

## THE MOTHERS' UNION - DIOCESE OF SYDNEY

STUDY PROGRAM 1996

THE MIND OF CHRIST

### INTRODUCTION :

Christians are sometimes accused of being "so heavenly minded that they are no earthly use."

It's true that we need to remember that our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3 v 20) and that we are no longer of the world (John 15 v 19). However, most of us live for a considerable time "in the world" after we are saved and before we go to heaven. So the way we spend this time is important to us, to others and most importantly, to God.

This series of four studies looks at the way we can make the most of our time here by using the mind of Jesus Christ Himself.

Every Christian already has the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2 v 16), but we need to learn how to use the wonderful resource God has given us.

The four studies or talks cover:

- 1) The importance of the Bible in knowing Christ.
- 2) The work of the Holy Spirit in helping us understand the mind of Christ.
- 3) The power to put Christ's mind into action.
- 4) Our choice to obey Christ's mind in our daily lives.

All four are inter-related and make a continuing study, so they should be taken in the order they are presented. However, each study does stand alone, looking at the separate aspect described above and a very brief summary of the preceding studies is included at the start of studies 2 - 4. This is for people who are not able to attend all four.

The suggestions for the talks should give extra insight on the reasons for choosing the particular questions used in the Bible studies. The Bible Study leader may find it helpful to read the talk outline sheet, as well as the Bible Study sheets.

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**SUGGESTED HYMNS AND SONGS**

**Theme** May the Mind of Christ my Saviour Australian Hymn Book 537

**STUDY 1**

*Australian Hymn Book (AHB)*

- 332 Spirit of Truth, essential God.
- 333 Lord your word abiding
- 334 Break Thou the bread of life
- 491 How firm a foundation.

*Psalm Praise*

- 51 These are the facts
- 62 Blessed is the man
- 80 The Lord is my light

*Ring of Praise*

- 50 Father, I thank you
- 51 Father of all things
- 116 Jesus is Lord
- 145 Meekness and Majesty

**STUDY 2**

*AHB*

- 58 Praise the Lord, Ye heavens adore Him
- 71 My God how wonderful Thou art
- 308 Come Holy Ghost our souls inspire
- 310 Come down O love divine

*Psalm Praise*

- 38 Glory give to God in heaven
- 98 Listen to my prayer Lord

*Ring of Praise*

- 94 Great is Thy faithfulness
- 114 How great Thou art
- 178 Sing to the Father
- 225 Lord give us your Spirit

**STUDY 3**

*AHB*

- 311 Come gracious Spirit
- 322 O breath of life
- 377 Spirit Divine
- 399 Father in heaven, grant to your children

*Psalm Praise*

- 58 The Spirit came as Promised (Tune 1)
- 81 Safe in the hands

*Ring of Praise*

- 66 Spirit song
- 167 Jesus is our king
- 171 Tell my people I love them
- 220 Fruit of the Spirit

**STUDY 4**

*AHB*

- 451 Lord Jesus Christ
- 522 O master let me walk with Thee
- 561 Kneels at the feet of His friends

*Psalm Praise*

- 108 Safe in the shadow of the Lord
- 130 I life my eyes

*Ring of Praise*

- 67 May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
- 101 There's a wideness in God's mercy
- 146 He that is in us
- 216 Brother, sister let me serve you
- 227 Prayer of St Francis

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### STUDY 1: THE SCRIPTURES AND THE MIND OF CHRIST

Every day we are called to make choices, some big, some small. Some appear to be small and unimportant, but turn out to have unforeseen and far-reaching consequences.

How can we make wise choices?  
Choices which are in line with God's will for us?  
If only we had Jesus' mind!

Paul says we DO have:  
**1 Corinthians 2 v 16 " But we have the mind of Christ."**

This is not a promise for the future, "one day we will be given Christ's mind". It doesn't depend on our effort "if we work hard enough". No, Paul simply states that each Christian has the mind of Christ.

However, when we look at our own lives and the life of Jesus, we immediately become aware of glaring differences that are not to our credit. Like money in a bank account, Christ's mind is of no help to us if we can't actually use it in our lives.

