



The Link

Volume 10

A non-denominational publication to the body of Christ

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Eph 4:4-6 (KJV)



In this Edition:

*There is one body
Handling offences
Unity an important tool for growth
Clogs in the wheel of prayer
Foundations for a fulfilling life and marriage
Lighting the dark places of the earth
Stop! Do not run
Food for thought: Do I love the Lord?*

EDITORIAL

Glory, honour and praises be to God for the opportunity He has given us to be able to reach out to you again through this work, We trust the Lord Jesus, to grant unto us an open door into your heart and be of blessing to you through this edition of The Link magazine.

It has not been very easy lately, there have been challenges and hindrances, but in it all we thank our God for He keeps sustaining us. We trust him to be able to forge ahead in this ministry.

In this edition, the Lord is leading us to look at ourselves straight in the face and say it loud that "we are one body in Christ"; despite all things that make us different, and the fact that we are so many that we can never come under the same roof, the body of Christ remains one. We have one Christ, one faith, one baptism and we are going to the same heaven where we will no longer separate ourselves.

We will also look at what challenges the enemy brings to separate us and address how our relationships can be fostered to instil unity in the body of Christ

Christ is coming very soon; He is coming for a body of believers, very many but joined together in Him. Prepare for His soon return and work to remove what separates you from your brothers and sisters in Christ. The work will start where you worship and extend beyond your buildings.

We will also bring to us biblical instructions on how to get our prayers answered, how to handle offence and challenge ourselves on what is the expectation of the Lord Jesus on some issues.

Join us to allow the Holy Spirit, to work through us in the teachings and messages in this magazine.

Where the word of God speaks directly to you, make amends; where the word of God gives you a mandate as a leader in the church of God, take action. Let the Lord use you to spread this word, "though we are many, we are one body in Christ" and also apply various teachings to your life situations.

Thanks for the love and encouragement you have given and your support for this work, God bless you and reward you in Jesus name (Amen).

*Yours in His service,
Segun Ajayi*

CONTENTS

Page

<i>There is one Body</i>	3
<i>Handling Offences</i>	6
<i>Unity as an important tool for Growth</i>	7
<i>Who is your master?</i>	8
<i>Clogs in the wheel of prayer</i>	9
<i>Foundation stones for a fulfilling life and marriage</i>	11
<i>Lighting the dark places of the earth</i>	12
<i>Stop, Do Not Run</i>	14
<i>Food for Thought: Do I love the Lord?</i>	15

THE LINK is a non-denominational teaching magazine sent or delivered free to homes, churches, ministries, schools, establishment and any believer that requests a copy. THE LINK carries no subscription or news-stand price. **IT MUST NOT BE SOLD.**

This publication is being financed as the Lord provides through a group of brethren.

We would like to know how this publication has been of blessings to you, please write or call us.

You can also send in your gift(s) in cash or kind to improve the quality of this publication. (Cheques/Money orders should be made payable to Segun Ajayi).

EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor

Segun Ajayi

Associate Editors

Rufus Oladosu

Kunbi Ajayi

Odunayo Ogundipe

All Correspondence should be addressed to:

The Link Ministries

P.O. Box 891,

Ota.

Ogun State.

Nigeria.

E-mail: thelink@email.com

Phone Numbers: 08035350974, 08023534241,
08038183974, 08039129863

THERE IS ONE BODY

By Segun Ajayi

“So we, being many, are one body in Christ and every one member of one another” (Romans 12:5)

The passion in the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ when He was here on earth was to have a body of believers that will be one. No wonder when He was praying in John 17, He spent sometime praying for the church; He prayed that we will be one as He and His father is one (John 17:11, 17). He desired that the church will be one in Him so that the world may believe the Father has sent Him. He also gave the church His glory so that the body will be one in Him (John 17:23). The Lord Jesus Christ though He has departed from here in the physical, is still working through the lives of men and women revealing His love and grace to them with the intention of making a body of believers that will be one with Him and His Father. This is the same body that Christ is coming to take to heaven with Him.

The body of believers has grown so large now that what started in Jerusalem in a small upper room has transformed into a great number of people in every nation of the world. The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ has spread through all borders, not hindered by languages and cultures. Praise the Lord. The more the body is growing, the more it looks as if we need to divide further into smaller groups, denominations and entities. The body has become so large and we have the situation as was recorded in 1Cor. 1:12; some said, we belong to Paul, and others say we belong to Apollos, Cephas, A or Z. Few consider that we belong to Christ.

We should again ask ourselves the question, is Christ divided? Was Paul or Apollos or Cephas or A or Z crucified for us? Were we baptised in the name of any of these people we claim we belong to? Were we not all baptised in the name of Jesus Christ and into His body? Apostle Paul spent quite some time on the issue of this division in the Epistles.

Christ did not come for just a group of people; He came to shed His blood for the whole world. He is

the Lord of the whole body of believers. So why do we see each other as separate?

