

AFTER CHURCH, WHAT NEXT?

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to *my lovely wife*, **Mrs. Nyarko**, for her assistance and motivation.

PREFACE

In an attempt to follow the pattern of Christ scripturally revealed, it is necessary that the Church pays much attention to the Christian life after church services: Many churches today focus much on what happens in the midst of the assembly than the lives of Christians outside the church.

The Bible is closed after church as the mind switches to the “multitude of business” (Eccl 5:3) that engulfs this mortal world. Many activities in life torment the “seed” after church services, and so, positive steps should be taken to control the mind against evil.

With an intention to help shape the lifestyle of every Christian after church services, the author has prepared this study to assist believers in their attempt to control the mind and many other activities of this world with the scriptures.

I have the conviction that all readers will find the study interesting and helpful with regards to how we live our lives after the assembly.

God richly bless all readers.

Seth Nyarko.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- a. know and understand the need for Christians to be productive after church services;
- b. correct people's misconceptions and/or perceptions regarding how the Bible should be used effectively after church;
- c. control the mind for holy conduct and godliness.

CHAPTER 1: WHAT HAPPENS TO THE “SEED” AFTER CHURCH?

In the context of our study, “The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11) through which one is born regeneratively (see 1 Pet 1:23); it does not make reference to *giving*, the seed of men or the seed of Christ according to Genesis 3:15 (see Gal 3:15-16).

However, the study aims to talk about productivity and inefficacy on the side of Christians after church services regarding the word of God:

1. The seed reproduces: After church, the seed germinates and reproduces according to the will and purpose of God. This happens in the lives of few Christians who prepare their minds and hearts, spirits and souls for the word delivered in the assembly. However, bad fruit could be produced if falsehood is preached and/or adopted; *“Either make the **tree good** and its **fruit good**, or else make the **tree bad** and its **fruit bad**; for a tree is known by its fruit” (Matthew 12:33, NKJV).*

In order to bear good fruit in the kingdom of the Church, one needs to humble to receive and obey the word of God (James 1:22-25; compare Acts 17:11-12). This makes the believer sealed with the Spirit (Eph 4:30) more productive; he bears the **fruit of the Spirit** (Gal 5:22-23; see Matt 13:23) guided by the **gift of the Spirit** (see Acts 2:38-40). The eternal truth and gospel of peace (Eph 6:13-15) strengthens and guides the believer till the day of judgment (compare Jn 12:48). He can never be harmed or destroyed by the devil in the kingdom of God; he is taught all the time (1 Thes 3:10), in truth, and increased by God (1 Co 3:6-8).

2. The seed is terminated: The devil hunts down the seed and succeeds on the side of those who received the seed by the wayside, on stony places, and among the thorns (see Matt 13:19-22). It is the core mandate of the devil to ensure that the seed does not bear good fruit after church services, but Christians pay little attention to that.

The seed can be terminated by the devil if one fails to believe in the word (Luke 8:12), understand the message (Matt 13:29) or overcome tribulation or persecution associated with the gospel (see Matt 13:20-22; Luke 8:13-14). And such category of people receives instant judgment of God (compare Mark 16:16).

Signs of a terminated seed

1. The message is easily forgotten (James 1:22-24).
2. Members engage in unholy conversations (1 Co 15:33; 2 Tim 2:16-18).
3. The kingdom business is ignored (1 Thes 4:11-12).
4. The believer interferes in other men's matters to forsake their responsibilities (1 Pet 4:15; compare Prov 26:17).
5. The believer entertains profane words and fables, and fails to trust in God's message (compare 1 Tim 4:7-11; Titus 3:9-11).
6. Worldly things are prioritized (1 Jn 2:15-17).
7. The believer does not have deep concern for the Lord's Church (see 2 Co 11:28).

