

POSTOLIC FOUNDATION

Discipleship Curriculum in the Epistles

ΠΡΟΣ
ΕΦΕΣΙΟΥΣ

ΚΑΙ ΚΕ ΕΠΑΡΡΗΘΕΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΕΡΕΛΗ.
ΣΕΚΕΡ ΠΕΚΕ ΜΗΡΑΚΚΑ ΓΡΕΥΤΑ.
ΒΑΙΝΤΑ ΑΥΡΑ ΚΑΙ ΧΟΡΜΙΣΕΟΙΣΤΕ.

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A Disciple Making Disciples Series

APOSTOLIC FOUNDATIONS—

Discipleship Curriculum in the Epistles

An Issue Paper

APOSTOLIC FOUNDATIONS:

Discipleship Curriculum in the Epistles

Introduction

Have you ever felt that things are missing or behind in your faith? Have you often felt that this is not the best you can be as a disciple of the Lord? If you do, then we are brothers and sisters in the struggle. Many times I feel that my Christian faith has lacks. “Lacks? What do you mean?” someone might ask. Yes, lacks. This has made me ask questions like the ones we would be considering in this issue.

*Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and **might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?** 1 Thessalonians 3:10*

As Paul felt concerning the Thessalonians, we often feel, again and again, that there are things that need to be filled in our faith. There are areas where things are still behind. The word "lack" in this scripture is the Greek word *hustēma*, which means a deficit, a poverty, a deficiency, something that is behind or missing. It is the gap between where a believer is and where God wants them to be.

This shows us that even after believing in Christ, a believer still has areas of deficit and deficiency in their life of faith. There can be things lacking, things behind, and areas where Christ has not yet been fully reflected in our lives. Where truth received is not truth lived, where the doctrine believed is not fully the life we have become. That gap is a deficit that needs supply.

The word "perfect" used by Paul is *katartizō*, which means to complete thoroughly, to restore, to repair, or to bring something into its intended condition.

The Thessalonians had already believed the gospel. Their faith had produced evidence: the work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope (1 Thessalonians 1:3). They had become disciples. Paul said, "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 1:6).

The apostles understood discipleship as becoming followers of those who themselves followed Christ. Even though the word "discipleship" is not explicitly used, the concept and reality are present. The Thessalonians had become followers of the apostles because the apostles were following Christ and declaring His word to them.

They were true disciples. They had turned from idols to serve the living and true God. They had become examples to other believers, and the word of the Lord had sounded out from them throughout the regions (1 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

Paul also said they became followers of the churches of God in Judea, which were in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 2:14). This was significant because the church in Judea was where the early church began. Those believers had suffered persecution from the Jews, and the Thessalonians followed in their footsteps by standing firm in the midst of suffering and affliction.

Yet despite all this evidence of genuine discipleship, Paul still said that their faith lacked something.

This teaches us that being a disciple of Jesus Christ does not mean there cannot still be areas of our lives where we lag. There can be areas where our lives are not yet properly mirroring Christ, where our character, “faith skills”, spiritual understanding, love, obedience, and endurance are still being formed.

Therefore, we can learn from the apostles how they supplied what was lacking in the believers. They sought to bring believers into what Paul describes as being thoroughly fixed, thoroughly repaired, and thoroughly complete. Understanding how the apostles accomplished this is one of the reasons why we must carefully examine the epistles.

You shouldn’t read this booklet as a standalone. It is a part of a series on discipleship titled— “A disciple making disciples”. We started looking at the concept of discipleship in the Old Testament, In the gospels (Before Pentecost) and then in Acts (After Pentecost) and now more explicitly in the epistles.

Imagine you are being discipled by Paul or Peter!

If you had been brought into the faith under the ministry of Paul, Peter, James, John, or any of the early apostles, what would your discipleship have looked like? What would they have considered necessary for establishing you in Christ? What truths would they have insisted that you understand? What practices would they have expected you to learn? What kind of life would they have expected those truths to produce in you?

I'm sorry! That's too late. But...thank God we have the epistles, though we don't have the apostles. The apostles wrote letters to their disciples, and we still have those letters preserved for the Church today. So, we could still be disciplined by them. Aren't you glad God gave us those letters? The epistles make up the majority of the New Testament books, forming 21 of its 27 books.

Could we trace the heart, the centre, and even the circumference of their work of discipleship?

These questions are important because the New Testament does not leave us merely with the message the apostles preached to unbelievers. We also possess letters written to the communities that arose through the preaching of that message. In those letters, we encounter believers being taught, instructed, corrected, reminded, encouraged, warned, to be made perfect and fully mature in Christ (Col 1:28).

In the epistles we could see the struggles of disciples. We see churches in their weaknesses and strengths. We hear the apostles returning to truths they had taught before, applying those truths to new situations, correcting departures from them, and calling believers onward into the life that properly belongs to those who are in Christ. This is an encouragement for us today, to see that the bible doesn't throw away the struggles, difficulties, discouragement, fears, failures and even errors of the early disciples. But rather showed us God's perspectives, answers, help and correction for our own edification today.

The Epistles therefore a jewel store for the 21st century disciple. It gives us something immensely valuable. They allow us to stand, as it were, inside the apostolic heart on discipleship.

Paul could write to the Thessalonians: *“Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more”* (1 Thess. 4:1).

Notice the language: **“as ye have received of us.”** Something had already been given to them. Now, this epistle is like a follow up. Their conversion had been accompanied by instruction concerning how they were now go onward on the odyssey to ABOUNDING! This became the testimony of the Thessalonians in the second epistles— they indeed abound (2 Thessalonians 1:3)

He continues: *“For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus”* (1 Thess. 4:2).

Again, Paul appeals to previous teaching. The letter does not contain the beginning of their Christian instruction. It assumes a history of teaching that already existed between apostle and church. The same pattern appears elsewhere. Paul reminds the Corinthians: *“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received”* (1 Cor. 15:3).

Something received by the apostle is delivered to the church and must then be held fast by those who received it.

To the Colossians he writes: *“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught”* (Col. 2:6–7).

Apostolic teaching was concerned with what believers believed, but it did not terminate in belief considered merely as

information. What they had received was to become the power that produces a life of glory and virtue.

Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. (Philippians 4:9).

This language appears repeatedly throughout the New Testament: **received, delivered, taught, learned, heard, remembered, held fast, continued, kept, traditions, commandments, pattern, doctrine, that which was heard from the beginning.**

Apostle John also writes: “*Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning*” (1 John 2:24; cf. 2John 6-10).

Peter explains that he writes so that believers might remain established in truth: “*Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth*” (2 Pet. 1:12).

Peter saw the teachings of the Apostles as inspired as the Old Testament text. He connected the Apostles and the Old Testament writers:

This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: (2 Peter 3:1-2)

Paul tells Timothy: “*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*” (2 Tim. 2:2).

The Question Before Us

Our concern in this study is consequently larger than asking what doctrines appear in the Epistles. We want to ask:

What did the apostles teach believers in order to establish them in Christ, and what picture of mature Christian life emerges when the teaching of the Epistles is considered together?

Or more simply:

What did the apostles consider necessary for forming a Christian?

We should not answer that question before searching the Scriptures.

It is easy for every generation of the Church to construct a discipleship programme around the things it presently considers important. But what do the Apostles consider important? We want first to listen.

- ✚ What did the apostles themselves emphasise?
- ✚ What did they teach repeatedly?
- ✚ What did they assume believers already knew?
- ✚ What did they consider serious enough to correct?
- ✚ What did they insist must be remembered?
- ✚ What did they command believers to hold fast?
- ✚ What deficiencies did they regard as signs of immaturity?
- ✚ What qualities did they recognise as evidence of growth?
- ✚ What kind of people were they trying to produce?

Hang on! I wouldn't want you to rush past those questions. Would you personally reflect on those questions for yourself and for anyone God has entrusted to you in a discipleship relationship? Would you personally take a journey in the epistles to answer these questions? I encourage you to personally read the epistles over and over with these questions in mind. Would you?

These questions take us beyond a catalogue of doctrines into the apostolic work of Christian formation.

Disciples Before Teachers

It would be easy to approach a study like this merely looking for material that we can use in teaching other people. But before asking how this can be used to form others, we must allow this truth to confront our gaps and conform us.

The investigation must therefore become an act of discipleship. And then we become capable of helping others enter the same life.

What We Are Looking For

As we move through the Epistles, three questions will guide us.

