

# CHURCH.

# LESSON 19

<b>1</b>	PRAYER
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**Group leader. Pray** for God's guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Commit your group and this lesson about church building to the Lord.

<b>2</b>	SHARING (20 minutes) <span style="float: right;">[QUIET TIMES]</span> COLOSSIANS 3 - 4 and 1 THESSALONIANS 1
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**Take turns** and **share (or read)** from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times out of the assigned Bible passages (Colossians 3-4 and 1 Thessalonians 1).

Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

<b>3</b>	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) <span style="float: right;">[KEY VERSES IN JOHN]</span> (6) JOHN 5:24
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**Review** two by two.

(6) John 5:24. I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

<b>4</b>	TEACHING (85 minutes) <span style="float: right;">[CHURCH CEREMONY]</span> CHRISTIAN WEDDING
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**Introduce.** This teaching is about the Christian wedding. We will learn what the Bible teaches about marriage and the wedding ceremony.

## A. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MARRIAGE

### 1. Marriage is God's idea, God's ordinance and God's institution.

**Discover and discuss.** What is taught about marriage in the following passages?

(1) Marriage is a relationship between two people of different sexes.

**Read** Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-24; Proverbs 5:15-19.

**Notes.** When God planned to create the universe, he devised the way in which all species would continue to exist and multiply. God created the two different sexes and he has a specific purpose for that. Together the man and the woman express the image of God. And together in marriage they form the smallest family unit, the very foundation of every larger fellowship. God created sex so that:

- the husband and wife would form a strong unity
- they might enjoy marriage
- the human race would continue to spread across the whole world
- because of so much sexual immorality (Greek: porneia)<sup>1</sup> "each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband (1 Corinthians 7:2).

(2) Marriage is an ordinance and institution of the God of the Bible.

**Read** Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6; Ephesians 5:31.

**Notes.** Marriage is not an invention of any human culture or society. The God who revealed himself in the Bible and in Jesus Christ created in the man and the woman the need and desire for marriage. Already *before* the man and woman fell into sin, God revealed his plan with regard to marriage (Genesis 2:24). He created and established the marriage relationship as a relationship in which a man and a woman marry:

- they must leave their parents
- form a unity between one man and one woman
- and may have sex within their marriage relationship.

<sup>1</sup> Forms of sexual immorality: incest, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality (Leviticus 18:6,20,22,23), pornography, paedophilia, prostitution (1 Corinthians 6:9-10), etc.

According to Matthew 19 and Ephesians 5, God also maintained this ordinance (command) and institution *after* the man and woman fell into sin. Both the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul confirm God's marriage institution in Genesis 2:24 as an institution for all nations and all cultures on earth!

(3) Marriage is a visible picture of the relationship between God and his people.

**Read** Jeremiah 3:1; Ephesians 5:22-25.

**Notes.** In the Old Testament, the human marriage serves as a visible picture and reminder of the relationship between God and his people on earth! A person who turns his back on God is a (spiritual) prostitute in the eyes of God.

In the New Testament, the Christian marriage serves as a visible picture and testimony of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Christian Church.

Although through the years cultures in the world have changed God's original marriage institution<sup>2</sup>, God still demands that all people and all cultures on earth return to his original marriage ordinance and institution!

## 2. Marriage may be an arranged marriage or a love marriage.

**Discover and discuss.** What are the advantages and disadvantages of an arranged marriage and of a love marriage?

**Read** Genesis 24:1-4,67; Genesis 29:16-20; Psalm 127:1-2; Matthew 19:6.

**Notes.** In Western culture, men tend to marry the woman they love. In Eastern and Middle Eastern cultures men learn to love the woman they marry. In the West they start with a burst of emotion, which is hopefully followed by a commitment of the will. In the East they start with a commitment of the will hopefully followed by a blooming of the emotions. Either way of marriage will work out well if the God of the Bible is central to each!

