

Lesson 12 Solving our Disputes

We are God's chosen people. Therefore, we should love each other deeply. Our Lord Jesus said, "Everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another" (John 13:35).

Yet even as Christ's followers, we sometimes have disputes. In this lesson we will learn how to solve these disputes. When we manage to do so, the bonds of love between us grow even stronger than before.



Disputes among Christ's Followers

1 In every earthly family, there are sometimes disputes between brothers or jealousy between sisters. This happens too in our spiritual family of Christ's church. In heaven our spiritual family will be perfect, but it is not yet perfect here on earth.

- a) Has a brother or sister in Christ ever caused hurt to you? [Yes / No]
b) Have you ever caused hurt to a brother or sister in Christ? [Yes / No]

2 Even at the time of the apostle Peter, the believers sometimes had disputes. See what advice the apostle Peter gave to them. Read 1 Peter 3:8-12 and fill the gaps from verse 8: "Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, _____ one another, be compassionate and _____."

3 When they learned to solve their disputes, their love grew even stronger.

Mark the following statements 'True' or 'False':

- _____ a) God's chosen people on this earth are always perfect
_____ b) Christ's followers sometimes have disputes
_____ c) Christ's followers can solve their disputes and be reconciled

4 Some disputes of those early believers were similar to our disputes today. For instance:

- One group of believers complained that another group was receiving more aid money than them (Acts 6:1-6)
- One group criticized the apostle Peter for breaking their ethnic customs (Acts 11:1-18) Two groups disagreed about what religious customs Christ's followers must follow (Acts 15:1-32)

On each of those occasions the believers found a way to solve their dispute and restore peace with each other. They followed the advice of their leader Peter:

Now memorize the following verse.

"They must seek peace and pursue it" (1 Peter 3:11)

5 In your experience, what things cause disputes among Christ’s followers today? Tick one or more of the following, according to your own observation:

- a) one believer causes offence to another
- b) one person is jealous that another has more money
- c) two people compete to lead the group of believers
- d) Christ’s followers disagree over doctrine
- e) believers pass on gossip about each other
- f) another cause, such as _____
(give an example from your own experience)

God longs for us to solve our disputes

6 Whenever God sees us divided by disputes, it grieves him very much. He longs for us to be reconciled to each other. The Lord Jesus taught that this is even more important than attending worship (Matthew 5:23-24).

What is our Saviour’s attitude whenever there are disputes among his chosen people? (tick two correct answers)

- a) It makes him very sad
- b) It does not affect him at all
- c) He longs for us to solve our disputes

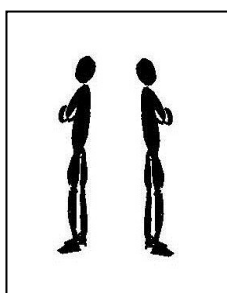
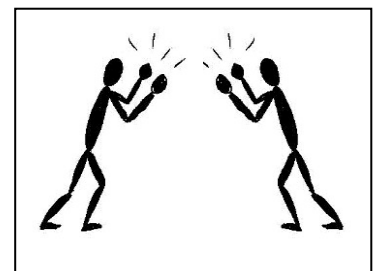


God longs for us to solve our disputes and be reconciled. But how practically can we do this? There are bad ways and good ways. Let’s learn first about some bad ways.

Bad Ways to Solve Disputes

7 One bad way to solve disputes is to fight. Some people fight with fists, some with Kalashnikovs. Some fight in the law-courts and some in their homes. But what does this lead to, according to what we learned in lesson 10?

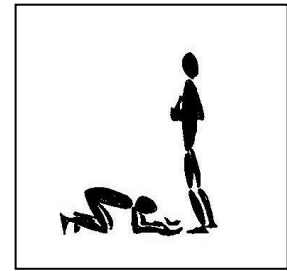
- a) reconciliation
- b) revenge



8 Another bad way to solve disputes is to turn our backs on each other. People cut each other off and refuse to talk with each other. They even prevent their families from having any contact with each other.

Sometimes this state of isolation continues for years and years. What are the negative results, in your experience? _____

9 A third bad way to solve disputes is to enforce surrender. The stronger person forces the weaker person to give way. If a mediator is asked to help, he typically takes the side of the senior person without tackling the issue fairly. So the junior person has to surrender and say the words 'I apologize' even when he does not mean it.



