a common practice these days for people to deceive or trick others in order to make more profits or get what they want; what does God say about dishonest scales or riches?
 - Give examples from your area/ community of how people use dishonest means to get what they want.
 - What can you do to promote honesty and integrity to the people around you and show them that you are different?
6. **Read verse 4 again;** does it mean that riches are not good? In your understanding, what do you think is the meaning of the verse?
7. Take an honest look at your life and the way you run your daily affairs; would you confidently describe yourself as an upright person or not?
 - Which of the qualities or areas of your life do you need to work on more so that your integrity/ uprightness is felt by the people around you?

Reflection and prayer: Think of the areas where you are falling short as far as uprightness is concerned and pray that your life will be a clear example of upright living among your generation.

STUDY 3

IMPLICATIONS OF AN UPRIGHT LIVING: WHAT DOES IT TAKE

DANIEL 6: 1 – 28

Introduction

Uprightness attracts both friends and enemies. God always takes the side of the upright – he promises to bless, protect, and rescue them. However, there are costs involved, and anyone who desires to live an upright life must be ready to pay the price (**2 Timothy 3: 12**). As you seek to live uprightly before God, it is very necessary that you should be aware of both the negative and positive implications associated with living an upright life in your generation so that you are not taken unawares when bad things happen to you because of your choice to be upright before God. Like Daniel did, it is our hope that this study will challenge you to choose uprightness at all times regardless of the costs involved?

Study questions

1. If you knew that your friends are watching everything you do both in public and private, how would you feel? Would you change your behavior or not? Explain.
2. **Read Daniel 6: 1 – 28:** Describe Daniel's position according to the passage. In Malawian context, which position will be like Daniel's?
3. What can you say about Daniel's character? Pick out from the passage all the qualities that distinguished Daniel from the rest of the governors.
 - What temptations / challenges would any man in Daniel's position likely to face face?
4. Uprightness attracts both good and bad things;
 - a. List all the good and bad things that happened to Daniel as a result of his uprightness.
 - b. How did Daniel react to the evil plot from the other governors and supervisors? What evidence do you find in the passage of his consistent obedience to God? (V. 10, 16).
 - c. What positive impact did Daniel's character and obedience to God have on his own life, the King and the entire kingdom?
5. Which is easier; to do the right thing and be punished, or to do the wrong thing and escape punishment? Explain.
 - Was there a time in your life when you got into trouble for doing the right thing? If yes, how did you react?
 - Why do you think God sometimes allows bad things to happen to good people?
6. What would it take for you to be upright in your own generation? (Think of all the negative things that can happen to you for choosing to be upright in your current environment).
 - Would you still choose to be upright despite the negative implications? Explain.
7. What lessons about uprightness do you learn from Daniel's life and character?

Reflection and prayer: Reflect upon the qualities of God in verses 26b -27 and pray that they will be manifested in your life as you walk uprightly before him.

SECTION 2

BECOMING AN UPRIGHT GENERATION

Introduction

Having looked at our call to upright living, the indicators and what it takes for one to live an upright life, one may wonder how they can become upright before God. Where does one start from? We all know that there is no one who was born righteous (Romans 3: 10). It is only Jesus who can make us righteous, but there is a part we must play to be declared righteous. We can only be declared righteous when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, through faith. After we have been declared righteous, we need to produce fruits that show that our lives have been transformed, one of which is uprightness.

Uprightness is an ideal that most people never fully attain. Yet, we are still judged by how upright we are. Though we may never become perfect, our efforts and actions will reveal who is controlling our lives and that is what matters. Becoming an upright person is not a once off activity; it is a lifestyle, it is a life-long process. If we must raise an upright generation, we must first become the upright generation ourselves. In this section we will look at being born again as the first step towards uprightness. We will also discuss being led by the Holy Spirit, guided by biblical values and facing trials and temptations as some of the factors that can help us to walk in uprightness. It is our sincere hope that by the end of these studies, those without Christ will have accepted him as their personal Lord and Savior; for without Jesus Christ, uprightness does not make sense.

