

Introduction to the Module

Greetings, dearest friends, in the strong name of Jesus Christ!

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we affirm our deep belief in the creative, convicting, converting, and calling power of the Word of God. To understand the wonderful blessing of conversion and calling, we will need to critically evaluate the place of the Word of God in the Church.

Our first lesson, *The Word that Creates*, explores the nature of the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God. We'll see that God's own perfect integrity guarantees the absolute trustworthiness of the Scriptures. Furthermore, we'll discover how God created the universe through his Word, and how he identifies himself completely with the Word in Jesus Christ. Being the means by which the Holy Spirit creates new life in those who believe, we prove to be disciples by abiding in Jesus' Word. As members of the Church we receive the Word together in community, the same which provides us with the ultimate purpose of the created universe, which is the glorification of Almighty God.

In the next lesson, *The Word that Convicts*, we'll look at how God's Word convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Word teaches that sin is universal in scope and corrupting in its character. The Word of God also convicts regarding righteousness, revealing God's perfect righteousness and our moral inadequacy. And, it convicts regarding judgment, instructing that God will judge Israel and the nations, the Church, Satan and his angels, and all the wicked dead by his just determination. God's Word also convicts us of the truth--of Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God, and the integrity of his Word through his messengers, the prophets and the Apostles.

Lesson three, *The Word that Converts*, concentrates on the power of the Word of God to produce new life in the believer. This Word that converts is synonymous with the Gospel of Jesus; it is the good news of salvation which causes us to be "born again," to experience the washing of regeneration, and renewal of the Holy Spirit. The Word produces in we who believe concrete signs of God's renewing power. This same Word that creates new life, sustains us, provides spiritual nourishment, causes our growth, and enables us to defend ourselves against the devil's lies.

Finally, lesson four, *The Word that Calls*, explores the concept of (*metanoia*), that is, repentance towards God, and to faith (*pistis*). Faith in Jesus Christ is the way that

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God saves, delivers, and rescues the believer from the penalty, power, and presence of sin. As we turn from sin to God in Christ, the Word leads us to receive God's new nature (regeneration) and become incorporated (adopted) into the people of God (to the *laos* of God) by grace through faith alone. The Word that calls us to salvation also calls us to discipleship (as bondslaves of Jesus), to freedom (as redeemed children) and to mission (to make disciples through our witness and good works).

Truly, the Holy Scriptures are a Word that are profitable for teaching, correction, instruction, and training so that God's person might be completely equipped for any task (2 Tim. 3.16-17). May God bless you as you explore the richness of his God-breathed Word that creates, convicts, converts and calls!

- Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis

Introduction to the Module

Greetings in the strong name of Jesus Christ!

Of all the subjects preached and taught by Jesus of Nazareth, none are as significant and controversial as the subject of the Kingdom of God. Both conservative and liberal scholars agree that Jesus' favorite subject, the one he preached and taught upon most often, is the Kingdom of God. It was his salvation message, master plan, and heart theology. Sadly, the modern Church seems to pay little attention to what Jesus considered to be most important in his prophetic and Messianic ministry. Our hope is that your heart will be gripped by the kingdom story - the King and his Kingdom - and see its importance in the life of personal discipleship and ministry.

The first lesson, *God's Reign Challenged*, focuses upon God as the sovereign majesty. It discusses how the absolute sovereignty and lordship of God was defied, both by the devil and his angels, and the first human pair, Adam and Eve, through their willful disobedience in the garden. This rebellion produced tragic results in the world, in human nature, and the release of the demonic into the world. In spite of our rebellion, however, God intends to restore all heaven and earth back under his reign, and constitute again a universe where his name is glorified, and his justice and peace rule forever.

In our second lesson, *God's Reign Inaugurated*, we will explore God's intent to eradicate all disobedience and rebellion as a result of the Fall - God becomes a Warrior in this fallen realm. God made a covenant with Abraham as his solemn promise to bring a Seed through whom the *shalom* and justice kingdom reign would be brought back to earth. This covenant promise was renewed with Isaac and Jacob, to the Israelite nation, to the tribe of Judah, and finally to the family of David. Here we trace in bold line the origins of the Messiah, so the reign of God would be brought back into this fallen and sin-cursed world. Jesus of Nazareth is the Kingdom's presence realized, with God's reign demonstrated in his incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension.

Lessons three and four deal with *God's Reign Invading* and *God's Reign Consummated* respectively. Now that our Lord Jesus has died, risen, and ascended into heaven, the Kingdom of God is being proclaimed throughout the world by his Church. The Church of Jesus Christ is the locus—the place or context—of God's salvation, of the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, and of authentic kingdom

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shalom, the place where God's presence and power are freely being displayed. The Kingdom of God will be consummated at the Second Coming of Jesus, where death, disease, and all evil will be put down, all heaven and earth shall be renewed, and God will become All-in-all.

The Story of the Kingdom is the story of Jesus, and God's intent is to bring the world back under his rule in him. Our prayer is that your love and service to him will abound as you study the Word of God on the forever rule of God!

We praise God for his kingdom story, and your interest as a student of his Holy Word!

- *Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis*

The Capstone Curriculum, Module 3

Introduction to the Module

Greetings, dearest friends, in the strong name of Jesus Christ!

The Church of God in Jesus Christ is one of the most refreshing and important themes of all the Scriptures. Jesus of Nazareth, through his death, burial, and resurrection, has been exalted as head over his new people, those called to represent him in the earth and bear witness of his already/not yet Kingdom. To understand the Church's role in God's kingdom program is critical to every facet of personal and corporate discipleship; there is no discipleship or salvation apart from God's saving action in the Church. Grasping what God is doing in and through his people empowers God's leader to represent him with wisdom and honor. We invite you with enthusiasm to study the Church in order to fully appreciate the nature of ministry in the world today.

The first lesson, *The Church Foreshadowed in God's Plan*, focuses upon how the Church is foreshadowed in God's exalted purpose to bring glory to himself by saving a new humanity through his covenant with Abraham. You will see how the Church is foreshadowed in the unfolding of his gracious plan of salvation to include the Gentiles in his work in Christ Jesus, and learn of God's intent to create for himself a unique and peculiar people, the *laos* of God. You will also discover the richness and meaning of salvation, what it means to be rescued from the lostness and separation from God caused by sin. Through our union with Christ we become joined to "the people of God" who inherit the Kingdom he promised. United to Christ is to be united to his people, those people whose hope is in God creating a new heaven and a new earth with a new humanity under the rule of God which will completely reverse the effects of sin and death on the world.

