



Listen Pray Love Serve

IRON SHARPENS IRON

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*Iron sharpens Iron ministry is;
“one Christian taking the
initiative with another individual
to help them know Christ better
and obey him more fully,
through studying the Scriptures,
prayer (for and with them) and
sharing one’s life with them –
and leaving the results to God.”*

INTRODUCTION

“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27). One of the great challenges of today is for Christian men to step up to their responsibilities in family and in church. These studies are designed to help us become men of God so that we will glorify God and influence those who follow. Each one of us – under God – has the potential for enormous influence within our family and circle of friends. Let’s use it for God’s glory.

Life today can exert great pressures and there are many ‘calls’ upon our time. Progress in the Christian life involves what one writer calls a ‘dependent responsibility’¹. This means that those who follow Christ have a responsibility to grow and develop as Christians, depending all the time on the help of the Holy Spirit. This is what we want to encourage.

Married men can work hard to give their families what they need materially – and in the end miss what they really need spiritually, that is, loving, godly husbands and fathers. For those who are single there is a huge need within our culture for godly single men who live to the glory of God. In Iron Sharpens Iron you will be placed with a Lead Partner who will meet with you for regular prayer and encouragement

Iron Sharpens Iron is . . .

Intentional – it is something we commit to.

Purposeful – the goal is growth in Christ.

Biblical – with the Scriptures being core.

Accountable – there is third party support.

Voluntary – this will not be for everyone.

Time limited – minimum 12 months – maximum 18 months.

The basic agreement is:

- Meet on a regular basis for 30–45 minutes.
- Agree specific growth goals.
- Use the material as a basis for discussion.
- Respect confidences

What stage are you at?

Jesus called upon people to follow him. He said: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.” (John 10) What a message of eternal life, surely nothing could be more important! Maybe you are simply exploring Christianity, or perhaps you are a Christian already and want to push on? Or maybe it’s time to refresh your walk with God? Wherever you are on this path – we want to help you.

In this opening study we want to be clear on the core of the gospel. The gospel – in its broadest sense – is the unfolding story of God’s plan in the saving of his people and the restoration of all creation to the glory of his name. In a narrower sense the gospel is about a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Below is a summary of that core message. Work through the following paragraph slowly and ask any questions you have.

God is holy¹ – because of this he is angry at sin². We are not holy – but **sinful** – therefore we have a problem. God sent a **Saviour - Jesus Christ** – so that God's perfect anger would no longer be directed at us. Jesus is **God** in the **flesh**. He had to be God to **rescue** us. He had to be human to **represent** us. Jesus lived a **perfect** life. When we trust in him, he takes our sin and makes his righteousness³ ours. Jesus died on the **cross**. He did so as an **atoning**⁴ **sacrifice**⁵ to bring us to God, and as a **substitute** paying sin's debt. Jesus **rose** from the dead demonstrating his victory over death. God (The Father) was satisfied with his life and work. Jesus sent the **Holy Spirit**. The Holy Spirit brings us **alive** to God and **empowers** us to live the Christian life. We must therefore trust in Christ and what he has done for us as we receive him as Saviour and **Lord** of our lives⁶.

1 'Holy' here means that God is perfect. Note - the Gospel begins with God - not us!

2 'Sin' is an old archery term for missing the mark. We all 'miss' God's standards.

3 This does not mean we become perfect! But rather that God chooses to see us as righteous in Christ.

4 'Atonement' is an old English word meaning bringing together.

5 Sacrifices in the Old Testament showed the seriousness of sin and were a sign pointing to Jesus who would end the need for sacrifice by becoming the ultimate sacrifice for sin.

6 Bible verses dealing with some of the above themes. Isaiah 6 - Romans 3v23 - Romans 3v23; 2 Corinthians 5v21; Acts 2v32,33; Romans 10v9.

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LET'S BEGIN

- What's your story?
- Are you clear on the gospel?

The essence of the gospel is not an idea or philosophy – but a person. When Thomas (the doubting disciple) asked Jesus the way to God, Jesus did not say – ‘Go this way or go that’ he said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14v6) Jesus *is* the good news. The call of the gospel is to trust and follow him because of who he is and what he has done. The following prayer might be helpful to you if you have understood the gospel and want to respond in committing or recommitting your life to Jesus. But that decision is between you and God.

