

**LIFE  
WITH JESUS  
THE NAZARENE**

*Welcome to a new step in the Life with Jesus the Nazarene!* You have read *The Story of Jesus the Nazarene*. You may have started a new life with Jesus, a life that is radically different from all you had experienced before. It was a true revolution, with a new lord governing your life, namely Jesus Christ.

After realizing that God loves you unconditionally and wants to be your friend you have started on *The Way with Jesus the Nazarene*. This has opened up new opportunities for you, your family, your everyday life. You have experienced that God loves you so much that he gives you strength to live as a Christian. This will not always be easy, sometimes it may cost you real sacrifices. But God has promised to be near you with his Spirit to guide you and help you.

The *Life with Jesus the Nazarene* will bring many surprises, some you'll like, others you won't like. God, however, has provided for you to be not alone, but serve him with others and for others. This book will help you to share His life with others and to enjoy your new life with Jesus to the fullest and make a real difference in your community and world.

This may be one of the most exciting books you'll ever read. It will trust you to do something that hardly anybody else will ask you to do - except Jesus Christ: You are invited to be a coworker with God, a person through whom Jesus Christ can build his church.

May God bless you richly while you cooperate with him in building his church!

Your friends from the  
*Church of the Nazarene*

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## *Share His Life*

A lake that only receives water will soon turn fresh water into salt water and eventually die. Only as it gives water to outflowing rivers can it stay sweet and refreshing. The same is true for a Christian. You cannot receive God's life and love and keep it for yourself if you want to be vibrant and refreshing for the people around you. But as you share His life new life will grow!

The Jewish authorities tried to shut down the early followers of Jesus, but they answered, "*we cannot help speaking about what we have actually seen and heard*" (Acts 4:20). Just a couple of months earlier they had been timid and ran away when the enemy appeared. Now they were prepared to even die for Jesus and wanted everybody to know that "*in no one else salvation can be found*" (Acts 4:12). How did this happen?

Jesus Christ had given them a totally new life, a life that was constantly being fed by streams of living water as he had pictured his Spirit (John 7:37-39). His goal was to make every Christian a living picture (eikon) of God, representing him in this world and sharing his life with those that aren't yet transformed by his love.

*Who are the people with whom you could share his life?* They are your family members, your friends and neighbours, your colleagues at work, the people in your town or village, in your province and country, and ultimately everybody that doesn't know God personally, even your adversaries or enemies! "*For his purpose is that all men should be saved and come to know the truth*" (1 Tim 2:4).

All around the world people are finding Jesus as their friend and leader. This opens up a totally new perspective for their lives. They are full of joy, and want to tell everybody what has happened. Probably you feel the same way. But you should be careful. Don't just rush ahead and tell people all their mistakes, and all they have to do or should stop doing. People generally don't like to be schoolmastered or talked into something.

*What they really look for is a friend!* They want somebody with whom they can share their problems and joys, who cares for them no matter who they are or have been. This will be difficult for you, and you may even experience disappointments. But nobody can really live without trusting others.

You'll find lots of people that are desperate and without hope. They feel they can trust nobody and that nobody trusts them. Jesus Christ will give you courage and strength to plant seeds of trust in the lives of people around you, people that may have even hurt you and misused you in the past.

You see, Jesus understands your personal hurt. Before he asked his followers to spread his message of love around the world they had actually left him, or like Peter even said, "I don't know him". Can you imagine how that must have hurt him after they had been with him for three years? But Jesus used this same Peter to build his church and changed a wavering coward into a solid rock.

*How do you win friends?* The most important step is to pray for the people you want to befriend. Talking with God about another person helps you to appreciate, to understand, and to love this person. And God will prepare him or her to be open to his love. While you pray ask God to open your eyes so that you can see the other person as God sees him or her and to give you his love for your new friend.

To build friendship invite your friend to share a cup of tea and try to find out what he or she is interested in like sports, books, music, children, etc. Show your new friend that you value him or her, and try to do something together in his or her field of interest. You may not always have the same interests, but in this way you will demonstrate how important the other person is to you. If you hear of any needs or problems your friend is facing try to help him or her as much as you can.

After you have established a real friendship or when the other person asks you tell him or her how you have experienced God's love and that you want to share His life with him or her. You may give your new friend a copy of *The Story of Jesus the Nazarene* that he or she can learn more about God's wonderful love to every man, woman, and child on this earth.

Many people will initially be astonished or even suspicious if you act that way, because they have never felt they were important to anybody. Others may have just pushed them around or seen them as a number to fulfill a planned goal. They were never allowed to make their own decisions or to have a personal opinion. Then, please, don't give up! Paul writes, God's "*love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope, it can outlast anything. Love never fails*" (1 Cor 13:7.8). This love is given to you in Jesus!

Don't try to build too many friendships at one time. Experts say that you can not really be friends with more than seven people at the same time if you want to do more than just say, "hello". Of course that doesn't exclude answering people's questions. If they want to know why you are suddenly so different, you should tell them how Jesus has changed you and what he can do for them. If you find it difficult to talk about Jesus you can still give them *The Story*

of *Jesus the Nazarene* with the words, "this book contains a message that has totally changed my life. I am happy to let you read it".

*Why should you invite people to your home?* The home has traditionally been the place of hospitality where people warm up around the fireplace and share a meal of friendship. The quality of the home is not important rather the depth of love, welcome, and fellowship. For many centuries the church met mainly in private homes, and most churches started as "house-churches". Even in the New Testament you can often read, "*greet so and so and the church in his house*".

This makes lots of sense for God is a personal god. He is not confined to church buildings or services and masses on Sundays. He wants to be part of your whole life and transform your home and your workplace. Actually the home may be a better place to serve God, because he is an everyday God, not a Sunday only God!

