

**TRINITY UNITED CHURCH,  
LEGON**

**THEME FOR THE YEAR 2021:**

**REBUILDING OUR BROKEN**

**WALL:**

**LOVING GOD AND LOVING MY  
NEIGHBOUR (MATT. 22: 37-39)**

## FROM THE MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

During our Bible Studies last year, we looked at the theme “Rebuilding our broken Wall” which was taken from Nehemiah 2:17. In those studies, it became obvious that our relationships with God and with our neighbours are very important in our efforts to rebuild the broken wall in a Church such as ours. So in this year’s studies, we will be focusing on what our Lord Jesus the Christ called the first and second commandments in Matthew 22:37-39. Sometimes we hear people comment that the coming of Christ Jesus has liberated us from the Law and therefore, we are no more under the Law. That might be true to some extent. In fact, Jesus told His disciples that there is a greater expectation from all who follow Him and the laws are now stiffer in the new dispensation. In Matthew chapter 5, He emphasized that: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them (Matt. 5:17). Reading through Matthew chapter 5, one finds that our Lord’s expectation of the Christian is greater than when they were given to the Israelites since the laws have been put in our minds and written on our hearts in the new covenant (Jer.

31:31-34). We should therefore know that both the Old and New Testaments uphold the Law and therefore the vertical relationship between us and God must be equally balanced horizontally by loving our neighbours, which includes our enemies (Matt. 5: 43-45).

These Bible studies will help us go through Paul's Epistles to the Ephesians as well as part of his epistle to the church in Rome. The message is equally meant for our instruction and it is my hope that these studies will help us to deepen our love for God as well as our neighbours as we rebuild our broken wall. Jesus the Christ, in His revelation to John while on the island of Patmos, reprimanded the church in Ephesus. He said among others, "I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance . . . . Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place . . . . He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 2:2-7). May the Lord come to find us faithful and obedient, both as individuals

who form the Trinity United Church as well as a corporate body, so that our lampstand as a Church, to which many people look, will not be removed from its place within the Temple of our God.

I am grateful to the team of writers who made time and sacrificed to provide these studies for our benefit. They include Rev. Enock Twum Aboagye, Bros. Solomon Adjetey-Sowah, Samuel Frimpong Manso, Sis. Alberta Frimpong Manso and myself. I am also indebted to Dr. George Kodie Frimpong who made the time to look through the work and offered suggestions to improve its quality. I am hopeful that together with the Bible Study leaders, we would search the scriptures to know the truth and be willing to hearken to God's voice so that in the end, our love for God and our neighbours would be deepened in our Christian growth.

REV. DR. MARTIN ADU OBENG  
MINISTER-IN-CHARGE

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## **STUDY 1: WHY SHOULD WE LOVE GOD?**

### **TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:1-6**

#### Memory Verse:

*We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).*

#### Introduction:

Paul's letter to the Ephesians was meant to strengthen the believers in their Christian faith by explaining to them the nature and purpose of the church. After his salutation, Paul affirms the glorious fact that believers in Christ have been showered with God's kindness. This includes the fact that God predestined us to be His adopted children through Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:5) and made us heirs along with Jesus Christ.

In Roman law, adopted children had the same rights and privileges as biological children and so Paul uses this term to show how strong our relationship with God is (Gal.4:5-7). These facts indicate that God first loved us irrespective of our nature and of where we come from. This and the next four

lessons will be focused on God's love towards us and how we, as Christians in the Trinity United Church (TUC), should respond to God and our fellow humans more by our actions (deeds) than our words.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What does the passage say about God's love towards us?
2. What does Paul mean when he states that "God in His love, predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will"? (Eph. 1:5 and Gal. 4:5-7).
3. How should we respond to God's love towards us in order to reap the full benefits as adopted children?
4. How can we, as adopted children, exhibit this love that God has for us to people in our homes, neighbourhood, workplaces and schools, among others?

## Summary

As Christians, we should be reminded that God's love is unconditional, pure, non-discriminatory and universal. God first loved us so it is natural for us to also love Him. Loving God also means that we exhibit the love in our actions by obeying His commandments and extending this love to our fellow human beings unconditionally. This is because we cannot claim to love God and hate our brother or sister. Jesus Christ emphasized this in Matthew 22:34 ff. as the most important commandment. It is important to let those who come into contact with us realize that we are Christians by showing them God's love. This will go a long way to make an impact on them and possibly lead them to become Christians, if they are not.

## STUDY 2: LOVING GOD AS A COMMANDMENT

### TEXT: MATTHEW 22:34-40

#### Memory Verse

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind*

*(Matthew 22:37).*

#### Introduction

God's commandment could be defined as a divine rule that must be obeyed. An example is the Decalogue (or 10 Commandments) that God gave to the Israelites through Moses (Exod. 20:2-17; Deut. 5:6-21). Decalogue (ten words) was coined from the Greek word *dekalogus*. The first four (4) commandments deal with duties toward God, and the rest concern relations among persons. The summarized version of the Ten Commandments in the New Testament (NT) is what Jesus Christ provided in Matthew 22:34-40. The Pharisees, who believed in the resurrection and followed the 'traditions

of their fathers' were described as hypocrites by Jesus. These Pharisees who had classified over 600 laws often tried to distinguish the more important from the less important ones. They went to Jesus and asked Him to identify the most important law. Jesus answered them by quoting from Deut. 6:5 and Lev.19:18. He told them that by fulfilling these two commands, a person would have kept all the Ten Commandments and the other Old Testament (OT) moral laws. One would ask, "Does it matter to know the more important laws from the less important" as the Pharisees wanted to test Jesus about? As Christians, it is incumbent on us to ensure that we embrace the two components – loving God and loving our neighbours – and obey them. Since it is a commandment from God, we just cannot disobey but do all we can to love God with all our hearts and with all our souls and with all our minds, and to love our neighbours as ourselves. It is by so doing that we believers would have fulfilled our duty as Christians.

## Questions for Discussion

1. Discuss the motive of the Pharisees' question in Matthew 22:34-35 and identify lessons that we can learn from it as TUC members.
2. What can you say about the behaviour of the Pharisees?
3. Explain verse 40 in your own words. (Note: the phrase "the Law and the Prophets" is a reference to the present Old Testament).
4. How do you relate loving God and loving your neighbour to the Ten Commandments?
5. What should we do as Christians to ensure that we obey the Ten Commandments as summarized in Matthew 22:37-40?

## Summary

God gave the commandments so that they would be obeyed. If we love God, then we should keep His commandments. Moreover, as Christians, if we obey God's commandments, we will escape, to a large extent, the danger of sin which could threaten our lives as highlighted in 1 John 2:3-6. Again, if we obey God's commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight, then we will receive from God whatever we ask as in 1 John 3:22-24. If we disobey God and do not keep His commandments, then it means we do not love Him. This is because Jesus Christ said in John 14:15 that "If you love me you will keep my commandments". We should therefore endeavour to obey God's commandments to show that we really love Him.

**STUDY 3:      LOVING GOD FOR WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR  
US**

**TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:7-14**

Memory Verse

*But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).*

Introduction

Paul's letter to the Ephesian church was meant to strengthen the believers in their Christian faith by explaining the nature and purpose of the church. Paul's explanation from Ephesians 1:7-14 clearly shows that Grace is God's voluntary and loving favour given to those whom He saves. We do not deserve His salvation because we cannot earn it. The Grace of God is such that no religious, intellectual or moral effort can gain it for us because it comes only from God's mercy and love. Without God's Grace, no person can be saved. To receive God's Grace, we must acknowledge that we cannot save ourselves; only

God can save us. The only way to receive this loving favour is through faith in Christ Jesus.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Mention three things that God has done for us in Ephesians 1:7-14 that should make us love Him also.
2. What other things has God done for us that should compel us to love Him?
3. How should we as individuals show our love to God, considering all that He has been doing for us as Christians?
4. Can you give some examples of what we have been doing as individuals and as Trinity United Church (TUC) to demonstrate God's love to our neighbours?
5. Discuss what we should do as a Church (TUC) to improve upon our relationship with God and with our neighbours, based on what He has done and is doing in our lives.

## Summary

God shows His love to us through uncountable ways, both as Christians and as non-Christians. We should love God because He first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19). John 3:16 tells us that God showed His love to us by sending His only begotten Son to come and die to save us from our sins. Again, God commands us to love one another just as He has loved us (Jn. 13:34). As Christians, we must love one another for love is of God (1 Jn. 4:7). Loving God should not only be in mere words but also show in our actions. That is to say, loving God means that we exhibit the love in our actions by obeying His commandments and extending this love to our fellow human beings unconditionally.

**STUDY 4:        LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR HEART AND  
                         WITH ALL OUR SOUL**

**TEXT: EPHESIANS 1:15-23**

Memory Verse

*We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus (1 Thessalonians 1:3).*

Introduction

This week's lesson ends Chapter 1 of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. This chapter contains two main thoughts: the first describes the blessings Christians have been given as a result of our salvation through Christ. The Apostle Paul explains these facts through praises directed to God the Father. The second section, which we are discussing in this study, commends the Ephesians for their reputation and prays that

Jesus would bring them into an event which is more fulfilling as far as their faith is concerned.

