

"Called to Serve"

LEADER'S NOTES

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INTRODUCTION

When a church first studies "Called to Serve", it may well be that you are leading a group of established church members or even leaders. Your approach will obviously be very different from later on in the life of the church, when you might be teaching a group of new Christians. *The course is not really suitable for enquirers or immediate follow-up of a profession of faith. It is ideal in giving deeper teaching after an initial discipleship course, or for established church members and leaders in laying a biblical foundation for every member ministry.*

If teaching established church members or leaders

At first glance some of the early sessions may appear basic. It is important to assure the group that there is plenty of deeper teaching in the Course. In addition, it is useful for them to review basics and to know what newer Christians in the church will be taught. You will need to prepare this group much more carefully for the service of Dedication. Some will approach it with anticipation, whereas others might feel threatened, as the time approaches when the ministry of everyone in the church is reviewed. Get to know the policy of the Minister about how he intends to ensure that the Course leads on to practical application. It is vital to know whether or not the Minister intends that the Course be used just as a teaching course, or part of the Time Strategy for church development. If the latter, personal interviews are essential before the Dedication Service. The Minister may wish to be involved in these. It is important that the leadership is united over these matters before the rest of the church studies the Course. See people individually about particular problems and keep the Minister informed about reactions of the group. If the Minister is going to implement the Time Strategy, it is vital that "Called to Serve" group leaders read "The Minister's Guide".

If new Christians

Some of the later sessions particularly contain teaching which may appear daunting. However, it is important for them to know how the church "works". Some will need reassurance that God is looking for the right heart attitude to His word, not perfect understanding. Most people appreciate it if the leader makes time to chat to them one-to-one. Any corporate times of prayer should, to begin with, be brief, with no compulsion to pray. Suggestions can be made for the nervous, e.g. writing out a sentence prayer to read.

If a mixture of mature and new Christians

Sometimes established Christians may come to the church, having moved into the locality. They may have to join a group of predominantly new Christians. Encourage them to give as well as receive. They could contribute by e.g. occasionally leading the worship.

Introducing the Course to potential participants

A supper could be held for those interested, at which the leader introduces the Course and testimonies are shared by those who have benefitted from the last Course.

What about overlap with an enquirers'/discipleship Course?

There may be overlap in Sessions 2 - 4 and possibly 6 - 8, but "Called to Serve" deals with subjects in-depth, and a little repetition is a good thing for new or established Christians.

- **Bear in mind the overall objective:**

To put it positively - the majority of church members sharing in unity in the ministry of the church.

To put it negatively - eventually only those who are one in heart and mind over the biblical principles summarised in the Vision should be ministering in the church.

Your attention is drawn to the Introduction to the Course, which clarifies the aims, and suggests how the Course might be part of a church programme.

A suggested approach to teaching the Course is:-

A weekly 2 hour session.

1/4 hour (i) A short time of worship.

1/2 hour (ii) Sharing together about progress made in understanding and putting into practice the teaching of the last session.

1/2 hour (iii) Teaching, or listening to the tape of the current session.
(Use the "Called to Serve" audio or video tapes by Rev. Tony Higton if possible.
Absentees should catch up by tape before the next session).

1/2 hour (iv) Discussion or "Group Time" as recommended in the Course.

1/4 hour (v) A concluding time of prayer and thanksgiving.

- Introduce variety, e.g. enter into worship after the session on worship.
- You may occasionally need to take two evenings over some sessions, especially the session on "Talking with God".
- Ensure your Minister has allocated church members to pray for you and your group.
- Remember that the Course Leader also has pastoral responsibility for group members. Perhaps a married couple could share this leadership and responsibility, or support a single leader.

The Course should not be rushed, but it is equally unhelpful if it takes too long.