In our second lesson, *The Church At Worship*, we'll consider salvation as the foundation of the Church's worship. We'll see that salvation comes by God's grace alone and that human beings can in no way earn or deserve it. Worship, therefore, is the proper response to the grace of God. We will also explore some of the insights from Christian reflection about the Church's worship, including a brief study of the terms "sacrament" and "ordinance" as well as varying views of Baptism and the Lord's Supper applied to the Church's worship. Furthermore, we'll discover the theological purpose of the Church's worship, which is to glorify God because of his solitary holiness, his infinite beauty, his incomparable glory and his matchless works. Approaching the triune God through Jesus Christ, the Church worships through praise and thanksgiving, and through Liturgy, which emphasizes the Word

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and the Sacraments. The Church also worships God through its obedience and lifestyle as a covenant community.

Lesson three is entitled *The Church as Witness*, and focuses on the mission of the Church. In this lesson we'll cover the most significant aspects of the doctrine of election as it applies to Jesus Christ as the elect of God, to his chosen people Israel and to the Church, and to individual believers. We'll discover Jesus Christ as the Elect of God, the One through whom God saves out of the world a people for himself, and briefly explore the dimensions and definition of the concept of God's chosen people as it is defined both in Israel as the people of God and the Church of Jesus Christ. As God's instrument of his Great Commission, we'll take notice of three critical elements within it: the Church gives witness as she evangelizes the lost, as she baptizes new believers in Christ, that is, to incorporate them as members into the Church, and as she teaches her members to observe all the things Christ commanded.

Finally, in lesson four, *The Church at Work*, we will discover the various dimensions and elements of the Church. Special attention will be given to how we may detect authentic Christian community by concentrating on certain marks which have been proven to be true signs of the Church's actions and lifestyle. We'll consider the marks of the Church according to the Nicene Creed, as well as according to the teaching of the Reformation. We will also look at the Church through the lens of the Vincentian Rule, a helpful guide to understand and evaluate traditions and teachings claiming to be binding upon Christians. We'll end this study by concentrating on the ministry of the Church through various images of the Church mentioned in the New Testament, the image of the household of God (God's family), through the image of the body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit (God's agent of the Kingdom of God). We will also look through the lens of God's army, as the Church does battle in the Lamb's war. These images offer great insight into how we are to understand the Church's identity and work in the world today.

Without question, the Church of Jesus Christ is God's agent for his Kingdom, and the people of his presence. May your study of this material and the Word of God produce in you a deep love and devotion to live for and build up the holy people of God, the Church!

May God richly bless your diligent study of his Holy Word!

- Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis

The Capstone Curriculum, Module 4

Introduction to the Module

Greetings, in the strong name of Jesus Christ!

The theme of mission has not received the kind of focus and attention in our urban churches that it should. Having been seen largely as a work across the ocean in far flung corners of the world, we have failed to give it the kind of critical analysis that it deserves. From one vantage point, the entirety of the Christian faith could be seen as a response of mission, the call to go to the nations and proclaim Jesus of Nazareth as Lord and King of the reign of God. The NT is a collection of missionary documents given to churches that were founded by the apostles, the original missionaries of the Christian faith. God himself is the original missionary, coming to the world in Christ and reconciling it to himself (2 Cor. 5.18-21). Indeed, Christianity is mission.

This module, therefore, deals with this key subject with the intent to help you, God's emerging leader in the city, to understand both the theology and ramifications of mission from a biblical point of view. In a real sense, we cannot understand what God is doing in the world through mission without an overview of the vision of God's purpose and working. So, in our first two lessons we will look at mission through four distinctive lenses: mission as drama and promise, and mission as romance and warfare respectively.

In our first lesson, *The Vision and Biblical Foundation for Christian Mission (1)*, we deal with the perspective of Mission as the Drama of All Time. Our intent here is to provide a framework for understanding the work of mission from the Scriptures themselves. We will begin by giving a general definition of mission, and then outline a quick summary of the critical elements of a biblical understanding of mission. We will look at mission through the lens of story and drama, showing from Scripture that mission is God's sovereign working through history through the various epochs or sections of time to bring about redemption in Christ. We also explore Mission as the Fulfillment of the Divine Promise, envisioning mission as God fulfilling his promise as the covenant God of faithfulness. We will describe the role of biblical covenants in the Scriptures, and trace God's action as response to his covenant promise to Abraham, confirmed in his sons and the patriarchs, identified with the tribe of Judah and clarified in the promise to David to have a perpetual heir on his throne. In the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the promise of Abraham and David has been fulfilled, and now, through mission proclamation of the Gospel, the promise of new life is offered to the nations through the preaching of the cross.

In lesson two, *The Vision and Biblical Foundation for Christian Mission (2)*, we will explore Mission as the Romance of the Ages and as the War of the Spheres. These images in Scripture allow us to see just how critical mission is to our theological framework as believers. As the romance of God, we see God's determination to draw out of the world a people for his own possession. We will review this grand theme, beginning with the history of Israel as the wife of God, and her unfaithfulness through idolatry and disobedience. We will trace this theme in the person of Jesus, and see how the new covenant expanded the

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people of God to include the Gentiles. As the warfare of the ages, we see the proclamation of God's kingdom rule in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Beginning with the clear affirmation of God's sovereignty, we see God has determined to reestablish his rule over his creation, which fell from his grace through the rebellion of the devil and humankind at the Fall. Since this time, God has taken the position of warrior to bring the universe back under his rulership. In the person of Jesus of Nazareth, God is reasserting his right to rule over the universe, and mission is the proclamation of that Kingdom come in Christ.

In lesson three, *Christian Mission and the City*, we turn our attention to the object of mission and God's intent for the city and the poor. We begin by looking at the ancient city, its organization and characteristics, especially its symbolic feature as a sign of rebellion against the Lord. We will consider the spiritual significance of the city, looking at God's interaction with a number of cities in Scripture, and exploring their meanings. We will see how God has adopted the city concept for his own purposes, overruling its association with rebellion and idolatry, and redeeming its meaning for mission, and for the future glory of the Kingdom. In this lesson, then, we will also provide a rationale for our involvement in urban mission. As the seat of influence, power, and spiritual activity as well as the magnet for the oppressed, the broken, and the poor, we as 21st century disciples must strive to speak and live prophetically to the city. As the picture and symbol of our spiritual destiny and inheritance, we must do all we can to evangelize, disciple, and plant churches in our cities, both at home and abroad.