## 3. Marriage must be between two believers (Christians).

**Discover and discuss.** What does the Bible teach about marrying an unbeliever?

**Read** Deuteronomy 7:3-4; 1 Corinthians 7:16,39; 2 Corinthians 6:14.

**Notes.** God prohibits Christians from marrying a non-Christian.

Due to the sinfulness, brokenness of this world and the many wars, there are many Christian women, who cannot find Christian men to marry. In other situations there are Christian men, who cannot find Christian women to marry. Instead of allowing these Christian women and Christian men to marry non-Christians, Christians should make a greater effort to win many more men and women in their country to Christ.

The apostle Paul warns against a Christian thinking that he can marry a non-Christian and then win the non-Christian afterwards for the Christian Faith (1 Corinthians 7:16)! This is a misconception, because no human being can cause another to accept Christ. That is God's prerogative (John 6:44). Therefore, a Christian should not be presumptuous and disobedient to God! "An unequally yoked" marriage is against God's will. It will cause suffering for the believer and the children!

## 4. Marriage must be monogamous.

**Discover and discuss.** What does God say about polygamy or having concubines?

(1) Monogamy was God's institution at creation.

**Read** 1 Kings 11:1-11.

**Notes.** The biblical history contains good and bad examples with regard to marriages, but these historic examples are not normative for doctrine or behaviour in Christian marriage. For example, Bible history relates that important people in biblical history, like king David and king Solomon, had more than one wife, something which God had forbidden during the institution of marriage (Genesis 2:24). In some cultures there exists polyandry (a woman has more than one husband) and in other cultures there exists polygamy (a man has more than one wife). Polyandry and polygamy only cause problems like a warped sexual morality, jealousy, discrimination, violence and idolatry. However, the biblical commands and teachings with regard to marriage are always normative for Christian doctrine and behaviour.

(2) Monogamy remains God's institution after the fall.

**Read** Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5.

**Notes.** God never changed his original plan of Genesis 2:24. God never said, "A man should be united to *his wives*" (*plural*), but "to *his wife* (*singular*)!" Jesus Christ repeated this command and said in Matthew 19:5 that "the *two* will become *one* flesh". He excluded all other people (men and women) from the unity of the Christian marriage relationship. Sex outside marriage is forbidden!

God forbids polyandry and polygamy. He forbids having a concubine. He forbids adultery. He forbids premarital sex and sex outside marriage (Hebrews 13:4) and therefore he forbids living together without being married. And God detests flirting, because it is pretending courtship and love in an atmosphere of insincerity, self-love and lack of self-control (Genesis 3:1-5; 2 Corinthians 11:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:1-6).

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<sup>2</sup> For example: having a mistress, polygamy, polyandry, flirting, all forms of sexual immorality

## 5. Marriage is for as long as one lives.

**Discover and discuss.** What does God say about the durability of marriage?

(1) God unites one man and one woman for life.

**Read** 2 Corinthians 6:14; Matthew 19:3-6.

**Notes.** Because the relationship between God and his people is a covenant relationship, the Christian marriage relationship should always be a life-long faithful relationship. A Christian has the responsibility to choose to marry only a believer (2 Corinthians 6:14). And when they marry, it is God who unites the two people in marriage for as long as they live (Matthew 19:5-6). Jesus teaches: “What God has joined together, man must not separate (a prohibition in Greek)”! A Christian marriage is the God of the Bible joining a Christian man and a Christian woman together for their whole life!

(2) Divorce in the Bible.

**Read** Malachi 2:16; Matthew 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:12-16.

**Notes.** God says, “I hate divorce and I hate a man’s covering himself with violence”. God regards divorce as an act of violence against the marriage partner and he hates it. However, due to sin in the world, the Bible allows divorce only in a case of marital unfaithfulness and in the case of marital incompatibility. Marital unfaithfulness is expressed in spiritual idolatry (false religion), sexual immorality or violence within the marriage (Matthew 19:8-9). And *marital incompatibility* occurs when a non-Christian partner refuses to live together with his or her Christian spouse (1 Corinthians 7:12-16). (See manual 8, lesson 41).

