

CHURCH.

LESSON 29

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray and commit your group and this course on building Christ's Church to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) <i>[QUIET TIMES]</i> LUKE 15:1 – 18:17
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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 with God out of the assigned Bible passages (Luke 15:1 – 18:17).

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

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) <i>[CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE]</i> (5) PROVERBS 3:3-4
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Review two by two.

(5) Remain faithful. Proverbs 3:3-4. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favour and a good name in the sight of God and man.

4	TEACHING (85 minutes) <i>[CHURCH BUILDING MINISTRY]</i> TRAINING NEW CHRISTIANS THROUGH PERSONAL HELP
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Introduce. This teaching is about training new Christians through personal help. We will teach one way in which an older Christian may help a younger Christian to grow.

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL HELP

1. What is personal help?

In this study “personal help” is defined as the help given by an older and more mature Christian (a coach or mentor) to a younger Christian. The older Christian helps the younger Christian to grow spiritually and become a disciple of Jesus Christ. He receives help that is:

- tailored to his needs and personality
- by making use of the Bible
- and by means of a personal relationship, Christian love and care.

2. Examples of personal help in the Bible.

Introduce. Although these are examples of Christ's personal ministry, Jesus Christ stimulated his disciples to follow his example. These examples are intended to stimulate our thinking concerning some aspects of personal help.

(1) Give personal help in order to help a person to believe in Jesus Christ.

Read Luke 19:1-10.

Discover and discuss. What did Jesus do when he met Zacchaeus?

Notes. Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save the people who are lost. Zacchaeus was a lost man. But Jesus found him! Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector. He was very wealthy, because he had cheated and had required people to pay taxes that were too high. When Jesus came to his town, Zacchaeus also wanted to meet Jesus. We do not know why. Maybe he had a bad conscience about his cheating. Nevertheless, Jesus knew what the real reason was and *took the initiative to meet Zacchaeus in his own house.*

During their conversation, Zacchaeus confessed his sin to Jesus and said, “Lord, here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” Then Jesus helped him to receive salvation and said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house. ... The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.” An important aspect of personal help is to help people understand the gospel and to receive Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

(2) Give personal help in order to help a person to learn more from Jesus.

Read Luke 10:38-42; Acts 8: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

Discover and discuss. What do you think is “the one thing” that people need?

Notes. The “one thing” that people really need is to sit at the feet of Jesus Christ and learn from him. We do not know what Mary’s personal need was or what Jesus taught her. But we do know that Jesus gave this event a very high priority. He said that the personal help Mary chose was more important than doing her regular work in the house. It was more important, because Christians ought to fix their eyes not on what is seen (the temporary things), but on what is unseen (the eternal things)!

Thus, an older Christian could invite a younger Christian to meet regularly (say once every 14 days) “to sit at the feet of Jesus” and learn together from the teaching of Jesus. The teachings of Jesus are recorded in the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. An important aspect of personal help is to study and discuss together the teachings of Jesus Christ.

(3) Give personal help in order to help a person to restore a broken relationship.

Read John 13:37; 21:15-19.

Discover and discuss. What did Jesus do when he met Peter at the Sea of Galilee?

Notes. Jesus Christ took the initiative to meet Peter and restore their broken relationship. Before Jesus was crucified, Peter had boasted that he would follow Jesus even if Jesus was persecuted and killed. He had said, “I will lay down my life for you”. But when Jesus was arrested, Peter fled together with the other disciples of Jesus. During the trial of Jesus, Peter denied three times that he knew Jesus or belonged to his disciples. This act of Peter brought separation between him and Jesus Christ.

After Jesus had been resurrected from the dead, Jesus spoke personally to Peter and said, “Peter, do you truly love me?” Three times Jesus confronted Peter with the same question and three times he gave Peter the same task, “Feed and take care of my sheep.” Jesus knew what Peter’s big need was. Peter had denied the Lord Jesus three times before his death. Peter needed forgiveness and restoration of his relationship with Jesus. Jesus took the initiative to help Peter in his personal need. Jesus forgave Peter and restored him as his disciples and hid apostle. Another important aspect of personal help is to help a person in a very personal matter.

3. Practical aspects of personal help.

(1) Proclamation, admonishing and teaching in personal help.