Finally, in lesson four we explore another critical component of Christian mission. In *Christian Mission and the Poor*, we will examine the concept of the poor and mission through the lens of the rich biblical concept of *shalom*, or wholeness. As the covenant community of Yahweh, the people of Israel were called to live in such faithfulness to the Lord's covenant that poverty would be replaced with justice and righteousness. Building on the fact of God's deliverance of his people from Egypt at the Exodus, God gave his people in his covenant a blueprint for justice that would address the issue of poverty and oppression. Armed with this biblical vision, we will then consider how Jesus as Messiah and Head of the Church fulfills the Messianic prophecy regarding the One who would bring justice and peace to the poor. Jesus as Lord and Head of the Church continues to express God's mandate for *shalom* among the people of God, and through his people, to the world. The Church, God's new covenant community by faith in Jesus, is called to live in *shalom* and demonstrate both to its own members and to the world the justice of God for the broken. This is possible now because of the Holy Spirit who empowers and strengthens the people of God today.

As believers in Jesus Christ, each of us, every congregation has been redeemed in order that we might be redemptive, proclaiming and living out the truth of God where he has placed us. Truly, to be Christian is to be mission-oriented and mission-formed; we were born from above to become co-laborers with God in his mission to win the world for his Son (Acts 9.15).

May God use this course of study to challenge you to play your part in the remarkable story of God's glory, and his mission to win the world to himself through his Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ!

- Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis

The Capstone Curriculum, Module 5

Introduction to the Module

Greetings, in the strong name of Jesus Christ!

According to the clear testimony of the Scriptures themselves, God equips his representatives through the Spirit-breathed Word of God, the Scriptures. Everyone God calls into the ministry must determine to discipline themselves so as to master its contents, submit to its injunctions, and teach its truths. Like a workman (or work-woman!) they must strive to handle the Word of truth accurately, and so be approved of the Lord in their study (2 Tim. 2.15).

This module focuses on the facts, principles, and implications of interpreting the Bible. In our first lesson, *Biblical Inspiration: The Origins and Authority of the Bible*, we will outline the need for biblical interpretation, and what we need to do to prepare for this great task. We will explore both the divine and human dimensions of the Bible, clarify the goal of all interpretation, and lay out clearly our theological assumptions regarding the high place of the Scriptures in the Church. We will especially concentrate on the kind of life and heart preparation necessary to interpret God's Word accurately. We will also look at the Bible's claim to be inspired of God, and its authority and place in theological and spiritual judgments in the Church. In a day where biblical scholarship has exploded, we will also take a brief look at modern biblical criticism, and wrestle with its claims as it relates to our study of Scripture today.

In our second lesson, *Biblical Hermeneutics: The Three-Step Model*, we will introduce an effective method of biblical interpretation designed to help you approach your study of Scripture so as to bridge the gap between our ancient and contemporary worlds. We call it the Three-Step Model: understand the original audience, discover general principles, and make applications to life. In this lesson, too, we will actually examine a passage of Scripture employing this model, looking at a passage in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, in his first epistle, 9.1-14. Using the framework found in your *Keys to Bible Interpretation* appendix, we will canvass this great text of Scripture looking specifically at how a deliberate, careful, and prayerful approach can yield great knowledge and encouragement to us as we strive to understand God's will through his holy Word.

We focus upon the types of literature found in the Bible and how to interpret them in our third lesson entitled *Biblical Literature: Interpreting the Genres of the Bible*. We will define and outline the concept of genres (pronounced JOHN- ruhs) in biblical interpretation, laying out an overview of the idea, and giving a few basic

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assumptions of this kind of special hermeneutics. We will then discuss various forms of biblical genres, but will give special attention to two types of literature which represent the vast majority of the actual material in the Bible, narrative and prophetic. We will give brief but meaty discussions of both narrative study (i.e., story theology) as well as prophetic and apocalyptic literature, showing how attention to genres can help us better interpret Scripture.

Finally, we will close our module study with our fourth lesson, *Biblical Studies: Using Study Tools in Bible Study*. Here we will explore the kind of solid scholarly reference tools available to us as we attempt to understand the meaning of a biblical text. The student of the Bible has access today to many remarkable tools, both written and software, all which can help him or her gain a mastery of the Word. We will concentrate first on the *basic* tools for solid biblical interpretation: a good translation of Scripture, Hebrew and Greek aids, a Bible dictionary, a concordance, and exegetical commentaries. We will also consider *additional* tools that may enrich our study of Scripture. These will include cross-reference aids, topical Bibles, cross-reference Bibles, and topical concordances. We will also discuss aids which focus on history and customs of the Bible: Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopedias, atlases, and other related reference works. Finally, we will briefly look at Bible handbooks, study Bibles, and other helps, and conclude our discussion with the use of Bible commentaries, and the role of tools in general as you interpret your Bible for devotion, preaching, and teaching.

The Bible's own remarkable claim of its transforming power ought to be reason enough to challenge us to master the Word of God. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work" 2 Tim. 3.16-17. The God-breathed Word of God in the words of humankind is sufficient to enrich us, delight us, and make us competent and equipped for every good work. Truly, the Word of God cannot be broken, will always accomplish its purpose, and will ensure the person of God enjoys good success in all they do to advance the Kingdom of God wherever they are (John 10.35; Isa. 55.8-11; Josh. 1.8).

My sincere prayer is that all of these blessings and more become yours as the Holy Spirit enables you to explore the principles and practices of interpreting his holy and eternal Word!

With great anticipation of your edification,

- Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis

The Capstone Curriculum, Module 6

Introduction to the Module

Greetings, dearest friends, in the strong name of Jesus Christ!

The study of the person of our God, the Father Almighty, is one of the most important and richest of all studies in the Word of God. It affects every part of our discipleship, worship, and ministry; truly, as our Lord Jesus said, “And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent,” (John 17.3).

In our first lesson, *Prolegomena: The Doctrine of God and the Advance of the Kingdom*, we will briefly explore the first things, the prolegomena, which undergirds a study of theology, looking at the necessity of God revealing himself to us. We will study the concepts of *general and special revelation*, and carefully explore the importance of studying the doctrine of God in terms of God’s *immanence*, i.e., his present and active involvement in creation, as well as his *transcendence*, God’s infinite nature and unknowableness.

In our second lesson, *God as the Creator: The Providence of God*, we will examine God’s supreme authority and providence over all creation and history. God works all things according to his will. The Father Almighty is sovereign over all, the source of all life, and the Sustainer of all through his Son, Jesus Christ. We will also explore how God’s providence is expressed in his preservation and governance of all things, and see how a solid, biblical understanding of God’s providence resolves major modern errors in philosophy and theology, namely, pantheism, deism, fatalism, and chance.

We take a slightly different turn in our third lesson, *The Triune God: the Greatness of God*. We will look at the biblical evidence for the Trinity, God’s triune personhood. The Scriptures teach that there is only one God, and yet this same God reveals himself as God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The members of the Trinity are one, diverse and equal, the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. After examining the Trinity, we will then briefly examine the attributes of God’s *greatness*: his spirituality, his life, his personality, his infinite character, and his unchanging essence.