When you invite people to your home, they will realize that God is more for you than just a wonderful tradition. He is the center of your life, the unseen guest at your table, the friend who helps you conquer life's problems, the one person who shares His life with you and whose life you share!

Making friends and inviting people to your home to read the Bible and pray doesn't mean you have to live in a large house or have to provide a big meal! It is more important to create a friendly atmosphere and to show God's love by a smile on your face and a welcome that comes from your heart. Jesus Christ lived like a beggar, but he welcomed people like a king. His love will enable you to serve people like he did.

Some people will try to convince you that all of this is the responsibility of paid church ministers.

Well, they should certainly do it, too. But the Bible doesn't make that much difference between a "normal Christian" and "special church employees". God expects every Christian to share His life with others around him, and he helps every Christian to do it successfully.

Peter, one of the early followers of Jesus, addresses all God's people as *"a chosen generation, his royal priests, his holy nation, God's very own, to demonstrate the goodness of him who has called you out of darkness into his wonderful light"* (1 Ptr 2:9).

⇒ **Some Steps to "Share His Life":**

- Make a list of the names of people (family members, friends, relatives, neighbours, colleagues, etc) with whom you would like a closer relationship.
- Select 5-7 that are especially important to you, and start praying for them. Pray that God helps you to see the other person as God sees him or her.
- Pray for opportunities to talk with them, get to know them and their interests, and do something for or with them. When you know enough plan a time to actually act according to what you found out.
- Ask God to help you to invest trust into others.
- If you have friends that love Jesus, too, invite them for a cup of tea at your home with one or the other person from your list to show them that they are important to you. (This is especially important if the person you invite is of the other sex.)
- Don't get discouraged if some things don't work out the way you planned it. Try again, and keep praying for these people.

## **Follow His Leadership**

Jesus Christ was not really that interested in programs, buildings, or public recognition. He was interested in people, and he loved them! He saw beyond their outward appearance, rich or poor, young or old, nice or ugly, he saw their hearts, *"as he looked at the vast crowds he was deeply moved with pity for them, for they were as lost and miserable as a flock of sheep with no shepherd"* (Matth 9:36).

Jesus Christ knew: People look for somebody who can show them a way out of their desperation and hopelessness, they look for new meaning to their life, they want to know whether there is life after death and how they can be saved, they look for help to solve their personal, family, and community problems, they want true friends who love them and a purpose to live for.

That was true 2,000 years ago, and it is true today. But there is one difference, Jesus Christ needs you to reach out to these people. He will not send his angels, he is waiting for you to go ahead and be his coworker. And he has promised, *"all power in heaven and on earth has been given to me ... and I am with you always, even to the end of the world"* (Matth 20:18,20).

Down through the centuries people have heard God's call. Some were intellectuals, priests or church officials, but most were simple people who had no theological education (like Peter and the other early followers of Jesus). They saw the need and hopelessness of their countrymen and felt that they could trust God to touch and transform the lives of these people through them.

God has called you, too! Maybe you feel like Timothy, Paul's young friend. He was a bit timid in

view of God's call. Paul encouraged him, "*be strong in the grace that Christ Jesus gives. Everything that you have heard me teach you should in turn entrust to reliable men, who will be able to pass it on to others*" (2 Tim 2:1.2).

There is one characteristic that distinguishes a leader from other people, he or she has a *goal*. And a good leader will *communicate* this goal to other people and *enable* them to reach the goal together with him or her. Let's look at these three characteristics.

*The goal of a Christian leader* is to follow Christ's leadership as closely as possible. This is only possible if you study his word and talk with him in prayer every day, and if you live in the power of His Spirit (see *The Way of Jesus the Nazarene*). One problem of being a leader is that people will always watch you. They expect you to lead by your example. Paul was so confident of his life with God that he wrote, "*copy me, my brothers, as I copy Christ himself*" (1 Cor 11:1).

It would be too much to explain all the fields where you should be an example as they have been outlined in detail in *The Way of Jesus the Nazarene*. (It would be good to reread the main points regularly.) Your bible study will help you to follow Jesus closer every day. But we want to emphasize a few fields.

A good Christian leader knows that his time and money, his family and workplace belong to God, and he will always ask himself, how can I best serve God with what he has entrusted to me? He or she will lead a disciplined life remembering God's command, "*do not get drunk on wine; instead, be (constantly) filled with the Spirit*" (Eph 5:18). And a good leader will above all be concerned for those that need his help

rather than his own well-being. He or she will do all to share God's love with others.

*A good Christian leader will communicate Christ's leadership to others.* This is much more difficult than it sounds the first moment. Communication is more than just telling people like a teacher or an indoctrinator where one talks and the rest has to listen. If you truly want to communicate you have to know your people. This is why we talked about making friends.

You have to know what they want and need, how they live, where they come from, what God and life mean to them just now. When you talk with people look at them and pray that God will help you to see them as he sees them, and say to them what he wants to be said. The best language to speak when you really want to communicate is the language of love.

Sometimes that will be difficult. Maybe you are tired or had a difficult day. Maybe the other person had a hard day, or just isn't the person with whom it is easy to have a good relationship. Then remember, God is with you. He will love these people through you.

*A good Christian leader will enable people to live under Christ's leadership.* This means communicating what you yourself have learned. But it is more, it also means caring for others with sacrificial love. In the *Legend of the Grand Inquisitor* Dostoyevsky tells the story of a church leader who has imprisoned Jesus. He tells him that you cannot build God's kingdom and really help people the way Jesus did, and this is why "*we have corrected your work and have founded it upon miracle, mystery, and authority*".

