

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this series about sharing from our quiet times you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will share from what they have learned from their quiet times. Every day during the past week we had a quiet time from a passage in the New Testament. Once a week we come together to share with one another what we have learned. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. We will first explain how to have a quiet time. Then we will share the important truths and lessons from our quiet times and try to answer some difficult questions. Today's topic is A DISCIPLE SHARES WHAT HE LEARNS FROM ACTS 15:1 to 17:34.

(S) **POINT 1. HOW TO HAVE A QUIET TIME AND SHARE**

Have a time of fellowship with God or quiet time every day of the week from one of the seven assigned Bible passages. An easy quiet time method is called "The favourite truth" method. It has 5 steps. Step 1. Pray and ask God to speak to you. Step 2. Read one of the seven assigned passages. Step 3. Choose your favourite truth. It is the truth, verse or passage through which God is speaking to you, stimulating your thinking or touching your heart. Step 4. Meditate on your favourite truth. Meditate by doing the following four things. First. *Think* about the meaning of words. Second. *Ask* God what he intends to say to you. Third. *Relate* your favourite truth to your life by making a practical application. Fourth. *Write* the most important thoughts of your meditation in a notebook so that you may share them with others. Step 5. Pray your favourite truth for yourself. Then pray your favourite truth for someone in your family. Then pray your favourite truth for someone nearby. And finally, pray your favourite truth for someone far away. When you meet together with one friend or with other Christians in a house fellowship or discipleship group, take turns to share the meditation of one of your quiet times. You may also try to answer some questions from the assigned passages.

(T) **POINT 2. SHARING FROM ACTS 15:1 – 18:28**

This past week we have read, meditated and prayed from Acts 15:1 – 18:28. Now we will use our quiet time notes to share truths and lessons from the assigned passages and discuss some questions.

**Sharing quiet times from Acts chapter 15.**

I want to share about the Old Testament ceremonial law. In Acts 15:1 we read that some people tried to convince the Christians to keep the ceremonial law of the Old Testament, saying, "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Is this true or not? Circumcision was a part of the "ceremonial law" of the Old Testament. Should Christians still keep the requirements of the Jewish ceremonial law or not? The Old Testament ceremonial law stipulated rules and regulations with respect to four areas of religious ceremonies. One. Rules with respect to holy persons, like the priests and the Levites. Two. Rules with respect to holy places, like the tabernacle and the temple. Three. Rules with respect to holy times, like the Sabbath, the religious fasts and feasts in Israel. Four. Rules with respect to holy actions, like circumcision, eating clean foods, offering sacrifices and bringing tithes. The question is, should Christians also keep these ceremonial laws or not? Some preachers came from Jerusalem to Antioch and said that unless the Christians keep the rules and regulations of the ceremonial law, they cannot be saved. This was a very serious statement. Their demand brought the apostle Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute with them and they all went to Jerusalem to decide this matter. Should Christians keep the law or not? Let us consider the teachings of the New Testament.

In Matthew 5:17 Jesus Christ said that he did not come to abolish the law, but *to fulfil the law*. Especially the book of the Hebrews teaches how Jesus Christ fulfilled the law. While in the Old Testament, there was one temple in which many priests served and in which daily sacrifices were brought, in the New Testament there is no more an earthly temple, no more earthly priests, who bring animal sacrifices, and no more animal sacrifices, because Jesus Christ himself became the only High Priest of the Christians and his death on the cross became the final perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people! Hebrews 7:12 says, "When there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law." Hebrews 8:5 says, "The temple is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven". Hebrews 10:1 says, "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming - not the realities themselves." And Hebrews 7:18-19 says, "The former regulation *is set aside* because it was weak and useless, for the law made nothing perfect, and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God." The New Testament clearly teaches in many places that the rules and regulations of the ceremonial law in the Old Testament have all been abolished! For example, Galatians 6:15 says the following about "circumcision": "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation." And Romans 2:28-29 says that real circumcision must be a circumcision of the heart, inwardly by the Holy Spirit, not outwardly and physically.

Finally, in Colossians 2:14 is written, "God cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross." *Because the ceremonial law has been*

*cancelled, Christians are set free from all its regulations.* And Ephesians 2:14-15 says, “Christ destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations.” By his death on the cross, *Christ abolished the ceremonial law and therefore Christians may not reintroduce it into the church and thus bring new divisions among believers!* In conclusion, Paul says in Romans 3:28, “A man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.” Here in Acts 15, the church came to the same conclusion. Christians are saved by faith, through grace and not by the law, which is like a heavy yoke on people.

(S) I want to ask a question about eating certain food, particularly “food sacrificed to the idols and blood and the meat of strangled animals”. Why do the apostles and elders at the Jerusalem meeting on the one hand tell people not to keep the ceremonial law of circumcision and on the other hand tell them to keep the ceremonial law of abstaining from eating certain food? In Acts 15:28-29 they say, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality.” Were these regulations not a part of the ceremonial law?

(T) While abstaining from sexual immorality is part of the moral law, the other three regulations were part of the ceremonial law in the Old Testament. However, the reason why the apostles and elders in Jerusalem requested the non-Jews (Gentiles) to abstain from these three things was *not to teach them to obey the Old Testament ceremonial law, but rather to teach them to obey the New Testament law of love*. Eating food that was previously sacrificed to dead idols and especially eating blood and the meat of strangled animals was a common practice among the non-Jews, but was an abhorrence for the Jews! In order to show Christian love to the believers from among the Jews, the believers from the Gentiles were commanded to refrain from eating those things.