First:

 **What had these believers already received?** Here we will pay particular attention to the places where the apostles appeal to previous instruction: what believers had heard, learned, received, been taught, or already knew.

 **Second: What are they now being taught, reminded of, corrected about, or called to practise?** The letters were

written into real situations. Churches struggled with sin, division, suffering, error, immaturity, persecution, confusion, false teaching, misuse of spiritual gifts, failures of love, and uncertainty concerning the future. Apostolic correction shows us what Christian formation required when the life of the church departed from its proper form.



Third: What are these believers supposed to become?

This may finally be the deepest question of all. What does maturity look like according to Paul? According to Peter? According to James? According to John?

When their writings are heard first in their own contexts and then placed alongside one another, what common picture of Christian existence emerges? Can we identify the heart of apostolic discipleship? Can we identify its centre? Can we trace its circumference far enough to see how extensively the gospel was expected to reshape the life of a believer?

And having discovered these things, can we recover something of that apostolic seriousness in the work of making disciples today?

That is the investigation before us.

Before the Epistles: The Jerusalem Letter

Acts 15 gives us one of the earliest preserved examples of formal apostolic instruction addressed to believers, and within the narrative of Acts it provides our first explicit apostolic letter arising from the question of how Gentile converts are to be established in the Christian faith.

Acts 15 provides an important place to begin because it gives us a convergence of the apostles and early church leaders around a fundamental question concerning the Gentile believers. Paul and Barnabas had been preaching among the Gentiles, and many had believed. But a question arose concerning what should happen to these people after they had believed. Certain men taught: *“Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved”* (Acts 15:1).

The question therefore concerned both salvation and the life of those who had now believed. Paul and Barnabas disputed with them, and it was determined that they should go up to Jerusalem *“unto the apostles and elders about this question”* (Acts 15:2).

When they arrived, the same issue appeared again: *“But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses”* (Acts 15:5).

These were people who believed. The question was now what should be required of Gentiles who had also believed. Must they become circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved and to live as Christians?

“And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter” (Acts 15:6).

This is important. There was an apostolic consideration of the matter. The word *matter* here concerns the question or subject under discussion. There was “much disputing” (Acts 15:7). They reasoned together concerning what the Gentile believers should be taught and what should be required of them.

Peter then spoke from what God had already done among the Gentiles. God had chosen that the Gentiles should hear the gospel from his mouth and believe, and God himself had borne witness to them: *“giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us”* (Acts 15:8). Peter added that God: *“put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith”* (Acts 15:9).

He therefore rejected the attempt to place the yoke of the law upon the Gentile believers and concluded: *“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they”* (Acts 15:11).

There was therefore an apostolic consensus concerning salvation. Salvation was through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and not through circumcision or the keeping of the law of Moses.

Paul and Barnabas then reported what God had done among the Gentiles through their ministry (Acts 15:12). James also spoke, referring to Peter's testimony and to the prophets concerning God's purpose to take from among the Gentiles “a people for his name” (Acts 15:14).

Yet the discussion did not end merely with the declaration that the Gentiles were saved by grace. The apostles also considered how these believers should now live. James therefore concluded:

“Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God” (Acts 15:19).

They were not to be troubled with circumcision and the requirements being imposed upon them. Nevertheless, they were

instructed: *“That they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood”* (Acts 15:20).

They were saved by grace apart from circumcision, but salvation did not mean that nothing could now be required of them. There were practices from which believers were expected to abstain.

To *abstain* is to refrain or hold oneself back from something. There is therefore already an expectation that the believer can exercise restraint over his conduct. The Gentile Christians were to turn away from particular practices connected with their former life and with the world from which they had been called.

The letter sent to the Gentile believers therefore made two things clear. First, the apostles rejected those who had troubled them by saying: *“Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law”* (Acts 15:24). The apostles said concerning such teachers: *“to whom we gave no such commandment.”* The burden of circumcision was therefore not to be laid upon them. Salvation was by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yet, second, the believers were told that certain things were necessary for them to abstain from: *“That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication”* (Acts 15:29).

What follows in Acts is particularly important for the purpose of this study. Paul and his companions did not leave the decision in Jerusalem. As they went through the cities: *“they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem”* (Acts 16:4). Luke then tells us the result: *“And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily”* (Acts 16:5).

This language of being **established in the faith** brings us directly to the concern of this investigation. The apostolic decision was communicated to the churches as something to be received and kept. Apostolic instruction was connected with the establishment of believers and churches in the faith.

Acts 15 therefore gives us an important starting point for the investigation of apostolic discipleship. Here are people who have believed the gospel, and the apostles are confronted with the question of what must now be taught and required of them. The answer first establishes the ground of their salvation: they are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and not through circumcision. But the apostles also speak concerning the life that follows salvation. There are things from which believers must now abstain and practices that must change. There is a kind of context to deal with and issues that surrounds the context in which the disciples were in.

The Jerusalem letter thus stands naturally before our investigation of the Epistles. It shows apostolic leaders considering a question together, reaching a judgment concerning the gospel and the life of Gentile believers, putting that judgment into writing, sending it to the churches, and seeing those churches established in the faith.

This provides an important grounding for our journey into the Epistles. We are asking not only **how people were saved**, but also **how those who had believed were established in the faith and taught to live because they had been saved**.

What Acts 15 Teaches Us to Look for in the Epistles

Acts 15 does more than give us an early example of apostolic instruction to believers. It could give us a framework for what we should begin to look for as we enter the Epistles. To look at the epistles one by one in a booklet would change it from being a booklet. But we can catch the apostolic heart and spirit with this framework and go further in our personal study:

1. The Epistles preserve, clarify, and correct apostolic teaching

Acts 15 begins because a teaching had arisen among the believers:

“Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved”
(Acts 15:1).

The issue was serious because it concerned what the believers were to understand about salvation. Paul and Barnabas therefore had “no small dissension and disputation with them” (Acts 15:2), and the matter was brought before the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.

The Epistles frequently perform this same work. They preserve what had already been taught, clarify what had been misunderstood, apply apostolic teaching to new circumstances, and correct departures from it. Some letters confront serious error or false teaching; others are concerned more generally with instruction, encouragement, correction, and further establishment in what the believers had already received.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones once said this: “Why do you think the New Testament was ever written? Why were the Gospels ever written? Why were these epistles ever written? Now, the answer is this. They were written to

establish and to confirm the faith of the believers. Here was the difficulty, as it's always been. The apostles had gone around preaching the Gospels, and people had believed, and churches had been formed. But false teachers began to arise. And they began to say things in the name of Christianity and the church that were not true.

There were false Gospels which were being written, apocryphal Gospels, claiming to be quite authentic, setting out ostensibly to teach the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ, but saying fantastic things, things which were not true. And the result was that the believers were disturbed and confused, not only that, the message of the church was becoming confused as she stood before the world making her statements.

And these documents that we have, and which we call the New Testament, were primarily written to correct that, to show that these apocryphal Gospels and others were false, and that they mustn't be believed, and that these false teachers were false apostles who were teaching a lie and were misrepresenting the truth concerning our Lord and concerning his great salvation.

And therefore, you see, they go out of their way to make these great statements. So you've got your Gospel according to John, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

That's the thing that he's got to emphasize and to prove, that Jesus was not only a man, but that he's God. He's the Word, with God, always was with God, looking into the face of God through all eternity. That's the position, he says. He writes in order to make certain to them and to remind them that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing in him, they might have life through his name.

It's an absolute necessity. Of course, they had at the same time to prove that he was also man, truly. So John writes his first epistle to do that. Every one of these things has got a motive. They're all written in order to state the truth, and especially to do so in terms of false teaching, or something that was being propagated that was not really in accordance with the facts as such. So they make these tremendous statements about the person of our Lord."

The epistles were also written into the actual life of churches. They arose in the midst of real questions, weaknesses, divisions, suffering, moral failures, cultural pressures, social differences, and uncertainties about how faith in Christ was to be lived.

Romans, for example, clearly reflects tensions surrounding Jews and Gentiles, the law, faith in Christ, food, doubtful Christian practices, and how believers with different backgrounds and convictions were to live together. Romans 14–15 especially shows that practical questions concerning food, days, conscience, the strong and the weak, and Jewish and Gentile believers were real concerns within the world of the letter. Even Paul's instruction concerning governing authorities in Romans 13 shows apostolic teaching entering the ordinary question of how Christians were to understand their life within the political order of their time.