Finally the 90 year old leader finishes and waits for Jesus' answer. But Jesus doesn't say anything, just looks gently in his face. "*Suddenly He approached*

*the old man in silence and softly kissed him on his bloodless, aged lips. That was all his answer".* This is the way God enables us to follow his leadership. He loves us no matter what we have said or done, and he continues to love us even when we reject and crucify him. And he wants to love others through us, *"yes, we love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:18).*

What do you have to sacrifice in order to be God's leader enabling others to follow him? You have to *sacrifice power over others*. A Christian leader doesn't play the big boss, but serves people as Jesus said, *"whoever wants to be first must be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matth 20:27.28).* The authority of a Christian leader doesn't come from his power over people, but from his serving them with God's love.

You also have to *sacrifice religious status*. Being a Christian leader doesn't make you an intermediary to God, because Jesus Christ is the only mediator. And he has offered free access to God for everybody, *"by virtue of the blood of Jesus, you and I may now have confidence to enter the holy place by a fresh and living way ... (so) let us draw near with true hearts and fullest confidence" (Hebr 10:19-20.22).* God wants us to have fellowship with him, but he doesn't force us, and thus a Christian leader frees people for a personal relationship with God.

Finally you have to *sacrifice religious show*. God can and does perform miracles, he may even use you to serve people in such a way. But he doesn't want us to seek the miraculous or the miracle worker, he wants us to seek him. Your responsibility is to lead people to freedom in Jesus Christ, *"every man who commits sin is a slave. If the Son, then, sets you free, you are really free" (John 8:34.36).* And Paul adds, *"plant your feet firmly within the freedom that Jesus*

*Christ has won for us, and do not let yourselves be caught again in the shackles of slavery" (Gal 5:1).*

You can lead people into God's freedom and help them see, how he loves them. This will enable them to live life with new strength, to tackle everyday's problems, to transform their world according to God's principles, and to glorify His name.

⇒ **Some Steps to "Follow His Leadership":**

- Write down several of God's promises that empower you to pass on the Good News.
- List the major characteristics of Christ's leadership.
- Try to formulate in your own words what God wants to do through you.
- List several areas where you are copying Jesus Christ and where you should start doing it.
- Try to find out how you could better communicate God's love to other people (choose actual people, don't discuss it just in theory).
- Write down what sacrificial love means.
- List some of the bondages by which people in your area are bound. Pray for God to give you a heart of love and wisdom to lead people into His freedom.

## *Glorify His Name*

Many people have tried to explain what the church is. Some have looked at doctrines, others at actions, and didn't like what they saw. So they started to speak about the "true church", but nobody really knows what that would be. Paul characterized the church with these words, *"Christ gave himself to make the Church holy, having cleansed her through the baptism of his Word - to make her an altogether glorious Church in his eyes. She is to be free from spots, wrinkles or any other disfigurement - a Church holy and perfect"* (Eph 5:26. 27). This means that the Church is to be a picture and a pointer (icon) to God and his glory.

It is important to see that God doesn't necessarily give a blueprint what the "true Church" is under any and all circumstances, but he outlines certain principles. He wants his Church to use these principles according to the situation in which she is. *"Love your neighbor"*, for example, is one of God's principles. The way *how* you love your neighbor can, however, be quite different from one situation to the next. If your neighbor is hungry love means to feed him, but if he has spent all money on alcohol and has nothing left to buy bread love must be tough and tackle the root of the problem. God wants us to use our God-given intelligence to apply his principles to everyday decisions. What are some of his principles for the Church?

*Each Christian has received some gifts and skills from God.* The Church of Jesus the Nazarene is not like a crowd in a stadium that watches a few professionals play football, cheering or whistling according

to the action on the field. Christians are part of the team, they help win the victory. But not everybody can do everything. Some are good in scoring, others in defense, some work behind the scenes arranging food, tools, medicines etc. Some people would prefer being on the field (which is okay if that is their gift), but it is important to see that you can only win if everybody does his or her part even if it isn't in the limelight.

The Bible emphasizes, "*serve one another with the particular gifts God has given each of you*" (1 Peter 4:10 - read Romans 12, 1. Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4:11-14 for a list of these gifts). Not everybody has all gifts, but each Christian has at least one or two gifts. Sometimes it is difficult to find out which gift a person has. To pray, read the Bible, talk with other Christians about it, and try to use a gift can be a way to find out.

Somebody may for example have the gift of *evangelism*, and thus easily be able to approach others with the message of God's love and lead them into fellowship with God. Another person may not be able to talk much at all, but just loves to *serve* other people and show God's love in a practical way. Both gifts are equally important. Though every member has a different responsibility, they will only together reach their full potential.

Skills are much easier to recognize (e.g. cooking, car repair, languages, music, accounting, etc.), most of them can be learned, but all can be used in the church in one way or the other. It is important that each person finds his place where he or she can serve others, and that those who have many skills or gifts don't deprive the others of their opportunity to glorify God through their gifts and skills.

*The way Christians live and work together should be peaceful.* It is sad to say, but Christians have not

always been a good example in how they have treated one another. That was even true in the first church, so Paul encouraged the Corinthians to settle their problems in the church and not go to court (1 Cor 6:1.2).

In the same church people had different opinions on how a church service should be, and Paul reminded them that *"God is not a God of disorder but of harmony and peace"* (1 Cor 14:33). In many cases what Christians do may not be so different from what non-Christians do, but *how* they do it could be very different. For a Christian the goal doesn't justify the means, but he should act holy (in a way that honors God). That means that even if the goals of a Christian are good he won't reach them at any cost, but only if he can act holy and Christ-like.

Paul warned his young co-worker Timothy, not to get into stupid discussions that make no sense, but to *"concentrate on winning God's approval, on being a workman with nothing to be ashamed of, and who knows how to use the word of truth to the best advantage"* (2 Tim 2:15). In conclusion, in the church people serve others and God, not their own interests or special ideas. Above all they want to glorify God.