#### **How do we bring Jesus' mind into our daily lives and the decisions we make?**

It is fairly obvious that if we want to be like Jesus we must know as much as we can about Him. The first place to look is in the bible.

#### **BIBLE STUDY 1**

1. Luke 2 v 46,47 describes part of Jesus' visit to the temple in Jerusalem at age 12. What was Jesus doing in the temple and what was the reaction of those who heard Him?
2. What was Jesus' criticism of the Sadducees in Matthew 22 v 29?
3. In Luke 24 v 25-27, from what did Jesus quote as He explained the situation that was saddening and confusing Cleopas and his friend?
4. What did Jesus do for His followers before He returned to heaven? See Luke 24 v 45.
5. Read 2 Timothy 3 v 15-17. What advantage did Timothy have?
6. What is the source of ALL scripture and what is its use?

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7. It isn't easy to find time to read the Bible in a busy life. Unless we plan definite times it won't happen.  
When can you read your Bible tomorrow? Next week? (*a personal question, not necessary to share.*)

What are some of the problems you face in finding time?

How can they be worked around?

Can you help someone else from your own experience?

Read Deuteronomy 6 v 6 - 9

8. What does God say about the importance of His commands?

9. What is our responsibility to others, particularly our families?

10. How are we to carry out this responsibility?

Psalm 19 v 7 & Psalm 119 v 105 show us further benefits of God's word, to us and to our families.  
What are they?

Take a moment to consider the bible studies you are doing at present, both personal and with others in a group.

Hebrews 4 v 12 says "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

11. Is this your experience with the studies you are currently doing?

If it is, ask God to help you share what He is teaching you with someone you have not shared with before.

You could write a letter if you find writing easier than speaking.

If it is not, ask the Holy Spirit to make God's word come alive to you.

Who could you ask for advice on bible study material and groups? Do it today!

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### TALK 1

The **AIM** of this study is to bring out the importance of knowing Jesus through reading the Bible.

The study questions focus on

- 1) Jesus' attitude to the Scriptures (Q's 1-4)
- 2) The source of the Scriptures (Q 6 , 11)
- 3) The use of the Scriptures (Q 5,8-10 )

The applications centre on : how to find time to read the Bible, and  
how to use what God is giving us as we study His word.

In emphasising the importance of reading the Bible, we are not claiming that this is the **ONLY** way God has revealed Himself to us.

God reveals Himself in many ways: when we pray, through His creation, through other people's kindness, wisdom and skill, to name just a few.

However, this study concentrates on the fairly obvious proposition that to be like Jesus, we should try to know as much about Him as we can.

Hebrews 1 v 2 says that God has spoken to us by His Son, and John 1 v 1 calls Jesus "the Word".

The Bible claims to record God's word to His creatures. Genesis 15 v 7 "I am the Lord"

Exodus 20 v 2 "I am the Lord your God", v 3 "You shall have no other gods before me,"

2 Timothy 3 v 15 "All scripture is God-breathed" .

If these claims are true (and we believe they are), we are being wasteful if we neglect the resource God has given us.

The Bible is one of God's gifts to us, and like any gift, the recipient has to accept it, open it and use it before it becomes useful.

Our second aim for this talk is to encourage our audience to open and use their gifts!

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### STUDY 2: UNDERSTANDING AND THE MIND OF CHRIST

When we looked at Study 1, we saw that reading the bible is an essential part of having the mind of Christ. We cannot obey what we don't know and we cannot follow someone we know little about. There is no shortcut, we need to read our bibles and as we do we find that God Himself meets us and guides us.

#### BIBLE STUDY 2

Read Proverbs 3 v 5 & 6

1. What must we do and what must we not do?
  
2. What will God do?

However, knowing what God wants us to do is not enough.

Read Genesis 2 v 16 & Genesis 3 v 1-10

3. How were Adam and Eve used to talking to God?
  
4. Was Eve confused about God's will concerning the trees in the garden and their fruit? v3
  
5. What was the basis of her choice to disobey God?

Read Matthew 23 v 23-24

6. The Pharisees and teachers of the law knew the scriptures, what does Jesus criticise about them?
  
7. Think of a time in your life when you deliberately chose to do something you knew was wrong. (It doesn't have to be a big thing.)  
Why does knowing what's right not ensure that we do what's right?