One of the long prayer sessions in Paul's letters is found in Eph. 1:16-17. Here, Paul prayed that the Ephesians would know Christ better. Jesus Christ is our model and the more we know him, the more we will be like him. The question is, how much do you know Christ as an individual? Personal knowledge of Christ will change your life.

Another prominent thing Paul talked about, apart from faith and love, is hope. Paul explains that the hope we have is not a vague feeling that the future will be positive, but it is complete assurance of victory through God. This complete certainty comes to us through the Holy Spirit who is at work in us (Eph.1:18).

Lastly, Paul elaborates on the power of God, focusing on God's power displayed in how He raised Jesus Christ from the grave and exalted him (Eph.1:20-23).

## Questions for Discussion

1. What does it mean to “love God with all your heart”?
2. The Apostle Paul remembered and prayed for the Ephesians on the basis of what he had heard about them concerning their faith and love. How can people also hear of your faith and love?
3. One clear theme in Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians was reconciliation in Christ. How this was achieved and how can one benefit from this reconciliation?
4. Discuss how a Christian can have complete assurance of certainty through the Holy Spirit that when Christ comes again, he or she will join Him to heaven.
5. In what ways can we as a Church (TUC Church) be remembered as Paul remembered the believers in Ephesus?
6. “Fullness of him ...” in Eph. 1:23 refers to Christ filling the Church with gifts or blessings. Can you share with the group about a gift or blessing that you have received from God, and how you are using it to His glory?

## Summary

Today's study celebrates the value of our salvation in Christ. Paul's prayers for the believers in the Ephesian church was not only to praise their success, but also to appeal for their growth. As Christians, we are not only followers of Jesus Christ, but also recipients of His blessings and power. Paul seeks to remind us that a complete understanding of Christ leads to a greater love and strong faith. God's incomparably great power is available to help every believer. There is therefore nothing too difficult for Him.

As Christians, we should be mindful that each member has to get involved in Christ's work. We should not attempt to work, serve or worship merely because of our own individual interest, but in accordance with what the entire body of Christ is doing just as the Ephesians did.

## **STUDY 5:      LOVING GOD BECAUSE OF WHO WE WERE**

### **TEXT: EPHESIANS 2:1-7**

#### Memory Verse

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).*

#### Introduction

During the past four studies, we looked at the love of God toward us and the reasons why we should also reciprocate that gesture. This is the last of the series about the need to love God because of His abundant love and mercies.

In Eph. 2:1-7, Apostle Paul explains to the Ephesian Christians how God demonstrated His love to us even while we were still sinners and following the ways of this world. Paul tells us that we were dead in our sins and deserved to die when God came to our rescue. As a result of God's great love and mercy for

mankind, He took our sins to the Cross and died on our behalf. God raised us up with Christ and has seated us with Him in the heavenly place.

As Christians, we should realize that God's mercy and love come to us by means of the Cross at Calvary. This new life is imparted to us through our identification with Christ in His death and resurrection in order to have the new life in Christ.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. According to Ephesians 2:1, what sort of people were we before Christ died for us?
2. Why was it necessary for us to be saved? Could we have saved ourselves according to Eph. 2:5?
3. How should we respond to God's love and mercy which He demonstrates to us through the Cross at Calvary?
4. Explain in your own words, "It is by grace you have been saved" (Eph. 2:5b).

5. Does it mean we have nothing to contribute in order to be saved as Christians? Give reasons for your answer.

### Summary

Before we became Christians, we were dead in sin and slaves to our sinful nature. But now as Christians, we are alive with Christ as emphasized in Galatians 2:20. Therefore our eternal life with Christ is certain because we are united in His powerful victory. It is an undeniable fact that in the resurrection, Christ has been victorious over Satan and his power. Therefore, Jesus is the permanent ruler of the whole world, and Satan is only the temporary ruler of the part of the world that chooses to follow him. Do you want to be ruled by Satan or Jesus? We should know that it is only through being united with Christ's perfect life that we can become good in God's sight, to be led by Jesus the Christ.

Those who refuse to receive Christ end up becoming objects of God's wrath (Eph. 2:3). Since Jesus died for our sins and has

resurrected, we know for sure that our bodies will also be raised from the dead when He returns (1 Cor. 15:2-23).

## STUDY 6: OUR POSITION IN CHRIST I

### TEXT: EPHESIANS 2:8-13

#### Memory Verse

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God: not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).*

#### Introduction

We will be discussing 'Our position in Christ' in this and the next studies as explained in Ephesians Chapter 2 by the Apostle Paul. There are many Church attendants (even in TUC), who will find it difficult to tell their positions in Christ when they are confronted. In these studies, Paul talks about free gifts of God such as grace, salvation and faith which are given to us as Christians. Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians to encourage them to think of themselves in a whole, new way. He wanted them to think of themselves as those who had once been involved in idol worship, illicit sex, and unnecessary philosophies, but as people of Christ, with a

new identity, they are now a new creation and therefore should behave as such. We will discuss and explore further how, as Christians, we should respond to the gifts from God and know our position in Christ.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What is our position or relationship with Christ, in respect of Paul's explanation in Ephesians 2:8-9?
2. Discuss the phrase "we are God's workmanship . . ." in Eph. 2:10. What does it mean in connection with discrimination against our neighbours?
3. How should we respond to God's gift of salvation and grace as Christians?
4. What does Paul mean when he refers to us as Gentiles, uncircumcised and foreigners in our old nature?
5. What has brought us closer to Christ now?
6. Give examples of what we should do, as Christians, to maintain our salvation and faith that God has freely given us.

## Summary

In this study, we have come to understand why we are on this Earth in the first place, and why we should live in unity with God and with our neighbours. Paul explains that we become Christians through God's unmerited grace, not as a result of any effort, ability, intelligent choice, or act of service that we have exhibited. Therefore, Paul is admonishing us, as Christians, to embrace God's gifts, such as salvation by grace through faith alone, as well as the nature and role of the Church in God's eternal plan. We end today's discussion by affirming to ourselves our purpose here on this earth and how we should relate to God and man in order to have a share in His unmerited favour.

## STUDY 7: OUR POSITION IN CHRIST II

TEXT: EPHESIANS 2:14-22

### Memory Verse

*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).*

### Introduction

In our last study, we discussed the first part of 'Our position in Christ'. In today's study, we are continuing with Paul's discussion on our faith in Christ and peace with God as highlighted in Chapter 2. Here, Apostle Paul makes it clear that because of Christ's death, we are all one. Our hostility against one another has been put to death (whether Jews, Gentiles, Black, White, etc.). This means that all Christians (including TUC members) can have access to the Father through Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are no longer foreigners or aliens to God; we are citizens of

God's Kingdom and members of his household. In the course of this discussion, we will focus on the sacrifice that Jesus has made on the Cross, which has justified us through faith to enjoy peace with God.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What are some of the things that divide us as a result of discrimination among Christians?
2. What is the significance of the Cross to us as Christians?
3. Does the death of Christ have different meanings/significance to Jews, Gentiles or any other groups of people? What do these people say?
4. "The death of Jesus justifies everyone to enjoy peace with God". Discuss this statement in light of what people of other faiths, such as Islam, teach.
5. Reflect on your own faith in Jesus Christ. Does your faith in Christ have an impact on your day-to-day interactions with people?

6. Give examples of what we should do, as Christians, to maintain our salvation and the peace that God has given us through the death of Jesus on the Cross.

### Summary

The Apostle Paul consistently emphasizes that salvation is accomplished on the basis of grace, through faith in God. Good works, human effort and best intentions will never be enough to earn us our salvation. All of us are marked with sin, both deliberate and unintentional. As a result, we deserve to be separated from God. It is only through His mercy and grace that we can be saved and this leaves no room for us to brag. This also means that all who are saved, are part of the same spiritual family. There is no cause for hostility among believers. We were all not worthy, and were saved by the same kindness of God. Therefore, we should live as followers of Christ to justify the sacrifice that God, through Jesus Christ, has made for us.

## **STUDY 8:      LOVING GOD BY RESPONDING TO HIS CALL**

### **TEXT: EPHESIANS 3:1-6**

#### Memory Verse

*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and dine with him, and he with me (Revelation 3:20).*

#### Introduction

The circumstances leading to Apostle Paul's conversion is indeed mysterious. This is because Paul was seriously persecuting Christians. Yet, God's love, grace and mercy were demonstrated to him and so he was saved. Due to the unmerited favour Paul received from God, he demonstrated so much commitment to the call of God. In Ephesians 3:1, Paul describes the world's encounter with God in human lives as a great mystery. Paul did not even consider his state as a prisoner; he defied all odds and vigorously propagated the gospel anytime an opportunity came his way. This attitude of

Paul should obviously have a positive impact on every believer, and thereby make us respond to God's call upon our lives by showing love to Him in spreading the gospel. After this lesson, we should be equipped (both in knowledge and spirit) to respond appropriately to God's call upon us.

### Questions for Discussion

1. In Ephesians 3:1, Paul said "For this reason...." What do you think is the reason Paul is referring to in this verse? Refer also to Ephesians 3:13.
2. Why did Paul, all of a sudden, turnaround from persecuting Christians to devote his whole life to the call of God and to propagate the gospel throughout areas he could reach at the time?
3. Do you think that God has called you to His service? Why do you say so?
4. What should we as a Church (TUC) collectively and as individual members do in response to God's call?
5. What could be done to encourage more members to be active in service to God?