Heavenly Father. Thank you that you sent Jesus Christ your only Son to save us from your anger against all that is wrong in us. I am sorry for my failure and I commit/recommit my life to Christ. Please accept me on the basis of what Christ has done upon the cross as sacrifice and substitute. Fill me with your Holy Spirit that I may follow in the strength he gives. Amen.

Baptism is one of the two ordinances (the other is communion) that Christ has given to his church. Baptism is for believers and marks the start of the life of discipleship. Jesus gave this command to his followers: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28v19-20)

At Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out by God and 3000 people were converted, the Apostle Peter said to the crowd: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Now every generation comes to Christ the same way, repenting, believing, and being baptised.

If you want to talk more about baptism, then speak to one of our pastors or elders.

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We are made for worship and we all worship something or someone. True worship is our response to God in every part of our lives and stems from our understanding of who God is and what he has done for us. God has brought us together with him through faith in Christ, but he has also brought us together with other believers and so it is the most natural thing for us to meet with other Christians and worship God together. Those who worship and follow Christ do so in fellowship together.

Read Hebrews 10v19-25

- 1** The writer to the Hebrews begins with a reference to the confidence we have in drawing near to God in worship (v19). Tell your story of the way God has worked in your life.
- 2** God has brought us to himself and together through the cross of Christ. This is called the atonement. Talk about your own understanding of the cross and what it means to you. (v19-22)
- 3** What is the difference between assurance and over-confidence? (v22)
- 4** Why do you think verses 23-25 link faithfulness with meeting together?
- 5** Is there anything new that has struck you from Hebrews 10 that you would want to note and to apply to your life?

Q What are your main goals for this course?

Pray.

(If you have never done this before then read a verse of Scripture or a verse of hymn).

THE BIBLE

Christ is our leader. Following Christ is directly related to the Bible and it is through his word (that Christ gave through his apostles John 14v26) that we come to know him. The Old Testament anticipates Jesus Christ, the Gospels record him, the Acts of the Apostles proclaim him, the Epistles explain him, and the last book of the Bible - Revelation - promises his return. Following Jesus as Lord of our lives means being serious about believing and applying his word.

Read 2 Timothy 3v10-17

- 1** The Bible contains a prompt to action (v10) – and sometimes at great cost. What might it mean for you to be submitted to God’s word. What challenges may you face?
- 2** Paul talks about Scripture as being ‘God-breathed’. What do you think this means?
- 3** What evidence is there that the Bible is God-breathed?
- 4** Think of people who have been good examples of the ‘Bible lived out’ in your life. What was it about them that made an impact on you?
- 5** Read v17 again. What are your gifts? And what steps might you need to take to be better equipped for serving Jesus?

 Return to your goals. How are you progressing?

Pray together.

(Remember – a verse of the Bible/hymn if you're nervous!)

(Wayne Grudem's book of Christian Doctrines is a great summary of teaching and could help you go a little deeper.)

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PRAYER

Read Luke 11v1-4

We may imagine that this request (Luke 11 “teach us to pray”) coming from one of the disciples was prompted by witnessing the intimacy that Jesus enjoyed with his Father. Jesus has opened the way for all who believe in him to enjoy intimacy in prayer with God. Prayer is a mystery, but it is also an incredible gift opened for us at an astonishing cost. (Hebrews 9; 1 Timothy 2v5)

- 1 Why do you think Jesus began with: 'Our Father, hallowed be your name'?
- 2 Talk about what patterns of prayer you have and any different ideas that might help.
- 3 Some people use the acronym ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication) in prayer. Why might something like this help us?
- 4 God is interested in the great things of our lives 'your kingdom come' and in the detail 'our daily bread'. Men tend to 'bottle it up'. What's impacting you just now?
- 5 For some men, their view of their 'Heavenly Father' is shaped by their 'earthly father'. Is this true for you? And how does this affect your view of God/prayer?

Q How are the 'goals' doing?

Pray about your goals and the ‘great things’ and ‘details’ that concern you just now.