I have been privileged to visit quite a number of gatherings of believers and part of the things that caught my attention is that whenever we meet someone else from another denomination, we always find it difficult to receive each other as brothers and sisters in the same body of Christ. Though we all claim to believe the same Jesus Christ, we find it so difficult to share with each other. However, a group of believers in the Northern part of Nigeria surprised me, they received my family with gladness and enthusiasm that I could not hesitate to tell them that I feel at home in their midst.

In fact it was the way I was received by this congregation that fuelled the burden I have carried for months about this article you are now reading. May the Lord will reward the people and make that spirit to spread in the body; so that when we see each other we

will have fellowship with one another as members of one body.

It ought not to be only associations or meetings that should bring us together, it should be the oneness of the faith we share and the body we all belong to.

A lot of people have asked us questions about the ministry we operate and the name ‘*The Link Ministries*’ and they tend to believe that we came together to associate or link brethren together. This is not so. We have a mandate to preach the total gospel and tell everyone about Jesus Christ, who is the One that links us together. He is The Link. We also believe that irrespective of our being many and diverse, we can share the message of the Kingdom and bring out the best in us to prepare the whole body for the imminent return of the coming King, Jesus Christ. As we earnestly wait for His return, we will like to emphasize on what God’s expectation is regarding the body that Christ came to die for. The Lord will bind this body together in one hope, one love and one spirit in Jesus name.

It ought not to be only associations or meetings that should bring us together, it should be the oneness of the faith we share and the body we all belong to.

WHY ARE WE ONE BODY?

1. The Lord Jesus Christ died for all.

“And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” 1 John 2:2

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you, the gospel which I presented unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; For I declare unto you first of all that which I have received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.” 1Cor 15:1, 3.

The death of Christ and the blood that He shed was what brought us remission of sins. If He had not died, then we will all still be in our sins, and we cannot claim that we are anything. Though we are in different places, having different cultures, languages and leaders, we are all who we are now are as a result of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ Jesus came for everyone, to set us free from the yoke of bondage to sin so that we can all be free to serve God together in a newness of life.

2. We belong to the same Father

“For we are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ” Gal. 3:26.

“Go unto my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, to my God and your God.” John 20:17.

The whole body of believers has been born unto God as a result of faith in Jesus Christ; we therefore belong to the same Father with Him. Time and space will not permit me to give several references in the scripture where it is clearly written that we all have the same Father. We all belong to same parenthood with the Lord Jesus Christ. We are all part of God’s family and related together by the same blood. We are so to say ‘bloody’ brothers and sisters; why do we need to separate each other? The Lord will work on us. (See Ephesians 4:6)

3. We Are All of the Same Faith

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4: 4-5)

The faith that brought us salvation is the faith in Jesus Christ: His sacrifice for the remission of sin, the forgiveness of sins and justification of the ungodly by faith. This brought us grace and we are received into God’s family. The faith we are referring to is what was delivered to the early saints and passed to us. The same gospel was preached to the bond and the free, Jews and Gentiles and as many as believe become one in Jesus Christ. Wonderful!

I will say also that two children born of the same parents and believe in the same things are usually different in the way they sometimes do things. However, we are made one as a result of what brought us together, faith in Jesus Christ. When we see a fellow believer in Jesus Christ, we should receive him because we are all joined in the same faith that brought us salvation.

4. We are all baptised into one Body

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 12:13

When we come to the Lord Jesus Christ and we believe the work of grace He accomplished for us, we are all baptized into one body in Christ. None of us was baptised into our denominations, nor were we baptised in the name of our leaders; except if it is not the gospel of Jesus Christ we believe. We were baptized into the body of Christ in the name of Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ is working through the one body, to demonstrate His gifts and power everywhere, in different pavilions, buildings, locations and through different ministries. The Holy Spirit is also working in us to ensure the body is brought to perfection and perfectly fitted together and compacted. Every member of this body is jointly supplying what is required to edify and cause an increase in the body and kingdom of Christ. (See Ephesians 4:16).

The Lord is working in His church with diverse gifts and signs to confirm His word. The signs and diverse demonstrations of God’s gift in our midst ought to bring us together and work with each other rather than separating us. May the Lord build us up together in Jesus Name.

WHAT WE SHOULD ROOT OUT

Root out all:

1. Envy and Rivalry

Let us remove all envy. We sometimes envy each other and the gifts of God upon our lives. As the scripture indicated, envy is a work of the flesh. We should be men and women that will mortify the deeds of the flesh. Where envy is, there will be evil speaking, bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour and rivalry. Where such exist we cannot work together and we will hinder the free flow of the move of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

2. Pride of Life

Whenever we allow the pride of life, it shows that we do not have the love God fully at work in us (see 1John 2:5). We begin to compare ourselves with the people and standards of the world. We tend to glory in position and fight each other to get to the top and vaunt ourselves.