Finally, in lesson four we turn our attention to *God as Father: the Goodness of God*. Here we will discover God’s marvelous goodness demonstrated in his moral attributes of his perfect moral purity, absolute integrity, and unbounded love. And,

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we close our module with a look at the *goodness and severity of God*, exploring the relationship between God's goodness and severity, his love and justice.

Truly, our God the Father Almighty is the one, true, and glorious God of heaven. Knowing him better will equip us to represent him with honor as his servants. May God bless you as you explore the untold riches of Scripture regarding our great and mighty God!

- *Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis*

The Capstone Curriculum, Module 7

Introduction to the Module

Greetings, in the strong name of Jesus Christ!

The leaders of the Church of God are his precious gift to his people throughout the ages. The evidence that Jesus loves his people dearly is that he has granted unto them apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip his people to represent the Kingdom of God in this fallen and soon-to-end world (Eph. 4.9-16). This module highlights the various roles and offices associated with this high and important task in the Kingdom of God.

To begin with, in Lesson 1, *The Christian Leader as Deacon (Diakonoi)* we will probe the foundations of Christian leadership as it relates to the offices and functions of leadership in the local church. We will explore the ministry of deacons, or, in the Greek, *diakonoi*, examining its meaning in the Greek NT, and its probable origins in the Jewish synagogue. We will also look at the *diaconate*, or ministry of deacons, and comment on the authority and functions of this ministry through three models of the Deacon's role: as a servant, as a steward, and as an assistant.

Next, in our second lesson, *The Christian Leader as Elder (Presbyteroi)* we will trace the notion of elder from its OT root in the tribal system and synagogue, to the Sanhedrin, and to the NT Church. We'll then give careful consideration to the calling of and the criteria for becoming an elder in the NT Church, and will complete our brief study by examining several analogies to help us understand the nature of biblical eldership; that of an overseer, a father or parent, a colleague or team member, and finally a representative. We will consider these in order to discover new ways we can put the principles of eldership into practice in our own lives and ministries.

In Lesson 3, *The Christian Leader as Pastor (Poimenes)*, we will outline the biblical context of the idea of the pastorate, starting with the definition of the Greek term for pastoring, and tracing historically the development of the idea of a formal office of the pastorate. We will then highlight the calling and the criteria for representing God as an undershepherd of the flock. We will close our section with a discussion of pastoral authority, along with a look at three biblical models and analogies of pastoral care: that of a nurturer and care giver, a protector and guardian, and a leader of the flock of God.

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Finally, in Lesson 4, *The Christian Leader as Bishop (Episkopoi)*, we will provide a broad definition and overview to this dynamic concept of bishop or overseer. Beginning with a consideration of the NT language, we will trace its probable context from the council of elders in Jewish rulership, including the development of the concept, through the history of the Church. After considering the calling and criteria of the bishop's office, we will examine the concept of bishop through the images of supervisor, apostle, and spiritual director. We hope our study will show how the very nature of Christian leadership and Christian community demands bishop-level oversight and relationship which goes beyond just the local body itself.

It is hard to imagine a more wonderful gift to an assembly or group of assemblies than godly, Christlike leadership, true shepherds who guard and protect the flock of God. May God use this study to inspire you to nurture and care for his people, to emulate the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep.

- *Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis*

The Capstone Curriculum, Module 8

Introduction to the Module

Greetings, in the strong name of Jesus Christ!

Evangelism is proclaiming and demonstrating to the world that God has visited the world in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and that this visitation is now accompanied by liberation from the devil and from the effects of sin! To evangelize is to prophesy deliverance in Messiah Jesus.

The lessons of this module are organized to provide you with a solid overview of the critical issues arising from a biblical grasp of evangelism and spiritual warfare. The first lesson, *Spiritual Warfare: Binding of the Strong Man*, outlines the war of the universe that was caused by the disobedience of the devil and humankind. God's good creation was made subject to demonic powers and death, and humankind is now enslaved by selfishness, disease, alienation, and death. Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, believers are delivered from Satan's dominion, as well as from the effects of the Curse through the power of the Spirit. Evangelism is proclaiming God's deliverance through Jesus Christ to the entire world in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson two deals with *Evangelism: The Content of the Good News of the Kingdom*. Evangelism proclaims and demonstrates God's deliverance in Christ through word as well as love and service to others. This ministry focuses on Christ; evangelism is nothing less than communicating the person and work of Jesus Christ! The Nicene Creed offers a clear, useful, and powerful outline of the critical truths associated with Jesus' incarnation, passion, resurrection, ascension, and Second Coming. If we master these truths, we can clearly communicate them in our urban neighborhoods.

Our next lesson, *Evangelism: Methods to Reach the Urban Community*, reveals how evangelism is not only what we say but who we are and what we do. To speak persuasively of the Lord Jesus in our communities, our credibility must be rooted in solid character and genuine spirituality. We will look at communication methods by which to share the Good News, and the importance of preparation for effective urban evangelism through intercessory prayer. We will look at personal soul winning and sharing one's testimony, along with the importance of evangelism through public preaching and discourse. We will also consider the concept of the household network, or *oikos* in urban evangelism.

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Finally in lesson four, *Follow-up and Incorporation*, we will explore the idea of conserving the fruit of our evangelism by following up new converts, that act of “incorporating new converts into the family of God so they can be equipped to grow in Christ and use their gifts for ministry.” We will look at how the apostles nurtured new converts, and study how we can use the same steps to bring new converts into a local assembly of believers, on the road to spiritual maturity and fruitfulness.

Our Lord Jesus desires that we bear much fruit to the glory and praise of God (John 15:8-16). May the Lord bless your study of his Word so you can join the harvest workers in gathering the fruit of the Lord’s own salvation, to the Father’s glory!

- *Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis*

The Capstone Curriculum, Module 9

Introduction to the Module

Greetings, in the strong name of Jesus Christ!

The Spirit-breathed Scripture is anchored on the witness of Jesus of Nazareth. He and he alone provides unity, continuity, and coherence to both the Old and New Testaments, and no one can claim a holistic or accurate view of the Bible without him being central in all phases of exegesis. He is the Bible's theme (John 5.39-40). In this module we trace some of the significant markers of the OT's witness to Messiah, and see how those markers provide us with a strong handle on the meaning of the entirety of Scripture.