This can also be seen in how they treat superiors and civil authorities (Rom 13:1-7). Christians are no political revolutionaries, but should win ill-informed people and even their adversaries with good deeds and love (1 Ptr 2:13-17). Some people have criticized Christians because of this biblical principle. But there is something that is more powerful than all the armies and weapons of this world, and that is the love of God reaching out to a world of hate through God's people.

*God loves men who give cheerfully.* Christians are people that don't want to keep everything for them-

selves, but understand that *"to give is happier than to receive"* (Acts 20:35). A Christian knows that all he has is a gift of God. He may have worked hard for his salary, but without health and intelligence given by God the situation would be quite different. This is why Paul encourages the church to support those that are in need (2 Cor 8:13, 9:6-11).

Wherever Christians meet they bring their gifts to God, most people bring money, others bring goods like food or products, to show that they love God and want his love to spread. These gifts are not to make the pastor or church rich, but to help the poor, old, needy, and neglected, and to win others to Christ. These gifts should be administered by two or three people, carefully recorded (both income and expenses), and used according to what the church group decides.

Part of it may be directly used for church work like renting a room for meetings, for literature to help people better understand God and his word, or for special training courses. Some churches help those that bring God's word to them. Paul writes, *"the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel"* (1 Cor 9:14). But on the other hand Paul didn't use this privilege (take money), because he didn't want to hinder the gospel. His principle was, *"I have been all things to all sorts of men that by every possible means I might win some to God"* (1 Cor 9:22).

Having a fully paid local pastor is not required for being a church. (Some people might even feel mistakenly the church is exploiting others.) A preacher, however, that works in a company for his living is much closer to the problems of those whom he brings the message of God. (A superintendent or bishop, however, who helps many churches will need support in order to be free for his or her service.)

In any case at least 10 % of the individual church's income should go to help others (see chapter 5). God blesses not only individuals, but whole churches that are more concerned about others than themselves. This is why some churches give 50 % or more of their income for other people that need God's love. They trust God's promise, "*generous sowing means a generous harvest ... God can give you more than you can ever need, so that you may always have sufficient for yourselves and enough left over to give to every good cause*" (2 Cor 9:6.8).

*Christian churches have a purpose to live for, they are to declare God's praise and glorify his name. This doesn't just happen. Paul emphasizes, "I run with determination, I go straight for the goal". How should the goals of a church look like?*

They should be *precise* and *clear*. Nobody can reach general goals ("help everybody") or ones that contradict another. You should be able to *measure* the goals and your progress (for example, "contact 21 new people in the next 6 months, we are 7 and want to contact 1 new person every two months").

These should be *goals of faith*. A goal of faith is a goal that you cannot reach by yourself, but need God's help for. It is not an irrational goal, but one where you take risks, because you count on God and his promises. It really is a goal that comes out of prayer, and is constantly supported by prayer. You may for example want to share God's love with a town of 100,000 people. Although God wants everybody to experience his love there is no way you can do that with a small group in a month or two or even in a year, i.e. such a goal makes no sense, because you can't even reach it with a miracle of God. But you could ask him to lead you to a specific number of strategic people (that you may not even know

yet) that will come to know God and spread his love with you so that the town is reached step by step.

If you follow these principles you will continue to grow into God's image of a true church and glorify his name. In the next four chapters we will concentrate on several other principles that characterize a Christian church. They are so important that we will discuss them separately.

⇒ *Some Steps to "Glorify His Name":*

- Study God's gifts as they are explained in the Bible. Discuss with your group which gifts and skills each of you may have and how you can best use them.
- Try to formulate in written form the principles for a Christian church as they were explained in this chapter.
- Agree in your group on a program of giving, and discuss areas where your help may be needed.
- Agree in your group on a financial plan, and elect two or three people that can handle your finances in an effective and responsible way.
- Take time to ask God together in prayer to show you the goals he wants you to reach with his help. Make a plan of action and control it step by step.

## *Share His Love*

The early Christians faced times of severe persecution. Many of them were imprisoned and sentenced to death. One fact, however, turned many of their tormentors into Christians, a supernatural love in their eyes, words, and deeds, the love of God. Paul writes about this love in *1 Corinthians 13*, "love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. Love never fails" (verse 7.8 - read the whole chapter).

Many people in our society have never experienced true love. True love is unconditional love, a love that doesn't say, "I love you, if ...". This is the love which God has shown to us, "the proof of God's amazing love is this: that it was while we were sinners that Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). Yes, he even died for us before we were born. This is absolutely astonishing, and even some Christians have problems with it. They believe Christ died for a few elect, for the decent people, those who do their best to live according to God's principles.

The incredible fact though is that Jesus Christ died for everybody, the good and the evil, the religious and the atheists, those that ignore him and those that reject him. He loves man so much that he even accepts a "no", and doesn't force anybody to follow him. John, one of the early followers of Jesus concluded, "friends, if God loved us as much as that, surely we in our turn should love each other! If we love each other God does actually live within us, and his love grows in us towards perfection" (1 John 4:11.12).

What does this mean in practical terms? From the very beginning Christians realized that their Christian life would be in serious danger without fellowship with other Christians. This is why Paul organized groups of Christians wherever he went. Some of them were small, others were larger. Some had leaders that had some understanding of the Bible, others had just heard for the first time that God loved them and entrusted their life to God. Some lived in major cities and cultural centers, others in small towns and villages that hardly anybody knew. But Paul was convinced that Jesus would build his church, no matter how great the obstacles would be, because this is what Jesus had promised.

Certainly, this is somewhat uncommon. Today pastors and church officials start churches and are responsible for their growth. But there is no reason why God shouldn't be able to do today what he did 2,000 years ago. There is no reason why God shouldn't enable you with the help of His Spirit to find others that love God or want to know his love and start a local church. You may feel incompetent, but so did many of the first Christians. You are not called to display Christian competence, but to *share His love*.