STUDY 4
EXPERIENCING A NEW BIRTH
JOHN 3:1-21

Introduction

We are all born with a sinful nature that separates us from our Creator (Romans 3: 23). God designed us in His own image (Genesis 1:27), but that image was tarnished when man fell into sin. As sinners, we cannot fellowship with a holy God the way we are, or walk uprightly before him unless the image of God in us is repaired or restored through a new birth (a spiritual birth). If we must raise an upright generation, we must first become the upright generation ourselves by being born again and allowing our old sinful nature to die and putting on the new nature through faith in Christ – *“no one can please God without faith, for whoever comes to God must have faith that God exists and rewards those who seek him” (Heb. 11: 6).*

Study questions

1. **Read John 3:1-21.** From the passage, describe who Nicodemus was.
 - a. Why do you think Nicodemus came to see Jesus at night **(v.2)?**

2. Explain the following in your understanding:
 - a. Born again **(v.3)**; Born of water and the Spirit **(v.5)**
 - b. How can a person be born again?
 - c. What is the difference between physical birth and spiritual birth **(v.6)?**
 - d. Why is a new birth (being born again) necessary for a believer **(vv. 3, 16 -18)?**

3. From Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus, it appears that Nicodemus had difficulties to understand what Jesus meant about being born again;
 - a. Why do you think it was difficult for Nicodemus (a great teacher) to understand Jesus **(v.10 - 13)?**
 - b. How could Jesus’ explanation in verses 14 to 16 help Nicodemus to understand better?

4. Why did God send his Son into the world **(vv. 16 -17)?**
 - How does the story of Moses lifting up the snake in the desert **(vv.14 -15; see Numbers 21:4-9)** illustrate our need and Christ’s offer?

5. What happens to those who believe in the Son and those who do not believe in the Son?
 - Do you think it is possible for a person who does not believe in the Son to walk in uprightness **(vv. 19 -21)?** Explain your answer.

6. Reflect upon Nicodemus’ questions to Jesus **(vv. 4, 9)**; what questions about spiritual birth (being born again) do you still have to this day?
 - Have you had any experience of a new birth before? If yes share your experience. If not, would you like to experience it now? (Talk to someone you know to help you).

Memory verse: Jesus answered, “I am telling you the truth, no one can see the Kingdom unless he is born again.” – John 3: 3 (Good News Bible – TEV).

STUDY 5
PURSUING UPRIGHTNESS: LED BY THE SPIRIT
ROMANS 8:1-17

Introduction

After being born again, most believers still struggle to live a life that is completely free of sin. Romans 7 describes how the law created in Paul an awareness of sin and how he was a slave to sin. But in Romans 8, Paul describes how the Spirit of God sets us free from the law of sin and death. Without the Holy Spirit, it is not easy to live a life of obedience to God. It is very necessary that we become born again to enter the Kingdom of God. But for us to live an effective Christian life and walk in uprightness, we need the Holy Spirit to lead us so that we will not live as our human nature demands. In this study, we will discuss how the Holy Spirit can help us to pursue uprightness, and thereby become true children of God.

Note: Before discussing the questions, it is advisable that you read Romans 8 to understand the background to this study.

Study questions

1. **Read Romans 8:1- 17.** What did God do to set us free from the law of sin and death (vv. 1 -4)? See also Romans 7: 14 – 25.
2. Identify the two categories of people in the passage (vv. 5 – 8).
 - What are the differences between those who are controlled by their human nature and those who are controlled by the Spirit?
 - What are the results of being controlled by either the human nature or the Spirit?
3. What obligation do we have as believers in Christ (v. 12)?
 - In what ways does the Holy Spirit empower us to live an upright life (vv. 14 – 16)?
4. Compare and contrast V. 14 with John 1: 12. How does one become a child of God?
 - What are the privileges/ benefits of being children of God (v. 17)?
5. Do you think it is possible to be controlled by the human nature after one is already born again?
 - Why do you think there are some believers continue to struggle with sin even after being born again?
 - What can you do to have your life fully controlled by the Holy Spirit?
6. Imagine you are in a court of law for a crime you know you committed and the Judge declares that you are no longer condemned; how would that affect the way you live your life afterwards?
 - Why do you think some people still live with a guilty conscience even after God has forgiven them and declared them free?
7. Take stock of your life and check if there is any area that is still controlled by the human nature. What steps are you going to take to ensure that your whole life is controlled by the Spirit?

Prayer: Open your life to the Holy Spirit and allow him to lead all your decisions and actions.