We recommend two "terms" of 10 sessions each (approx. 6 months), or three "terms", tackling one each of the three sections of the Course (Sessions 1 - 6, 7 - 12 and 13 - 20). The Course should not take longer than one year and maybe as little as six months. It is possible to hold a "catch-up" weekend with 3 or 4 sessions on a Friday evening and Saturday.

THE AIM FOR EACH SESSION

Session 1. Setting the Scene

- Aim 1:** To understand the three overall aims of the Course, as set out on the first page of this session. (Ensure you also know how the Course fits into the overall programme of the life of the church).
- 2:** To glimpse "the Vision" for the church which is summarised on page 11. It is also expounded as the Course proceeds, and summarised in a fuller two page version at the end of the Course. Ensure you understand and can explain why there is a written Vision -namely, to enable the church to be united concerning biblical aims for its life and mission. This is no more legalistic than a doctrinal basis of faith, such as the Creed. The checklist on page 13 is particularly useful when a church first embarks on the Course, but should not be allowed to turn into a negative discussion about the church.

Anyone who reacts negatively at this stage to the Aims or the Vision should be referred to the Minister. If unresolved their attitude could hinder the group. **This session is crucial to the whole course.**

Session 2. Checking the Foundations

- Aim:** To ensure members know and understand the gospel and have made a personal commitment to Christ. Private help may be necessary. However the next few sessions may help clarify this for the individual. This session is also useful for training in witnessing.

Session 3. Turning From Sin

- Aim:** To help people understand the nature and importance of repentance and to be up to date with their repentance. NB. Some members may need private counsel. At the end of this Session we mention the:-

Occult Check List (See Appendix 4)

If people have no understanding of the occult or the need to include any involvement in their repentance, it may be necessary to mention in the group some of the points listed in the Check List. The ideal is that each member of the group, or at least anyone with extensive occult involvement should have a private appointment with someone qualified in Christian counselling, who is able to take them through the occult checklist to ensure that any involvement is renounced. See also Session 6. If this is not possible, mention some of the major areas in the group. Allow time for a period of silent reflection about whether there has been any personal involvement, then lead in a prayer of confession, and read a scripture verse of absolution (e.g. 1 John 1:9). It would not be wise to go into details e.g. about alternative medicine, as this could lead to a heated discussion which could detract from the main purpose of the session on repentance.

Session 4. Turning to Christ

- Aim:** To ensure that the members understand justification by faith; that they have assurance of salvation and are willing to be truly committed disciples of Jesus as Lord. Normally you will only have believers in your group, but if you think anyone at this stage has not made a personal commitment, it would be unwise to let them continue in the group. Personal help should be offered.

Session 5. Remaining in Christ

Aim: To ensure members understand the meaning of baptism and are living in the experience of it. (Check that everyone is baptised). To ensure that communion is meaningful and helpful to them. Avoid controversy over baptism or communion. Deal with that outside the group. The appendix to these notes on infant baptism is to reassure those in the paedobaptist tradition and hopefully to help those who do not believe in infant baptism, to respect the motives and integrity of those who do. There is also an appendix on rebaptism and confirmation.

Session 6. Receiving Power

Aim: To encourage all the members to experience Baptism in the Spirit. If the atmosphere in the group is full of faith, it could be appropriate to pray there and then for folk to be baptised in the Spirit. Otherwise offer prayer privately or in a suitable church service. If anyone is not ready for this, don't pressurise them, but be sensitive to opportunities later in the Course. Again look out for those who are afraid and give them personal help. It would be unwise for anyone who has not clearly experienced the Baptism in the Spirit, or is unwilling at least to have prayer for the release of God's power, to participate in the Service of Dedication. This would undermine unity and the result could even be that there would be folk in the Ministry Teams who are resistant to the work of God's Spirit. It is most important that any occult involvement is repented of, before prayer for Baptism in the Spirit. (See notes on Session 3).