The devil brings men and women down easily with pride just like he fell as a result of pride. Leaders watch out! It is so easy to fall when you are at the pinnacle of your 'man-made' edifice. At that height everyone around you is seen as not important or as important as you are and hence you do not want to relate with them. Let the love of Christ begin to work in your heart again, to relate with others in the body of Christ; they are all your brethren and we are all going to the same heaven. You must realize that without Christ you cannot be anything and without His body you cannot function to please God.

3. Any barrier of doctrines that cannot be substantiated from the word of God.

Let us remove all doctrines that cannot be substantiated from the Bible. The Bible is the common platform upon which all of us should build. Any other foundation will lead to error and the enemy will use that to separate us from one another, since we may not be able to agree on such issues.

Finally, beloved, let us now love one another with a fervent heart. The love of God will make you to see Christ in your brother and sister and be able to relate well with each other as members of one body.

Let our song be:

“Let there be love shared among us

Let there be love in our hearts

Let this same love sweep this nation

Cause us oh Lord to arise,

Give us a fresh understanding of brotherly love that is real.

Let there be love shared amongst us,

Let there be love”.

Let us be kind to one another, tender-hearted and forgiving each other.

However, as members of one body, we are sometimes afraid and we are not too sure of who the other person is. Apostle John in his second letter verses 9-10 admonishes us that anyone that abides in the doctrine of Christ is your brother and sister and such person should be received and related with as a part of the body of Christ.

We should be able to sing at our gatherings once again:

“I don't care which church you belong to,

But as long as in Jesus you stand,

By grace through faith you have been saved,

You are my brother, so give me your hand”.

HANDLING OFFENCES

By Oluwakemi Oluwadara

“This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offence towards God and man.”
(Acts 24:16)

We have all had our feeling hurt at one time or another. We have felt insulted by someone or been victims of unjust decisions. And usually, when our feelings are hurt by someone instead of letting it go, offence begins to build up on the inside of us.

Resentment, bitterness, un-forgiveness and offences can have a dramatic impact in our lives if they are not dealt with and uprooted. Countless believers fall prey to the snare of offence and this can cause havoc on their families, businesses and church. Finally if the offence is not dealt with, a Christian dies spiritually, never quite understanding what happened to him. God is very clear when He says that we must be slow to take offence, as it does not promote the things of God in our lives. When we are offended, it immediately put up a wall between us and the presence of God.

If we focus on offence we have suffered, the offence will become a trap that not only distract us from progressing in the things of God, but can also delay God’s perfect plans for our lives. Offence can usually stop us from achieving success. Once we consider how devastating offence is in our hearts, we will want to quickly dig it out and be free from it for ever.

In Acts 24:16, Paul indicates that a person can’t become free from offence over night; he said, “I exercise myself”. In other words he worked on himself to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and man. In the same way, you must constantly work to stay in the love of God and to keep yourself from getting offended by what people do to you.

It is common to find believers who are trapped in the vicious cycle of offence; often, the point at which we take offence is the point at which we may cease to grow further in our walk with God. It is certainly the point at which our relationships with others stop bearing fruits in our lives.

Realize that opportunities for offence will come. We may be offended everyday of our lives. Even when we are not

among people, the enemy will begin to cloud our minds with all manner of things to bring an offence if we are not alert.

The word offence is derived from the Greek word ‘skandalon’ which was originally the name of the part of a trap to which the bait is attached, hence, a trap or snare. It was the part of the trap that lures or ensnares an animal. So offence is what Satan uses to lure people into full blown cases of bitterness, resentment and un-forgiveness.

ASK YOUR SELF WHAT JESUS WOULD DO

Whenever an offensive situation arises, ask yourself these questions: what does the Bible say about it?

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.” Mathew 18:15-17

What would Jesus do about it? When we abide in Him, we are free to love people, no matter what they may do to us.

The next time someone says or does something to you and you feel insulted or hurt, purposely strive to resist that feeling of offence from dwelling in your heart. Pray about it and settle issues in your heart or meet the person that offended you to talk things over. The devil will be disappointed that you did not fall for his trap.

Humble your self, forgive, let go of offence and receive God’s blessing for your life.

*“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, **forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**”* Eph 4:30-32 (NIV)

UNITY AS AN IMPORTANT TOOL FOR GROWTH

UNITY AS AN IMPORTANT TOOL FOR GROWTH

By Rotimi Daniel

“How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.” Psalms 133:1-3 (NIV)

It is very clear from the Holy Scriptures that God wants brethren to dwell in unity. He wishes that every believer will be united with other believers and that every local church will be in unity with each other.

It is well known that the word ‘Church’ means the assembly of the called out, an assembly that must be distinct (in all respect) from every other assembly. Therefore, it follows that God wishes that all the members of the church will be one, most especially as the world is coming to a climax and awaiting the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ.

These are some of the characteristics expected:

- That they will have one mind
- That they will believe the same thing
- That they will speak with one voice
- That they will preach the same doctrine

“I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.” 1 Corinthians 1:10 (NIV)

This is the commandment God gave to the visible church which many have departed from.

But how can we be saying the same thing, if we do not believe and practice the same thing?