On the surface this appears to solve the dispute, but:

- a) Has justice really been done? [Yes / No]
- b) Will the junior person still feel resentment in his heart? [Yes / No]
- c) Does true reconciliation take place? [Yes / No]

10 Tackling disputes through 'enforced surrender' brings peace on the surface, but it is not true deep peace. A wife may surrender to her husband, but their hearts will remain divided. In the church, a younger leader may surrender to the elder one, but he may continue to spread discontent among the believers and later the group will split.

Can fighting, turning our backs or forcing a surrender bring true peace? _____

A better way to solve disputes

Now let us learn a better way to solve our disputes. This way involves three steps:

- First step:* Bring your emotions to God
- Second step:* Talk with the other person
- Third step:* Give and receive forgiveness



First Step: Bring your emotions to God

11 When we have a dispute with someone we feel strong emotions against that person. Hurt, anger and desire for revenge fill up our minds so completely that there is no room left for any other thoughts!



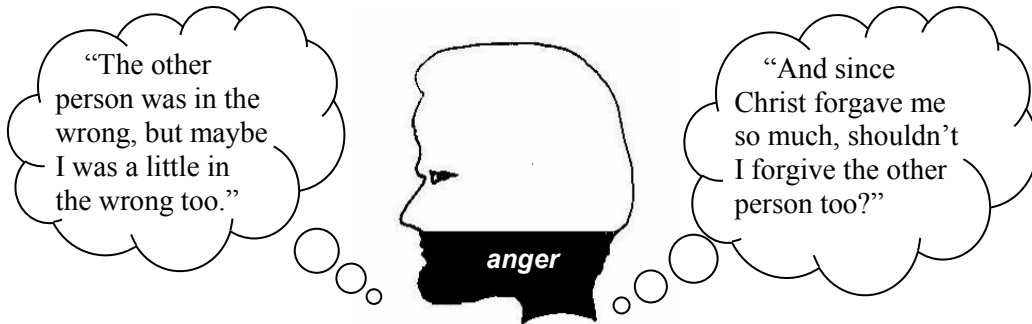
If we go to confront the other person while our thoughts are still full of anger, we will definitely use angry words. Then in turn the other person will defend himself with angry words too.

In such a state, will that person be able to consider calmly anything we say? [Yes / No]

12 Therefore, as the first step we need to bring our angry emotions to God. He listens while we pour out our emotions to him. He is our Healer, so we should show him our spiritual wounds just as a patient shows his bodily wounds to the doctor.

What is the first step towards solving our disputes? Bring your _____ to God.

13 As we keep talking with God about these negative emotions, he will gradually reduce the anger in our minds. That makes room for other thoughts to enter, like this:

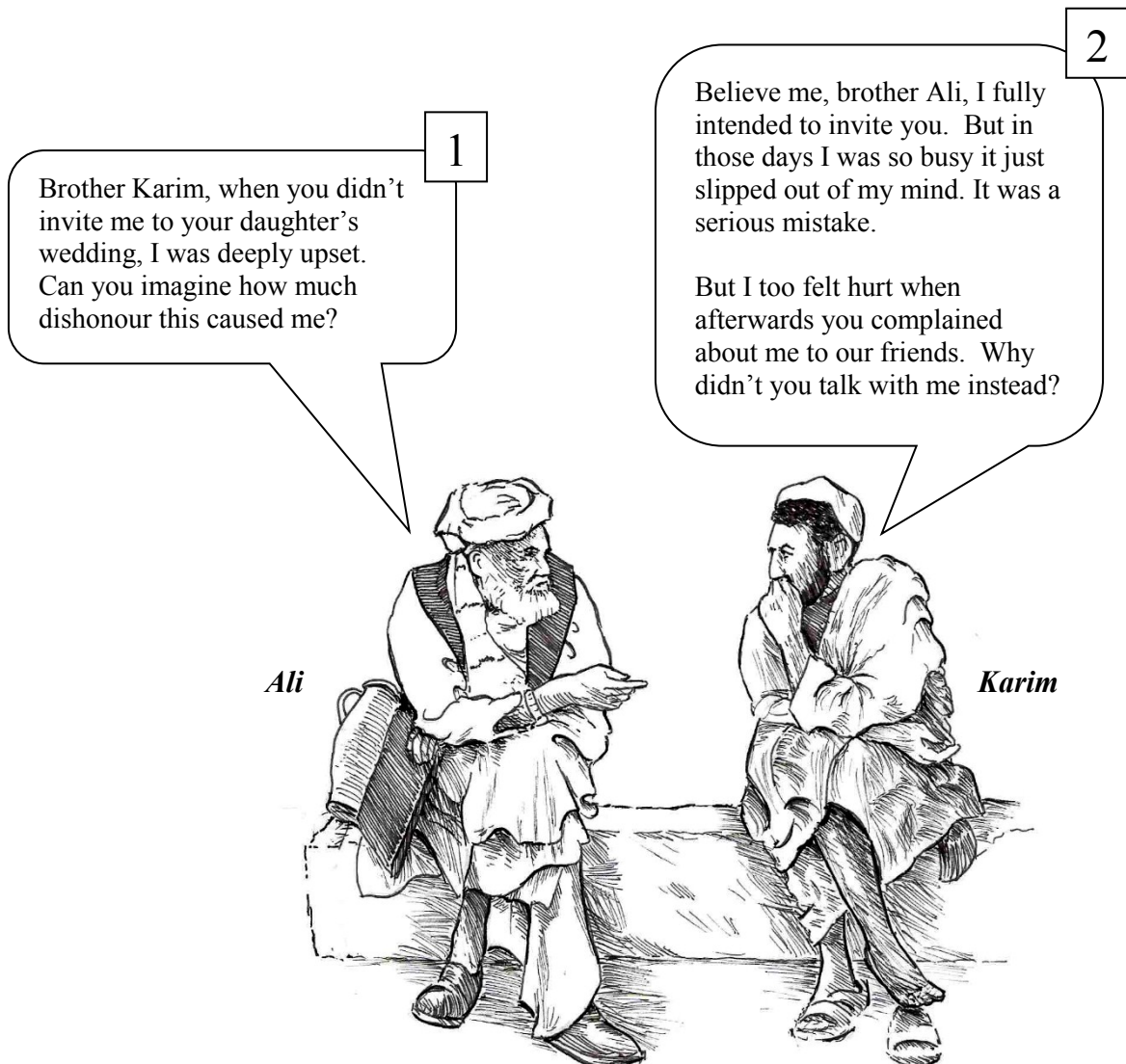


Probably we are not yet completely free of the anger. But slowly our emotions have come under control sufficiently for us to be able to speak calmly with the other person. We also ask God to prepare that person to be willing to listen to us. We wait for the right opportunity to meet with them.

What is the first step towards solving our disputes? Bring your emotions to _____

Second Step: Talk with the other person

14 Here Ali and Karim are two followers of Christ. They have a dispute. Ali speaks first:



- a) Are they discussing in a calm or angry way? _____
b) Are they listening carefully to each other? _____

15 Ali had previously completed the first step by bringing his emotions to God. So now in the second step he is able to talk about the problem without getting angry again. Calmly he explains how Karim hurt him. Karim listens carefully without interrupting. Then Karim explains how Ali hurt him, and Ali listens without interrupting.

They both describe their feelings honestly, but in a loving way. They are “*speaking the truth in love*”, as Ephesians 4:15 says. They are making good progress towards solving their dispute.

What is the second step in solving our disputes? [Talk / fight] with the other person
(circle the correct answer)

16 Also, notice that Ali does not attack or insult Karim’s person. Instead he just focuses on Karim’s specific action. This is important to remember whenever we have a dispute with someone. Therefore:

- a) Which sentence below, 1. or 2., is better for a wife to say to her husband? _____
1. ‘The meat you bought yesterday was too expensive, could you try a different butcher next time?’
2. ‘You are so wasteful, you always waste our money!’
- b) Why do you think this? _____

17 But earlier Ali had made a mistake. He had complained about Karim to his friends instead of going to talk directly with Karim in private. Our Lord Jesus gave us this guidance:

“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.” (Matthew 18:15)

Why is it so important to speak in private? (write your own opinion and be ready for discussion)

18 Let’s check if Ali and Karim are using any of the bad ways to solve their dispute that we learned earlier in this lesson:

- a) Are Ali and Karim fighting with each other? [Yes / No]
b) Are they turning their backs on each other? [Yes / No]
c) Is one of them forcing the other to surrender? [Yes / No]