After making friends with people as discussed earlier, you invite them to meet with you for a clear purpose, to come to know God, his Word, and his love better. (For this you obviously need a number of Bibles; if you can't get any, contact us and we will help you.) Don't invite too many people, if the group grows too big right away it will be difficult to really get to know one another. If your group grows over 15-20 it may be a good idea to have two meetings, one for the larger group, and another one where you meet in smaller groups of 10-20 people.

The smaller group should enable people to learn to love each other, to share their joys and sorrows, get help for problems, understand the Bible and realize what it means for them, their families, their workplace, and your community. Generally people have hardly anybody whom they can trust. This fellowship will help them to trust God and his children, find brothers and sisters that really love them.

The love you need for your fellowship to grow is one of commitment, a commitment to one another. Each group member will need to make a decision to encourage the others, not to pull them down through criticism. To be open and honest to each other, even if it hurts, for real help is only possible if we allow God to look beyond the surface and into our hearts.

If you sit together and talk about your personal difficulties and hurts you are not gossiping or complaining. You rather go to God, your father in heaven, and trust him to understand you, hug you, and let His love heal your wounds. This of course means that what you say has to stay in your group, you don't talk about it to somebody else than Jesus in prayer.

Some problems cannot be solved at once. Some people have un-Christian habits (like heavy drinking, cheating, or stealing) that took them years to "develop". God can free you in one moment, but often he doesn't because he wants us to learn to trust him and dedicate our lives to him totally. In any case it will be necessary to support others and have time when they need you, to be near them, encourage them, pray for them, and strengthen them in their decision to say no to temptation. In all these cases it is helpful to be accountable to each other, to agree on rules of action, group responsibilities, progress reports, and mutual evaluation.

One of the most important aspects of this committed love is prayer. Paul writes to his young co-worker Timothy, *"I urge first of all that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone - for kings and all those in authority" (1 Tim 2:1.2)*, and he reminds the Ephesians that *"our fight is not against any physical enemy; it is against organizations and powers that are spiritual. We are up against the unseen power that controls this dark world, and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil" (Eph 6:12)*. Why is it so important to know this fact?

You cannot fight and overpower the enemy if you don't know him. Your enemies are not people even if they are quite nasty; your enemies are not organizations even if they are quite bothersome. Your enemy is the devil and his powers, and you can only overcome him by prayer, by linking with God's power resources. You are powerless against the powerful devil, but if you unite in prayer with the almighty God nobody and nothing can stop you.

Actually the church, you are called to reign this world by prayer. Earlier in his letter Paul wants the church to realize, *"how tremendous is the power available to us who believe in God. That power is the same divine energy which was demonstrated in Christ when he raised him from the dead" (Eph 1:19.20)*. There will be times when you need to meet as a church to pray for an individual, a family, your community or country with this power of God, and God will answer your prayers. You may even see miracles happening.

He doesn't do that, because you are such a good Christian, because your words are nice, or because you have prayed long enough. Actually all these things are quite unimportant, even getting the help of a minister of the church or of a saint doesn't

make any difference at all. There is only one reason why God answers prayer, because he has promised it by the honor of his name. If you put God's interests and honor first in your prayer you can count on him answering it.

You will *share His love* by inviting people into your fellowship and by being committed to serve each other with God's love and pray for one another in his power. And you can do that by following his steps.

⇒ **Some Steps to "Share His Love":**

- Make a list of people for whom you want to pray as a group. Pray specifically, not just generally.
- Design a sort of "covenant" that helps your small group to be committed to each other in love.
- Study the letter of Paul to the Ephesians, and write in your own words which authority God has given to his church.
- Take your list of people (friends) with whom you want to share God's love. Pray for each of them, then make a plan of action, *I will share God's love with .... by ....* (be as specific as possible in what you want to do with God's help, how you want to encourage and serve each of your new friends).
- Don't give up if something doesn't work the first time. Continue to pray and share His love.

## **Follow His Steps**

Jesus Christ was radically different from all the religious leaders of his time. He demanded total commitment to himself and his cause, *"if anyone wants to follow in my footsteps, he must give up all right to himself, carry his cross every day and keep close behind me. For the man who wants to save his life will lose it, but the one who loses his life for my sake will save it"* (Luke 9:23.24).

At another time he told a story to explain his principle of service, *"I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me"* (Matth 25:35.36). He called those that would act in such a way 'blessed' (= makarios). This Greek word describes the quality of a god, in other words a divine behaviour.

The people that were addressed in such a way were very astonished. They had no idea when they should have served Jesus in such a way. But he explained to them, *"I assure you, whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me"* (Matth 25:40). If you really want to live the life of Jesus the Nazarene you will follow his steps and serve the lonely, neglected, helpless, and hopeless cases. You will speak for those that have no voice, for whom nobody cares, for those that may be despised or even hated by society. For Jesus Christ came to seek and save the lost.

The people around you may hate Jews or gypsies, they may despise other races or peoples, but Jesus

Christ enables you to love them. He can even help you to love your worst enemy, people that torment and persecute you. This is not a sign of weakness. On the contrary, the power of love in action is divine and invincible. What does that mean for your church?

*The Church is an agent of God's love in society.* Materialism has turned men's heart into stone. How else could we neglect our old people just because they can no longer "produce for society"? How could we isolate orphans and handicapped children and adults just because they are "unproductive"? Christians are called to help these people, clothe and feed them, love them in word and deed.

It seems that in our time nationalism and racism is lifting its ugly head again. All people are equal before God. He loves all races, peoples, and even the outcasts. Christians are grateful for their earthly motherland, but they know that their citizenship is in heaven where men from every nation and tribe, people and language will stand before God without any discrimination. This is why they reach out to everybody with God's love.