For us to be able to understand the true biblical church unity, we will examine the following things under this topic.

- The meaning of unity

- The relevance of unity
- A step to unity

THE MEANING OF UNITY

According to the Advanced Learners Dictionary, Unity is, ‘State of being united, an arrangement of parts to form a complete whole’.

Encarta Dictionary also indicates that Unity is being one, combining into one, harmony and singleness among individuals.

From the above, we can see that unity is more than just coming together for sharing or discussing. In the spiritual sense, ‘Unity is oneness of the people who believe the same thing, practice what they believe and having the same motive and purpose’.

THE RELEVANCE (Importance)

“How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!” Psalms 133:1 (NIV)

The importance of unity in the church of God cannot be overemphasized. It was part of the Church from the beginning. Although local churches sprang up wherever the gospel was preached, and each of these enjoyed an independent life of its own, but the relationship and oneness was still visible. For example the link between the Churches at Jerusalem and Antioch (See Acts 11:22; Acts 15:2); and the hand of fellowship given by the early Apostles to Paul and Barnabas (See Galatians 2:9).

Jesus himself evidently conceived it when He prayed for His disciples that they all might be one, so that the world might believe (See John 17:21). The church cannot be what it ought to be, without being united because it is a body, a building and a tree.

Body (1 Cor. 12:12-22)

“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” 1 Corinthians 12:27 (NIV)

Building (Eph. 2:19-22)

“For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.”
1 Corinthians 3:9 (KJV)

Tree (John. 15:1-2; 5-6)

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5 (NIV)

A branch will stop to receive nourishment if it detaches itself from the rest of the tree. Here is a counsel of wisdom.

Some of the good things unity will do:

1. It brings God's blessing

"How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!" "For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore."
Psalms 133:1, 3b (NIV)

2. Unity will sustain in times of weakness and give victory in battle

"As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up-- one on one side, one on the other-- so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword."
Exodus 17:11-13 (NIV)

"Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." Eccl 4:12 (NIV)

A STEP TO UNITY

In John 17, Jesus prayed for the church. He did not pray that God should unite the whole world but only the Church. Therefore, we must begin to prevail in the place of prayer if we want the body of Christ to be united in our time.

WHO IS YOUR MASTER?

By Kolawole Ajayi

The Contemporary Longman English Dictionary gives about ten or more meanings to the word "Master". For the purpose of this exhortation, I will restrict the definition of 'Master' to mean – 'controller' or 'who controls you' or 'who gives you orders' or 'whom you obey' or 'who rules you'.

Therefore, **WHO IS YOUR MASTER?** Who rules or controls your life? Out of twenty four hours of the day what takes most of your time and heart? Are we not too bothered about mundane things of earthly life to the detriment of our eternal life? Have we not mortgaged our eternal life to satanic forces of sin, all in our quest to be notable in this world, particularly the love of money and positions?

As Christians our master should be Jesus Christ. The disciples called Jesus 'Master' in several parts of the Bible. For example,

- (i) Luke 8²⁴ when the disciples called on Him to calm the raging storm at sea.
- (ii) Luke 8⁴⁵ – when He felt power leaving him, when a sick lady touched Him to get healed.

With **JESUS** as your Master, nothing becomes impossible in your life. Worries disappear. Just as he calmed the raging sea storm, He will calm all the raging storms in your life. He becomes your protector, provider, ruler, director, etc. You become His entirely. He will be available to release His power to heal diseases and make whole. Please allow Him today to see the transformation. He is ever so gracious and merciful.

Brethren, we should have only one master- Jesus Christ (Matt. 23⁸). Matt. 6²⁴ says, *"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."* (NIV)

We must not be slaves (opposite of master) to earthly pleasures of sin or things of the flesh which leads to eternal death, but live a life of obedience to our master – Jesus Christ which leads to eternal life. (Further readings – Romans 6:16, Gal 5:19-26)

CLOGS IN THE WHEEL OF PRAYER

By Olaolu Aderinwale

A very appropriate meaning of prayer is that found in the answer of Hannah to the observation of Eli in **I Sam. 1:15** where she said, "I have poured out my soul before the Lord". Therefore, prayer means communion with, or pouring out the totality of one's soul to God.

Every person offering prayer to God has one purpose in view; to move God to listen to, hear and answer his prayers. But unfortunately, many Christians today offer prayers to God without receiving answers to their prayers. The question we need to ask is this, 'Why do prayers sometimes remain unanswered?' The promise of God with regard to prayer is that given in **Jeremiah 33:3** where He said, "**Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.**" Why then do Christians not receive answers to prayer? The problem definitely lies NOT with God, who is unchangeable and whose word, once uttered, cannot be altered or withdrawn, but the problem lies squarely with man.

Let us therefore try to highlight some of the causes of unanswered prayers in the lives of today's Christians:

1. Refusing to hear the truth

The man who turns away from the truth, not only will he not receive answers to prayer, but also his prayer will be an abomination. It is so stated in **Proverbs 28:9**. Many people, even Christians, deliberately turn deaf ears to the word of God particularly if it is in conflict with their practices.