Read Colossians 1:28-29.

Discover and discuss. What did Paul’s personal help consist of?

Notes. Paul says, “We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labour, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.” This was what Paul purposed to do with *each person*. Paul’s practical help consisted of the following.

Paul proclaimed Jesus Christ to each person. He proclaimed (Greek: kataggelomai) openly that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour and the only Lord! When an older Christian helps a younger Christian to grow, he should proclaim Christ and nothing but Christ as the Source of salvation and maturity, the Mediator of salvation and maturity and the Goal of salvation and maturity (cf. Romans 11:36). Of course, the two believers may discuss any topic that may be important for the young believer, like for example the influence of philosophers on human thought. But it is the gospel concerning Jesus Christ, and not philosophy that saves people and makes them grow to maturity and Christ likeness (1 Corinthians 1:20-25).

Paul admonished each person. “To admonish” (Greek: noutheteó) literally means to imprint certain words into the mind of a person by means of teaching, reprimanding (reproving), warning, urging (stimulating) and encouraging. Paul himself gives examples of how he admonished people.

- In 2 Corinthians 5:20, he pleads with people to be reconciled to God.
- In Acts 20:31 he says that he never stopped warning each of the Christian leaders in Ephesus night and day with tears.
- In 1 Thessalonians 2:7,11-12, Paul’s personal help is beautifully summarised, “We were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God.”

Paul taught each person. “To teach” (Greek: didaskó) means to explain the truths of the Bible to a person in a systematic and practical way.

There is no great difference between:

- his teaching, his doctrine, what Christians must believe
- and his admonishing, ethics, how Christians must behave

Paul’s teaching was done with a view to admonish and his admonishing was rooted in his teaching. Therefore, Paul always proclaimed Christ as:

- the Saviour of sin
- the Lord who is obeyed
- the Example who is followed!

As a matter of fact, only to those people who embrace Christ as Saviour and Lord can Christ also be the Example. When non-Christians only admire Jesus Christ, but not accept him as Saviour and Lord, they cannot be saved from their bondage to sin and they also do not receive the Holy Spirit that enables them to follow the example of Jesus Christ.

(2) The linkage between teaching and admonishing.

Paul always links his admonition to his teaching about the person and work of Christ .

Discover and discuss. What does Paul admonish and what does he teach in these Bible passages?

- **Read** Romans 15:2-3. Paul teaches, “Christ did not please himself”.
Therefore he admonishes, “Each of us should please his neighbour”.
- **Read** Ephesians 5:2. He teaches, “Christ loved us and gave himself up for us”.
Therefore he admonishes, “Live a life of love (walk in love)”.
- **Read** Colossians 3:13. Paul teaches, “The Lord forgave you”.
Therefore he admonishes, “Forgive one another”.

Paul proclaimed, taught and admonished people “in all wisdom”. And “wisdom” means to use the best means to reach the highest goal. It means to apply truth in the right time and in the right way to the right person and in the right circumstances.

(3) The one-another responsibilities.

Discover and discuss. What are some of the practical aspects of personal help which every Christian can and ought to give?

Read Galatians 6:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 10:25.

Notes. Many times in the New Testament we read about the Christian’s “one another responsibilities”. For example,

- carry one another’s burdens
- encourage one another
- urge one another to love and to do good deeds.

All these one another responsibilities are the things mature Christians should actively apply while giving personal help to young Christians.

4. The aim of personal help.

Discover and discuss. What is the aim of all personal help?

Read Colossians 1:28-29; 1 Corinthians 1:8-9; 3:5-7; Philippians 1:6.

Notes. The aim of personal help is help a younger Christian to grow towards spiritual maturity and to function in the Church of Christ. It is “to proclaim Christ and teach and urge every person in all wisdom, to present every Christian “perfect” (Greek: teleios) in Jesus Christ. The word “teleios” can refer to “the end” with respect to time or to “perfection” with respect to the degree.

(1) With reference to time the word “teleios” means “to the end”.

In 1 Corinthians 1:8, Paul says, “God will confirm or keep you strong to the end”. God’s work in a Christian will continue to the end, that is, until the second coming of Christ! God is faithful and he will faithfully do what he promised!

(2) With reference to degree the word “teleios” means “blameless, complete, mature and perfect”.