CHAPTER 2: THE BIBLE IS CLOSED AFTER CHURCH

The Bible is gradually losing its credibility in the lives of some believers in this period of apostasy: It is closed after church services, and, many Christians surprisingly have excuses to support why they fail to read or study the scriptures. This poses burdensome responsibilities on Bible teachers and preachers of the churches of Christ as far as the kingdom business is concerned.

Bible reading incurs blessings from God; “***Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near***” (Revelation 1:3, NKJV). Regardless of what is hindering us from reading the Scripture, failing to read weakens our spirits and decreases our understanding, knowledge, wisdom and insight in Christ.

However, this chapter aims to encourage Christians to read the Bible regardless of the conditions at hand.

2.1. How Christians Perceive The Bible At Church.

At church, many believers perceive the Bible as ...

1. God's Word: One of the key principles of Christianity is that, “Every Christian should believe in the Bible alone”, and thence the Latin term *Sola scriptura* which means “by scripture alone” [in English]. In the midst of the church of Christ, the Scripture is prioritized. But, after church services, it is ignored by many Christians.

At church, Christians believe that the Bible is the “word of God” (Mrk 7:13; Rom 10:17; Heb 4:12; compare Eph 6:17; Isaiah 49:2), and that, its scriptures are sacred (Rom 1:2; 2 Tim 3:15). But after church, many believers fail to address the scriptures as the “Oracles of God” (Rom 3:2; Heb 5:12; 1 Pet 4:11) because they no longer read them: They rather engage in activities that keep them away from reading the Bible.

2. Inspired: At church, Christians do not doubt the inspiration of God's word. What makes study of the Bible exciting is understanding the fundamental principles of its history, nature and content. Once one accepts the Bible as the inspired communication of God to man, then his or her interests are excited to investigate the means and materials by which God has preserved His written communication to man throughout history.

The first century Church believed in the *Manuscripts* (the handwritten literary composition that is produced in usually a single language) of the OT and NT (in Hebrew and Aramaic), the original *Autograph* (the first writing of the Manuscripts), and the *Uncials* or *Majuscules* (Manuscripts where text has been written with all upper case letters). The present Church of Christ also believes in the inspiration of the Scripture today based on the correct translations of the original manuscripts.

However, it seems such belief is paralyzed outside the assembly: After church, many Christians do not see the need to engage in research and pure Bible study, as it was in the case of John 5:39 and Acts 17:11; “*For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little*” (*Isaiah 28:10, NKJV*).

3. In the midst of the church, the Bible is described as the living word of God (Heb 4:12), divine book of reference (see Jn 5:39; Act 17:11), great weapon of the saints (Eph 6:17; 1 Thes 5:8-11), etc. Christians believe that God directs the path of the saint into eternity through His word (Deut 31:8; Josh 1:5; see Psalm 119:105-107).

However, irrespective of how best the Bible is treated and/or used in the church, it should be regarded as such after congregational meetings.

2.2. How Christians Perceive The Bible After Church Meetings

After church, the Bible is perceived by many Christians as ...

1. A Dictionary: Many Christians visit the Bible when in need; this is not totally wrong, but we shouldn't treat it as a dictionary. To evangelize the world, we must

enter the battlefield fully prepared: *We live in a world where soldiers go to the battlefield with no weapons.*

The Bible should diligently be used at all time to defeat the power of darkness, *that spirit of antichrist* (1 Jn 4:3), behind many false teachings (see 1 Tim 4:1). But in a case where one visits the Bible for assistance only when the need arises, it becomes the person's own dictionary.

2. A Pillow: The Bible has now turned into pillows at home. Christians today have developed the idea that the Bible can best protect humanity if it's used as a pillow on which one rests his head. People even believe that they are able to think well and have good dreams when they lay on the Bible.

I do not doubt anyone's belief or self propounded theory, but I insist that the Bible should be read and not to be used as a pillow.