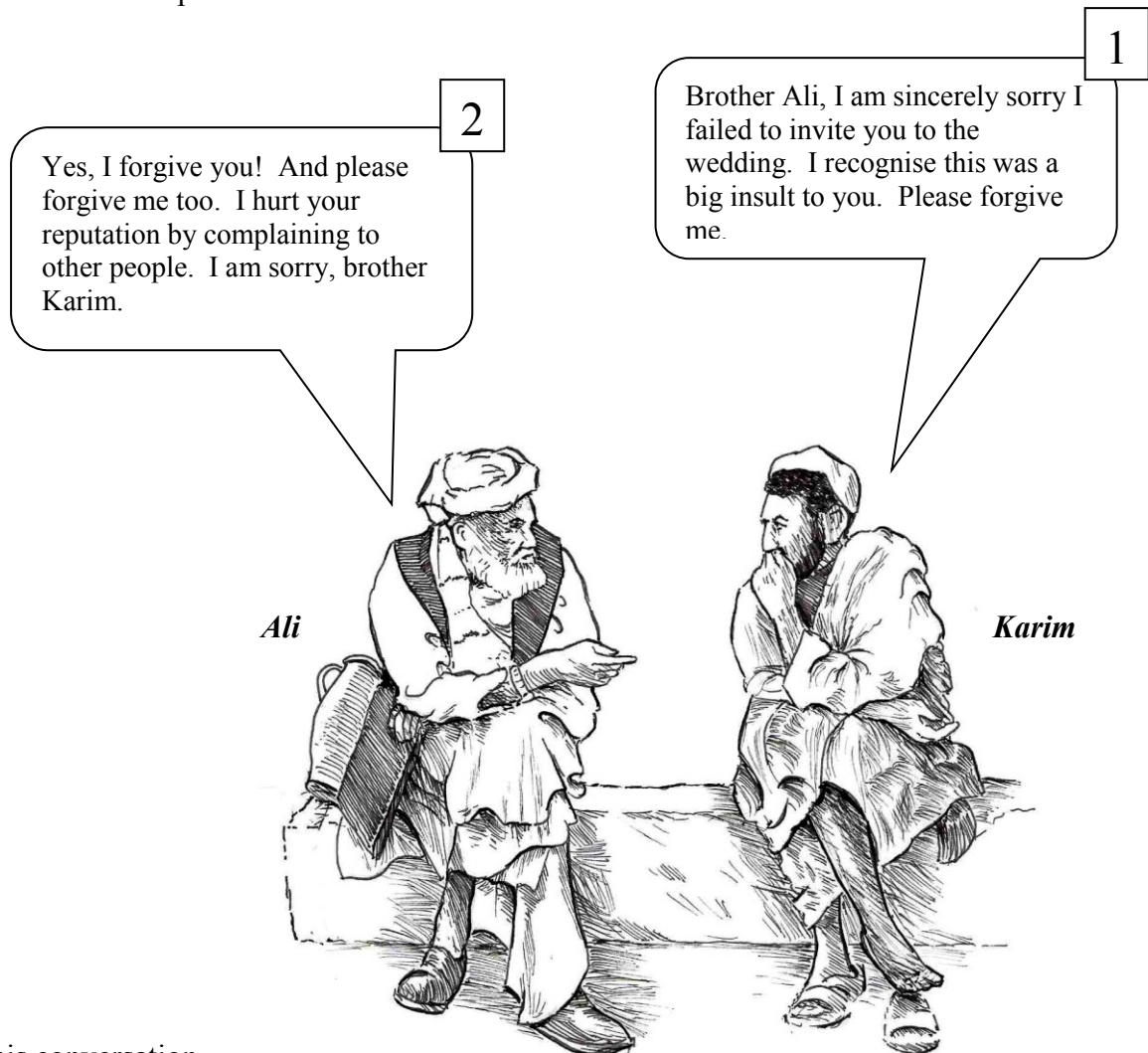
19 They are tackling their dispute in a good way! Write here the two steps they have taken so far:

First Step: Bring your _____ to God
Second Step: _____ with the other person

20 Now Ali and Karim come to the third step.

Third Step: Give and Receive Forgiveness

This time Karim speaks first:



In this conversation,

a) Which of them apologizes? (*tick one only*)

1. Ali 2. Karim 3. Both of them 4. Neither of them

b) What position do they each take? (*tick one only*)

1. 'Nothing was my fault'
 2. 'Everything was my fault'
 3. 'I apologize for the part that was my fault'

21 Neither Ali nor Karim just surrenders to the other, saying 'everything was my fault'. Instead they recognize that 'one hand does not make a clap' and so:

- Ali apologizes specifically for what was his fault
- Karim apologizes specifically for what was his fault

It is hard to ask someone to forgive us, isn't it? This is not a weak thing to do. Rather, it takes manly strength to do such a hard thing.