From the example of Adam and Eve and the Pharisees, as well as from our own experiences, we find that knowing the bible will not make sure we obey God's will.

If knowledge of God was sufficient, Jesus could have come to teach and not to die!

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8. What do the following verses say about God's mind and natural human understanding?  
Job 38 v 4 - 7

Job 42 v 1 - 3

Isaiah 29 v 16

Isaiah 55 v 8 - 9

Isaiah 40 v 13

Paul takes the question asked in Isaiah 40 v 13 and answers it. There is someone who has known the mind of the Lord - The Holy Spirit.

Read 1 Corinthians 2 v 6 - 16

9. How does Paul explain the Spirit's understanding of the Father in v 11?

10. From v 12, why have we received the Holy Spirit?

11. How does the Spirit teach us? See v 13

In addition to knowledge about the bible, we need understanding of what it means (Luke 24 v 45) and we need the power to act (Acts 1 v 8).

12. When does a Christian receive power? (Acts 1 v 8)

13. Who has the Spirit of Christ indwelling? (Romans 8 v 9)

Do you have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you?

If you belong to Christ He is there and you have access to His understanding and His power to "be His witness".

If you are not sure that He is there will you talk to someone who does know Him, such as your MU Branch President, or your Minister? They would be happy to talk to you or to arrange for you to do a short course called "Christianity Explained".

Or when you go home, start to read the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the New Testament and get to know Him yourself.

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### TALK 2

In Study 1 we established the importance of reading the Bible in knowing God .

The **AIM** of Study 2 is to show that we also need to **understand** what God wants , as well as know His word.

To understand God's word, we need God's help. He gives us the Holy Spirit to make His word clear to us.

The study questions focus on

- 1) The difference between knowing and doing. (Q's 1-7)
- 2) The difference between our minds and God's . (Q 8)
- 3) The one who makes the difference in our understanding of God. (Q 's 9 - 13)

The applications focus on our need for the Holy Spirit to explain God's word to us.

Knowledge and belief in God are important , but they are NOT ENOUGH.

James 2 v 19 tells us that "even demons believe that there is one God - and shudder."

We can read the Bible as long as we like, but unless we have the Holy Spirit to make it come alive to us, it will remain just a book. Once we have the Holy Spirit within us, the Bible becomes "living and active, sharper than any double edge sword." (Hebrews 4 v 12).

1 Corinthians 2 v 12 says "We have not received the spirit of the world but the spirit who is from God, **THAT WE MAY UNDERSTAND** what God has freely given us."

Sometimes Christians wonder if they have the Holy Spirit because they don't see any of the more spectacular signs in their life , such as speaking in tongues, or healing through faith alone.

2 Corinthians 1 v 22, 5 v 5 & Ephesians 1 v 14 all tell us that God has given us His Spirit as a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. Romans 8 v 9 says that if we do not have the Holy Spirit , we are not God's. God keeps His promises. If we have accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour then we can be sure that God's Holy Spirit dwells within us, even if we don't feel Him there. God doesn't mock His children.

Our second aim is to assure our audience that God is indeed a Trinity. By accepting the Father's gift of the Son we also receive the Holy Spirit. And with Him we are given the understanding to know the mind of Christ.

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### STUDY 3: THE POWER TO OBEY THE MIND OF CHRIST

Our earlier studies showed that we can have knowledge of the bible, but lack understanding of how to apply that knowledge to our daily lives. We can know what we should do, but lack the power and will to put that knowledge into action.

Sin separated us from God, bringing death and blunting our understanding of God's communication with us. Jesus came that we "might have life and have it to the full" John 10 v 10. This includes life for our minds.

#### BIBLE STUDY 3

When Jesus told His disciples He was to leave them they became concerned and wanted to follow Him (John 13 v 36 - 37). Jesus comforted them and made them a promise.

1. From John 14 v 16 - 18, whom did Jesus promise to send to them?
2. Why does Jesus say that His going away will be for His disciples' good? John 16 v 7.