Corinth gives us perhaps the clearest example of how many different kinds of problems could exist within one church. There were divisions and rivalries, questions of social standing, sexual immorality, marriage, lawsuits between believers, food offered to idols, questions of Christian liberty, abuses surrounding the Lord's Supper, disorder in church meetings, questions concerning spiritual gifts, economic matters surrounding collections, What preachers to listen to and doctrinal confusion concerning the resurrection. There were moral, social, economic,

cultural, ecclesial, and doctrinal problems. Paul was not writing into an ideal Christian community. He was bringing apostolic truth into the midst of the actual life of the believers.

Galatians presents a particularly serious doctrinal controversy concerning circumcision, the law, justification, and the place of Gentile believers among the people of God. Yet even there, doctrine is not detached from life. The argument eventually enters questions of liberty, walking in the Spirit, relationships among believers, restoration, burden-bearing, and the kind of life the gospel produces.

Philippians similarly shows believers living under suffering while also facing rivalry, selfish ambition, and contention. Even the disagreement between Euodias and Syntyche becomes part of Paul's pastoral concern. His great presentation of the humiliation and exaltation of Christ in Philippians 2 is therefore brought directly into the question of how believers are to think about themselves and relate to one another.

Ephesians does not appear to arise from one crisis as sharply as Galatians or Corinthians, yet its instructions still reveal the actual world of Christian life: Jew and Gentile reconciliation, unity in the Church, sexual and moral conduct, work ethics, speech, husbands and wives, children and parents, servants and masters, and spiritual conflict. Even when we cannot reconstruct a particular question behind every instruction, the teaching is still directed toward the realities in which believers lived.

The Thessalonian letters address persecution and suffering, sexual holiness, brotherly love, work ethics, disorder among those who would not work, questions concerning believers who had died, and confusion surrounding the coming of Christ. James

addresses trials, poverty and wealth, partiality, speech, quarrelling, worldliness, treatment of labourers, patience, prayer, sickness, and restoration of those who wander. Hebrews gives sustained theological teaching concerning Christ, priesthood, sacrifice, covenant, and access to God, but does so while repeatedly warning believers against drifting, unbelief, turning back, and failing to persevere.

First Peter speaks directly into suffering and therefore addresses holiness, hope, conduct among unbelievers, family relationships, submission, pastoral leadership, suffering unjustly, and steadfastness. Second Peter and Jude respond strongly to corrupt teachers and to the moral consequences of false teaching. The Johannine Epistles likewise show doctrinal and practical realities intertwined. First John confronts serious questions concerning eternal life and truth of that life in love, it shows by tests that to know God is to obey, to live righteously, and to practically love. Second and Third John addresses walking in truth love, issues of hospitality to strangers, false teaching, authority, and conduct within Christian communities.

The point is important. The Epistles were not written into an imaginary Christian world in which believers had no problems. **We are therefore not saying that Christian preaching today should avoid questions of money, work, family, sexuality, society, suffering, or any of the ordinary realities of life. The apostles themselves addressed such things. The important question is how they addressed them.**

They brought the Scriptures and the saving reality of Christ to bear upon the actual circumstances of believers. Their answers were not simply opinions attached to biblical quotations. The Scriptures formed the world within which they understood the

problem, and what God had done in Christ governed the way that problem was interpreted and answered.

This is why the Epistles can teach us more than the answers to first-century questions. They allow us to watch something of the apostolic mind at work: how the apostles understood the problems before them, how they read the Scriptures, how they interpreted those Scriptures in the light of Christ, how they applied them to circumstances that had never existed in precisely the same form before, and what kind of response they sought to produce in believers.

We should therefore ask as we read each Epistle:

What apostolic truth is being taught, preserved, clarified, applied, corrected, or defended in this letter? What circumstances among these believers made that teaching necessary, and how does the apostle bring the Scriptures and the reality of Christ to bear upon those circumstances?

2. The Epistles continually return believers to the ground of their salvation

Before the apostles determine what should be required of the Gentile believers, Peter first establishes what God has already done.

He testifies that God had: *“given them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us” (Acts 15:8),*

and had: *“put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:9).*

He then concludes: ***“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they”*** (Acts 15:11).

The life required from believers therefore does not become the ground of their salvation. The ground is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, received through faith, accompanied by the work of God in purifying them and giving them the Holy Spirit.

Yet believers need to hear these truths again. They must remain grounded in the reality upon which their entire walk with God is built. The apostles therefore repeatedly return Christians to what God has done for them in Christ before, beneath, and alongside their exhortations concerning how they should live.

A Brief Survey

One thing that becomes clear as we read the Epistles is that the apostles continually ground believers in the reality of the person of Christ and His saving work. This is not always presented systematically. Sometimes the argument is spiral: the apostles return again and again to what God has done in Christ as the basis of what believers are, what they possess, and how they are now to live. Yet beneath the different emphases of the Epistles, the ground of salvation has already been set.

Paul, because he wrote the bulk of the New Testament Epistles, gives us the fullest expression of this. Christ stands at the foundation of his message. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul reminds the believers of the gospel which he himself had received and delivered to them: *“how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures”* (1 Cor. 15:3–4). The death and

resurrection of Christ continually govern Paul's understanding of salvation.

From this saving work, Paul develops the great realities believers have received in Christ. He speaks of redemption and the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14), justification by faith (Rom. 3:21–26; 5:1), reconciliation to God (Rom. 5:10–11; 2 Cor. 5:18–21), adoption as sons (Rom. 8:15–17; Gal. 4:4–7), and the reality of becoming a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). He reminds the Corinthians that although such were some of them, *“ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”* (1 Cor. 6:11). Throughout his Epistles, what Christ has accomplished and what believers have consequently received form the basis upon which he teaches them to live.

Peter does the same from his own emphasis. He speaks of believers as those whom God has *“begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”* (1 Pet. 1:3). Their redemption was not accomplished with corruptible things, *“but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”* (1 Pet. 1:18–19). Christ *“his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree,”* so that believers, being dead to sins, might live unto righteousness (1 Pet. 2:24). Peter therefore also grounds Christian existence in something God has already done through Christ—His blood, His sin-bearing death, His resurrection, and the new life and hope that have come through Him. Even when he turns to Christian growth, holy living, or endurance in suffering these realities remain beneath his exhortation.

James does not develop the saving work of Christ in the same explicit way. He speaks of *“the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory”* (James 2:1), and he writes throughout to people whose

identity as believers in Christ is already presupposed. He also speaks of God's own act in bringing them forth: "*Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth*" (James 1:18). His exhortations are addressed to people whose faith in Christ and new relation to God already stand behind the practical demands of the letter.

John is explicit concerning what Christ has done. He presents Christ as "*the propitiation for our sins*" (1 John 2:2; 4:10), and tells the believers, "*your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake*" (1 John 2:12). The love of God is manifested in the sending of His Son that "*we might live through him*" (1 John 4:9), and the Son of God appeared "*that he might destroy the works of the devil*" (1 John 3:8). John therefore continually returns believers to Christ, His saving work, the forgiveness they possess in His name, the life received through Him, and the love of God revealed in His coming.

Hebrews develops this ground with Levitical language. This has profoundly shaped our reading of the Old Testament rituals and ceremonies. He employed the language of sacrifice, priesthood, covenant, cleansing, and access to God. Christ is both the great High Priest and the perfect sacrifice. "*By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*" (Heb. 10:14). Through the new covenant there is remission of sins, the law of God written upon the heart, cleansing of conscience, and boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 8:10–12; 9:14; 10:16–22). These are not secondary matters in Hebrews. They are precisely the realities upon which the readers are called to hold fast, draw near, and persevere.

This same Christ-centred ground continues throughout the wider New Testament witness. Revelation opens by speaking of Jesus Christ as the one who "*loved us, and washed us from our sins in*

his own blood” (Rev. 1:5), and repeatedly presents Him as the Lamb through whose blood God's people have been redeemed.

The language and emphases differ from writer to writer, but the recurring reality is clear: Christian life begins from what God has already done in Christ. Christ's person, His death and resurrection, His saving work, and the blessings believers receive through Him are not merely introductory doctrines to be left behind. They are the ground upon which the apostles repeatedly establish the faith and life of the churches.

You should take time to know these realities, study them deeply, meditate on them carefully, and pray them down into your heart until it dominates your consciousness and translates into your experience. As you read your bible mark such places, savour the truths and rejoice in them.

As we read the Epistles, we should therefore ask:

What saving reality does the apostle establish or recall as the ground upon which the Christian life is built?