## 6. Marriage is temporal, only for this life on earth.

**Discover and discuss.** Does marriage continue after death? What does death do to the marriage relationship?

(1) The marriage continues for as long as both partners live.

**Read** Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:39.

**Notes.** Paul teaches that the marriage relationship is only for as long as both partners live. If one partner dies, then the other partner is free to marry another Christian.

(2) Marriage is God’s institution on earth, not in heaven.

**Read** Matthew 22:23-32.

**Notes.** Jesus teaches that after the resurrection from the dead, people will neither marry nor be given in marriage. Then the resurrected Christians will be *like* the angels in heaven. However, all the relationships on earth, including the relationship with one’s former marriage partner, will be far more meaningful and satisfying in heaven than when they still lived on earth, because everybody will live a perfect life directly in God’s visible presence! Therefore, marriage is God’s institution only *on earth* and not in heaven.

The eternal value of Christian marriage may be sought in the following:

- Christian marriage develops Christian character (see 1 John 3:1-3)
- Christian marriage reflects and proclaims Christ (Ephesians 5:22,25)
- Christian marriage multiplies Christians on this earth (Genesis 1:28) and on the new earth (Revelation 7:9)

## 7. Marriage is the normal relationship for most people on earth, but it is not the best for everyone, because God might have another purpose for that person’s life.

**Discover and discuss.** Why is marriage not the best for everyone?

**Read** Matthew 19:10-12; 1 Corinthians 7:8-9,25-35; 1 Corinthians 9:5; 1 Timothy 3:2; 4:3; Isaiah 54:1-5.

**Notes.** In the Bible marriage is regarded as normal for Christians and Christian leaders (1 Corinthians 9:5; 1 Timothy 3:2; 4:3).

But remaining single is not a curse or a punishment. And choosing celibacy is not more “spiritual” than choosing marriage. Celibacy is a spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 7:7,32-35; Matthew 19:10-12), but may never be institutionalised (enforced on others in the Church)!

Both the Lord Jesus (Matthew 19:10-12) and the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 7:32-35) have special words for those who remain unmarried. God calls some people to remain unmarried for a certain period in their life or even for their whole life in order to do a special work for God. God calls these people to serve him with undivided devotion! God gives a very special promise for people who remain unmarried – they will have more spiritual children than the physical children of married people. He promises that he can make them very fruitful in the work of God’s kingdom (Isaiah 54:1-5)!

## B. RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHRISTIAN HUSBANDS AND CHRISTIAN WIVES

**Introduce.** God created every man and every woman. God instituted the marriage relationship, not when he created the man, but when he created the woman (Genesis 2:18-24). Therefore, God also has the right to determine the responsibilities of married men and married women towards one another. He knows how his creatures are able to

function the best. Only when a husband and a wife obey these God-given responsibilities, can they have a good marriage.

Some people argue that the marriage responsibilities recorded in the Bible are culturally determined and that they are therefore not normative for Christians today. This is a very dangerous argument, because whatever God commands, forbids and teaches in the Bible is and remains normative always, precisely because God wants to change the sinful culture in all nations on earth! (See manual 6, lesson 23 in which the relationship between human culture and the culture of the kingdom of God is explained).

### 1. The God-given mutual responsibility of the husband and the wife towards one another.

**Read** Ephesians 5:22-25.

**Notes.** The Christian marriage relationship is a visible demonstration of the relationship between Christ and the Christian Church and therefore also a proclamation of Jesus Christ to the world. By observing a good Christian marriage, the people of the world learn more and more about Jesus Christ and the Christian Church. They not only *hear* about God's love for them, they *see* this love illustrated in the Christian marriage relationship (and in the Christian church). They not only *hear* of the joy of a growing relationship with the Living God, they *see* an example of such joy in the Christian marriage relationship (and in the Christian church), etc. The Christian marriage relationship is a powerful witness to the reality and attraction of a relationship with Jesus Christ! Every Christian marriage can become a missionary endeavour, especially when the Christian home is open and people can "come and see" (John 1:40) how that Christian family functions.