Session 7. Doing the Word

Aim: To encourage everyone to start a simple system of Bible reading or to go deeper in studying the Word. (Check again at the end of Course). It is important they understand that all of the teaching in the Course and in church is based on the Bible. In the section on Bible meditation stress that it is different from occult (transcendental etc.) meditation. They should not let their minds go blank but concentrate on e.g. the cross or a verse in the Bible. But stress the section on "Doing the Word", and explain that to serve God in the fellowship of the Church, after the Dedication Service, is one way of acting on God's Word.

Session 8. Resisting the Enemy

Aim: To alert people to the spiritual battle in which all Christians are involved, and to help them overcome fears about it as they realise their authority in Christ. Discourage anyone from going overboard on this subject or being unwise in spiritual warfare. Normally "principalities" should be a matter for the church to pray about and resist when the leadership believe the time is right. Finish the session with worship to fix people's attention on the Lord.

Session 9. Living by Faith

Aim: To encourage members to live a life of faith. Seek to discover if anyone has a particular problem over trusting God in different areas of life, and whether that can be dealt with simply through repentance and prayer or requires deeper counselling. Encourage prayer in the group for e.g. health and family problems (but discourage any breaking of confidences to the group, e.g. about married partners).

Session 10. Bearing much Fruit

Aim: To try to discover if the members have a hunger and thirst for righteousness. Be specific over the fruit of the Spirit. Each member could ask God for help in one particular area of holiness over the next week and share progress with the group or privately with the leader the following week.

Session 11. Talking with God

Aim: To ensure each person is having at least a brief Quiet Time. Also encourage prayer in the group as suggested at the end of the notes on this session. Some will be very shy and may need at first to write down a short prayer and read it out. Or encourage everyone to say a sentence prayer. Stress the importance of group prayer in the church and that it is vital to make all decisions prayerfully. The church should be developing a system of prayer groups. (Further help from Time Ministries International). Get to know how a group member may join a prayer group after the Service of Dedication. This session may take two evenings, one on why and how we should pray and the second on going deeper in prayer and dealing with difficulties.

Session 12. Worshipping the Lord

Aim: To encourage the members to express themselves more freely in worship privately and publicly (though no one should feel under pressure). To reassure people in liturgical churches about the value of liturgy and the possibility of a blend of liturgy and spontaneity. (Further help from Time Ministries International).

Session 13. Loving the Church

Aim: To ensure the members really feel part of the Body of Christ; to identify and deal with any proud independence. To ensure people avoid divisive, negative behaviour including gossip and backbiting. Be specific about this. Encourage the group gently to correct one another whenever they lapse into such things. Encourage them to approach someone against whom they bear a grudge etc. Stress also the positive teaching in this session, but help the members understand that church discipline is a necessary part of love. Deal patiently and sensitively with fears and misunderstanding over this. This session may well have to take two evenings.

Session 14. Serving the Flock

Aim: To teach the members that they should not expect their Minister to have all the gifts, but should support him as he seeks to delegate. They should also be willing to accept ministry from other leaders in the fellowship, appointed by the overall Minister to shoulder different responsibilities. If your church is not yet experiencing the five-fold ministry this can be taught as something you are aiming towards.

NB. The introduction to this Session is very important, as it paves the way for the Dedication Service.

Session 15. Honouring Your Leaders

Aim: To encourage the right attitude to leaders in the church. It is vital in this session and throughout the Course to discern if the members have the right attitude to the leadership. Personal help should be given to any who seem either rebellious on the one hand or too "slavish" on the other. If the situation is still not satisfactory by the end of the Course, it would be unwise for that person to participate in the Service of Dedication until the attitude is sorted out. However it should be remembered that if the Course is being introduced in a church for the first time, leaders may be having their gifts reassessed.