God’s work in a Christian makes him mature, complete and blameless. Personal help takes a lot of time, energy and struggle. Nevertheless, God promises that he himself will make it succeed. This is a wonderful assurance to Christians! Although it sometimes seems as if a Christian will never grow up to maturity and become blameless, God still promises that at the second coming of Christ, every Christian will be completely mature and perfectly blameless!

The Christian worker has the same goal as God. In 1 Corinthians 3:6 Paul says, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.” God uses mature Christian workers to help new Christians to grow, but it is always God himself who is the cause of growth and in control of growth. In the picture of 1 Corinthians 3, Paul evangelised the Corinthians, Apollos disciplined them. But God alone made their ministry a reality: God caused them to be born-again and made them into mature and functioning Christians. And God will continue the good work that he began in them until he returns (Philippians 1:6). Then they will be completely perfect!

B. THE CONTENTS OF PERSONAL HELP

Introduce. When you give personal help to another Christian, you may want to follow the following five practical steps.

Step 1. Pray for the young Christian.

Discover and discuss. When you give personal help to a young Christian, what could you pray for him in his presence?

- **Read** John 6:44. Thank God for drawing him to Christ and saving him.
- **Read** Colossians 1:2-14. Thank God for the progress he is making in his Christian growth. Thank God for his faith, love and hope. Thank God for other Christian workers who preached the gospel to him and who are helping him to grow. You could use Paul’s prayer for the Colossians in Colossians 1:9-12 to pray for his growth, his life, his

relationships and his service in the church. In this prayer, Paul prays for their knowledge, behaviour, growth and service.

- **Read** Luke 22:31-32. Like Jesus, you could pray for his personal needs.
- **Read** Matthew 6:9-10. Pray that he will learn God's will from the Bible, that he will allow Christ to control (rule) his life through the Holy Spirit, and that God will be glorified in his life. Ask yourself, "What can I pray for him that would encourage him?"

Step 2. Share your progress with one another.

Discover and discuss. When you give personal help to a young Christian, what things could you share with one another?

Notes. Share with one another about your progress in growth and struggles in life. And encourage one another. The older Christian should also share his progress, so that the young Christians can follow his example.

- **Read** 1 Timothy 4:15. Share with one another about the things you are doing to grow. For example, share what you have learned from your Bible reading or personal time with God during the last week. Review with one another the Bible verses that you have memorised. Talk about what is happening in your family, marriage and work. Discuss with one another your service in the church or kingdom of God.
- **Read** Romans 1:12. It teaches, "Be mutually encouraged by one another's faith". Encourage one another by sharing about your faith with one another. For example, share a promise from the Bible. Discuss something God has done to stimulate your faith. Share with one another about your vision and plans for the future and how you depend on God for the future. Ask yourself, "How can I stimulate his progress and spur his faith on?"

Step 3. Teach God's Word.

Discover and discuss. When you give personal help to a young Christian, what things could you teach him?

- **Notes.** Teach him to know the Bible and teach him to use the Bible (God's Word). Jesus says in the Great Commission, "Make disciples and teach them to obey all that I have commanded you."
- **Read** Philippians 4:9. Do Bible Study together about a specific topic. Use any part of a discipleship course (for example, www.dota.net or www.deltacourse.org) to teach and train him. What is important is that you encourage one another to make the truths in the Bible your personal convictions and to personally apply them in your lives!
- **Read** 2 Corinthians 13:10. An important thing to remember is that you should rather build on the young Christian's strengths than his weaknesses. For example, if his strength is to do Bible study and his weakness is to memorise Bible verses, then concentrate on training him to do Bible study very well and compliment him for whatever progress he makes in memorising Bible verses. Do not pick on his weaknesses, because he will grow insecure and be afraid to make mistakes and fail. Rather be an encourager! When you teach a young Christian to study the Bible, ask yourself, "What are his strengths and how can I build on them? How can I be an encourager?"

Step 4. Discuss his personal questions.

Discover and discuss. How did Jesus Christ answer the questions of his disciples?

- **Read** Matthew 19:3-6. Sometimes, Jesus Christ answered their questions by quoting the answers from the Bible. He reminded people of what God had said and then based his answer on God's Word.
- **Read** Luke 10:25-26. At other times, Jesus Christ answered their questions with another question. He asked them what they knew about what the Bible said about their questions. If they gave the right answer, he would praise them and encourage them to put it into practice.