In our first lesson, *The Promise Given*, we will examine the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament through the idea of progressive revelation. We will look at the complimentary connections which exist in the OT and NT as they relate to the person of Christ and his Kingdom, and consider the unique motif of *promise and fulfillment*, and how this integrates and makes one the teaching of Scripture on the person of Jesus Christ. This unity of truth is seen in God's marvelous promise to send a redeemer to humanity through whom God's enemy would be destroyed, and humankind would be redeemed. In the *protoevangelium* (i.e., the first telling of the Gospel in Genesis 3.15), through the covenant promise of Abraham and its extensions we see how the Messianic hope is the unifying principle of the OT and the joyous fulfillment of the New, all finding their climax in the person of Jesus Christ. He is both the seed of the woman and the seed of Abraham.

In lesson two, *The Promise Clarified*, we explore the biblical typology that reveals how the experience of Israel, the descendants of Abraham and the people of God, represent an analogy where we can understand the larger relationship of God with all of the redeemed through Jesus Christ. We will look at the roles of types and analogies in our study of Scripture, and explore four distinct moments within Israel's history which can help us understand the OT essentially as a witness to Christ and his kingdom reign (i.e., the Exodus, the conquest of Canaan, the entering into the Promised Land, and the restoration of Israel from the Babylonian Captivity). In this lesson we will also see further how the OT provides witness to Christ in the OT sacrificial system. Jesus of Nazareth is the substance and fulfillment of the Tabernacle, the Levitical Priesthood, the Temple sacrifices, and the feasts and festivals of Israel. In a real way, all of these personages, events, and institutions prefigure the person and work of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham.

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Lesson three focuses on *The Promise Personalized*, whose aim is to see how many of the character types in the OT point to and illustrate the ministry of Jesus Christ in the NT. We will explore the types in the OT which point to Jesus' roles as a prophet, priest, and king, considering Moses as a type of Christ in his prophetic role, Melchizedek as a type of Christ in his priestly order, and David as a type of Christ in his role as King of God's people. We will also look at several cases of character types which deserve special mention because of their significance in understanding Christ's role as head of humanity, redeemer of his kinsmen, and warrior in God's conquest. These characters represent the person of Adam, Joseph, and Joshua. In these figures the promise of God for redemption and restoration are made personal and visible for all to see.

Finally, we will close our module with lesson four, *The Promise Universalized*. Here we will consider the nature and scope of OT Messianic prophecy as it relates to providing us with a clear OT witness to Christ and his Kingdom. We will provide the rationale of OT Messianic prophecy, and quickly outline the OT Messianic predictions which are repeated in the NT, specifically predictions fulfilled in Jesus Christ concerning his birth, his person and life, his death, his resurrection, and coming glory. We will also consider the significant issue of how God has extended the promise and blessings of Abraham, a promise extended in the apostles' teaching, to include all peoples. We will also look carefully at the OT predictions about the Messiah in Acts and the Epistles, and a picture will emerge for us—that God Almighty, the true and living God, has not only fulfilled his promise for salvation to Abraham, but he has also included Gentiles in that salvation.

No greater work can be done on earth than becoming a workman or work woman of the Lord in regard to his sacred text: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2.15). The accurate handling of the text demands a Christo-centric orientation that discovers and cherishes the OT witness to Jesus Christ.

My sincere desire is that the Holy Spirit will reveal to you the glory and majesty of the picture of Jesus in the OT text, and that this picture will transform us, even as Paul suggests: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3.18).

May the Hebrew Scriptures unveil his glory to us, and transform us as we become diligent students of God's holy Word!

- Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis

Introduction to the Module

Greetings, in the strong name of Jesus Christ!

The identity of the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth is arguably the most critical subject in all Christian reflection and ministry. Indeed, it is impossible to minister in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ if that ministry is based upon false and ignoble views of who he was (and is), what his life signified, and what we are to make of him today. Everything is at stake in our right conception of his life, death, resurrection, ascension, and return. This module highlights his majestic person and deeds, and mastering the biblical material on him is the task of all responsible discipleship and ministry.

In the first lesson, *Jesus, the Messiah and Lord of All: He Came*, we consider the significance of the Nicene Creed for Christological studies. We will look specifically at how the Nicene Creed helps frame our thinking as urban ministers about a study of the biblical materials on Jesus, especially in the sense of helping us view Christ's work as two movements: his humiliation (i.e., his becoming human and dying on the cross for our sakes) and his exaltation (his resurrection, ascension, and the hope of his return in power). We will also discover the biblical teaching on Jesus's nature before he came to earth, as preexistent Word or Logos. We will consider his divinity as well as two historical heresies regarding Christ's divinity, and close our discussion by commenting on the significance of Jesus' divinity for our faith and discipleship.

Next, our second lesson, *Jesus, the Messiah and Lord of All: He Lived*, explores the humanity of Christ. We will focus on his dual reasons for coming to earth: to reveal to us the Father's glory and redeem us from sin and Satan's power. We will also look at the creedal language regarding Jesus' humanity, his conception by the Holy Spirit and birth to the Virgin Mary, and investigate some of the historical errors connected with denying either Jesus' divinity or humanity. We close this lesson by considering three important aspects of Jesus' life and ministry on earth. These include his identity as the Baptized One who identifies with sinners, the Proclaimer of the Kingdom of God, reasserting God's right to rule over creation, and as the Suffering Servant of Yahweh who would give his soul as a ransom for many.

In our third lesson, *Jesus, the Messiah and Lord of All: He Died*, we will explore the theological implications of Jesus' humiliation and death, his descent in his divine person on our behalf. We will consider Jesus' humiliation in the Incarnation, his life

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and ministry, as well as his death. In considering his sacrifice on Calvary, we will explore some of the historical models for understanding his work on the cross. These include the perspective of his death as a ransom for us, as a propitiation (divine satisfaction) for our sins, as a substitutionary sacrifice in our place, as a victory over the devil and death itself, and as a reconciliation between God and humankind. We will also explore some of the historical alternative views of Jesus' death. These include his death as 1) a moral example, 2) a demonstration of God's love, 3) a demonstration of God's justice, 4) a victory over the forces of evil and sin, and 5) a satisfaction of God's honor.

Finally, in our fourth lesson, *Jesus, the Messiah and Lord of All: He Rose and Will Return*, we begin with a consideration of the various aspects and implications of two events which mark the exaltation of Christ. The *resurrection* serves as a vindication of Jesus' Messiahship and sonship, and his *ascension* grants to our Savior a position of dignity and authority that allows him to fill all things with his glory. We explore these in light of the biblical teaching of the Creedal language, enabling us to understand God's intent to exalt Jesus of Nazareth to supreme heir of all things as a result of his death on the cross. We will close our study by looking at the last three statements regarding Christ's person in the Nicene Creed. We will consider his coming in glory, his judgment of the nations, and discuss briefly the nature of his coming reign of the Kingdom of God.