It is important to deal patiently and sensitively with fears and misunderstandings about submission. It is also important that you define by name those who are in positions of authority; (e.g. in Hawkwell Tony, the Rector, is supported by his wife Patricia in overall leadership. They share responsibility with a full time staff with defined areas of authority. Finally there is a large group

of leaders (and spouses) who again have defined roles, e.g. churchwardens, Ministry Team leaders, those in charge of departments, e.g. Counselling, Young Church etc. Leaders only have authority in areas to which they have been officially appointed.) If people studying the Course express disquiet about your existing leaders, remind them that the role of everyone will be reviewed after the Course, if this is the first time it has been introduced to your church.

The group leader should then explain that, over the next few weeks, each person will be interviewed by the Minister or someone appointed by him, as to whether they are in agreement with the fuller version of the Vision at the end of the Course, and are ready to participate in the Service of Dedication and go into Ministry Teams. Arrangements for both interviews and Service should now be made with the Minister.

It is very important that you do not ignore any vague inner feelings or disquiet you have about a member. Often these feelings are important. Talk to the member concerned and try to sort it out. If it is not sorted out it is vital that you tell the Minister before the interview takes place, so that he is fully aware and can perhaps help where you could not. It is possible that the Minister will include the "Called to Serve" group leader in the interviews.

Session 16. Discerning the Gifts

Aim: To encourage the group members to expect that their God-given gifts will be recognised and used once they have been members of Ministry Teams for a few months. Leaders of Ministry Teams should be asked to make practical arrangements to do this once they have got to know the new members, e.g. after 6-12 months. Those already either in leadership positions in the church or fulfilling any role, should be encouraged to hand this back to God in principle at the Service of Dedication to be transformed or removed, although not actually in practice until after their gifts and ministries have been discerned in Ministry Teams. Leaders should have their gifts reassessed in a leaders' group. Encourage the group to embark on an adventure of faith together, expecting God to reveal in the next year new ways of serving him. (Full details re. how to discern gifts and ministries are in the Minister's Guide).

Session 17. Extending the Kingdom

Aim: To ensure members have a vision for local and world mission and are enthused to be directly involved in it. (Further help on local evangelism available from Time Ministries International.) To impart understanding that God's kingdom is expanded not just by evangelism, but by upholding social justice and by serving the community in social care, with God's love. Try to discover beforehand the areas of mission in which your church is involved.

Session 18. Giving to God

Aim: To encourage each member to aim towards tithing to the church, which in its turn should be giving at least a tenth of its income to mission. Practical advice should be given, e.g. women not in paid employment whose husbands are unsympathetic to the church could perhaps tithe their house-keeping. There could be discussion as to whether wage-earners tithe gross or net, before or after mortgage payments etc. No rules should be laid down, but folk encouraged to seek God's will for themselves. Group leaders should ask the treasurer for copies of the current budget and details of mission giving. He could also be invited to the group to give practical advice on how to give, e.g. standing orders, covenants etc. It should be stressed that he will be the only one who will know what is given. For those who have not been tithing and find the concept difficult, help could be offered to draw up a specific plan of increased giving, aiming at 10% over an agreed time scale. Some will perhaps have given privately to all kinds of charities, but gradually as the giving to Mission by the local church is increased, could be encouraged to channel almost all their giving through the church, which could perhaps aim at giving 50% to evangelism and mission.

Session 19. Reviewing the Vision

Aim: To review the three aims of the Course and clarify the Vision.

This is a Session in which to remind people of the teaching in the Course; to enthuse them about preparing themselves for the Service of Dedication; and to ensure they understand the Vision (which has already been thoroughly taught in the Course). It is a vital Session to conclude the Course, preparing for the Service of Dedication and the exciting future ahead. The Course Leader should be well-versed in the points of the Vision. You should also ensure you have read the important notes at the end of this Session and understand how they relate to your church situation.

Avoid getting bogged down in any debate over wording of the Vision. Rather envision your group about being united for service. Anyone who wishes to debate the Vision at this stage should talk to the Minister, who will probably already be in the process of interviewing everyone personally. We recommend that the longer version of the Vision is used with individuals in the personal interviews.