STUDY 6

GUIDED BY BIBLICAL VALUES

1 Peter 5: 1 - 11

Introduction

Abiti is about to sit for her final year exams. One of the teachers invites her to his office and tells her that she will not be able to sit for her final exams because she still has some fees balance to settle. However, the teacher tells her that he will settle the remaining balance for her and allow her to sit for the exams on condition that she accepts to have sex with him as a thank you. Abiti is having difficulties to decide whether to accept the help and write her exams or reject it and miss the exams. In her culture, rejecting or reporting the teacher would be considered disrespectful and ungrateful to someone who simply wants to help her, but as a Christian, having sex with the teacher is sin before God. What would be the right thing for her to do in that kind of situation?

Stories like these are not new in the campuses and work or business places. You have possibly heard of how students, employees or business people were manipulated to do wrong things to get out of a difficult situation. While helping others is one of the biblical values, some people have twisted it and used it to achieve their own selfish ambitions. In this study, we will discuss how biblical values can help us to be upright in our dealings with people who are below or above us.

Study questions

1. **Read 1 Peter 5: 1 – 11.** Mention the groups of people that are being addressed in the passage.
2. What pieces of advice are given to each group and why?
3. What values / principles can you pick from the passage? How can they help to promote uprightness among believers?
4. Biblically, and even culturally, it is expected of the younger/ juniors/ subjects to respect the elders/ seniors/ leaders (v. 5).
 - a. In what ways can the young ones/juniors/ subjects show their respect or submission for the elders/seniors/leaders?
 - b. What responsibility do the elders/seniors/leaders have over the people they look after? (V. 1 – 3).
 - c. Give examples of situations where juniors or subjects have been forced to do wrong things out of submission or respect for the seniors or leaders.
 - d. What can you do as a child of God when you are forced to go against the Word of God by the people you respect or have authority over you?
5. **“Be alert, be on watch! ...” (v. 8).** What does it mean to be alert or to be on watch? How would that help you to avoid being a victim of Satan’s temptations?
 - What are some of the ways that Satan uses to tempt believers to go against biblical values?
 - In what ways can good values be perverted or twisted and used for evil purposes?

6. One of the tools Satan uses to tempt believers to cut corners and go against godly values is suffering/ pain/desperation; what encouragement do you find in the passage that can help you in times of suffering? (V. 9-10).
7. Reflect upon your spiritual journey; has it been easy or difficult for you to live an upright life? Explain.
 - What dilemmas have you had to deal with in your Christian walk?
 - Share some of the biblical and moral values that have helped you/ can help you walk uprightly before God.

Memory Verse: Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about you (1 Peter 5: 7 – NLT).

Responding in prayer: Tell God about all your worries and struggles and trust him to care for you. Ask him to give you wisdom and courage to choose to please him whenever you are faced with temptations to go against his standards.

STUDY 7

FACING TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS: HINDRANCE OR MOTIVATION?

Job 1: 1 - 2: 10

Introduction.

It is easy to say that you are blameless or upright when you have not faced any difficulty in life. But for those that have gone through difficult situations, they know that it is not easy and it takes the grace of God to be blameless in such situations. For as long as we live in this world, we will always have trouble (John 16: 33); and whether things are working for us or not, the devil will always have something to tempt us with. Different people get tempted differently by negative situations, and they also react differently to similar situations: while some people will look at negative situations as hindrance, others tend to look at the same situations as motivation for attaining certain things in life. In this study we will discuss how we can effectively deal with challenging situations (trials and temptations) in our pursuit of uprightness.

Study questions

1. Would you say trials are a hindrance or motivation for uprightness?
2. **Read Job 1: 1 – 2: 10:** How is Job described in the passage?
3. Job is described as “blameless and upright: he feared God and shunned evil” (**V.1, 2: 3 - NIV**):
 - What reason does Satan give God for Job’s uprightness? (1: 9 - 11; 2: 4 - 5)
 - What indications are there that Job’s uprightness was not because of the blessings and protection he received from God? (1: 20- 22; 2: 9 – 10)
4. Describe the pain and suffering that Job went through.
 - Why do you think God agreed to put Job through such pain and suffering?
 - How could have Job’s suffering be a temptation to his faithfulness to God?
 - How did Job react to the painful situation he suddenly found himself in? Why do you think he reacted in the manner that he did?
5. Share any challenging situation that you experienced in your own life and whether they tempted your faithfulness to God or not.
 - How did you react to the situation?
 - If you knew that God was behind what you went through, would you have reacted differently or not? Explain.
 - How would the knowledge that God limited Satan’s access to Job’s life change the way you view your own suffering (1: 12, 2: 6)?
6. It is said that the most difficult temptations to overcome are those from the closest or loved companions (Psalm 55: 12 – 14);
 - What advice did Job’s wife give him regarding his situation? Why was such an advice dangerous to his situation and to his faith in God?
 - How has Job’s example encouraged you in case you face similar challenges?