3. A course book: After church, the Bible is used by students for a specific course of study. It is used by students for courses like Religious and Moral Education (RME), Christian Religious Studies (CRS), and some literature courses. I do not condemn the introduction of biblical courses in education, but I believe the Bible should not be visited only for academic excellence; using the Bible only as a course book does not encourage one to give regular attendance to reading (1 Tim 4:13) for the sake of the kingdom of Christ.

4. For ornamentation: After church, the Bible is used for decoration, adornment or embellishment by some believers. People use the Bible to decorate their rooms, cars, offices, etc., but fail to read the Scripture. They send a clear message to the world that the Bible consumes business hours and does not fetch them any money for studying it; this creates laziness and procrastination on the side of the believers.

2.3. How To Keep The Bible Always Open After Church

- 1.** Esteem God's word than your necessary food (Job 23:12; compare Psalm 119:10).
- 2.** Study the Scripture regularly (1 Tim 4:13,16).
- 3.** Meditate the word of God day and night (Joshua 1:8).
- 4.** Pray regularly (Luke 18:1; 1 Thes 5:17) for divine help (James 1:5-8) and sometimes engage in fasting (Mark 9:29).
- 5.** Renew your mind (Rom 12:2) and your steadfast spirit (Psalm 51:10) for positive thoughts in Christ (Phil 4:8-9; 2:5).
- 6.** Do not forsake the gathering of the saints (1 Thes 3:10; Heb 10:25; 3:13).
- 7.** Allow yourself to be rebuked by the word of God (2 Tim 4:2; Prov 12:1; 13:1,18).
- 8.** Put the word of God into practice (Matt 5:15-16; compare Rom 10:17; James 1:22-25).
- 9.** Teach others (2 Tim 2:2) to live like Christ (Eph 5:1-2).

CHAPTER 3: THE BELIEVER'S MIND IS SWITCHED TO THE WORLD

The brain is one of the most powerful organs of the human body system; it is the control center of the central nervous system. From the biblical point of view, the author prefers to use “mind” instead of “brain”, in order not to limit the study to intelligence.

The mind is the powerhouse of knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and insight; it seals God's law (see the context of Matt 22:37) as far as the spirit, soul and body are concerned (1 Thes 5:23).

According to **Matt 22:37**, Jesus used “mind” instead of “strength” or “might” comparing **Deut 6:5**. It is written, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength*” (Deuteronomy 6:5, NKJV): Jesus quoted, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind*” (Matthew 22:37, NKJV). This does not contradict; it was stated unequivocally in the original manuscripts, even in the Latin Vulgate.

The Vulgate reads;

- “*diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto **corde** [heart] tuo et ex tota **anima** [soul] tua et ex tota **fortitudine** [strength] tua*” (**Deuteronomy 6:5**, Latin Vulgate).
- “*ait illi Iesus diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto **corde** [heart] tuo et in tota **anima** [soul] tua et in tota **mente** [mind] tua*” (**Matthew 22:37**, Latin Vulgate).

For clarity sake, the words in [square brackets] are my own emphasis, trying to translate the Latin words into English.

Since the introduction of the book of Matthew in the New Testament Canon of Scripture in the AD 60s, *mind* and *strength/might* have been used interchangeably in addition to heart and soul, to refer to one's ability to dedicate the totality of the human personality to God and His kingdom instead of materialism. However, **Mark 12:30** uses both *mind* and *strength* for the sake of his audience in order not to sound contradictory, considering the context of **Deut 6:5** and **Matt 22:37**. Biblical

eschatology only chooses between mind or strength instead of using both words at the same time.

According to the scriptures, *the mind is your strength*. And, it should be used in all aspects of life. God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9); we need to learn from Him (Eph 5:1) how to think positively in Christ (Phil 2:5; 4:8).

This chapter of the study discusses the faculties of the mind and how best each of them can be used positively in the kingdom of Christ.

3.1. The Faculties of the mind

From the biblical point of view, there are **six(6) main faculties of the mind** irrespective of how one categorizes them: Any of these faculties affects our spiritual and physical growth, feelings or emotions.