God gives to the husband and wife responsibility and authority to serve one another! But God has created the man and the woman differently and has commanded them to express their God-given responsibilities and authority by serving one another in different ways. He desires that the Christian husband expresses his service by especially taking the initiative in the relationship. And he desires that the Christian wife expresses her service by especially inviting her husband into a warm and strong relationship.

### 2. The God-given responsibilities of the Christian husband towards his wife are especially to love her and to lead her.

**Read** Proverbs 31:10-12,28; Ephesians 5:25-29,33; 1 Peter 3:7.

(1) The Christian husband must serve his wife by loving her.

He must love her just as Christ loves his Church, by showing unselfish interest in her, wholeheartedly accepting her and helping her to become her best. Love is completely unselfishness and never puts itself in the centre. Love is self-sacrificial service. Love is to treat her with care and respect. Love is to faithfully live together with her for better or for worse and in health or in sickness.

- Love is beautifully expressed in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.
- Love that is not impatient can wait to show love and does not enforce itself (e.g. kindness) on the other.
- Love that is kind seeks every opportunity to be helpful and do the other good
- Love that is not jealous is generous in giving appreciation, honour and credit the other deserves.
- Love that does not boast is modest about its accomplishments and merits. It does not try to impress.
- Love that is not proud is humble with respect to its own abilities and weaknesses.
- Love that does not behave rudely shows good manners and tact in relationships and communication.
- Love that is not self-seeking is unselfishly, especially in exercising its rights.
- Love that is not easily angered meekly submits itself to the injury and hurts which the other may cause.
- Love that does not keep a record of wrongs is forgiving, especially in broken relationships.
- Love does not delight in evil is righteous (upright) amidst the weaknesses and failures of the other.

Proverbs 31 describes another way of loving her. When his wife is a woman of noble character, his heart depends on her. For example, because he relies on her help, he asks for her help. True love makes her feel needed, wanted, chosen above other people and appreciated! Thus, she is able to do him good, all the days of her life. That is why both her husband and her children stand up and praise her.

(2) The Christian husband must serve his wife by leading her.

He must lead her just as Christ leads the Church. He must lead her like a shepherd leads his sheep: feeding her, caring for her, protecting her and carrying her through difficulties. He must lead her like a steward manages a great house or estate: taking good care of her possessions, activities and interests. He must lead her like a teacher by helping her to understand and practise the truths of the Bible. He must lead her like a servant: especially in the areas she needs him most.

### 3. The God-given responsibilities of the Christian wife towards her husband are especially to love him and to help him.

**Read** Genesis 2:18; Ephesians 5:22-24,33; Titus 2:4-5; 1 Peter 3:1-6.

(1) The Christian wife must serve her husband by loving him.

The Bible teaches that the Christian wife should dedicate herself to love her husband and her children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God (Titus 2:4-5). Also her love should be characterised by patience, kindness and the other characteristics of love mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13. Love is to faithfully live together with him for better or for worse and in health or in sickness.

The issue of the working mother must be evaluated in the light of modernism, materialism and individualism on the one hand and the interests of God's kingdom on the other hand.

(2) The Christian wife must serve her husband by helping him.

The Bible teaches the Christian wife must respect the authority of her husband (or: to be submissive to her own husband (Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Peter 3:1-6) and to respect her husband (Ephesians 5:33). She serves her husband by voluntarily respecting his leadership and following him. The difference between obedience and submission is that obedience may be required or demanded by a person in authority, but submission is a voluntary attitude with matching behaviour of the wife towards her husband. A husband may not require or demand submission from his wife! This is only God's prerogative!