3. The Epistles establish the new identity of God's people

Acts 15 does not merely answer how the Gentiles are saved. It also explains what God is doing in saving them.

James recalls Peter's testimony: *“Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name”* (Acts 15:14).

This is a statement of identity. These Gentiles who had once belonged to the nations are now being gathered by God as a people for His name.

A brief Survey

The Epistles do not only ground believers in what Christ has done for them. They also ground believers in **who they have now become through Christ**. Throughout the apostolic writings, we find a remarkable variety of portraits describing the new reality of those who have believed.

Paul perhaps gives us the widest range of these descriptions. Yet one of the great expressions by which his different portraits can be brought together is the phrase **“in Christ.”** Through faith, the believer has been brought into union with Christ: *“he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit”* (1 Cor. 6:17). Paul can therefore say, *“I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me”* (Gal. 2:20), and again, *“ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God”* (Col. 3:3).

This union with Christ means that the saving history of Christ (His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension) becomes determinative for the believer's own identity. Paul speaks of believers as having died with Christ and as being raised with Him (Rom. 6:4–11; Col. 2:12–13; 3:1–3). God has even *“raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”* (Eph. 2:6). The believer is therefore to reckon himself *“dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Rom. 6:11).

From this reality, Paul uses many other names and portraits. Believers are **saints** (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2), **sons of God** (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 3:26), **members of the body of Christ** (1 Cor. 12:27), **new creatures** in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), **the temple of God** (1 Cor. 3:16), **fellowcitizens with the saints and of the household of God** (Eph. 2:19), and those whose *“conversation [citizenship] is in heaven”* (Phil. 3:20). They are those who *“call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord”* (1 Cor. 1:2). The different images

are not identical, but they continually locate the believer's life within the new reality created in Christ.

Peter likewise employs a remarkable collection of portraits. In one passage alone he calls believers “*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people,*” called to show forth the praises of Him who called them “*out of darkness into his marvellous light*” (1 Pet. 2:9). He goes on to say that they were once “*not a people,*” but are now “*the people of God*” (1 Pet. 2:10).

Elsewhere Peter calls them **strangers and pilgrims** (1 Pet. 2:11), **servants of God** (1 Pet. 2:16), **newborn babes** who are to desire the sincere milk of the word (1 Pet. 2:2), **lively stones, a spiritual house**, and **an holy priesthood** (1 Pet. 2:5). He even takes up the name **Christian**, telling those who suffer “*as a Christian*” not to be ashamed, but to glorify God (1 Pet. 4:16). These identities are not decorative names. Peter repeatedly uses them to ground the kind of *conversation* i.e., the manner of life that should now characterize those who belong to God.

John also speaks of believers through a rich language of identity. They are people whose “*sins are forgiven... for his name's sake*” (1 John 2:12), who have “*known him that is from the beginning,*” and who have “*overcome the wicked one*” (1 John 2:13–14). They are **children of God**: “*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God*” (1 John 3:1). They are **born of God**, and John can even say that God's “*seed remaineth in him*” (1 John 3:9). They are people who have “*passed from death unto life*” (1 John 3:14), who possess eternal life in the Son (1 John 5:11–12), and who live in fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3).

James also grounds believers in their new identity. He repeatedly addresses them as **brethren**, placing them within the new family created by faith in Christ. He tells *“the brother of low degree”* to rejoice *“in that he is exalted”* (James 1:9). His earthly poverty does not determine his true standing. His exaltation is found in the new reality into which he has been brought through Christ. Likewise, James refuses to allow wealth or social position to determine the worth of believers. He asks, *“Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?”* (James 2:5). Here again the believer's identity is grounded not in whether he is rich or poor according to the measurements of society, but in what God has made him: **chosen, rich in faith, an heir of the kingdom, and a brother among the people of God.** This important in James's correction of partiality, because the Church must learn to see believers according to their identity before God rather than according to the social distinctions of the world.

Jude addresses his readers, in the KJV, as those *“sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called”* (Jude 1). Hebrews speaks of believers as **holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling** (Heb. 3:1), as those who have been sanctified by Christ's offering (Heb. 10:10), and as citizens of Zion, dwellers of the heavenly city and the assembly of God's people (Heb. 12:22–24). Revelation likewise describes those redeemed by Christ's blood as made *“kings and priests unto God”* (Rev. 1:5–6).

The apostles do not leave believers to construct their identity from the changing perspectives of the world around them or from their old way of seeing themselves. **They continually tell Christians who they are because of what God has done in Christ.** Their identity is not first grounded in social status, ethnicity, wealth, achievement, failure, or the opinion of others.

It is grounded in their relation to Christ and in the new reality into which God has brought them. This must be emphasized in our time.

This is so relevant in our generation. We are frequently troubled by questions of identity, worth, and belonging. The Epistles locate the us within something deeper and more secure than the fluctuating definitions offered by society. The Christian is in Christ, belongs to God, has been brought into the community of God's people, and has received a new life whose reality cannot simply be reduced to the categories by which the surrounding world measures him. We live far ahead of our time; we are ruled by the consciousness of the age to come as we live in this present world.

And, repeatedly, this identity becomes the ground of conduct. The apostles do not merely tell believers what to do; they remind them **who they are**, and then call them to live in a manner consistent with that reality.

Who are you? In my discipleship as a teenager, I learnt that anywhere in the epistles that says **in him, through him, by him, or words like that** should be noted and marked as speaking to me. That is my identity. That revolutionised my Christian walk. It changed how I see myself and how I lived. It grounded my sense of esteem in Christ as a teenager. You need to do the same.

We should therefore ask as we read the Epistles:

Who does the apostle say these believers have now become because of what God has done for them in Christ, and how does that identity govern the life he calls them to live?

We should therefore ask:

Who does the apostle say these believers have now become because of salvation?

4. The new identity of God's people requires a corresponding life

The Gentile believers are not required to become circumcised to be saved. Nevertheless, the apostolic decision does not conclude that nothing can now be required of them.

James says that they should: *“abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood” (Acts 15:20).*

The final letter repeats the instruction: *“That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication” (Acts 15:29).*

Salvation by grace therefore does not make the believer's conduct a matter of indifference. There are practices from which those who belong to God must now abstain.

This becomes especially important because the believers continued to live within societies whose religious, sexual, social, and cultural practices were not necessarily compatible with their new allegiance to Christ. The Gentile Christians were not physically removed from the Gentile world when they believed. They had to learn how to live as God's people within it.

The Epistles repeatedly address this question. They teach believers how their new identity must become visible in holiness, relationships, sexuality, work, worship, speech, family life, use of

possessions, treatment of one another, and conduct before the surrounding world.

Paul: A life corresponding to the new reality in Christ

Paul continually calls believers to a manner of life that corresponds to what they have received in Christ. His ethical instruction is rarely detached from the realities he has already established concerning salvation and Christian identity. Again and again, he tells believers what is true of them and then reasons from that reality into how they ought to live.

1. A life corresponding to our identification with Christ

One of Paul's strongest grounds for Christian conduct is the believer's identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. In Romans 6, believers have been baptized into Christ's death, buried with Him, and raised to “*walk in newness of life*” (Rom. 6:3–4). Because “*our old man is crucified with him*” (6:6), they are to reckon themselves “*dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (6:11).

The practical consequence follows directly from that identity:

“*Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body*” (Rom. 6:12).

They are no longer to yield their members as “*instruments of unrighteousness unto sin*,” but to yield themselves unto God and their members as “*instruments of righteousness*” (6:13). Sin is not to have dominion over them (6:14). They were once servants of sin, but have now become “*servants of righteousness*” (6:17–18).

Paul therefore does not merely command righteousness. He grounds the command in what has happened to the believer

through union with Christ. **You have died with Christ; you have been raised with Christ; therefore, live as one who is dead to sin and alive unto God. Sin has a dominating power; it has addictive tendencies, but the new identity of the believer breaks its power. This is God's provision over habits, memories of sin's pleasure and chains of addiction.**

2. A life in the Spirit

Paul also presents Christian life as life in the Spirit. The Spirit is not merely something believers are taught about; He is the reality of God's presence within them. "*The Spirit of God dwell[s] in you*" (Rom. 8:9), and therefore the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in those "*who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*" (Rom. 8:4).

The believer is consequently called to live by the power and direction of the Spirit. "*If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live*" (Rom. 8:13). Likewise, "*Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh*" (Gal. 5:16). Paul contrasts the works of the flesh—sexual immorality, uncleanness, hatred, strife, envy, drunkenness and the like—with "*the fruit of the Spirit,*" which is "*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*" (Gal. 5:19–23).