(I) The Thinking Faculty: This division of the mind is for planning, making decisions and building intentions. Both spirit and mortal beings think. This is one of the most powerful faculties, because, faith and hope are built in here; demons who apply their thinking faculty realize their future judgment and tremble (James 2:19).

(II) The Faculty of Good and Evil: This faculty of the mind was established after the fall of mankind in the garden of Eden (see Gen 2:9; 3:22). This is where the “daily battle of sin and righteousness” occurs (Rom 7:14-23); it was this same battle which God wanted Cain to win (Gen 4:6-8), and still wants it defeated in the life of every Christian (see Rom 6:12-14).

(III) The Conscience Faculty: This faculty is for making decisions between good and evil with or without the law of God (see Rom 2:14), and should be devoid of doubts (compare Rom 14:23).

(IV) The Faculty of Imaginations, Dreams and Visions: This is where **(1)** pictures are drawn in the mind whenever one imagines about something, **(2)** dreams are projected in connection with the soul and spirit, and **(3)** God's servants had their

visions according to the Scripture; the human eyes play key role in this faculty of the mind.

Before one could dream, the thinking faculty releases information to this particular faculty when one sleeps to project the things of the physical world to the spiritual realm within one's scope or territory (Eccl 5:3; compare Isaiah 29:8; Hos 7:14). The good and evil faculty also has power to influence this faculty under discussion.

(V) The Faculty of Knowledge and Wisdom: Both the spiritual world and the physical world play key roles as far as this faculty is concerned. The mind switches to any of them, depending on the condition at hand. Whenever this faculty is at work, wisdom becomes “the application of knowledge” (compare James 3:13-15; Rev 13:18).

When one fails to worship God with the knowledge faculty, He hands him over to a reprobate mind which constantly switches to [full] evil faculty that terminates the faculty of understanding (see Rom 1:28-32).

(VI) The Faculty of Understanding and Insight: This unique faculty “glorifies” the entire human mind. Insight is the “core level of knowledge” which God alone gives; and it's mostly seen as understanding in relation to the Scripture (see Luke 24:45). The human eyes, ears and heart aid in understanding (see Mark 8:18; Matt 13:15-16). This beautiful faculty of the human mind, however, controls the activities of some other faculties as well.

- ❖ Biblical analysis proves that the spiritual gifts (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Co 12:8-10, 27-31; 13:8; 14:26; Eph 4:11; 1:17; 1 Pet 4:11) work with any of these faculties of the human mind: We need to serve God with “**all the mind**” (Matt 22:37).

3.2 How The Mind Switches To Any Faculty After Church

The mind switches to any of the six faculties of the mind depending on the environment and its conditions, and the instincts from the soul and spirit. Just like computers, humans also have input and output devices; they play key roles in mind switching.

The **input devices** of the human body system include but not limited to the ears, eyes, nose, and skin (compare Mark 8:18; 1 Jn 1:1-4); these parts of the body feed the mind with *data* for processing: The **output devices** include the heart, tongue and mouth (see Matt 15:17-20; James 3:3-12); these parts of the body produce thoughtful ideas outside the whole being. The input devices are mostly used by the “speaker” and the output devices become useful to the “audience” of the message, but both are relevant to humanity in all aspects of life.

The human soul and spirit feed the mind with thoughts and control almost every single action of mankind. God speaks to His people through His Spirit that connects to the spirit of mankind (Rom 8:14-16). Conceptually, the soul *chairs* the affairs of the whole being to mediate between the spirit and the body. The mind is connected with the instinct of the soul and spirit channelled through the heart for processing and feedback. Scripturally, the mind does not act alone; it needs to negotiate with the spirit, soul and heart. Worship in spirit and truth (Jn 4:23-24) overshadows all evil thoughts.

In this sense, the mind switches in-between the spirit and soul, depending on the environment and one's situation.