6. Paul responded positively to the call of God and worked seriously on it. Share with your group what has been your response to God's call and whether it is like that of Paul or different from his.

### Summary

Paul responded to the call of God and served Him with all his heart, mind, soul and strength. This is because Paul was concerned that all Christians to whom he was writing (such as Ephesians, TUC believers, etc.) would understand why he was going through the struggle of being in prison. We, as Christians in TUC, should take a cue from Paul's behaviour and respond accordingly to God's call upon our lives. This will mean that no matter our circumstances and conditions, we should have no excuse in spreading the gospel to our neighbours.

## **STUDY 9: LOVING GOD THROUGH EVANGELISM**

### **TEXT: EPHESIANS 3:7-13**

#### Memory Verse

*He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation' (Mk. 16:15).*

#### Introduction

Jesus gave the Great Commission to His disciples (Christians) in Matthew 28:19-20. Paul loved Jesus so much that he obeyed this Great Commission by becoming an apostle of God, especially to the Gentile communities. He took advantage of every situation to share the gospel, even when he was arrested and given the opportunity to defend himself (Acts 26). There is no doubt that every one of us gets opportunities in diverse ways and periods to share the word of God, for example in schools, markets, offices, our communities, among others. Unfortunately, we do not make use of those opportunities to share the Word of God as Paul

did. This study therefore will remind us of the need to spread the gospel wherever we find ourselves as a demonstration of our love for God.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What did Paul mean when he described himself as “less than the least of all God’s people”?
2. Discuss Paul’s strategy in sharing the gospel to the Gentiles, mostly.
3. Do we need to have a special strategy to enable us share the Word of God to a particular group of people? What are your reasons?
4. What preparations should we make to make us ready and courageous to share the gospel?
5. What is your personal experience as far as sharing the gospel is concerned?
6. Do you think that we as members of this church are involved in evangelism? Give reasons for your answer.
7. What should we do, as individuals and as a church, to improve on our effort in sharing the gospel?

## Summary

Evangelism is Christ Jesus's command to every Christian as given in Matthew 28:19-20. Apostle Paul has set us an example as Christians to follow. Wherever we have an opportunity (which we always have), we should be ready as God's servants to spread the gospel. Availing ourselves to God to spread the gospel, does not mean that things would be smooth; there could be challenges, just as Jesus Christ Himself and the early church believers like Paul went through. However, God will intervene and empower us to endure the persecution. We will eventually bring new believers to Christ. Just as the Early Church Christians suffered and sacrificed for us in this part of the world to also become Christians, so should we feel honoured, yet obliged to sacrifice for others to also come into the body of Christ.

**STUDY 10:    LOVING GOD THROUGH OUR DEVOTIONAL  
LIVES**

**TEXT: EPHESIANS 3:14-21**

Memory Verse

*I pray that out of his glorious riches, he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being (Ephesians 3:16).*

Introduction

Christian devotion can be understood to be a time set aside to commit oneself to pray, study the Bible and meditate on it or to worship God privately. Different names such as Bible Study, Quiet Time, Daily Watch, Sacred Time or Appointed Time with God, are used in place of Christian devotion time. The Apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesian Church that God will empower and strengthen them through the Holy Spirit. As Christians, we have all the fullness of God available to us, but

we must appropriate that fullness through faith and prayer so that we will be empowered to live for our Lord Jesus all the days of our lives. This study will therefore help us appreciate the role that such time with God plays in our Christian growth.

### Questions for Discussion

1. How important is it to have a personal devotional time with God daily?
2. Why should Christians intercede for others as Paul did for the Ephesian Church?
3. Which people should we pray for?
4. Read Matthew 6:12. Are there conditions for one to fulfil before one prays to God? Are there conditions upon which God answers our prayers?
5. Does Christian devotion have to follow a defined pattern? Discuss.
6. Examine your devotional time whether you are on the right path. What can you do to improve on your personal time with God?

## Summary

The Apostle Paul, in his intercessory prayer, appealed for spiritual strength from God to (the Ephesian) Christians. This action demonstrates the application of what he (Paul) preached. It teaches us to 'walk the talk' as a means to prove that we do not just preach to people but our behaviour and attitudes conform to it. In other words, we should practice what we preach by showing concern to those who need assistance. This includes praying for them to gain spiritual as well as physical strength from God Almighty. Above all, we should take our personal devotion seriously and do it frequently and in all sincerity so that we would be empowered in our relationship with God.

## STUDY 11: LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR MINDS

**Text: ROMANS 12:1-2**

### Memory Verse

*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2).*

### Introduction

The Bible tells us that God created us in His own image and breathed into us to make us living beings. Even though humankind sinned, we still carry in us the image of God. Therefore, to be able to apply God's Word to our lives and live by it, something has to happen to our minds. In this study, we will discover ways by which we can love God better when our minds are renewed and also appreciate His will for our lives.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Why does Paul make an appeal to his audience to present their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God?
2. Explain verse 1 in your own words and indicate how you can make that happen in your life.
3. How can we undergo the transformation that verse 2 commands?
4. In a world that is full of information, how can we train our minds to discern between truth and falsehood?
5. What is the surest way to knowing the will of God, according to verse 2?
6. Identify three steps that we must take to enable us to love God with our minds.

### Summary

We live in a world that encourages us to feel okay by staying independent of the other. As a result of this, many Christians are living isolated lives and do not care about what we do with our minds. This study has shown that the only way to discern the mind of God, that is His will, is to

have a renewing of the mind. Our sinful minds have been corrupted and made us selfish; but when we have the mind of Christ, we have no other choice but to see our lives as already dedicated to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. This will require that we continually make the Word of God a light for our path and a lamp unto our feet so that we do not trip and fall into sin. God wants us to love Him with our all and this is part of our calling as children of God. We are in this world but not of it, so let us beware.

## **STUDY 12: LOVING GOD WITH OUR MATERIAL POSSESSIONS**

**TEXT: MATTHEW 19:16-26**

### Memory verse

*Jesus told him, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come follow me" (Matthew 19:21).*

### Introduction

Memorizing the Ten Commandments was a part of the life of every Israelite but this should not be done for the sake of doing it. To the man who was seeking eternal life, Jesus pointed out that salvation does not come from good deeds unaccompanied by love for God. Instead of adding another commandment to keep, or good deeds to perform, we, just like the man in the passage, need to submit humbly to the lordship of Christ. At some point in time, church members talk about becoming donor-fatigued and therefore reluctant to

give for the work of God. We should note that whenever we are told to give for God's work, we should not think we are giving to the church leaders, but rather to God. This study will enable us to discover the need to give generously towards the work of God.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Should a person who desires to follow Christ sell everything he or she owns materially as a first step? Why do you say so?
2. Read verses 23 and 24 again and summarise your understanding of Jesus's statement.
3. How should giving towards God's work compare with responsibility for our own families, and our personal needs?
4. How do we ensure that nothing comes between us and God when it comes to using our God-given wealth?
5. Can we love God with all our hearts and yet keep our money to ourselves? What are your reasons?

6. In a sentence or two share what lessons you have learnt in this study.

### Summary

Because it is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, it appears impossible for a rich person to get to the Kingdom of Heaven. The disciples, astounded as they were, thought that if anyone could be saved, it would be the rich, whom their culture considered specially blessed by God. Jesus, however, explained that “with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26); even rich people can enter into the Kingdom of God if they are willing, since God is willing to bring them in. What we need to note as believers is that it is faith in Christ which counts, and not in self or riches. We realize in the passage how difficult it was for the man to give up his wealth, because his wealth had become his god. We should therefore be careful not to allow the love of material things or possessions to come between us and our God. We cannot love God with all our heart and yet keep our money to ourselves. Loving Him totally means using our money and

possessions in ways that please Him. He provided all that we have in the first place, and is capable of giving us more if we used our resources for His glory.

## **STUDY 13: WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?**

**TEXT: LUKE 10:25-37**

### Memory verse

*The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?” (Luke 10:29)*

### Introduction

One of the dictionary definitions of “neighbour” is “a person who lives (or is located) near another”; an example could be the people in our vicinity. Jesus’ definition of a neighbour is, however, different from what we know. He refers to a neighbour as one who is really willing to provide help in times of need to somebody, whether known or unknown. To throw more light on Jesus’ description of a neighbour, let us put the parable of the Good Samaritan in perspective. According to biblical history, a deep hatred existed between Jews and Samaritans. The Jews saw themselves as pure descendants of Abraham, while the Samaritans were a mixed race produced

when Jews from the Northern kingdom intermarried with other people after Israel's exile. In this study, we will know more about who the legal expert least thought as his neighbour to broaden our understanding of who we should recognize as our neighbours.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Why did the expert in the law come to Jesus?
2. Did he get an answer to his question? Why do you say so?
3. What, in your own words, did Jesus explain to be a neighbour?
4. Share with the group an occasion when you should have helped someone but refused or were unwilling to do so.
5. Do you think that our congregation, Trinity United Church, Legon, is providing support for our neighbours? Give examples to +
6. 587\4]  
{P"}Ojustify your answer.

7. What should the story of the Good Samaritan teach us about how we should study the Word of God?
8. Who would you say is your neighbour?