"To submit" does not mean to submit to him like a slave, but to submit to him like a helper (Genesis 2:18). It is to voluntarily follow him by being the best possible team member of her husband's team. As a member of his team, she gives him every possible input, suggestions, advice, ideas, help, support, etc. that she can possibly give. She discusses all important matters concerning their personal lives, their marriage, their family and their society with him. She makes good decisions and choices together with him and discusses the consequences of their decisions. Only in the last resort, if there cannot be reasonable agreement between them, she should allow him to make the final decision and to be responsible for the consequences of his decision. Her submission is limited to what God requires of her and when a husband demands submission to what is wrong, she may gently resist him (cf. Acts 5:29). She must seriously advise him to change his thoughts, plans, choices or decisions when they no longer do him, her or others any good! Thus, a husband and a wife ought to live and work together as a team in their marriage, in their family and in their society.

To respect her husband is to state her point of view in a gentle way and then allow God to work it out in his own way. It is to carefully consider the husband's advice. It is to involve him in the making of her plans and to communicate the progress she is making. It is to voluntarily take the initiative to serve him without waiting for him to ask her. It is to patiently listen to him and to try to understand his problems and points of view.

**Summarise.** When a man serves his wife by loving her and leading her as Christ loves and leads his Church, it will not be difficult for his wife to serve him by loving him, acknowledging his authority, helping him and respecting him. The best place where children learn what love and respect and what leadership and submission really means is to observe the relationship of their Christian parents every day.

## C. THE CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE CEREMONY

**Introduce.** The Christian marriage ceremony is a public social and religious event. In the Bible sex before marriage, living together (without being married officially) and so-called marriages between homosexuals are condemned. The Christian marriage ceremony officially and publicly ends the stage of being *single* and begins the stage of being *married*. The Bible teaches or relates the following truths with respect to the Christian marriage ceremony.

### 1. The Christian marriage ceremony has three indispensable elements.

**Read** Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5-6; Ephesians 5:31.

**Discover and discuss.** What do the three indispensable elements of the marriage ceremony mean in practical terms?

**Notes.**

In Matthew 19:5-6, Jesus teaches, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate." God said this at the creation and Paul repeated this for the Church. Therefore this principle must be very important for God! Marriage is a very important social and religious event. It is the time a man and a woman leave their parents and begin a new family together! The three indispensable elements of the marriage ceremony are: to publicly leave one's parents, to be united to one another and to become one flesh.

(1) Christian marriage means: leaving one's parents.

Whether the marriage has been arranged or is a love marriage, a man and a woman must leave their parents and start their own family. A man and a woman prepare to leave their parents by announcing their plan to get married and by making a start with their preparations for the marriage ceremony. This is usually called *the engagement*. Only at the marriage ceremony do they definitely leave their parents.

The married couple must leave their parents in several different ways:

They must leave their parents emotionally: From the marriage onwards, the man and the woman should love one another and prefer one another more than their parents.

They must leave the authority of their parents: Ephesians 6:1-3 teaches that as long as they are immature children (minors), they should obey and respect their parents. But Ephesians 5:31 teaches that when they marry, they should leave their parents. From their marriage onwards, they are no longer under the obligation to obey their parents, but they remain under the obligation to honour their parents. "To honour" is not the same as "to obey". For example, parents and parents-in-law have no authority over their former children whatsoever. A mother-in-law has no authority over the wife of her son.

They must leave their parents financially: The married couple should earn and manage their own finances.

They must leave their parents spiritually: Especially when their parents are non-Christians, they should not tolerate the religious beliefs and practices of their parents in their home or family. They should only serve the Lord Jesus Christ in their home and family.

They must leave their parents socially: If possible, the Christian couple should find their own home or room in order to live separately from their parents. Of course, in some cultures young adults leave the home of their parents long before their marriage in order to study or to work elsewhere. This is not wrong.

All these aspects of leaving one's parents are visible signs to the parents and to everybody else that the married couple is no longer dependent on their parents, but has begun their own family.

(2) Christian marriage means: being united to one another.