Perhaps no study of doctrine can compare with the thrill of understanding from a biblical and creedal way the richness, wonder, and mystery of God's Son, Jesus of Nazareth. His humiliation and ascension is the heart of the Gospel, and the center of our devotion, worship, and service. May God use this study of his glorious person to enable you to better love and serve him who alone has been given the preeminence by the Father. To him be the glory!

- Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis



The Capstone Curriculum, Module 11

Introduction to the Module

Greetings, dearest friends, in the strong name of Jesus Christ!

Welcome to Module 11 in our Capstone Curriculum series, entitled *Practicing Christian Leadership*. We demonstrate our devotion to our Savior by practicing a kind of leadership that both honors and glorifies our Lord and edifies and builds up his people. We will explore these important concepts and practices throughout this important study.

The first lesson, *Effective Worship Leading* considers the idea of representation of the Lord Jesus as fundamental in practicing every dimension of Christian leadership as his agents and servants. Closely connected to this important idea, we will also consider carefully the role of ministering the Word and Sacrament among the people of God. Throughout this lesson we will see how we as Christian leaders may lead God's people to experience his grace and direction through an effective ministry of the Word of God and a faithful practice of the sacraments of the Church.

In our second lesson, *Effective Christian Education*, we will explore the idea of bringing new believers into our churches, dealing specifically with how we welcome and integrate new believers into our community life together. We will also explore the concept of parenting new Christians and discipling them in the Church. We will look carefully together at the meaning of spiritual parenthood, seeking to biblically define and practically outline how we can enable new and growing believers in the Lord to mature in Christ.

Next, lesson three deals with an important aspect of Christian leadership, *Effective Church Discipline*. The practice of Christian leadership involves our thorough knowledge of the principles of biblical exhortation, and here we will explore reasons why this ministry is so necessary for Christian leaders among God's people. In this lesson we will also address the question of the practice of church discipline. We will look at both the biblical definitions and practical guidelines of godly rebuke and restoration in the context of God's community.

Finally, in lesson four we will focus on *Effective Counseling: Preparing, Caring, and Healing*. Here we will define effective biblical counseling, starting with a general explanation of it and its implications for us as urban Christian leaders. Our goal will be to understand both the therapeutic and pastoral implications of counseling and leading God's people. Together we will discover how we can

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become better care givers for those encountering the dark side of life, trials, tribulations, and distress. As God's servants and under-shepherds of his people, we will discover how we may come to bear the burdens of those who are experiencing trouble or stress, and do all we can in order to edify the flock of God, even as he gives us opportunity.

What an adventure it is to serve the living God by caring for his dear people! My prayer for you is that you become that Christian leader God desires you to be, all for his glory!

- Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis

Introduction to the Module

Greetings, dearest friends, in the strong name of Jesus Christ!

As 21st century disciples of Jesus in the cities of America, we desire to be fruitful in the work of God—ministering to the lost, and advancing the Kingdom of Christ (John 15.8,16). In module 12, *Focus on Reproduction*, we concentrate our attention on the need to evangelize, equip, and empower the lost in order that they might become salt and light in the communities where they live and work.

In our first lesson, *Church Growth: Reproducing in Number and Quality*, we affirm the single most critical concept in understanding mission in the city: the lordship of Jesus Christ. As risen Lord and God's Anointed Messiah, Jesus has been exalted to the position of head over all things to the Church and Lord of the harvest. In this lesson we survey his call to make disciples of all nations, to *Evangelize*, as well as to affirm that radical discipleship is proven in Christian community. Jesus has called us to evangelize the lost, equip new disciples to live the Christian life, and to empower his Church to reproduce itself, all for the glory of God.

Next, in our second lesson, *Planting Urban Churches: Sowing* we introduce the important concept of *oikos* in urban evangelism. Here we show how an *oikos* is that web of common kinship relationships, friendships, and associations that make up a person's larger social circle. Beginning with an outline of *oikos* in the NT, we then explore the meaning of this critical idea for urban cross-cultural evangelism.

In lesson three we further outline the second main phase of church planting, *Equipping*, through the idea of *follow-up*, or incorporating new disciples into the Church. Arguing that the Church is God's means of bringing new Christians to maturity, we provide key elements and tips in the practice of following up new believers in Christ. In this lesson we will also look closely at the practice of discipling growing believers. Examining the role of the discipler as model, mentor, and friend, we will offer practical advice in how to help new Christians grow to maturity.

Finally, in lesson four, we will consider our role in helping new churches progress toward independence through *Empowerment* and the final phase of urban church planting: transition. We will define the purpose, plan, and perspectives related to empowering through four biblical aspects of godly urban church leadership. Without a doubt, godly, servant leadership is critical to ensure a dynamic growing

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church in the city. We conclude our module study with a blueprint of a godly urban church, those characteristics that represent a healthy, reproducing church in the city that is an agent of change and freedom in its community, in Jesus' name.

My sincere prayer is that God will grant you grace to understand his will for reproducing fruit and making disciples of the Kingdom in the city. May his Spirit grant you the power and desire to make disciples where you live, and so multiply his Church, to the glory of his great name!

In his Grasp,

- Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis



The Capstone Curriculum, Module 13

Introduction to the Module

Greetings, in the strong name of Jesus Christ!

There can be no question that the most critical and important subject to master in the life of a Christian leader is the actual person and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. No other subject is as significant or controversial as the meaning of his life and ministry. This module is designed to introduce you to a “life of Jesus” survey that concentrates on the historical accounts in the Gospels, beginning at the announcement of his birth to his ascension after his death at Calvary. No other study can yield a greater intellectual and spiritual harvest than a concentrated focus upon the historical facts surrounding Jesus’ life, ministry, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension. Jesus of Nazareth is Messiah and Lord of all!

Our first lesson, *The Messiah Announced*, will concentrate on a brief first look at the critical perspectives and processes associated with a profitable study of the life of Christ. We’ll then proceed to look at the birth, infancy, and childhood narratives of the Messiah. We will see that the New Testament reveals in the Gospel accounts of the Apostles that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah who fulfills the promise of God for salvation, redemption, and revelation. We will also look carefully at the one chosen by God to announce Messiah’s ministry, John the Baptist, attending both the baptism of Jesus, and his temptation in the wilderness. We end our first lesson by considering two important incidents concerning Jesus’ announcement of his Messiahship: his inaugural sermon at Nazareth, and his first public miracle attesting his Messiahship at the wedding at Cana.