2. Refusing to humble oneself

Refusing to humble oneself is a serious clog in the wheel of prayer.

God told the Israelites the conditions they must fulfil before He could bless them. The first of these conditions listed in 2 Chronicles 7:14 is that they should humble themselves.

A proud man will definitely be working himself out of God's favour because God will resist him.

"Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 1 Pet 5:5(NIV)

Humility before God therefore is essential to receiving the favour of God.

3. Forsaking God

It is an eternal and unchangeable fact that if a man forsakes God, God will also forsake him and consequently his prayer will not be answered. The great lessons in **II Chronicles 15:2** are as follows: (a) The Lord is with you while you are with Him, (b) if you seek Him, He will be found of you and (c) if you forsake Him, He will forsake you. Anybody who is forsaken by God will not find his prayers answered.

4. Provoking God

The life history of Moses should teach us of the consequences of provoking God. You may recall that Moses provoked God when he struck the rock with his rod instead of stretching it to the rock in order to bring out water for the Israelites. Because of this, God decreed that Moses would not go beyond Jordan (that is he would not reach Canaan). Deut. 3:25 shows the effort of Moses to move God to change His sentence on him. Verse 26 is particularly instructive "But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes and would not hear me".

A Christian can provoke God when he goes beyond God's instruction or does not obey God. Remember, "*To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.*" 1 Sam 15:22b (NIV)

5. Hardheartedness

Hardness of heart exists when a person hears the word of God through His Prophets, Pastors, Evangelists or personal reading of

the Bible but hardens his heart and insists on, and cleaves tightly to his own ways. According to Zech. 7:12-13, this position invites the wrath of God and the result is in v. 13b “that as He cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear saith the Lord”

6. Uncharitableness

There is a common saying and it is accepted without questioning, that what a person sows, he reaps. Charity should be extended particularly to the poor; failure to do this when one is able, displeases God. As stated in Proverbs 21:13 “Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard”. In other words, the man who shuts up his bowels of compassion on the poor will reap what he sows. This means that his prayer will not be answered.

7. Regarding iniquity in one’s heart

This is a very serious hurdle over which no prayer can jump however powerful. God desires a clean heart free from any encumbrances. Regarding iniquity in the heart is the reason for many unanswered prayers. In Psalm 66:18, the psalmist says “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me”

The Bible also says in Isaiah 59:2 “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear”.

8. Wrong Motives

Another reason why prayers are not answered is that many ask amiss to satisfy lusts. This emanates from the failure of many to distinguish between **wants** and **needs**. Look at James 4:3 which says, “Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lust”. We must learn how to pray for the essentials.

9. Dishonour of Companion

Dishonour of companion, especially between spouses, is a valid cause of unanswered

prayers. Misunderstanding between spouses prevents a free flow of thoughts and adversely affects concentration on the subject-matter of prayer. Similarly, many prayers are unanswered because of the unfaithfulness of husbands and wives. In I Peter 3:7, the Bible says “giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered”.

10. Unbelief

Faith has multi-dimensional significance. Unless one believes that God has power to answer prayers, that He promised to answer our prayers and that He will give to us if we ask Him, no answer to prayer shall be given. When the disciples of Jesus could not cast out evil spirit, they asked Jesus ‘why’? Jesus answered “Because of your unbelief”.

11. Un-forgiveness

Refusal or outright failure to forgive those who have wronged you will surely prevent God from answering your prayers. This was incisively discussed in our last edition under a topic **“Forgiveness its significance to a Christian”**. Please read it again.

12. Double-mindedness

The Bible describes a double-minded man as ‘unstable in all his ways’. **James** wrote in his book in **Chapter 1:7** “For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord”.

Brethren, with the above analysis, it is hoped that we Christians will note the clogs in the wheel of prayer and try to remove them from our lives so that our prayers may not be obstructed.

God, in His infinite mercy, will answer our prayers in Jesus’ name, Amen.

FOUNDATION STONES FOR A FULFILLING LIFE AND MARRIAGE

By Rufus Oladosu

"If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Psalms 11:3

The foundation of an edifice is very important. It sets a limit to its height. The foundation stones hold up the structures. They have to be strong otherwise, the structures will be compromised (Luke 6:49). Foundation stones are the core values that will keep you on the right course in the face of the vicissitudes of life. Life, marriage and career are all compared to building a structure. A fulfilling life and marriage is the one that is achieving its ordained, divine purposes. Such should be satisfying, full of peace and good fruits, inspiring and motivating others to experience the same.

THE FOUNDATION STONES

1. Adaptability

"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength." Phil 4:11-13 (NIV)

Adaptability implies flexibility, malleability, adjustability and teachability. Humans are compared to clay in the hands of a potter. Ability to adjust according to the prevailing circumstances is a necessity for a fulfilling life and marriage. Please note that things will not go according to your plans and targets. Situations and people do change. You will need to make adjustment when new realities come in the course of your life, so that you will not be stranded. You may have to change your mind on some issues, adjust your tastes sometimes and be ready to make the most of whatever happens.