The marriage ceremony is a public social and religious ceremony during which a man and a woman make a marriage covenant with one another in the presence of God and God's people. They promise to be faithful and committed to one another for their whole lives until death separates them. In Malachi 2:13-16 God says, "The Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth" that you will not break the marriage covenant with her. During the marriage ceremony, the Lord himself makes the man and woman into one and warns them not to break faith with one another in a divorce. At the marriage ceremony, the families of both sides as well as all the Christian brothers and sisters and other friends witness that these two people make the promise of the marriage covenant to God, to love one another, to be faithful to one another and to help one another through all the circumstances of their lives.

(3) Christian marriage means: becoming one flesh.

The marriage ceremony marks the beginning point where the husband and the wife may become one in every aspect. They should become one spiritually, mentally, emotionally, socially and physically. The physical unity is the culmination of this unity and is permitted by God only after the wedding and inside the marriage relationship. The wedding is God's acknowledgement that the man and woman may begin their sexual unity. The sexual unity between the married man and the married woman is pleasing to God, but only within the boundaries of the marriage covenant. That is why God forbids every form of sex *before* marriage or *outside of* marriage (Hebrews 13:4). The physical unity is also the very best when there is a growing unity in all the other areas of their relationship.

## 2. The Christian marriage ceremony is a public social and religious festival.

**Teach.** In the Bible, the wedding feast was never a secret matter, but always a public event!

(1) The Christian marriage ceremony was a public family event.

In ancient times, "the pledge to be married" was *a matter for the whole family*. Historically this was an event in which the families of the groom and the bride played a significant part. It included the choice of a marriage partner (Genesis 21:21), sometimes, the giving of a compensation gift to the family of the bride (Genesis 29:18, 34:12) and the giving of gifts to the bride and the groom (Genesis 24:59,61, 1 Kings 9:16).

In modern times, asking advice from your parents with respect to marriage, the marriage partner and the marriage ceremony will most of the time be appreciated as honouring your parents. The giving of compensation gifts, however, is not a biblical requirement.

(2) The marriage ceremony was a public social and religious event.

The marriage ceremony included some of the following elements: The bride and groom wore wedding garments (Psalm 45:13-14). They were accompanied by bridesmaids and friends of the groom (Psalm 45:14, John 3:29). The groom and his friends came to the house of the bride and the bridesmaids went out to meet them. They went in a grand marriage procession all the way from the bride's home to the groom's home for the wedding festivities to take place there. The invited guests were allowed to join the procession if they carried lamps or torches, due to the dark roads at night (Matthew 25:1-13). There was a marriage feast at the home of the groom, sometimes for a whole week long (Matthew 22:1-14, John 2:1-10, Judges 14:17).

The most solemn part of the wedding ceremony was establishing the marriage covenant of which God himself was the Witness (Malachi 2:14, Proverbs 2:17, Ezekiel 16:8)! Throughout the centuries, Christians have conducted their

marriage ceremonies publicly in the presence of God, their families, their friends and their Christian brothers and sisters.

(3) The consummation of the marriage only after the marriage ceremony.

Only after the marriage ceremony, the marriage was consummated (Genesis 29:21-23, Deuteronomy 22:13-21; Hebrews 13:4).

<b>5</b>	PRAYER (8 minutes)	<i>[REACTIONS]</i> PRAYER IN RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD
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*Take turns in the group to pray* short to God in response to what you have learned today.  
Or divide the group into two's or three's and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

<b>6</b>	PREPARATION (2 minutes)	<i>[ASSIGNMENT]</i> FOR NEXT LESSON
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*(Group leader.* Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Be committed to make disciples and build Christ's Church.
2. Preach, teach or study the teaching of "Christian marriage" together with another person or group of people. Teach new believers what the Bible teaches about marriage and the significance of having an official marriage ceremony.
3. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time from half a chapter of 1 Thessalonians 2 - 5 each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. Memorisation. Meditate and memorise the new Bible verse. (7) John 6:37. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. Bible study. Prepare the next Bible study at home. John 8. Make use of the five steps method of Bible study.
6. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
7. Update your notebook on building Christ's Church. Include your notes on personal time with God, your memorisation notes, your teaching notes and this preparation.