Paul describes this *application of love* in Romans 14:1-5. He says, “Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgement on disputable matters. One man’s faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. ... Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.” During the time of Acts 15, the majority of Christians were still Jewish Christians, who were used to keeping the Old Testament ceremonial law. They would be offended if the Gentile Christians ate food that was “unclean” in their mind. Although the food rules of the Old Testament have been cancelled and abolished and the New Testament regards all food as “clean” (Mark 7:18-19), the law of Christian love demands that Christians should not eat food that offends their weaker brothers. The biblical command of love is never cancelled! Therefore, in order not to offend the weaker brothers in what they regarded as wrong, the Gentile Christians were asked to abstain from eating unclean food.

(S) I want to share from Acts 15:7-11 about how people are saved. People are saved by faith and not by keeping the law. During this meeting in Jerusalem, the apostle Peter stood up and told the assembly how God had saved the first Gentiles. Peter was relating how God had chosen him to be the first apostle to go to the Gentiles in Cornelius’ house and preach the gospel to Gentiles. Did God require these Gentiles to be circumcised before they could be saved? What happened in the house of Cornelius? Peter related that he first preached the gospel to them. Then they believed and God saw the faith in their hearts. Finally, God showed visibly that he also accepted believing Gentiles into the church by also giving to them the Holy Spirit. Peter said very clearly that *God made no distinction between how the non-Jews (Gentiles) and the Jews were saved*. God purified the hearts of both Jewish believers as well as Gentile believers by faith and not by the law. The apostle Peter then challenged the assembly, which consisted entirely of Jews, not to test God by reintroducing obedience to the ceremonial law as a requirement for Christians!

#### **Sharing quiet times from Acts chapter 16.**

(T) I want to share from Acts 16:6-10 about how the Holy Spirit guided the Christian workers. During the second missionary journey, Silas, Timothy and Luke accompanied Paul. They formed a missionary team. They had wanted to go the province of Asia, but the Holy Spirit kept them from going there. Then they tried to enter the province of Bithynia and again the Holy Spirit would not allow them to go there. So the team travelled upwards to Troas. During the night, the apostle Paul had a vision. He saw a man from Macedonia, a province across the sea in Europe. This man was begging them to go from Asia to Europe to help them. The whole team concluded that God wanted them to go to Europe and preach the gospel to the Europeans. This was the first time in recorded history that the gospel was preached in Europe, in the West! What I find intriguing is that *the Christian message did not originate in the West, but in the Middle East, which is a part of Asia!* And what I find encouraging is that *God the Holy Spirit is the director of the missionary work of the church!* He knows where everyone of the Christian workers should go.

(S) I want to share from Acts 16:14 about my responsibility and God’s responsibility. It says, “One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message.” *The responsibility of Christian workers is to preach the gospel. The responsibility of God is to open the hearts of the listeners!* When I preach the gospel and

people open their hearts to Jesus Christ, then I praise God for saving them. If they do not open their hearts to Jesus Christ, I should not blame myself, but continue to trust God that he knows what he is doing in the life of every human being on earth.

### **Sharing quiet times from Acts chapter 17.**

(T) I want to share from Acts 17:2-4 and verse 17, how Paul helped people to study the Bible. We read, “As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ’, he said. Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.” Paul’s custom was to find a group of people who wanted to study the Bible. Every week they would meet together and Paul would reason with them from the Scriptures.

The word “*reason*” literally means, “to ponder over” the truths in the Bible and “to discuss” those truths. During these discussions from the Bible, Paul as leader also explained and proved certain things from the Bible. The word “*explain*” literally means, “to open up completely” the Scriptures, that is, to explain the meaning of difficult passages. The word “*prove*” means, to show that what you say is clearly written in the Bible. Paul’s goal was to “*persuade*” the people to believe the truths written in the Bible.

In Ephesus, Paul had such Bible discussions every day for two years (Acts 19:8-10)! In Acts 17:11 we read, “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.” The new believers examined the Scriptures every day in order to discover the truth for themselves. They wanted to develop their own convictions about what the Bible said. The word “*examine*” literally means “to investigate the truth by searching and by asking questions” and then “to formulate your own convictions” about the truth so that you can discern and appraise the truth. This is how I now also want to do Bible study with other people. I will gather a group of Christians, about 8 people, and meet every week for Bible study and prayer. I will *lead them to discover and discuss the truths of a Bible passage for themselves*. I will explain the difficult questions, which they cannot solve themselves. I also encourage them to write down what they have learned from God.

(S) I want to share from Acts 17:24-27, about explaining who God is to non-Christians. We read, “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And human hands do not serve him, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.” Most non-Christians believe that there are many different gods in the world. They believe that these gods are the masters only of certain areas of life or of certain places in the world. They also believe that these gods live in temples and should be served by gifts and sacrifices brought to them in the temples. The Bible says that there is only one God and he is the living God, the God who revealed himself through the prophets and finally through Jesus Christ. The living God created the universe and rules over every aspect of this universe. *The living God does not live in temples or shrines that are built by human hands*, but he is present everywhere, sees everyone and knows everything about everyone. The Bible says that the living God revealed himself and desires that all the people in the world seek him and know him. The living God is not interested in our sacrifices or gifts, but he desires to possess our hearts and our love. He wants people to trust in him and relate to him throughout all the events in every day of their lives and not just during certain prayer times.

### (T) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Divide Acts 18:1 – 21:40 into seven passages. Every day have a quiet time from one passage. Record the meditations of all your quiet times in a notebook. Once a week meet with a friend or with a house fellowship or discipleship group and share from your quiet times.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and make disciples” and Internet on www. Etc

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