2. Accurate knowledge

"The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know." 1 Cor. 8:2 (NIV)

Seek accurate information. The best source is the bible. Information brings transformation. To be uninformed is to ask for deformation. Separate facts from fictions, truth from supposition. Ask pertinent questions. Seek godly counsel. Plans fail for lack of good counsel. In life, a reader today is a leader tomorrow. Marriage is not for the uninformed. Study and you will not be ashamed.

3. Diligence

"The hand of the diligent shall bear rule but the slothful shall be under tribute." (Prov. 12:24)

Diligence is "spoudazo" in Greek. The word means to be exact, to use speed, to show care, to make effort. Diligence that produces distinctions will encompass all these. It takes diligence in spirit, soul and body to bring forth pleasant fruits in life and marriage. Employ your mind - think. Use your body- work. Marriage works for those who work at it. A lazy man or woman is a poor candidate for blissful marriage. Why? Marriage imposes responsibilities. Without steady hands and diligent mind, frustration will follow.

4. A servant spirit

"And whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matt. 20:27)

Be committed to drawing out the water of life to refresh others and there you shall find a suitable mate.

People resent those who govern but always open their doors to he who serves. Service brings greatness and fulfilment. Look for a need and meet it. You will be highly rewarded. Are you unmarried and in need of a spouse? Go to the 'well' there

you will find a good mate (See Gen. 24:15-20, 67; Exodus 2:18-21). Be committed to drawing out the water of life to refresh others and there you shall find a suitable mate. In marriage, your primary focus should not be how to have your needs met but what you can do to meet the needs of your spouse and children. What you give will come back to you in the same measure (Luke 6:38). **True happiness and success come from serving others.**

"It's more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35)

(Continued on page 13)

LIGHTING THE DARK PLACES OF THE EARTH

By Kunbi Ajayi

Darkness is that which makes sight impossible; it is limiting, it covers and beclouds. Darkness shrouds in secrecy. It often speaks of sorrow, violence and hatred and there is only one thing that dispels it, that is light. In John 1:1, the Bible records that *“light shines in the darkness and the darkness comprehends it not”*. There are dark places on the earth and because of the darkness of these places they are the habitations of cruelty, wickedness, all that is anti-God. Now what brings about these places? Are they still in existence? What will make light to shine to dispel the darkness?

The Bible says that we are the light. A light shouldn't be hidden under a bushel. A city set upon a hill cannot be hidden; so let your light so shine that men may see and glorify your Father who is heaven. From the foregoing it suggests that we children of God are the ones that will dispel the darkness in the dark places of the earth. Are we doing that? And how can we do that?

“Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.” Psalms 74:20 (KJV)

This scripture suggests that to overcome or become immune to the effect and activities in the habitations of cruelty, we must have respect onto the covenant. Which covenant?

“I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.” Gen 17:2 (NIV)

“This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised.” Gen 17:10 (NIV)

“Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.” Gen 17:14 (NIV)

That is the covenant;

“In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ” Col 2:11 (NIV)

This covenant has to do with all of us that partake of this circumcision, and we are enjoined to have respect unto this covenant because of the habitations of cruelty. This

covenant is so important that it cannot be annulled (See Galatians 3:15)

“Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (that done in the body by the hands of men)--remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.” Eph 2:11-13(NIV)

That is how we begin to respect covenant. Jesus Christ broke down the wall of partition or difference between Jews and the Gentiles.

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Eph 2:19-22 (KJV)

That habitation of God that is built and framed together, **the Church**, is what will shine great light that will dispel the darkness created on the earth and overcome the cruelty in dark habitations. Praise the Lord.

*“His intent was that now, **through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.**”* Eph 3:10-11 (NIV)

How do we go about doing this, to evade the onslaught of the habitations of cruelty?

We must have respect unto the covenant by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh. We must cut off the flesh and its deeds. When we do this, we can direct our hearts to love God; if we love Him, we would obey Him.

“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love” Eph 1:4 (NIV)

If we actually please Him in all things, we can walk in the victory He has already accomplished. Remember He

has defeated principalities and rulers that operate in the dark places.

“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” Col 2:15(KJV)

The Church of God will continue to march on and the gates of hell cannot stop her.

The believers are the one representing Christ now here on earth, and unless we operate under the covenant we entered in as a result of what Christ has accomplished, we can not spoil principalities, we cannot put light in the dark places of the earth, and we cannot destroy the habitations of cruelty.

You know what? It involves all of us; from the biggest to the smallest, we need each other. The kingdom cannot progress and increase through division, because it is in this love, unity and oneness that God can demonstrate the exceeding greatness of His power through the Church.