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Q How are your goals going?

SMALL GROUPS

Read Acts 2v42-47

It is encouraging to be part of a large gathering of God's people and to join in praise and to listen to the Bible being preached but this is only part of a rounded experience of what it means to be a disciple. Growth Groups meet so that we can pray, study and support each other; this is what we see in the Acts 2 passage. Being part of a church small group is important.

- 1** What is the importance of the link between the ‘apostles’ teaching’ and ‘fellowship’?
- 2** Why do you think God so blessed and prospered the Acts 2 church?
- 3** What evidence is there of real sacrificial commitment here? (v45)
- 4** What may we bring to – and receive from – a Growth Group?
- 5** Why might Growth Groups be good places to grow as Christians?
- 6** Are there any blockages to your participation that you might want to work through?

Q Pray about your 'goals'. Are you encouraged? Discouraged?

Over the next few weeks think about what you might bring to a Growth Group

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Are you reading any good Christian books? It doesn't take long to read one chapter a day. (10 of Those; Christian Focus; and The Good Book Company are good websites to visit).

SERVICE

1 Our culture pu

- tendency in you?
- 2** How does Christ's example in John 13 affect you?
- 3** How was Jesus going to serve them further? (v7) What shape should our service be?
- 4** How do you deal with criticism or opposition in service?
- 5** Can you think of some good examples of Christian service?
- 6** What task is there – perhaps seemingly menial, perhaps not – that you could do for Jesus?

Q What steps in service will you determine to take?

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GIVING

Ask most pastors what they least like to talk about and most would put giving near the top of the list. We are hugely sensitive to the criticism of being too interested in money and yet the Lord Jesus taught that our attitude to money is indicative of the condition of our hearts, as he said: “*Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*” (Matthew 6v21). People in the OT were obliged to tithe (a tenth of their income) and many Christians today use this as a guide to their giving.

Read Mark 10v17-31

- 1** What did Jesus put his finger on in this story?
- 2** Why does this man hold back? Can you relate to this?
- 3** What should spark our giving? (Ephesians 2v8-9)
- 4** What should the shape of our giving look like? (1 Corinthians 16v1-2)
- 5** What was a feature of the giving of the Macedonians? (2 Corinthians 8v1-3)
- 6** How does your giving compare with the above?

Is your giving to God's work realistic? Do you need to think and pray about this?



How are your goals progressing?

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Q Are you progressing on the 'goals'? Be encouraged.

HOLINESS

The truth we hold must be held lovingly and with integrity. A life that is truly lived for God will be attractive to some and not to others, we must be ready for that. In the Old Testament there were items that were set apart for the worship of God. In a similar way Christians are set apart, sanctified (means set apart) for that purpose too. Our lives are no longer to be lived for self - but to please our holy and loving God. Sanctification is the process by which the Holy Spirit makes us more like Jesus.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4v1-8

- 1** How does Paul's teaching here differ from the general worldview today?
- 2** Can you say - hand on heart - that you are living to please God?
- 3** What helps has God given us to live in holiness? (1 Corinthians 10v13)
- 4** The stats on men (and women) watching porn are scary - is this a problem for you?
- 5** What are your challenges to holiness?
- 6** What are the benefits of holiness?

Q How are the ‘goals’ coming along?

Take a moment of quietness to reflect on areas of your life that need to change and then pray that God would empower you to do so.

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REVIEW MEETING

We hope you have enjoyed and benefitted from these studies. But discipleship doesn't end here. In fact - it doesn't end until we see Christ face to face! So keep on moving forward! These are the themes we have studied:

- 1 Worship
- 2 The Bible
- 3 Prayer
- 4 Church
- 5 Small groups
- 6 Discernment
- 7 Service
- 8 Giving
- 9 Witnessing
- 10 Holiness

Q Which of the above themes have made the biggest impact?

Q Which themes need further attention?

Q What are your forward goals for growth in Christ?

NOTES

It is a great thing to have someone come alongside us for part of the journey.

But we need to remember that – although we are helped along the way by other Christians – that it is Christ we follow. Be encouraged as you read these

words from Hebrews 12:

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

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