### Summary

The characters in this passage, namely: the Priest, the Temple assistant and the despised Samaritan, could be anyone of us. In our efforts to serve the Lord, we come across similar situations and we easily or inadvertently refuse to offer assistance, giving excuses that either we would be late for a church programme or because of the possibility of providing a witness statement at the police station, we wouldn't want to offer the needed assistance. From the passage, we learn three principles about loving our neighbour, namely: i) Lack of love is often easy to justify, even though it is never right; ii) our neighbour is anyone of any race, creed or social background who is in need; iii) love means acting to meet the person's need. There is therefore no good reason for refusing

to help; we should note that wherever we live, there are needy people close by who need our help. As a church also, we shouldn't be tired of assisting deprived churches or individuals who need help.

## STUDY 14: LOVING GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

### TEXT: EPHESIANS 4:1-10

#### Memory Verse

*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:2-3).*

#### Introduction

The body of Christ, which is the church, has experienced and is still experiencing disunity. There are many people who are in the body of Christ, but do not live lives worthy of their calling because they do not make every effort to maintain unity through bearing one another in love. Apostle Paul presented to the Christians at Ephesus the ethical demand that should distinguish them from other religious groups. In this study, we will discover how we can show love to God's

people who are our neighbours within the church and outside of it.

### Questions for Discussion

1. According to verse 1, what standard of a worthy life is expected of the Christian?
2. What does it mean to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (verse 3)?
3. Read verses 5 and 6 again. Why did Paul introduce the oneness of God in his discussion on unity within the Body of Christ?
4. What level of grace has been given to believers as people of God?
5. Why did Paul link Christian love with the doctrine of God?
6. What role does the Holy Spirit play in loving God's people in the church?
7. What should we do today to foster unity by loving others in the church?

## Summary

Paul, after his encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ, stood for peace and unity in the body of Christ. The Ephesian church was filled with both Jews and Gentiles and Paul admonished them to live lives worthy of their calling. He admonished them to be mature in the faith and to strengthen their fellowship as members of the body of Christ Jesus. Paul described how the people could show maturity by living in unity. The believers were to be humble, gentle, patient, and to bear one another in love. As children of God, we are commanded to strengthen our fellowship with the people in the church. We are not to be at loggerheads with one another nor should we be divided in our hearts and minds. We are to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of the peace of God. Paul admonishes that our love towards God's people in the church should be likened to the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the Godhead. God created us to be sociable, to love, and be loved. So, Paul made it clear that God has given each and every believer the grace to bear one another in love and it is part of our calling as

believers to strengthen our fellowship with people in the church through genuine love.

**STUDY 15: LOVING GOD THROUGH SERVICE TO OUR  
NEIGHBOURS**

**TEXT: EPHESIANS 4:11-16**

Memory Verse

*The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12).*

Introduction

In the previous lesson, we learnt about unity, love, and the key role the Holy Spirit plays in helping the Church accomplish its calling. We saw how important it is for each one of us to know the common things that unite us for which reason we should make every effort to be united. The focus of this study is on what God has done for the church by giving His only Son, Jesus Christ, and how through Him we, as the Church, have been gifted with gifts obtained by grace to serve others. Service to our neighbours is service to God; loving God should

therefore reflect the love we have for our neighbours and vice versa.

### Questions for discussion

1. According to verse 11, what are some of the gifts that God has given us?
2. In verse 12, what is the purpose of the gifts God has given to us?
3. What, in your own words is your understanding of verse 12?
4. From the passage, identify some key elements that should characterize the growing Christian.
5. What does it mean to be mature in the Lord?
6. From the passage, what services are we expected to render unto our neighbours as a result of the gifts that God has given us?

### Summary

God has given us gifts to use in serving our neighbours. The services we render to our neighbours help to equip them to mature in the body of Christ. The grace of the gifts is to help

train and equip our neighbours and not to deprive or take advantage of them. God has given the church various leadership roles to help serve others to ensure better living of the Christian life. We are to appreciate every gift that God has given us and to make use of them by loving Him through our service to our neighbours. We demonstrate our love for God when we love our neighbours and make them benefit from the gift that God has entrusted to us through Jesus Christ. Let us always ensure that our neighbours are growing in the Lord since this is an indication of growth in the Body of Christ.

## **STUDY 16: LOVING OUR NEIGHBOURS AS OURSELVES**

### **TEXT: EPHESIANS 4:17-24**

#### Memory verse

*The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these (Mark 12:31).*

#### Introduction

Christ in His encounter with one of the scribes at His time revealed that, aside loving God with all our hearts, minds, and souls, the second greatest commandment to all believers is to love their neighbours as themselves. Paul's letter to the Ephesians has something in common with Jesus' emphasis on loving our neighbours. Jesus realized that the scribe needed a change of life by refraining from his way of life in order to be conformed to the pattern of Christ. Paul likewise admonished the believers at Ephesus not to live their lives as people who do not know Christ. In this study, therefore, we will discover how best we can relate with our neighbours using ourselves as the standard.

### Questions for Discussion

1. With reference to verse 17 to 19, how did Paul describe the Gentiles' way of life?
2. What are some of the requirements from us, Christians, if we are to love our neighbours?
3. Read verse 20 again and explain what is important about Christ in our relationship with our neighbours.
4. How can we have a renewal of our mind so that relating with our neighbours will not become a burden?
5. What lesson(s) have you learnt from this study to help you love your neighbour as yourself?

### Summary

The desire of Paul is for all Christians to be transformed from their old self through their encounter with Christ and to put on new life in Christ, and learn of Christ by living in truthfulness, righteousness and holiness to reflect the true likeness of God. We are being admonished as believers not to live our lives like those who have not seen and experienced

the true light of God in Christ. Paul affirms and insists that we Christians should conform to Christ in order to love our neighbours as ourselves. When we conform to Christ and understand our calling through him, it informs our understanding of loving both those who are in and outside the faith. Let us remember that our neighbour, like ourselves, was created in the image of God and therefore should be treated with utmost respect as we would want others to do to us.

**STUDY 17: BASIS FOR LOVING OUR NEIGHBOURS AS  
OURSELVES**

**TEXT: EPHESIANS 4:25-32**

Memory verse

*And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you (Ephesians 4:32).*

Introduction

There are many people who are in the body of Christ and yet are living their lives outside the life of Christ. We have learnt in our earlier study that when we come to Christ we are no longer to live according to our old way of life. Rather, we are to put on the new person which is in Christ Jesus. There are a number of reasons why we must no longer live the old life but rather live in the true likeness of Christ. In the previous study, we learnt that living in the newness of Christ helps us to exhibit the true nature of Christ by reflecting truthfulness, righteousness, and holiness. Today's study will help us to

appreciate the reasons why we must love our neighbours as ourselves and how we should handle our neighbours.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Why does Paul insist in verse 25 that we believers put away falsehood against our neighbours?
2. As members of the same body, how can we prevent the devil from using us against one another?
3. What role do our words play in our relationship with our neighbours'?
4. Identify some of the dos and don'ts that Paul outlines as guidelines for us in our relation with our neighbours.
5. To what extent can we grieve the Holy Spirit through the way we relate with our neighbours?
6. What practical steps would you want to take to deepen your relationship with your neighbours?

## Summary

Paul continues to emphasize that our neighbours, especially those in the Christian faith, are members of the same body of Christ and therefore must be given the needed recognition in and outside the assembly of God's people. We are not to treat our neighbours differently outside the church as we would treat them when we come together. As the Gospel of Matthew teaches, 'In everything do unto others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the Prophets'. The Apostle Paul indicates clearly the roles that we Christians have to play in order for us to be able to love our neighbours as ourselves. We are not to keep falsehood, bitterness, and let evil talk come out of our mouths. Instead, we are to be kind, tender-hearted, and forgive as we would want others to forgive us. Let us make every effort to demonstrate the love of God to our neighbours as we would want them to do to us.

## **STUDY 18: LIVING A LIFE OF LOVE TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOURS**

**TEXT: EPHESIANS 5:1-7**

### Memory verse

*Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (Ephesians 5:1).*

### Introduction

Very often, we hear people say “Oh! I know all of this but I want to have my privacy”. That might be true but when we become Christians, we have no obligation to please self; rather, our desire must be to please God by imitating Him. The passage for today’s study covers two important areas of every Christian’s life: our living relationship with God and our neighbours. Paul encouraged the believers at Ephesus to be imitators of Christ by living in love towards their neighbours just as Christ loved them and gave himself up for them. As children of God serving and working in his vineyard, we are to

be obedient to God's call and live in His love. But how can we achieve this? This study seeks to find answers to this.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What does it mean to imitate God as a Christian?
2. From the passage, what should a Christian do to live a true life of love?
3. According to verse 3, what radical steps do we have to take in order not to be partners with those who live unholy lives?
4. What caution does Paul give us concerning being disobedient to God's instruction?
5. "Live in the world but do not love it." Do you agree with this statement? Give your reasons.

### Summary

Throughout the teachings of Paul, his major focus on our relationship with God, with Christ and with our neighbours sets Christ or himself as an example worth imitating. He is able to set himself as an example because he is imitating Christ who is the standard. We have seen from the study that

when we live in love, it will help us to renounce evil ways. We are to live in love because all who live in love are born of God. But whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love (1 John 4:7-8). To live in love, we should be committed and exercise self-control towards our neighbours. Love comes from God; therefore, we are to rely on God to be able to live a life of love towards our neighbours.