What is the third step in solving our disputes? _____ and _____ forgiveness.

22 We should be

“forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

God has forgiven and buried our past sins. In the same way when we forgive someone for a particular sin, we should bury it. After burying it, we should never dig it up again!

But what if that person repeats the same offence in future? Should we forgive them again? The apostle Peter asked this same question. Read Jesus’ reply in [Matthew 18:21-22](#). (You can find Matthew’s gospel in your Bible in the ‘List of Contents’)

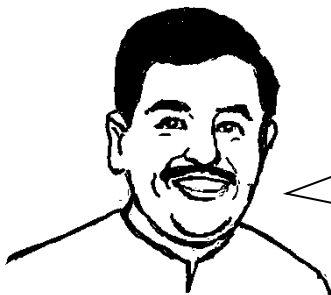
How many times did Jesus tell Peter to forgive? _____

23 Watch now as Karim and Ali give and receive forgiveness. What joy these two brothers in Christ feel when they are reconciled!



Stop and think:

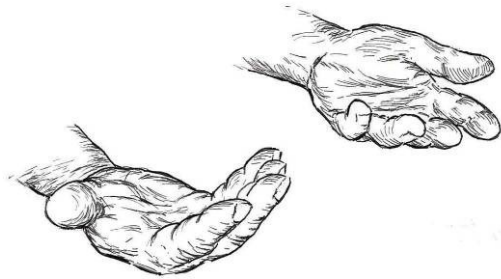
- ***Are you in a dispute with a brother or sister in Christ? Would you like the joy of being reconciled to them? Ask God to prepare the way for this to happen.***



Sometimes, even when we ourselves try to give and receive forgiveness in a dispute, the other person might not be willing. This makes reconciliation impossible until their attitude changes. But at least let us try our best from our side. God’s Word says, “*If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone*” (Rom 12:18).

LESSON 12 PRACTICAL TASK

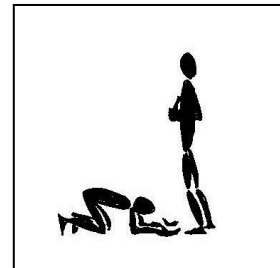
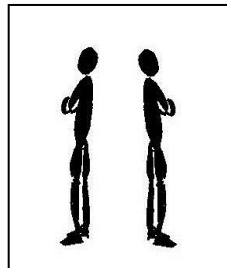
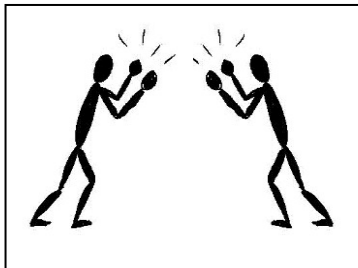
In question 23, you thought about someone with whom you need reconciliation. Each day this week, talk with God about this person. Use this prayer:



“Dear Father God,
Please change my emotions about [name].
Help me understand his/her point of view.
Provide a suitable opportunity to talk with him/her.
Enable both of us to listen to each other
and to forgive each other.
In the name of the Lord Jesus who forgave me,
Amen.”

LESSON 12 REVIEW

1 These pictures show three ways people often try to solve disputes. Write by each one ‘good’ or ‘bad’:



_____ a) fight

_____ b) turn our backs

_____ c) enforce surrender

2 Write three good steps to solve our disputes:

First Step: Bring your _____ to God

Second Step: _____ with the other person

Third Step: _____ and _____

3 Write the memory verse, with its reference:

“They must seek _____” (1 Peter ____:____)