7. Some people say it easier to maintain one's integrity and devotion to God when you are poor, while others say it is much easier when you are rich; what is your own take on this?
- Job was blameless and yet he suffered; how does this differ with the popular view that suffering is a curse or punishment from God?
 - What lessons about righteousness/ uprightness/ integrity do you learn from Job's life and experiences?

Reflection and prayer: It might be possible that discussing this passage may have raised some difficult questions and feelings regarding suffering and righteousness/ uprightness. Talk to God about them and ask him to help you remain upright in all your ways regardless of the challenges you may face in life.

SECTION 3

RAISING AN UPRIGHT GENERATION

Introduction

So far, we have looked at our call to uprightness and how we can become an upright generation. In this section, we will discuss how we can raise an upright generation in a depraved and crooked society. It is very necessary that we understand the generation we are living in so that we will know how to impact it for uprightness. Uprightness is not lived in isolation; God expects all believers to let their light shine in darkness in order to influence those living in darkness. We need not be blind to the evils that are happening in our time and around us, we need to be aware but still choose to be upright so that others can follow our example.

One may ask, what if we can't change them, or what if nobody is willing to follow us? There is a popular saying that ***“if you can't beat (change) them, join them.”*** However, in this section, we would like to stress a different message that ***“if you can't beat them, then choose to be different.”*** We are aware that not everyone will appreciate our efforts to be upright, not everyone will follow our example. Some will even laugh at us or try to persuade us to join them in their crookedness. But our message is, under no circumstance must you be tempted to join them. Should the worse comes to the worst, then choose to be different, even if it means being alone. For that reason, the last study in this guide is: Choosing to be different: When everyone is doing it. We therefore encourage our members to go through all the studies so as to make the most out of this guide.

Enjoy the remaining studies.

STUDY 8
UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT GENERATION
2 TIMOTHY 3: 1 - 17

Introduction

Living an upright life in our current generation may seem a hopeless endeavor considering the increasing levels of sin and wickedness in our society. We are living in the last days when religion seems to be fashionable and yet righteousness seems to be old fashioned or being swallowed by evil. False teachers are busy deceiving themselves and others so that people are not able to see or apply the truth of God's Word. Despite the increasing wickedness in these last days, we should know that God's standards have not changed; he still expects those who have been taught the truth to be blameless, and his power is available to help every believer who desires to walk upright before God. While it is tempting to think that sin will win or that there is no hope for the Church, we should remember that God is with us and the power of biblical truth will help us to remain faithful to Christ until the end. In the end, victory is guaranteed for the righteous while sinners will realize how foolish they have been all this time (**2 Timothy 3: 9**).

Study questions

1. Mention the evils that people will do in the last days (vv. 1 – 7). What will be the end of people who do these evils (vv. 8, 9)?
2. Compare the evils listed in the passage with what is happening in the present days, do you think the current generation is better off or not? Explain.
 - How does the awareness of the evils taking place in your generation help you to stand firm?
3. Who you follow or listen to as your mentor or leader can influence your faith and character either positively or negatively. What influence did Paul have on Timothy (vv. 10 – 11)? Why would Timothy trust Paul's influence?
4. Think about the person you consider to be your spiritual mentor or role model; how well do you know the person and how does he/ she inspire you to stand firm in your faith in these last days?
 - What qualities must you have to enhance your own trustworthiness among the people you influence?
5. Persecution/ suffering is inevitable for those who want to live a godly and upright life (vv. 12, 13); what has been the cause of suffering in your own life?
 - What do you think makes people vulnerable to evil men and impostors in our time?
6. What does Paul expect from Timothy, and why (vv. 14, 15)?
 - What can safeguard us from the negative influence of evil men and impostors (vv.15-17)?
 - Where does the Scripture come from and what power does it have?