## STUDY 19: LOVING GOD BY LIVING IN THE LIGHT

TEXT: EPHESIANS 5:7-14

### Memory verse

*For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light.  
Live as children of light (Ephesians 5:8).*

### Introduction

As seen previously, God is love and all those who love are children of God. In today's study we will add two more attributes to what we have studied so far. God is not only love but also light and life, and anyone who dwells in His light has eternal life. In the preceding study, Paul made it clear that the wrath of God comes upon all who are disobedient to Him by not abiding and acting according to His will and plans. Paul admonishes all children of God to disassociate themselves from those who are disobedient to God.

## Questions for Discussion

1. According to verse 9, how did the apostle describe the fruit of light and what was the source of this light?
2. How can Christians disassociate themselves from those living in darkness?
3. In seeking to love our neighbours, can we permit a believer to live in the light of God and at the same time live in darkness? Why do you say so?
4. Read verse 11 again and give examples of what unfruitful works of darkness are in our contemporary times.
5. Suggest ways by which we can still love our neighbours without necessarily mixing light with darkness.

## Summary

Paul's experience in moving from darkness into the divine light of God at Damascus always reflected in his epistles, including the epistle to the Ephesians. The Apostle Paul

reminded the Christians at Ephesus of their past way of life. They were living in darkness and he, Paul, brought the light of Jesus Christ to them. They were, therefore, to love God as a result of the great light that they saw. Paul also encouraged the believers to live as light in the new faith that they found themselves. This appeal goes to all believers and children of God. When one comes to Christ, the person experiences the transformational light of God and is transformed from darkness into light. Leaving out Christ is seen by Paul as living in darkness. God through Jesus has transformed us from darkness into light and all that we have to do is to love God by living as true light of Christ towards our neighbours. Light is an object that reveals that which is hidden in darkness. Therefore, loving God by walking in His light helps us to resist the works of darkness.

## **STUDY 20: LOVING GOD THROUGH OUR WORSHIP**

### **TEXT: EPHESIANS 5:15-21**

#### Memory verse

*. . . always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:20).*

#### Introduction

Worship is an important part of a Christian's spirituality. Through it, we get connected to God and are enabled to express our heartfelt messages to Him. We always shower praise on our dear ones; how much more the one who created us in His own image? There are many Christians who divorce worship from living a holy life; they sing and pray beautifully but deny the transforming power of Christ. This study, therefore, will help us know how we can adore God as a means of registering our love for Him.

## Questions for Discussion

1. In verse 15, why did Paul warn the believers on how to live their lives in the body of Christ?
2. Read verse 18 again. What does it mean “not to get drunk with wine . . . instead be filled with the Holy Spirit”?
3. How important is being filled with the Holy Spirit to worship?
4. What does verse 19 communicate?
5. Do you think that our way of worship reflects our love for God? What are your reasons?

## Summary

There are different forms of worship that Christians render to God as a response to His goodness. In this passage, Paul encourages believers to be filled with the Spirit of God as we express our love by adoring Him with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Paul encourages us to make melodies of worship in our hearts. That does not mean that we cannot

worship God outwardly. The implication of Paul's form of worship is for us believers to know that God is Spirit and all who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. Our worship to God should show our appreciation of who He is and what He has done for us. In so doing, we would be expressing our genuine love to Him.

## STUDY 21: LOVING OUR NEIGHBORS IN OUR MARRIAGE

### TEXT: EPHESIANS 5:21-33

#### Memory verse

*Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21).*

#### Introduction

Christian homes are the first place where Christian norms and principles should be learnt. Paul was very much interested in the relationship that should exist between husbands and wives since this relationship, to a large extent, affects the way children are brought up. It also reflects the relationship of the household with our neighbours. Some Christian couples do not see their marriage as a divine institution for which reason they should show their love for God by loving their spouses and the other members of the household. This study will help us identify how wives should relate to their husbands and vice versa, since in marriage we find one of our closest neighbours.

## Questions for Discussion

1. Should married couples see themselves as neighbours?  
Why?
2. In verse 21, what does it mean to be submitted to one another out of reverence for Christ?
3. Let a woman in the group read verses 22 to 24 and identify what Paul expects of her.
4. Let a man read verses 25 to 30 and highlight his role in relating to the opposite sex.
5. What relationship does Paul raise as the model to which relationship in marriage should conform? Why?
6. How can we make verse 33 practical in our marriages to demonstrate our love for God?

## Summary

It is not enough to show respect and honour outside the home and do the contrary in our marriage and at home. Usually, we see people submitting to outsiders and loving them, which is good, but these same people do not submit to their wives or love their husbands. Every married couple is admonished by Paul to respect each other as neighbours and reflect the love of God towards each other. Wives and husbands are to submit to each other out of reverence to Christ and subsequently go the extra mile of submitting or loving such as exists between Christ and the church. The submission we give to each other as Christian couples is a demonstration of our true worship to God who instituted this divine institution.

## **STUDY 22: LOVING OUR CHILDREN IN THEIR UPBRINGING**

### **TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:1-4**

#### Memory verse

*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).*

#### Introduction

Often when this passage is quoted, what quickly comes to mind is how children should obey their parents. Paul establishes the child-parent relationship criterion for a Christian home. He devoted three verses to address children to obey their parents, and gave the conditions attached to obeying one's parents. It is a command for every child to obey his or her parents or guardians. This study will help us discover the relationship that should exist between children and their parents or guardians as a fulfilment of God's commandment.

## Questions for Discussion

1. Does a mother have equal responsibility with the father in disciplining a child? What are your reasons?
2. Why then did Paul direct the disciplining of a child to fathers? (Read also 1 Thess. 2:7-12).
3. What do some fathers do that provokes their children (wards) to anger?
4. From the passage read, can a disobedient child be given equal love as an obedient child? Give reasons for your answer.
5. How can a parent love a disobedient child in his or her upbringing?
6. What responsibility do children also have towards their parents?
7. Distinguish between discipline and child abuse.

## Summary

When Christian discipline and instructions are instilled in a child, they help that child to grow in obedience and to relate well with their parents. Children's obedience to a parent or an elderly person usually depends on how well they were brought up. As we instil discipline in our wards as parents, we have been admonished not to do anything to provoke them to anger. The actions and behaviours of parents send strong information to children in their upbringing. Most often, parents are the first point of contact that children learn from. Therefore, when parents love them and give them proper training, they grow and live with it. The kind of discipline we give to our wards has both positive and negative implications on them. Let us, therefore as parents, demonstrate our love and concern towards our children, and they will grow to love us.

## **STUDY 23: LOVING OUR EMPLOYERS AS OUR NEIGHBOURS**

### **TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:5-8**

#### Memory verse

*Knowing that whatever good we do, we will receive the same again from the Lord, whether we are slaves or free (Ephesians 6:8).*

#### Introduction

Paul's letter to the Ephesians is very well structured. He ensured that he has covered a large portion of things that were happening in his time in this particular letter. The passage in many versions of the Bible is captioned as 'slaves and masters'. It is so because these were the words used for the employee and employer respectively. During the last quarter of the first century, slavery was a major booming trade that both Christians and non-Christians engaged in. The passage indicates clearly that the slaves were Christians and Paul admonished them to obey their masters (employers) with fear and trembling. In this study, therefore, we will

discover what is expected to be the relationship at the workplace and how we as Christians should behave in such marketplace.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Read verse 6 again. What is the basic instruction that Paul gives to employees?
2. How can a Christian work as unto the Lord in a secular organization?
3. What is Paul's reason for asking the slave or employee to obey the employer or master?
4. What are some of the challenges that Christian workers face at the workplace?
5. Read verse 8 and indicate the instruction that Paul gave to Christian masters or employers.
6. What advice would you give to a Christian worker who works in a challenging work environment?

## Summary

Some workers are treated like slaves at their places of work, including Christian homes. However, we are admonished in this passage to love those who work under us as our neighbours. When we see our employees and employers as our neighbours and love them as ourselves, it will help us to work whole-heartedly, and obey their instructions to help the workplace achieve its goals and this will ultimately benefit us. We should not function best when we are given strict supervision before we open up to work to our employer's satisfaction. We are being encouraged to render services with enthusiasm as to the Lord and not with lazy attitudes. Employers on the other hand are not to treat their employees anyhow. They are not to take advantage of them and misuse them. Paul admonishes all employers not to threaten their employees or workers and they are not to be partial in their work ethic and discipline.

## STUDY 24: LOVING OUR EMPLOYEES AS OUR NEIGHBOURS

### TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:9

#### Memory verse

*Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Don't threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and He has no favourites (Ephesians 6:9).*

#### Introduction

In an ideal situation, an employer-employee relationship should be one of mutual reliance. The employer relies on the employee to perform his/her job well and in so doing, keeps the business running smoothly. Conversely, employees rely on their employers to pay them to enable them support and look after their families financially. But what do we see sometimes in such relationships? Some employers focus so much on making profits that the needs of the employees are relegated to the background. On the other hand, some employees also pretend to be working, and expect to be

remunerated at the end of the month; some also only work seriously when the employer is around. In this study we shall look at what the Word of God says about such relationships. We shall be guided by Ephesians 6:9, which says, “Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Don’t threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and He has no favourites”.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. List some of the things employers do to frustrate employees in the employer-employee relationship.
2. Discuss some of the things employees do to incur the wrath of their employers.
3. How can the things listed in questions 1 and 2 be corrected to enhance the relationship for the growth of a business?
4. Can we also share personal experiences in our employer-employee relationships?