The group time of laying "on the altar" as Abraham did with Isaac, any existing gift or role to be transformed or replaced, is very important. For new Christians or those who have never been used in the church, it is an opportunity to express willingness in principle to be used by God for the first time. However, changes will not happen in practice until well into the first year of membership of Ministry Teams, where members should be prepared for their gifts to be assessed and matched to a role in the group or church.

Session 20. Preparing for Service

This is the actual Service of Dedication.

Only those who are aiming towards the Vision should participate in this Service, by mutual agreement with the Minister. This should be a joyful occasion as your group members look forward to sharing in the Ministry and Mission of the church. There will of course be some trepidation, and you will need to encourage them that God's strength is made perfect in weakness.

They are not being asked to make solemn vows, but rather a declaration of intent, with God's help.

It is important that anyone who for various reasons is not ready to join in the Service, is not made to feel second class. Each believer is equally important in God's sight, and there should be open fellowship and teaching groups for all to join (in addition to the Ministry Teams for those who have participated in the Service of Dedication). Everyone should be made to feel welcome at Sunday Services and offered pastoral care or midweek fellowship if required, but the Vision and Course provide a firm foundation of unity for the future shared ministry and mission of the church.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 WHAT ABOUT INFANT BAPTISM?

APPENDIX 2 WHAT ABOUT "RE-BAPTISM"?

APPENDIX 3 WHAT ABOUT CONFIRMATION?

**APPENDIX 4 CHECK-LIST OF OCCULT, PSYCHIC AND
RELATED INVOLVEMENT**

APPENDIX 1

WHAT ABOUT INFANT BAPTISM?

The purpose of this appendix is not to be controversial but to show how a biblical basis for it can be made out. Belief in infant baptism is not part of the teaching of the Course, as it is non-denominational. Should baptism only be for believers, or can it also be for the infants of believing parents? Christians have often taken very dogmatic positions on all this.

But the New Testament does not explicitly say what was done (concerning baptism) with second generation Christians, i.e. the children of adults whom the New Testament describes as the first Christians.

As the New Testament is not explicit on this, it is wrong for us to be dogmatic. We may work out what we think are the implications of the Bible's teaching, but Bible-believing Christians come to different conclusions. We should not divide from each other over this. If the matter had been so vital, the New Testament would have been explicit. Paul's priorities are shown in 1 Cor. 1:17 when he says, "For Christ did not send me to baptise, but to preach the gospel".

Because of the silence of the New Testament, we must read the Bible as carefully as possible and seek to enter into the minds and background of the apostles.

1. Generally agreed Points

Acts 2:38 says, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit," i.e. every Christian must:-

- a. Repent and believe
- b. Be baptised in water
- c. Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit

We all agree on this, but the question is, when should baptism in water take place? So long as a Christian is baptised in water, does it matter whether it is before he comes to belief or afterwards?

The next verse (39) says, "The promise is for you and your children ..." Baptism signifies and seals this promise, so is it not right to baptise the babies of a believer?

NB. As we have seen, baptism is primarily about God's promises and gifts, i.e. what God does to us, not about our responses or witness. So the fact that an infant can't immediately respond to God may not disqualify it for baptism.

2. The Mind and Background of the Apostles

In the ancient world, the unity and solidarity of the family was very obvious. Parents wouldn't think of embracing a new religion without making their children part of it. Like every Jewish family, Mary and Joseph brought the eight day old Jesus to be circumcised. Children were present at the Passover. When a person was baptised into the Jewish faith his children were baptised at the same time. All of this suggests the early Christians would expect to baptise their children in the absence of any command in the New Testament not to do so.