This life in the Spirit reaches into ordinary life. In Ephesians, Paul's command, "*be filled with the Spirit*" (Eph. 5:18), flows into worship and thanksgiving, into relationships among believers, and then into the life of husbands and wives, parents and children, servants and masters (Eph. 5:19–6:9). The Spirit-filled life is therefore not separated from family, work, worship, relationships, or moral conduct.

The same reality governs sexual holiness. Paul tells the Corinthians that their bodies are *“the temple of the Holy Ghost”* and that they are not their own, for they are *“bought with a price”* (1 Cor. 6:19–20). Therefore, even sexuality must correspond to the fact that the believer now belongs to God and is indwelt by His Spirit.

This redefines believers' view of their physical body. Our bodies are living shrines, where God dwells. What we do with our bodies matters; how we treat our sexuality matters. Sex is therefore seen as sacred. This needs to be reiterated in a world where sex is an idol.

3. A life of consecration and sanctification

Paul also describes Christian conduct as the giving of the whole person to God. Having expounded the mercies of God in Romans 1–11, he turns in Romans 12 and says:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Rom. 12:1).

This is a picture of our priesthood; as priests, we are meant to offer our whole lives as burnt offerings, i.e., give our entire lives as devotion to God.

The *“therefore”* is important. Consecration is a response to mercy. The believer presents himself to God because of what God has already done.

Paul repeatedly speaks this way about holiness. *“This is the will of God, even your sanctification”* (1 Thess. 4:3). Believers are to possess their bodies in sanctification and honour rather than in the lust of concupiscence characteristic of those who do not know God

(1 Thess. 4:4–5). They have been called not unto uncleanness, “*but unto holiness*” (4:7).

4. A life corresponding to the new man

Another of Paul's great pictures is the putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new. It's more like a change of garment or ecdysis. The gospel has brought about a new humanity through Christ; He is the New Man, Adam is the Old Man, and we believers must therefore put off the fallen Adam and put on the holy and righteous Christ.

In Ephesians, they are taught to “*put off concerning the former conversation the old man,*” to be renewed in the spirit of their mind, and to “*put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*” (Eph. 4:22–24).

Paul then immediately shows what this means practically. Falsehood must be put off, and truth must be worn. Corrupt communication gives way to speech that edifies. Stealing gives way to honest labour and generosity. Bitterness, wrath, anger and malice give way to kindness, tenderness and forgiveness (Eph. 4:25–32). The new man is the need of our world today.

Colossians follows the same pattern. Because believers have put off the old man and put on the new (Col. 3:9–10), they are to put away fornication, uncleanness, evil desire, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy and lying i.e., the way the fallen humanity live and what they celebrate (3:5–9), and instead “*put on*” mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, forgiveness and, above all, love (3:12–14).

Christian ethics therefore becomes the visible expression of the new person created in Christ unto good works that God has planned beforehand (Ephesians 2:10).

5. A life produced by grace and gratitude

Finally, Paul frequently grounds Christian conduct in the believer's response to what has already been received from God. Romans 12 begins *"by the mercies of God."* In Ephesians, forgiveness of others is grounded in the forgiveness believers themselves have received: *"forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"* (Eph. 4:32). Immediately afterward Paul says, *"walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us"* (Eph. 5:2).

The grace received becomes the pattern of the grace extended to others.

This also explains Paul's strong emphasis upon good works. Grace does not terminate in passive profession. Christ *"gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works"* (Titus 2:14). Likewise, *"they which have believed in God"* are to *"be careful to maintain good works"* (Titus 3:8).

So with Paul, the Christian life is not merely a list of rules added after salvation. It is a life that **corresponds to a new reality**. Believers live differently because they have died and risen with Christ, because the Spirit now dwells in them, because they belong wholly to God, because they have put on the new man, and because grace has already been shown to them.

From these realities Paul can then address the whole range of Christian existence—sexuality, family, work, worship, prayer, speech, relationships, generosity, love, spiritual warfare, service in the Church, and conduct before the world. The instructions differ, but the logic remains: **live according to what God has made you in Christ.**

*"In the New Testament, religion is grace and ethics is gratitude" –
Thomas Erskine*

"The central problem of human sin is a radical failure of gratitude, where we treat the boundless favors of God as if they are debts He owes to us. When we truly understand grace—realizing that our salvation is entirely unmerited and voluntary—our hearts are shocked out of this sense of entitlement. A person who has been genuinely rescued by Christ does not look at God's law as a heavy, legal burden to be carried out of fear. Instead, every act of obedience, every choice to die to ourselves, and every pursuit of holiness becomes a joyful, spontaneous shout of 'thank you'. Therefore, the ultimate powerhouse behind all Christian ethics is never legal obligation; it is a heart overflowing with profound gratitude."— R. C. Sproul

Peter, James & John

Peter likewise grounds the duties of believers in what God has already done for them and in the identity they have consequently received. Christian conduct is not presented as an independent moral programme. It arises from calling, redemption, new birth, belonging to God, and the example of Christ.

Peter begins by reminding suffering believers of the living hope into which they have been begotten through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:3). Even in *"manifold temptations"* they rejoice,

and though they have not seen Christ, they love Him and, believing, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Pet. 1:6–8). Their response to suffering is therefore already being interpreted from the reality of their faith in Christ.

The same grounding appears in Peter's call to holiness. “*As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation*” (1 Pet. 1:15). Their calling necessitates a corresponding manner of life. Peter then immediately connects this holy conversation with redemption. They have not been redeemed “*with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers,*” but “*with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*” (1 Pet. 1:18–19). Redemption has therefore brought the believer out of a former manner of life. The precious blood of Christ does not merely secure something for the future; it establishes a new relation to the life from which they have been redeemed.

Peter makes the same connection with the new birth. Believers have been “*born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God*” (1 Pet. 1:23). Therefore, chapter 2 begins: “*Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings*” (1 Pet. 2:1). Because they have been born again, there is a former manner of life that must now be laid aside. And as “*newborn babes*” they are to desire the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2). The believer has a new appetite, one that cries out for God’s word.

Peter then gives them further pictures of who they are, and each picture carries responsibilities with it. They are “*lively stones*” being built into a “*spiritual house*” and “*an holy priesthood,*” called to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5). They are “*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a*

peculiar people,” and therefore they are to show forth the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Pet. 2:9). Identity becomes vocation.

Even their relationship to the surrounding society is interpreted from this identity. Peter calls them “*strangers and pilgrims*” and, on that basis, urges them to abstain from fleshly lusts and to maintain an honest conversation among the Gentiles (1 Pet. 2:11–12). Yet being strangers does not mean withdrawal from responsibility within the world in which they live. They are to be separate but involved. They are also “*servants of God*” (1 Pet. 2:16). They must therefore live faithfully within society, in relation to authorities, masters, husbands, wives, fellow believers, and even those who persecute them. They belong to another order, but they remain servants of God within the society in which He has placed them.

Suffering itself is also brought under this same Christian reality. Christ suffered, leaving believers an example that they should follow His steps (1 Pet. 2:21). Therefore, suffering does not suspend Christian character. Even when persecuted, the believer is still to live in such a way that Christ is manifested. Peter can eventually say, “*if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf*” (1 Pet. 4:16).

Second Peter expresses the same principle in another striking way. After describing the virtues that are to be added to faith—virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity—Peter says that the person who lacks these things “*is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins*” (2 Pet. 1:5–9). The failure of Christian character is described as a kind of forgetfulness. A kind of spiritual dementia causes carelessness and bareness as a beleiever.

The person has forgotten what has already happened to him. Peter therefore sees growth in Christian virtue as flowing from a continuing consciousness of cleansing and salvation. Something happened to us when we believed, we were infected by the Holy Ghost, washed by the everlasting blood. We can never be the same, unless we forget.

John reasons in a very similar way. The Christian life is repeatedly grounded in what believers have received from God. *"We love him, because he first loved us"* (1 John 4:19). Love does not begin with human moral effort; it arises from the experience of divine love. Indeed, *"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us,"* and therefore *"we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren"* (1 John 3:16). What Christ has done becomes the pattern of what believers now do.

John applies this to very ordinary situations. If someone has this world's goods and sees his brother in need but shuts up his compassion from him, John asks, *"how dwelleth the love of God in him?"* (1 John 3:17). He therefore concludes, *"let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth"* (3:18). The experience of God's love must become visible in practical compassion.