5. There is no doubt that some house-helpers are treated badly in Christian homes. What advice do you have for such mistresses and helps?

### Summary

Although Christians may be at different levels or positions in society, we are all equal before God. God does not play favouritism and as a result, no one is more important than the other. Employers must run their businesses in a godly manner. Furthermore, they must be interested in the welfare of their employees and not only in their business profit. An effective employee is the one who focuses on his or her work and delivers to the growth of the business and the appreciation of the employer. It is the responsibility of the employer, through interactions, to find out any challenges that the employees are facing and address them. Both employers and employees must conduct themselves in a godly manner in the delivery of their mandates. If God was

standing at our workplaces watching us, how would we conduct ourselves? We should always ask ourselves the question, “What would Jesus say about my behaviour towards my employer or my employee in our relationship?”

## STUDY 25: LOVING GOD BY BEING STRONG IN HIS POWER

### 2 TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:10-18

#### Memory verse

*A final Word: Be strong in the Lord and His mighty power (Ephesians 6:10).*

#### Introduction

In the Christian life, we battle against rulers and authorities (the powerful evil forces of fallen angels headed by the devil, who is a cruel fighter, 1 Peter 5:8). To withstand their attacks, we must depend on God's strength and use every piece of His armour. In this passage, Paul is not giving this counsel to the Church, the body of Christ only, but to all individuals within the church. The whole body needs to be armed. As we battle against the "mighty powers in this dark world", we should fight in the strength of the church whose power comes from

the Holy Spirit. This study will help us understand better the spiritual warfare – who are involved and the armour we have to put on to do battle and be victorious.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Who are involved in this spiritual warfare?
2. Identify the various components of God's armour as captured in Ephesians 6:14-18, bearing in mind how a soldier in biblical history dressed for war.
3. Having identified the components, can we relate these components to our Christian life?
4. Is there any weapon for the back covering of the Christian? Why?
5. What does this armour of God tell us about our lives as Christians?

## Summary

All of us Christians are engaged in spiritual battles and find ourselves subject to the attacks of the devil who operates through several agents. This is all because we are no longer on the devil's side but on the Lord's. Paul therefore tells us to use every piece of God's armour to resist the devil's attacks and to stand true to God in the midst of those attacks. None of the weapons protect our back, indicating that in this warfare, there is no turning back; if we do, we will be putting our Christian lives in danger.

## STUDY 26: LOVING GOD BY LOVING HIS WORKERS

### TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:19-24

#### Memory verse

*Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel (Ephesians 6:19).*

#### Introduction

This portion of Paul's letter was meant for circulation among other churches besides Ephesus. Paul therefore highlights the supremacy of Christ, gives information on both the nature of the Church and how church members should live. It also stresses the unity of all believers, namely: male and female, parent and child, master and slave, regardless of sex, nationality, or social rank. In this study, we will discover how Paul, of all Christians, seeks prayer support, indicating how important it is for us to pray for Christian workers since they are also among our neighbours.

### Questions for Discussion:

1. In verses 19-21, what did Paul do even when he was in chains and in prison?
2. What then do we learn from Paul's experience as followers of Christ when going through challenges?
3. Should challenging circumstances hinder us in our resolve to help or encourage others? Explain.
4. In what ways can we encourage Christians whom we don't see regularly and who are far away from us in these modern times?
5. What relationship can we develop with those who proclaim the gospel of Christ?

### Summary

As Christians, one of our key responsibilities is to help spread the Word of God. Sometimes, we give several excuses why we will not be able to attend a church programme. Paul could have done the same by giving an excuse that he was in chains and therefore limited in his ability to let the Word of God

reach others. Paul, however, was not discouraged but remained strong, and wrote powerful letters of encouragement from prison. He did not ask the Ephesians to pray that his chains would be removed, but that he would continue to speak fearlessly for Christ in spite of his chains. The circumstances under which Paul encouraged others should make us know that God can use us in any circumstances. Even as we pray for a change in our circumstances, we should also pray that God will accomplish His plan through us right where we are. The love of God should encourage us to love His workers too, in spite of our circumstances or theirs. We also have a responsibility to pray for Christian workers because they are part of our neighbours and we should bear them up before the throne of God.

## **STUDY 27: LOVING OUR NEIGHBOURS AS MEMBERS OF ONE BODY**

**Text: ROM. 12: 3-8**

### Memory Verse:

*For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you (Rom. 12:3).*

### Introduction

Have you ever thought about the fact that we are all members of the body of Christ with our Saviour and Lord Jesus as the head? We therefore have a responsibility to one another; but often, much as we know, making this happen is difficult for us Christians, since we are different people with different temperaments. This study seeks to help us know what it is that we have in common as members of the body of Christ and how this should motivate us to love our neighbours as part of the body of Christ.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Why does Paul make reference to the grace given him when he exhorts us on how we should relate with our neighbours?
2. According to verses 3 to 5, who are our neighbours?
3. How should we see our neighbours when using the gifts that God has given us?
4. One area in the Church that has created much hatred has been in the use of gifts that God has given us. What advice does Paul give us in verses 6 to 8?
5. What is the connection between verses 3 and 6 to 8?
6. State three lessons that you have learnt from this study to help you relate with others.

### Summary

Any person who joins the Church needs to understand that it is by the grace of God that we have been called. Therefore, no matter who we are in life, God looks at all of us as souls for whom Christ died. Even those who have not accepted Christ Jesus are not far from the kingdom of God and must be loved

by those of us who have been saved by the grace of God. Since we all have been created in the image of God, it is our individual and collective responsibilities to ensure that the gifts of God do not divide us but rather help us to build up one another in the faith. In view of God's mercy, the renewing of our minds and the grace given us, we have to make every effort to love our neighbours because we all belong to the body of Christ.

## **STUDY 28: LOVING OUR NEIGHBOURS WHO ARE IN NEED**

### **TEXT: ROMANS 12: 9-13**

#### Memory Verse

*Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality (Romans 12:13).*

#### Introduction

Throughout the Bible, we are exhorted to show concern for those who are in need because in every society, everyone has a need in one way or another. What one has might be a need of someone and this enhances sharing with our neighbours. As Christians, such imbalance in society enables us to be selfless and to see ourselves as part of a bigger family. This study will open our eyes to opportunities around us to enable us to show our love for God as we respond to the needs of our neighbours.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. Read verse 9 to 11 and identify at least four things that can enhance our relationship with our neighbours.

2. How can we make verse 13 practical in our relationship with others?
3. Are our enemies to be recognized as our neighbours? Why do you say so?
4. What are some of the dos and don'ts in the passage that should sustain our relationship with others?
5. Is it possible to love a neighbour without showing mutual affection?
6. How does verse 12 fit into the way we relate with our neighbours in need?
7. In a sentence or two, summarise some of the steps you have to take as a result of the lessons from the study to meet the need of a neighbour.

### Summary

Sharing is an act that enables one's doors to be opened to a neighbour in need, bearing in mind that it is an important principle in many religions, including Christianity. This study requests that we share sincere love that flows from God with

others. It could mean sharing material items or helping to meet some psychological needs. Our attitude towards God should reflect in the way we treat His children. Therefore, let us know that just as we have needs, so do others and these needs of others might be met by praying for them, demonstrating our patience in affliction or being hospitable. Whatever the Lord prompts us to do must be seen as part of our calling by God to love our neighbours who are in need.

## **STUDY 29: LOVING OUR NEIGHBOURS WHO PERSECUTE US**

**TEXT: ROMANS 12: 14-21**

### Memory Verse

*If it is possible, as far as depends on you, live at peace with everyone (Romans 12:18).*

### Introduction

We live in a world that is under sin and, as a result of this, people develop hatred towards us and seek our downfall just because we are doing the right thing or have decided not to give in to a certain way of life. We should not be surprised that people hate and would go any length to make life unbearable for us. But should we retaliate? This is a hard question and today's study will help us to know how to handle those who persecute us even for righteousness sake.

### Questions for Discussion

1. In your own words, explain verse 14 and how this command can be made practicable.

2. From the passage, identify at least five things that Paul advises us not to do to our neighbours who persecute us.
3. From the same passage, identify at least five things that Paul exhorts us to do to our neighbours who persecute us.
4. According to verses 19 and 20, how can we partner with God when our neighbours push us to the wall?
5. Give some practical illustrations that should help us to love our neighbours.
6. Reflect on verse 21 and turn it into prayer for your neighbour who has been making life difficult for you.

### Summary

Throughout the Scriptures, our attention is drawn to the fact that for as long as sin is a part of humankind, the devil will use every means to make life unpleasant for us so that we might throw our hands up in despair. But will that end the persecution? Obviously not; it might rather make life more unbearable. That is why Paul, through this study, exhorts us to know that vengeance belongs to God and instead of

revenging, we should heap burning coals upon the heads of our enemies by blessing them, and as far as depends on us live peaceably with them. Let us therefore not be overcome by evil, but rather overcome evil with good.