LESSON 12 ANSWERS

- 1 a), b) personal answers. Probably all of us have been hurt by other followers of Christ, but probably we have all hurt them too.
- 2 love, humble
- 3 a) False b) True c) True
- 4 memorize the verse
- 5 personal answers, for discussion time
- 6 a), c)
- 7 b)
- 8 for discussion time
- 9 a) No b) Yes c) No
- 10 No
- 11 No
- 12 emotions
- 13 God
- 14 a) Yes b) Yes
- 15 talk
- 16 a) 1. b) because sentence 1. is about her husband's specific action, while sentence 2. is a general attack on him personally
- 17 for discussion time
- 18 a) No b) No c) No
- 19 emotions, talk
- 20 a) 3. b) 3.
- 21 give, receive
- 22 seventy-seven, i.e. so many you lose count!
- 23 stop and pray



Study tip: It is very important to answer the questions which ask your personal opinion. Please don't miss them out!

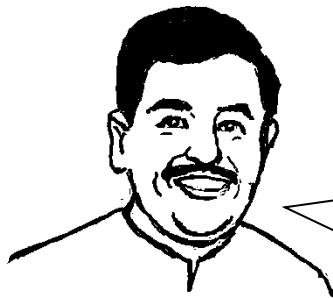
Lesson 19 Serving one another

One time Jesus Christ was having a meal with his twelve disciples. They were arguing among themselves about “*which one of us is the greatest?*”

Jesus their master rebuked them: “*The greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.*” (Luke 22:26-27)



Then Jesus proved his point in an astonishing way. He got up from the table and took the place of a slave. He took off his outer clothes and tied a towel round his waist and poured water into a basin and started to wash the feet of his disciples!



What do you think about this surprising act? Would Jesus lose his follower's respect by serving them in this way? Or is it possible to serve and lead at the same time? Today we will learn how to serve one another, according to Jesus' example.

Serving One Another

1 After washing his disciples' feet, Jesus said to them:

“You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord’, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you”. (John 13:13-15)

- a) In this passage, two titles show Jesus' authority over his disciples. What are these titles? ‘Teacher’ and ‘_____’,
- b) By washing the disciples' feet, did Jesus lose his authority over them? [Yes / No]

2 Jesus Christ did not lose his disciples' respect by serving them. In fact, soon afterwards he served them by sacrificing his life for them! As a result, they respected and loved him even more.

From the last sentence in the box, fill the blank spaces:

”I have set you an example that _____”

3 Jesus said “You should do as I have done for you”. Jesus is our Teacher and our Lord. According to his example, what should we do? (*tick one*)

- a) serve one another
- b) rule over one another
- c) compete with one another

4 Afterwards Simon Peter followed the example of his Teacher. Let's learn from 1 Peter chapters 4 and 5, where the apostle Peter teaches us how to serve one another.

Gifts for Service (1 Peter 4)

Read **1 Peter 4:10-11** and fill the blank:

“Each of you should use whatever _____ you have received to serve others” (1 Peter 4:10)

5 This is our memory verse for this lesson. Write it again and **memorize** it:

“Each of you _____ others” (1 Peter __: __)

From 1 Peter 4:10-11, we learn three things about these gifts for service:

- A. Different people have different gifts
- B. Each of us has a gift
- C. We should use our gifts humbly



A) Different People have different gifts

6 1 Peter 4:10 speaks of ‘God’s grace in its various forms’. God gives different gifts to different people. Some gifts are natural abilities which develop from our birth. Others are supernatural abilities we receive after our ‘new birth’.

Who gives all these gifts? _____

7 All these abilities come from our generous God, through his Spirit. We cannot earn them. They are God’s free gifts for his chosen people.

Write ‘True’ or ‘False’ by the following statements:

- a) Different people have different gifts _____
- b) We earn God’s gifts by doing good _____

8 Think about a beautiful Persian carpet. If all the threads in a carpet were the same colour, how boring that would be! Instead, the weaver combines threads of many different colours into a lovely design.

In the same way, God weaves us together to be His beautiful chosen people! Does He give us all the same gifts, or different gifts? _____

9 Because we all have different gifts, we need each other. It is like a body with many parts. If we had many eyes in our face but no ears, how useless that would be! In Christ’s community different people have different gifts, so we need each other.

Did you hear the story about two men? One was blind and the other crippled. They both needed to get to the city centre. But the blind man couldn't see which way to go and the crippled man couldn't walk. So how could they reach there?

Well, the blind man told the cripple to get on his back, and be his 'eyes' for him and he would be the 'feet' for the cripple. By helping each other, they both reached their destination. They served each other and trusted each other.