“... his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” Eph 1:19-23 (NIV)

“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” Eph 2:6 (NIV)

God is ready to work through His body to establish His rule and subdue His enemies that operate in the dark places of the earth. We are to operate with Him from His throne to subdue the kingdom of darkness and allow the glorious light to shine through. We can demonstrate the exceeding greatness of God’s power by exercising our authority in Christ, living according to the terms of the covenant and preaching the Gospel where Christ is not known. By these we will be destroying the habitations of cruelty by shining as light in the dark places of the earth.

FOUNDATION STONES FOR A FULFILLING LIFE AND MARRIAGE

(Continued from page 11)

5. Prayer

“... And as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper” 2Chr.26:5

Prayer is an invitation for supernatural help. A strong prayer life is a basic necessity for success in anything in life. Man is limited in himself. Without God, nothing of value can happen to anyone. (See John 15:5) He who does not pray will become a prey. Why? The devil is prowling around looking for whom he may devour (1Pet.5:8).

Every venture or relationship will face a storm. The outcome will be determined by who your helper is *“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright.” Ps 20:7-8(KJV)* In marital relationship, prayer is needed in making a right choice of partners, in dealing with the challenges of in-laws and raising godly children. A daily quiet time may sound old fashion but no good substitute has yet been invented. A man is in the highest place when he kneels down before His maker.

6. The fear of God

“Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.” Ps 128:1-3 (KJV)

The fear of God keeps a man from the evils of temptations (see Gen 39:7-9). It should occupy an important place in the desired qualities in one’s spouse. You need it as a bulwark against wrong peer pressure, unholy family demands and lures and lust of sin arising from the fallen sinful nature. **It’s never right if God forbids it no matter what the majority may think and it cannot turn right.** Be known for right conduct and integrity that springs from the fear of God. The fear of God sets free from the fear of man which is a snare. It attracts divine assistance in every endeavour. It fills the heart with great peace.

Remember that Jesus is the chief cornerstone of a great life. (1Pet.2:6) All things are held together by him (Col.1:17). Everything that is good begins at Calvary. If you sincerely desire all you read in this magazine, give your life to Him TODAY and He will make it glorious.



STOP! DO NOT RUN

By Michael Salako

I lived in Amuwo Odofin Housing Estate, Mile Two in Lagos. It was a beautiful evening for the boys to play football. It was a weekend affair opposite the former Durbar Hotel, on the street leading to Canal View Estate. The quiet street was turned to a football field. This practice had been for long. As I stood watching the game, I was able to see the police cars parked at a distance. In some cases, the game would end in serious fracas; the police are on hand to quell any incident.

At the tail end of the street, were young boys pushing each other into the road as the occasional car coming from the opposite direction would pass. One boy among them who seemed to have the 'what will happen anyway' attitude, would leap out in front of every passing car, very close to be hit by the car. Meanwhile the police were watching as well. Only God could tell why he was doing such a thing. Many questions were raised in my heart as I watched. Suddenly, a car appeared, coming from Crystal Estate, heading in the direction of the housing estate. The ready to die fellow who thought death is meant for older people, waited for the very last minute, leapt out in the front of the coming car. But it was too late for the driver. The foolish boy was hit, flying in the sky like a weightless balloon. And that was the end of him on earth. The horror of the accident was written plainly on the face of the driver, as he saw the dead corpse, he jumped out of the car running toward the canal. The police ran after him, likewise majority of the football players shouting to him to stop.

The police shouted as to make him realize that the accident was not his fault. So desperate to run away, he jumped into the water hoping he would swim across to the other side. Once again, the police shouted, "stop, please stop, we are not going to arrest you". They shouted breathlessly. Tired and weak, he could no longer swim the water to safety. And on the third day, his corpse was found floating on the canal.

In our lives, we tend to behave foolishly like the driver running away whenever our relationship with God is at the negative. Many Christians fall into sin and whenever God is calling them to repentance, they run away. (See Isaiah 1:18). We must not allow guilt to push us away from the blood of cleansing. His call is for grace. There is a throne of grace established for us in which we might approach so that he can take away our reproach.

Apostle Paul understood this while he lived as a sinner before his repentance. When God met him on the road to Damascus, he didn't run away. His question revealed to us, that he was ready to make amends. He knew that God is calling him to repentance and not judgement.

.....*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*.....(Acts 9:6).

This ought to be the question on our lips as we appear before his throne of grace.

The prodigal son is the 'wisest' sinner I noticed in the Bible. He didn't run away. He came back to appeal that he should be forgiven. God is not interested in our run-away attitude. That we are guilty and we flee His presence is not pleasing to God. Will running away populate heaven? The blood is not tired of cleansing our heart and likewise it is not a yardstick for us to continue in our 'off-day' behaviour.

We must arise to fight against the spirit of Cain and Judas Iscariot that is pushing us to run away from God. Zacchaeus is another person I love dearly. When he met Jesus Christ, he didn't allow his sins to push him away from the saviour rather he invited Him to his house and salvation entered into his house and life (Luke 19:1-10). Stop, do not run! It is a suicidal decision that you are taking. God loves us beyond the understanding of man. He wants our relationship and not refusal. As Christians, we must stop running when we are guilty.