An old joke says, "in capitalism man gets exploited by man, in communism it is the other way round". In truth, men have always been exploiting other men since the world exists. Some people do it directly, others less direct. Some people quote great ideological or even religious reasons for it, others are just egotistical. The Bible suggests that Christians should esteem other persons higher than themselves, treat others in a way oneself would like to be treated, and overcome the exploiter with love. And God has promised to help his children to live in such a way (Rom 8:31-39).

*The Church is an agent of God's love to the suffering.* There are all sorts of reasons why people suf-

fer. Sometimes God uses suffering to lead his followers into a closer relationship with him. Suffering, however, is a result of man's sin, of personal sin or the sin of others. The Bible teaches that there will be a day when all suffering will be over, a day when God will wipe away every tear from our eyes, when death, sorrow, crying, and pain will be no more (Rev 21: 3.4).

The Church is called to carry God's transforming love to the sick, the dying, the poor. This love is more than just nice words. It comes with the power of God that can heal the sick (with or without a doctor), with a strength that creates a new life that never ends, with wealth that enables to share and multiply even the humblest gift.

This love will do more than just treat the effects, it will go to the root of the problem. It will help people to find a job or create job opportunities. It will provide preventative health care and foster a healthier life style. It will train people in vocational skills and educate them to serve their society. It will *"seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you"* (Jer 29:7), as the prophet Jeremiah wrote to the people of Israel when they were exiled to Babylon.

The whole Bible emphasizes that a godly life style is not passive, but rather active. It doesn't accept everything as god-given, or sees the world as the devil's playground. It rather claims this world for God, and expects God's followers to enlarge his kingdom of love by transforming individual lives, families, and whole communities according to his principles. It doesn't promise that we can build a paradise on earth, but it enables us to follow His steps and share His love.

*The Church is an agent of God's love for sinners.* Everybody who lives without God is a sinner, but in

some lives you can see the direct results of sin. Excessive drinking of alcohol or smoking destroys the body (and mind) that God has given us. But it is not only the individual who suffers. Often the family, especially the children, pay a terrible toll. They get abused, and often live without life's basic necessities and without love. Sometimes terrible crimes happen or people get killed, because a person cannot control himself nor his car.

This is why we believe it would be best if Christians did not drink alcohol or smoke at all. In this way they could show their disagreement with the terrible consequences of excess, and help those that want to be free from bondage. But Christians don't despise those suffering from the results of sin, rather they love them. They will do everything to help them to true freedom in Jesus Christ. For Jesus can free people even from the strongest bondage!

This help requires committed love, prayer, constant support and contact, new opportunities and friends, and patient faith in a God for whom nothing is impossible. These problems are so important not only because they destroy individual lives, but also because they ruin society. There is no way a successful company or economy can be build, when 10, 20, or even 30% of the people are alcoholics. But there is good news, Jesus Christ died on the cross so that everybody who wants to be free from sin, can be free and can overcome temptation.

God's love can even transform adulterers or prostitutes and penetrate prison walls. He offers hope to everybody, even the worst criminals. The last person to whom Jesus talked on the cross was a criminal. He recognized that he was lost and pleaded to Jesus. And he answered him, *"this day you will be with me in paradise"*. In the same way Jesus is prepared to open up a new way to everybody who

agrees with his or her sin, reaches out to him, asks for his help, and accepts his cure of a radical transformation. He doesn't want to improve one's life style or reform one's behaviour, he wants to make everything new.

Christians are agents of this new life, ambassadors of the Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ. And this is why churches follow his steps and reach out with his love to those whom nobody loves.

⇒ ***Some Steps to "Follow His Steps":***

- Prepare a list of all the hospitals, orphanages, prisons, homes for the elderly, homes for the handicapped in your area.
- Try to find out what the needs in these institutions are and see whether you can help in one way or the other.
- Pray with your people for God to show you people suffering from sin who want to be free, to see their real needs and how you may be involved in solving them.
- Try to find out which gifts you have in your church, prepare a plan of action, and try to get as many people involved as possible.
- If there are larger needs where you can't help, contact our office to find out whether others may be able to work with you (describe the situation specifically).
- Ask God to open your eyes for the needs in your immediate neighborhood, and to give you wisdom how you may be able to share his love in a practical way.

## ***Sense His Spirit***

Jesus has promised his church that they would not be alone, but he would guide and help them through his Spirit. This Spirit is a spirit of freedom, "*plant your feet firmly within the freedom that Christ has won for us, and do not let yourselves be caught again in the shackles of slavery. Listen, if you consent to be circumcised then Christ will be of no use to you at all*" (Gal 5:1.2). Paul emphasizes here a double freedom, a freedom *from* the slavery of old forms, and a freedom *to* serve Christ and his world.

The *Life with Jesus the Nazarene* is therefore not to be lived in a ghetto, separated from the world, abiding with strange forms, rituals, and behaviors. It is a life of people who are free to serve others, adapt to their needs, and love them by valuing the individual more than even their traditions. This doesn't mean, of course, that there should be no forms or traditions at all, but that such forms and traditions should be honored and developed that help people to come to know God and love him.

God's Holy Spirit will help you to do this well. When you live in close fellowship with him (by reading God's word and by prayer) he will guide you to understand people, appreciate, and serve them the right way. Here are some important principles for an effective church ministry.

*Work according to a plan.* Many people waste an incredible amount of time, because they just respond to what happens. But time is a gift of God, and you should use it wisely as Paul writes, "*make the best use of your time, despite all the evils of these days*" (Eph 5:16). If you want to work effectively you should

set priorities (do the most important things first), and then work according to them. You may have a small group of friends with whom you meet regularly to decide a general action plan for your group. In any case you'll need to prepare each meeting you have (see also next chapter), and the services to your community (see last chapter).