**STUDY 30: LOVING OUR NEIGHBOURS WHO ARE IN  
AUTHORITY**

**TEXT: ROMANS 13:1-5**

Memory Verse

*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God (Romans 13:1).*

Introduction

We all know that this world was created by our God to ensure dependence on one another and it is for a similar reason that God has established structures to help in governance. Those who rule over us are our neighbours and in some cases, we elected them into office or endorsed their appointment. Unfortunately, familiarity breeds contempt and, sometimes, it becomes difficult for us to obey those whom God in His own wisdom has placed in authority to govern us. This study will help us know the source of the power that these governing authorities exercise and why God wants us to submit to them.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Who are expected to submit to governing authorities and why?
2. Can we really say that all governing authorities that exist have been established by God? What are your reasons?
3. What consequences await those who rebel against God's established authorities?
4. Is it possible to have a non-Christian who is "God's servant" as found in verse 4? Give some examples from the Bible.
5. Explain verse 5 to justify why we should love those who are in authority.
6. What are some practical ways that we can show our submission to governing authorities?

### Summary

In a democratic nation like Ghana, we are likely to play down the role that governing authorities such as the chieftaincy institution, the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary play to make life bearable for us. Very often, people who

occupy such positions are elected by the citizens or appointed by some higher powers. The voice of the people could represent the voice of God and it is our civic responsibility to recognize those people who are in power. This means that we must pray for these leaders and support them. If we do not agree with them, there are appropriate procedures that can be followed to register our concerns. Let us, therefore, resolve to be interested in our local and national affairs and create convenient environment for our leaders to oversee our lives and to enable us to submit because of conscience and obedience to God.

## STUDY 31: LOVING GOD BY PAYING OUR TAXES

TEXT: ROMANS 13:6-10

### Memory Verse

*Pay to all what is due them – taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honour to whom honour is due (Romans 13:7).*

### Introduction

The mention of taxes and revenue raises a lot of eyebrows because paying money is never pleasant. However, it is part of our Christian responsibility and Paul did not mince words in addressing this issue. We are not different from the members in the Church of Rome. In this study, therefore, we will discover why Paul, a Jew, gave this charge knowing fully well that the Roman government was then in power and how he extends this further to teach us how we should relate with our neighbours.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Should we pay taxes? What should be our reasons, according to verses 6 and 7?
2. Are we expected to pay taxes when those in authority abuse the privileges given them? Give reasons to your response.
3. What relationship exists between loving God and paying our taxes?
4. Explain the statement “for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law” (v.8)
5. Why should we owe no one anything except love? Cite some examples from everyday life to affirm this command of the apostle Paul.
6. Is it right for us to love God and despise our neighbours?

### Summary

The Apostle Paul’s command to the church in Rome to pay taxes is in accord with our Lord Jesus the Christ’s statement “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s” (Matthew 22:21). It emphasizes our civic responsibility and

the fact that when we pay our taxes, our neighbours also benefit directly or indirectly. For example, salaries can be paid by the government and infrastructural development can take place. Besides paying our taxes, Paul also exhorts us to owe no one anything except loving our neighbour (Rom. 13:8). Let us take Paul's advice and make amends where needed, by paying our taxes and loving one another.

## **STUDY 32: LOVING GOD BY LIVING IN EXPECTANCY OF HIS COMING**

**TEXT: ROMANS 13:11-14**

### Memory Verse

*And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because salvation is nearer now than when we first believed (Romans 13::11).*

### Introduction

There is a saying in the book of Corinthians that “love never ends”. This is often true in human relationships, but what about our relationship with God? Most of the time we begin well in the Christian journey but slowly backslide and our love for God grows cold. We hear of the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ during Christmas and it causes our hearts to beat a little so we resolve to live better lives, but that is all there is for the year. This study will help us to know why we should wake up from our slumber and prepare for the Day of the Lord at all times. We will identify what we should be doing

as part of our preparation to meet our Lord in order not for us to be taken unawares.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Apostle Paul exhorts to wake up from our sleep (v. 11); why?
2. What shows in our day that our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed?
3. Identify at least three things that we who are awake should do to show that we understand the present times.
4. According to verse 13, what are we expected to do while it is day?
5. How can we clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 14) in our present times?
6. Considering the occurrences in contemporary times, do you think that the day of the Lord is nearer in our time? Explain.
7. Why should loving God cause us to live as children of the light?

## Summary

Current occurrences tend to blur the reality that Jesus the Christ will come soon. Just as it was in the days of Noah when they were eating and drinking as well as marrying and being married, so will the coming of our Lord be. This means that every time of the day should be seen as the dawn of Christ's coming and this should cause us to speed up our preparation by putting aside the deeds of darkness and rather putting on the armour of light. This is not easy but it is possible if we remember that the things of this world will pass away and therefore we should yearn for eternity with Jesus our Saviour and Lord. This will cause us to stay awake and look forward to His Coming again as the Lion of Judah.

## **STUDY 33: LOVING OUR NEIGHBOURS WHO ARE WEAK**

**TEXT: ROMANS 14:1-10**

### Memory Verse

*Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions*

*(Romans 14:1).*

### Introduction

The body of Christ has many parts; some are strong, others are weak, but all these parts must support one another as we grow in our faith. God expects us, out of our love for Him, to ensure that everyone who comes to faith in Christ will grow and since our abilities differ, so are our rates of growth in the faith. It is easy for the strong in faith to trample on the weak on matters that might seem trivial. This study will help us know how to relate within the body of Christ on matters such as what to eat or what day to worship so that the principles will guide us as we relate with other Christians.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What do you understand by the statement made in verse 1?
2. What arguments does Paul make to justify loving our neighbours who, to us, are weak?
3. Should food and days of worship cause us to look down on others? Why?
4. Relate verses 7 and 8 with verse 1 and indicate why we must not discriminate against others.
5. What lessons do verses 9 and 10 teach us about passing judgment on a brother or sister?
6. Does this mean that we should not correct our neighbours when they go wrong? Explain.
7. In summary, what lessons have you learnt from this study?

### Summary

The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and Ephesians chapter 4 draws attention to the way the body of Christ should function so that there would be interdependence for

growth in the faith. The goal that Paul sets in Ephesians 4:15 is that “we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (NRSV). Any growth of the body that deprives other parts of growth is a stunted one and God is never pleased with it. Our responsibility as Christians, therefore, is to do our best to ensure interdependent growth, for Christ died for all and we do not live to ourselves – we live to the Lord and die to the Lord (verse 7). Let us, therefore, welcome those who are weak in the faith and help them to grow in Christ while we who are strong remain steadfast.

**STUDY 34. LOVING OUR NEIGHBOURS WITHOUT BEING  
OBSTACLES**

**TEXT: ROMANS 14:11-23**

Memory Verse

*Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil  
(Romans 14:16).*

Introduction

Relationships with our neighbours can be both beneficial and a nuisance. As Christians, we have every responsibility to make something good emerge from our relationship with our neighbours without allowing the obstacles to impede our blessings. There is no doubt that our faith and understanding of situations could cause us to like or dislike something which might be another person's delicacy. We have different tastes and desires and how we handle them while relating with our neighbours is very important in sustaining the relationship. In this study, we will learn about some of the things that could easily become obstacles to

developing good relationships and how we can handle them as Christians to get the best of what God desires for our neighbours.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Why is verse 12 important to the way we relate with our neighbours?
2. What message do verses 13 to 16 communicate to us about how to relate?
3. Differentiate between “passing judgment on one another” and “rebuking in love”.
4. Read verses 19-21. To what extent can a normal act of eating food destroy our relationship with a neighbour?
5. What should be the guiding principle on how we relate with our neighbours?
6. Is it possible for a Christian, in the process of keeping to his/her faith, to become an obstacle to a neighbour? What are your reasons?
7. How can we relate with others without compromising our faith?

8. In a sentence or two, share the lessons learnt from this study.

### Summary

In an earlier study, we looked at the need for us to be tolerant of our neighbours when it comes to what Paul calls “disputable matters” (Rom. 14:1, NIV). Indeed, there are weightier matters that we should delve into and establish as foundations of our faith. In relating with our neighbours, one of the key principles should be whether we can give account of our stewardship on such issues to God and whether our neighbour benefits from our stance. This does not mean we should compromise our faith; instead, we should hold fast to it and make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Through this, we will win over our neighbour to Christ.

## **STUDY 35. LOVING OUR NEIGHBOURS AS PEACEMAKERS**

### **TEXT: ROMANS 15:1-13**

#### Memory Verse

*Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God (Romans 15:7).*

#### Introduction

Our relationship with our neighbours has been of great concern to the Apostle Paul and he uses various models to help us appreciate how important our neighbours are to the mission of Jesus the Christ on this earth. In this study, therefore, Paul uses the way our Saviour and Lord, who was also a Jew, endured suffering at the hands of his own kinspeople in order to bring salvation to both Jews and Gentiles. We will therefore study this model and identify lessons that can help us as we follow the steps of our master, Jesus the Christ, in our relationship with neighbours.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. Explain verse 1 with reference to who can be classified as “the strong” and “the weak”.