The calling of the police in the story was not to persecute the driver; however two factors contributed to his flight:
Fear and Ignorance

We must not allow fear to rob us of our glorious destiny in Christ Jesus. We are so special that God is always willing to put us right.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

DO I LOVE THE LORD?

God's utmost desire for man, created in His image and ransomed by the Blood of His dear Son, is for man to love Him and keep His commandment. If you ask many in the Church today "Are you serving God?", they will answer you positively saying. "I am a Pastor, I am an Evangelist" and so on. Pause a bit however and ask yourself this question "Do I love the Lord?". Can you sincerely say "I love the Lord"? In what way(s) have you proved this to God Himself and to the whole world? Let us examine the following:

How obedient are you to the word of the Lord and instructions of the Holy Spirit?

The new testament alone contains about 1,050 commands. Do you obey these commands?

Remember disobedient is equal to rebellion and rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft (1 Samuel 5:22^b-23^a... *Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. ²³For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.*)

Jesus says, **If you love me, keep my commandments (John 14:15)**

The Scripture says in 1 John 2:4-5, "If someone says, "I belong to God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and does not live in the truth, but those who obey God's word really do love him. That is the way to know whether or not we live in him (NLT)".

Don't you love the world?

You need to show that you love the Lord by what else you love.

Remember that the Lord cannot share your heart with the world. Anyone that loves the world the love of the father is not in him

(1 John 2:15-17 -Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love the world, you show that you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only the lust for physical pleasure, the lust for everything we see, and pride in our possessions. These are not from the Father. They are from this evil world. And this world is fading away, along with everything it craves. But if you do the will of God, you will live forever)(NLT)

The Scripture says in I John 5:21 **"Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts"**(NLT).

Do you have a genuine love for our brethren?

You need to have a sincere love for each other.

Let us stop just saying we love each other; let us really show it by our actions (1 John 3:18)

Anyone who hates another Christian is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don't have eternal

life within them. We know what real love is because Christ gave up his life for us. And so we also ought to give up our lives for our Christian brothers and sisters. But if anyone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need and refuses to help—how can God's love be in that person?

Jesus says in Matthew 10:34-35, **"now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."**(NLT)

Do you share Christ with others?

Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 says, *"I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

How do you react in adverse situations?

You need to realize those who love God have to always be joyful, keep on praying, and always be thankful, irrespective of happenings. For this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus (1 Thessalians 5:17).

All things will work together for your good (Romans 8:28).

Those who put their trust in the Lord will be like mount Zion that cannot be moved (Psalm 125:1).

You need to move situation and not the situation moving you.

Do you labor for God or seek personal gain?

You need to serve God earnestly not because of what the Lord will give to you but out of a passion for the Lord and to bring glory to Him continually. Your labour for God determines your love for Him.

Do you serve God or mammon (money & riches)? Jesus says in Luke 16:18 "You cannot serve God and mammon"

Do you desire to know Him more so that you can serve Him better or you seek know Him to get bread. Press forward as did Apostle Paul in Philipians 3:12 (But I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ Jesus saved me for and wants me to be (NLT).

You need to identify yourself in the plan of God for His body and begin to pursue it vigorously. GOD BLESS YOU.

In the beginning God created everything perfect and He had wonderful fellowship with Adam and Eve. But man decided to disobey God. This resulted in sin and death.

Saviour for You

God did not want us to die and live without Him forever. He said, I will die in your place. So Jesus came to this earth and died on the cross and shed His blood for us. If we believe this and accept Him in our heart as our saviour, He forgives our disobedience and we are born into God's family.

Forgiveness

Now when God looks at us, He doesn't see our "black" sin, but a clean heart that is forgiven. Forgiveness makes us white as newly fallen snow.

Growth

As we yield ourselves to Him, we grow as Christians. Just as green plants and trees grow and produce fruit, so we grow in our Christian life and produce the fruit of love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control.

Special Promises

As we go through life, we have precious promises that are "good as gold". God has promised that as His children, we will live with Him forever in His wonderful home called heaven, where the streets are paved with gold.

*Do you want to a part of God's wonderful family?
Please take the steps outlined below:*

Acknowledge: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," Rom 3:23 (NIV)
Say, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Luke 18:13 (NIV)

Believe: "'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 (NIV)

"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." John 3:18 (NIV)

Confess: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." I John 1:9(NIV)

Pray like this: Dear Lord Jesus, come into my heart right now. Your word says if I come to you, you will in no wise cast me out. I believe in my heart and confess with my mouth that you are the Son of God. I believe you died and rose for my justification. Thank you for agreeing to be Lord over my life. Thank you because I am saved NOW.

If you have just taken this step, we would like to pray along with you. Please **contact us at the address below** or **contact any gospel Church close to you**. God bless you and keep you in Jesus Name (Amen)

**The Link Ministries,
P.O Box 891,
Ota,
Ogun State.
Nigeria.**