Read 1 Corinthians 2 v 6 - 16

3. What are the different jobs of the Spirit?

Compare what Jesus said the Comforter would do.

Read John 16 v 5-16.

4. What are the three things of which the Holy Spirit will convict the world?
5. In addition to the reason given in John 16 v 12, why didn't Jesus tell His disciples everything at that time?

Compare John 16 v 15 with 1 Corinthians 2 v 11 & 13

6. Who is the source of the Spirit's message and to whom does the Spirit teach this message?
7. Compare Romans 8 v 6, Romans 8 v 9 and Galatians 5 v 23. What **work** of the Spirit given in the Romans verses is also one of the 9 **fruits** of the Spirit, listed in Galatians?
8. (*This is a question for personal reflection, you may not want to answer it in front of others, but please answer it for yourself.*)  
Think of something in your life that needs this particular work.

Do you believe He can make it possible for you to be "more than conqueror through Him

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who loved us"?

Plan now how you will draw on the Holy Spirit's strength to overcome the next time you are tempted.

Don't be discouraged, we all find some things hard. Jesus understood that when He said we may need to go on forgiving someone who has hurt us. See Matthew 18 v 21, 22.

9. From Romans 8 v 26 & 27, what important way does the Spirit help us in our weakness?

The indwelling Holy Spirit separates Christianity from all other beliefs. Many teachers have described their planned ways for their followers to live, but Jesus also gave the power to obey His commands by placing His own Spirit within each believer. The Holy Spirit is the "deposit guaranteeing our inheritance". (Ephesians 1 v 14)

To have access to the mind of Christ we need knowledge of Jesus through the scriptures. We need understanding of God's word through the indwelling Holy Spirit and we need the power to act on our understanding of God's will, also through the Holy Spirit.

BUT there is a remaining factor.

Just as in Study 1 we mentioned that money in the bank is no help if we CAN'T use it, it is also no help if we CHOOSE NOT to use it.

10. From Ephesians 1 v 3, with what has God the Father blessed us?

What are some examples?

11. Romans 6 v 11 - 14 tells us that we have to choose to act. What are we to count ourselves?

To whom do we offer ourselves?

What else do we offer? What are ways we can do this?

We all have our "weak spots" and satan is very good at using them to repeatedly trip us up, so we feel it's impossible to avoid that particular sin.

This week remember "sin shall not be your master because....you are under grace". Each day consciously offer up each part of your life to God, especially the weak spot and ask Him for His way of victory.

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### TALK 3

The **AIM** of this study is to show that the Holy Spirit also brings the **POWER** to obey the will of God for our lives.

The study questions focus on

- 1) The presence of the Holy Spirit (Q's 1 - 2)
- 2) The work of the Holy Spirit. (Q's 3 - 5)
- 3) Our inheritance through the Holy Spirit (Q's 6 - 11)

The applications call us to consider where we need to exercise the Spirit's work of self control in our lives, and how we will do this in practise.

Also we are asked to identify weak spots which satan uses to repeatedly trip us up. Are we prepared to consciously offer up ALL parts of our lives to God, including the weak spot, and believe that He will give us victory?]

This study looks at more of the work of the Holy Spirit, and the effect His work has on our lives. We consider the breadth, width and depth of the inheritance that God has given us, including the power to obey His will for us (Acts 1 v 8).

Sin marred the communication between God and His world, but through Jesus this communication has been re-established. The power of the Holy Spirit opens a new world of obedience to God. It is not perfect yet, and won't become perfect until God establishes His "new heaven and new earth" (Revelation 21 v 1 ), but "we are no longer the slaves to sin we once were" (Galatians 4 v 7,8) Now the Holy Spirit gives the understanding of God's will and the power to obey, so we are gradually transformed into the likeness of God's Son, Jesus. (Romans 8 v 29)

Our second aim is to convince our audience that God has the power to transform His children into the likeness of His Son, our part is to obey.

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### STUDY 4: CHOOSING TO OBEY THE MIND OF CHRIST

The mind of Christ is God's free gift to all Christians. Like our salvation, it is not something we earn.