The same principle governs obedience and righteousness. *"He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked"* (1 John 2:6). Those who claim fellowship with God cannot walk in darkness (1 John 1:6–7). Those who know Him keep His commandments (1 John 2:3–5). Those born of God are called to a life in which righteousness becomes visible (1 John 2:29; 3:7–10). John therefore continually brings Christian conduct back to the reality of being in Christ, knowing God, being born of God, having eternal life, and having experienced His love.

James expresses the same basic principle through his own characteristic emphasis. Faith must become visible in life. A profession of faith that produces no corresponding works is dead (James 2:14–26). *The Lutheran church came up with a formula that I think all Christians should commit to memory: Justification is by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. Justification is not by a lonesome faith that exists in isolation from good works. If it is alone with no works present, then it is not justifying faith. Good works add nothing to our justification, but they are crucial to our sanctification, which follows and flows out of our justification. We do not trust in our good works in order to reconcile ourselves to God, but we should constantly be examining ourselves to make sure that the fruit of the gospel—good works of service to God and neighbor—is being borne in our lives.*—**R.C Sproul**

Therefore, James brings faith into speech, treatment of the poor, partiality, quarrelling, use of possessions, patience, prayer, mercy, and relationships. The tongue must come under the rule of faith (James 3:1–12). The poor brother must not be dishonoured, because God has chosen the poor of this world “*rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*” (James 2:5). Mercy must characterize those who themselves live before the God of mercy (James 2:12–13). Again, faith is expected to become visible.

This pattern runs through the apostolic writings. The apostles speak about love, justice, compassion, sexuality, family life, work, worship, speech, possessions, suffering, relationships, and a wide range of practical realities. The point is not that Christians should avoid talking about these things. The apostles themselves spoke about them extensively. The important point is that they did not normally treat them as realities detached from salvation.

They continually brought the believer's conduct back to what God had done, what Christ had accomplished, what the believer had received, and who the believer had consequently become.

So whether the question concerns sexuality, money, compassion, family life, justice, speech, work, suffering, or relationships, the apostolic ethic continually springs from the same fundamental reality: **the Christian life is the outward expression of the Christian's experience of Christ. What God has done for and in the believer must now become visible in the manner of life the believer lives. So, the ground to which you answer all of life issues must be grounded on this eternal reality, Centred around Christ.**

The question for us therefore becomes: **What manner of life does this salvation and this new identity require from the believer as it relates to God, to the community of believers?**

5. Apostolic teaching is interpreted from the Holy Scriptures

The discussion in Acts 15 does not rest merely upon the experiences of Peter, Paul, and Barnabas. James also places what God is doing among the Gentiles within the testimony of Scripture:

“And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written” (Acts 15:15).

He then cites the prophets to show that the gathering of the Gentiles belongs within the revealed purpose of God.

This establishes another important feature of apostolic teaching. The apostles understand Christ, salvation, the Church, and the inclusion of the Gentiles within the larger revelation of God

already given in the Scriptures. Their teaching does not arise independently of what God had previously spoken.

This will continue throughout the Epistles. The apostles repeatedly appeal to the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, the history of Israel, the promises of God, and the figures and events of the Old Testament in order to explain the gospel and the Christian life.

The Epistles Teach Us How to Read Scripture

The Epistles do not only give us doctrines to believe or instructions to obey. They also teach us how to read the Old Testament Scriptures. In them, we are watching men who had been formed by the Scriptures interpret the life of the Church through those Scriptures in the light of what God had now done in Christ.

The Old Testament world is everywhere within the apostolic writings. Sometimes the apostles quote a passage directly. Sometimes they refer to a biblical person or event. Sometimes they employ its imagery, language, categories, promises, patterns, or institutions without formally announcing a quotation. Adam, Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Moses, Israel, the Exodus, the wilderness, the law, the covenant, the temple, sacrifice, priesthood, Zion, creation, the prophets, the Psalms, and the promises of God continually reappear within their reasoning.

The apostles also showed us that the Old Testament narratives were written for our instruction and example. We are to imitate the faith of those who trusted God and learn from the unbelief and rebellion of those who did not. Paul brings Israel in the wilderness before the Corinthians as an example and warning (1

Cor. 10:1–12). John points to Cain as one whose way of hatred and murder must not be followed (1 John 3:12). James sets before believers the prophets, and particularly Job, as examples of patience in suffering and steadfastness before God (James 5:10–11). Jude warns against “the way of Cain,” “the error of Balaam,” and “the gainsaying of Core” (Jude 11). Peter likewise recalls Noah and Lot as righteous men preserved by God, while Balaam becomes an example of covetousness and unrighteousness (2 Pet. 2:5–16).

Hebrews 11 perhaps gives us the fullest portrait of this. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Rahab, the judges, the prophets, and others are gathered into one great history of faith. Their stories are then brought directly into the life of Christian believers: *“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight... and let us run with patience the race that is set before us”* (Heb. 12:1). Their lives are not preserved merely as ancient history. They become witnesses to the life of faith, teaching believers to endure and finish the race before them. Hebrews even says that God had provided something better for us, *“that they without us should not be made perfect”* (Heb. 11:40). Their story and ours therefore belong within the one unfolding purpose of God.

Paul speaks in the same way. When he recalls Israel in the wilderness, he calls them *“our fathers”* (1 Cor. 10:1), even while writing to a largely Gentile church. Abraham likewise becomes *“the father of all them that believe”* (Rom. 4:11). Believers are therefore brought into the same history of faith and promise. Paul then makes an important hermeneutical statement concerning Abraham: *“Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also”* (Rom. 4:23–24). The Old Testament record was not written merely for those whose lives

it originally described. It was written also for the instruction of those who would later believe in Christ.

It would therefore be too narrow to read the Epistles merely as independent Christian writings that occasionally appeal to the Old Testament for supporting texts. The apostles' thought itself was deeply scriptural. The Scriptures furnished much of the world within which they understood Christ, salvation, the Church, holiness, suffering, judgment, hope, worship, and the purposes of God.

This is especially significant because they were applying those Scriptures to **new situations**.

The Old Testament did not contain a chapter entitled, "How Gentile Christians in Corinth should deal with meat sold after pagan sacrifice," yet Paul could reason about that problem biblically. It did not directly describe Gentile churches being pressured to receive circumcision after the coming of Christ, yet Paul could return to Abraham, the promise, Sarah and Hagar, and the law in order to interpret what was happening in Galatia. Hebrews takes sanctuary, priesthood, sacrifice, covenant, wilderness, and promise and uses them to explain the significance of Christ and the perseverance required of believers. Peter takes language originally spoken concerning Israel and employs it in describing the identity and vocation of Christian believers.

Philemon gives us another interesting example. Paul has before him a concrete social problem involving a master and a servant, separation, some form of wrong or debt, and reconciliation. Yet he interprets the relationship from within the new reality created by Christ. Onesimus is to be received "*not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved*" (Philem. 16). When Paul says, "*if he hath*

wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account... I will repay it" (vv. 18–19), his reasoning also belongs naturally within the scriptural world of wrong, restitution, responsibility, and restoration. Paul does not merely give a detached discussion of slavery or social relations. He brings the actual relationship inside the realities of Christ, brotherhood, fellowship, love, reconciliation, and responsibility.

So what the apostles demonstrate is more than the ability to **find a verse for a situation**. They had so understood the Scriptures within the fulfilment of God's purposes in Christ that those Scriptures became the world from which they thought.

And this is where the Epistles can train us.

We need the apostolic writings as a lens for learning how to read the Old Testament as Christian Scripture. The apostles do not take us away from the Old Testament; they help us appreciate its stories, promises, prophecies, warnings, institutions, and patterns more fully. What has changed is that we now see these things within the fulfilment of God's purposes in Christ.

This also guards against the opposite extreme of thinking that, because Christ has come, Christians now need only the Epistles and no longer need the Old Testament. The Epistles themselves will not allow us to think this way. They continually send us back to the Old Testament. Abraham is our father in the faith. The faithful who endured before us become witnesses to the life of faith. Israel's failures become warnings to us. The prophets become examples of endurance. The promises and prophecies belong within the purpose now fulfilled in Christ.

We therefore belong to a holy continuity of God's people. The coming of Christ does not sever us from the earlier Scriptures; it enables us to understand our place within the purpose toward which those Scriptures were always moving.