If you give personal help to a young Christian, give him opportunity to ask any question. Listen carefully to his question, ask questions about it and hear him out.

And if you counsel him, then do the following:

- It is better not to give him your answers or opinions, because your answers and opinions are your convictions and your applications of the truth, not his.
- It is much better to let him discover the answer to his questions for himself from the Bible and then to make his own personal application of that truth. You may suggest some Bible passages, but let him read and discover the answer to his question himself. When a Christian discovers the truth for himself and makes his own applications, he develops personal convictions. . He will not quickly forget what he has learned. Ask yourself, "Which Bible passages will help him most to discover God's answer to his question (or problem)?"

Step 5. Pray together.

Teach. Finally, pray together. Ask the young Christian to pray first and respond to God about all the things that God has taught him that day. He will pray about the things that were really meaningful to him during your time of personal help. His prayer will help you to know what God is doing in his life, so that you may continue to pray for him and give him personal help.

As an older Christian you should also pray and respond to God about the things that God has taught you that day. Later when the young Christian has grown more, you could both begin to pray for other people, like for your family, friends and colleagues so that also they may know the truth and be saved.

C. PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR PERSONAL HELP

1. To whom should you give personal help?

Discover and discuss. Who ought to receive personal help?

Notes. Because every Christian worker is limited, nobody can give personal help or personal time on a regular basis to every person under his care. Therefore, an older and more mature Christian should give personal help to especially those people who need it most.

(1) Those who struggle with personal problems and questions.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:14. It teaches, “Warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone”. You should give personal help to those who struggle with a personal problem or have a personal question that they want to discuss with you.

(2) Those who stay away from meetings or lag behind.

Read Hebrews 10:25. It teaches, “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching”. An older and more mature Christian should give personal help to those who stay away from meetings, to those who lag behind and to those who need help to do a particular Bible study or lesson.

(3) Those who are faithful, teachable and eager to receive training.

Read 2 Timothy 2:1-7. Paul urges Timothy:

- to be strong in the grace that he has in Christ
- to teach other eager Christians what he himself had learned from Paul
- to endure hardship as a soldier of Christ
- to only please his commanding officer Jesus Christ
- to compete as an athlete according to the rules in the Bible
- and to work hard as a farmer in God’s harvest.

Older and more mature Christians should give personal help to those who are faithful, teachable and very eager to receive more instruction and training.

2. When should you give personal help?

Teach. When should personal help be given? This depends very much on your own maturity, capacity, availability and willingness to teach and train others and on the calling God has given you.

But it also depends on how much you are involved in the young Christian’s life. For example, if you are the only Christian meeting with him, then you should try to meet one another at least once every week for 1½ to 2 hours to do the above mentioned 5 steps together.

However, if the young Christian is already meeting in your church service, house fellowship or discipleship group, then meet him whenever either he or you think it is really necessary.

3. How should you give personal help?

Read Matthew 20:25-28; Luke 22:24-27; Hebrews 10:24-25.

Discover and discuss. How should personal help be given?

Notes. Jesus teaches that an older and more mature Christian may not rule over a younger Christian, because that is the way of non-Christians. He does not permit a Christian worker to command any other Christian. Christian workers may not force another to do certain things, but he may teach, admonish (warn) and encourage. “Let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love (in relationships) and good deeds (in ministry).” Personal help should be given in the sphere of encouragement and building one another up!

5	PRAYER (8 minutes) [REACTIONS] 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.

(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 "Training new Christians through personal help" together with another person or group of people. Encourage older and more mature Christians to give personal help to new and younger Christians.
3. **Personal time with God.** Have a quiet time with God from half a chapter of Luke 18:18 – 21:38 each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. **Memorisation.** Review series G: "Christian marriage". (1) Leave and cleave. Genesis 2:24, (2) Love and lead. Ephesians 5:23,25, (3) Love and submit. Titus 2:4-5, (4) Resolve conflicts. Matthew 5:23-24, (5) Remain faithful. Proverbs 3:3-4.
5. **Bible study.** Prepare the next Bible study at home. John 13. Make use of the five steps method.
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.