3.3. How to control “mind switching” positively

1. Think positive at all time, with the mind of Christ (Phil 4:8; Col 3:16).

“Think twice about any decision you intend to take today. There may be enemies somewhere watching you from afar, readily prepared to trap you with the mistakes you make ignorantly. Be vigilant. Resist the devil in your plans today (1 Pet 5:9) with the mind of Christ (Phil 2:5)” (Seth Nyarko).

2. Manage your time properly (Eph 5:15-17).

3. Always forgive (Matt 6:14-15).

4. Overcome sin (Gen 4:6-7; Rom 12:21).

5. Be clothed with the [full] armour of God (Eph 6:11-18): *“A complete armor of God must have **belt, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet, sword and strength** to fully combat the evil forces in the spiritual warfare: Never appear ‘naked’ in this battle against these spirits of darkness” (Seth Nyarko).*

- The ‘**Belt**’ symbolizes ‘**truth**’, as an armor of God (Eph 6:14). Christ is the truth that liberates (Jn 8:32; 1 Jn 2:21). Always allow yourself to be sanctified with the word of Christ (Jn 17:17) to win this battle against the powers of darkness.
- The ‘**Breastplate**’ symbolizes ‘**righteousness**’, as an armor of God (Eph 6:14). Righteousness is the manifestation of holiness (Acts 3:14): It protects your heart from being shot with evil plans (Matt 15:18-20). Never allow the devil to drive you into destruction with sin (Rom 7:18-21).
- The ‘**shoes**’ as an armor of God symbolizes the ‘**gospel of peace**’ (Eph 6:15): You should always be ready to spread and defend the ‘doctrine of the Cross’ (1 Co 1:17-18). With this pair of shoes, you can overcome all obstacles such as thorns, fire, stones and ice (Gal 6:12; 2 Co 13:4) put on your way by the devil to discourage you in this journey to eternity. Never walk barefooted.
- The ‘**shield**’ symbolizes ‘**faith**’, as an armor of God (Eph 6:16); it helps to quench all the burning arrows shot by the Evil One. Faith makes you realize the existence and power of the God we serve (Heb 11:1, 6) with great zeal

and strength to conquer the devil repeatedly. Do not shake in faith (1 Co 15:58; James 1:5-8).

- The '**helmet**' as an armor of God symbolizes '**salvation**' (Eph 6:17; 1 Thes 5:8): It protects the mind from being shot and injured with demonic thoughts which can make Christians doubt of their salvation in Christ. The helmet also protects the ears, nose, tongue, and eyes from satanic threats. Do not join this spiritual warfare without a helmet.
- The '**word of God**' is the '**sword of the Spirit**' (Eph 6:17; Heb 4:12). Jesus used it to defeat the enemy (Matt 4:1-11): Always make a sharp sword with your mouth through the word of God (Isaiah 49:2; Jer 23:29).
- Your '**strength**' in this spiritual warfare is '**prayer**' (Eph 6:18; 1 Thes 5:17-19). Ask all things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn 14:13-14) and they shall be provided according to His will and purpose (1 Jn 5:14-15; 3:21-22).

6. Control your secret life (Eph 5:11-14; Eccl 12:14; Mark 4:22; Rom 2:16; 1 Co 4:5; Heb 4:13).

7. Win with self-control (1 Co 9:27; 2 Tim 3:3).

CONCLUSION

The study discussed the need for Christians to put into practice the word of God. It encouraged Christians to make good use of the Bible after church services, with sound mind in Christ.

It is the duty of every Christian to exhibit the character of Christ everywhere to secure the truth. And to make this work in all aspects of life, Christ must be included in our daily activities.

Lift up the banner of Christ: Be active all the time.

LESSON PREPARED, SUMMARIZED AND EDITED
BY **BRO. SETH NYARKO**, BIBLE TEACHER.

CONTACT: 0249289180/ 0209177976