In our second lesson, *The Messiah Opposed*, we begin by looking at the historical context which surrounded Jesus at the time of his appearing in his public ministry. We will survey the nature of Rome’s domination of the first century world, and see how the different Jewish sects and parties responded to Rome and to Jesus. We will look at the Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, Zealots, and Herodians. In the second segment of this lesson we will explore the Jewish concept of the Kingdom of God at the time of Jesus. We’ll see how the nation of Israel, oppressed by political powers, believed that when Messiah came, the Kingdom of God would come in power, restoring the material universe and saving humankind from the control of Satan. Of course, Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom present, and demonstrated its reality in his healings and exorcisms, revealing the Kingdom’s presence in his own person and ministry.

Lesson three deals with *The Messiah Revealed*, which aims to understand that in the person of Jesus, the promised Messiah is powerfully revealed through his perfect life and character, his masterful leadership of the Apostles, and his submissive

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sonship to his Father. Jesus' Messiahship is made plain through his prophetic teaching ministry, as well as in the mighty demonstrations of power, both in signs and wonders (miracles) and dramatic encounter with spiritual demons. Here we will also briefly consider the suffering and death of Jesus (i.e., his Passion). His death provides us with a clear revelation of the promised Messiah. We will also consider Peter's confession of Jesus' true identity, accompanied by Jesus' prediction of his death, and his resolve to go toward Jerusalem. We will look at Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, his final week encountering the Jewish leaders, and his Passover with the disciples. Finally, we will look at the events surrounding his crucifixion and death, his agony in prayer in the Garden to his burial after his death on the cross. Undoubtedly, Jesus' suffering and death give strong and undeniable testimony of his identity as the Son of God, as God's anointed Christ, the one who can reassert God's right to rule over his creation and over all humankind.

Finally, lesson four discusses *The Messiah Vindicated*. This lesson considers both the significance of the resurrection of Messiah Jesus, and its importance in our theology, faith, and ministry. Once we consider the evidence for the resurrection, we will then survey the various appearances of Jesus, beginning with his resurrection at the tomb up until his appearance to the Apostles at the Sea of Galilee. Nothing provides a clearer witness to the vindication of the Messianic identity of Jesus Christ than this one unequivocal fact: Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead.

We will close this module with a critical study of the Great Commission as a continuing vindication of Jesus' identity as Messiah, and the importance of this commission as it relates both to the fulfillment of prophecy as well as to global mission. For forty days after his resurrection, Jesus demonstrated its truthfulness to the Apostles, and gave his promise to send them the Holy Spirit to fulfill that commission. We close our study of the life of Jesus with a look at the Ascension, the final historical sign which gives evidence of Jesus' vindication as Messiah. Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah of God.

Again, there can be little doubt that the depth of our ministry and leadership can proceed no further than the depth of our knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Messiah of God and Lord of all. Therefore, may our God and Father provide you with both the hunger, passion, and discipline to master the life and ministry of Jesus. In so doing, you will be able to be his disciple and make disciples of Jesus in your church, in your ministry, and wherever else God may lead.

Take his yoke upon yourself, and learn of him—this is the key to godly servant leadership in Christ.

“For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

- Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis

Introduction to the Module

Greetings, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit!

There are few theological truths in the history of the Church that have sparked as much controversy, disagreement, and schism as the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. From ancient disagreements about Trinity and “procession” to modern disagreements about the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit, there is much that might cause us to approach this module with caution; but, I sincerely hope that this is not the case. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit lies at the very heart of the way that we understand who God is and how we experience his living presence in our midst. The Spirit is sent to empower and lead the Church of God and to give new life to all those who respond in faith to its message about Jesus. Our hope is that the truths you learn about the Holy Spirit will not only be “formal theology” which helps you *to understand* God better, but will be also “practical theology” which allows you *to depend on the Holy Spirit* in ever increasing measure as you minister in God’s Church and witness in the world.

The first lesson, *The Person of the Holy Spirit*, focuses upon God the Spirit as the third person of the one Trinitarian God. We will explore the biblical portrayal of the Spirit as a divine person who both *is* God and who *consciously acts* as God. We will also discuss the relationship of the Spirit to the Father and the Son as the one who is the “bond of love” between them and their “gift of love to the world.” We will talk about the Spirit as the “Life-giver” and show how the names, titles, and symbols of the Spirit in the Scriptures portray him as the source and sustainer of physical and spiritual life and as the one who is at work to renew all things.

In our second lesson, *The Prophetic Work of the Holy Spirit*, we will explore the nature of prophetic revelation and come to understand the Spirit as the one who both *inspires* and *illuminates* the Word of God. We will also see that the prophetic role of the Spirit includes his ministry of conviction. He is the one who overcomes the deception caused by sin and leads us to true repentance. The prophetic work of the Holy Spirit is both the means by which God reveals himself and the means by which he enables us to believe that revelation.

Lessons three and four deal with *The Powerful Presence of the Holy Spirit (Part One)* and *The Powerful Presence of the Holy Spirit (Part Two)*, respectively. Here the focus is on what the Holy Spirit does in the lives of those who repent and

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believe. We will speak about the role of the Spirit in regeneration, adoption, baptism, gifting, indwelling, sealing, and sanctification. We will come to understand that the powerful work of the Spirit enables the Church to fulfill its mission in the world.

The person of the Holy Spirit is as real and vital as God the Father and God the Son. The Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son into the world so that we can experience loving fellowship with them and so that we can be empowered to obey God's commands and accomplish his mission. Our prayer is that your dependence on the Spirit will grow as you study the Scriptures together.

- Rev. Terry G. Cornett

Introduction to the Module

Greetings, in the strong name of Jesus Christ!

The ministry of the Word of God lies at the heart of the equipping ministry. Paul tells the Ephesians that God has given the Church apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers in order that they might equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4.11-12). There is no precedent for seeing a church as having a single minister: as believers we hold to the universal priesthood of believers (1 Pet. 2.8-9), in the universal ministry of the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12.1-11), and the universal functioning of the members of the body of Christ (Romans 12.3-8). This module focuses on your role through preaching and teaching to equip believers to fulfill their God-given ministries in Christ.

In the first lesson, *The Ministry of Proclamation: Kerygma (1)*, we will define and provide an overview of the concept of preaching. We will look briefly at the distinctiveness of the preaching ministry to teaching, and speak about the development of preaching in the ministry of Jesus and the apostles. We will then look at some of the difficulties we will have to overcome if we are to be the kind of messengers of the Lord we need to be in our very needy day and time. In the second segment of this important lesson we will also examine the call to preach, suggesting that God sends men and women to be his messengers to proclaim his Word. We will then look carefully at the kind of character that we need to have for effective preaching, and look at the content of effective biblical preaching—the biblical truth regarding Jesus Christ and his Kingdom.