Planning is needed if you want to have a special program (time, place, invitations), invite a speaker or new people from your neighborhood. The same is true for visiting your new friends (plan to visit them regularly, and prepare beforehand what you will do or say).

*Recognize and use the opportunities.* Many people are open or even waiting for God's love to touch their lives. This is why Paul encourages, "*be wise in your behavior to non-Christians, and make the most of every opportunity*" (Col 4:5). When you start a new day or discuss a new program always pray for God to give you an open and sensitive heart for your fellowmen to communicate and practice God's love.

People that are new in your community or neighborhood are especially open to new contacts and friends. The same is true for people who have lost a family member or have personal, work, or family problems. They need help and probably are more open for a friendship with God. You should also approach people that others neglect, despise, or see as second-class-citizens with the love of God offering your friendship.

Your community may need help, too. Christians have a message of hope that can transform lives and help create a better community. Serving your neighbors in practical ways by caring for children, offering a camp program for teenagers and young adults, establishing a food service for the poor, etc. will open doors to the hearts of people. If you have a special

program (e.g. how to educate your children in a Christian way) and want to invite others, advertise it by informing people personally and with posters and fliers.

Your brothers and sisters, and those in your church may look for special help on various fields. In any case it is helpful to organize special interest or age groups that meet separately once a week. Some suggestions are groups for children, teenagers, young adults, young families, older people; music, outreach, language, knitting, skills groups, etc. Everything people love to do or where they need help can give you an opportunity to not only help them, but bring them also into a closer relationship with God.

*Prepare a place.* You will have to decide where you meet and to which place you invite people. A church, prayer-house, or temple is not necessary in order to worship God. You could meet in your home (like in the early church where Christians mostly met in homes), but sooner or later this space may not be large enough. Then it would be good to look for a public room that is easily accessible by public transport, not too far away for most of your people, and easy to find for new people.

Such places could be a school, community center, cinema, theater, or any other larger room or hall that is available on a Sunday. But as you may need to pay a fee for using a building you should be careful that your church has enough money to pay the bill. Pray that you find the right place for the right price. God can touch the heart of local officials or individuals so that you may even get something free.

The way people worship God is very different and depends on the time, place, and culture. But it is important to meet in small groups (during the week) for personal fellowship and support, and in a larger

"service" (once a week) where you praise God together. Some Christians are meeting for several hours on Sundays, and discuss problems in small groups, then meet for a service, share a meal together, and stay together even afterwards for games, joy, and fellowship. This will portray that Jesus Christ is interested in our whole life, not just in "serious" issues.

Get *help* from others. If you want to know more about how a church is structured, we are happy to send you a small booklet about the international *Church of the Nazarene*. It will tell you how you can be a part of a worldwide fellowship of Christians that help each other to spread the love of Jesus around the world.

We are also happy to help you with further study material, some in printed form and others on audio or video tapes. If you need additional help to start a church group or to continue working with it, we are certainly prepared to visit and help you. Just write to the address at the end of this book, and we will try to do what we can.

If you feel God calls you not only to organize a church, but also to serve his people as a pastor we are happy to help you as much as we can. We offer regular courses that offer intensive biblical training and show how you can be a Christian leader. Some of these are comprehensive courses over a few days, others are taught in a classroom setting at one of our centers, and for some we are prepared to come and teach them where you live. We may also be able to give you certain courses in written form. (Write to our office for more details on how you can be the leader God intended you to be).

Meeting regularly to listen to God's word and pray together is not an option. It is what God wants from us, *"let us not give up meeting together, as some do,*

*but let us do all we can to help one another's faith" (Hebr 10:25). This may be totally new for you, and you may initially have some problems. But remember that you are called to share His love, not to create a big program. Jesus has promised you, "wherever two or three people have come together in my name, I am there, right among them" (Matth 18:20).*

⇒ **Some Steps to "Sense His Spirit"**

- Try to find a group of people that share responsibility with you. Pray and devise with them an action plan for your church according to priorities.
- Make a list of the group of people you serve or want to serve. Try to find out what their needs and interests are, then work on establishing small groups for them.
- Challenge some of your people to pray specifically for all new people in your area, and for those that hurt or face major problems. Have them develop steps to be-friend these people and share God's love with them.
- Communicate to your people that you are not alone, but that other Christians are your friends who want to help you and serve God with you.
- Have a regular time of prayer (at least once a week) where you pray for your church and the people you want to reach by name. Trust in God's presence and guidance in sharing his love.
- Remember, we are happy to visit you and help you get started. Just send a note to our office.

## *Worship His Majesty*

One of the greatest theologians of all times has summarized the Good News thus, *man's purpose is to know God and enjoy him forever*. To know God we have to study his word, and to enjoy him we have to love him. Both aspects are closely intertwined. You will only really love God if you know him. The more you know him the more you'll love him, and the more you love him the closer you'll want to know him.

All of this, however, is not just an intellectual exercise. It will lead you to worship God. *For only those who praise and worship God in his majesty truly know him*. In order to praise God you don't need to be in a church building. You can do it anytime at any place. Actually the whole life of a Christian is to praise God as Paul explains, *"in Christ we have been chosen ... so that we may bring praise to his glory"* (Eph 1:11.12). This does, however, not keep Christians from meeting at least once every week to praise and worship God together.

These meetings have traditionally included a time of praising God with music, song, and prayer, and a time of explaining the Bible. For in order to truly praise God you have to listen to him when his word is read and preached. Some churches add to these elements the celebration of the Lord's Supper every Sunday, something that the Bible doesn't require nor forbid. The early church had Communion every time they met to remember the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and to receive new strength and joy for their Christian life. Others add a time of service by sharing personal or community needs in small groups

and praying for it. Your financial gifts (see chapter 3) serve others, too, and by them you worship God with a thankful heart.