Think about this true story. In what ways does it apply to us in our local group of believers?

Note your ideas and be ready for discussion. _____

B) Each of us has a Gift

10 Here again is the verse we memorized:

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others".

(1 Peter 4:10)

- a) Does each of Christ's followers have a gift from God? [Yes / No]
b) Therefore do you yourself have a gift to use in Christ's service? [Yes / No]

11 It doesn't matter if you are old or young, male or female, educated or not! God has given each of us a gift for serving others.

Some people think they have no useful gift for service. In a local group of believers, two ladies are discussing this:

I am just a housewife, busy with my children. I am not gifted to serve in the church!



Fayzia

That's not true, dear Fayzia. You are very good at encouraging people. You notice when they are sad. You lift them up. You pray for them. God has given you the gift of encouragement, and it is very special for us!



Laila

What gift for service has God given to Fayzia? (*tick the correct answer*)

- a) a gift of preaching
- b) a gift of encouraging others
- c) a gift of healing

12 Never think you are insignificant. Others in the church need you. God wants you to use your gift to serve his chosen people.

In every local church, how many people have gifts for service?

- a) only the leaders
- b) only those who are well educated
- c) each person, even the shy and humble member

13 We find out our gifts by trying out different kinds of service. Then we ask ourselves:

- “When I serve in this way,
- Do other believers think I am good at it?
 - Do I see positive results from it?
 - Do I enjoy it?”

For instance, suppose a young man Samir enjoys leading the singing when the believers worship together. They tell him he is good at it, and there are positive results as people’s hearts are lifted in praise to God.

So then, what is Samir’s gift for service? _____

14 That way is how we discover our gifts for service. But as we do so, there is a danger! We may develop a wrong attitude. We may become proud of our own gifts, or jealous of other people’s gifts.

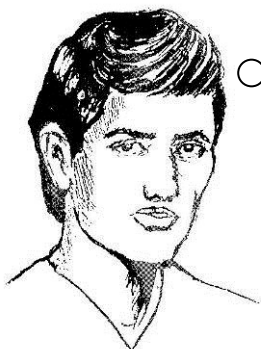
So we need to learn a third thing too:

C) We should use our Gifts Humbly

Recall our memory verse once more, and fill the blank space: “*Each of you should use whatever gift you have _____ to serve others*”. (1 Peter 4:10)

15 The verse reminds us that we ‘receive’ gifts. We cannot earn them and we do not deserve them! They all come from God’s generous hand.

Here again is the young man Samir from question 13. He has many gifts:



I am good at leading, singing, and evangelism, and praying for the sick. I understand the Bible very well. I preach excellent sermons. I even speak in supernatural tongues. I have more gifts than anyone else in my local church. So why didn't they make me their leader?

If you were a member of that church, would you want Samir to be the leader? Write reasons for and against giving him responsibilities as leader, and be ready for discussion.

Reasons for Samir being leader: _____

Reasons against Samir being leader: _____

16 Proud Samir has forgotten that we should use our gifts humbly. They are for us to serve God and to serve others.

1 Peter 4:11 gives two examples of this. Fill the blanks from this verse:

“If anyone _____, they should do it as one who speaks the very words of God.
If anyone _____, they should do it with the strength God provides”

17 1 Peter 4:11 shows that it is a big responsibility to ‘preach’ God’s Word. Every preacher should work hard to prepare the sermon carefully.

1 Peter 4:11 also says that we should ‘serve’ with God’s strength. This word often refers to serving a meal. Men forget how hard women work to cook delicious meals, serve them and then clear up afterwards! But to God the person who serves in this way is just as important as the one who preaches.

For what reason do we serve? (*read the rest of verse 11 in your Bible and then tick one answer*)

- ___ a) so that we may be praised by other people
___ b) so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ

18 From 1 Peter chapter 4, what three things have we learned about gifts for service? *Fill the blank spaces:*

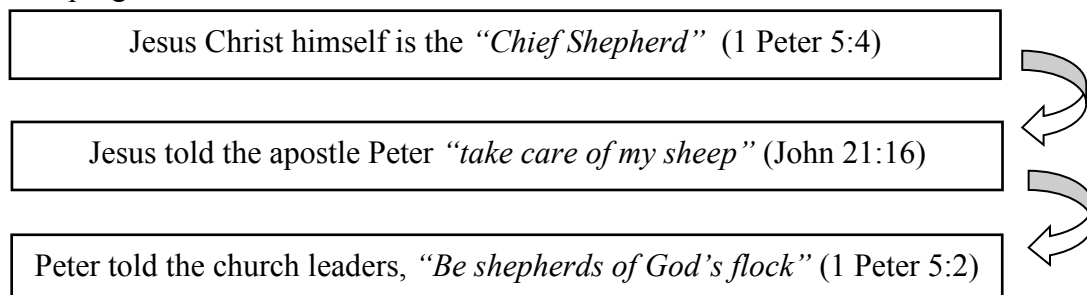
- a) Different people have _____ gifts (see question 6)
b) _____ of us has a gift (see question 10)
c) We should use our gifts _____ (see question 14)

Serving as Leaders (1 Peter 5)

19 Read 1 Peter 5:1-4. To whom is the apostle Peter writing this section? “To the _____” (verse 1.)

20 In the New Testament, each local church had a group of leaders. This is better than having just one leader in each church. They can share the different responsibilities according to their different gifts.

Look at this progression:



What important task has God given to church leaders? To be _____ of His flock.

21 Jesus the Chief Shepherd shows us how to be a good shepherd. He said, “*I lay down my life for the sheep*” (John 10:15).

What are the characteristics of a good shepherd? (*tick any correct answers*)

- a) He is unselfish
- b) He cares more for the sheep’s welfare than for his own.
- c) He is lazy
- d) He lets the sheep wander into danger
- e) He sacrifices himself for the sheep

22 1 Peter 5:2-3 tells leaders how to be unselfish shepherds of God’s flock. Fill the blanks:

- a) “not because you must, _____ because you are willing” (verse 2)
- b) “not pursuing dishonest gain, _____ eager to serve” (verse 2)
- c) “not lording it over those entrusted to you, _____ being examples to the flock” (verse 3)

23 This repeated word ‘but’ shows that Christian leaders should be very different from worldly leaders. Just think of the difference:

- Worldly leaders use their people for their own benefit.
- Christ-like leaders sacrifice themselves for their people’s benefit.

It is not easy to lead in a serving way. But what will such leaders receive as a reward? A “_____ of glory” (see verse 4).

24 Leaders have a big responsibility to care for God’s people. The people’s responsibility is to encourage and submit to their leaders instead of complaining. Let us be grateful for our leaders, and respect them.

Read 1 Peter 5:5-6

What attitude should the younger people show towards the elders? “_____ yourselves”

25 Whether we are leaders or members of a church, 1 Peter 5:5 tells us “*Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another*”. Just as Jesus humbly served his disciples by washing their feet, so we serve each other humbly.

At the start of this lesson, we asked ‘is it possible to serve and lead at the same time?’ Most people think it is impossible. But what do you think? Note your ideas and be ready for discussion: _____

Jesus completely changed the whole system of service. He was the Master, but he did the serving. So let us forget about status and position, and serve from our hearts!



LESSON 19 PRACTICAL TASK

Ask another believer, who knows you well,
“What gifts for service do you think I have? How can I use those gifts to serve others?”

LESSON 19 REVIEW

- 1 From 1 Peter chapter 4, what three things have we learned about gifts for service?
 - a) Different people have _____ gifts *(questions 6-9)*
 - b) _____ of us has a gift *(questions 10-14a)*
 - c) We should use our gifts _____ *(questions 14b-18)*

- 2 Write the memory verse: “Each _____
_____”. (1 _____ : _____)

LESSON 19 ANSWERS

- 1 a) Lord b) No
- 2 copy from the box in question 1
- 3 a)
- 4 gift
- 5 memorize the verse
- 6 God
- 7 a) True b) False
- 8 different gifts
- 9 for discussion
- 10 a) Yes b) Yes
- 11 b)
- 12 c)
- 13 leading the singing
- 14 received
- 15 for discussion
- 16 read the verse
- 17 b)
- 18 a) different b) each c) humbly
- 19 elders
- 20 shepherds
- 21 a), b), e) are correct
- 22 a) but b) but c) but
- 23 crown
- 24 submit
- 25 for discussion

Study tip: What has God done in your life?
How has he answered your prayers?
Tell us on comefollowmecourse@gmail.com.