2. Considering the example of Jesus the Christ, what should be our attitude towards our neighbours who are weak in the faith?
3. According to verse 5, what character traits will help us glorify God as we relate with our neighbours?
4. A common utterance people make is “I can’t tolerate people who are . . . .” Should this come from the lips of a Christian? Why do you say so?
5. How can we make verse 7 become a reality in our lives as we relate with our neighbours?
6. Read verses 8 and 9 again. What impact did Jesus’ servanthood have on both Jews and Gentiles?
7. What benefit will relating well with our neighbours who are weak in the faith bring to us?

### Summary

As Christians, we follow the steps of our Saviour and Master Jesus the Christ who gave His life as ransom for many and has become all things to both Jews and Gentiles. He had to bear the shame of death from the hands of His own people and

knowing why He was on this earth, Jesus stayed focused. Tolerance is a key virtue in our desire to show love to our neighbours and not be obstacles to their quest for answers. Just as the Father has accepted us through the finished work of Jesus, so must we also accept one another, in order to bring praise to our God and make the beauty of God's love reflect through our lives toward our neighbours.

## **STUDY 36: LOVING GOD USING PAUL AS OUR EXAMPLE**

**Text: Rom. 15:14-22**

### Memory Verse

*I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me (Romans 15:15).*

### Introduction

From the previous study, we saw how Jesus the Christ modelled for us how we should relate with our neighbours, whether we are of the same faith, tribe, or gender. That might have looked like something unattainable. But Apostle Paul, in this study based on his epistle, makes it clear to us that even though he was as human as we are, he was able to reach out to the Gentiles and to places where Christ was not known during his missionary journeys. One might ask, "How did he do it?" This study will help us discover some of the things that helped him to attain this goal.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What does Paul mean by his compliments of the Church in Rome as found in verse 14?
2. Did Paul, according to verses 15 to 18, qualify to advise on how we must relate with our neighbours?
3. What did Paul share with the Gentiles wherever he went?
4. What lessons can we learn from Paul to help us relate better with our neighbours who are “Gentiles”?
5. If it was not easy for a Jew to relate with a Gentile, what does this study teach us about relationship with those outside our comfort zone?
6. Can you identify some steps you have to take to enable you reach out to those outside your comfort zone?

### Summary

Paul, who was an apostle of Christ Jesus and also a Jew, did not shun the responsibility of reaching out to the Gentiles. He tells us that “his ambition was to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that he would not be building on

someone else's foundation" (Rom. 15:20). He achieved this by his capacity to be "full of goodness, complete in knowledge" (v. 14) and competence to instruct others. He had compassion for his neighbours, the Gentiles, and had a personal experience of knowing Christ so that he could make him known to others. In the same way, we must build up our faith in Christ Jesus and from our experience of Him, make others know of His transforming power.

## **STUDY 37: LOVING GOD BY SUPPORTING HIS WORK**

**Text: Rom. 15:23-33**

### Memory Verse

*For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem (Romans 15:26).*

### Introduction

God's work must be done in God's way and it must be able to meet all the needs of the members of Christ. One of the characteristics of the Early Church was that the members tried to ensure that there was no needy person among them (Acts 4:34). This spirit of sharing was sustained during Paul's missionary journeys. He did his best to mobilise resources from one congregation to others for the benefit of the Church. How did Paul support God's work? This study will help us to find his motivation and how he put this into action.

### Questions for Discussion

1. According to Romans 1:11-15 and 15:23-24, why was Paul yearning to visit the church in Rome?

2. How did Paul assist in mobilising support for the Christians in Jerusalem?
3. How can we also support God's work as part of our love for God and our neighbours?
4. What is your understanding of verses 26 and 27?
5. Can you give some examples of mutual support that should exist between us and our neighbours?
6. In what ways can we also contribute to God's work, according to verses 30 to 32?
7. Identify at least one Christian worker or organisation that you can pray for this week.

### Summary

Supporting God's work is one good way of showing our love for God. Even though a lot is going on in the mission fields and many individuals and Christian organisations are preaching the Gospel to all creatures as commanded by Jesus in the Great Commission, support for such work has been dwindling over the years. It took Paul to mobilise support for poor Christians in Jerusalem. Keeping in touch with such Christian

workers, praying for them and encouraging them in the service of God is very important in ensuring that the work of God does not fold up. In fact, if we refuse to support God's work, He is capable of mobilising other means and this might be an indictment on us. While we have the opportunity, let us show our love for God by supporting His work.

## **STUDY 38: LOVING OUR NEIGHBOURS BY APPRECIATING THEIR ROLES**

**Text: ROM. 16:1-16**

### Memory Verse

*Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them (Romans 16:3-4).*

### Introduction

Ministry is teamwork and it makes progress when each member in the team recognises his or her role in this business. Very often, teams operate but the role of others is looked down upon. Apostle Paul, despite his many missionary journeys, made time to build teams with whom he worked. His work was sustained in his absence because he appreciated the role of his neighbours. In this study, we will find out how he did it so that we can also follow in his steps as we relate with others and appreciate their roles in the team.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Identify from the passage as many groups of people as possible that Paul related with as his neighbours.
2. What did Paul say of Priscilla and Aquila? Read Acts 18:24-28 and give an example of how this couple assisted the churches of the Gentiles.
3. Reflecting on your own life, what testimony do you think others will give of you in your absence?
4. In verses 1 and 2, what commendation does Paul make of Phoebe to the church in Rome?
5. How can we make our relationship with our neighbours affect their relationship with others?

### Summary

A careful study of Paul's letters to Christians shows how much he treasured relationships. At the end of almost all his letters, he always had people to whom he extended greetings. He ended his letter with the statement, "Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings" (Rom. 16:16). This is a demonstration that he recognised the roles

of people he came into contact with during his journeys and maintained the relationship. We need to ask ourselves, “If someone were to write to this church, will he/she specifically mention my name?” The answer we give must help us evaluate our relationship with neighbours and change our attitudes for the better.

## STUDY 39: LOVING OUR NEIGHBOURS BUT WATCHING OUR DOCTRINE

**Text: Rom. 16:17-19**

### Memory Verse

*I urge you, brothers [and sisters], to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned (Romans 16:17).*

### Introduction

Keeping our relationship with neighbours is paramount to our Christian witness and this has been the focus of our theme. This does not however mean that we should give in to whatever our neighbours offer even if it is to the detriment of our Christian faith. Despite the cordial relationship that the Apostle Paul had with others, he is quick to sound a note of caution towards the end of his letter. This study will help us to discern such threats to our belief so that we do not sell our birth-right as Christians while relating with our neighbours.

## Questions for Discussion

1. What caution does Paul give us as we relate with our neighbours who can obstruct our faith?
2. Do you think such neighbours were in the church at Rome? Why do you say so?
3. Why are such neighbours a threat, according to verse 18?
4. Explain verse 19 in your own words.
5. How can we be wise and innocent in our relationship with our neighbours?
6. Does this mean that we should not relate with those who are of a different faith from ours? Justify your answer.
7. How can we live in this world and yet not be of it?

## Summary

The apostle Paul concludes his letter to the Church at Rome with the statements that we discussed in this study. The issues raised in the concluding part of this letter show that in the process of keeping our neighbours, we should equally

treasure what we believe as Christians so that we do not sacrifice our belief for something that we would regret one day. Let us make every effort to love our neighbours and help them to understand our doctrinal position. However, we should not allow them to divide our front and put obstacles which are contrary to what we have been taught concerning the Christian faith in our way.

## **STUDY 40: LOVING GOD AND OUR NEIGHBOURS IN MINISTRY**

**Text: Rom. 16:20-27**

### Memory Verse

*He answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind" and "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Luke 10:27).*

### Introduction

Throughout the year, we have looked at the theme, "Loving God and Loving our neighbours", as we rebuild our broken walls through these Bible studies. These studies have exposed us to what is entailed in maintaining a balance between our relationship with God and with our neighbours. In this study, Paul concludes his letter but also highlights how we can reach out to people of different backgrounds while we are engaged in the work of God and also be able to relate well with our God who is the source of all relationships. We will therefore identify some of these people that Paul met and how he acknowledged them in his letter as well as

discuss what the mystery of Christ Jesus is, to help us love God as well as our neighbours.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Identify each of Paul's neighbours in ministry and the roles they played to assist in the spread of the gospel.
2. What does Paul teach us about God and the gospel in verses 25 to 27?
3. How can we also be co-workers with Paul in the spread of the gospel?
4. Should we share the gospel with our neighbours who are not Christians? Why do you say so?
5. In what practical ways can we show our love for God and for our neighbours concurrently?

### Summary

The Church at Rome was dear to the heart of the Apostle Paul and he longed to see the members. Unfortunately, he could

not meet them physically. So, he had to communicate with them through letter writing to strengthen the relationship between them. In this passage for the study, he mentioned some of his co-workers who had supported him in ministry and sent their greetings to his audience as well. His final doxology reveals the legacy of Christ which was entrusted to him, Paul, and he was not ashamed to proclaim this gospel. We can also be neighbours with Paul in this mystery and share this good news of Christ Jesus' mission with our neighbours so that they can also benefit from the mystery that God is in Christ Jesus, reconciling all of humankind to Himself.