3. Covenant Teaching

- a. We believers are spiritual children of Abraham (See Gal. 3:7, 29; Rom.4:11, 12). The blessing promised to Abraham is the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is given to us through Christ (see Gal. 3:14).
- b. Like Abraham we are accepted by God ("justified") by faith (see Rom. 4:1-5, 22-25).
- c. Baptism like circumcision, is a sign or seal of this acceptance by God through faith. (See Rom. 4:11). Thus circumcision and baptism are equated in meaning.
- d. Therefore baptism like circumcision can be given to the infant of a believer.

NB. In the old covenant (given to Abraham) infants received the privilege of the sacrament of justification by faith. In the new and "better" covenant, are we to conclude they are worse off and cannot receive this privilege?

Paul, in 1 Cor. 7:14, says that the children of a believer are "holy". That word means they are in a covenant relationship with God. Baptism signifies and seal this.

4. The Method of Baptism

The best method is by immersion or dipping. This is the first alternative in the Church of England, for example. (See the Alternative Service Book, pages 232. 226). This method expresses dying to sin, being buried and rising again to new life (Rom 6). However, the early church may well have poured water over people. It seems that the early church method varied according to how much water was available, e.g. in arid areas water was poured or sprinkled. (Also sprinkling with blood or with water was a regular and meaningful ritual in Old Testament times (see Lev. 7:14; 14:7, 51; 16:14-15, Heb. 9:13,19; 11:28; 12:24; 1 Peter 1:2).

The Levites were sprinkled with water when they were set apart (Numbers 8:7; compare 19:13, 18-20). Also the Lord says in Ezekiel 36:25-26, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you." (cf. Heb. 10:22).

5. The Abuse of Infant Baptism

An infant should not be baptised if neither parent is a believer. At least one parent should be involved in the church and properly instructed. The language of the Baptism Service can be misleading and encourage uninformed people to take a rather magical and mechanical view of baptism. Sadly many people are trusting in their infant baptism to get them to heaven. This is a grave error.

6. Practical Guidelines

Some Christians baptised (christened) as babies become disturbed as to the validity of their baptism particularly if their parents were not Christians. This paper hopefully shows that there is no need to be worried so long as they are now believers. All the four elements outlined in the Course are present in their lives. They can publicly reaffirm baptism promises and perhaps give a testimony about how they came to faith. (See Appendix 2).

APPENDIX 2

WHAT ABOUT "RE-BAPTISM"?

Some Christians, particularly in those cases where neither parent was a believer, cannot conscientiously believe in the validity of their infant baptism. This subject requires a sensitive pastoral approach. There have been various responses to the problem: -

- a. Some have reached the conclusion that what matters is that all four elements (in the Course) are present in their lives, whatever irregularities there may have been. To baptise where neither parent is a believer is improper, but does not invalidate the sacrament which is, after all, what God has done, not the Minister, parents or godparents.
- b. Others cannot conscientiously accept this and they meet with different responses from their Ministers:
 - i. Some Ministers take a very strong line that baptism is essentially once only and cannot be repeated. To be "re-baptised", is virtually to fall into heresy.
 - ii. Others feel that view (i) ignores the genuine belief by many Christians that faith must precede baptism (either in the candidate or in the parents). They therefore regard as invalid either all infant baptism, or infant baptism where faith was absent in both parents and candidate. They therefore feel such folk have not been baptised, so must proceed to "genuine" baptism.

Ministers who hold this view sometimes perform this baptism themselves where their church rules allow them to do so. Others may perform a conditional baptism: "If you are not baptised, I baptise you in the name of..." Where denominational rules are strict, some Ministers in these circumstances give their blessing to a candidate being baptised in another church. This could, of course, lead to problems about which ceremony was the candidate's baptism if, for example, he were to proceed to ordination in a paedobaptist church. However, in a united church both views would surely have to co-exist.

APPENDIX 3

WHAT ABOUT CONFIRMATION?