7. When you look at the evil things people do nowadays, how do you feel?

- What are you planning to do about the evils that are happening in your generation?
- In what areas of your life do you sense God is speaking to you to make necessary changes?

Prayer: Talk to God about the changes you need to make in your own life so that you will have a positive influence on others. Pray that as evil men are going from bad to worse, you will stand firm in your faith and your influence among unbelievers will continue to grow.

STUDY 9

PASSING IT ON: IMPACTING BOTH CURRENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

2 TIMOTHY 2: 1 – 13

Introduction

Christianity has always been spread by believers who receive Biblical teaching and then share it with others. As Christians who have been taught the word of God and have been transformed by it, we have a responsibility of passing on the good teachings to others through our example and by intentionally identifying reliable believers and teaching them to teach others. Christianity must not end with us. We should not feel comfortable when we are the only ones standing upright and others are falling. As Paul knew it, we can positively impact current and future generations, and thereby multiply healthy churches, only when we are both learners and teachers who find other trustworthy or reliable people who will be able to pass on the good teachings to others (2 Timothy 2: 2).

Study questions

1. **Read 2 Timothy 2: 1 – 13.** What specific instructions are given to Timothy (vv.1, 2, 3, 8)? Why are they necessary for his ministry?
2. What images does Paul use to illustrate the nature of Timothy's ministry to others (vv. 3 -7)?
 - What practical examples do you learn from each of the images used?
 - In what ways do these examples impact the people around us?
3. Because of preaching the gospel, Paul suffered ... (v. 9); in what ways could his endurance affect God's chosen people (v. 10)?
4. What would happen to our campuses, work places, homes, churches and communities if every believer applied the principle in verse 2?
 - In your context, who would you consider to be reliable people whom you can teach and entrust them with the responsibility of teaching others?
5. If you were to preach the gospel and promote upright living in your current generation, what sufferings are you likely to face?
 - How can your endurance attract others to experience the life you are living?
 - How can the truthful saying in verses 11 to 13 motivate us to do what is right despite our suffering?
6. Christianity spreads fast when we pass on what we have learnt or received from others.
 - a. Are there people in your life whom you consider your spiritual mentors? What has been their role in your life?
 - b. Are there individuals who look up to you as their spiritual mentor? What lessons have you learnt from this passage that will help you become an effective mentor?
7. In what ways are you similar to or different from a loyal soldier, athlete or hard-working farmer?
 - What disciplines do you need to cultivate to become a good soldier or effective athlete for Christ?

Reflection and prayer: Take time to think about the people who have contributed positively to your faith. Thank God for them and ask him to help you become a better teacher and mentor to others.

STUDY 10

CHOOSING TO BE DIFFERENT: WHEN EVERYONE IS DOING IT

GENESIS 6: 9 – 22

Introduction

“*Everyone is doing it*” is a popular statement that is usually associated with negative peer pressure. I have never heard anyone encouraging another to do something good because everyone is doing it. In an era where sin is rampant and everyone seems to be doing it, what does God expect from his children? Suppose you have done everything possible to influence your peers and colleagues to live godly lives but no one is willing to follow your example, instead they are asking you to join them because everyone these days is doing what they are doing, will you join them or you will choose to be the odd one out? These are some of the struggles that young people, and everyone who wants to do what is right, face when nobody seems to support their thinking. Nobody feels comfortable to be alone or sidelined. The need to fit or gain acceptance/ approval has led some believers to compromise God’s standards, and eventually sin against God. We should remember, sin is sin regardless of how many people are doing it, and God will not lower his standards just because the majority are not able to attain them. If our desire is to live an upright life and please God at all times, we need to choose to be different even if it means being alone at times.

Study Questions

1. **Read Genesis 6:5-22.** What angered God in the passage we have just read? v.5.
 - How did God react to the evil described in this passage? (List at least 5 reactions).
2. Compare and contrast Noah and everyone else in this passage. What do you think made Noah stand out in his generation?
3. Out of everyone on earth, Noah was the only one faultless in the sight of God. What possible pressures did he receive from the people around him?
4. Put yourself in Noah’s shoes, would you have been able to remain faultless when everyone around you was evil? Is this still possible today? Give examples.
5. Give examples of behaviors or practices that everyone seems to be doing in your area of operation?
 - What pressures are you likely to face, and what will it take for you to remain faultless in that environment?
 - Would you choose to do the right thing regardless of the pressure even if you are the only one doing it?