"By grace you have been saved through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not of works, so that no one can boast." Ephesians 2 v 8 & 9.

But just as Jesus calls us to open the door to His knocking, before He enters, (Revelation 3 v 20) we have to choose to obey the Holy Spirit's guidance as He teaches, guides and empowers us. We have to open the door of our minds and then to act on the Holy Spirit's revelations to us.

#### BIBLE STUDY 4

1. From Romans 12 v 2, how are we to shun conformity with the world and be transformed in our everyday lives?
2. What will this transformation enable us to do?

What do the words test and approve mean here?

Read Ephesians 4 v 20 - 24

3. What are we to put off and what are we to put on?

How can we do this in practice?

Note that Paul tells us that it is the Christian who must do the putting on and off. Although we have the indwelling Holy Spirit, we must **choose to act** in a way that is different to the way "the Gentiles live, in the futility of their thinking and their darkened understanding" Ephesians 2 v 17,18.

Paul then goes on to spell out, in practical terms, how this new way of life will effect the Christian's conduct and relationships with others.

4. Carefully read Ephesians 4 v 25 to 5 v 11, applying each section to today's conduct. How do ALL these standards apply in today's society?
5. In light of our society's emphasis on standing up for your rights, how do you interpret Ephesians 5 v 21?
6. When we are urged to make sure that our needs are met and we are fulfilled, what does Jesus example, quoted in Philippians 2 v 3 - 11, say?
7. How does Paul respond to the claim that "it's alright because everyone does it and we'll be left behind if we don't go with the flow"? Think of specific ways Philippians 2 v 14 & 15

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8. To what extent do television, radio and magazines influence the way we and our families think? How would you apply Philippians 4 v 8 to this?

9. On what are we to set our minds? See Colossians 3 v 2.

How are we to do this? Compare Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6 v 19-21

10. According to Philippians 4 v 6 & 7, what should we do when we become anxious about something?

11. What will be the result when we do this? v7

12. Read John 13 v 34,35 & John 15 v 12 & 15 v 17  
What new command did Jesus give His disciples?

What is the result when Christians obey this command?

How obedient are you being to Jesus' command?

To summarise the four studies in this series, we firstly need to accept that each Christian is given the mind of Christ as a free gift from God.

Our ability to use Christ's mind is affected by our knowledge of God and His will for us which we find through reading the bible. It is also affected by our understanding of the bible and our power to put what we know into practice. Both of these are the work of the Holy Spirit, God's deposit in the heart of each Christian.

However, we can grieve the Holy Spirit by disobeying His guidance. So the final step we need to use the mind of Christ in our own daily lives is to choose to obey and act on the Spirit's direction.

We will still make mistakes, perfection will only come in heaven. But when we do fail we can follow Paul's advice :

" But one thing I do: FORGETTING what is behind and STRAINING toward what is AHEAD, I PRESS ON toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me HEAVENWARD in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 3 v 13,14

**TALK 4**

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The **AIM** of this study is to show that we have to **CHOOSE** to obey God.

We can know what to do, understand it and even have the power to act, but we still have to take the final step and choose to take the action, to obey God's will for us.

The study questions focus on

- 1) Choosing to allow God to work within us. ( Q's 1 - 3)
- 2) Choosing to allow God to work through us. (Q's 4 - 8)
- 3) Choosing obedience to God and its results. (Q's 9 - 12)

The applications challenge us to choose to be different. To consider God's ways and the results of following God's ways as opposed to following the world's ways. To be prepared to be the one who makes a difference.

The questions aim at having us apply the principles found in passages such as Ephesians 4 & 5 to our daily lives. This should be a practical study, not simply looking at the principles, but finding ways they will work in the lives we are living.

The four studies have built on each other. We can want to choose God's way, but not know enough about Him to know what He wants. This is why reading the Bible is so important. Without the indwelling Holy Spirit we have neither the understanding nor the power to obey even when we do understand. This is why we need to listen to God's prompting as we pray and read His word.

The final choice, to obey what we know to be God's will for us , God leaves to us. He won't compel obedience, although when we do fail to obey He will often bring us back to face a similar temptation again. He loves us too dearly to want us to settle for second best.