The point is not that the apostles give us permission to make arbitrary connections or discover whatever spiritual meaning we want. Rather, by attending closely to how they themselves read the earlier Scriptures, we learn how creation, covenant relationship, the nation of Israel, law, sacrifice, kingdom, wisdom, prophecy, and the other great realities of the Old Testament are understood within the accomplishment of God's purposes in Christ.

In that sense, the apostles teach us not merely **what the Old Testament means**, but something of **how to see life through Christ**.

And that same apostolic formation of the mind becomes important for how we encounter our own world.

The apostles were living in their own societies, with their own political realities, economic structures, sexual practices, religious systems, family arrangements, cultural assumptions, sufferings, and controversies. They did not possess a biblical verse explicitly naming every situation they encountered. Yet because their minds had been formed by Scripture and by the reality of Christ, they could interpret those situations from within God's world.

That is what biblical thinking begins to look like.

We read the Scriptures deeply enough that they cease to be merely a storehouse from which we retrieve quotations. They

begin to furnish the categories by which we understand God, ourselves, other people, the Church, society, suffering, work, sexuality, money, power, death, hope, and everything else that constitutes human life.

This also enlarges what we mean by discipleship.

Discipleship cannot finally be reduced to taking someone through a course containing a predetermined collection of Christian subjects. There may certainly be courses, lessons, and organised teaching. But the deeper work is helping a person learn to **see life through Scripture**.

The disciple learns the Scriptures. He learns to recognise God's purposes within them. He learns to read the Old Testament through the apostolic witness to Christ. He learns how the apostles brought that scriptural world into contact with actual human problems. And gradually he himself learns to ask:

- What world does Scripture tell me I am living in?
- What has God done?
- What does this situation look like before God?
- What truths govern how I should understand it?
- What response does faithfulness require here?

Then Scripture begins to enter ordinary existence. Whether worship, work or interactions with the world or daily choices they are lived within a mind increasingly formed by the Scriptures.

So the Epistles can teach us at least three things at once: **how the apostles read the earlier Scriptures, how they used those Scriptures to understand the world and problems of the**

Christians they served, and therefore how we ourselves may learn to think biblically within our own world.

That is why sustained meditation upon the word matters. We must **see with apostolic eyes**—to read Scripture, to understand God's world through it, and then to understand our own lives within that world.

There is scarcely an Epistle whose thought can be adequately understood apart from the scriptural world of the Old Testament. Sometimes this appears through direct quotation; sometimes through identifiable allusion; sometimes through biblical persons, events, institutions, and images; and sometimes through a vocabulary and pattern of thought so deeply shaped by Israel's Scriptures that the apostles reason from within that world even without citing a particular passage.

We should therefore ask:

How does the apostle use the Scriptures to explain, establish, or apply what believers are being taught?

6. Written apostolic teaching works together with the ministry of mature believers

The Jerusalem Council does not simply write a letter and send it to the Gentile churches without further ministry.

The apostles and elders choose Judas and Silas, described as: *“chief men among the brethren”* (Acts 15:22),

and the letter itself says: “We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth” (Acts 15:27).

When they arrive, Luke tells us:

“And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them” (Acts 15:32).

The written instruction was therefore accompanied by people who could explain, exhort, encourage, and strengthen the believers.

This is important for understanding discipleship. Good books are good. Apostolic content is necessary. But the formation of believers cannot be reduced to the circulation of information. There is also a need for mature people who understand the apostolic teaching and can help others understand it, practise it, and become established in it.

This pattern continues into Acts 16. Paul and his companions went through the cities: *“they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem”* (Acts 16:4).

The result was: *“And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily”* (Acts 16:5).

The letter, the ministers who carried it, the explanation that accompanied it, and the continuing strengthening of the churches all belonged to the same work of formation.

Written apostolic teaching works together with the ministry of mature believers

The Epistles themselves confirm what we first see in Acts 15: discipleship cannot be separated from people, relationships, and

the shared life of the Church. From Paul to Peter, James, John, and Hebrews, believers are not pictured as receiving apostolic instruction and then attempting to mature in isolation. God places them among other believers and provides ministers, elders, mature Christians, fellow workers, and the mutual ministry of the whole body as part of their formation.

Paul's letters make this especially visible. He was constantly working with and sending mature believers to strengthen the churches. Timothy is perhaps the clearest example. Paul reminds the Corinthians that he had sent Timothy, "*who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord,*" and who would "*bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church*" (1 Cor. 4:17). To the Thessalonians he says that Timothy was sent "*to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith*" (1 Thess. 3:2). Written teaching and personal ministry therefore worked together.

Paul's letters are filled with the names of people who shared in this work. Romans 16 gives us an extraordinary picture of a network of fellow labourers, servants, helpers, and believers who had worked alongside him. Phoebe is commended to the church at Rome as "*a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea*" and as one who had been "*a succourer of many*" (Rom. 16:1–2). Priscilla and Aquila are called his "*helpers in Christ Jesus*" (Rom. 16:3). Similar fellow workers appear throughout Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians, and the other letters. Paul's ministry was never the work of one isolated apostle passing information to isolated Christians.

This also appears in the ordinary responsibility believers had toward one another. Paul tells those who are spiritual to restore someone overtaken in a fault "*in the spirit of meekness*" (Gal. 6:1).

Believers are to “*bear ye one another's burdens*” (Gal. 6:2), admonish one another (Rom. 15:14), comfort and edify one another (1 Thess. 5:11), warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, and support the weak (1 Thess. 5:14). There is therefore accountability, correction, restoration, encouragement, and mutual strengthening within the Christian community.

Older women are to teach the younger women (Titus 2:3–5). Timothy himself is to take what he has heard from Paul and commit it “*to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*” (2 Tim. 2:2). Christian formation is being transmitted through people whose own lives and doctrine have first been formed.

The ministry of mature believers was not limited to what they taught; their lives were also to become examples of the truth they proclaimed. Paul could therefore say, “*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*” (1 Cor. 11:1). Christ remained the ultimate pattern, but believers could learn Christian living by watching those who faithfully followed Him.

Paul says similarly in Philippians: “*Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do*” (Phil. 4:9). They had not only heard truth from him; they had seen it embodied in his life. What they had learned, received, heard, and seen was now to become their own practice.

He therefore tells them, “*Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample*” (Phil. 3:17). The Thessalonians likewise became “*followers of us, and of the Lord*” and then “*ensamples to all that believe*” (1 Thess. 1:6–7).

The Church therefore forms believers not only through programmes, but through people in whom that doctrine has

become visible. Mature believers show others what the Christian life looks like in practice.

Paul also speaks of ministers whom Christ has given to the Church—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers—*“for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,”* until the believers come to maturity (Eph. 4:11–13). The ministry of such people belongs to God's provision for bringing the body toward *“the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”*

James presents the same communal reality in another way. If someone is sick, he is not pictured as bearing the affliction alone: *“let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him”* (James 5:14). Believers are told, *“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another”* (James 5:16). If someone wanders from the truth, another believer may be involved in turning him back (James 5:19–20). Prayer, confession, restoration, and the ministry of elders all take place within a life shared with others.

Peter likewise charges the elders to *“feed the flock of God which is among you,”* not by domination, but by being *“ensamples to the flock”* (1 Pet. 5:2–3). The younger are to submit themselves unto the elder, while all are to *“be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility”* (1 Pet. 5:5). Mature leadership and mutual humility therefore belong together.

John's letters carry the same sense of shared spiritual life. His repeated address, *“my little children,”* reveals something of his own pastoral relationship to the believers. Yet he does not make Christian care the responsibility of apostles alone. The believers themselves are to love one another. If a man possesses this world's goods, sees his brother in need, and closes his

compassion against him, John asks, “*how dwelleth the love of God in him?*” (1 John 3:17). Love must therefore become practical care within the community: “*let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth*” (1 John 3:18).

Hebrews perhaps makes the necessity of this shared life especially explicit. Believers are told to “*exhort one another daily*” lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:13). They are to “*consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works,*” not “*forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,*” but “*exhorting one another*” (Heb. 10:24–25). They are also told to remember those who have spoken the word of God to them and to consider the outcome of their faith (Heb. 13:7), and to obey those who watch for their souls “*as they that must give account*” (Heb. 13:17).