Reflection and prayer: Imagine how God feels about the growing levels of depravity in our society and how many people would be spared today if God were to release His anger. Pray that God will give you courage and grace to choose uprightness even when the majority are doing otherwise.

GUIDE LINES FOR GROUP BIBLE STUDY

1. Come to the study prepared: pray that God will help to understand and apply the passage to your life. Read and reread the Bible passage to familiarize yourself with what the author is saying. Have a good Bible translation that you can understand, avoid a paraphrase.
2. Be willing to participate in the discussion. The leader of your group will not be lecturing. Instead, he or she will be encouraged the members of the group to discuss what they have learned from the passage. Plan to share what God has taught you in your individual study.
3. Stick to the passage being studied. Your answers should be based on the verses which are the focus of the discussion and not on outside authorities. We have tried to take the studied from the passages rather than just random verses.
4. Be sensitive to other members of the group. Listen very carefully when they share what they have learned. You may be surprised by their insights. Link what you say to the comments of others so that the group stays on the topic. Also be affirming whenever can, it encourages some of the more hesitant members of the group to participate.
5. Be careful not to dominate the discussion. We are sometimes so eager to share what we have learned that we leave too little opportunity for others to respond. By all means participate but allow others also.
6. Expect God to teach you through the passage being discussed and through the other members of the group. Pray that you will have an enjoyable and profitable time together.
7. If you are the discussion leader, you will find additional suggestions and helpful ideas for each study in the leaders' notes. These are found at the back of the guide.

For the Leader

Leading a Bible discussion can be an enjoyable and rewarding experience. But it can be intimidating especially if you've never done it before. If this is how you feel, you're in good company. When God asked Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, he replied, O Lord, please send someone else to do it! (Ex 4:13). But God's response to all of his servants – including you- is essentially the same: "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Corinthians 12:9). To get the most of the study as a group, the leader needs to adequately prepare before the study time. Below are a few hints on how to lead a Bible study.

Before the meeting:

- 1) Study the passage prayerfully and let God speak to you through it.
- 2) Go through the questions and study to learn what God may be saying to you personally and to the group. In this guide there are basically three types of questions: Observation (questions of the facts of the passage), Interpretation (Questions of meaning or understanding of facts), application (question for personal or group application of the facts). There is usually a temptation to leave out application or personal questions but make sure all application questions are answered because they are the main reason we are studying the Bible.
- 3) Pray for the study and each individual in your group.

During Study:

- 1) Create a free and cheerful atmosphere where each member feels free to participate.
- 2) Have the passage read aloud, preferably by one person, or more if it is long.
- 3) Make a brief introduction to the study, (one is included at the beginning of each study).

- 4) Proceed with the questions. Be flexible. Rephrase the questions, if need be, but keep the discussion centered on the passage.
- 5) Stick to the Bible as your authority and focus on the passage of study.
- 6) Watch the time so that you cover the study adequately.
- 7) Give attention to group dynamics.

Avoid:

- 1) Preaching
- 2) Answering your own questions.
- 3) Letting someone dominate or talk too much.
- 4) Targets and too much cross-referencing.
- 5) Unnecessary arguments.
- 6) Going on for too long, watch the time.

Instead:

- 1) Ask questions for facilitate discussion.
- 2) Encourage more than one person to answer. More members can participate by clarifying, expanding, endorsing, modifying or disagreeing with the ideas contributed by others.
- 3) Be sensitive to the quiet or shy members.
- 4) Keep the discussion centered on the main passage of study.
- 5) Keep the study moving to the conclusion

Remember:

- 1) To make enough observation, but not spending all the time.
- 2) Allow for good discussion on interpretation.
- 3) Never leave out Application.
- 4) Aim at each member leaving the study with at least one specific application.
- 5) Encourage members to prepare individually for the next study.

After The Meeting:

- 1) Be sensitive to any member's needs that should be attended to and make necessary follow-up.
- 2) Encourage members to meet each other informally during the week and share their experiences.