*Praising God in music and song.* This has always been a central part of Christian worship. The style of music and song has changed down through the centuries as Christians tried to express their love for God from their heart. The style differs also because of cultural differences, Africans for example sing much louder and are more rhythmic than Northern Europeans who are more reserved.

We are happy to help you with Christian music, hymns, and songs, but finally you need to decide on your own what is best for you and your people. In any case it should express the joy you have in Christ, your love for him, and your gratefulness for what he has done for you, as Paul writes, "*sing among yourselves psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, your voices making music in your hearts for the ears of the Lord! Thank God the Father at all times for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Eph 5:19.20).

What you sing can be modern. You or somebody in your group may even be able to write a new song for the Lord. The hymnbook of the Old Testament, the Psalms, encourage us several times to "sing a new song unto the Lord". Of course you can also sing traditional hymns and thus share in the spiritual wealth of generations of Christians that have lived before you. You will also want to sing some international songs that make you a part of the worldwide church of Jesus Christ.

This will help you to rejoice about all that God has been doing and is still doing, and lift your eyes to God and his power. There is nothing that can bring you closer to God and let you see your world with his eyes than praising him in music and song. It will

truly transform your everyday life into an act of worship.

*Praising the Lord in prayer.* The Psalms are a book full of praise-songs that are at the same time prayers. It is easy to forget that prayer is not just asking, but communicating with God, telling him how much we appreciate and love him, and dedicating ourselves to him. Many modern songs are similar. They are musical prayers rather than statements of faith or action. Prayer and praise link us with God's world as Jesus explained, "*God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24).

Jesus wants us to understand that worship is not just a spiritual exercise or a religious requirement. When we worship God by prayer and praise we get in direct contact with the eternal God, the ruler of the universe. His power, wisdom, and love is made available to us, flows into us and through us into this world. This is why worshipping God's majesty is more important than anything else.

Depending on the size of your group and on their temperament you can have quiet prayers (everybody speaks to God by himself), prayers by one or several people (that pray for all the others), or prayer by all (a time where you give everybody an opportunity to pray, either together at the same time or one after the other). But don't force anybody to pray, because a prayer should come from the heart and not just from the head.

For many years Christians have used pre-formulated prayers (the Psalms can be used in this way). This joins you on one hand with the spiritual heritage of the church, but it can also be a danger if it is just an empty routine. God sees our innermost being and hates empty words, but he loves to hear his children praising him from all their heart and

doesn't mind whether the words and tunes are simple or superb.

*Praising the Lord through His Word.* Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and lead them to glorify God. This is not possible if they don't hear his word, for *"faith can only come from hearing the message, and the message is the word of Christ"* (Rom 10:17). In other words, true worship of God has a twofold direction, towards heaven by music, song, and prayer, and towards this world by preaching his message of transforming love in word and deed.

Preaching God's word should show people the way to God and his love, and it should encourage and help those that love him and are already on the way of Jesus the Nazarene. You don't need a formal theological education in order to do this though Bible training is beneficial. God's Spirit will also help you to share what you have experienced and what he teaches you when you study your Bible.

Remember, God is present when you worship him. He has promised to give you the right words and speak through you. Not your intelligence or eloquence will make the difference, but your dependence on him. Paul had to realize, *"when I am weak, then I am strong"*. The reason for this was God's principle, *"my grace is enough for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness"* (2 Cor 12:10.9).

Of course this doesn't imply that it is best not to study the Bible and just sit down and wait for a message from heaven. On the contrary, *"preach the Word; never lose your sense of urgency, in season or out of season. Reprove, correct, and encourage, using the utmost patience in your teaching. Go on steadily preaching the gospel and carry out to the full the commission that God gave you"* (2 Tim 4:2.5). You may not always see immediate results,

but results are his responsibility; yours is to preach the Word.

*Praising the Lord in the beauty of his holiness.* For many people suffering is the way to holiness, and without doubt, God used suffering to draw people to him. At the same time many people have cursed God in their suffering, because suffering itself makes nobody holy. Holiness is rather a gift of God, available to us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. How can you lead your people to worship God in the beauty of his holiness?

Paul explains, a spiritual and logical worship means *"to give him your bodies as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him"* (Rom 12:1). Holiness is worshiping God with all you have and are. This should be the focus of all singing, praying, and preaching. You can help your people do that by inviting them to bring all their failures, shortcomings, problems, and joys to Jesus in prayer. You can show them that God forgives, heals our hurts, grants victory, and even steps in to fulfill what we have missed.

Then you should invite them to open their hearts for God's fullness and blessing, and by faith accept and thank him for His holiness. Nobody can earn this holiness, even if he acts holy. It is God's gift, ready for everybody. A person who accepts the gift of holiness can truly praise God.

In the Old Testament we read that whole battles were won just by praising God, and you will see radical results in your church and the lives of your people if you concentrate on *"worshiping God in the beauty of his holiness"* (Psalm 96:9). It is wonderful to experience God's presence in the fellowship of believers, but it is even greater to see him transform everyday situations, whole families and communities. This is what you can expect him to do through

you and your church when you live the *Life with Jesus the Nazarene*.

⇒ **Some Steps to "Worship His Majesty":**

- Devise a program for a Christian service by emphasizing worshipping God - with music and song, prayer, and preaching sections. Try to express worship in such a way that it is relevant for people in a post-Christian, post-Communist, and secular society.
- Encourage people to speak with God in prayer and to praise him with their songs and their whole life. You can request Christian hymns and music from our office.
- Study what the Bible (and *The Way of Jesus the Nazarene*) explains about the Lord's Supper, and plan to celebrate it regularly.
- Share with people that they can worship the Lord in the beauty of his holiness, and how this will transform every day of their life.

For more material and personal help  
in order to start or run  
a church in your home or community  
write to or contact your friends from the  
Church of the Nazarene