Confirmation has developed from the practice of the apostles who prayed with the laying on of hands for people to receive what is often called the Baptism in the Spirit. We deal with this in one of the sessions. At one time baptism in water and laying on of hands for Baptism in the Spirit took place on the same occasion. Later it was separated to await the visit of the bishop. There is no reason why, given proper spiritual preparation and an attitude of faith, confirmation should not prove a real spiritual blessing. There are many testimonies to this happening. Confirmation is a domestic rule of some churches. For example, the Church of England says that those who regularly take communion should be confirmed or "ready and desirous" to be confirmed. If people are to be committed to a local church which belongs to a denomination with such rules, it is wise to encourage them to submit to the ceremony for the sake of the witness of that church within the denomination. This is not the same as having a "denominationalist" attitude.

APPENDIX 4

CHECK LIST OF OCCULT, PSYCHIC AND RELATED INVOLVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

1. **The aim** is to ensure that repentance in the area of the occult, false religions and related involvement is complete. (It is an appendix to Session 3 of "Called to Serve" where the biblical teaching on repentance is outlined).
2. **The method** should be for a trained counsellor or experienced leader to take each individual through the check list and pray with the person afterwards. There should ideally be a counsellor of the same sex as the person being counselled, with a "prayer backer" either in the situation or supporting the occasion in prayer. If extensive involvement is suspected there should always be two people present to counsel.
3. **The principle** behind it is that the Bible specifically condemns the following practices:-
 - a. **Involvement with other gods.** The Ten Commandments condemn this, together with idolatry (Ex. 20:3-6; 32:4,8; 2 Kings 17:1-23; Isa. 40:19-20; 41:7; 44:9-20; 46:6-7). In fact those who worship other gods worship demons (Deut. 32:16-17; 1 Cor. 10:19-20 cf. 1 Cor. 5:10-11; 6:9; 8:4-5; Gal.5:20; 1 Peter 4:3). To eat meat offered to idols with pagans in their temple feasts is to participate with demons (1 Cor. 10:20-22).
 - b. **Involvement with mediums and spiritists** (Lev. 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deut. 18:11; 2 Kings 21:6; 1 Chron. 10:13-14; Isa. 8:19). It is clearly forbidden to try to contact the dead or spirits.
 - c. **Witchcraft** (Deut. 18:10). It should be remembered that Witchcraft (or Wicca) involves using "magical" powers, namely "communication with or entry into alternative states of reality" and "manipulation of subtle energies associated with the cosmos or the human body".

This will include spells (condemned in Deut. 18:10) but it is wise to avoid all procedures and therapies which claim to manipulate hidden forces.
 - d. **Sorcery, Divination and Fortune Telling** (Lev 19:26; Deut 18:10; 2 Kings 17:17; 21:6; Isa. 47:12-15; Acts 16:16-18). Divination is seeking to know the future or hidden things by magical means. There are many methods of divination. Fortune telling may be seen as a form of entertainment but serious involvement is condemned in Scripture so the whole area is best avoided.
 - e. **Astrology and Omens** (Deut. 18:10; Isa. 47:12-15). Some are involved in astrology in a light-hearted way but it should be remembered that astrology teaches our lives are determined by impersonal astronomical influences and, as such, is contrary to Christianity, which teaches the sovereignty of a loving, personal Father-God.
4. **Christians are not to be in fear** over these occult and related practices. But we are wise to leave a "margin of error" between ourselves and these practices to ensure we don't unwittingly stray into them. Also, the N.T. teaches that if we are in doubt about something in this area we should avoid it or ensure we're free of it. (Read Romans 14:14, 23).

5. **The list is not exhaustive.** Particularly as a result of the rapid development of the New Age Movement, new occult techniques are being devised all the time. **IT IS FAR MORE IMPORTANT TO TEACH A CHRISTIAN DISCERNMENT**, than to try to give a comprehensive list.
6. **The most controversial subjects** are usually connected with alternative medicine or therapy. Some Christians may want to avoid all remedies where there is no adequate explanation as to why they work. Others will take a more lenient view so long as there is no obvious occult connection.

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