The picture of discipleship is done in community. The gap between hearing apostolic teaching and becoming a mature Christian is not supplied by information alone. Christian life therefore cannot be entered or matured in alone. The believer must learn to receive and participate in God's provisions within the body of Christ. He needs the Scriptures, but he also needs people who understand and live those Scriptures. ***He needs teaching, but he also needs correction, encouragement, prayer, example, fellowship, accountability, and the ministry of others.***

As we read the Epistles, we should therefore ask:

What people, relationships, and ministries does God use to teach, strengthen, correct, restore, and mature these believers, and how are believers themselves expected to participate in the formation of one another?

Bringing the Questions Home

These questions are not meant only to help us understand what the apostles were doing in the churches they wrote to. They are also meant to help us examine our own Christian life. As you read, do not ask only, *“What was Paul teaching them?”* Ask also, *“What is this teaching showing me about my own faith, my thinking, my conduct, and my growth in Christ?”*

7. The Epistles set the Christian life within the hope of what is to come

The apostles understood the Christian life within a clear **already and not yet** reality. Salvation is something believers already possess in Christ, and yet something whose fullness they still await. Paul can speak of believers as already saved (Eph. 2:8), justified (Rom. 5:1), adopted as sons (Rom. 8:15–16), redeemed (Eph. 1:7), and translated into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13); yet he can also say that *“now is our salvation nearer than when we believed”* (Rom. 13:11), that we are *“waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body”* (Rom. 8:23), and that the Spirit we presently possess is the *“firstfruits”* and the earnest of what is still to come (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:13–14). What believers have received is therefore real, but it is not yet complete.

John expresses the same tension with remarkable clarity: *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be”* (1 John 3:2). Peter likewise speaks of believers as already having received *“all things that pertain unto life and godliness”* (2 Pet. 1:3), while still looking toward an *“entrance... into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”* (2 Pet. 1:11) and a salvation *“ready to be revealed in the last time”* (1 Pet. 1:5). The apostolic hope

therefore begins with what God has already given in Christ and stretches forward toward what He will yet bring to completion.

Paul repeatedly brings this future hope into the believer's present life. He reminds Christians that *"we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ"* to receive according to what has been done in the body (2 Cor. 5:10). At the same time, present suffering is placed beside coming glory: *"our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,"* because *"the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal"* (2 Cor. 4:17–18).

The expectation of Christ's coming also produces a particular posture of **watchfulness, sobriety, and preparation**. In Romans, Paul says that *"now is our salvation nearer than when we believed,"* that *"the night is far spent, the day is at hand,"* and therefore believers are to *"cast off the works of darkness"* and *"put on the armour of light"* (Rom. 13:11–12). The coming day demands a corresponding manner of life.

He develops the same thought in Thessalonians. The day of the Lord will come *"as a thief in the night"* (1 Thess. 5:2), but believers are not children of darkness. They are *"children of light, and the children of the day"* (5:5), and therefore Paul says, *"let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober"* (5:6). Those who sleep sleep in the night, and those who are drunken are drunken in the night; but believers belong to the day and are therefore to remain sober, clothed with faith, love, and the hope of salvation (5:7–8).

For the Thessalonians, the coming of Christ is also a source of comfort. Those who have died in Christ will rise, and believers are therefore told to *"comfort one another with these words"* (1 Thess. 4:16–18). The hope of Christ's return is thus not merely

information about the future. It gives comfort in death and suffering, while producing readiness, watchfulness, sobriety, and moral seriousness in the present.

James speaks with the same expectation. The man who endures temptation is promised *“the crown of life”* (James 1:12). So, we endure by this hope when trials get fierce. Believers suffering under present difficulties are told, *“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord,”* like the husbandman waiting for the precious fruit of the earth (James 5:7). They are to establish their hearts because *“the coming of the Lord draweth nigh,”* and to remember that *“the judge standeth before the door”* (James 5:8–9). The expectation of Christ's coming produces patience, endurance, and seriousness about the way one lives.

Peter likewise grounds present endurance in future hope. Believers have been begotten again unto a living hope and to *“an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you”* (1 Pet. 1:3–4). This enables them to rejoice even when they are *“in heaviness through manifold temptations,”* knowing that the trial of their faith will be *“found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”* (1 Pet. 1:6–7).

Peter also reminds believers that they will give account *“to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead”* (1 Pet. 4:5). In his second Epistle, the coming day of the Lord becomes an immediate question of Christian character. Since the present order will not continue forever, Peter asks, *“what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness”* (2 Pet. 3:11). Believers are *“looking for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,”* and therefore must *“be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless”* (2 Pet. 3:13–14).

John makes the same connection between hope and present holiness. Believers are told to abide in Christ so that *“when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming”* (1 John 2:28). And because they expect to see Christ as He is, John says, *“every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure”* (1 John 3:2–3). Future hope produces present purification.

Revelation brings this apostolic expectation to its great conclusion. The present world is not the final order of things. John sees *“a new heaven and a new earth”* (Rev. 21:1), and the book closes with Christ saying, *“Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me”* (Rev. 22:12). The proper response of the Church is therefore both longing and readiness: *“Even so, come, Lord Jesus”* (Rev. 22:20).

The apostles therefore taught believers to live with an eternal horizon. What we possess in Christ now is real, but it points toward something still to be completed. Present suffering is not final. Present success is not final. The present order of the world is not final. Christ is coming, the dead will rise, judgment will come, God's people will receive their inheritance, and God's purposes will reach their appointed end.

This expectation gives Christian life urgency. It produces watchfulness, sobriety, patience, endurance, purity, faithfulness, and a proper evaluation of what is temporary and what is eternal. The Church must therefore learn to think beyond the immediate moment. God has purposes for His people that extend beyond the present age, and believers are called to live now as those who belong to the world that is coming.

As we read the Epistles, we should therefore ask:

What future reality does the apostle place before me, and how should that hope govern the way I live now?

And What About Me?

The purpose of this study is not simply to understand what the apostles taught the early churches. Their writings now stand before us as Scripture. We therefore have to ask whether the realities by which they sought to establish those believers have actually established us.

- Am I grounded in the gospel, or have I merely become familiar with Christian language?
- Do I know who I am in Christ, or is my identity still being determined largely by achievement, failure, money, status, relationships, culture, or the opinions of others?
- Has what I believe become visible in the way I speak, work, love, forgive, use money, handle sexuality, endure suffering, and relate to other believers?
- Has Scripture become the world through which I interpret my life, or do I mostly bring my own assumptions to Scripture and look for verses to support them?
- Who is helping to form me? Whose faith and manner of life can I follow? Am I genuinely living within the relationships and ministries God has provided in the Church?
- And am I living merely for what is immediately before me, or does the coming of Christ, resurrection, judgment, and the hope of the world to come actually govern the choices I make now?

And Whom Am I Helping?

Apostolic discipleship does not end with ourselves.

Paul told Timothy: *“the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also”* (2 Tim. 2:2).

The believer who is being formed eventually participates in the formation of others. He is a disciple making disciples.

How does it

It may begin with one person.

- Someone whose questions you take seriously.
- Someone with whom you read Scripture.
- Someone whom you help understand what Christ has done.
- Someone whose life situation you help think through biblically.
- Someone sick you prayed with.
- Someone who fell you restored
- Someone you correct in their error when necessary.
- Someone who can see something of the Christian life in the way you yourself live.

Who is forming you?

And who, through your life, is learning to follow Christ?

Are you A DISCIPLE MAKING OTHERS DISCIPLES?

ABOUT THE YOUNG MINISTERS' FORUM

The Young Ministers' Forum (YMF) is a Gospel-centered parachurch movement committed to strengthening and equipping young ministers to faithfully serve God's purpose across churches, communities, and nations.

As a parachurch platform, we exist to complement and support the local church by cultivating ministers who are spiritually grounded, doctrinally sound, missionally active, and formed in Christlike character. Through intentional fellowship, mentorship, resource development, and structured education, we provide an environment where emerging leaders can grow in clarity, conviction, and competence for lifelong ministry.

Our Vision

To strengthen and equip young ministers to serve God's purpose with clarity, conviction, and competence.

Our Mission

We fulfill our mission through the **FORGE** framework:

F – Fellowship

Cultivating authentic community where iron sharpens iron and ministers grow in unity, accountability, and shared purpose.

O – Outreach & Missions

Advancing the Gospel through evangelism, public engagement, and cross-cultural mission initiatives.

R – Resource Building

Developing and distributing biblically faithful and intellectually sound resources to serve ministers and local churches.

G – Grooming & Mentorship

Providing intentional spiritual formation, leadership development, and personal guidance for sustainable ministry impact.

E – Education

Equipping the mind and ministry through structured theological training, practical workshops, and disciplined study.