Next, we will explore in our second lesson, *The Ministry of Proclamation: Kerygma (2)*, how the Holy Spirit affects every dimension of an effective preaching ministry. We will consider the kind of vessel or preacher the Spirit is most likely to use, and then look at some of the key aspects of the Spirit's work in the proclamation of the Word. We will also examine the three steps of planning out, delivering, and following up on the preached Word. As communicators of the Word of God, we must first establish contact with hearers, communicate the content of the Word clearly and boldly, and make connections with the truth of the message and the lives of the audience, proclaiming all in dependence on the Holy Spirit.

In the third lesson we will turn our attention to the ministry of teaching. In that teaching session, *The Ministry of Teaching: Didache (1)*, we will provide a

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definition and overview of the biblical concept of teaching. We will canvass the principles in the teaching ministry recorded in the NT, beginning with Jesus and the apostles, and outline the benefits of the teaching ministry in the Church. We will consider both the distinctives and difficulties associated with the ministry of teaching, and make a plea for us to recover the ministry of teaching in our urban churches in order to build the Kingdom in our communities. As with the preaching ministry, we will analyze the call, character, and content of the teaching ministry, highlighting the central virtues needed for a fruitful ministry. As those entrusted with the Word of God, we must recognize our call to teach, be humble enough to be clear in our presentation of Jesus Christ and his Kingdom, and teach for maturity and fruitfulness in the Church. By understanding the call, the character and the content of the teaching ministry, we will be better able to lead others into the truth.

Finally, in lesson four, *The Ministry of Teaching: Didache (2)*, we will carefully examine how the Holy Spirit impacts and leads us in our ministry of teaching in the Church. The Holy Spirit selects particular members in the Church of Jesus Christ and supplies them with his own anointing, gifting, and call to teach. The called teacher is responsible for using his or her gift with all their energy, being faithful and teachable, while the Holy Spirit employs their gift for the sake of building up the body. We will close our module with a focus on the three steps in designing, delivering, and applying a teaching presentation. To teach our students well we must first establish contact with our students, then communicate the content of the Word of God in our lesson with clarity and boldness. Finally, we strive to make connections with the lives of the students and the truth of the Word of God. To teach is to strive to see individuals obey all that Christ has commanded us, through the leading of the Spirit.

A revolution can occur in urban ministry when gifted and available men and women minister the Word of God in such a way as to raise up a new generation of laborers in the city—those who can care for the hurting, share the truth of God, and declare the Kingdom to their neighbors. Your role in this ministry is urgent and needed.

May God bless your efforts as you seek to enhance your ability to know, preach, and teach God's living Word of truth!

- Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis

The Capstone Curriculum, Module 16

Introduction to the Module

Greetings, in the strong name of Jesus Christ!

As disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are responsible to display in our words and deeds the life of the Kingdom to Come in the midst of our churches, and through our lifestyles and ministries of compassion to others. This module, *Doing Justice and Loving Mercy: Compassion Ministries*, highlights the ways in which we as Christian leaders both conceive and practice generosity in the body of Christ and in the world. As leaders of the church in the city, it is critical that we understand the richness of the biblical insights around this subject, as well as explore the possible ways in which we as believers and Christian ministers can demonstrate the love and justice of the Kingdom where we live.

The first lesson, *Let Justice Roll Down: The Vision and Theology of the Kingdom*, focuses on the first word, or *prolegomena* toward an understanding of doing justice and loving mercy. We will define the structure of the world from a biblical point of view, and assess the different ways in tradition that church/world relationships have been viewed, and highlight a theology of God that can help us understand the critical role that doing justice and loving mercy plays in our kingdom testimony. We will also look carefully at the *imago Dei* (i.e., the image of God) in Scripture. We will see the uniqueness of humankind, and explore its implications for viewing all individuals, families, peoples, and nations as precious and irreplaceable.

Our second lesson, *Doing Justice and Loving Mercy: The Urban Congregation*, explores the priority of demonstrating justice and mercy in the Church of Christ. As the people of God, we must understand the “home grown” quality of Christian love, and in this lesson we will consider the significance of God’s grace in sustaining ministries of mercy and love, and the implications of experiencing God’s grace in our approaches to justice and mercy. We will observe, too, the practices of justice and mercy in God’s OT community as well as in the Church, God’s kingdom community today. We will also observe the “two-four-six” rules of God’s love and justice through the Church. We will begin by looking at the *two objects* which can receive God’s justice and mercy, members of the Church and those outside. We will then consider the *four channels* through which God manifests his love: the family, the Church, care societies, and the state. We will finish our study by looking at six principles which should inform our care-giving as local congregations.



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In lesson three, *Doing Justice and Loving Mercy: Urban Community and Neighborhood*, we will discuss the two critical truths underlying our understanding of serving in the world: God as creator and Jesus as Lord of all. The Church responds to the lordship of Jesus Christ, serving both as the locus (place) of God's working as well as his agent (ambassador) through whom he works. We will look at the four classic ways that church/world relations have been understood in Church history, and then look at four models which can help us understand better just how the urban church should interact with its neighborhood and community. We will here also introduce a simple yet effective approach to organize our efforts together as we seek the Lord's will to minister mercy and justice in our urban neighborhoods. Prepare, Work, and Review, (PWR) is a simple but exciting process of seeking the Lord's wisdom in ministry. And in this lesson we will provide some practical advice on how to organize in order to provide effective care to others as we address the needs of those in our community.

Finally, in lesson four, *Doing Justice and Loving Mercy: Society and World*, we will seek to expand this notion of doing justice and loving mercy to the very ends of the earth. Here we will look to comprehend our calling to live as *world Christians*, striving to think *globally* but to act *locally*. We will look critically at the issues of poverty and oppression, and the protection of the environment. After considering these weighty issues, we close this module's discussion with a focus on one of the great issues of our time, the concept of difference. We will explore the oft-misunderstood notion of diversity from a kingdom perspective. We will explore the ways in which wrong concepts of difference can fuel bigotry and hatred among people, lead to violence, war and the loss of life and destruction of property. Here we will explore three Christian approaches to mass violence and war, and end our time with a plea for us to embrace a dynamic ministry of Christian peacemaking.

In a world torn by violence, cruelty, and injustice, we desperately need representatives of the Kingdom who can demonstrate both the justice and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Only the Church can reveal the righteousness, unity, and grace of the Kingdom of God in the midst of a world torn by malice, vengeance, and disunity. Only in Christ can we pursue a peace that is authentic and that will last. Until our Lord returns, we are called to display his righteousness in the earth.

May God richly bless you in every way as you refresh your memory of our call to demonstrate justice and love mercy, in the Church and in the world, to the glory of God.

- Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis