EQUIPPING CHRISTIANS LIVING IN AN "UNEQUALLY YOKED" CONTEXT: A PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL STUDY.

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PREFACE

My sincere gratitude and thanks to:

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I dedicate this study to my father and mother, Schalk and Lina Theron, who raised my two sisters and me to love the Lord and to dedicate our lives to Him.

May this study provide guidelines to Christians who are living and/or working with non-Christians in an unequally yoked context, in order to reach out to them with the saving message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

To God be the glory and honour. It is by God's grace that I have been able to start and finish this study. I am his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, to do the good works which He prepared in advance for me to do.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND SUBSTANTIATION

Worldwide developments like secularism, paradigm changes and postmodernism have a direct influence on the context in which contemporary South Africans and especially Christians live (Vorster, 1996:7-9). Van der Walt (1994:368-371) refers to the South African context and the effect when the word "Christian" is removed from the term "Christian-national". The result is a secularised nationalism. He states that secularism is the condition of the Western culture and it is visible in the art of today, in politics, in education, in the office and the factory. Christians need clear and new values which will equip them for their life in society (without protection from the state after 1994) and the part they need to play in the economy, politics, education and other areas of society (Kingma & Lotter, 2002:309-311; *cf.* Dreyer, 2003:47). There is a need for a re-interpretation of the New-Testament values for today's context, because our changing South African society with its far-reaching social and political transformations needs shared value systems (Joubert, 1992:62-63). Scholars are considering anew the role which churches and Christianity should play in this new dispensation with its huge challenges in discussions about ethics. The government has invited religious communities to become involved in the formation of a moral foundation for society (Botman, 2000:97). In his last opening speech of Parliament, former President Nelson Mandela (1999) said that the South African nation urgently needs a balance between freedom and responsibility. In all sectors of life, South Africans need a measure of discipline, a work ethic and need to take responsibility for their actions.

Jesus Christ made it clear that his followers will experience difficulties living as Christians in this world (Jn 16:33) and they may even experience persecution because they have received the Word and the world has rejected Jesus Christ. Therefore He prayed for them the prayer recorded in Jn 17 (Bible, 2001:1402-1403; Beasley-Murray, 1999:300). Referring to the same prayer of Jesus, Lategan (1984:24) gives another reason why Christians struggle in their relationship with the secular world: they do not belong to the world, even though Christ has sent them into it (Jn 17:14-18). When Richards (1985:639) writes on the Christian's relationship to the world, he refers to the same passage of Scripture. The disciple of Jesus Christ should reveal God's love, life and light to the world (Whitacre, 1999:415). There can be no doubt that Jesus sent his disciples into the world to make a difference and to have a positive influence on it (Mt 5:13-16).

For Christians, these new developments like secularism bring new challenges, often resistance and even persecution. In everyday life, Christians find themselves living more and more among unbelievers. This is the result of the "global village". Christians, Muslims, Hindus and people of many different cultures

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and religions are living next to each other (Olivier, 2003:9). The words of Paul: "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers."(2 Co 6:14), shed light on the relation between an unbeliever and a believer (Theron, 2004:42).

In the metaphor which Paul uses, the Greek word *heterozygountes* can be translated as "other yoked" or "unequally yoked". The word is related to the adjective used in the LXX's version of Lev 19:19, prohibiting the mating of different species of cattle (*cf.* Thrall, 1994:472; Garland, 1999:331). Webb (1992b:162) also refers to the passage in Dt 22:10. God made a clear distinction between the species and man may not join together what He has set apart. As far as Jordaan (1999:480) is concerned, the unequally yoked-prohibition in the Old Testament has two dimensions: the *physical union* on the one side and an *emotional/spiritual connotation* on the other. He believes that the people of Corinth understood clearly what Paul meant with the metaphor of "the unequally yoked": it is as inappropriate for dissimilar people (Christians on the one hand and non-Christians on the other) to be associated together as it is for dissimilar animals to be yoked together. Barnett (1999:130) goes so far as to say that Paul is using this metaphor to explain that Christians are of a different breed than unbelievers and should therefore not have improper relationships with unbelievers.

Some scholars see the instruction of Paul as applicable to marriages between believers and unbelievers (*cf.* Webb, 1992b:168-169; Jordaan, 1999:470), while others are of the opinion that Paul is not only referring to marriages, but to any fellowship between believers and unbelievers (Calvin, 1964:89; Kruse, 1994:1198). Although Jordaan (1999:469-470) has no doubt, on ground of grammatical and thought-structure analysis of the text and its socio-historical context, that Paul's prohibition in 2 Co 6:14 is especially applicable on marriage relationships, he also confirms that it is applicable to a wide range of relations, including labour, business, religious and political relations.

Paul's instruction in 2 Co 6:14 is followed by five rhetorical questions (2 Co 6:14-16). The apostle wants to make it clear that there is nothing common between righteousness and wickedness, just as there can be no fellowship between light and darkness. In the same way, the believer and unbeliever will never be in agreement and have nothing in common (*cf.* Plummer, 1948:206; Murphy - O'Connor, 1991:68; Thrall, 1994:457; Jordaan, 1999:481). Because Christians are reconciled with God and temples of God, they are set apart from unholy activities (*cf.* Calvin, 1964:91; Garland, 1999:332-336; Jordaan, 1999:482). This is not only true for the people of Corinth, but for Christians of all times – also for Christians today.

Christians in South Africa not only experience that they work and live together with non-Christians, but they find themselves under a non-Christian government (Jordaan, 1999:485). The researcher deems this a typical "unequally yoked" context. That is, a believer with his/her Christian values, norms and ethics lives in a secular world whose values, norms and ethics differ fundamentally from his/her own. There can be no equally based communion between the believer and the unbeliever in their approach to life and

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setting goals for life. The researcher agrees with Jordaan (1999:485) when he indicates that Christians need to receive fundamental guidance on how they should react to non-Christians in the praxis of everyday, in other words to equip Christians living in an "unequally yoked" context.

Hartin (1997:21-22) confirms that the Christian today finds himself in the context of a postmodern society which is characterised by a plurality of moralities and religious convictions. Various human sciences agree that pluralism is one of the characteristics of modern society. In this pluralistic society, Christians should learn to remain true to their principles and ethical values and they should learn how to react to those who see things differently. The researcher agrees with Steenkamp (1996:757) when he remarks that Christians living and working in this postmodern society will always be aware of the tension existing between their Christian faith and the culture that surrounds them. Furthermore, the Church still has the responsibility to witness with even more conviction to the world around her. This task should be fulfilled by all the members of the Church and the challenge is to equip them for their task.

1.2 CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH

An extensive electronic search of the following databases has been done at the Ferdinand Postma and the Jan Lion-Cachet Library at the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus):

- ATLAS – American Theological Library Association – Religious Database
- EBSCO HOST – Academic Search Elite Database
- Library Catalogue
- NEXUS DATABASE SYSTEM – Dissertations and Theses
- SCOPUS – Multi-disciplinary Articles Database
- ISI – Web of Science
- ISAP – South African Journal Articles
- SABINET – SA Cat – Publications

From the electronic search of the literature it is clear that research has been done on who the unbelievers are to whom Paul is referring in 2 Co 6:14 (Webb, 1992a:44) and what Paul means by the term "unequal yoke" (Webb, 1992b:179), but the research does not give clear guidelines as to *how* the believer should act towards the unbelieving world. No research has been found on the specific topic of equipping Christians for living in the postmodern context. The researcher encountered only one model for equipping Christians for their helping ministry as lay counsellors. Theron (2004:1) focused her research on the "unequally yoked" marriage partners. Lategan (1984:20) states that the passage in 2 Co 6:14-7:1 refers to relations within the community of faith, but that the problem of the believer's relationship with the world is not addressed. Lategan's research results may no longer be *ad rem* in the postmodern South African context (*cf.* Du Toit, 2000:59), as Lategan assumes that the majority of the population is Christian and that the government is upholding Christian values and norms. Steenkamp (1996:755) stresses the point that the danger in postmodern culture is that the Word of God no longer serves as the

norm for society at large. Jordaan (1999:485-488) makes an analysis of the current South African context to see whether the command of Paul in 2 Co 6:14 sheds any light on the relationship between believers and unbelievers. He states that Christians need to receive fundamental guidance on how they should react to non-Christians in the praxis of everyday. In the light of the above-mentioned discussion, it is the opinion of the researcher that a model to equip Christians living in an "unequally yoked" context still needs to be developed, proposing general contours for Christian living in postmodern society. As the researcher is best acquainted with the South African context, that will be the focus of the study, but where applicable, a broader context will be referred to.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

How can Christians, who are living in an "unequally yoked" context, be equipped not only to cope, but to have a positive influence on the unbelieving world around them?

The individual problems that will be investigated are:
- What does the Bible teach about the relationship between the believer and the unbelieving world?
- What insights from the human sciences can be of assistance in understanding the "unequally yoked" context in which Christians live in order to equip them for their task to influence the world around them positively?
- What does an empirical study reveal about the current problems that Christians experience living and working in the secular world?
- How can Christians be equipped to handle the problems they experience in the world and bring about positive change in their environment?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the proposed research is to understand the "unequally yoked" context in which Christians live and to suggest possible guidelines to equip them, not only to cope, but to have a positive influence on the unbelieving world around them. In order to attain this goal, the researcher will endeavour to reach the following objectives:
- to investigate what the Bible teaches about the relationship between the believer and the unbelieving world;
- to research how the human sciences can help to understand the "unequally yoked" context in which Christians live in order to equip them for their task to influence the world around them positively;
- to do a qualitative empirical study on the current problems that Christians experience living and working in the secular world; and
- to propose a model to equip Christians for their life in an unequally yoked context.

1.5 CENTRAL THEORETICAL STATEMENT

Christians who are living in an "unequally yoked" context need a biblical model to equip them to have a positive influence on the unbelieving world around them.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

In a Practical Theology study, the researcher needs a functional model to enable him/her to move between theory and church praxis (Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:33). There are different models which can be used in a Practical Theology study, like *inter alia* Zerfass (1974:164-177) who formulated a *Basis theory*, *Metatheory* and *Practice theory*; Heitink (1999:106, 114 ff) who used three circles which he calls *Hermeneutical, Empirical* and *Strategical* and Lotter (2007:6) who proposes *Scriptural perspectives*, *Context* and a *Pastoral Theological* model. These different models have large overlaps and contain the basic issues needed to be addressed by Practical Theology, namely the biblical perspective, perspectives from other disciplines and a proposed model. The operational scientific hermeneutical model of Zerfass has been chosen as the method of research in this thesis as the researcher agrees with De Wet (2006:57), that it provides a framework to investigation the existing problematic Christian-ecclesiological praxis and to move to a new praxis. Heyns and Pieterse (1990:35) give a schematic presentation of the model of Zerfass:
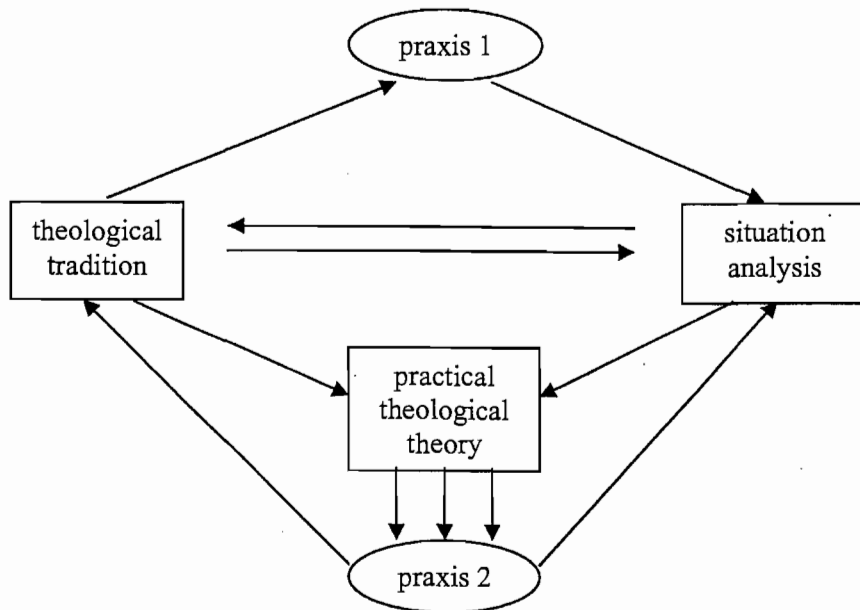
They explain the model as follows: it starts with praxis 1, where there is a problem and ends with a new, amended praxis 2. Praxis 1 has its origin in theological tradition. To solve the problem in praxis 1, a situation analysis must be undertaken which may include an empirical study making use of the knowledge of other sciences such as sociology, psychology and anthropology. This data, together with the theological tradition, is being used to formulate a theory. Praxis 2 takes form as soon as the new theory is being implemented. Praxis 2 needs to be evaluated against the situation analysis and the theological tradition, and if necessary, modified (Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:36).

1.6.1 An analysis of the literature

In order to reach the *first objective,* to establish a basis theory, appropriate passages in Scripture will be identified. A literature survey and a grammatical, historical exegetical study, according to the method set out by De Klerk and Janse van Rensburg (2005:51-61), will be performed to establish the biblical principles undergirding the relationship between the Christian and the unbelieving world. In order to reach the *second objective,* to establish a metatheory, a literature survey of Philosophy, Ethics and Sociology will be done with the help of an electronic search of the databases.

1.6.2 An empirical investigation

In order to reach the *third objective,* a qualitative empirical study will be done by using semi-structured interviews with six Christians who are living in an "unequally yoked" context. This method was chosen rather than a more formal quantifiable method, because it will enable the subjects to be more revealing about personal and intimate material (Jagger & Wright, 1999:63).

1.6.3 The proposed model

In order to reach the *fourth objective,* to establish a practice theory, a synthesis and interpretation of the basis and metatheory in hermeneutical interaction will be done to propose a model to equip Christians who live in an "unequally yoked" context.

1.6.4 Other aspects

- The thesis will be submitted in article format consisting of six articles in accordance with regulations A.13.7.3, A.13.7.4, A.13.7.5 and A.14.4.2 of the North-West University. The most important motivation for choosing the article format is that it facilitates the process to publish the content of the thesis.
- The articles comply with the requirements for an article according to the journals *Practical Theology in South Africa* and *In die Skriflig.*
- The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible, New International Version (NIV) is always used for references from the Bible, unless otherwise indicated.
- The abbreviations for the books of the Bible are according to the NIV.
- The researcher refers to both genders whenever the term "Christian" or "believer" or the personal pronoun "he" or "she" or the possessive pronoun "his" or "her" is used.

1.7 CHAPTER DIVISION

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- CHAPTER 3: Equipping Christians living in an "unequally yoked" context: New Testament perspectives on how Christians should live and act in a society of diverging convictions (Article 2)
- CHAPTER 4: Equipping Christians living in an "unequally yoked" context: Metatheoretical perspectives on the postmodern context in which contemporary Christians live (Article 3)
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- CHAPTER 7: Equipping Christians living in an "unequally yoked" context: Challenges to Christians and the Church amidst unbelievers in a postmodern context (Article 6)
- CHAPTER 8: Conclusion and suggestions for further research

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Key concepts:

believer/unbeliever

Christian influence

equip/equipping

postmodernism

unequally yoked

Kernbegrippe:

gelowige/ongelowige

Christelike invloed

toerus/toerusting

postmodernisme

ongelyke juk

CHAPTER 2 (ARTICLE 1)

EQUIPPING CHRISTIANS LIVING IN AN "UNEQUALLY YOKED" CONTEXT: OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVES ON HOW CHRISTIANS SHOULD LIVE AND ACT IN A SOCIETY OF DIVERGING CONVICTIONS

Abstract

Equipping Christians living in an "unequally yoked" context: Old Testament perspectives on how Christians should live and act in a society of diverging convictions

Paul's exhortation according to 2 Co 6:14, not to be yoked together with unbelievers, has caused diverging reactions throughout history. On the one hand, some Christians try to shun the realities of everyday life in escapism and in a devotion of isolation. On the other hand, others continually try to compromise by accommodating contemporary demands and trends in religious practices (inculturation). The primary aim of the article is to provide general scriptural guidelines on situations in which believers are yoked together with unbelievers. For this purpose the histories of some Old Testament figures are researched. These narratives are concerned with believers who played a significant role within a context of unbelief and sin. A few other Old Testament perspectives are touched upon, *inter alia* the responsibilities of believers in the world. In conclusion pointers valid for a Christian lifestyle within a secular context are indicated.

Opsomming

Toerusting van Christene wat in 'n "ongelyke juk"-konteks lewe: Ou Testamentiese perspektiewe oor hoe Christene moet leef en optree in 'n gemeenskap met uiteenlopende oortuigings

Paulus se vermaning om nie in dieselfde juk te trek as die ongelowige nie (2 Kor 6:14), het oor eeue heen uiteenlopende reaksies veroorsaak. Aan die een kant probeer sommige Christene om die realiteite van elke dag te ontduik in wêreldontvlugting en 'n vroomheid van afsondering. Aan die ander kant vind 'n mens weer Christene wat probeer om 'n kompromis aan te gaan deur voortdurend hedendaagse eise en strominge in godsdienstige praktyke te akkommodeer (inkulturasie). Die primêre doel van die artikel is om algemene skriftuurlike riglyne te bied oor situasies waarin gelowiges saam met ongelowiges in een juk moet trek. Vir hierdie doel word die geskiedenis van enkele Ou-Testamentiese figure nagegaan. Hierdie narratiewe hou verband met gelowiges wat 'n beduidende rol gespeel het in 'n konteks van ongeloof en sonde. 'n Paar ander Ou-Testamentiese perspektiewe word aangeraak, onder andere die verantwoordelikhede van gelowiges in die wêreld. Ten slotte word riglyne gegee wat kan geld vir 'n Christelike lewenstyl binne 'n sekulêre konteks.

2.1 INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The Old Testament instruction that different animals were prohibited to be yoked together (Dt 22:10; Lev 19:19) is used by the apostle Paul in the well-known passage of 2 Co 6:14-16 (Theron, 2004:41-43). The Old Testament law underscored the necessity of holiness and thus prohibited Jews to plough with an ox (clean) and a donkey (unclean) yoked together (Futato, 1997:296). Using this in a metaphorical way, Paul implies that believers should not become intimately involved with unbelievers. Although this guideline is given in the New Testament, it refers to its origin in the Old Testament and also describes situations where Old Testament believers were "unequally yoked". This is what will be pursued in this article.

Throughout the history of Christianity the text from 2 Co 6:14, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers", has been open to different and even diverging reactions. Christians live and work in a context in which they are constantly confronted by convictions contrary to their own which causes considerable pressure. In an attempt to comply with the command not to be yoked together with unbelievers, some Christians are so concerned with personal holiness (to avoid sin) that they withdraw from the world. They believe that as the coming of Christ draws near, the world is inevitably becoming worse and there is nothing more they can do about it than to separate themselves from the world (Packer, 1985:5-6). They consequently move back into the "ghetto" of their own culture and religion and in doing so, avoid the pressure to some extent (Lucas, 2002:58). Van der Walt (2006:35) refers to this reaction of Christians as "pietism", a distorted kind of piety (godliness) and a strange, out-of-this-world spirituality. Christians having this perspective on the command in Corinthians emphasise their personal relationship with God to such an extent that their faith becomes limited to their *inner life* with no involvement in the affairs of "the world". This apathy causes Christianity to have little influence outside the walls of churches (Van der Walt, 1999:1).

Another option for Christians is to conform to the new culture in order to remove all pressure (Lucas, 2002:58). Missiologists like Hesselgrave and Rommen (1992:1, 146) refer to this attitude of compromise as liberalism, as the Christian doctrine is constantly reshaped to comply with current human understanding and cultural preferences in order to present the Gospel in acceptable terms. The world is developing so fast within the global context that Friedman (2006:50) in his ground-breaking book even stated: "The world is flat" and spells out what he calls "ten flatteners", where he explains that everything became so close that everyone in the world lives virtually within the bounds of each other. Hence, it became a stark reality that Christians "merge" with the world in which they live.

These options, according to Lucas (2002:58), represent two of the five ways which Niebuhr mentions to relate faith to culture. The other three alternatives mentioned by Niebuhr are:

- Christ *of* culture: God is operative in all areas of life and tends towards assimilation with the surrounding culture.

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- Christ *against* culture: human culture is a fallen culture and opposed to God, and should therefore be shunned.
- Christ *the transformer of* culture: human culture should be confronted with the aim to transform it. It should thus be studied to enable critical involvement.

There are other ways (except for the two above-mentioned options) in which Christians can go about in the "meeting" between the secular world and Christianity. Another possibility is described as "inculturation" and Burke (1995) explained it as follows:

> Inculturation is a term designating the process by which the Gospel takes root in local values, discovering and using their richness, as well as purifying their deficiencies. He goes on by explaining that inculturation enriches the church and gives *inter alia* a better understanding of liturgical celebrations.

From an African perspective, the author Peter Nlemadim DomNwachukwu (2000) published his book titled *Authentic African Christianity: an inculturation model for the Igbo*. In this book he examined seven models of indigenous Christianity in Africa as a background for developing an "authentic Igbo Christianity" as he calls it (DomNwachukwu, 2000:2), which should be taken cognizance of in the African context.

Since this article focuses on the Old Testament, it will be indicated what the history of the Old Testament revealed in many ways: God has never taken his people *out* of the world, but has chosen to leave them *in* the world to live among the gentiles, to have an impact on the world around them and to transform it (*cf.* Ge 12:3).

2.2 PROPOSED METHOD

The basis theory component of the operational scientific hermeneutical model of Zerfass (Zerfass, 1974:164-177; *cf.* 1.6) will provide the paradigm to suggest guidelines on *how* believers should live in a secular world by exploring theological departure points from the Word of God (Venter, 1993:247; Heitink, 1999:113; Reinecke, 2001:9). In order to reach the aim of giving guidelines for a basis theory, it will be attempted to identify Old Testament figures who were yoked together with pagans or unbelievers and to investigate how they asserted themselves as believers in an environment of mostly unbelievers. Guidelines from these histories will be formulated for contemporary Christians on how to act in a context in which they live and work together with people of opposite or diverging convictions. In conclusion Old Testament teachings about the responsibility of Christians in the world will be investigated.

In her article on the transformative potential of Scripture, Mouton (1997:247-248) argues that Scripture should continually be a resource for Christian ethos and ethics in everyday life. Christians should thus attempt to obtain biblical perspectives from the Word of God on what the relationship between them and

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the surrounding secular world should be and how they should live in the same context as unbelievers or people of opposing convictions.

2.3 OLD TESTAMENT FIGURES YOKED TOGETHER WITH HEATHENS

The identity and ethos of the early faith communities' were shaped by reminding themselves *who* God is and *what* He had done in the past. For the purposes of this article, Old Testament people who believed in God but lived and worked among heathens or gentiles are thus identified. Attention is given to Joseph (*cf.* Ge 39) and Daniel (*cf.* Da 1-6) who served as leaders in foreign courts, but also to an ordinary, unnamed slave girl who had no status (*cf.* 2 Ki 5). To ensure a balanced perspective, Israel as a nation is also focused on. The advice of Jeremiah to the Israelites during the period in which they lived as exiles in Babylon, will receive attention (*cf.* Jer 29).

2.3.1 Joseph

As a young child Joseph experiences the threat of death, the shock of humiliation, the tortures of being chained as a slave and sold into Egypt to work for his Egyptian master, Potiphar. After experiencing a time of good fortune, he finds himself in the depths again (Wallace, 2001:32). No wonder Wenham (1994:372-374) calls this period one of the darkest times in Joseph's life, since he experiences the one setback after the other, but the phrase "the Lord was with Joseph" enfolds the events recorded in Ge 39. The divine name of Yahweh is rarely used in the history of Joseph (only three times in other chapters: Ge 38:7, 20; 49:18), but in chapter 39 it is used *eight* times (Ge 39:2, 3, 5, 21, 23). The narrator makes sure the reader knows why Joseph is so successful (Wenham, 1994:373; Hamilton, 1995:459; Borgman, 2001:184). Joseph is highly regarded by Potiphar because "the Lord gave him success in everything he did" (Ge 39:3). Consequently, Potiphar puts Joseph in charge of "everything he owned" (Ge 39:4). This is a comprehensive assignment for a slave, but the Bible states that Joseph was divinely equipped for this massive task (Hamilton, 1995:459-460; Mathews, 2005:732).

Joseph's faith in God, however, is at stake when Potiphar's wife confronts him with a moral temptation. Mathews (2005:726-727) asks the question how it is possible that Joseph remained true in such a difficult trial, as he was alone in a foreign country. He mentions the opinion of Luther that Joseph's *spiritual heritage* enabled him to make the right decision: "The Word implanted in the boy's heart by his father was completely pure and exceedingly fruitful." Joseph shows his loyalty, complete dedication to his master and his strength of character by withstanding the temptation of Potiphar's wife to seduce him (*cf.* Hamilton, 1995:461; Johnson & Johnson, 2001:157; Wallace, 2001:32). Wenham (1998:86) confirms Luther's opinion by remarking that Joseph's motivation for his reaction is given in the phrase: "How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" (Ge 39:9). He shows his trust in God, his moral convictions and his deep, constant and living piety with this statement. His moral behaviour was not only

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based on his *beliefs about* God, but on his *fellowship with* God. God's presence always dominated his attitude. His religious experiences exercised a lot of power in his life (Wallace, 2001:33-34).

Notwithstanding his innocence, Joseph ends up in jail. In his difficulties, his faith was severely tested, but he held on to the Word of the Lord and it "proved him true" (Ps 105:19). He must have asked many questions, but he never doubted that what God had spoken, would come to pass. That is exactly what happens as Baldwin (2000:168), Borgman (2001:185) and Wallace (2001:36) draw attention to the passage in Ge 39:21 where it is stated that "the Lord granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden". The influence God gave to Joseph was a foretaste of the blessing God had promised Abraham: to bless all nations of the world (*cf.* Ge 12:2-3) and to redeem them from corruption (Wallace, 2001:38). Joseph believed that God had sent him to Egypt for a purpose he was yet to discover. He settled and felt that he was under God's providence and in His presence. He believed that he could conform to this new culture and customs, as long as it did not require of him to sin against his God, because he never lost hold of his dream. He dressed and acted like a traditional Egyptian, but knew that he would never *be* an Egyptian (Wallace, 2001:35-36). What appears at first as further degradation in the life of Joseph, Wenham (2003:66) and Mathews (2005:731-732) state, is in fact a move closer to triumph, because God uses it for the salvation of Joseph's family and many others (Ge 50:20).

Pointers from Joseph's life
- His protection in difficult times and the secret of his success, flow from the fact that the unseen God is *with* him, and at work *in* his life.

- He was divinely equipped for his task, as "the Lord gave him success in everything he did" (Ge 39:3).

- He believed that God had sent him to Egypt for a purpose. Therefore he settled, conformed in certain ways to this new culture and its customs, as long as it did not require of him to sin against his God.

- His faith in God, stemming from his religious upbringing and spiritual heritage, enabled him to stand firm in a time of temptation.

- His moral behaviour was not only based on his *beliefs about* God, but on his *fellowship with* God.

- When he suffered unjustly, he held on to God's promises.

- God made Joseph prosper again, because He wanted to use him for the salvation of many.

2.3.2 Daniel and his friends

Daniel and his three friends are among many Israelites carried off to Babylon in exile (Da 1:1). The theme of the book of Daniel, according to Davies (1993:12), is the relationship between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of men. God's people can fully participate in the life of a foreign nation, but may not compromise their religion (Collins, 1993:51). The way to success, even in a hostile world, is faithfulness to God, although success is never a right, but a gift of God (Lucas, 2002:55-56). The events

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recorded in Daniel 1 are about more than a mere food-issue (Helberg, 1994:26). As Redditt (1999:46) states clearly, there was no regulation that prohibited Daniel to eat the food of the foreign king (Da 1:8). On the one hand, says Lucas (2002:57), it is about the king of Babylon who wanted to capture not only the Jews' bodies, but their minds as well. That explains the process of conditioning and indoctrination which includes the changing of their names – he wanted to make them Babylonians. Van Deventer (2001:154) indicates that the king tried to establish the young men in the Babylonian culture. On the other hand, Lucas (2002:57) believes that Daniel 1 is about the sovereign God who has control over all nations and who is at work in this world (*cf.* Van Deventer, 2001:194). God's actions, as described in this chapter, are that of a "hidden hand" which only an eye of faith could perceive. Proof that God is certainly at work, can be found in the fact that the palace official does not point-blank refuse Daniel's request for different food and in the outstanding progress and abilities of the four Jewish men.

The question of allegiance is prominent in the story of Daniel and his friends: the pressure to conform and become loyal subjects to the king of Babylon is extensive. According to Van Deventer (2001:154), the young men did not accept all aspects of the process of adapting to the new culture. Lucas (2002:58) agrees with Van Deventer and states that Daniel wanted to draw a line in the king's process of conditioning with his refusal to eat the king's food – he wanted to place a "marker". It paid off and Daniel received the highest civil post under the king (Da 2:48) and just like Joseph, served the ruler in a foreign land faithfully (Collins, 1993:39). Daniel took the leadership position and responsibility in society, but with that he also had to make hard choices – it was a matter of participation joined with distinctiveness (Lucas, 2002:58). God bestowed outstanding wisdom on Daniel and promotion followed, but not without the envy of his colleagues (Russell, 1989:69; Helberg, 1994:26, 66).

Daniel's colleagues wanted to remove him from office legitimately, but could not find any evidence against him. Fidelity in religious conviction implies faithfulness in all areas of life (Helberg, 1994:68). Their only hope was to use his spiritual strength against him, since they knew that he would obey God rather than men (Da 6:5; *cf.* Ac 5:29). Daniel's religious convictions and commitment to God were apparent to people, as everybody knew that he would not compromise, even if he had to face death (Miller, 1994:179; Redditt, 1999:48; Van Deventer, 2001:172-173, 209). Daniel knew that the prohibition to pray to his God (Da 6:7) was a ploy by his adversaries to get something against him (Da 6:3-4) and he knew they were lying in wait for him. He disobeyed the law of the country and continued to pray three times a day openly as it was the source of his power (Da 6:10). His adversaries use his dedication to God to look like rebellion against the king (Da 6:13). Daniel ended up in the lion's den and it is clear that God did not protect Daniel *from* danger, but *in* it (Redditt, 1999:105-107).

Daniel's friends likewise had to take risks to hold on to their Jewish identity in Babylon (Da 3:19-30). The government required of them things they were unwilling to do. It was certainly a time of persecution for them (Davies, 2001:565). According to Miller (1994:104-105, 119) and Van Deventer (2001:194),

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the three friends had no doubt that God could deliver them. The fact that He is sovereign, omniscient and faithful and in control of kings and events on earth, comforted them and they humbly accepted that God not always chose to intervene in the circumstances of his servants – they were ready to face death. Irrespective of God's action, they were steadfast in their decision. Their faithfulness did not depend on the certainty of deliverance (Collins, 1993:188; Van Deventer, 2001:163, 196). They resolved to adhere to the first two commandments of the Law of Moses, not to honour any other god and worship any idol. Their actions were determined by their principles, whether it was "clever" or not (Lucas, 2002:91).

The king gives them another chance to get out of a life-threatening situation and to prove their loyalty and obedience, because he is primarily concerned with their public conduct and not their private beliefs. The same holds for today's secular society: as long as religion is a matter of private belief and does not challenge the assumptions and values of society, it is acceptable. Daniel's friends, however, refused to change their stance, not because God would save them in the first place, but because they wanted to follow the pattern of life that a commitment to Yahweh requires. This demonstrates true ethical behaviour – it is motivated by the intrinsic merit of the action, irrespective of the positive or negative consequences (Van Deventer, 2001:198; Lucas, 2002:95). God did not prevent their suffering, but He was the "fourth" man *with* them in the fire (*cf.* Is. 43:2). He did not save them *from* the furnace, but *in* it (Russell, 1989:48-49, Helberg, 1994:48). Daniel's friends' choice demonstrates their willingness to die faithfully for God, rather than to live as followers of Babylonian gods (Redditt, 1999:69-70, 73). They were unconditionally committed to God (Da 3:28).

Although God is able to deliver believers from trials, He sometimes allows trials to continue and asks believers to trust Him, even if they do not understand (Miller, 1994:120). In order to stay faithful to God, Daniel's friends had to disobey the direct order of the king with possible dire consequences, but God delivered them (Redditt, 1999:72). Earthly powers do have some authority over God's people, but He is never distant in the situation, always present to keep His faithful people safe. God does not save Daniel and his friends *from* the fiery furnace and the lion's den, but *in* it (Da 3:24-25; Da 6:22). He does not always deliver His people miraculously from martyrdom, but He grants victory over death, hope over fear and justice over evil (Lucas, 2002:155).

Pointers from the lives of Daniel and his friends
–   God's people can fully participate in the life of a foreign nation and can serve the ruler faithfully, but may not compromise their religion. It is participation with distinctiveness.
–   The sovereign God, who has control over nations, is at work in this world and in His people's lives. His actions are often that of a "hidden hand" which can only be perceived by an eye of faith.
–   The young men were under pressure to adapt to the new culture, but did not accept all aspects of the process.

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- God gives wisdom to remain faithful in all circumstances, even life-threatening ones.
- Faithfulness to God implies faithfulness in all areas of life and God may grant success, but it is never a right. God's people are loyal citizens and conscientious workers. When God allows success, it may cause the colleagues' envy.
- Daniel's religious convictions and commitment to God were evident to people, as they knew that he would not compromise, even if it costs his life.
- Daniel disobeys the law of the country and continues to pray openly three times a day, because he knows that it is the source of his spiritual power.
- God did not protect Daniel and his friends *from* danger, but *in* it, because He was *with* them.
- Daniel's friends had no doubt that God could deliver them in their time of trial, but they accepted that God not always chooses to intervene in the circumstances of his servants. Notwithstanding the circumstances, Daniel's friends stayed committed to God and trusted Him.
- Their commitment to God did not depend on the certainty of their deliverance.
- They demonstrated true ethical behaviour which is motivated by the intrinsic merit of the action, irrespective of the positive or negative consequences.
- They disobeyed the king, as dying faithfully for God was preferable to serving false gods.

2.3.3 The young Israelite slave girl

It is *God* who gives Naaman, the commander of the Aramean army, victory over Israel (2 Ki 5:1). This proves that God is in control of nations (Provan, 1999:191). In the Israelite theology, no foreign army can have victory over them unless God allows it. This defeat must be God's will, because it results in the glorification of the Lord as a powerful gentile is converted (Seow, 1999:193). God is interested in the lives of people, also the lives of *non*-Israelites (House, 1995:271; Bimson, 1998:366). He uses an anonymous, young slave girl filled with compassion and without status and influence in a foreign country to bring salvation to a gentile (Seow, 1999:193, 198; Branch, 2004:180, 187; Kim, 2005:50-52).

The slave girl is a prisoner of war and handmaid of Naaman's wife. She knows or quickly learns how to serve a great lady by being kind and observant. She knows when to speak and when to be silent. She earns her mistress's confidence before she shares her faith. Naaman's wife trusts her, because her words bear witness to faith, encouragement and hope (Bimson, 1998:366; Branch, 2004:180, 186). By her words and attitude she demonstrates her loyalty to and concern for Naaman. She mentions to her mistress that Elisha, "the prophet who is in Samaria" (2 Ki 5:3), can cure her master of his leprosy. She speaks confidently, because she knows that God heals and when a prophet of God prays, things happen. She helps her master, but also does a great service to her people and her God (Dietrich, 2001:251; Branch, 2004:181). This girl in exile has all reason to be bitter and unhelpful, but like Daniel and Mordecai, she cares for the spiritual and physical well-being of her conqueror (House, 1995:272; Safari, 2004:23).

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Pointers from the young slave girl's life

- God is in control of nations, because it is *He* who gives the Aramean army victory over Israel.
- God sometimes allows difficult situations, because He has a plan.
- God is interested in the lives of *all* people, even *non*-Israelites.
- God sometimes uses unlikely people to fulfil His purposes. One needs not to be influential to be used by God, but faithful, loyal and filled with compassion.
- The slave girl earns her mistress's trust before she shares her faith.
- No confrontational action is required of her, she only has to say something, but she does it *in faith*.
- She demonstrates her loyalty to and concern for her master by introducing him to the solution to his problem – her God who has compassion, answers prayer and heals people.
- God receives the glory as His salvation and healing extends to a gentile because of her.

2.3.4 Exiles in Babylon

The exile began in 597 BC when a significant number of Jews were forcibly deported to Babylon and ended when Cyrus allowed them in 538 BC to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (Gruber, 1997:94). Jeremiah, who stayed behind in Judah, writes to the exiles and specifically addresses their relationship to Babylon (Jer 29:1-23). Kidner (1987:100) notes that Jeremiah starts his letter by stressing the point that it is *God* who has sent the exiles to Babylon (Jer 29:4, 7, 14) and they should therefore come to terms with their situation. With this, Huey (1993:253) believes that Jeremiah wanted to remind the exiles that God is in control and that they should put their hope in Him, rather than turning to "holy revolt". When the time is right, God will end their suffering, as He has plans to let them prosper and experience peace (Jer 29:11). In the meantime, they must be patient in their suffering, because God is at work for their ultimate good (Miller, 2001:791). Jeremiah, says Kidner (1987:100), wants the exiles to be set free from the paralysing resentment and self-pity and to work for growth and peace. They are exhorted to settle down, build houses, plant gardens, marry, have children and plan the marriages of their children, because God will be present with his divine blessing and active in their daily lives, even in this foreign land (Miller, 2001:792; Fretheim, 2002:402). Jeremiah gives this advice to the captives at the beginning of the exile for them to know that the exile will not end as soon as the false prophets claim. In fact, it will be seventy years before God will deliver them (Jones, 1992:363; Keown *et al.*, 1995:72; O'Connor, 2001:511-512).

Remarkably, Jeremiah's letter not only focuses on the exiles, but also on the people among whom they live. The Jews must seek the well-being of Babylon and pray for it (Jer 29:7). God is also concerned about the welfare of a "pagan" city. The exiles' work and prayer would have a positive effect on their own lives, but also on those of the Babylonians (Fretheim, 2002:403). The exiles must pray for the peace of Babylon so that it can be a secure and viable place to live, because only then can they find their possibilities for life there (Miller, 2001:792). In the New Testament, many instructions are found on how

believers should react towards their enemies (*cf.* Mt 5:43-48; Ro 12:20; Tit 3:1-2 & 1 Pe 2:18), but Jeremiah 29:7 is the only passage in the Old Testament where God's people are instructed to pray for their enemies (Huey, 1993:253). Seeking the well-being of the enemy is a sure way to find one's own well-being (Miller, 2001:796).

Pointers from the lives of the exiles

- The exiles should remember that it is *God* who has sent them to Babylon. God *is* in control.
- They should put their hope in God and not take things into their own hands.
- They should be patient in their suffering, because God will intervene at the right time. He will work things out for their ultimate good, because He has plans for them.
- They are exhorted to work for growth and peace, to settle down, to continue with their daily lives and to seek the welfare of Babylon.
- God is present with His divine blessing and active in their daily lives, even in a foreign country.
- The Jews must seek the well-being of Babylon and pray for it, because God is also concerned about the welfare of a "pagan" city.
- They should pray for the peace and prosperity of the "pagan" city, because it will have a positive effect on their lives and also on the lives of the Babylonians.
- Seeking the well-being of the enemy is a sure way of finding one's own well-being.

2.4 TEACHING FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT ON THE RESPONSIBILITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE WORLD

The examples of people in the Old Testament who shared the yoke with gentiles clearly indicate that God does not withdraw His children from the world, but He desires of them to reach out to the people around them. Van der Walt (2006:31-32) emphasises that young Christians need to be taught the implications of their conversion to Christ. They need to understand that their lives also have an outward focus to serve God and their fellow human beings in *all* spheres of life.

2.4.1 To be a blessing to the nations

Abraham's response to the divine call shows his obedient faith (Wenham, 1987:282). When God calls Abraham (Ge 12:1-3), He promises that Abraham will be divinely blessed, but in order to receive this blessing, Abraham has to risk everything (Wenham, 1987:274; Wenham, 1998:70). He has to leave his "country", his "people" and his "father's household" behind. He does not dishonour his heritage, but understands that these things may hinder him to obey God's command. The comfort of one's country and support of one's family give way to a higher allegiance when one chooses to enter the kingdom of God and receives the promised blessing (Mathews, 2005:109). This blessing is not for him only, but for all the peoples of the earth, also those outside the chosen community. All people will experience blessing

through their contact with Abraham and his nation (Fretheim, 1994:424; Whybray, 2001:49; Mathews, 2005:115, 117). This promise became true in the lives of many people throughout history. Laban was blessed because of Jacob (Ge 30:27). Potiphar and the whole of Egypt experienced God's blessings because of Joseph (Mathews, 2005:726). King Xerxes' life was saved by Esther and Mordecai (Est 2:19-23). After ministering the Word of God to the Jews who rejected it, Paul and Barnabas turned to the gentiles to bring "salvation to the ends of the earth" (Ac 13:46-47).

Throughout the centuries, Christians have had a positive impact on their society. Think in this regard of David Livingstone's contribution to abolish slavery (*cf.* Mackenzie, 1993), or George Muller who established homes for thousands of English orphans (*cf.* Muller, 1984) or Jackie Pullinger's work among drug addicts, gangsters and prostitutes of the Walled City in Hong Kong (*cf.* Pullinger, 1993). Christians still respond to the needs of the world around them. They aided in the rebuilding of Kobe, Japan, after a devastating earthquake on 17 January 1995. As a result of their help, opportunities for ministry opened up (Kellner, 1995:60-61). Evangelical churches in Turkey had an impact on their Muslim neighbours through their aid and rescue efforts after the earthquake in Izmit in August 1999 (Veenker, 1999:22). The same happened after the earthquake in Kashmir on 8 October 2005 (Alford, 2006a:21-22). After the tsunami had struck some twelve South East Asian countries on 26 December 2004, radical Islam communities opened up for Christians through relief work done by them (Carnes, 2006:64). Another example is the effect that hurricane Katrina had on the Christian community in New Orleans. The city is well known for its Mardi Gras, but 28% of its residents lived in extreme poverty. Church leaders admitted that little was done to address the chronic poverty situation. After Katrina had struck on 29 August 2005, a coalition of ministries was formed to co-ordinate relief efforts and thousands of jobs were provided for the unemployed (Alford, 2006b:48-50).

2.4.2 To be a light to the Gentiles

In Isaiah 49, the second of the four so-called "Servant Songs" is found and the "servant" in this passage is identified as the nation of Israel. The servant is called to do a particular task (Knight, 1984:130; Thompson, 2001:75). God has given the servant the task to "bring Jacob back to him" (Isa 49:5). According to Thompson (2001:77), this refers to a spiritual return of God's people to Himself – a return to faith in, and faithfulness to God. Israel's first responsibility is that the Israelites will come back to God. This is not an easy task, because according to Isaiah 49:4, the servant became despondent – "I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing" (Westermann, 1996:207). In spite of this feeling of failure, God extends the span of his commission and tells Israel that they must be "a light for the Gentiles" (Isa 49:6). They received a mission to the wider world (Westermann, 1996:212).

This is the vision that the prophet Isaiah has of Israel – they should be a "light to the nations" (Isa 49:6; Block, 1997:622). To proclaim the deliverance of the Lord *only* to Israel, which is in itself an overwhelming assignment, is too *small* a task for the servant of the Lord, and therefore his task is *augmented* to include the Gentiles "to the ends of the earth" (Isa 49:6; Carpenter, 1997:307, Tomasino, 1997:957; Oswalt, 1998:293). Although Israel is precious in God's sight and the object of God's compassion, God is also interested in the nations of the earth (Hanson, 1995:126; Hubbard, 1997:559). God's focus has shifted from the physical captivity of Judah to the moral and spiritual captivity of Israel and the world. God wants the life of Israel to be evidence that He alone is the Holy One (Oswalt, 1998:287).

In the Old and New Testament "light" is synonymous with "salvation" and God does not limit his salvation only to ethnic Israel (Selman, 1997:327-328; Thomas, 1998:319). As Thompson (2001:78) remarks, God wants His love to reach and enfold all people – worldwide. Seitz (2001:433) mentions that obeying God's commission and being a "light to the nations" may entail affliction and adversity. Faithfulness in such a situation will convey an intimate knowledge of God and fellowship with Him. Sawyer (1996:38) and Thomas (1998:320) notice that the apostle Paul uses this command in Isaiah to justify and authorise his missionary involvement with the Gentiles (Ac 13:47).

2.4.3 To declare God's glory among the nations

The twofold task of Israel, according to Terrien (2003:675), is evident in Psalm 96:

- They must praise and bless the Lord's Name (Ps 96:2).

- They must proclaim it to the nations (Ps 96:3).

The Hebrew verb *bāśar*, used in Ps 96:3, carries the meaning of "proclaiming the good news" (Broyles, 1999:375). According to Kidner (1975:347), the meaning of the word in the LXX is "to evangelise". The good news that should be spread is about Yahweh's saving work and the fact that the Lord reigns. It is a definite evangelical action. The purpose of the action is that the nations and the peoples of the earth should understand that the reign of God brings stability (Tate, 1990:512; Mays, 1994:307-308). The Israelites are called to share the good news of victory over chaos with all people who worshipped other gods. The universal note, that not only Israel, but "all the earth", should honour Yahweh, continues in Psalm 96:9 & 10 (Eaton, 2003:341; Lucas, 2003:47-48). "All the earth" speaks about the cosmic scope of God's rule which will ensure stability and justice for all the world's peoples (McCann, 1996:1065-1066).

2.5 GUIDELINES FLOWING FROM THE RESEARCH FOR CHRISTIANS IN THEIR CONTACT WITH UNBELIEVERS

From the study of some Old Testament figures and the nation of Israel and selected teachings on the responsibilities of God's people towards the world in which they live, certain essential truths about God and some general guidelines to equip contemporary Christians living among unbelievers in a secular world, can be identified.

2.5.1 Believers should understand the importance of a personal relationship with God

– A personal relationship *with* God implies daily fellowship with the living God. It requires a day by day walk with Him where the spiritual truths are applied in everyday life and decisions. It is not only knowledge *about* Him.

– Day by day fellowship with God is the source of Christians' spiritual strength. That is where they learn to trust God and where they receive promises from God which will carry them through trying circumstances.

– A personal relationship with God enables Christians to obey God's commands faithfully and to be willing to sacrifice – even unto death, by keeping the Suffering Servant in mind and following Him.

– A personal relationship with God helps the believer to remember that unjust suffering should never be regarded as a sign of God's *absence,* but of His *presence.*

– Christian parents should realise that the religious upbringing of their children is their most important responsibility, as it will help their children to stand firm in times of temptation and in difficult situations.

2.5.2 Believers should know and be reminded that God is sovereignly in control

– They should remember that God uses circumstances to work *in* and *through* their lives and to bring about His purposes.

– They should accept difficulties and be patient in it, since God does not always deliver His children *from* danger, but always protect them *in* it.

– They should not take matters into their own hands, but maintain an unwavering faith and trust in God, because He *is* in control and will intervene at the right time, because He has a plan to fulfil.

– The knowledge that God is in control gives believers the spiritual strength to act in a truly ethical manner – to do what is right, based on the intrinsic merit of the action, irrespective of the positive or negative consequences.

2.5.3 God is present and He equips His children for their task

– Believers should remember that the *unseen* God never leaves them alone, He is always *with* them.

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- They should understand that God sometimes works with a *hidden* hand which can only be observed by an eye of faith.
- They should remember that God gives wisdom and faith to know how to handle difficult situations and to remain faithful in all circumstances.

2.5.4 God's standards and faithfulness to Him

- Christians should be loyal and conscientious in their work and always deliver work of outstanding quality, even if their employers are unbelievers and sometimes discriminate against them.
- In their dedicated service to their earthly "masters", they should remember that their real Master is in heaven and their first loyalty lies with Him.
- If believers are forced to compromise their religious convictions and to do something contrary to God's will, they have the right to non-violent civil disobedience.
- God does not always require "big" things, but He asks of believers to be faithful in the small things.

2.5.5 God's outward focus gives believers a missionary vision

- Believers need to understand that their lives should be directed towards service to God and fellow human beings in *all* spheres of life.
- Believers have a responsibility towards the Church of God and *also* towards the larger world to spread the good news of God's salvation, as God is not interested only in His children (the believers), but also in the nations (the unbelievers).
- They should know that God has a purpose to fulfil through their lives and they should thus be willing to participate fully in every day's civil responsibilities, but it is participation joined with distinctiveness.
- Believers should not keep quiet about their personal commitments and religious convictions, because people should know why they act the way they do.
- They should first win the *trust* of the unbelievers, before they try to share their faith.
- God does not use only influential people to bring about change. The only requirement used by God is that believers should be willing to share faithfully their religious experiences and beliefs.
- Believers should contribute to the welfare of foreign nations. Unbelievers should be blessed as a result of their contact with believers.
- It is possible that doors for the Gospel may open as a result of Christian concern and outreach/help in countries of the world which are traditionally not open to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In this article it has been indicated that God's people are often yoked together with unbelievers. Believers and unbelievers share the same context in this world, but believers are called upon to act as witnesses of

God. Even when they suffer injustice and affliction, they should take heart, because suffering is never a sign of God's *absence*, but of His *presence*. God does not always deliver His children *from* danger, but always protect them *in* it. The secret for a fulfilling life lies in a personal relationship with God and daily fellowship with Him. Knowledge *about* God is not sufficient. God's children are blessed by Him to be a blessing to others and they should therefore understand that their lives should be directed towards service to God and fellow human beings in *all* spheres of life.

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Key concepts:	Kernbegrippe:
basis-theoretical guidelines	basis-teoretiese riglyne
believers' responsibilities	gelowiges se verantwoordelikhede
secular context	sekulêre konteks
yoked (*cf*. 2 Co 6:14)	juk (vgl. 2 Kor. 6:14)

CHAPTER 3 (ARTICLE 2)

EQUIPPING CHRISTIANS LIVING IN AN "UNEQUALLY YOKED" CONTEXT: NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVES ON HOW CHRISTIANS SHOULD LIVE AND ACT IN A SOCIETY OF DIVERGING CONVICTIONS

Abstract

Equipping Christians living in an "unequally yoked" context: New Testament perspectives on how Christians should live and act in a society of diverging convictions

The exhortation found in 2 Co 6:14 "not to be yoked together with unbelievers" has been interpreted and applied differently by Christians. Some Christians try to hide from the realities of everyday life in a kind of escapism and religious isolation, while others compromise by trying to accommodate society's demands and current trends in all kinds of worldly religious practices. These extreme positions cause Christians to be without any influence in the world. The primary aim of the article is to show how believers in New Testament times handled the situation when they were yoked together with unbelievers. In order to propose scriptural guidelines for contemporary believers, the focus will be on the example of the apostles while the teaching of Paul to the slaves and of Peter to the strangers in this world will also be discussed. Some other New Testament perspectives are touched upon, *inter alia* the kind of authority to be obeyed and teaching on the responsibilities and attitude of believers. After the discussion of each part, pointers will be suggested. In conclusion, guidelines towards a Christian lifestyle within a secular context will be proposed.

Opsomming

Toerusting van Christene wat in 'n "ongelyke juk"-konteks lewe: Hoe Christene moet leef en optree in 'n gemeenskap met uiteenlopende oortuigings

Die vermaning in 2 Kor 6:14 om "nie in dieselfde juk as die ongelowige te trek nie" word verskillend deur Christene geïnterpreteer en toegepas. Sommige Christene probeer om die realiteite van elke dag te ontduik in 'n lewe van ontvlugting en godsdienstige afsondering, terwyl ander weer probeer om die samelewing se eise en hedendaagse strominge in wêreldse godsdienstige praktyke te akkommodeer. Hierdie uiterste standpunte veroorsaak dat Christene sonder invloed in die wêreld is. Die primêre doel van die artikel is om aan te toon hoe gelowiges in die Nuwe Testamentiese tyd die situasie hanteer het waar hulle met ongelowiges in een juk moes trek. Ten einde Skriftuurlike riglyne vir hedendaagse gelowiges te bied, sal daar gefokus word op die voorbeeld van die apostels, terwyl die onderrig van Paulus aan die slawe en Petrus aan die vreemdelinge in hierdie wêreld ook aandag sal kry. Enkele ander

Nuwe-Testamentiese perspektiewe word aangeraak, onder andere die soort gesag wat gehoorsaam moet word en onderrig oor die verantwoordelikhede en houding van gelowiges. Na die bespreking van elke gedeelte, word merkers aangedui. Ten slotte word riglyne aangebied wat kan geld vir 'n Christelike lewenstyl binne 'n sekulêre konteks.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Christians find themselves living in a postmodern context where they are increasingly confronted with people holding different views. Their Christian values and ethics are challenged by the 21st century society which is sometimes even explicitly hostile towards Jesus Christ and his followers (Bakker, 2004:117-118; Kolden, 2004:423). Some scientists and even Nobel prize-winning physicists openly state that they prefer to restrict their field of view to that which can be observed and verified, subsequently *excluding* most matters of faith (Yancey, 2003:2-3). In addition to the pressure Christians experience to live out their faith in the postmodern environment, they are also confronted with the biblical teaching in the passage of 2 Co 6:14 – "do not be yoked together with unbelievers" which can give the impression that they should avoid contact with unbelievers. As this passage clearly sheds light on the relationship between believers and unbelievers, it is imperative that believers, in order to obey God, should understand what kind of conduct is forbidden (Jordaan, 1999:469).

This verse forms part of the pericope comprising of 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 which, ever since the 19th century, has been subject to many critical questions and arguments regarding its authorship. Despite some difficulties, many scholars still believe that this passage is authentically Pauline (Harvey, 1996:75-76; McCant, 1999:62-63). Paul exhorts the Corinthians to renew their covenantal faithfulness as God's people (Long, 2004:235). He urges them, according to Thrall (2004:472-474), not to be closely associated with unbelievers because of the absolute contrast between the moral uprightness which is required of believers and the wickedness which is common among the unbelievers. Theron (2004:41-43) highlights the way in which Paul metaphorically applies the Old Testament instruction that different animals are prohibited to be yoked together (Dt 22:10; Lev 19:19). Futato (1997:296) argues that this Old Testament law underscores the necessity of holiness and thus prohibits Jews to plough with an ox (clean) and a donkey (unclean) yoked together. Hoffmeier (1997:712) states that God wants to remind the Israelites that they are His people and that they should not mingle with pagans. They should not have fellowship with those who despise the salvation of God, just as light cannot exist in union with darkness and no harmony exists between Christ and Belial (2 Co 6:14-15).

By means of the metaphor Paul warns believers not to be *intimately involved* with unbelievers (Barnett, 1999:130). Another word, suggested by Garland (1999:331-332), is "ally". Paul prohibits an alliance between spiritual opposites as it could lead to spiritual disaster. The fact that believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit does not mean that they can be careless about their associations in the world. Paul is not

implying that Christians should totally separate themselves from the world, because that would mean that they will have to leave this world altogether (1 Co 5:10). They still have to shop at the market (1 Co 10:25) and may be invited for dinner at an unbeliever's house (1 Co 10:27), but they may not form their spiritual identity in the pagan society and realign their values accordingly. Belleville (1996:177-182) mentions that the quotation of Isaiah 52:11 in this pericope, suggests that Paul is referring to associations or partnerships between Christians and non-Christians of compromising nature, rather than casual or occasional working relationships. The reason for the prohibition in verse 14 is given in verse 16 – "for we are the temple of the living God". It means that they belong exclusively to God and should forsake all associations that would be incompatible with God's ownership.

Paul's metaphor conveys the message that believers should live holy lives by separating themselves from close relationships in which, unless both parties are true believers, Christian consistency will be compromised. However, to be effective witnesses in the world, believers should be seen and accessible (Martin, 1986:197, 211). Paul states that Christians are *called* to be God's letter to the world (2 Co 3:2-3) and may hence *not withdraw* from the world (Vosloo & Van Rensburg, 1999:1535-1536). The Bible depicts believers as God's ambassadors in the world. Throughout history, God has never removed his followers *from* the world, but has left them *in* the world to have an impact. In His high priestly prayer, Jesus Christ does not ask His Father to take His disciples *out* of the world, but to protect them *in* the world (Jn 17:15, 18). The vital question, according to Van der Walt (2007:2, 4), still remains: How should Christians, living in today's context, have a positive influence on the world around them? It will not happen if they are accommodative towards a society which ignores God's norms. Neither will it happen if they isolate themselves from the "sinful" world. It is extremely difficult for Christians, says Bohnen (2004:111), to find the healthy balance between "identity" and "involvement". Moltmann uses the metaphor of the fossil and the chameleon to describe the two above-mentioned extremes on the position of Christians *in* the world. The fossil depicts the tendency of some Christians to preserve their old traditions. The chameleon represents the inclination of others to compromise and adapt to society in order to remain unnoticed. Neither the fossil, nor the chameleon, pass the test of Karl Barth on the characteristics of the authentic church: *For the church to be true, she needs to be "church for the world"* (Bakker, 2004:118).

The primary aim of this article is to propose scriptural guidelines for a Christian lifestyle within a secular context. In order to attain this objective, believers who were yoked together with unbelievers in New Testament times will be identified and their lives will be discussed to see how they handled the situation. New Testament teachings on the responsibility of Christians in the world and the desired attitudes and responses of believers in an environment of mostly unbelievers will also be investigated.

3.2 PROPOSED METHOD

At the Faculty of Theology of the North-West University, the operational scientific hermeneutical model of Zerfass is often used as practical-theological methodology. The reason for the choice of this specific model probably lies in the fact that it provides a framework for investigating different levels of hermeneutic interchange between theological tradition and operational praxis; norm and current situation; ideal and reality and theology and social sciences (De Wet, 2006:59-60, *cf.* 1.6). The objective of this chapter is to establish a basis theory by using principles from Scripture (Janse van Rensburg, 2007:3). Some New Testament figures who lived and worked among unbelievers will be identified and selected passages from the Word of God will be investigated in order to provide possible guidelines for contemporary Christians.

3.3 THE CONCEPTS "BELIEVER" AND "UNBELIEVER"

As the purpose of this article is to propose guidelines from the New Testament on how Christians should act and live within a contemporary context of unbelief, it is important to clarify the concepts of "believer" and "unbeliever" in New Testament terms. The concept *believer* is understood as somebody who has heard and believes the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Richards, 1985:123; *cf.* McKim, 1996:28). A believer is someone who believes in the Triune God, but often lives and works in a context in which the majority of people are unbelievers (*cf.* 2 Co 6:14). A believer has put his trust in Jesus Christ and has a new focus in life. This change of heart and life is, however, only possible if a believer has been born again by the working of the Holy Spirit (Theron, 2004:8). The Bible refers to a believer as "disciple" or "Christian" (Ac 11:26). Within the framework of this article *unbelievers* are regarded as non-Christians who do not believe the Gospel (Furnish, 1984:371; Louw & Nida vol.1, 1989:124; Webb, 1992:43-44; Jordaan, 1999:479; *cf.* McKim, 1996:291).

3.4 SOME NEW TESTAMENT FIGURES WHO SHARED THE YOKE WITH UNBELIEVERS

The New Testament provides examples of believers who lived and worked among unbelievers. In order to provide possible guidelines for contemporary Christians, attention will be given to the way in which the **apostles** asserted themselves when they experienced hostility from the religious leaders of their day. Paul's teaching regarding the **conduct of slaves and masters**, included in the household codes and the example of **Onesimus** before and after his conversion, will be investigated, as well as Peter's teaching to the **"strangers in the world"**.

3.4.1 Apostles

Peter, John and other apostles made momentous declarations before the Sanhedrin:

> *"Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God."* (Ac 4:19)

"We must obey God rather than men." (Ac 5:29)

The Gospels portray these men as fearful and slow to understand, but after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit during Pentecost (Ac 2:1-4), they were changed men, willing to share the Gospel even at the cost of their own lives (Lloyd-Jones, 2001:97, 101, 107). Peter is not precluding obedience to men, but if one must choose between obeying God or men, God must be obeyed (Barrett, 1998:288). The apostles did exactly this when they disobeyed a specific order of the authority (Ac 5:28) because of God's command (Ac 1:8). The apostles acknowledged, just like Daniel (Da 6:10-13), that there is a *higher authority* from whom they take their orders (Alexander, 2001:1035). Believers are consequently free to disobey the state if it requires disobedience to God (Lea & Griffin, 1992:318). Jesus Christ prepared his disciples that they might experience opposition (Lk 12:11-12), but also promised that the Holy Spirit would teach them what to say (Wall, 2002:92).

The passage in Acts 5:29 is Scripture's leading justification for civil disobedience, but as Wall (2002:109) argues, Peter's response is directed towards a particular kind of authority. His expression of civil disobedience does not serve political, but *missionary* ends. According to Romans 13, Paul emphasises that civil authority is divinely sanctioned to serve the purposes of God in the world. The church thus supports civil authority, but opposes authorities whose self-interest is contrary to the purposes of God. In such cases, actions of civil protest or disobedience may be necessary, e.g. sit-in strikes, hunger strikes or disruption of traffic. This, says Van Wyk (1999:76-78), corresponds with the opinion of Calvin who never opted for unconditional obedience to the government. Christians may be involved in organised peaceful resistance if their God-given fundamental rights of freedom and justice are violated. Van der Walt (1994:501) defines civil disobedience as demonstrative (visible), yet non-violent actions, deliberately breaking the laws of the country, in order to bring about change in the policy of government.

Pointers from the apostles' lives
– Pentecost changed fearful disciples into bold apostles.
– Jesus warned his disciples about possible opposition, but promised the presence of the Holy Spirit.
– The authorities should always be obeyed, except when they require something against God's will.

3.4.2 Slaves

The teaching regarding the conduct of slaves and their masters will be divided into three groups. Firstly, attention will be given to the household code as treated by Paul. Then the specific case of the relationship between Onesimus and his slave owner Philemon will receive attention. To conclude, the teaching of Peter regarding slaves and masters will be studied.

3.4.2.1 The household codes

The household codes or *Haustafeln* can be traced back to Aristotle and address the mutual responsibilities of people in different relationships (Schreiner, 2003:125). The purpose was to ensure good management of households, as a household was seen as the basic unit of society in the Greco-Roman world. Good relationships within households contributed to the stability of the state and formed part of Christians' witness to a hostile society (Jobes, 2005:179-183). Paul addresses Christians in different sectors of life and strongly emphasises submission and obedience (Barclay, 1997:68-69).

3.4.2.1.1 Ephesians 6:5-9

The Pauline authorship of Ephesians was universally accepted until the beginning of the 19th century when scholars started to question it on the grounds of the absence of Paul's favourite words, on the impassionate style in which the letter is written and several other theological arguments (Stott, 1999:16-18). Many scholars hold the view that these arguments are sufficient to prove that Paul is not the author of Ephesians (Kitchen, 1994:7; Perkins, 2000:351; Yee, 2005:33). The author of this article agrees however with many other scholars who are of the opinion that Paul is indeed the author of the letter according to Eph 1:1 (Liefeld, 1997:19; O'Brien, 1999:45-46; Hoehner, 2004:60). Slaves should serve their masters with "respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart" (Eph 6:5). They should be honest and people of integrity with pure motivation (Louw & Nida vol.1, 1989:747). As Christians, they are ultimately working for God and not for people and should therefore demonstrate a willing and wholehearted obedience (Ryken *et al.*, 1998:967; Best, 2004:575, 577). Paul's teaching to the slaves and the masters can be applied to the employer-employee-relationship (De Klerk, 2001:116). Paul asks employers and employees to set an example as believers *within* the prevailing order, without overturning it. He encourages slaves to be as obedient to their masters as to the Lord. Employees should not focus on their employers, but on the Lord who is the real Employer. Then their work will be good and enjoyable (De Klerk, 2001:117; Janse van Rensburg, 2003a:767; Hoehner, 2004:808). They will be conscientious and dedicated in their work, even when the owner's back is turned (Best, 2004:577-578). As the slaves' real Master is in heaven, they will work to win His favour – no need to be "men-pleasers" (Louw & Nida vol.1, 1989:300). Paul reminds the Christian masters that the Lord is their Master (Eph 6:9). The way they experience God as Master should influence the way they act as masters (Janse van Rensburg, 2003a:767). They should always treat their slaves with integrity as they are accountable to their Master in heaven (Hoehner, 2004:814-815).

3.4.2.1.2 Colossians 3:22-4:1

Paul's teaching focuses on the motivation of workers and the standard of their workmanship – both should be of the highest standard, because the work is done for Jesus Christ (O'Brien, 1998:1275; Clinton & Ohlschlager, 2001:1590). Many Christian slaves had non-Christian owners and it was probably difficult for them that their lives were spent to benefit unbelievers. They were perhaps tempted to do the minimum, but Paul urges them to give their best in their work (Barclay, 1997:91). They should

see their lives as being spent *in service of Christ* (Col 3:23, 24). Paul therefore discourages "eye service" (Col 3:22) – service to impress others (Louw & Nida vol.1, 1989:461). He urges Christians to accept the *status quo*, as it is only the circumstances *in which* they serve the Lord and not the circumstances *for which* they live (Barclay, 1997:92). They should respond to it with a Christian attitude of obedience, love, compassion and justice. Such behaviour demonstrates spiritual maturity (Stuckenbruck, 2003:125). They should allow God to transform them inwardly so that their lives can be a witness (Murphy-O'Connor, 2001:1197). The masters should remember that before the impartial God they are the same as slaves and should therefore answer to their "Master" in heaven (Stuckenbruck, 2003:125).

3.4.2.1.3   1 Timothy 6:1-2

Slaves often experienced injustice and it was natural to retaliate, but Paul reminds them that their behaviour should never jeopardise God's Name, even if they endure discrimination (Vosloo & Van Rensburg, 1999:1641). Paul distinguishes between *slaves of unbelievers* who should, for the sake of their witness (missionary aim), respect and obey their masters, and *slaves of believers* who should not expect different treatment because their masters are brothers in Christ. On the contrary, these slaves should work even harder, because a Christian brother will benefit (Guthrie, 1998:1310; Quinn & Wacker, 2000:483; Drury, 2001:1227; Marshall, 2004:627).

3.4.2.1.4   Titus 2:9-10

When Paul encourages slaves to "show that they can be fully trusted" (Tit 2:10), he wants them to be faithful (Louw & Nida vol.1, 1989:377). The stereotypical Greco-Roman view of slaves' behaviour was that they steal and talk back, but Paul advocates behaviour that will commend the Christian religion to outsiders and make the teaching about God attractive. Outsiders must see that the Christian faith produces members of society whose lives are in accordance with their social status (Bassler, 1996:198; Mounce, 2000:416; De Klerk & Janse van Rensburg, 2005:83). The message is clear: people can live a Christian life within the existing orders of society (Marshall, 2004:257-258). Obedience to the Lord also includes obedience to human authorities (Janse van Rensburg, 2003b:827).

Pointers from the household codes

–   Employees should be honest, faithful and obedient. They should work with respect, integrity and dedication, even if their employers are unbelievers and their backs are turned.
–   They are ultimately working for God and his Name should never be jeopardised.
–   Eye-service is ruled out, because they are really in service of Jesus Christ. He is their *real* Master.
–   Christians should accept the prevailing social structure, as it is only the circumstances *in which* they serve the Lord and not the circumstances *for which* they live. They should set an example *within* it – a sign of spiritual maturity.

- Christian employees should allow God to transform them inwardly so that their behaviour can make the Gospel attractive to other people.
- Christian employers should remember that the Lord is their Master and they are accountable to Him. They should treat their employees with integrity and goodwill.

3.4.2.2 Onesimus

The life of Onesimus serves as an example of an unequally yoked situation which changed after the slave's conversion and the implications it has on his relationship with his Christian owner, Philemon. What Paul is actually requiring of Philemon, regarding Onesimus, has always been one of the most difficult interpretative issues in the short letter to Philemon (Frilingos, 2000:99-100; De Vos, 2001:89). From the diplomatic language of Paul, Stuckenbruck (2003:128) argues that it is apparent that Onesimus left Philemon in an unlawful manner and probably owes him money (Phm :18). With his cautious and humble approach, Paul hopes to extinguish Philemon's justified anger (Gorday, 2000:312-313). Paul argues that Onesimus' conversion changed everything, irrespective of what has happened in the past: he was *useless*, but now is *useful* both to Paul and Philemon (Phm :11). Barth and Blanke (2000:141, 143-144) give the meaning of the name "Onesimus" as "useful". His usefulness becomes apparent only *after* his conversion, as the scoundrel becomes a "new man" – a total transformation. Barclay (1997:117), Nordling (1997:278) and Stuckenbruck (2003:129) comment on how Onesimus' conversion influences his relationship with Philemon – the slave-master relationship changed to "brothers in the Lord" (Phm :15-16; Col 4:9). Philemon's Christian charity is stretched further as Paul expects him to treat this former thief as an equal before God. According to De Vos (2001:102, 104), Paul is more interested in the fundamental change in the nature of their relationship (brothers) than in the legal aspects (the slave's emancipation). The fact that Paul wants Philemon to consider Onesimus as a "brother" also has implications for Onesimus' reinstatement as member of the church, which was important to demonstrate the integrity of his conversion (Taylor, 1996:274).

Pointers from Onesimus' life
- Onesimus, a useless, runaway slave, becomes "useful" after his conversion.
- His conversion entirely transforms a scoundrel into a "new man" worthy of his name.
- The conversion changes the former slave-owner relation into a brother-brother relation.

3.4.2.3 Slaves in Peter's letter

The exhortation to slaves in 1 Pe 2:18-25 is based on the slave's obligation to God – in reverence for God (Achtemeier, 1996:193). Peter instructs slaves to submit to their masters, even if their masters are wicked and harsh, because it is "commendable" (1 Pe 2:19) or "pleasing" (Clowney, 1988:115). The slaves' obligation to submit is not cancelled by the unjust behaviour of the master (De Klerk & Janse van Rensburg, 2005:61). Slaves should live as witnesses of Jesus Christ in spite of injustice and persecution.

They may only disobey if their masters expect something against God's will. If slaves suffer unjustly, they will be rewarded by God (Schreiner, 2003:127, 134, 137-138). Kolden (2004:424) and Jobes (2005:187-189) show how Peter reminds the slaves to focus on God's Son who also had no rights and was treated unjustly. They should thus submit to their masters' authority and bear unjust treatment, because of Jesus, the Suffering Servant who said: *"No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also"* (Jn 15:20). Abused slaves are exhorted to follow Christ's example (1 Pe 2:21) when He experienced injustice from office-bearers (De Klerk & Janse van Rensburg, 2005:61).

Pointers from Peter's letter concerning slaves
- Slaves should submit to their masters in reverence for God – even if they are wicked and harsh.
- Slaves should live as witnesses of Jesus Christ in spite of injustice and persecution.
- Slaves may only disobey if their masters expect of them something against God's will.
- Suffering may be part of God's plan for them, but in their suffering, they should focus on the Suffering Servant and follow Christ's example.
- God will reward them if they endure unjust suffering.

3.4.3 Strangers in the world

Peter refers to Christians as being alienated (1 Pe 1:1; 1 Pe 2:11) within the structure of a non-Christian environment, an environment that is non-supportive and sometimes quite hostile towards them (Janse van Rensburg, 1996:37; Kolden, 2004:423; De Klerk & Janse van Rensburg, 2005:60). He instructs them on how to live in a justifiable relationship with unbelievers with whom they are "unequally yoked". Peter reminds his readers that although they are living in an alien world with different values, they should still submit to the authorities (Bakker, 2004:117; Kolden, 2004:423; Jobes, 2005:165). Submission to secular human authorities is part of God's will, for He wants his people to silence any slander and suspicion by "doing good" (1 Pe 2:15) and by being law-abiding citizens (Schreiner, 2003:126). Good behaviour is the most successful way to win the approval of one's accusers. "Doing good" has always been an imperative part of Christian spirituality, because by this Christians should bear witness to the Gospel in the society in which they live (Bakker, 2004:117-118). In the Heidelberg Catechism, "good works" are described as deeds done in faith, for God's honour and according to the Law of God (De Bruyn, 1997:165). Peter's instruction clearly contradicts a worldview that promulgates separation from society and withdrawal from civil responsibility (Jobes, 2005:175-176).

Peter urges Christians not to permit the hostility of the secular society to enter the Christian community (Achtemeier, 1996:222). He wants them to return unbelievers' evil and insults with blessings (1 Pe 3:9). This admonition, according to Schreiner (2003:164-165, 168), corresponds with the teaching of Paul (Ro 12:17) and Jesus (Lk 6:28-29). With "blessing" Peter means that believers should ask God to shower his

favour and grace on other people. Why? Because believers are called to do this and in doing it, they will inherit eternal blessing.

Christians are encouraged not to fear suffering (1 Pe 3:13-17), for nothing can bring lasting harm to the person who does God's will. It is also the pathway to blessing (Achtemeier, 1996:228). Peter warns Christians that they might experience unjust suffering (Jobes, 2005:226-228). Although God's eye is on the righteous, suffering may be part of His will. The knowledge that no persecution can remove them from God's divine favour, gives them courage to remain faithful *in* their suffering. Part of this faithfulness is being prepared to explain the reasons for their beliefs and hope (1 Pe 3:15). Cultural isolation is never an option for a Christian community. They are called to live their lives openly and to give reasons for it in the midst of the unbelieving world (Achtemeier, 1996:230, 232-234). It is imperative, says Schreiner (2003:168-174), that believers should prepare themselves for suffering (1 Pe 4:1-6). They will face opposition, but it will only be temporarily and they will not be conquered, as God will vindicate them.

God uses suffering for purification, because it is a sign of God's *presence* through his Spirit (1 Pe 4:14), and not His *absence* (Schreiner, 2003:219). Suffering, according to Achtemeier (1996:306, 309) and Jobes (2005:233, 287), is inevitable and nothing strange. Christians must therefore be reminded that if suffering comes, it is under God's sovereign control. If they suffer for Christ, they should experience joy (1 Pe 4:13), because their suffering means that they are blessed by the presence of God's Spirit. It is further a sign of future eschatological deliverance. This future-directedness, says Kolden (2004:427), gives hope for everyday living. Hope has transformative power as it changes the believer's perspective on the present situation. Without hope, a situation may seem unchangeable, but with hope the inflexible becomes flexible. Hope does not make suffering less real, but puts it in the right perspective and provides patience to endure.

Pointers from Peter's letter
- Christians live in an alien place with different values, but they should still submit to the authorities and be witnesses of Jesus Christ by "doing good".
- Christians should be law-abiding citizens and may not withdraw from civil responsibility, even if society is unjust.
- They should respond to evil and insult with blessings.
- Suffering should not be feared, for nothing can bring lasting harm to the person who does God's will.
- The knowledge that no persecution can remove one from God's divine favour, gives courage to remain faithful *in* suffering.
- Believers should be prepared and ready to explain the reasons for their beliefs and hope.

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- God uses suffering for purification. It is never a sign of His *absence*, but of His *presence*. This gives *hope in suffering*.

- Hope does not make suffering less real, but puts it in the right perspective and provides patience to endure.

3.5 GOD'S PEOPLE'S RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS THE WORLD

Jesus does not pray that His disciples be removed *from* the world, but protected *in* it (Jn 17:14-15). The Father does not abandon the world and His disciples must witness about it (Beasley-Murray, 1999:300). Jesus does not want His disciples to withdraw from the world like the Gnostic groups, but to be active *in* it (Scott, 2003:1202). Although the disciples do not belong to the world, God has a mission to fulfil through them. It is therefore imperative that they should stay *in* the world. Jesus modelled for his disciples the meaning of being alien *to* the world, but still committed to the mission *in* the world (Borchert, 2002:204). He reached out with compassion to the poor, the sinners, the rejected and the marginalised (*cf.* Lk 5:12-13; 5:27-32; Lk 7:36-50; 18:35-43). Believers will not be able to follow in His footsteps without the help of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus went away, He promised that He will ask the Father to give "another Counsellor" who will be with His disciples for ever (Jn 14:16). As Borchert (2002:123-124) explains, the Greek word for "another" is *allon* which implies that Jesus *is* the 'Paraclete', but as He will soon depart, the Holy Spirit will come to do the same things which Jesus did, namely leading the disciples, advising them, teaching them and empowering them. Attention will now be given to some metaphors and particular teachings in the New Testament which explain the relationship and responsibility of believer towards the unbelieving world.

3.5.1 To act like salt, light and a lamp

When reference is made to "light" in the Old and New Testament, like in Isaiah 49:6 and Mathew 5:14, it refers to "salvation". Believers are called "the light of the world" (Mt 5:14) and they must bring God's light to those who are still in darkness – to *Israel*, but also to the *whole world* (Selman, 1997:328-329; McConville, 1997:752). When Jesus calls His disciples the salt and light of the world, there is a warning included: if the disciples do not carry out their mission, they will be thrown out, just like salt when it loses its salinity (Mt 5:13). Just as salt is not salt for its own sake, the disciples do not exist for themselves, but for the world (Hagner, 1993:99; Davies & Allison, 2000:472-473). For the lamp to give effective light to those around it, it must be put on a stand (Mt 5:15). The disciples of Jesus Christ should therefore be *in* the world (Davies & Allison, 2000:476). The metaphors of the salt and the light, says Lucas (2002:58), carry the message of involvement combined with distinctiveness:

- Light is the antithesis of darkness, but light must shine into the darkness.
- Salt must be combined with that to which it must give taste and to that which it must preserve, but must keep its salinity, otherwise it will be ineffective.

Hagner (1993:100) emphasises the importance of Christian involvement. For the world not to be left in darkness, Christians must fulfil their calling. It is good to become aware of Christians who are serious about their calling by being actively involved in bringing hope in a suffering world. To give just two examples:

- The WMF (Word Made Flesh) Organization focuses on serving Jesus Christ among the poor in urban slums, red-light districts and refugee camps (Heuertz, 2007:90).
- Members of the Tabernacle Baptist Church in New York are reaching out to Karen refugees from the jungles of Myanmar (Burma), helping them in practical ways in their resettling process (McGill, 2007:97).

It is actually impossible, argues Hagner (1993:100), for disciples not to be involved in the world, just as a city on a hill cannot be hidden (Mt 5:14). Salt should be saline, a light should shine and a disciple has a mission. Religion in isolation does not exist (Boring, 1995:182). Davies and Allison (2000:470, 472, 478) see the message of Mt 5:13-16 as the summary statement of the task of God's people in the world. "Closet-Christianity" and self-directed service are ruled out. Jesus calls his followers into a *visible* discipleship that should be lived before the world. Christians should constantly be built up in their faith and reminded of their task in the world (Blomberg, 1992:103; Hall, 2004). Young Christians need to be taught the implications of their conversion to Christ: their lives should have an outward focus to serve God and their fellow human beings in *all* spheres of life (Van der Walt, 2006:31-32).

3.5.2 To be a letter to the world

Paul uses metaphorical language in 2 Co 3:2-3 when he states that the Corinthians are a letter from Christ "*written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts*" (McCant, 1999:37). Their lives are actually a "communication" from Christ and a witness to the world about the change that God works in the lives of people (Martin, 1986:51). The fact that the letter can be "*known and read by everybody*" confirms that their lives are a testimony (Barnett, 1999:60-61; Thrall, 2004:222). The letter was written by "*the Spirit of the living God*", that is the *life*-giving Spirit. With this emphasis, Thrall (2004:227-228) and Lotter (2005:493) believe that Paul wanted to accentuate the point that the power at work in the hearts of the believers, is the Holy Spirit. Through His working, the believers have experienced a profound change of heart which is visible in a new lifestyle (Lotter, 1993:57; Barnett, 1999:62). If the letter was written in pen and ink, it was only visible to a few people, but now it is visible to "*everybody*" – everyone can observe their salvation (Belleville, 1996:89; Savage, 1996:104; Garland, 1999:158).

3.5.3 Attitude towards the enemy

Jesus Christ quotes the ancient Mesopotamian law of "an eye for an eye" (Mt 5:38). His command, however, is radically different: "do not resist an evil person" (Mt 5:39). He wants his disciples to respond to evil without retaliation, to unreasonable requests with compliance, and to be charitable when people

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ask something (Hagner, 1993:130-131). There is no room for revenge in God's Kingdom (Allison, 2001:855). Jesus Christ expects his disciples to be unselfish, to show humility and to be prepared to suffer loss. He set the example when He prayed for His persecutors on the cross (Lucas, 2002:156). The former minister of law and order in South Africa, Mr. Adriaan Vlok, demonstrated this attitude when he washed the feet of Rev. Frank Chikane as a sign of penitence over events under the Apartheid regime (De Lange & Coetzee, 2006:1).

3.5.4 Submit to authorities

According to Romans 13:1-7, believers must submit to authorities, even to non-Christian governments, because they are instituted by God to maintain public order (Mounce, 1995:243; Jordaan, 1999:488). Paul was well aware of the possibility of persecution when he wrote these instructions, as it follows directly after Ro 12:14-21 where he advocates that Christians should not curse their persecutors, should not repay evil with evil, and should not seek personal revenge (Wright, 2002:718). If somebody resists authority, he resists God's institution and brings judgement on himself (Mounce, 1995:243). In Ro 13:5 Paul gives two reasons why Christians should submit to authorities, namely to be free from possible punishment and to be free from the accusation of one's conscience (Wright, 2002:721). He repeats these instructions in Titus 3:1-2. Believers should be obedient to the governing authorities and should be ready to "do good" (Mounce, 2000:444). When Paul exhorts Christians to "be ready to do whatever is good" (Tit 3:1), he wants them to be positively involved in society (Lea & Griffin, 1992:318).

3.6 PROPOSED GUIDELINES WHEN A YOKE IS TO BE SHARED WITH UNBELIEVERS

From the research done, guidelines valid for contemporary Christians will now be suggested:

3.6.1 Importance of the Holy Spirit

– The Holy Spirit transforms fearful people into bold witnesses of the Gospel.

– He is present and guides believers on how to handle difficult situations.

3.6.2 In the face of suffering

– When God allows suffering in believers' lives, they should focus on the Suffering Servant and remember that God is sovereignly in control.

– Suffering should not be feared, for nothing can remove them from God's divine favour. This gives believers courage to remain faithful *in* their suffering.

– Believers should be prepared to explain the reasons for their beliefs, actions and hope.

– God uses suffering for purification – it is never a sign of His *absence*, but of His *presence*. This gives *hope in suffering.*

- Hope does not make suffering less real, but puts it in the right perspective and provides patience to endure.
- God's Kingdom has no room for revenge: believers should return evil and insult with blessing.

3.6.3 Obedience to authorities

- Christians should submit even to non-Christian authorities, but it is never an unconditional obedience.
- Authorities may be disobeyed if they require something against God's will.
- Christians should be law-abiding citizens and may not withdraw from civil responsibility.
- When Christians' God-given fundamental rights of freedom and justice are being violated, they may be involved in organised non-violent resistance.

3.6.4 Attitude at work

- Christians should be honest, faithful and obedient and work with respect, integrity and dedication, even if their employers are wicked and harsh unbelievers.
- Eye-service is ruled out as Christians are ultimately working for God and his Name should never be jeopardised.
- Prevailing social structures are only the circumstances *in which* Christians serve the Lord and not the circumstances *for which* they live. They should set an example *within* it as a sign of spiritual maturity.
- Christian employees should behave in such a way that the Gospel is attractive to unbelievers.
- Christian employers should treat their employees with integrity and goodwill, because their Master is the Lord and they are accountable to Him.

3.6.5 Involvement in the world

- Jesus Christ never removed his disciples *from* the world, but protected them *in* it. Although they do not belong to the world, God has a mission to fulfil through them.
- Religion in isolation and "closet-Christianity" are ruled out. Jesus Christ calls believers into a *visible* discipleship, to serve Him and their fellow human beings in *all* spheres of life.
- With involvement comes distinctiveness, because believers have experienced a profound change of heart which should be visible in a new lifestyle.
- Their lives are actually a "communication" from Christ and a witness to the world about the change God can bring in the lives of people.

3.7 CONCLUSION

In this article, it has been shown how believers in New Testament times handled the situation when they were "yoked together with unbelievers". Attention was given to the teaching of Paul to the slaves and of

Peter to the strangers in this world. Some metaphors and particular teachings in the New Testament explain the relationship and responsibility of the believer towards the unbelieving world. In conclusion, guidelines for a Christian lifestyle within a secular context were suggested. Although Christians may feel like strangers in this world, they may not practice their religion in isolation, because God has called them to be witnesses to the world and He has promised the assistance and presence of the Holy Spirit. If they experience injustice and suffering, they should remain faithful by focussing on the Suffering Servant and remembering that God is sovereignly in control. Their behaviour will make the Gospel attractive to unbelievers. The article ends with proposed guidelines when a yoke is to be shared with unbelievers.

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Key concepts:	**Kernbegrippe:**
basis-theoretical guidelines	basis-teoretiese riglyne
believers' responsibilities	gelowiges se verantwoordelikhede
secular context	sekulêre konteks
yoked (*cf.* 2 Co 6:14)	juk (vgl.2 Kor. 6:14)

CHAPTER 4 (ARTICLE 3)

EQUIPPING CHRISTIANS LIVING IN AN "UNEQUALLY YOKED" CONTEXT: METATHEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE POSTMODERN CONTEXT IN WHICH CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANS LIVE

Abstract

Equipping Christians living in an "unequally yoked" context: Metatheoretical perspectives on the postmodern context in which contemporary Christians live

The 20th and 21st centuries have witnessed drastic changes causing growing secularism and the diminishing of the influence of the church. These leave Christians with feelings of discomfort, insecurity and fear. It is imperative to equip believers to handle successfully the changing environment and still live according to God's will. To be more effective in their task and true to their calling, Christians should be in touch with current intellectual trends as significant paradigm shifts that have taken place over the centuries. There is no doubt that we are currently living in the postmodern milieu in which people often have little regard for the Bible and are sometimes even aggressive towards Christianity. This can be seen as a spiritual crisis or a *kairos* moment – a challenge for new forms of discipleship. It is hence crucial that Christians have a good understanding of postmodernism if they are to engage unbelievers on appropriate terms.

Opsomming

Toerusting van Christene wat in 'n "ongelyke juk" konteks lewe: Metateoretiese perspektiewe op die postmoderne konteks waarin Christene vandag lewe

Verreikende veranderinge het tydens die 20ste en 21ste eeue plaasgevind wat 'n toename in sekularisme veroorsaak het en 'n afname in die invloed van die kerk. Dit veroorsaak gevoelens van ongemak, onsekerheid en vrees by Christene. Dit is noodsaaklik om gelowiges toe te rus sodat hulle die veranderende omgewing suksesvol kan hanteer en steeds leef volgens die wil van God. Vir Christene om effektief hul taak en roeping in die wêreld uit te leef, moet hulle op hoogte wees van huidige intellektuele tendense, want ingrypende paradigmaskuiwe het oor die afgelope eeue plaasgevind. Daar is geen twyfel dat ons ons tans in 'n postmoderne milieu bevind waar mense dikwels geen agting vir die Bybel het nie en soms selfs openlik aggressief is teenoor Christenskap. Dit kan as 'n geestelike krisis of 'n *kairosmoment* beskou word – met uitdagings vir 'n nuwe soort dissipelskap. Dit is gevolglik uiters noodsaaklik dat Christene 'n goeie begrip van postmodernisme sal hê indien hulle ongelowiges op toepaslike wyse wil bereik.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

After Constantine's conversion, the Christian period followed for approximately a thousand years in which the church influenced the worldview of people and almost everyone was "Christian" (Hunter, 2001:21). During the Middle Ages, Europe was referred to as the *Christian culture* (Thompson & Lotter, 2001:184). However, the Renaissance, the rise of science and the Enlightenment caused growing secularism and the influence of the church diminished over time. It is an ongoing process and today one finds people who have never been substantially influenced by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who have no or little Christian background or vocabulary and who are not members of any Christian church amidst a society which claims to be about 82% Christian (Hendriks, 2007:7). As a result of the "global village", Christians find themselves living and working among such people, people of different cultures and people of different religions (Jordaan, 1999:485; Hunter, 2001:21-22; Olivier, 2003:9).

Christians living among non-Christians is not a new and unique situation of the 20th and 21st centuries. The 1st century Christians experienced the same circumstances. After Jesus ascended to heaven, the number of believers counted a hundred and twenty living among unbelievers who were often a threat to them (Ac 1:15; Ac 4:29). The relationship between the believer and the unbeliever needs to receive attention. Theron (2004:42) asserts that the words of the apostle Paul: *"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers"* (2 Co 6:14) in Scripture sheds light on this relationship. The metaphor of the "unequal yoke" can be used to describe the context in which believers and unbelievers live and work together in this secular world.

Research shows that both the religious and non-religious sectors of society are influenced by cultural changes (Breed & Van Rensburg, 2001:427). It is therefore important that believers should be equipped to live according to God's will in this changing environment. People are often overwhelmed by change since they feel secure in a constant environment (Hart, 2001b:47). Olthuis (1999:140-141) uses words like "visible discomfort, unease of the soul, a sense of powerlessness, fear and uncertainty" when he describes people's reactions to changes during the 20th and 21st centuries. During a meeting of South African Christian Leaders (SACLA) in 2003, the greatest challenges facing the church were identified, namely HIV/AIDS, crime and corruption, violence, poverty and unemployment, sexism, racism and the crisis in South African families (Cilliers, 2007:2-3). The Christian's task in this world is according to Davies and Allison (2000:470-478) summarised in Mt 5:13-16. Jesus calls his disciples to be salt and light in the *world* and warns them that if they do not fulfil their mission, they will be thrown out, just as salt which lost its salinity. Likewise, a lamp should be put on a stand in order to give more light. Jesus Christ's disciples should bring light to the world around them and should therefore be *in* the world to fulfil God's purposes. To be more effective in their task and true to their calling, Hart (2001b:47) and Moreland (2001:13) urge Christians to be in touch with, and willing to adapt to, changing situations and

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current intellectual trends, since the emotions, thoughts and behaviour of the people they want to reach, are shaped by it.

The aim of this article is to investigate *what* the unbelieving, secular world looks like in which the believer in Jesus Christ lives and *how* he/she should act when other viewpoints are rife. A study will be made of the major paradigm shifts that have occurred over the centuries and their implications for Christianity. Coupled with these paradigm shifts are trends like secularism and relativism which need to be investigated in order to understand their influence on Christianity and the challenges they pose to believers in their daily lives. To conclude, some guidelines will be proposed on how Christians should respond to unbelievers in order to influence the world around them positively.

4.2 PROPOSED METHOD

The operational scientific hermeneutical model of Zerfass which consists of a basis theory, a metatheory and a practice theory will be used as methodological framework in order to facilitate the movement between theory and praxis, in other words to promote the concretisation or actualisation of theory in practice (Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:7, 33; Heitink, 1999:113; Reinecke, 2001:9). In this article a metatheory will be established to indicate *what* the unbelieving, secular world looks like in which believers of Jesus Christ live and *how* they should act where other viewpoints are rife. Venter (1993:247) and Pieterse (1993:51) understand *metatheory* as a theory in which scientific departure points are expounded which are common to other disciplines studying aspects of the same nature. Related disciplines which will be referred to in this article are Philosophy, Ethics and Sociology which will be used interchangeably without necessarily indicating the specific discipline.

4.3 PARADIGM SHIFTS OVER THE CENTURIES

People never live in a cultural vacuum, but are exposed to prevailing cultural tendencies (Steenkamp, 1996:746). How one thinks and what one believes are influenced by the time in which a person lives as man is a "child of his time" (Du Toit, 2000:13). It will therefore be profitable to investigate the paradigm shifts that have taken place over the past centuries. Erickson (2001:32) mentions the shift from premodernism to modernism and the recent shift from modernism to postmodernism.

4.3.1 Premodernism

The theistic worldview was dominant in the western world up to the end of the 17th century. Everyone agreed that the triune, personal God of the Bible existed, that He had revealed himself and could be known, that the universe was His creation and that human beings were His special creation (Sire, 1997:21). The church was at the centre of society and determined the social order, beliefs and cultural values (Groothuis, 2000:33). The old South Africa, according to Smit (1997:14) and Du Toit (1997:12), was in many ways a typical premodern society where the churches generally did not try to change the

lifestyle of people but expected government to enforce the "correct" lifestyle by law. This was of cause not conducive for the spiritual maturity of Christians. Erickson (2001:32) believes that a large section of the world's population today still live with a basic premodern orientation.

The concept of the world during the premodern time was based on a literal understanding of the Bible. The earth was flat, situated on pillars with an expanse over it. Behind the expanse was water and that was the domain of God and his angels. Human beings, evil forces and the realm of the dead inhabited the ground level. Life was viewed as an interaction between two forces in creation: the *good power* of God who blesses man if he lives according to His will and the *evil power* of Satan who wants to destroy man (Du Toit, 2000:15-16). The premodern cultures experienced little cultural or religious diversity. This relative stability was shaken during the 14th-17th century by the Renaissance and the Reformation (Groothuis, 2000:33-34). In the scientific arena, the literal biblical understanding of the earth was under attack as a result of many discoveries, e.g. when Copernicus declared in 1514 that the sun stands still and the earth and other heavenly bodies revolve around it and Galileo Galilei claimed in 1632 that the sun is not static and does not form the centre of the universe, but forms part of many other planetary systems (Du Toit, 2000:25-26). In the religious arena, religious stability came under fire when the Reformation started with Luther and his Ninety-Five Theses on 31 October 1517 in which he challenged the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. Calvin followed by publishing the first edition (1536) of his *Institutes* (Collinson, 2005:49, 75-76).

4.3.2 Modernism

The Enlightenment (17th-19th century) followed and introduced the era of modernism in which intellectual reason became the only source of truth (Hart, 2001a:8; Moreland, 2001:13). People started to question Christianity and the Bible's authority (Groothuis, 2000:35). The early Christian theologians tried to reconcile Christianity with the philosophical ideas of the ancient Greeks and especially the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas who divided knowledge into two levels: a lower level of "natural" knowledge and a higher level of grace – the place for biblical revelation. It was not Aquinas' intention to undermine biblical authority, but with his nature-grace thesis, he indicated that biblical revelation was not applicable to the lower domain. With this, he prepared the way for Descartes' rational philosophy (Horn, 2002:14-15).

The French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650) was perhaps the most influential figure during the Enlightenment (Hooker, 2007). With his famous aphorism – *cogito ergo sum* – "I think, therefore I am", man was put on a new road of pure rationality, independence, self-value and self-confidence. With his foundationalism, Descartes attempted to establish some absolute departure points on which all knowledge could rest (Erickson, 2001:56). He announced a new order which could free man from his obligation to the Divinity – his only obligation was towards himself as a rational being (Horn, 2002:15).

Several influential personalities gave intellectual and philosophical impetus to modernism. Thompson and Lotter (2001:187) see Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) as perhaps the biggest contributor with his *Critique of pure reason* (1781). In it he advocated his belief in objectivism (Erickson, 2001:73). The modernist thinkers wanted to replace the apparent irrationality, stemming from religion, with a rational, scientific worldview. They did not completely reject belief in God, but God was gradually removed from their belief systems (Groothuis, 2000:35-37). Modernity's rejection of religious authority was seen as a positive step to human adulthood in which people could, for the first time, think for themselves and take responsibility for their actions (Scanlon, 1999:228; Riggs, 2003:79).

4.3.3 Postmodernism

Modernity believed in the universal sameness of people and therefore universal agreement on all issues is possible. This gave rise to an arrogance that promoted one culture as the only "true" culture. The problem with this assumption was that the "universal sameness" was based on the life and experiences of upper-class European men. This failure of modernity provoked a strong reaction and people demanded that differences between human beings should be respected. This caused a shift from the "subject" to the "other" with a strong realisation that the difference of the "other" should be celebrated (De Gruchy, 1997:234; Hartin, 1997:27).

The sinking of the Titanic in 1912 sliced through illusions of technology's power to conquer everything (Pinsdorf, 1997:491). Further scientific disasters during the late 20th century like the one in 1984 at the Union Carbide chemical plant in Bhopal, India (Browning, 1993), the one in 1986 at the nuclear power station at Chernobyl in Russia (Gray, 2002) and the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger in 1986 in the US (Hoover & Fowler, 2007), brought more scepticism about modernity's unlimited faith in man's reason (Lyon, 2002:11). The devastating consequences of two world wars and other atrocities during the 20th and 21st centuries caused more disillusionment with modernism (Kourie, 2006:29). Optimism about the intellectual ability of man, mentions Steyn (2005:50-52), was replaced with modesty and an acknowledgement that there is not only *one truth*, but *different truths*.

As the failures of modernism became more apparent, a new movement started to take shape: postmodernism. It was a reaction against the credo of modernism of mastering and controlling everything through reason and science. The *illusion* that man is autonomous was exposed by men like Marx and Nietzsche. They claimed that the world is just too complex, too contradictory, too flawed with pride, ignorance and arrogance, that it can be explained by "universal reason" (Olthuis, 1999:141-144). A comparison of some of the differences between modernism and postmodernism are given in the table below and a study of these will give a better understanding of postmodernism:

MODERNISM	POSTMODERNISM		MODERNISM	POSTMODERNISM
confidence in reason	distrust in reason		equality	uniqueness
universality	particularity		mind	body
iron-clad arguments	no watertight arguments		rational	emotional
closure	open-ended		predictability	unpredictability / surprise
clarity	ambiguity		what is known / seen	what is unknown / unseen
unity	multiplicity / diversity		representable	un-representable
autonomy	interdependence		answers	questions
stability	change		metanarrative / master story	narratives / stories
power over	power with		truth	truths

Moreland (2001:13) describes postmodernism as a reinterpretation of what knowledge is. From a postmodern view, there is no such thing as objective reality and truth. Set certainties and values are replaced by pluralism, relativism, subjectivity and diversity. Schweitzer (2001:173) agrees that the transition from modernity to postmodernity brought with it a loss of a unifying centre of norms and values. The shift from modernism, with its emphasis on a rational approach to reality, to postmodernism, with its emphasis on relativity and absence of absolutes is clearly shown by Hart (2001a:8-9). With this shift, people have achieved their ultimate "freedom" as they can create their own "truth" which serves as their personal value system (Horn, 2002:21).

Scholars agree that we are currently living in the postmodern age, but to define the concept of postmodernism, is not so easy, because as Hart (2001a:8) mentions, the meaning of postmodernism seems to depend on "whom" you read. Globus speaks about the fluid, uncontainable and changing quality of postmodernism (*cf.* Kourie, 2006:29). Although there is much disagreement on important issues among the renowned postmodern philosophers, as Janse van Rensburg (2000:34) indicates, Kingma and Lotter (2002:315-317) provide a few characteristics of postmodernism:

- Changed rationality – human experience, feeling and spirituality are added to mere human reason.
- Affectivity – a need for emotional warmth and safety. People no longer only want to know things, but they want to experience things.
- Diversity and pluralism – there is openness for different truths, ethical rules and perspectives. Traditions are no longer binding.
- Spirituality – a moving away from the secularism and atheism of modernism. Spirituality is understood as the essence of being human. It is however not necessarily a vertical search for God, but a horizontal search for mystical experiences.
- Tolerance and relativism – all religions and values are acknowledged equally.
- Subjectivity – the "self" is important, but always changing. Every person's story is important, not only the *grand narrative*.

Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998), a French sociologist, gave the major claim of postmodernism in his work *The Postmodern Condition* in one sentence: "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodernism as incredulity toward all metanarratives" (Lyotard, 1984:xxiv). He understands a metanarrative as an explanation of the cosmos, including the role which human beings play in it (Piehl, 2001:25). He rejects the idea that other smaller stories can only be explained in terms of the metanarrative. This postmodern breakdown of all "master stories" is seen by many as a threat to the proclamation of the Gospel (Schweitzer, 2001:173).

Modernity worked toward the privatisation of religion. The public realm was seen as secular and the individual had to keep his religions "preferences" to himself when in public. The church could not interfere in public life. Postmodernity individualised and privatised religion even more and the position of the church became even weaker (Schweitzer, 2001:177). While modernism claimed that man may serve *no* God, postmodernism claims that man may serve *any* god. This religious tolerance leads to relativism, as all religions are different footpaths leading to the same mountain top (Van der Walt, 1999:87-88). The new "buzz" word in all sectors of society is "spirituality". People are looking for the "fullness of humanity" and are drawn to spirituality (Kourie, 2006:19, 23). Spirituality needs hence to receive more attention (*cf.* 4.4.4).

4.3.4 Being – Knowing – Meaning

The paradigm shifts can be presented in different ways, but irrespective of the way one chooses, its far-reaching consequences and implications cannot be denied. Sire (1997:175) gives the example of justice: in the *premodern* society, justice was based on the revelation from a *just God*, in the *modern* society universal *reason* was the guide to justice and in the *postmodern* society there is a *despair* of any universal standard for justice. He summarises these shifts in an alarming way:

Medieval *hierarchy* → Enlightenment *democracy* → Postmodern *anarchy*

Hunter (2001:22) illustrates the shifts as follows: The *premodern person* might say: "I belong, therefore I am." The *modern person* might say: "I think, therefore I am." The *postmodern person* may say: "I feel, therefore I am."

Premodernism took metaphysics as the foundation for its worldview. If there is nothing, then nothing can be known and thus *being comes before knowing*. Descartes argued with his famous aphorism that *knowing is prior to being*. With this he initiated the *major shift from being to knowing*. He did not reject the theistic notion of God, but wanted to be sure that what he thinks is really true. This implied a shift from the primacy of God who creates to the primacy of the self that knows on its own. Knowing was now the focus and a new issue developed, namely "how one knows". This introduced the *shift from knowing to meaning*. Nietzsche took Descartes' doubt further and radically damaged modern optimism and self-confidence in human reason. It took a long time to sink in, but by the 1990's it was clear that confidence

in the human reason was almost non-existing. In this movement, *knowing* comes under fire. Today, conceptual relativism is the order of the day for religion and all other aspects of reality (Sire, 1997:176-178).

4.4 POSTMODERNISM AND CHRISTIANITY

Although postmodern philosophers disagree in many respects, Janse van Rensburg (2000:34) mentions a few common points: most of them are non-Christians, some of them have no regard for the Bible and may reject any effort to proclaim absolute truth. Some are consequently aggressive towards Christianity in general and the legitimacy of the Bible in particular. The *postmodern person* might say: "I feel, therefore I am", but he/she might also say: **"I am, so what?"** This "so what"-attitude has far-reaching consequences for Christianity, as the postmodern person is more interested in life *before* death than life *after* death (Hunter, 2001:21-22). Lyon (2002:7-8) draws attention to the difficulties which the Christian faith experiences in the 21st century. The statistics about the depletion of the church and the diminution of Christian influence worldwide are clear. On the one hand, this can be seen as a spiritual crisis. On the other, however, it can also be a *kairos* moment – a "Christ moment" – a challenge for new forms of discipleship (Lawrence, 2002:84). The researcher is of the opinion that Christians can benefit greatly if they choose to respond positively to the challenges posed by postmodernism (*cf.* 4.4.1 – 4.4.4). It is therefore imperative that Christians have a good understanding of postmodernism (Groothuis, 2000:32).

4.4.1 Distrust

The postmodern mind is suspicious about any absolutes and if a religion claims that its understanding of human kind is true and authoritative, it is considered as oppressive. Christians should thus have a good look at their own commitments, because Christian commitment may sometimes be more "modern" than Christian (Lee, 2001:18). Lawrence (2002:82) comments on the suspicion and distrust of contemporary society towards Christians and gives the example of a bumper sticker that reads: "Dear God, please save me from your followers." He is of the opinion that 90% of accusations against Christians today are rooted in distrust. It reminds of the words of Mohandas Gandhi: "I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ" (Illian, 2006). The question, many times, is not about right or wrong, e.g. homosexuality, but about dominance and oppression. The way the church has treated women in the past, or its handling of slavery, has caused deep-rooted distrust which will not be resolved by words alone. Evangelism today is more than just *proclaiming* the kingdom of God. It should first and foremost be a *demonstration* of the kingdom of God:

- Bringing healing to a sick society.
- Bringing wholeness to the spiritually lost and those under economic oppression.
- Being kind to those whose lifestyles are completely different from yours.

People need to experience that somebody has *heard* them and has compassion with them (Lawrence, 2002:83). There is a great responsibility on the shoulders of the one who shares the Gospel message. To

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have impact, his/her life must be authentic, genuine and transparent. God needs trustworthy and faithful *servants* in this postmodern world. The best response to accusations against Christianity is intentional and authentic friendship (Lawrence, 2002:84).

4.4.2 Metanarratives and Narratives

In the postmodern orientation, there is incredulity towards metanarratives and absolutes (Hunter, 2001:22). When Christians speak about "absolute truths", they should make sure what they mean by it, as human language is so fallible. From a biblical perspective, truth it is not mere statements or beliefs, but a revelation in the form of Jesus Christ (Jn 14:6). When believers speak about "absolute truth", it has nothing to do with mere human knowledge, but with a faithful assertion that reality is grounded in a transcendent God who discloses himself to man in love (Lee, 2001:19). Since postmodern people do not believe in metanarratives, they must give meaning to whom they are by creating their own narratives (Senekal, 2006:144). Every person has thus his own narrative (his understanding of reality) which may not be denied, dominated or marginalised by others. Christians need to listen to other people's narratives while their personal narratives should demonstrate integrity. Only then will postmodernists listen to them (Steyn & Lotter, 2006:8).

4.4.3 Walk the talk

A common criterion which postmodernists use to make decisions, Steyn and Lotter (2006:8) indicate, is whether something works (not whether it is true). "Whatever is working for you" is a very relativistic mindset and it is not easy to persuade someone intellectually to abandon this style of thinking. Transformation is more likely to happen if somebody observes the power of a transformed life of a follower of Jesus Christ (Lawrence, 2002:84). A life of integrity, says Hart (2001b:47), is more effective than good arguments. People want to see how believers "practice what they preach" – how they "walk the talk". The Bible is also more concerned about *how people act* than about *what they think* (Van Houten, 2004:1). Lawrence (2002:84) affirms that it has a great impact on unbelievers if they see a believer laying down his/her own interest for the sake of helping somebody else who would never have received help in any other way. Evangelism should be seen as a *kenotic* action – to give oneself according to the example of Jesus Christ (Php 2:5-7). He became incarnated into the world for the sake of the lost (Hendriks, 2007:5-6).

4.4.4 Spirituality

For the modernists, faith in an unthinkable, unprovable and unrepresentable God is impossible. For the postmodernists, however, these characteristics of God point to a reality beyond the reach of reason. Jacques Derrida, one of the most prominent voices of postmodernism, ends his *Memoirs of the Blind* with the following confession: "I don't know. I need to believe." The reality of God is hence no longer so unthinkable (Olthuis, 1999:145). Contemporary popular and scientific literature shows a growing interest

in the phenomenon of spirituality (Kourie, 2006:20). This interest in spirituality is not necessarily an interest in the Christian religion, and certainly not in the organised religion and church (Suk, 2001:4). People are looking for answers to their questions and suspect that the answers lie in the spiritual realm, but they have no idea where to look for it (Steyn & Lotter, 2006:8). Often, people are not essentially looking for answers, but for relief from their feelings of uncertainty, fear and pain (Poling, 2002:85). Yancey (2003:167-168) writes about Gandhi's mental churning and search for spiritual answers. He had great difficulty to accept Jesus Christ as the only way to everlasting life. When he shared his struggle with his Christian friends, they were shocked, but their answers could not satisfy him. People are rather looking for a vague, individual spirituality with an element of transcendence. They are earnestly seeking a God who cares, understands and who is available (Steyn & Lotter, 2006:8). If they do look at Christians, they ask questions about the relevance of Christianity. They want to know whether or not Christianity makes any difference in a person's life (Lawrence, 2002:84). If a believer is confronted with the questions of a "seeker", it is of utmost importance that the believer will attempt to find the person in need behind the question (Poling, 2002:85).

4.5 WORLDWIDE TRENDS AND ITS CHALLENGES TO CHRISTIANITY

There is no doubt among scholars that we are currently living in postmodern times (Smith, 1997:75; Scanlon, 1999:228; Riggs, 2003:5). Postmodernism brought with it certain megatrends, e.g. the search for meaning in life, secularism, pluralism and relativism. These are noticeable worldwide and influence the context in which people live (Kingma & Lotter, 2002:309-318). South Africans are no longer secluded from what is happening globally and are also influenced by these megatrends (Vorster, 1996:7-9). A study of some of the trends will be done and after each one, the challenges it poses to Christianity will be discussed as it can be advantageous for equipping Christians on *how* to live in a postmodern milieu.

4.5.1 In search of meaning in life

A quest for meaning and purpose in life is detectable as the known orders, –isms and systems failed to solve the problems of the world. The development in science and technology also failed to give adequate answers (Kingma & Lotter, 2002:310). Existentialism, a forerunner to postmodernism, left people to see life's ultimate meaning as rationally incomprehensible (Horn, 2002:20). As a result, people feel emotionally and psychologically unsafe and unsettled (Fletcher, 1995:153). Disillusioned people frequently ask questions like "what is the meaning of life", "where do I fit in" and "where is everything heading" (Steyn & Lotter, 2006:3).

The answer to the quest for meaning and purpose in life lies according to Van der Walt (1994:39, 54), Doran (1995:1) and Schoeman (2004:182) in the worldview of a person. A worldview provides a person

with an integrated, interpretive set of confessional perspectives on reality which shape, motivate and offer direction and meaning to human existence. It helps people to know and understand themselves and reality better and to form normative guidelines for their daily conduct. A worldview gives certainty and security in the lives of ordinary human beings. According to Sire (1997:21, 198), the theistic worldview, which claims that the triune, personal God of the Bible exists, that He reveals Himself and can be known, that the universe is His creation and that human beings are His special creations, is the only option, as all other worldviews have serious flaws. The problem in the postmodern epoch is that people no longer believe that God is alive and in control of the cosmos. They have lost the centre of life and are "filled" with a void. There is hope, argues Suk (2001:4), because contemporary people are talking more about spirituality and faith than ever before. Christians should seize the moment and turn interest in spiritual matters into convictions in Jesus Christ, because as Kourie (2006:22) indicates, spirituality gives meaning to peoples' lives.

Challenges to Christianity

- Unbelievers are in desperate need of a theistic worldview. It cannot be transferred from one person to another as each person must discover and define his/her own, but believers need to assist in the process (Schoeman, 2004:182).
- Believers need to be conscious of their own way of thinking and that of other people. Only *then* can they understand and communicate authentically with others in a pluralistic society and answer questions about God and the meaning of life (Sire, 1997:15).
- It is not enough that Christians accept theism as an intellectual construct. There is also a deep, personal dimension involved: it requires a commitment to the infinite-personal Lord of the Universe (Sire, 1997:199-200).

4.5.2 Anti-institutionalism and Individualism

Another megatrend in contemporary society is anti-institutionalism which leads to individualism. People are suspicious of any form of authority and want to be guided by own preferences (Suk, 2001:4). There is emancipation from institutional Christianity (Gabriel, 2006:18). In the past people were community- and group-centred, but are becoming more ego-centred. Quality of life is determined by self-respect and individual success (Joubert, 1992:58, 60). As many postmodern people no longer believe that God is in control, they are free to determine their own destiny (Herholdt, 1998:216). There are even Christians who no longer want to be part of a church and want to experience their religion in an individualistic manner. Slogans like "Yes for God, No for church" and "Church is Out, Religion is In" are frequently heard (Kingma & Lotter, 2002:318). The problem however, is that Scripture addresses equally the individuality and the communality of man. Man is never just an individual, but always in relation with other people and with that also comes responsibilities (Fowler, 1995:33). It corresponds with the concept of *Ubuntu*, one of the basic African values, which states that "a person is a person through other persons" (Cilliers,

2007:7). Furthermore, religious and ethical values are formed within the community and relationships in society (Larney & Lotter, 2005:663).

Challenges to Christianity

- People need to "belong", but 21st century people distance themselves from traditional structures and churches. Christianity should earnestly look at alternative methods to reach these people (Joubert, 2007).
- For Christianity to be effective, believers need to be part of the living body of Christ where they can be spiritually edified and equipped for their task (Oostenbrink & Lotter, 2002:548).

4.5.3 Secularism and Dualism

Secularism can be defined as the process in which religious institutions lose their social significance (Lyon, 1995:767). In 1928 it was said that secularism is a greater rival of Christianity than Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism, as it does not attack Christianity openly, but works practically unnoticed by infiltrating and paralysing Christianity at the heart (Van der Walt, 1994:374-375). Max Weber argued that although Calvinism provided the original value foundation for modernity, development and modernisation gradually displaced religion during the 20th century. He unambiguously stated that modernisation and secularism were the offsprings of religion, but also its murderers, since the secularist tradition claims that religion is a strictly private affair and not for the public sphere (Cox, 1999:135-137). In his book, *The secular city* (1965), Harvey Cox supported the secularisation hypothesis, but in his 1995 book, *Fire from heaven: the rise of Pentecostal spirituality and the reshaping of religion in the 21st century*, he confesses that he was wrong in his prediction (Hendriks, 2007:7-8). Perhaps Cox and many others were wrong in their prediction about the magnitude of the influence of secularism, but no one can argue that the influence of the church on politics, the economy and society in general was dramatically reduced and religion became a private matter (Gabriel, 2006:19). Once religion had become privatised, it lost its capacity to impact on public affairs (Voyé, 1999:275).

As a result of secularism, people perceive reality in two different dimensions, the secular and the sacred. The sacred level is under the governance of God and the secular is under control of man (Shorter & Onyancha, 1997:13-14). Christians often respond to this dualism by dividing life into a sacred- (private) and a secular (public) sphere. Van der Walt (1994:305) presents it graphically:

higher	holy	grace	revelation	spiritual	soul	church	theology
lower	secular	nature	reason	material	body	world	philosophy

As there is no place for God in the public domain, Christians concentrate on the "higher" world (Alfeyev, 2005:84). Christianity is confined to the church and there is no broader vision to serve God in other areas

of life. In their personal and church life, they think and behave like Christians, but in their political, scientific and economic life there is little sign of their spiritual commitment. The kingdom of God is however all-inclusive and not limited only to the spiritual realm: the *whole* Gospel must be applied to *all* of life (Van der Walt, 2006:34-35). The Gospel addresses the emotional, physical and cognitive dimension of man and commitment to God has consequences for all areas of life. Being a Christian in today's world asks for a spirituality that reaches further than only a Sunday worship service (Fowler, 1995:32, 40; Suk, 2001:5). This point is illustrated by the example of missionary work done in Africa in the past. Because the Gospel's message was understood as a message of private, individual salvation, it was robbed of its penetrating power to reform the social order and leaders were not equipped to meet the challenges of social transformation. Secularism has successfully silenced the witness of Christians in this world and weakened the impact of Christianity.

In this secularised society, many people still want to go to church, read the Bible and hold on to their "premodern" biblical faith, but they find themselves caught up in a "schizophrenic" world where they believe and pray on Sundays, but "know" *better* and live differently during the week. This leads to a kind of "sophisticated asceticism" which causes further secularisation of the community, as believers do not speak up for healthy moral standards and responsible ethical codes. Many believers struggle to know *how* to respond to people who differ fundamentally from their traditional views. Sometimes they react with unapproachableness, because they want to hold on to the Bible as the inspired Word of God and do not know how to apply the Truth in today's world. This reaction creates the image that the church is exclusive and unbelievers respond understandably with antagonism (Du Toit, 2000:35-43).

Challenges to Christianity
- A radical, total and integral Christian worldview which impacts on all areas of life, *inter alia* the family, education, politics, commerce, labour and the church, must be established (Van der Walt, 2003:541).
- A spirituality that tends to think about life in a dualistic way should be replaced by an "encompassing" spirituality.
- Believers should be taught to interpret and apply the Word of God responsibly to every day life.
- The exclusiveness of the church needs to be replaced with inclusiveness.

4.5.4 Pluralism, Subjectivism and Relativism
When Paul Tillich presented his *The Shaking of the Foundations*-sermons in 1946, he probably did not know that the Christian faith would be, in the next 50 years, confronted with the challenges of the loss of the great metanarratives and old certainties. The time of relativism had arrived (Grey, 2006:79). The major ideology in today's society maintains the absence of absolutes. Truth and morality become subjective and individuals have the right to choose what is good for them (Nnali, 2004:77). Christians

may believe that Jesus Christ is the *only* Saviour and that the Bible is the *only* book of revelation, but these facts are not necessarily true for everyone (Janse van Rensburg, 2000:11). To put it differently, pluralism states that Christianity is *true*, but it is not *the truth*. There is a diversity of religious perspectives available and people can gather a bag of beliefs to fit their liking. They are actually free to create their own faith (Nnali, 2004:78, 87).

The absence of absolutes has major consequences for personal choices in the realms of religion, sexual lifestyle, social and personal morality. Horn (2002:23-25, 27) identifies postmodernism as one of the Western philosophies which has successfully eroded the Western mind's trust in the Bible as the foundation of true morality. Moral relativism makes it very difficult to speak to people about their choices and lifestyles, because they may answer with the well known cliché of "that may be true for you, but it's not for me" (Cooper, 1993:111). It is not surprising, Thompson and Lotter (2001:197) conclude, that moral chaos and confusion characterise contemporary society. Think of issues like genetic engineering, euthanasia, abortion and same sex marriages. The internet makes pornography and internet sex anonymously accessible to anyone (Coetzer, 2006:70, 74). Even Pres. T. Mbeki speaks about the "moral vacuum" that has developed in South Africa (Shutte, 2007:5).

Challenges to Christianity
- In this relativistic society, the church may not compromise her teaching by accommodating contemporary opinions, but should speak out for truth (Nnali, 2004:80, 91).
- It should be done with the correct attitude – the attitude of Jesus Christ who draws people closer to Him (Php 2:5-8).
- Christians should learn to live holy lives, to think fundamentally about principles and to live out their prophetic critical calling in this world (Kingma & Lotter, 2002:320).

4.6 SOME GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIANS ON HOW TO RESPOND TO UNBELIEVERS

Many believers feel threatened by postmodernism and experience that Christianity is in danger, but the question can be asked: Are Christians not perhaps in their particular circumstances *"for such a time as this"* (Est 4:14)? The only certain factor in a changing world is the Gospel which has the only effective solution to the world's problems (Hart, 2001b:47). God gives the assurance that *"I the Lord do not change"* (Mal 3:6). Christians should respond to the challenges of the postmodern era and use the *kairos* moment.

4.6.1 Pointers for Christians about postmodern people in general
- People are open to different truths, ethical rules and perspectives and each person must create his/her own "truth" which will serve as his/her personal value system.

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- People no longer only want to *know* things, they want to *experience* things.
- People are in search of spirituality, but it is not necessarily a search for God. There are many different footpaths which lead to the same mountain top.
- People have no regard for the Bible as they reject any proclamation of absolute truth. This may cause aggressiveness towards Christianity.
- People are more interested in life *before* death than in life *after* death.
- People are in need of authentic friendship and want to see that Christianity makes a difference in peoples' lives.

4.6.2 Pointers for Christians living in a postmodern context

- Christians should have a good look at their own commitments, because it may sometimes be more "modern" (based on traditions) than biblical.
- Evangelism should be more than *proclaiming* the kingdom of God, it should be a *demonstration* of the kingdom of God, of love, compassion, willingness to sacrifice – the attitude of Jesus Christ.
- To earn a right to speak, believers should be people of integrity and their lives should be authentic, genuine and transparent. They should "walk the talk" and apply their spirituality in all spheres of life.
- Christians need an integral Christian worldview which can help them to make sense of their lives and also helps them to understand and to help others who are searching for meaning in life.
- Christians should be very careful in their interpretation of the Word and the way in which they communicate "truths".
- Christians should look at alternative methods to reach unbelievers.
- For Christians to be effective in this world, they need to be part of the living body of Christ where they can be edified spiritually and encouraged for their task.
- In response to the moral crisis, Christians should learn to think fundamentally about principles and they should demonstrate holiness, while living out their prophetic critical calling in the world.

4.7 CONCLUSION

In this article it has been indicated that major paradigm shifts have occurred over the centuries. Christians and non-Christians alike are currently living in the postmodern era. The postmodern way of thinking and lifestyle present unique challenges to Christians. To be effective witnesses of Jesus Christ, believers should take note of these challenges in order to engage appropriately with unbelievers. Postmodernism should not be perceived as a time of spiritual crisis, but rather as a *kairos* moment. The best "tool" for Christians' successful journey through this challenging epoch is to show authentic love towards others and to have an integral Christian worldview, as it provides a frame of reference by which human beings understand themselves and can form normative guidelines for their daily living.

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worldwide trends	wêreld-tendense

CHAPTER 5 (ARTICLE 4)

EQUIPPING CHRISTIANS LIVING IN AN "UNEQUALLY YOKED" CONTEXT: METATHEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CHRISTIAN LIVING IN A POSTMODERN CONTEXT

Abstract

Equipping Christians living in an "unequally yoked" context: Metatheoretical perspectives on Christian living in a postmodern context

Christians often conclude from the apostle Paul's warning: "*Do not be yoked together with unbelievers*" (2 Co 6:14), that he condemns all contact with non-Christians and advocates total withdrawal from the world. On the contrary, Christians are called to *influence the world*. They need to find the fine balance between an exclusive and an accommodating Christianity. Being aware of the Christian worldview help Christians realise their calling to be "reformers" in all spheres of life. Crime and corruption are symptoms of a society in need of moral and ethical values to serve as guidelines for responsible decision-making and appropriate behaviour in a changing South Africa. Christians are called to contribute to society's transformation by means of a comprehensive view of full-time service to God in every area of life. Christianity can only influence the world effectively if it continually addresses the economy, politics, society, culture, religion and education.

Opsomming

Toerusting van Christene wat in 'n "ongelyke juk"-konteks lewe: Metateoretiese perspektiewe op 'n Christenleefstyl in 'n postmoderne konteks

Christene dink dikwels dat die apostel Paulus met sy woorde: "*Moenie met ongelowiges in dieselfde juk trek nie*" (2 Kor 6:14), alle kontak met nie-Christene veroordeel en dat hy totale onttrekking aan die wêreld voorstaan. Inteendeel, Christene is geroep om die wêreld te beïnvloed. Hulle moet die fyn balans tussen 'n eksklusiewe en 'n akkomoderende Christenskap vind. Die Christelike lewensbeskouing maak Christene bewus van hul roeping om "hervormers" te wees op alle terreine van die lewe. Misdaad en korrupsie is simptome van 'n gemeenskap se nood aan morele en etiese waardes wat kan dien as riglyne vir verantwoordelike besluitneming en gepaste gedrag in 'n veranderende Suid-Afrika. Christene is geroep tot transformasie van die gemeenskap deur middel van 'n omvattende beeld van voltydse diens aan God in elke terrein van die lewe. Vir Christene om die wêreld effektief te beïnvloed, moet hulle voortdurend in kommunikasie wees met die ekonomie, politiek, gemeenskap, kultuur, godsdiens en opvoedkunde.   .

5.1 INTRODUCTION

From passages in Scripture, e.g. *"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers"* (2 Co 6:14), Christians might conclude that Paul condemns all contact with non-Christians and advocates withdrawal from the world. The converse is however true, namely that Christians are called to *influence the world* (Mt 5:13-16; 28:19-20). To find the equilibrium between being *exclusive* and *accommodating* is one of the major difficulties for Christians in the 21st century.

In Scripture one is reminded of the words of Paul: *"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers"* (2 Co 6:14) which clearly addresses the relationship between unbelievers and believers (Theron, 2004:42). New Testament commentators like Barnett (1999:130) and Garland (1999:331) agree that Paul wants to teach believers that they cannot live the same kind of life as unbelievers. Theron (2004:41-43) explains how Paul metaphorically applies the Old Testament prohibition of yoking different animals together (Dt 22:10; Lev 19:19) to warn believers not to become intimately involved with unbelievers (2 Co 6:14-16). This commandment accentuates the necessity of holiness and thus forbids Jews to plough with an ox (clean) and a donkey (unclean) yoked together (Futato, 1997:296). Although the principles presented in this passage are applicable to contemporary believers, they should not conclude that Paul condemns all contact with non-Christians and consequently advocates total withdrawal for fear of contamination (1 Co 5:9-11). The metaphor of the "unequal yoke" refers to close relationships where Christian beliefs can be *compromised* unless both parties are true believers. Christians are urged to break with any form of unhealthy compromise so that the Church and individual believers can live according to God's desires (McDougall, 1999:114, 121, 127-137).

Christians are imitators of Jesus Christ and should therefore follow his modelled lifestyle: to be *in* the world, but not *of* it (Jn 17:14-15). Van der Walt (1994:448) urges believers to find the balance between withdrawal (isolation) on the one hand and being swallowed up by the world (accomodation) on the other. Through the ages, the church was always judged by how her presence *in* the world is advantageous *to* the world (Hauerwas & Willimon, 1989:30). Believers should, through consistent devotion to biblical principles, *influence the world* instead of being influenced by it (Barna, 2006:70-71). Being aware of others' worldviews will enable Christians to share effectively Christ's message (Arch, 2007).

The Christian faith experiences difficulties in the 21st century (Voyé, 1999:275; Lyon, 2002:7-8; Alfeyev, 2005:89). Statistics about the decline in church attendance, growing unbelief, increasing hostility and the diminution of Christian influence worldwide are clear. Lawrence (2002:82) comments on the suspicion and distrust of contemporary society towards believers in Jesus Christ and Alfeyev (2005:82) gives the example of the French government's recent prohibition of wearing religious symbols in public – an attempt of militant secularism to expel religion from society. The postmodern philosophy with its rejection of absolute truths is at odds with Christianity (Barna, 2006:43).

The two objectives of this article are to investigate *how* a believer's faith in Jesus Christ can overcome the challenges of the postmodern era and *how* believers can positively influence the unbelieving world around them through their everyday living. Although the focus of the article is on the individual Christian, the believer often finds him-/herself within a community of believers, the Church. When reference is made to the Church, the collective voice of the body of true believers in Jesus Christ is implied. It is clear that the Church has a responsibility to give guidance to individual members on how to impact the world positively. A study will be made of the importance of a Christian worldview and a Christian value system to give contemporary Christians possible guidelines on how to act in situations where they are "unequally yoked". The role Christians should play in the world of *inter alia* politics, education, business and media will be investigated. In conclusion, some guidelines will be proposed on Christian living in a postmodern context.

5.2 PROPOSED METHOD

The metatheory component of the operational scientific hermeneutical model of Zerfass will serve as methodological framework for this article (Zerfass, 1974:164-177; Tucker, 2003:32-33; *cf.* 1.6). The metatheory will be established to indicate the role of a Christian worldview and a Christian value system to help contemporary believers influence the unbelieving world around them positively. By means of a literature study, the role of Christians in different areas of life will be investigated. According to Janse van Rensburg (2007:3) and Heystek (2000:126-127), the *metatheory* is a theory which comes into being by studying theories from other relevant human sciences in order to secure a more holistic understanding of the problem in focus.

5.3 CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW FOR CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANS

It is essential to explore the Christian worldview as it emphasises a Christian's way of seeing, understanding, interpreting, approaching and applying the totality of human life from the perspective of Christian history and biblical principles (Anon., 2007a). It explains what Christianity and the Bible teach about human endeavours in life and assists believers in relating Christian faith to real life situations (Turaki, 1999:21-22).

5.3.1 Definition of a worldview

Every person has a worldview, even if he/she is not able to articulate it clearly, because it is part of being an adult human being (Wolters, 2005:4). Various disciplines define the term "worldview" as the distinctive view that people have of reality, including the "unproven" and "unquestioned assumptions" about reality (Howell, 2006:310). Words closely related to "worldview" is "belief-systems" and "life perspectives". It serves as a guide to life, a compass to orient people in the world and presents a perspective on the origin, value, meaning and destination of the human race and the world. It provides a

comprehensive understanding of God, the world and man's relationship to God and the world (Noebel, 1991:8; Bosman, 2002:87-89; Schoeman, 2004:173, 182; Wolters, 2005:2, 5).

According to Sire (1997:17-18), a worldview addresses the following seven basic questions:

1. What is the ultimate reality? (nature and character of God)
2. What is the nature of external reality? (nature of the universe)
3. What is a human being? (nature of humanity)
4. What happens to a person at death?
5. Why is it possible to know anything? (basis of human knowledge)
6. How do we know what is right and wrong? (basis of ethics)
7. What is the meaning of human history?

5.3.2 The role of religion in a worldview

The word *secular* implies the absence of a religious foundation, but the "absence of a religious foundation" is in itself a religious belief, namely that there is no God. A worldview can never be free from some kind of religious perspective (Anderson *et al.*, 2000:38; Hulst, 2004:11). Furthermore, the worldview of a person will determine whether he/she will be religiously involved in the world (Larney & Lotter, 2006:10). Man's decisions and actions are determined by his/her principles, norms and values which in turn are determined by his/her worldview (Balasuriya, 2001:32; Lategan, 2003b:217). Religious convictions thus play an important role in the forming of a person's worldview (Schoeman, 2004:182; Shaw, 2005:10; Larney & Lotter, 2006:8). For a worldview to be adequate, Sire (1997:196-198) mentions the following requisites:

- It should be intellectually consistent and logic.
- It should be able to handle data about reality.
- It should explain what it claims to explain.
- It should satisfy people subjectively and that only happens if it is true.

There are numerous worldviews to choose from, but the Christian worldview is the only one which provides a consistent explanation of all facts of reality and complies satisfactorily with all above-mentioned requirements (Noebel, 1991:13; Sire, 1997:18, 198).

5.3.3 The history of the Christian worldview

The concept "Christian worldview" was first formulated by Augustine (354-430 AD), but its influence declined during the Middle Ages (± 400 - ±1400) with the upcoming of dualism. During the 16th century, Luther, Zwingli and especially Calvin succeeded to break through the dualistic Christendom in which Christians divided life into a sacred sphere (under the governance of God) and a secular sphere (under control of man). The Reformation emphasized *Sola Scriptura* (the Word of God alone is the guiding principle for everyday life). Two other essential principles also came to the fore: *Sola Gratia* (by grace alone) and *Sola Fide* (by faith alone). After two centuries, Kuyper accentuated again the concept that the

reformation should encompass politics, economy and education (Van der Walt, 1994:118-120, 305; Shorter & Onyancha, 1997:13-14; Zwemstra, 2006:20). Wolters also describes the development of a biblical worldview as a desire to live according to Scripture in all areas of life and work (Wolters, 2005:1).

5.3.4 The Christian worldview

As a worldview refers to "the comprehensive framework of one's basic beliefs about things", it follows that Christians will demand that their worldview should be shaped by and tested against the Bible. The reformational worldview relates to the three central themes of Scripture, namely creation, fall and redemption (Wolters, 2005:2, 7, 12). The same themes are found in Question 2 of the Heidelberg Cathechism (one of the central creeds of the reformed tradition), namely misery (fall), deliverance (redemption) and gratitude (Vorster, 2007:13-15). God is the sole and absolute Origin of the existing reality. The intimate fellowship which existed between God and man was disrupted because of the fall, when humankind turned away from God in disobedience and spiritual death followed. The redemption through Jesus Christ re-directs fallen man to the true Origin and makes fellowship with God again possible. The regulating principle in the Christian's life is the commandment of love for God and fellow humans, but the ever present tribulations of sin causes a continual struggle which can only be overcome through the grace of God (Hulst, 2004:15; Schoeman, 2004:187-189).

The Christian worldview answers the questions given in 5.3.1 as follows (Sire, 1997:23-38):
1. God is infinite and personal (triune), transcendent and immanent, omniscient, sovereign and good.
2. God created the cosmos *ex nihilo* to operate with a uniformity of cause and effect in an open system.
3. Human beings are created in the image of God, having personality, self-transcendence, intelligence, morality, gregariousness and creativity.
4. Human beings were created good, but through the fall, the image of God became defaced. God redeemed humanity through Jesus Christ, but each person can choose to accept or reject Him. Death is either the gate to life or to eternal separation from God.
5. Human beings can know the world around them and God himself, because He has given them the ability and He communicates with them.
6. Ethics is transcendent and based on the character of God as good, holy and loving.
7. History is linear and leading to the fulfilment of God's purposes for humanity.

5.3.5 The influence of a Christian worldview on contemporary Christians

The Christian worldview defines all relationships of the believer, because the primary relationship between the creature and his Creator encompasses all other relationships. Believers' lives thus become other-orientated, characterised by mercy, love and justice (Hollinger, 2004:41; Schoeman, 2004:194). Furthermore, the Christian worldview impacts on the *whole* life of the believer – to obey and honour God

in every aspect of life. It enables believers to relate their faith to all spheres of life by motivating them to live out their calling to make the world a better place. It gives believers direction, new perspectives and solutions to everyday problems (Van der Walt, 1994:33, 54; Kok, 2004:99).

Ecology can serve as an illustration of how the Christian worldview impacts on *life as a whole*. In 1994, an Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation was formally issued. It reaffirms that the earth belongs to God and that humankind is responsible to Him for it. It encourages Christians to maintain the biblical mandate for care of the creation in the face of accusations that Christianity is incompetent to react positively to environmental issues (Berry, 2000:17). In her article on ecology, Primavesi (2006:437, 440) mentions how there is a movement away from the traditional Christian stance that the Creator intended all the treasures of nature for the sake of man, to an acceptance of man's proper place in the environment and the realisation that man cannot, without severe consequences, assume the right to use earth's resources for his exclusive benefit. Passages in Scripture like Colossians 1:15-17 which state that all things were created by Him and *for* Him, help Christians to understand that their commitment to Jesus Christ also implies a commitment to God's earth (Echlin, 2004:7). Ecology, states Vorster (2004:260), forms an important part of the Christian religion, because irresponsible exploitation and misuse of natural resources given by God, implies disobedience to Him. In the creation narratives, Genesis 1 depicts humankind as the climax of the animal creation with the capacity to exercise dominion over all creatures, but Genesis 2 makes it clear that man is put in Eden to "serve and keep it". Man's ecological responsibility finds its biblical balance in *dominion exercised through servanthood* (Wright, 2004:126; French, 2005:470).

One of the most important influences of the Christian worldview is to compel believers to break loose from *dualism* which has paralysed Christianity and robbed it of its capacity to impact on public affairs and transform the world (Voyé, 1999:275; Van der Walt, 2003:541; Heyns, 2006:1). A dualistic worldview caused the rapid secularisation of the Western world as Christians avoided the field of art, education, politics, healthcare, etc. and left it to non-Christians. The Christian worldview is an integral worldview which helps believers to realise that the Bible has everything to say about business, science, technology and other social issues and that they are called to serve God full-time in all areas of life (Wolters, 2005:8-9, 12; Anon., 2007a). This corresponds with the claim of Richard Niebuhr that Christ is the *transformer* of culture (Nieburh, 1952:197). The believer's calling is not to move *out of* the world, but to move *in* the world, to read the Bible and the newspaper together – to be critically active in society (Smit, 2002:125, 135-136; Hulst, 2004:12). A Christian worldview helps believers to realise that they are called to be "reformers" of society: everything which was *formed* in creation, was *deformed* by sin and needs to be *reformed* in Christ according to the guiding principles of the reformation, namely *Sola Scriptura, Sola Gratia* and *Sola Fide* (Wolters, 2005:77-78; Zwemstra, 2006:21). The liberating influence of the reformation can for instance be seen in the changing view regarding marriage (Lotter, 2004:26-27).

5.4 A CHRISTIAN VALUE SYSTEM AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS FOR CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANS

Moral and ethical values can be defined as guidelines for responsible and acceptable decisions regarding oneself, one's place in society and the world. These values consequently determine one's behaviour and are applicable in all walks of life (Lategan, 2003a:363; Steyn, 2005:82; Lotter, 2007a:3). According to Niebuhr, the highest expression of Christian morality is self-sacrificial love as demonstrated by Jesus Christ on the cross. Christians will only be able to deal with the moral and social problems of this world through their vital faith in Him (Niebuhr: 1935:33; Browning, 2006:28).

5.4.1 The influence of Postmodernism

Relatively few people today refer to the Bible as a guide in matters of morality (Tate, 2006:517). Postmodernism advocates that there is not only one truth, but different truths. The standards for distinguishing between "right and wrong" are no longer universal, but rooted in particular languages and cultures. People lost their set certainties and predetermined ethical values and it was replaced by pluralism and relativism. Moral judgement becomes difficult and values become privatised (Vanhoozer, 1998:9; Vergeer, 1999:14; Janse van Rensburg, 2000:69-70; Prins, 2001:106; Hulst, 2004:10; Steyn, 2005:51-53). Postmodernism focuses on the individual – how he/she sees reality is determined by his/her religion, culture and worldview. One person's reality may completely differ from another person's reality. This gives rise to common slogans like "Nothing is sacred" and "Everything goes" (Vorster, 1999:11). Man is the reference for truth and he/she is only responsible to him-/herself (Lategan, 2003a:362). The result is liberalism (man is free of any norms) and it may be the origin of the current morality crisis in South Africa (De Villiers, 2000:440; Phillip, 2007:1).

5.4.2 The necessity of ethics and a value system

Happenings like the Enron scandal in 2001, crime and corruption, show that society cannot function without ethics (Lategan, 2003a:361). People from different cultural and religious backgrounds are searching for new norms. They are looking for values which can be applied in their changing world to guide them through their daily choices. They want to do what is right and not necessarily what is legitimate (Jordaan, 2000:30; Steyn, 2005:82). Focussing only on Africa, Turaki (1997:2) observes that many religious, cultural, political and economic models have been applied in an attempt to solve the problems of modern Africa, but the prognosis remains dismal. He argues that the continent's problems are deeper than a correct political or economic system and believes that only programs based on morality and ethics can effectively address Africa's problems. The South African society, remarks Heyns (2006:1), is characterised by *inter alia* AIDS, poverty, crime and racism. Referring to the example of Uganda where the AIDS-pandemic was turned around with the help of a Christian ethos, he believes that Christianity can have a constructive effect on society. Lategan (2003a:362) observes that there is a

growing resistance in South Africa against the "free-wheeling society" as people demand the "healing" of society through ethics.

5.4.3 The establishment of a Christian value system

According to Alfeyev (2005:86), there are two main groups of value systems, namely the Christian value system and the "common human values" of secular humanism. The former is theocentric (the Word of God is the measure for truth – Jn 17:17) and the latter is anthropocentric (man is the yardstick of truth). It is obvious that Christians cannot accept the second option. Kohlberg's theory on moral development states that children younger than 9 years learn about norms and values by the example of adults and by the consequences (reward/punishment) of their conduct – the pre-conventional phase. After 9 years, follows the convention phase in which values are determined on ground of identification with the group. Kohlberg believes that the majority of people stay in this phase and only a minority enter the post-conventional phase where moral decisions are based on self-defined moral values (Prins, 2001:109).

Although role-players like peer groups, media and schools have an influence in the forming of values, parents are the primary agents in the development of the child's moral values (Prins, 2001:108; Steyn, 2005:82; Lotter 2007a:3). The success of the transmission of values from parents to children, says Lotter (2007a:8-9), is determined by the cohesion, the flexibility and the communication of the family. Prins (2001:108-110) stresses the importance that children should experience their parents' religion as credible and not mere lip-service. Jordaan (2000:30) believes that new ethics should be acquired by *doing*. Children should be taught *how* to think, and not *what* to think. They should learn about sensitivity, honesty and responsibility. They should learn how to solve conflict without violence, how to live without fear and how to conquer selfishness. Prins (2001:115-116) adds that children should be taught decision-making skills, as they will encounter situations with no ready-made answers. Children must be assisted to move from the convention to the post-conventional phase – "outside" values should become internalised convictions.

5.4.4 The impact of Christian ethics on the world

In South Africa, the liberal democracy replaced the system of Apartheid and after three peaceful general elections, the new dispensation can be considered as a success, but with the new dispensation, also come new ethical challenges (Vorster, 2007:vii). Ethics give people guidance in their daily choices for the correct conduct in the midst of an imperfect society (Fourie, 1998:255). The attitude of Christ, given in Philipians 2:5-11, namely love, stewardship, self-denial and obedience to God, serves as a basis for Christian ethics and as a guideline for all relationships and activities (Vorster, 2007:20).

5.4.4.1 Information Technology

The 21st century is characterised by unprecedented advances in technology and developments in the cyber world, but Lotter (2006:3-4) rightly observes that consideration should be given to the potential damaging effects. Lategan (2003a:365) affirms that many policies are in place at higher education institutions for the application of technology in science and management, but little is done on the *normative* position with regard to the use of technology. Technology may not be allowed to be practised without any boundaries – an ethical framework is necessary. Lotter (2006:9) gives an example of the Pro-Ethics Pledge (http://www.iwanet.org/documento.asp?.id=12) which tries to ensure web professionalism and ethics. Through the pledge, subscribers to the World Wide Web (WWW) commit themselves to "uphold principles of integrity" and to strive towards fairness and responsibility. Such an ethical framework can protect people against the harmful influences of information technology. Another possible detrimental effect of information technology is the ever increasing threat to privacy on the WWW. Features of the WWW like traceability, registration of data, calling line identification and central control make the threat to the privacy of the individual using the WWW very real. The Private Coalition (coalition@privacy.org) is an example of a non-partisan coalition in favour of legislation to ensure individual privacy effectively (Lotter, 2007b:3, 8-10, 13-14).

5.4.4.2 Education

The presence of violence, drug abuse and cellphone pornography causes a new concern for ethics in schools and higher education institutions. An attempt to instil ethics without religion and moral values, however, is in vain (Lantos, 2001:2; Hollands, 2007:1; Keating, 2007:5; Smith, 2007:4; Spies, 2007:1). Education is more than just transmission of knowledge – it is the raising of children to maturity, the forming of people with healthy values who are able to choose between right and wrong and the development of character. Values and ethics, grounded in the Bible, play an enormous part in this process (Lantos, 2001:15; Rens, 2005:59-60). The practice of education has changed and will continue to change with the rapid development of new technology. Using information technology in the field of education is imperative, but *normative* guidelines should be in place to regulate it (Strijbos, 2006:8). Not only should ethics determine the curriculum of higher education institutions which are underwriting the Christian ethos, e.g. abortion techniques (in the context of "abortion on demand") may not be taught in the training hospitals of such institutions, but it should also be included in the curricula of all scientific disciplines, as students are the employers and employees of the future who could influence the societies within which they will work (Lategan, 2003a:363, 365-366). Such education can prepare students to be honest and responsible citizens and leaders (Kinoti, 1994:54).

5.4.4.3 Business

Corruption is a serious problem in the business society with Fidentia still fresh in the memory of many South Africans (Goredema, 2007:9). The World Democracy Audit of May 2007 states that South Africa is in the 41st place in the world's corruption rank (Anon., 2007c). The Global Economic Crime Survey

2005, undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers, involved 3634 senior executives in 34 countries. Of these companies, 45% were victims of fraud and an alarming 83% of the South African companies indicated that they experienced fraud (Anon., 2005:1). The ruins of Enron and WorldCom are testimonies of the destructive power of greed and dishonesty. TIME Magazine named the two "whistleblowers", Sherron Watkins (Enron) and Cynthia Cooper (WorldCom), as persons of the year. Cooper, when asked how she managed not to fall prey to the corruption in the company, responded that it was because of the *values* and *ethics* which she learned through her life, especially from her mother. Business ethics, based on transparency and accountability, assist people in their daily decisions to make the right choices, even when they are alone (Ramsay, 2003). A study in several American states showed that ethics-driven companies outperformed others (Lategan, 2003b:212). People with Christian values work and lead in a different way and can have huge impact (Curran, 2000:65).

5.4.4.4 Public morality

As a result of the liberal constitution in South Africa, many laws which prescribe a conservative public morality have been liberalised. Many Christians experience a tension between the lifestyle and values they were taught at home and the lifestyle and values rampant in the world. Consequently, believers feel that their traditional Christian lifestyle and values are no longer applicable to a large portion of their lives. Christian ethics can help them to develop an integrated, contemporary Christian lifestyle that will enable them to live authentic lives in society and influence public life effectively (De Villiers, 1999:87, 89). This corresponds with the opinion of Stanley Hauerwas who concludes that virtue and character provide a better framework for reflection on moral life than mere moral rules (Hauerwas, 1981:120; Hauerwas, 2002:166, 228; *cf.* Porter, 2001:107). Faith in Jesus Christ has spiritual, ethical and social implications for believers. They should be agents of biblical, moral and ethical principles in this world (Turaki, 1997:147-148). The prophetic voice of the church may not be quiet in the face of political, social and economic evils. The church has the task to preach and teach morality, to insist on morality at every level and its members have to live exemplary lives (Kinoti, 1994:12; De Villiers, 2000:447-449).

5.5 THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CHRISTIANS/CHURCHES IN THE WORLD

American churches are sometimes depicted as consisting of two types, the "private" church (primarily concerned with the saving of souls) and the "public" church (active in social structures to create a better society). The most influential propagator of the "public church" viewpoint was Reinhold Niebuhr (Hauerwas & Willimon, 1989:31). He was against both the anti-culturalism of exclusive Christianity and the accomodationism of culture-Christians and believed that Jesus Christ can transform all things so that God can be glorified in all vocations (Niebuhr, 1952:197, 207, 217). Christians, Van der Walt (2006:33-34) and De Villiers (2005:521) indicate, should contribute to society's transformation by means of a comprehensive view of full-time service to God, independent of the profession. Turaki (1999:22) and

Kinoti (1994:11) declare that Christianity can only influence the world effectively if it continually addresses the economic, political, social, cultural and educational areas of life.

5.5.1 Politics

As a result of the political changes, many Christians have "emigrated inwardly", dissociated themselves from the public sphere and withdrew to personal relations, interests and religious experiences (De Villiers, 2005:523). Withdrawal is not an option, argues De Villiers (1999:83), because Christians should be involved in the building of a new, just and democratic society. Packer (1985:6-8) and Kinoti (1994:7-8, 82-83) state that Christians should not see politics as a "worldly" business and thus not fulfil their political responsibility. Firstly, Christians should be well-informed about politics in order to vote and pray for government. Secondly, those with an interest and ability for a political career should pursue it. (See the interpretation of an interview with a Christian political leader in the South African Parliament in 6.7.2). Thirdly, Van der Walt (2003:296) calls attention to the necessity that Christians should criticise government. An example of such criticism is the statement of 13 October 2006 by leaders of Christian churches in South Africa on crime and violence. They made it clear that the elected political leaders are responsible to eradicate crime and violence and that citizens have the right to expect the State to protect them against violent misdeeds (Anon., 2006a).

Although South Africa is a secularised state since 1994, government encourages faith-based communities to play an active role in the formulation of public policy and to help with moral regeneration (Duncan, 2002:334-335). On 30 January 2007, the deputy president of South Africa again asked religious bodies to take part in the Moral Regeneration Movement (Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2007). When it comes to moral issues, argues Hartin (1997:30-33), the citizens of a democratic country have a responsibility to voice their views. The church has no choice but to be critically and constructively involved in the political arena. The Dutch Reformed Church did this with the press release at the end of the 2007 General Synod meeting. In it they criticised the government *inter alia* for its hesitation to actively fight violence and crime, for protecting esteemed ANC figures who allegedly committed crimes and for not taking seriously the importance of exemplary leadership and denouncing any hint of corruption in the government. The General Synod committed itself again to be a prophetic voice whenever deemed necessary (Anon., 2007b).

5.5.2 Society

Since 1994 South Africa underwent extensive transformation processes which cause especially white South Africans to feel insecure. Some believe that they cannot contribute anything to change the situation and therefore withdrew from the problem areas in society, while others have played a considerable role in the new South African society (De Villiers, 1999:81; Duncan, 2002:334; Kingma & Lotter, 2002:319; Steyn & Lotter, 2006:541-542, 551). It is better, asserts Du Plooy (2004:8), to take note of the negative

things in society and to be part of the solution. Van der Walt (1999:22-24) agrees that Christianity may never be confined to private life, but must influence society by serving God in all areas of life. The Church should maintain its prophetic calling to ensure positive change and its members should be empowered to be part of the transformation of society (Steenkamp, 1996:746; Duncan, 2002:340). Sir Frederick Catherwood, a Christian member of the European Parliament, said: *"To try to improve society is not worldliness, but love. To wash one's hands of society is not love, but worldliness."* (cf. Packer, 1985:4).

In order to play a role in the transformation of society, Christians are encouraged to develop adequate, contemporary Christian social ethics and formulate a Christian vision of a good society. The development of Christian social ethics entails the recognition of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all social spheres and the acceptance of biblical moral values as the only measure for policy formation and action. This is highly problematic in a non-Christian society, therefore an Ethics of Responsibility is proposed where people must take responsibility for their decisions (De Villiers, 2005:521, 526-530). South Africa is following the worldwide phenomena of developing into a human rights culture. Duties and *responsibilities* always go hand in hand with *rights* (Lotter, 2007b:5).

5.5.3 Economy / Business

Progress has been made over the last decade regarding nation-building in South Africa, but the soaring levels of corruption are intolerable. News headlines often carry reports of large-scale corruption in the public and private sectors (Gounden, 2007:2; Makapela, 2007:3). The values of the free market economy, like competition, consumption and the accumulation of material possessions have been taken over by Christians although they are hardly compatible with traditional Christian values (De Villiers, 1999:86). Some Christian ethicists even claim that economic life is foreign to faith and theology has no place in business ethics. Vorster (2007:130), on the contrary, believes that Christians can have a gigantic influence in the corporate world by being responsible stock-holders and stakeholders and by setting the example that business is not only about making profit, but also about serving people.

There are several factors which caused a renewed interest in business ethics. Lategan (2003b:212) mentions globalisation, new business practices like electronic marketing and commerce, worldwide economic scandals and ideologies like consumerism. This new interest in business ethics is also detectable at many universities as they include it in the training of business managers. Vorster (2007:130) urges business schools to mould the principles of business ethics into practical and realistic ethical guidelines for responsible corporations. There are four core values for corporate governance which should receive attention, namely *fairness, accountability, responsibility* and *transparency.* Value-driven organisations should consistently evaluate whether they "walk their talk", whether their values are integrated in all their activities. Managers should demonstrate their moral integrity through responsible

ethical decisions – not to be guided by what is *acceptable*, but by what is *right* (Lategan, 2003a:361-362; Lategan, 2003b:221).

Churches should provide their members in the business world with opportunities to discuss how they can integrate their Christian values in their businesses (Knapp, 2004:10-13). There are some biblical principles, suggested by Gardner (1997:55-58), which Christians should apply in their business endeavours:

- Profit – the quest for profit may not cause unscriptural behaviour.
- Process – the manner of doing business should be a witness, e.g. no exploitation or abuse of human and material resources.
- People – there should be mutual respect and dignity between employees and employers.
- Product – the quality of the product should be above reproach and not detrimental to consumers.
- Price – it should be fair.

Christianity can provide an integrated Christian worldview and relevant Christian work-ethics to address problems in the business world (Ogeke, 1998:25; Vorster, 2002:487-488).

5.5.4 Education

The primary educators of values in children, says Rens (2005:64), are the parents, but in the current broken society where parents are absent, children often have other role-models in society for the development of morals and other values, like peer groups, the media and especially television-characters. Teachers can have a huge impact on students. They do not only influence through content, but also through contact (McFarland, 2007). Teaching is not only about the curriculum, but also about being open to students and to pray for them. Teachers should share with their students their vision and sense of vocation, what inspires them and what excites them. Instead of cursing the darkness, Christian teachers should light the candle by not defining their position in terms of what they reject, but in terms of what they wholeheartedly stand for (Kok, 2004:106). Christian educators, indicates Rens (2005:70), should regard biblical character-building as part of their duty and in doing so, equip their learners for life. In order to ensure that learners will, as adults, act ethically, Christian educators should not only provide intellectual education to their students, but also be committed to the religious regeneration of their students, because character transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit (Lantos, 2001:16, 25-26).

5.5.5 Science

During modernity, states Voyé (1999:277-278), science presented itself as the means to solve all problems, but it also induced new problems, to the effect that society should prescribe limits for the application of scientific knowledge, e.g. in the area of bio-ethics. These ethical issues should be handled by government, but in Belgium, France and the Netherlands, the governments often approach religious actors for advice. Although the contemporary world is secularised, it seems as if governments

acknowledge that no other institution has developed competence in the ethical field like religion. Vorster (2002:493) agrees that when it comes to ethical issues regarding human life, the Church has the responsibility to enter the debate. Strijbos (2006:7) refers to the Centre for Philosophy, Technology and Social Systems at the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam with one of its objectives to carry out an interdisciplinary research programme into the management and design of technology and social systems with a high priority on ethical and other normative issues.

Although the relationship between science and religion has always been strained with scientists like Richard Dawkins and Steven Pinker who view religion as a relic of the pre-scientific past and believers on the other hand who see science as morally nihilistic, there are people like Dr Francis Collins who believes that science and religion can be reconciled. As leader of the Human Genome Project (aimed at healing innate human disorders), he is one of the world's most influential scientists and advocates that the God of the Bible is also the God of the genome and He can be worshiped in the cathedral and in the laboratory (Horgan, 2007:35). Collins believes that one can be a rigorous scientist, demanding evidence before accepting any conclusions, but also a believer whose life is influenced by his/her relationship with God. The field of human genetics offers the potential to alleviate human suffering, but also needs to be regulated to minimise inappropriate uses. Collins devotes 5% of this multibillion-dollar research program to ethical issues, involving a host of social scientists, ethicists and theologians (Tennant, 2001:42-43).

Sir John Templeton is a pioneer in the field of science and religion and started a foundation to encourage the dialogue between these two disciplines in the belief that religion and science can supply mutual illumination and appreciation of the wonders of the universe and motivate people to investigate and comprehend the truth in a new way (Barrow, 2006:19; Giberson, 2006:5). The Templeton Foundation started and funds the *Science & Theology News* which gives concise reviews on activities in the field and reports on topics like the big-bang theory; the world baby-making market; evolution; intelligent design; cloning; in vitro fertilisation and cosmological breakthroughs. The Harvard Divinity School joined the ranks of Oxford University, Princeton Theological Seminary and other major universities in the world in exploring the religion-science relationship in a prestigious way (Ferguson, 2006:14).

5.5.6 Media

It is the task of the public media to serve the interest of society and to report on prejudicial issues (Fourie, 1998:266). After 1994, Christians in South Africa lost their privileged position of access to the media (De Villiers, 2005:523-524). A greater number of committed Christians need to join the profession in order to win it back and ensure that Christian principles determine the practice of the profession (Shorter & Onyancha, 1997:84-85). Then the purpose of communication, namely to give information, to educate and entertain people and to build understanding in human communities, will be fulfilled again. The content which is communicated should always be truthful, constructive to human values and advantageous for

freedom and justice. The media can play a massive role in the changing of values and the fight against injustices (Balasuriya, 2001: 33-34, 37-38). Christians should use new media technology to impact on the community, e.g. Christian radio and television broadcasts. Digital technology and the internet can be used for religious publications and interactive websites, especially for Christians in "closed" societies (Anon., 2006b:38-39). Two examples are given:

- www.echurch.co.za (spiritual material accessible to Christians worldwide)
- www.kwamjing.net (an interactive Bible study programme for Thai Christians)

5.5.7 Justice

Believers should advance God's justice in the world by persistently reminding government of its responsibility to maintain order in society. The Church also has the responsibility to be a mouthpiece for minority groups, for the oppressed, for children and women (Vorster, 2002:406, 493). Since 1994, the Christian faith no longer has preference in the South African legislation and the administration of justice may sometimes be in direct conflict with Christian principles. If Christians do not agree with government, it is their task to use all possible communication channels to draw attention to it (Pienaar, 2006:18-19). Churches should encourage their members to use the constitutional road to expose and address any form of injustice. If it is not successful and they continue to experience discrimination, they should demonstrate that Christ is their Lord by not becoming angry, by continually doing good (1 Peter 4:19) and by continuing to be witness to the hope (1 Peter 3:15) that is living in them (Janse van Rensburg & Pienaar, 2005:48-49).

The aim of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was to bring reconciliation and healing to the South African society. Forrester (2001:205) and Storey (2007) comment on the fact that the TRC used a "different kind of justice" as they worked under the banner of "Healing Through Truth". The justice they followed had in mind to promote healing and restoration. The TRC hearings reached beyond the limitations of secular law in order to attain forgiveness and national reconciliation. In practice, they applied an almost scriptural understanding of justice: remember, judge and forgive. Justice should rather seek *restoration* than *retribution*. One police officer, who masterminded an attack on a rural village, faced his victims and said: "I can never undo what I have done, and I have no right to ask your forgiveness, but I ask that you will allow me to spend my life helping you to rebuild your village."

Dignity, equality and freedom are some of the values pursued in the South African Constitution. These values are also the core values of the Charter of Human Rights. The aim of human rights is to protect the individual against collective abuse of power and not, as many church leaders wrongly believe, an ethical concept enforcing secular morality on citizens (Vorster, 2002: 115, 168, 174, 250). A common response of Christians to the concept of "human rights", says Coetzee (1999:8), is that people have no rights, only privileges. This is true for the vertical relationship between man and God, but not for horizontal

relationships. Between people, privileges become rights which should be mutually acknowledged and respected. The rights of one person become the responsibility of others towards that person. Vorster (2002:484) agrees that human rights are not possible if there is no moral responsibility.

5.6 PROPOSED GUIDELINES ON LIVING IN AN "UNEQUALLY YOKED CONTEXT"

– Christians should be aware of their worldview, as it serves as a compass to orient them in the world.
– Parents are primarily responsible for the transmission of values and the internalisation of values is more successful if children experience their parents' religion as credible and not mere lip-service.
– The attitude of Christ, namely love, stewardship, self-denial and obedience to God, should serve as a guideline for all relationships and activities in all areas of life.
– To be truly influential, Christians should live integrated, authentic and contemporary lifestyles.
– Christians should be agents of biblical, moral and ethical principles in this world by not keeping quiet about political, social and economic evils.
– Christians should influence the corporate world by being responsible stock-holders and stakeholders (business is not only about making profit, but also about serving people).
– Christian educators should not only focus on the curriculum, but also equip learners for life through biblical character-building.
– Christians in the communications media should ensure that the communicated content is truthful, constructive to human values and advantageous to freedom and justice.
– Christians should impact the community through Christian radio and television broadcasts. Digital technology and the internet should be used for alternative evangelism purposes.
– Believers should have a scriptural understanding of justice, namely to promote healing, restoration, forgiveness and reconciliation. Justice should be *restorative* and not *retributive*.

5.7 CONCLUSION

In this article it was argued that Christians should follow the example of Jesus Christ to be *in* the world (they may not isolate them from the world), but not *of* it (they may not accommodate the world). The Christian worldview helps believers to "survive" the challenges of the 21st postmodern century and to influence positively the unbelieving world around them because it impacts the *whole* life of the believer, to obey and honour God in every aspect of life. It enables believers to relate their faith to all areas of life by motivating them to live out their calling and responsibility to make the world a better place. Christians have no choice but to be critically and constructively involved in the political, economic, social, judicial, scientific and educational areas of life. The world needs a holistic Christianity which emphasises full-time service to God, independent of one's profession.

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Key concepts:	Kernbegrippe:
metatheoretical perspectives	metateoretiese perspektiewe
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Christian ethics	Christelike etiek
believers' responsibilities	gelowiges se verantwoordelikhede

CHAPTER 6 (ARTICLE 5)

EQUIPPING CHRISTIANS LIVING IN AN "UNEQUALLY YOKED" CONTEXT: METATHEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES BY MEANS OF AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON CHRISTIAN LIVING IN A POSTMODERN CONTEXT

Abstract

Equipping Christians living in an "unequally yoked" context: Metatheoretical perspectives by means of an empirical study on Christian living in a postmodern context

The focus of this empirical study is to investigate how some believers experience their interaction with unbelievers as they work and live together. The aim is to learn from the participants' experiences, to investigate what problems they as Christians have in their contact with unbelievers and what lessons they have learned in their approach to non-Christians. The study thus addresses aspects of peoples' lives and is concerned with exploring human behaviour. It is consequently more appropriate to follow the qualitative method of research. A short overview of qualitative research is given, followed by the results of the empirical study in which six participants from different spheres of society were involved. Guidelines are proposed in order to assist Christians in their daily lives as they work and/or live together with unbelievers in an "unequally yoked context". To conclude, guidelines are proposed for equipping Christians for their task to make a positive contribution to the unbelieving world.

Opsomming

Toerusting van Christene wat in 'n "ongelyke juk"-konteks lewe: Metateoretiese perspektiewe d.m.v. 'n empiriese studie oor 'n Christenleefstyl in 'n postmoderne konteks

Die fokus van hierdie empiriese studie is om ondersoek in te stel na hoe sommige gelowiges hul interaksie met ongelowiges ervaar waar hulle saam woon en werk. Die doel is om uit die ervarings van die deelnemers te leer, om die probleme wat hulle in hul kontak met ongelowiges ondervind te ondersoek en om te ontdek watter lesse hul reeds geleer het. In die studie gaan dit oor mense se lewens en word menslike gedrag ondersoek. Die kwalitatiewe metode van navorsing is gevolglik meer toepaslik. 'n Kort oorsig oor kwalitatiewe navorsing word gegee en dit word gevolg deur die resultate van die empiriese studie waarin ses deelnemers uit verskillende sfere van die samelewing betrokke was. Riglyne word gegee om Christene te help in hul daaglikse lewens waar hulle saam met ongelowiges in 'n "ongelyke juk" woon en/of werk. Ten slotte word riglyne voorgestel oor hoe Christene beter toegerus kan word vir hul taak om 'n positiewe bydrae tot die ongelowige wêreld te maak.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Christians find themselves living and working among unbelievers who are sometimes openly sceptical, critical and even aggressive towards them, their faith and their lifestyle. Believers in Jesus Christ often do not know how to respond and if they do respond, they realise afterwards that they used the wrong approach or said the wrong thing. There is a need to equip Christians to live and work among unbelievers so that they can exert a positive influence on them.

The objective of this article is to report on the empirical study which was done in order to investigate *how* believers in Jesus Christ experience living and working as Christians in the 21st postmodern century and *what* their needs are in order to equip them better for their task to have a positive influence in society. In Practical Theology, empirical research is usually done by following the quantitative or the qualitative approach (Pieterse, 1993:109). The choice of approach will be determined by the nature of the problem to be investigated. The qualitative method is usually more suitable for data which is mainly verbal and the procedures are not strictly formalised. The paradigm of this approach is more holistic in nature with the aim to understand social life and the meaning people attach to everyday life. The quantitative method, on the other hand, is more suitable for data which is mainly numerical and the research process is strictly formalised and controlled. The main aims are to objectively measure the social world and to control human behaviour (De Vos *et al.*, 2001:15; Schurink, 2001a:241). For this empirical study, the qualitative method of research was chosen since this method gives a better opportunity to learn from experiences/perceptions of the participants (Flick *et al.*, 2005:3-8; Richards, 2005:35). A literature study on the qualitative research method will be done. The proceedings of the empirical study will be explained, a synopsis of the responses of the participants will be given and the results interpreted. To conclude, some guidelines will be proposed on Christian living in a postmodern context and how believers can be better equipped for their task in the unbelieving world.

6.2 PROPOSED METHOD

The empirical study forms part of the *metatheory* of the operational scientific hermeneutical model of Zerfass (*cf* 1.6). It helps practical theologians to understand the reality of peoples' lives. It generates information and knowledge in order to change the unsatisfactory current praxis into a more satisfactory praxis (Heitink, 1999:113; De Klerk & Nagel, 2004:126-127). The aims of this empirical study are to investigate the experiences of contemporary Christians who are living and working among unbelievers and to discover their difficulties and needs in their task to be "salt and light" in this world. Christ's metaphor in Matthew 5:13-16 of the salt and the light defines the responsibility of Christians towards society, namely that they should carry the message of salvation and work against corruption and moral decay (Blomberg, 1992:102).

6.3 THE QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

The nature of the problem to be investigated will determine the research methodology (De Vos *et al.*, 2001:15). Quantitative research, to put it simply, concerns counting (Holliday, 2002:2). However, if the focus of the study is more concerned with exploring human behaviour or aspects regarding peoples' lives, Schurink (2001a:241) and Silverman (2001:1) are of the opinion that the qualitative research method is more appropriate. Janse van Rensburg (2007:7) describes qualitative research as a method which works with *words*, rather than *statistics*. As the focus of this study is to investigate how believers experience their contact with unbelievers as they work and live with them, the qualitative methodology of research is preferred.

6.3.1 Qualitative research

As Flick *et al.* (2005:3) explain, qualitative research aims to describe the life-worlds of people "from the inside out", to attain the perspective of the participants in order to gain a better understanding of the social realities and processes in which they are involved (*cf.* Glicken, 2003:153; *cf.* Miller & Glassner, 2004:126). As the thoughts, actions and emotions of the participant are important, Janse van Rensburg (2007:7) calls qualitative research a *client-centred* approach. Qualitative researchers, Swinton and Mowat (2007:29) indicate, use a variety of methods, approaches and empirical material, e.g. case studies, personal experiences, life stories and interviews to explore the social world of people in an attempt to understand the unique ways in which people inhabit it (*cf.* Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:3).

This approach is usually more *open* and obtains more information than quantitative research where larger quantities of respondents are involved and where the process is strictly standardised (Glicken, 2003:151; Flick *et al.*, 2005:5). In qualitative research, a wide variety of responses are encouraged as the focus of the research is usually human relationships and there is a need not only for factual data, but also *how* the participants feel about the information which they provide (Holliday, 2002:4). Some of the advantages of this method of research are that it does not require a lot of time and money, the handling of data does not call for sophisticated skills and the data produced can provide ample understanding of the situation studied (Glicken, 2003:151; Richards, 2005:3). One of the biggest advantages of the qualitative research method is that it pays attention to the diversity of perspectives of the participants and provides the means to explore their points of views (Miller & Glassner, 2004:127; Flick *et al.*, 2005:8). Researchers frequently make use of semi-structured interviews consisting of questions which orientate the researcher, but still provide enough freedom to go wider than the set questions to attain a "deeper" understanding of the social phenomena in focus (Silverman, 2001:8; Hopf, 2005a:204).

6.3.2 The participants

A qualitative research project usually has a small number of participants which should be chosen carefully in order to illuminate the different issues to be investigated (Furlong *et al.*, 2000:532; Gerson &

Horowitz, 2003:204; Richards, 2005:20; Janse van Rensburg, 2007:8). A carefully chosen sample of participants will ensure that larger trends will be reflected in the study (Gerson & Horowitz, 2003:205). One of the most anxiety-provoking tasks of the researcher, is to get strangers to be "participants", to share their intimate and personal stories for no other reason than the advancement of knowledge and the possibility of increased personal awareness (Gerson & Horowitz, 2003:209). Once the participants have been identified, the time and place for the interview should be established and permission obtained to use a recorder (Hermanns, 2005:209).

6.3.3 The interview

An interview provides a way to acquire empirical data about the social world of people by asking them questions about their daily lives (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004:140, 149). Although the spoken word always has the possibility of ambiguity, it is still the most common and powerful way to try to gain understanding of fellow human beings (Fontana & Frey, 2000:645). The style of the interview used in qualitative research is described by Furlong *et al.* (2000:536) and Mason (2003:225) as conversational, flexible and fluid, instead of interrogative. As the goal of the interview is to *understand* the participant, Fontana and Frey (2000:655) comment on the paramount importance of establishing rapport with the participant. Hermanns (2005:210) and Schurink (2001b:302) emphasise the importance of the first few minutes of the interview. It is the responsibility of the interviewer to establish a cordial and open atmosphere for conversation so that the interviewee will have no fear to lay bare aspects of his/her personality and life-world. For an interview to be effective, the interviewer should also, according to Gerson and Horowitz (2003:204, 209-210), demonstrate sympathy and support. He/she must concentrate and listen carefully without making judgemental conclusions.

The questions should be well-formulated as they should guide the participants in a limited period of time through a maze of life experiences in an orderly way. Well-formulated questions will open up the possibility to discover the unexpected and to uncover the unknown (*cf.* Richards, 2005:38). It is sometimes necessary for the researcher to stimulate the participant to give more detail. This can be done by asking short and easily understandable questions. The interviewer should be careful not to ask leading questions in which the participant is guided in his/her response (Schurink, 2001b:310; Hermanns, 2005:213).

6.3.4 Qualitative data

Qualitative data is an account about what happens in a particular social setting or among certain people (Holliday, 2002:69). It consists of records of observations or interactions which are complex and contextualised. The data is usually the result of an interview or a questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions. The data is frequently unstructured and possibly filled with significant issues (Furlong *et al.*, 2000:532; Richards, 2005:34, 37). Some interviews will inevitably provide more useful information than

others. It regularly happens that the significance of one interview can only be fully understood once it has been compared with other interviews (Gerson & Horowitz, 2003:211). If the interview was recorded on tape, the researcher should decide whether he/she wants to transcribe it in full, in other words a *verbatim* transcript (which can take up to six times longer than the interview) or whether an overview or summary of attitudes and factual information is sufficient. At least a partial transcription is recommendable (Furlong *et al.*, 2000:540; Richards, 2005:52-53).

6.3.5 Analysing the data

Once the data has been collected, it is necessary to see the "big picture" in order to make sense of the data (Richards, 2005:163). As Gerson and Horowitz (2003:216) write, it is necessary *to step back and to seek the shape of the forest amid the trees*. The series of individual interviews need to be transformed into a coherent conclusion. This is a time-consuming but essential part of the process. An intensive and repeated reading of the material is necessary in order to identify recurring topics and to note similarities and differences. The researcher will use these topics to formulate a number of analytical categories (Schmidt, 2005:254-255). Once the analytical categories are established *from* the material, they should be applied *to* the material in order to systematise the data (Gerson & Horowitz, 2003:217; Schmidt, 2005:256). This systematising process entails that the data must be "fractured" and rearranged into the analytical categories in order to facilitate comparison and interpretation. It is extremely important to keep track continually of the context of the data, otherwise the researcher might fail to understand completely the data (Maxwell, 1998:89-90). If the researcher is working with various case studies, focusing on one case study can reveal how all the themes, issues and processes interplay. If different case studies are being compared, as will be done in this research, common issues, general patterns and central themes may come to the fore (Gerson & Horowitz, 2003:211; Richards, 2005:172).

6.3.6 The possibility of feedback

The qualitative research methodology provides the opportunity to take the interpretation of the researcher back to the participants. This is very useful and helpful as it can be instrumental to validate the interpretation (Richards, 2005:21). This process is called "member checking" and usually occurs at the end of the research process. This is an effective way of ruling out the possibility that the researcher misinterpreted the meaning of what the participants said. The participants have the chance to review the interpretation and see if they agree with the researcher's conclusions (Maxwell, 1998:94; Richards, 2005:140).

6.3.7 Writing a qualitative research report

In the qualitative research method, there are three important stages, namely the interview, the interpretation and the presentation of the results. There are various ways of presenting the results. The narrative presentation, following the historical sequence, is usually preferred in qualitative research

(Bude, 2005:324). The report, says Silverman (2001:233), typically has three sections. The methodology is given in the introduction. The researcher explains what he/she intended to do, how the data was gathered and how it was analysed. The contents of the data is given and interpreted in the main section. Silverman (2001:245-246) gives a few guidelines to ensure that the researcher presents the interpretation in a comprehensible manner, i.e. to make one point at a time, to top and tail each data extract (to ensure that the readers understand the context), to show the limitations of the data and the analysis, to number the extracts (to avoid misunderstanding) and to convince the readers. In the conclusion, the researcher summarises what came to the fore during the study.

6.4 RESEARCH ETHICS: THE PRINCIPLE OF INFORMED CONSENT

In the past, some people have been hurt by research studies which failed to inform them of their rights. It occasionally happened that people, some in locked facilities, were involuntarily subjected to research studies. It also happened that certain researchers were not honest with the participants about the real intent of the study (Glicken, 2003:221). The Articles of the Nuremberg Tribunal and the Declaration of Helsinki state that subjects must be informed about the duration, the methods, the aims and the possible risks of the study (Christians, 2000:139; Mouton, 2006:244). The concept "research ethics" refers to the ethical rules and principles which direct the interaction and relationship between the researcher and the participants in the research. It addresses aspects like voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality. Researchers use the principle of informed consent to cover the ethical aspects of an empirical study.

Informed consent usually consists of three components. Firstly, it refers to voluntary participation in the investigation. The second aspect is the requirement to inform potential participants as fully as possible in advance about the goals and methods of the investigation to enable them to make an informed decision about their involvement in the proposed study. When the subjects are not capable to agree, e.g. small children, consent must be obtained from their proxy, e.g. their parents. Thirdly, informed consent refers to the fact that the participant in the study is free to withdraw at any stage from the process without any penalty (Furlong *et al.*, 2000:29; Silverman, 2001:201; Hopf, 2005b:334-336; Mouton, 2006:244). Advantages of the informed consent are *inter alia* that it guarantees that the participants have full knowledge of the procedure, that they will cooperate and it relieves possible tension, aggression, resistance and/or feelings of insecurity in the participants (Strydom, 2001:27).

6.5 METHODOLOGY FOR THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

The empirical study was done following the qualitative method of research. The researcher developed a questionnaire and identified six Christians who are living and/or working with unbelievers. The purpose and procedure of the study were explained to the potential participants in a telephonic conversation. After they agreed to participate in the study, the accompanying letter (Annexure A), the Ethics Application

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Form: Informed Consent of the NWU (Annexure B) and the Afrikaans or English (which ever the participant preferred) questionnaire (Annexure C) were given to each participant to be completed in his/her own time. The researcher made an appointment with each participant in order to conduct a semi-structured interview on the basis of the completed questionnaire. These interviews were recorded. The completed questionnaires and audio tapes of the interviews are in possession of the researcher. The researcher did not transcribe the information of the questionnaires and the interviews in a *verbatim* way and only gives a synopsis of the information revealed by the participant in the questionnaire and the interview. These synopses served as the basis for the interpretation done by the researcher. A copy of each participant's synopsis and the interpretation done by the researcher was submitted to them so that they could verify whether it corresponds with what they intended to convey. The researcher implemented all changes indicated by the participants. From these interpretations the researcher made certain conclusions and proposed guidelines regarding the equipment of Christians working and/or living among unbelievers.

6.6 SYNOPSES OF THE TRANSCRIBED INFORMATION GIVEN BY THE PARTICIPANTS

The researcher did not transcribe the information given by the participants in the questionnaires and interviews in a *verbatim* manner and only a synopsis is given. Every participant had the opportunity to read the synopsis of the transcribe information of his/her questionnaire and interview and all changes suggested, were implemented. The synopses are given in Annexure D.

6.7 INTERPRETATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES

The interpretation was done by the researcher on the basis of the synopses and each participant had the opportunity to read through the interpretation. All changes suggested by the participants, were implemented.

6.7.1 Participant P1 – Unbelieving marriage partner

Although they have already been married for 40 years, their marriage has been unequally yoked for the last 13 years (she became a Christian, but her husband not). The fact that she is a believer helps her to look differently at her circumstances. Through her daily devotional time spent with the Lord, He guides her, teaches her how to live and helps her to renew her mind.

There are two major factors straining their marriage relationship. The *first* one is the fact that her husband is still an unbeliever. P1 is regularly exposed to critique and negative comments like "Christianity does not work" (Christians commit the same errors as unbelievers), "it is a waste of time and unrealistic", "believers are not very intelligent" (they believe in fables and unpractical speculations), "no intellectual proofs can be given" and "one should not be dependent on 'someone' else". At times it becomes too

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much and she feels like walking away from the situation. Then she reminds herself that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood". She experiences that the Lord is on her side and gives her strength and courage to continue. He is the "lifter of her head" (Psalm 33 – Spirit Filled Life Bible) and gives her wisdom and a spirit of "power and love and a sound mind".

The *second* factor causing difficulties in their marriage is communication. When there is a disagreement, P1 has learned to keep quiet and just continue with life, thus avoiding a "war" which will leave both parties unsatisfied. This naturally leads to further separation. She believes that a believer and an unbeliever can have good communication if there is mutual understanding and if they can connect emotionally. P1's husband is not able to communicate on an emotional level. He habitually reminds her of her mistakes and blames her when things go wrong (critique was the example he got in his parents' home). At the beginning of a relationship, love is a feeling, but after time it should develop into a love that "always protects, always trusts, always hopes and always perseveres", but this growth never occurred between them. As a result, she lives in two worlds. At home she can read and pray, but cannot speak about her relationship with God. Outside of home, she has many wonderful and supportive Christian friends with whom she can freely share about spiritual things and with whom her emotional needs are met. Her husband often feels left out and perhaps envious of her friends.

She believes that it is her task and responsibility as a Christian to continually be an example to her husband and to live out what the Word of God teaches her. In their relationship, she has discovered the power of forgiveness. If she is put in a difficult position, she trusts that God will help her to respond correctly. P1 believes that Christians should be more outspoken in society about practices like corruption, abortion and pornography. They should pray more about it and witness more. Christians will never be able to influence society positively if they do not live holy lives orientated by the Holy Spirit. She would like to be better equipped in the area of communication. According to her, pastors, churches, small groups, pastoral counsellors and fellow believers can play an important role in this equipment process.

6.7.2 Participant P2 – Politician

Being a Christian involves all spheres of life, starting at home, finding biblical answers to social problems and equipping him for his career as a politician. If it was not for his relationship with Jesus Christ which gives him hope, he probably would not have survived in a political career because of the many problems which humanly speaking cannot be solved. He sees his involvement in the political arena as a calling of God and can therefore be successful as a Christian politician, despite corruption. The changes in South Africa since 1994 had definitely made it more difficult for him to live out his Christian commitment in his daily activities. For example, the government is not committed to observe the Sabbath and Christian principles are no longer taken into consideration when it comes to legislation. As a result of Article 15 of the constitution (freedom of religion), P2 does not experience direct opposition because he

is a Christian, but does feel that his working environment is not sensitive towards his religious convictions. In debates based on Christian values, one should be extremely careful how issues are addressed, otherwise it is interpreted that Christians think they are better than others. One regularly hears anti-Christian arguments when the problems of Africa (missionaries were instrumental in the Colonialism of the West) and the Middle-East (the problem of fundamentalism) are being discussed.

In this postmodern time where liberalism is widespread and people are free to do whatever they like, morals became a dilemma. Christians became quiet and are afraid to witness, because they do not want to be branded as judgemental. Christians should nevertheless be "salt and light" (Mt 5:13-14), but they should do it with care. They are being watched very closely and if they make a mistake, the finger is quickly pointed to their double standards. P2 has learned that behaviour often "speaks" louder than words and it is therefore imperative that Christians should be consequent in their behaviour. In order to earn respect, they should not demonstrate a "know it all" attitude, but should always be kind, honest, sincere, non-superior and non-racist. If it is necessary to engage in a discussion, it should be done in a logical and collected manner. If you respond emotionally, using "religious jargon", people tend not to "hear" you and do no respect your point of view.

Believers may not withdraw into their personal monastery, but have a responsibility towards the society in which they live. They should be active and involved in all spheres of life and should condemn practices like corruption, abortion and pornography. They should do everything possible to force government to take action through legislation. P2 feels a need to be better informed about new scientific developments like cloning and stem cell research. These developments require ethical responses and Christians are not always well informed. They should do more Bible study and have conversations with knowledgeable people. Pastors in general do not succeed to address efficiently current "hot" issues in their preaching and consequently do not equip their members effectively.

6.7.3 Participant P3 – Medical doctor

God is her fortress and strength in times of tribulations and daily provides her with insight. Her relationship with God influences her life, her attitude towards others and helps her to realise her social responsibility. Through her relationship with the Lord, she has gained wonderful, supportive friends. She does not experience that it is more difficult for her to live out her Christian commitment, but recent changes in South Africa have brought unbelievers and believers of colour closer to her. P3 does not often speak about her faith, but prefers to witness through her deeds. If one shows compassion, more than what is required and walks the extra mile, it has impact and people appreciate and respect it. She sees her medical career as a calling and wants to follow Jesus's example of serving and loving others and of being sensitive to peoples' pain.

P3 finds that people under her authority respects her Christianity, because she acknowledges their needs and efforts to do their duty well. She has won "hostile" superiors' respect by respecting them, by working hard and by being "genuine" in her interaction with colleagues. The fact that a person is a Christian does not necessarily imply that he/she is a better doctor. P3 knows "Christian" doctors who are lazy and selfish and who think that they are entitled to their comfort zone. It troubles her that they are so easily influenced by secular values. On the other hand, she knows Muslim doctors who are working self-sacrificially. Christians should be careful not to put themselves on a pedestal and think of themselves as some kind of "elite corps" who is better than others. The focus of her work is to preserve human life, but suffering should not be prolonged. It is her policy to be frank with the patient's family so that they know what the prospects are. The doctor's faith in Jesus Christ helps him/her to be more compassionate and supportive in his/her contact with the family.

Although it is difficult for P3 to speak about spiritual matters, she believes that Christians should testify if necessary. They should be "salt and light" in the world and should address issues like corruption, pornography and non-therapeutic abortions. They ought to use their contact with unbelievers as an opportunity for their "light" to shine, but they should be careful *how* they live, because people watch Christians carefully. They should be genuine in their dealings with people and should maintain a high moral and ethical standard in society, because behaviour often has more impact than words. P3 would like to be better equipped by the church and its leaders to be able to talk more freely to non-Christians.

6.7.4 Participant P4 – Lawyer

When he grew up, he got the message that he is not "good" enough and does not deserve salvation, if he is saved, it is by pure grace. This caused him to fear God and often have doubts about his salvation. It still happens sometimes, but then he prays and asks God to help him to believe, because his relationship with God is important to him. He sees Jesus Christ now as his Friend and this influences his whole life. He tries to live out his faith at home, with other people and also in the way he does his work. If he comes across unbelievers, he tries to witness without being arrogant. He expects all the people working under him to follow Christian principles in their work, although not all of them agree with it or are happy with it. P4 often hears that people refer to Christians as being hypocritical, inconsequent and "flaunting" their faith. Christians are accused of pretending to serve the "case", but are more concerned about themselves, their prestige and popularity. When these attacks are directed at him, he tries not to entertain negative feelings, but rather strive to overcome accusations with sincerity. To persevere in the Christian walk in the midst of constant temptations, one should pray daily and believe that the Holy Spirit is with you and will guide you.

In the legal profession, P4 is repeatedly confronted with ethical decisions. He has experienced that people, including "Christians" and "business men for Christ", throw all Christian principles overboard

when is comes to money. It also happens that lawyers know what clients want to hear and many give exactly that answer, just to get the money. P4 thinks it is dishonest. There is no doubt that Christians are necessary in the legal profession, but they should know that they will sometimes be forced to do something against their Christian principles. They should then be willing to speak out or withdraw from the case. Every Christian should be "salt and light" in the world, but they can only do that by living exemplary lives and sharing their faith in a humble way, even to the least important person. Christians are called to make a difference. It bothers P4 that theologians and church leaders often bring discord between churches over trivial issues, which is not to God's honour. He struggles with the brokenness of this world.

6.7.5 Participant P5 – Teacher

His mother died when he was small and he grew up with her family who are Christians. His father, however, is a Muslim. When P5 finished Grade 12, his father came to him for the first time and tried to convince him to become a Muslim. After that, his father again tried to convince him and as a result, he broke all contact with his father. He considers God as his only Father. His relationship with Jesus Christ is the most important thing in his life and influences his whole life. Although P5 experiences discrimination because he is a Christian, he still lives out his Christian values at work. Some people tease him for being a Christian, but others show respect and appreciation, because he practices what he preaches. Some of his superiors claim to be Christians, but he does not see it in their lives. Others are non-Christians and it is difficult to work under them, as they do not support his Christian lifestyle. They often accuse him of thinking that he is better than they. He often hears remarks that the Gospel is incorrect, that Jesus never arose from death, that Christianity is dead and that Christians are sinners, hypocrites, insensitive and unfair. He responds to such accusations by correcting them from the Bible.

The fact that he is a teacher is a calling of God and he experiences that God helps him to handle difficult situations with wisdom and love. He tries to instil biblical norms with his students. In order to convey good values successfully, it is imperative that his behaviour and attitude should confirm the values – integrity is necessary. If he has success with one student, he feels his efforts were worthwhile. Christians sometimes make mistakes and colleagues are quick to say that you are a "believer", but one has the Bible and the Holy Spirit to help one overcome. The believer should always be willing to forgive and to ask forgiveness. People sometimes want to give something under the table as an incentive to get something else done. Christians should pray for the right moment to address it. P5 feels that teachers have the right to strike for decent salaries, but is should not be done in a violent manner.

Spiritual activities, like devotions at home, fasting and praying, Bible studies and meetings in church help him to persevere spiritually among unbelievers. If he speaks to unbelievers about faith issues, he tries to do it in a positive, friendly and Christ-like manner, without being judgemental or accommodative.

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Christianity is not only for Sundays, one's whole life should be a witness of one's commitment to God. Christians ought to be "salt and light" in the world, not only by words, but also by conduct, following Christ's example and living holy lives. Christians should address practices like corruption, pornography and abortion in society. It is the responsibility of the local church to equip believers for their task in the world. P5 feels that he sometimes get more opposition from so-called "Christians" than from unbelievers.

6.7.6 Participant P6 – Chaplain

The fact that he is a Christian gives him discipline and guidance and helps him to stay true to his Christian principles. Recent changes in South Africa do not make it more difficult for him to live out his Christian witness, but cause non-Christians to be more outspoken. In his daily activities, he can freely apply his Christian principles at work. He experiences that people respond positively to him and he also believes that his example has a positive influence on people around him. Non-Christian colleagues often challenge him with questions based on the Scriptures. Christians should never be discouraged by these challenges, but should venture out to address it with the help of the Lord. The most common objection against Christianity that P6 hears is that Christians are also sinners. He responds to this by saying that all people are fallible and need the grace of God in order to prepare them for the world to come. Non-Christians are very critical of the behaviour of Christians, so it is essential that Christians live exemplary and upright lives.

Before 1994, many people got their training in communist countries. There they had no choice but to become atheists. After coming back and having contact with Christians, many are coming back to Christ. When he converses with them, he tries to keep the communication channels open. In order to ensure this, they agree to listen to each other's opinions and if necessary, they agree to differ. An effective topic to bring unbelievers back is "life after death". He never imposes himself on people and sees every conversation as part of a process to prepare the ground.

To persevere in his commitment to Jesus Christ, he stands on the Word of God. P6 feels that it is the responsibility of Christians to be a light in the darkness, to share the Good News and to bring the message of hope to the hopeless. In order to fulfil this responsibility, Christians may never be neutral about values. They need to speak out against things like corruption, abortion and pornography. Christians can positively influence their society by giving freely, by demonstrating care and love and by encouraging others to love. P6 feels a need to be better equipped to reach out effectively to others and to be better disciplined himself. He believes Jesus Christ will equip Christians, but other Christians are also responsible for it.

6.8 PROPOSED GUIDELINES ON WORKING AND LIVING IN AN "UNEQUALLY YOKED CONTEXT"

In the process of analysing the synopses of the different participants, certain common issues, general patterns and central themes come to the fore. The researcher used these to formulate certain analytical categories which definitely can be used effectively in the process of equipping believers who are living and working among unbelievers.

6.8.1 The importance of a personal relationship with God

Many of the participants commented on the importance of their personal relationship with God. It is during their daily devotional time with the Lord that they get new perspectives, guidance, strength and courage for everyday living. Through their daily communion with God, He gives wisdom, insight, hope and biblical answers to their problems. Their relationship with God determines their attitude towards others, because He renews the mind and disciplines them to stay true to Him.

6.8.2 The importance of spiritual support

The participants declared the necessity of spiritual activities like fasting and praying, Bible studies and meetings in church to strengthen them to persevere among unbelievers. They witnessed about the value of Christian friends to support and encourage them to endure in difficult circumstances.

6.8.3 Challenges to Christians in the new South Africa

Christians previously lived removed from unbelievers, but the new dispensation brought believers in close contact with people from different backgrounds. Although the constitution ensures freedom of religion, some Christians do experience discrimination or opposition because of their faith. Non-Christians are more outspoken and very critical of Christians' behaviour and beliefs. It is imperative that Christians should be people of integrity who live exemplary lives and practice what they preach, because behaviour and attitude often "speak" louder than words. They should be extremely careful not to give the impression that they think they are better than others.

6.8.4 Accusations against Christianity

The participants came across accusations from unbelievers like "Christianity does not work"; "Christians commit the same errors as unbelievers"; "no intellectual proofs can be given"; "it is a waste of time and unrealistic"; "believers are not very intelligent"; "Christians believe fables and speculations"; "one should not be dependent on 'someone' else"; "Jesus never arose from the death"; "missionaries (Christians) were instrumental in the suffering caused by Colonialism in Africa"; "Christians are hypocrites" and "Christians are inconsistent in their behaviour and 'flaunting' their faith".

6.8.5 Christian behaviour in the world

In their contact with unbelievers through the years, the participants have discovered that certain behaviour is received better by unbelievers. If one cannot talk to unbelievers, it is better to keep quiet and continue to be an example of godly living. Being genuine, consistent, showing compassion and walking the extra mile has great impact on people. One should "earn" other peoples' respect by respecting them and by acknowledging their needs and efforts. If the believer is engaged in a discussion, emotional charged "religious jargon" should be avoided and the reasoning should be done in a logical and collected way. Christians should avoid a "know it all" attitude and should be kind, honest, sincere, non-superior, non-racist and non-judgemental. It is important to keep the communication channels between the believer and the unbeliever open. To ensure this, they ought to agree to listen to each other's opinions and if necessary, agree to disagree. Believers should never impose themselves on people and rather see every conversation as part of a process to prepare the ground. They may never entertain negative feelings, but should always be willing to forgive and to ask forgiveness.

6.8.6 Warning to Christians

It is the opinion of some of the participants that some Christians are easily influenced by the secular world's values. They become lazy, selfish and think they are entitled to their comfort zone. Some "Christians" even throw their Christian principles overboard when it comes to money. Christians are necessary in all professions, but they should know that people may sometimes expect of them to do something against their Christian principles. They must then be willing to speak out. Christians can also expect to experience from time to time more opposition from so-called "Christians", even people in church, than from unbelievers.

6.8.7 Christians' responsibility towards society

One aspect that clearly emerged in the feedback of the participants is that Christians may not withdraw from society, but have a role to play in all spheres of life. Christianity is not only for Sundays, but one's whole life should be a witness to one's commitment to God. Believers ought to use their contact with unbelievers as an opportunity for their "light" to shine (Mt 5:13-16). Christians ought to be "salt and light" in the world, not only by words, but also in conduct. This implies that they may never be neutral about values. They should speak out against things like corruption, non-therapeutic abortion and pornography. They should do everything possible to force government to take action through legislation. Christians should positively influence their society by giving freely, by demonstrating care and love and by encouraging others to love. They ought to share the Good News in a humble and non-judgemental way, even to the least important person, because people are in need to hear the message of hope.

6.9 PROPOSED GUIDELINES ON EQUIPPING CHRISTIANS FOR WORKING AND LIVING IN AN "UNEQUALLY YOKED CONTEXT"

In the process of analysing the synopses of the different participants, the following aspects regarding the need to be equipped for the task to be God's ambassadors in the world, became clear.

6.9.1 The need to be equipped

- To be able to communicate more effectively with unbelievers.
- To be able to reach out more effectively to unbelievers
- To be better informed about new scientific developments like cloning and stem cell research.

6.9.2 The responsibility for equipping Christians

- Jesus Christ will equip Christians for their task in the world.
- Pastors should become better informed by means of Bible study and conversations with knowledgeable people so that they can equip their members effectively.
- Churches, small groups, pastoral counsellors and fellow believers can play an important role in the equipping process.

6.10 CONCLUSION

In this article, an investigation was done by means of an empirical study on *how* believers in Jesus Christ experience it to live and work as Christians in the 21st postmodern century and *what* their needs are in order to better equip them for their task to have a positive influence in society. It is clear that Christians have a responsibility to reach out to unbelievers, but it should be done in a careful and sensitive way. An authentic, personal relationship with God is of paramount importance, because the new South Africa brought new challenges to Christians. It is imperative that Christians should be humble people of integrity, living exemplary lives and practice what they preach, because unbelievers are watching them closely. The participants made it clear that Christianity is not only for Sundays and that the believer's whole life should witness to his/her commitment to God. The need for equipping became clear and it seems as if the church has an important role to play in the process.

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Key concepts:	Kernbegrippe:
metatheoretical perspectives	metateoretiese perspektiewe
empirical study	empiriese studie
qualitative method	kwalitatiewe metode
member checking	kontrolering deur deelnemers
informed consent	ingeligte toestemming

CHAPTER 7 (ARTICLE 6)

EQUIPPING CHRISTIANS LIVING IN AN "UNEQUALLY YOKED" CONTEXT: CHALLENGES TO CHRISTIANS AND THE CHURCH AMIDST UNBELIEVERS IN A POSTMODERN CONTEXT

Abstract

Equipping Christians living in an "unequally yoked" context: Challenges to Christians and the Church amidst unbelievers in a postmodern context

Although Christians have the biblical instruction not to be associated too closely with unbelievers, they have the commission of Jesus Christ to be salt and light in the world. It is a huge challenge for believers to find the balance between "closeness" on the one hand and "distinction" on the other hand. In this article, essential traits necessary for Christians in order to fulfil their calling to be a blessing in the world and to make society a better place, will be identified. Not only Christians individually, but also Christians collectively (the Church), have an immense responsibility to be Jesus Christ's representatives in this postmodern context and to respond to the renewed interest and quest for spirituality which is currently evident. Contemporary society also poses specific challenges to the Church in order to have a positive impact. Certain guidelines which she needs to adhere to will be proposed in the article.

Opsomming

Toerusting van Christene wat in 'n "ongelyke juk"-konteks lewe: Uitdagings vir Christene en die Kerk tussen ongelowiges in 'n postmoderne konteks

Alhoewel Christene die Bybelse opdrag het om nie hulself te intiem met ongelowiges te vereenselwig nie, het hulle tog die opdrag van Jesus Christus om sout en lig vir die wêreld te wees. Dit is 'n groot uitdaging vir gelowiges om die balans te vind tussen "nabyheid" aan die een kant en "onderskeid" aan die ander kant. In hierdie artikel sal daar gepoog word om essensiële kenmerke te identifiseer waaraan Christene behoort te voldoen ten einde hul in staat te stel om hul roeping uit te leef, naamlik om 'n seën vir die wêreld te wees en om die samelewing 'n beter plek te maak. Dis nie net individuele Christene wat 'n groot verantwoordelikheid het om Jesus Christus se verteenwoordigers in hierdie postmoderne konteks te wees en te reageer op die hernude belangstelling en soeke na spiritualiteit nie, maar ook die liggaam van Christus, die kerk. Die huidige gemeenskap stel ook spesifieke uitdagings aan die kerk. Indien sy begeer om 'n positiewe impak te maak, behoort sy aan sekere riglyne te voldoen wat voorgestel sal word in hierdie artikel.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The passage in Scripture "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Co 6:14), may give the impression that Paul encourages Christians to withdraw from the world and to live almost ascetic lifestyles. Such a reaction, however, would be contrary to Christ's great commission to go out into the world and to make the people his disciples (Mt 28:19). It is hence imperative that believers should understand what the apostle Paul has in mind with his prohibition in 2 Co 6:14.

He uses a metaphor from the Old Testament found in Dt 22:10 and Lev 19:19 where it is prohibited to yoke different types of animals together. With this image Paul wants to convey the message that Christians may not enter into partnerships with unbelievers (Kruse, 1991:136). Paul's prohibition (2 Co 6:14a) is followed by five rhetorical questions (2 Co 6:14b-16a). Each question anticipates a negative response and reinforces the initial prohibition by essentially repeating it. The antitheses stated in the questions illustrate the absolute antithesis between "believers" and "unbelievers" – they cannot be yoked together (McCant, 1999:66-67). It is important that Christians should understand what kind of union Paul forbids. Clearly he is not expecting them to cease all contact with the Gentile world (1 Co 5:10), for he exhorts them to be good witnesses in terms of business and ordinary social kindness (1 Co 10:25-27). They should use the contact as an opportunity to convey the saving message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He does however strongly advise them against compromising the integrity of their faith. With the metaphor, Paul warns believers to avoid any action which can cause them to link up with the world in thought and deed. He is clearly referring to close relationships with unbelievers (Martin, 1986:197; Jordaan, 1999:487).

Referring to the teaching of Christ in the Beatitudes, Blomberg (1992:102) mentions that believers may also get the impression that Christ is calling his disciples to a quasi-monastic lifestyle. The metaphor of salt and light (Mt 5:13-16) transmits, however, exactly the opposite message and shows that Christ wants his followers to permeate society with the message of salvation and to work against corruption and moral decay. In the ancient times, the basic function of salt probably was to serve as a preservative. In the same way, Christians should prevent moral decay by influencing society so as to make the world a better place and to bring answers where there is confusion (Hall, 2004; Kapolyo, 2006:1119; cf. Davies & Allison, 2000:472). This cannot happen if Christians withdraw from public life to a sphere of inner life and devotion (Van Wyk, 2005:352).

To be a Christian, Du Toit (1994:480-490) states, is not only to follow a few moral instructions, but it entails an all-encompassing lifestyle. There is no doubt that a new, authentic Christian lifestyle should be cultivated for the demands of the changing South African community. Training and equipping are necessary to develop such a lifestyle, just as Jesus taught his disciples and the first Church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching (Ac 2:42). Furthermore, the focus of the New Testament letters

written by Paul and other apostles to congregations and individuals is on teachings about the cultivation of a true Christian lifestyle.

Although religion and specifically Christianity in Europe suffered severely under the post-enlightenment rationalism, there is a renewed interest and quest for *spirituality* which verifies that the world has not become post-religious (Vorster, 2007:1). However, the postmodern era brings specific challenges to the Christian Church. Aspects that need to be addressed, according to Du Toit (2000:173), are how the Church can be inclusive to accommodate people with alternative faith experiences and how a dualistic lifestyle can be prevented (following a premodern faith on Sundays, but surviving in a postmodern world for the rest of the week).

In this article essential traits will be identified which can enable Christians effectively to fulfil their calling of God to be a blessing to the world and to make society a better place, but at the same time not compromise on the biblical instruction not to be associated with the activities of unbelievers. Guidelines will also be proposed for the Church, as the body of Christ, to have a positive impact on the contemporary postmodern context in which she lives. The aim of this article is to investigate *how* the Church and Christians individually can be more effective in fulfilling their responsibility to be ambassadors of Jesus Christ in an unbelieving and secular world.

7.2 PROPOSED METHOD

Practical Theology is different from other disciplines in Theology in that it has a bipolar focus. The object of study can be divided into two parts, namely the Word of God on the one hand and the concrete reality (the praxis) on the other (Louw, 1998:2-4; Kruger & Venter, 2001:557). In the operational scientific hermeneutical model of Zerfass, which often serves as the methodological framework for studies in Practical Theology, one can distinguish these two focus areas in the basis theory and the metatheory. The third aspect of the model of Zerfass, the practice theory, is instrumental to bridge the gap between theory and praxis and to improve the issues of dissatisfaction in the current praxis (Grosskopf & Lotter, 2003:15, De Wet, 2006:59; *cf* 1.6). In this article a *practice theory* will be established to indicate *how* Christians and the Church should go about their responsibility to reach out effectively to unbelievers in the current postmodern context. It is formed by the creative hermeneutical interaction between the basis and metatheoretical insights and the results from the empirical study in order to give direction to the praxis (De Wet, 2006:60).

7.3 THE CONCEPTS "church" AND "Church"

According to Hayes (1999:5-6), mention is made in the reformed tradition of the *universal* church (Augustine and some other Reformers referred to the *invisible* church) and the *local* church (congregations which emerged after Pentecost). Passages in Scripture like Galatians 3:28 and

Ephesians 2:11-22 clearly state that once the *Church* has been enlivened by God's Spirit, all social and cultural boundaries disappear (Allen, 2007:116). In this article a distinction will be made between the *church* with a small "c" and *Church* with a capital "C". By *church* is meant a congregation-based faith experience, including the church buildings and structures (institution). By *Church* is meant the gathering of true believers in Jesus Christ, regardless of their church connections. It will become clear that people are not called to *go* to church, but to *be* the Church (Olivier & Van Deventer, 2004:14; Barna, 2006:x, 39; Niemandt, 2007b:50-56; Van der Walt, 2007:113). The difference between *church* and *Church* is given in a table (Niemandt, 2007a:54):

The *church* is ...	The *Church* is ...
A place where people go.	Followers of Jesus Christ, no matter where they are.
A gathering on Sundays to listen to a sermon and sing a few songs.	Groups of disciples who meet during the week in various places, but also on Sundays.
Christians who go to church on Sunday to "consume" religious services and to receive spiritual nourishment for the week.	Believers who live dependent on God, who worship together and individually during the week and who are sent to the world.
Christians who ask "What can the church offer me?"	Disciples who ask "How can I help and serve this community of faith in its calling to go to the world?"
A place where people can go so that their pastors can do religious things for them.	A community where the pastors and other leaders can equip believers for their service in the world.
A place where people can bring their children to learn spiritual lessons while they can listen to a sermon and sing a few songs.	A community where believers are equipped to guide their children in the ways of the Lord. A place where children form part of the faith community.

7.4 CHRISTENDOM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Christendom was legalised in the 4th century when Constantine declared the Christian religion as a legitimate religion and Teodosius declared it as the official state religion. The church and the state became one and the church had a position of great power and wealth. The church controlled the world of music, science and justice. Despite the power of the church, she lost her ability to influence society positively (Edmondson, 2002:2; Niemandt, 2007a:13, 15). The church was only an instrument in the hands of the state to promote state affairs (Van Wyk, 2005:353). This move influenced the church significantly (Niemandt, 2007a:14). People became "Christians" (church members) on the grounds of their birth and it boiled down to *hatch* (baptism), *match* (marry) and *dispatch* (funeral). Public opinion demanded that people should be "Christian" if they wish to be considered for public office or get support in business. People started to believe that religion is only about the one hour in church on Sunday. That is why "Christians" have so little regenerational influence on the world (Heyns, 2006:1; Van der Walt, 2007:267, 417). This kind of "Christians" can be called "cultural Christians" – they are associated with Christianity because of convenience, not because of conscience. They have no desire to understand and apply biblical principles in their daily lives (Anon., 2002).

Over the past 200 years, the influence of Christendom has been waning and the church is losing much of her power in the world and in people's lives. She has become one of *many* voices. The end of

Christendom, however, does not necessarily imply the end of the Christian faith or the Church (The mission-shaped Church working group, 2004:11; Steyn & Lotter, 2006:540; Niemandt, 2007a:14-15). To use the words of Miller (2007:38), post-Christendom does not imply a post-Christian era. A time of reconstruction should follow the time of deconstruction as a "new" Christianity is needed to provide inspiration and direction.

7.5 REFORMED TRADITION

The author of this article believes that Christianity is not a matter of convenience, but of conscience and has an earnest desire to understand what is happening in the world and to apply biblical principles to every day life. This attitude is in harmony with the reformed tradition to seek to put God always in the centre. An outstanding characteristic of the reformed tradition is that there is an openness to think new in new situations. Reformed people strive to reconcile the unchanging Word of God with changing circumstances (Gerrish, 1999:16-19; Burger, 2001:23-24). They do not only want to understand *God*, but they also seek to understand *life*. Although this openness of the reformed theology is a positive trait, it causes tension and vulnerability. The Church of the 21st century faces enormous challenges to apply the Bible in the contemporary context. There are, however, many Church leaders who have embraced the challenge and who regard this postmodern time as a wonderful opportunity to present faith and the role of the Church in a new way. They believe that the Word of God and circumstances should constantly be in conversation so that new light may come to the fore in the light of God's Word (Niemandt, 2007a:47-48). The deteriorating circumstance in Zimbabwe, the crime situation in SA, union between the four Churches in the Dutch Reformed family and legislation regarding marriage and civil unions in SA are examples of issues with which the DRC is currently busy (Anon., 2008a). Christians can only be "contemporary" Christians, states Stott (1993:29), if they are willing to listen both to the voice of God through Scripture and the voice of people.

This attitude corresponds with the spirit of the Reformation: *Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* (the reformed church must always reform). What is heard in the Word of God must become visible in word and deed (Smit, 2002:133). True faith is a living faith which grows. The end of Christendom (*cf.* 7.4) may bring about the birth of something new, something like the first century Church which impacted on society dramatically: a Church which can help people to understand how God wants them to live, to make sense of life and to fill their deep emptiness with the presence of the living God (Niemandt, 2007a:48-49).

7.6 AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY

Contemporary Christians should take time to study the lives of believers given in the Word of God who lived and worked among unbelievers and to be encouraged by their examples and to learn from them. Believers should moreover be conscious of the challenges and opportunities which the postmodern

context poses for Christian living. Nothing, Stott (1997:70) argues, delays the expansion of the Kingdom of God as much as inconsistent Christian lives.

7.6.1 Examples from the Old Testament

The Old Testament gives proof of people who were yoked together with heathens. The first example is Joseph who experienced several dark moments during the time he worked for Potiphar (Ge 39), but the distinctive phrase about his life is "the Lord was with Joseph" (Wenham, 1994:372-374). He was divinely equipped for his task and was very successful. His moral behaviour was not only based on his beliefs *about* God, but on his fellowship *with* God. As long as the new culture and customs in which he found himself did not require of him to sin against God, he conformed to it (Wallace, 2001:33-36). Daniel and his friends (Da 1-3; 6), serve as further examples of people of God in the Old Testament who participated in the life of a foreign nation without compromising their religion. Faithfulness to God and the assurance that the sovereign God is in control and at work in the world, were their keys for living in a hostile world (Lucas, 2002:55-57). God bestowed outstanding wisdom on Daniel and his integrity and faithfulness were evident to all (Helberg, 1994:66-68). The four young men never compromised their faith in God, even in the face of death (Collins, 1993:188; Van Deventer, 2001:163, 196). God did not protect them *from* danger, but *in* it (Redditt, 1999:105-107).

The life of the young slave girl of Naaman's wife (2 Ki 5) shows that God sometimes uses unexpected people to fulfil his purposes (Seow, 1999:193, 198; Branch, 2004:180, 187; Kim, 2005:50-52). She earns her mistress's trust and then shares her faith with confidence, transmitting encouragement and hope (Bimson, 1998:366; Branch, 2004:180, 186). She had enough reason to be bitter, but she cared for the spiritual and physical well-being of her conqueror (House, 1995:272; Safari, 2004:23). Jeremiah's advice to the exiles (Jer 29:1-23) transmits the same message: do not be paralysed by resentment and self-pity, but work for growth and peace, settle down, build houses, plant gardens, marry and have children, because God is present and at the right time, He will intervene for their ultimate good (Kidner, 1987:100; Miller, 2001:791-792; Fretheim, 2002:402).

7.6.2 Examples from the New Testament

The New Testament provides examples of people who were yoked together with unbelievers, e.g. the apostles. During the time of the Gospels, the disciples of Jesus Christ are fearful and slow to understand His teachings, but after Pentecost (the outpouring of the Holy Spirit), they are changed men, willing to share the Gospel even at the cost of their own lives (Lloyd-Jones, 2001:97-107). They obeyed the authorities, unless it implied disobedience to God (Ac 5:28-29). Although Jesus Christ prepared his disciples for possible opposition, He also promised the presence of the Holy Spirit who would teach them what to say (Wall, 2002:92). In the New Testament both Paul and Peter give teaching to Christians who are slaves of unbelievers. Paul exhorts the Christians to be honest, faithful and obedient and to work with

respect, integrity and dedication under all circumstances, because they were ultimately working for God (Ryken *et al.*, 1998:967; Best, 2004:575-577). They should accept the prevailing social structure and set an example *within* it as a sign of spiritual maturity and a way to make the Gospel attractive to others (De Klerk, 2001:117; Janse van Rensburg, 2003:767; Stuckenbruck, 2003:125; Hoehner, 2004:808).

Peter urges the Christian slaves who are working for unbelievers to submit to their masters in reverence for God, to live as witnesses of Christ in spite of injustice and persecution and to disobey their masters only if they expect something against God's will (Achtemeier, 1996:193; Schreiner, 2003:127, 134-138). Peter encourages them to focus on the Suffering Servant and to follow Christ's example *in* their suffering, for God will reward them if they endure (Kolden, 2004:424; Jobes, 2005:187-189, 226-228). He encourages them to respond to evil with blessings and to be prepared to explain the reasons for their hope (1 Pe 3:15). They should not fear suffering, for it cannot bring lasting harm to the person who does God's will, but they are encouraged to remain faithful *in* their suffering. God sometimes uses suffering for purification and therefore it is never a sign of His *absence*, but of His *presence* (Schreiner, 2003:219). This gives *hope in suffering* which does not make the suffering less real, but puts it in the right perspective and provides patience to endure (Kolden, 2004:427).

7.6.3 Believers' mission in the world

Part of God's calling of Abraham is the promise that he will be divinely blessed and that this blessing will extend to all the peoples of the earth (Ge 12:2-3). All people will experience God's blessing through their contact with Abraham and his descendants (Wenham, 1987:274; Fretheim, 1994:424; Wenham, 1998:70; Whybray, 2001:49; Mathews, 2005:115-117). This corresponds with the vision of the prophet Isaiah for Israel – that they should be a "light for the Gentiles" (Isa 49:6). In the Bible, "light" and "salvation" are synonymous and it is evident that God does not limit his salvation only to Israel, but He wants his love to reach all people (Selman, 1997:327-328; Thomas, 1998:319; Thompson, 2001:78). The same message is transmitted in the New Testament through the use of metaphors such as salt, light and a letter (Mt 5:13-15; 2 Co 3:2-3). "Closet Christianity" and self-directed service are ruled out as Christ calls his followers into a *visible* discipleship in which people can see their *new* lifestyle (Blomberg, 1992:103). He does not remove his disciples *from* the world, but prays for their protection *in* the world (Jn 17:14-15). His way to win the world is that people will not only become converts, but disciples who grow ever more in His likeness in order to comply with the Great Commission (Coleman, 2005:77).

7.6.4 Christian behaviour

In Christ's life, there was no room for revenge, as He was unselfish, humble, prepared to suffer loss and willing to pray for His persecutors (Allison, 2001:855; Lucas, 2002:156). Believers should follow suit and submit even to non-Christian authorities, as long as the authorities do not require something against God's will (Ro 13:1-7). Their behaviour should be above reproach as they "walk the talk" in all spheres

of life and practice an encompassing spirituality, because Christianity is not only for Sundays (Hart, 2001:47). A criterion often used by postmodernists, is whether something works. They want to see that Christ makes a difference in a believer's life (Lawrence, 2002:84). Non-Christians are consequently watching Christians closely. If believers wish to influence people, they should live integrated, authentic and contemporary lifestyles (De Villiers, 1999:87-89). They should show compassion and demonstrate a willingness to walk the extra mile (*cf.* 6.7.3). A life of integrity is more effective than good arguments (Hart, 2001:47). When believers engage with unbelievers in conversation, emotional charged "religious jargon" should be avoided. Christians should shun a "know it all" attitude and should be kind, sincere, non-superior and non-judgemental (*cf.* 6.7.2). That will keep the communication channels between believers and unbelievers open (*cf.* 6.7.6). The attitude of Christ, namely love, stewardship, self-denial and obedience to God, should serve as guidelines for all relationships and activities in all areas of life (Vorster, 2007:20).

Being a witness of Jesus Christ is not about propaganda, but it is about being a living mystery – to live in such a way that one's life would not make sense if God did not exist (Kenneson, 1995:169). Believers must show with their changed lifestyle that they are serving the Almighty God. A transformed life is a powerful pointer to the resurrected Christ and people will ask about it (Thompson, 2000:151; Nyirongo, 1997:145). The credibility of the Christian witness not only depends on sound exegesis of the Bible, but also on sound practice, that is to live accordingly (Vanhoozer, 1998:15, 20-21; Falcke, 2004:174).

7.6.5 Following Christ's example

Since Christ is the ultimate example for Christians (disciples of Jesus Christ – Ac 11:26), they should be imitators of Him. Paul describes Christ's attitude in Philippians 2:5-11 and uses it to give instruction on Christian living (Van Wyk, 2007:5). He became *human*, but also *humane*. He was available for people and had compassion with them → Christians should also demonstrate this *inclusive love*. Christ took on the nature of a *servant* → Christians should serve God by being responsible *stewards* in the community. Christ *humbled* himself → Christians should deny themselves. Christ demonstrated what it means to be obedient to God's will. God's will is expressed in His Law and explained in His Word and this should impact on the Christian's lifestyle (Vorster, 2007:15-20).

People devote themselves to that which they believe are the highest priorities in life. Jesus Christ defined his priorities by speaking about it and demonstrating it by His deeds. If believers want to follow in the footsteps of their Master, they need to pursue the same priorities as He did. Barna (2006:74-76) gives a list of priorities of Christ. He was committed to obey God (Mt 5:19), in love (Mt 5:44), justice (Mt 5:6), peace (Mt 5:9), holy living (Mt 5:16), integrity (Mt 5:37), generosity (Mt 6:2-4), spiritual connection (Mt 4:10), spiritual wholeness (Mt 16:26), biblical literacy (Mt 22:29), faith in God (Mt 19:26) and disciple-making (Mt 28:19).

The character of Jesus Christ enabled Him to impact on the world like no other person ever did. These qualities, listed by Barna (2006:76-77), should be visible in the believer's life too. Jesus Christ was merciful and grace-giving (Mt 5:7), reconciliatory (Mt 5:24), diligent (Mt 7:7), teachable (Mt 7:24), courageous (Mt 10:16), accepting (Mt 12:50), surrendered (Mt 16:24), humble (Mt 23:12) and servant-minded (Mt 20:26-27). Believers must become ever more like Christ, for it is Christ who lives in them (Van Wyk, 2007:4).

7.6.6 Christian worldview

A person's worldview is instrumental in how he/she looks at reality and it helps him/her to understand and interpret reality (Broodryk, 2002:8). The Christian worldview helps believers to define their relationships, but it also impacts on their *whole* lives as it enables them to relate their faith to all spheres of life. It gives direction, new perspectives and solutions for everyday problems (Hollinger, 2004:41; Kok, 2004:99; Schoeman, 2004:194). The Christian worldview is an integral worldview which helps believers to realise that they are called to serve God full-time in all areas of life. It helps Christians to understand that they are called to be "reformers" of society: everything which was *formed* in creation was *deformed* by sin and needs to be *reformed* again in Christ (Wolters, 2005:8-12, 77-78; Anon., 2007).

7.6.7 Revolutionary Christians

According to Barna (2006:7-8, 12-16, 25), Jesus Christ is looking for "revolutionary" Christians who are dedicated to glorify Him through every thought, word and deed. The trademark of "revolutionary" Christians is that they pursue an intimate relationship with God, even if it means to go against the flow. Revolutionary Christians are not perfect people with indisputable behaviour, but they are passionate to become it. Christ calls people whose lives reflect His life for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. He looks for people who are serious about their faith and who are not willing to play religious games. Their lives should be centred on their faith in Him and they should view every moment of life through a spiritual lens and apply biblical principles to every decision. They should be willing to return to a 1st century lifestyle characterised by values like goodness, love, generosity, kindness and simplicity. Barna (2006:22-24, 105) provides a list of seven core passions of "revolutionary" Christians:

− *Worship* – to be aware of God's magnificence, to voice gratitude for His love and to acknowledge His control and power.
− *Faith-based conversations* – for the purpose of inviting others into an intimate relationship with God.
− *Spiritual growth* – to learn more about the Christian faith and to apply Christian principles daily.
− *Service* – to demonstrate the transformation that faith causes in one's life.
− *Resources* – a willingness to use one's *resources* like money, skills and time for the benefit of others.
− *Spiritual friendships* – to be encouraged by others and to be accountable to others.
− *Family faith* – to model a Spirit-led lifestyle so that children can learn to walk in God's ways.

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7.7 THE CHURCH AND ITS MINISTRY

The French mathematician-philosopher, Blaise Pascal, stated that all human beings have a God-shaped vacuum within them which they attempt to fill, but only a true relationship with the living God can satisfactorily fill the emptiness (*cf.* Barna, 2006:30). Together with the spiritual hunger, postmodern people demonstrate a spiritual vitality and are thus looking for a dynamic and life-changing relationship with God (Olivier & Van Deventer, 2004:13). The Church of God as the community of true believers in Jesus Christ (*cf.* 7.3), has a vital role to play in this regard. For the Church to bring postmodern people in contact with the Gospel effectively, she has to be aware of the social and intellectual context of people, she needs to address the changing circumstances and needs of people and she has to do it in a contemporary way (Bolt, 2006:207; Conder, 2006:43; Norridge, 2006:5; Olivier, 2006:76-79).

7.7.1 Working among postmodern people

Postmodern people are exceptionally suspicious about absolutes or metanarratives (Smith, 2006:62). The Church should therefore be cautious *how* she presents the Gospel. She should not only *proclaim* the kingdom of God, but should *demonstrate* the kingdom of God by bringing healing to the sick, wholeness to the spiritually lost and kindness to those whose lifestyles are different from hers (Lawrence, 2002:83). Postmodern people are more interested in human experiences than in reason (Kingma & Lotter, 2002:315-317). They want to experience emotional warmth and that somebody has *heard* them and has compassion. To have impact, the Church should be genuine and transparent in her interaction with people. God's *servants* should be trustworthy and willing to engage in authentic friendships (Lawrence, 2002:83-84; Steyn & Lotter, 2006:10). The Church should assist her members to interpret and apply the Word of God responsibly to everyday situations. They will then not be scared to approach people who differ fundamentally from their traditional views (Du Toit, 2000:35-43).

Postmodern people are involved in a quest for meaning in life, because the known orders and -isms failed dramatically (Kingma & Lotter, 2002:310). They are looking for answers to their questions and relief from their feelings of uncertainty. They are earnestly seeking a God who cares, understands and who is available (Poling, 2002:85). The Church should seize the moment to turn spiritual interest into convictions in Jesus Christ, because faith in Him gives meaning to peoples' lives (Kourie, 2006:22). Although postmodern people are interested in spiritual matters, they are often not interested in institutional Christianity and most of the time want to experience their religion in an individualistic manner (Gabriel, 2006:18). The Church should therefore explore alternative methods to reach people, e.g. the internet and other technological devices (Anon., 2006b:38-39; Joubert, 2007).

7.7.2 Individualism or belonging?

Western individualism is a result of modernity and people believe that they can only attain authentic identity if they separate themselves from others (Smith, 2006:56). However, there is currently a growing

awareness that this kind of individualism is destructive. Research shows that it leaves people with feelings of alienation and an inability to maintain relationships (Nolan, 2006:15-16). One of the distinct features of the present generation, says Hunter (2001:21-22), is alienation. People are alienated from nature and from people. People are also spiritually alienated – they still believe in Jesus Christ, but do not go to church anymore – "believing without belonging" (Neilson, 2006:227). In the west, where individualism is rife, churches are empty, but in other parts of the world, especially in Africa, where *ubuntu* (a person becomes a person in and through other people) is considered as the essence of authentic human existence, churches are packed (Mnyandu, 1997:80; Nolan, 2006:17-18). *Ubuntu* is based on the values of intense humanness, caring, sharing, respect and compassion (Broodryk, 2002:13).

There is currently a quest to balance individualism and communality (Niemandt, 2007a:31). On the one hand people feel secure in an egoistic individualism, but on the other hand they are in need of sincere and intimate relationships. There is a longing for a new connectedness and a sense of belonging (Fogarty, 2003:98). This paradox requires new initiatives in evangelism and discipleship, like for instance the 12 week Alpha course which started in the late 20th century in England. It uses media in a very effective way, takes place in the relaxed atmosphere of private homes and is strongly relational in nature. New kinds of Christian communities are emerging as "non-belonging believers" organise themselves into Christian communities, e.g. pub-churches in the UK and home churches in Australia (Lyon, 2002:14-17).

In America, a trend is developing that people who are not interested in going to traditional churches, are meeting in coffee shops (Westbury, 2005). There is more spontaneity and an environment is provided where believers have easier contact with non-believers (Swanson, 2006:95-97; Grobler & Lotter, 2007). During the first few months that Bishop Wills visited Starbucks, nothing happened, but then God began to send people. They started to talk to him about personal difficulties and later became Christians (Jacobs, 2007). The National Community Church in Washington DC uses the movie theatres at Union Station to have their public services, because it is strategically located and highly accessible, also for the unchurched. Approximately 70% of people attending are from "unchurched" backgrounds (Batterson, 2007).

7.7.3 The Church's aim

All believers are called to be continuously transformed through the renewing power of the Holy Spirit (Smit, 2002:140; Van der Walt, 2007:9). Spiritual transformation refers to a significant transition which changes the perspectives and/or practices of people. Some prerequisites for such transformation are that faith should be a priority in the person's life and the person has to associate with people who share his/her interest in spiritual development so that they can motivate one another and be accountable to each other. Their common desire for spiritual growth will further determine their activities (Barna, 2006:52-58). Although individual transformation is important, transformation is also needed on a wider level.

According to Smit (2002:125), it is the responsibility of the Church. Bohnen (2004:110) states that the Church should look at the surrounding culture with differentiated acceptance (that which is good) and rejection (that which is bad). Through the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ, she can help to build a society based on love, peace, respect and justice (Anon., 2006a). In a broken world, the Church should be the carrier of hope, because hope has transformative power (Stone, 2001:259; Bohnen, 2004:110).

7.7.4 The Church's message

In 1965 Harvey Cox wrote *The Secular City* in which he predicted the end of religion, but in 1984 he wrote *Religion in the Secular City* in which he took back many of his earlier predictions. Religion is by no means dead and man is apparently "incurably religious" (Runia, 1994:312-313). The geneticist, Dean Hamer, proved through molecular genetics and neurobiology research that spirituality is "hardwired" into human beings' genes. In other words, people have a genetic predisposition for spiritual belief. He calls it the God gene (Hamer, 2005:6-9). Opportunities are opening up for the Church as postmodern people are thinking about the meaning of life and looking anew at faith. There is a willingness to listen to the Gospel, because they feel something lacking (Duvenage, 1999:28; Vorster, 1999:12; Hunter, 2001:21; Venter, 2001:88; Janse van Rensburg, 2002:46-48).

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is just as much a liberating message for postmodern people as it was for premodern and modern people (Runia, 1994:313). Preaching is part of the essence of the Church and the content of the preaching should always be the unchanging Word of God which must be preached in changing circumstances (Venter, 2001:78). Postmodern people *need* to hear about God revealed (*creatio ex nihilo*). The uniqueness of the Christian message (*kerygma*) is centred in the good news about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this, Christ sets Himself above all other gods. In Acts 17, when Paul speaks to the Athenian society, he does it with sensitivity and compassion. Although Paul does not approve of their gods, he is courteous when he speaks to them and treats them with dignity. Paul adjusted his message in order to be contextually appropriate without compromising the content (Paauw, 2002:45-48; Lotter & Thompson, 2005:710-712; Westbury, 2005).

In every generation the Church has to face difficult questions regarding the truth. To be able to minister the Word to the world, the Church needs to understand the world and the Word (Vanhoozer, 1998:12-13). In today's world where religious pluralism is rife, there are a few issues mentioned by Rabali (2004:64-65), on which the Church cannot compromise. The first is the uniqueness of the Scriptures. It is God who revealed the truth (2 Ti 3:16) and who inspired the human authors. Secondly, this Gospel should be preached in order to bring salvation to sinners (Ro 1:16). Thirdly, this salvation is only possible through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph 2:8). Believers can meet the postmodern challenge with

assurance that it does not depend on their intelligence and persuasive power, but on the Spirit of the living God who renews human hearts and enlightens human minds (Cooper, 1993:120).

7.7.5 The Church's methods

If churches are clinging to their traditions and methods and resist change, they may become culturally irrelevant and die (Olivier, 2006:121). Culture has changed from a left-brain dominance of rationality, to a more right-brain orientation of intuition and subjectivity (Neilson, 2006:279). Without compromising the message, the Church needs to utilise the positive elements of the current paradigm and vary the style to proclaim the richness of the Gospel (Vergeer, 1999:13; Westbury, 2005). In the presentation of the Gospel to the postmodern generation, attention should be given to the *how*. Pure rationality in a "from above" instructional manner as the only means to communicate the Gospel is no longer acceptable and alternatives like metaphors, symbols, rituals, music, narratives, drama, retreats and meditation should be employed. Peoples' attention should be captured and retained by stimulating multimedia presentations. In a certain sense the *process* is more important than the *product*. A two-way dialogue in which there is room for insights from the Gospel and questions from people, is more productive than one-way preaching (Hunter, 2001, 21; Olivier & Van Deventer, 2004:14-20; Steyn & Lotter, 2006:537).

Postmodern people need to experience the sermon as a "happening" and want participation (Janse van Rensburg, 2002:49; Olivier, 2006:131-132). They are looking for spaces where they can interact in a dynamic and life-changing relationship with God (Olivier, 2006:83). The Church and house-groups need to create opportunities for people to develop a deeper level of spirituality as well as deeper levels in their experience of interpersonal relationships (Vergeer, 1999:14; Olivier, 2006:138). House-groups can provide the milieu for acceptance, respect and trust in which people can experience the liberating power of *koinonia*, where low self-esteem can be addressed and old wounds healed (Shorter & Onyancha, 1997:140; Hunter, 2001:22; Fogarty, 2003:100). This kind of fellowship where there is commitment between people can help them to go deeper than their masks and to listen to each other, rejoice together and mourn together (Attfield, 2001:23; Fogarty, 2003:99).

In order to reach the young people, the Church should speak their "language" and the arts, music, DVD's, dance and drama are very effective. To touch the hearts of young people, the traditional sermon should include narratives filled with principles from the Word of God. Above all, the Church should demonstrate integrity. Young people need to experience that the Church is genuinely interested in them and is willing to listen to their stories, care about them and love them (Smith, 2007:138-141).

The Church's ministry should not depend solely on words or arguments to *present* an apologetic, but should rather demonstrate a transformed life of service, in other words to *be* an apologetic (Smith, 2006:29). Unless the Church becomes involved in practical outreaches, she will stagnate in self-

centeredness and apathy (Coleman, 2005:79). Biblical interpretation should follow the Word from the page to the practice (Vanhoozer, 1998:13). The Church should for example support people working in public institutions like the police service and correctional services and care for the poor, food-projects, homeless shelters, job creation, medical help, etc. In this way the Church will become more visible and more available to unbelievers who are seeking help. This implies a willingness to live a life of service and self-sacrifice with no place for status and comfort (De Villiers, 2000:449; Thompson, 2000:154; Swanson, 2002:80; Olivier & Van Deventer, 2004:20-23; Anon., 2006a; Barnes, 2006:40). Care Team is for example a group of believers in Houston, USA, who are trained to support physically and pastorally people stricken by HIV/AIDS and Alzheimer. They also support the caregivers and one caregiver said that with the support of the Care Team, she started to see light at the end of a very dark tunnel (Sunderland, 2002:158-161). Hope in Richmond South Africa (Anon., 2008b) is a partnership between churches in America, Canada, South Africa and Rotary International to address issues like nutrition (soup kitchens), health (HIV education and upgrading of local healthcare systems), sanitation (community toilets) and unemployment (craft- and brick production, micro lending for small business development) in the Karoo town of Richmond. As Swanson (2002:79-81) states, the Church looses its power, credibility and evangelistic effectiveness if she is not service-orientated.

7.7.6 Closing the Sunday-Monday gap

Some Christians almost forget about God from 8am to 6pm on Mondays to Fridays (Chang, 2004:1). Life should however be lived in the presence of God, because religion embraces all of life (Van der Walt, 2003:336; Falcke, 2004:175; Van Wyk, 2007:4). Christians may not separate their spiritual lives from the rest of their lives (Hall, 2004). The rediscovery of true humanness will close the reality gap between Sunday and Monday. There may be no withdrawal from the world, but a "world-wisdom" which offers realism about the world in which people live (Lyon, 2002:17-18). Christians should serve God in public life, in business, politics, science, etc. because ordinary jobs are also "divine vocations" (Van der Walt, 2003:337). Believers' relationship with Christ should determine everything they do in life, how they conduct their business, their family affairs and even how they make choices about the use of their time (Hall, 2004).

Church does not happen only at certain "holy" hours during a week in a specific secluded area, but daily where believers move (Fogarty, 2003:103). People do not necessarily want to listen to a sermon, but they want to hear about peoples' experiences and observe their lives (Lombaard, 2007:149). The world is the church grounds and the Church's ministry is a 24/7 ministry (Barna, 2006:137). Christians should confidently and lovingly share their convictions with unbelievers, while always respecting the unbelievers' convictions (Hartin, 1997:32; Holz, 2002:39). In dealing with people with different opinions, the key word is *tolerance* – a cordial effort to understand another's beliefs, without necessarily sharing or accepting it (Muehlhoff, 2002:46).

7.7.7 Not the "insider/outsider" church

Postmodern people are suspicious about the institutionalised church (Hunter, 2001:22; Fogarty, 2003:12). Perhaps this stems from the exclusive "insider/outsider" church model of modernity. The Church may no longer follow this model, but should be inclusive by gracefully accepting those on the margins and by accommodating diversity (Hendriks, 1997:36; Lyon, 2002:18). An attitude which demonstrates a willingness of the Church to renounce its old pretentious exclusiveness is a precondition for survival in the postmodern context (Neutjens, 2000:339). The Church needs to answer earnestly the question for herself – why does she exist? The only answer should be – because there is a world in need! The Church does not in the first place exist for the people who are there every Sunday, but for those who are *not* there (Bohnen, 2004:111; Bolt, 2006:217; Smith, 2007:133). Postmodern people often need to *belong* before they can *believe* (Conder, 2006:114). Saddleback in California is an example of a Church which succeeded in creating an environment where visitors feel welcome (Olivier, 2006:145).

The interaction which the Church has with people inside and outside the Church, should be characterised by acceptance and unconditional love (Lombaard, 2007:150). Christians in general are comfortable to speak about their faith to fellow Christians, but not so with people outside the circle of faith. The Church should teach believers to follow Christ's example and engage with people who are far from God in conversations about God. Narratives, when done prayerfully, produce existential challenges which arguments cannot pose. People must learn to be more attentive to and cooperative with the Holy Spirit to use the opportunities to say a word or to listen to an unsaved person's story (Thompson, 2000:135; Paauw, 2002:53; Lowry, 2006).

7.7.8 The missional Church

From history, the Afrikaners, as part of the South African society, understand the concept of "forming a laager". The Voortrekkers used the laager as a fighting technique in the Frontier Wars against the indigenous tribes. A laager was formed by strategically placing ox-wagons in a circle with thorn bushes jammed under the wagons and between the wheels (Giliomee, 2003:163). Today the concept of "forming a laager" is used when a safe space is created for the known by keeping the unknown outside. As soon as challenging situations are faced, there is a frantic desire for separation and self-determination. It may cause the downfall of a nation and for the purpose of this article, may have life-threatening consequences for the 21st century's Church (De Klerk, 2000:16). The Church needs to break free from the "laager" and explore new opportunities. Innovators are necessary who can think in a new way. The most important innovation is that the Church should once again become a missional Church. She does not do mission work, but she *is* God's mission to the world (Falcke, 2004:176; Niemandt, 2007b:56-60). The mission field is no longer far away, but right around the church (Olivier, 2006:143). She needs to go out and discover the needs of the community and tailor an outreach to meet the needs. In Gauteng, South Africa,

for example, a church was started for the motorbike community – the Messiah's Disciples and Ministry 4 Bikers Church (Anon., 2008c).

The Church has no option, but to *be* missional, because she is the body of Christ and He is a missional God. Mission is the very nature of the Church (Messenger, 2004:7). The task of the missional Church is to take the Gospel into the surrounding culture and to present her faith to non-believers (Conder, 2006:131). She needs to equip her members for this task (Hendriks, 2004:17). The missional Church exists for the transformation of the community (The mission-shaped Church working group, 2004:81). If the Church is not making an impact outside her four walls, she is not making an impact at all (Swanson, 2002:82).

7.7.9 Leadership

To bring about genuine and lasting religious transformation, leaders should concentrate on more than just constructing bigger buildings or replacing the overhead projector with a big-screen projecting system (Anon., 2005). They have to escape the short-sightedness of their denominational worlds. In order to attain it, they need to be *poets, prophets* and *apostles*. A *poet* is somebody who can listen and discern new rhythms of life. A *prophet* helps people to re-discover their true stories by unmasking the lies. He/she can reconnect God's people with their core values by inviting them to leave behind the present individualised religious consumerism and journey to a God-centred and neighbour-focused life. The *apostle* has a clear sense of calling and can lead people where "the old maps do not work anymore" (Hendriks, 2004:202-203; Neilson, 2006:280).

Leaders will probably not experience certainty about the way ahead and should be willing to struggle continually to understand what it means to be a faithful, witnessing community in the current postmodern setting (Roxburgh, 1999:252). Apostolic leadership is needed for the Church today, leaders who understand that they are *called* by a *sending* God to lead the body of Christ out of the "comfortable known" to *go* to a society/world in need (Dodd, 2003:150-152). The Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago is an example of a Church who attempts to leave the "Christian ghetto" in order to reach out to unbelievers through their "seeker services" (Hille, 2000:121).

7.8 CONCLUSION

In this article it was shown that Christians individually and collectively (the Church), have an immense responsibility to be Jesus Christ's representatives in this postmodern context and to respond to the renewed interest and quest for spirituality which is currently evident. To impact positively on society, Christians have to demonstrate an authentic Christian lifestyle. They should be people who "walk the talk" and practice an encompassing spirituality in all professions. The postmodern era also presents specific challenges to the Church. The Church has to give attention to *inter alia* the quality of

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relationships, the transmission of the message and leadership. Believers should demonstrate what it means to live in God's presence, not only on Sundays in church, but wherever they are. The world is their church grounds and their ministry is 24/7.

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Key concepts	**Kernbegrippe:**
authentic Christian lifestyle	geloofwaardige Christenleefstyl
believers' responsibility	gelowiges se verantwoordelikheid
Church ministry	bediening van Kerk
missional Church	missionêre Kerk
postmodern context	postmoderne konteks

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CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the research was to investigate the context in which 21st century Christians live and to suggest contours for a model to equip them to have a positive influence on the unbelieving world around them. In order to attain this goal, the researcher endeavoured to reach the following objectives:

- to investigate what the Bible teaches about the relationship between the believer and the unbelieving world;

- to research how the human sciences can help to equip Christians for their task to positively influence the world around them;

- to do a qualitative empirical study on the experiences of Christians who are living and working in the secular world; and

- to propose a model to equip Christians for their life in an unequally yoked context.

In this chapter contours of a model will be given which resulted from a synthesis and interpretation of the basis and metatheory in hermeneutical interaction. This will be followed by the final conclusion and suggestions for further research.

8.2 CONTOURS OF A MODEL TO EQUIP CHRISTIANS FOR THEIR LIFE IN AN UNEQUALLY YOKED CONTEXT

Throughout the study, it was shown that Christians individually and collectively (the Church) have an immense responsibility to be Jesus Christ's ambassadors in the contemporary postmodern context. To have a positive impact on society, Christians individually should be equipped to live authentic Christian lifestyles. Christians collectively, in other words the Church, should be equipped to respond effectively to the specific challenges posed by postmodernity. A model to equip Christians living and/or working in an "unequally yoked" context should thus have these two main foci.

8.2.1 AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY

Contemporary Christians will only be able to have a positive impact on the unbelieving world around them if they demonstrate an authentic Christian lifestyle characterised by integrity, transparency and genuineness.

8.2.1.1 Guidelines from the Old Testament (*cf.* 2.4 & 2.5)

From the study of some Old Testament figures, namely **Joseph** (Ge 39) and **Daniel** (Da 1-6) who served as leaders in foreign courts and an ordinary, **unnamed slave girl** who had no status (2 Ki 5) and the **nation of Israel** (the advice of Jeremiah in Jer 29 to the Israelites during the period in which they lived as exiles in Babylon) and **selected teachings** on the responsibilities of God's people towards the world in which they live (Ge 12:1-3; Isa 49:5-6; Ps 96), certain essential realities about God and some general guidelines to equip contemporary Christians living among unbelievers in a secular world, came to the fore.

8.2.1.1.1 Christians should understand the importance of a personal relationship with God

- A personal relationship *with* God implies daily fellowship with the living God. It requires a day by day walk with Him where the spiritual truths are applied in everyday life and decisions. It is not only knowledge *about* Him.
- Day by day fellowship with God is the source of Christians' spiritual strength. This is where they learn to trust God and where they receive promises from God which will carry them through trying circumstances.
- A personal relationship with God enables Christians to obey God's commands faithfully and to be willing to sacrifice – even unto death, by keeping the Suffering Servant in mind and following Him.
- A personal relationship with God helps the Christian to remember that unjust suffering should never be regarded as a sign of God's *absence*, but of His *presence*.
- Christian parents should realise that the religious upbringing of their children is their most important responsibility, as it will help their children to stand firm in times of temptation and in difficult situations.

8.2.1.1.2 Christians should know and be reminded that God is sovereignly in control

- They should remember that God uses circumstances to work *in* and *through* their lives and to bring about His purposes.
- They should accept difficulties and be patient in it, since God does not always deliver his children *from* danger, but always protect them *in* it.
- They should not take matters into their own hands, but maintain an unwavering faith and trust in God, because He *is* in control and will intervene at the right time, because He has a plan to fulfil.
- The knowledge that God is in control gives Christians the spiritual strength to act in a truly ethical manner – to do what is right, based on the intrinsic merit of the action, irrespective of the positive or negative consequences.

8.2.1.1.3 God is present and He equips his children for their task

- Christians should remember that the *unseen* God never leaves them alone, He is always *with* them.

- They should understand that God sometimes works with a *hidden* hand which can only be observed by an eye of faith.
- They should remember that God gives wisdom and faith to know how to handle difficult situations and to remain faithful in all circumstances.

8.2.1.1.4 God's standards and faithfulness to Him

- Christians should be loyal and conscientious in their work and always deliver work of outstanding quality, even if their employers are unbelievers and sometimes discriminating against them.
- In their dedicated service to their earthly "masters", they should remember that their real Master is in heaven and their first loyalty lies with Him.
- If Christians are forced to compromise their religious convictions and to do something contrary to God's will, they have the right to non-violent civil disobedience.
- God does not always require "big" things, but He asks of Christians to be faithful in the small things.

8.2.1.1.5 God's outward focus gives Christians a missionary vision

- Christians need to understand that their lives should be directed towards service to God and fellow human beings in *all* spheres of life.
- Christians have a responsibility to spread the good news of God's salvation, as God is not interested only in his children (the believers), but also in the nations (the unbelievers).
- They should know that God has a purpose to fulfil through their lives and they should thus be willing to participate fully in every day's civil responsibilities, but it is participation joined with distinctiveness.
- Christians should not keep quiet about their personal commitments and religious convictions, because people should know why they act the way they do.
- They should first win the *trust* of the unbelievers, before they try to share their faith.
- God does not use only influential people to bring about change. The only requirement to be used by God is that Christians should be willing to share faithfully their religious experiences and beliefs.
- Christians should contribute to the welfare of foreign nations. Unbelievers should be blessed as a result of their contact with believers.
- It is possible that doors to the Gospel may open as a result of Christian concern and outreach/help in countries of the world which are traditionally not open to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

8.2.1.2 Guidelines from the New Testament (*cf.* 3.3 & 3.4)

The New Testament provides examples of believers who lived and worked among unbelievers. Valuable guidelines can be identified by studying the way in which the **apostles** (Ac 4-5) asserted themselves when they experienced hostility from the religious leaders of their day. Paul's teaching regarding the **conduct of slaves and masters** (included in the household codes), the example of **Onesimus** before and

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after his conversion (the letter to Philemon) and Peter's teaching to the **slaves** (1 Pe 2:18-25) and **"strangers in the world"** (1 Pe 1-4) deserve attention. Some metaphors (Mt 5:13-16; 2 Co 3:2-3) and particular teachings in the New Testament (Jn 17:14-15; Mt 5:38-39; Ro 13:1-7) explain the relationship and responsibility of the believer towards the unbelieving world.

8.2.1.2.1 Importance of the Holy Spirit

- The Holy Spirit transforms fearful people into bold witnesses of the Gospel.
- He is present and guides believers on how to handle difficult situations.

8.2.1.2.2 In the face of suffering

- When God allows suffering in believers' lives, they should focus on the Suffering Servant and remember that God is sovereignly in control.
- Suffering should not be feared, for nothing can remove them from God's divine favour. This gives believers courage to remain faithful *in* their suffering.
- Believers should be prepared to explain the reasons for their beliefs, actions and hope.
- God uses suffering for purification – it is never a sign of His *absence*, but of His *presence*. This gives *hope in suffering*.
- Hope does not make suffering less real, but puts it in the right perspective and provides patience to endure.
- God's Kingdom has no room for revenge: believers should return evil and insult with blessing.

8.2.1.2.3 Obedience to authorities

- Christians should submit even to non-Christian authorities, but it is never an unconditional obedience.
- Authorities may be disobeyed if they require something against God's will.
- Christians should be law-abiding citizens and may not withdraw from civil responsibility.
- When Christians' God-given fundamental rights of freedom and justice are being violated, they may be involved in organised non-violent resistance.

8.2.1.2.4 Attitude at work

- Christians should be honest, faithful and obedient and work with respect, integrity and dedication, even if their employers are wicked and harsh unbelievers.
- Eye-service is ruled out as Christians are ultimately working for God and his Name should never be jeopardised.
- Prevailing social structures are only the circumstances *in which* Christians serve the Lord and not the circumstances *for which* they live. They should set an example *within* it as a sign of spiritual maturity.
- Christian employees should behave in such a way that the Gospel is attractive to unbelievers.

- Christian employers should treat their employees with integrity and goodwill, because their Master is the Lord and they are accountable to Him.

8.2.1.2.5 Involvement in the world

- Jesus Christ never removed his disciples *from* the world, but protected them *in* it. Although they do not belong to the world, God has a mission to fulfil through them.
- Religion in isolation and "closet Christianity" are ruled out. Jesus Christ calls believers into a *visible* discipleship, to serve Him and their fellow human beings in *all* spheres of life.
- With involvement comes distinctiveness, because believers have experienced a profound change of heart and it should be visible in a new lifestyle.
- Their lives are actually a "communication" from Christ and a witness to the world about the change God can bring about in the lives of people.

8.2.1.3 Guidelines regarding Christian living in the current postmodern context (*cf.* 4.6; 5.6 & 6.8)

Christians need to find the balance between exclusive Christianity, which is in a certain sense anti-cultural, and being so accommodating that it leads to so called "culture Christianity". Christians should contribute to society's transformation by means of a comprehensive view of full-time service to God, whether it is in the economic, political, social, cultural or educational areas of life. Then they will be able to respond to the challenges of the postmodern era and use this *kairos* moment to reach out to postmodern people who are looking for the meaning of life.

8.2.1.3.1 Understanding postmodern people

- People are open to different truths, ethical rules and perspectives.
- People no longer only want to *know* things, they want to *experience* things.
- People are in search of spirituality, but it is not necessarily a search for God.
- People have no regard for the Bible as they reject any proclamation of absolute truth.
- People are more interested in life *before* death than in life *after* death.
- People are in need of authentic friendship and want to see that Christianity makes a difference in peoples' lives.

8.2.1.3.2 Guidelines for Christians living in a postmodern context

- Christians should have a good look at their own commitments, because it may sometimes be more "modern" (based on traditions) than biblical.
- Evangelism should be more than *proclaiming* the kingdom of God, it should be a *demonstration* of the kingdom of God, of love, compassion, willingness to sacrifice – the attitude of Jesus Christ.

- Believers should earn the right to speak by being people of integrity. They should "walk the talk" and apply their spirituality in all spheres of life.
- Christians should be very careful in their interpretation of the Word and the way in which they communicate "truths".
- For Christians to be effective in this world, they need to be part of the living body of Christ where they can be edified spiritually and encouraged for their task.
- In response to the moral crisis, Christians should learn to think fundamentally about principles and they should demonstrate holiness, while living out their prophetic critical calling in the world.
- They should speak out against corruption, non-therapeutic abortion, pornography, and other evils in society.
- They should do everything possible to put pressure on the government to take action through legislation to ensure a more just society.

8.2.1.3.3 The Christian worldview and the believer's responsibility
- Christians should be aware of their worldview, as it serves as a compass to orient them in the world.
- Parents are primarily responsible for the transmission of values and the internalisation of values is more successful if children experience their parents' religion as credible and not mere lip-service.
- The attitude of Christ, namely love, stewardship, self-denial and obedience to God, should serve as a guideline for all relationships and activities in all areas of life.
- To be truly influential, Christians should live integrated, authentic and contemporary lifestyles.
- Christians should be agents of biblical, moral and ethical principles in this world by not keeping quiet about political, social and economic evils.
- Christians should influence the corporate world by being responsible stock-holders and stakeholders (business is not only about making profit, but also about serving people).
- Christian educators should not only focus on the curriculum, but also equip learners for life through biblical character-building.
- Christians in the communications media should ensure that the communicated content is truthful, constructive to human values and promotes freedom and justice.
- Christians should impact on the community through Christian radio and television broadcasts. Digital technology and the internet should be used for alternative evangelism purposes.
- Believers should have a scriptural understanding of justice, namely to promote healing, restoration, forgiveness and reconciliation. Justice should be *restorative* and not *retributive*.

8.2.1.3.4 Accusations against Christianity
- "Christianity does not work" or "Christians commit the same errors as unbelievers"
- "no intellectual proofs can be given" or "it is a waste of time and unrealistic"
- "believers are not very intelligent" or "Christians believe fables and speculations"

- "one should not be dependent on 'someone' else"
- "Jesus never arose from death"
- "missionaries (Christians) were instrumental in the suffering caused by Colonialism in Africa"
- "Christians are hypocrites" or "Christians are inconsistent in their behaviour"

8.2.1.3.5 Christian behaviour in the new South Africa

- Non-Christians are more outspoken and very critical of Christians' behaviour and beliefs.
- Christians should be people of integrity who live exemplary lives and practice what they preach, because behaviour and attitude often "speak" louder than words.
- They should be careful not to give the impression that they think they are better than others.
- Christians should always be genuine and consistent, showing compassion and walking the extra mile.
- "Earn" other peoples' respect by respecting them and by acknowledging their needs and efforts.
- If the believer is engaged in a discussion, emotional charged "religious jargon" should be avoided.
- Christians should avoid a "know it all" attitude and should be kind, honest, sincere, non-superior, non-racist and non-judgemental.
- They may never entertain negative feelings, but should always be willing to forgive and to ask forgiveness.

8.2.1.4 Following Jesus Christ's example (cf. 7.6.5)

Since Christ is the ultimate example for Christians, they should be imitators of Him.

8.2.1.4.1 Christ's attitude (Philippians 2:5-11)

- He became *human,* but also *humane.*
- He was available for people and had compassion with them → Christians should also demonstrate this *inclusive love.*
- Christ took on the nature of a *servant* → Christians should serve God by being responsible *stewards* in the community.
- Christ *humbled* himself → Christians should deny themselves.

8.2.1.4.2 Christ's priorities and characteristics

- He was committed to
    - obey God (Mt 5:19),
    - love (Mt 5:44) and justice (Mt 5:6),
    - peace (Mt 5:9) and holy living (Mt 5:16),
    - integrity (Mt 5:37) and generosity (Mt 6:2-4),
    - spiritual connection (Mt 4:10) and spiritual wholeness (Mt 16:26),

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- biblical literacy (Mt 22:29),
- faith in God (Mt 19:26) and disciple-making (Mt 28:19).
- Jesus Christ was
  - merciful and grace-giving (Mt 5:7),
  - reconciliatory (Mt 5:24) and diligent (Mt 7:7),
  - teachable (Mt 7:24) and courageous (Mt 10:16),
  - accepting (Mt 12:50) and surrendered (Mt 16:24).

8.2.1.5 Being "revolutionary" Christians (*cf.* 7.6.7)

Jesus Christ is looking for "revolutionary" Christians who are dedicated to glorify Him through every thought, word and deed. The trademark of "revolutionary" Christians is that they pursue an intimate relationship with God, even if it means to go against the flow. Revolutionary Christians are not perfect people with indisputable behaviour, but they are passionate to become it. Their lives are centred on their faith in Him and they view every moment of life through a spiritual lens and apply biblical principles to every decision. Seven core passions of "revolutionary" Christians:

- *Worship* – to be aware of God's magnificence, to voice gratitude for His love and to acknowledge His control and power.
- *Faith-based conversations* – for the purpose of inviting others into an intimate relationship with God.
- *Spiritual growth* – to learn more about the Christian faith and to apply Christian principles daily.
- *Service* – to demonstrate the transformation that faith causes in one's life.
- *Resources* – a willingness to use one's *resources* like money, skills and time for the benefit of others.
- *Spiritual friendships* – to be encouraged by others and to be accountable to others.
- *Family faith* – to model a Spirit-led lifestyle so that children can learn to walk in God's ways.

8.2.2 THE CHURCH AND ITS MINISTRY

Postmodern people demonstrate a spiritual hunger which can only be satisfied by a dynamic and life-changing relationship with God. The Church of God as the community of true believers in Jesus Christ has a vital role to play in this regard. For the Church to bring postmodern people effectively in contact with the Gospel, she has to be aware of the social and intellectual context of people, she needs to address the changing circumstances and needs of people and she has to do it in a contemporary way.

8.2.2.1 The Church's aim

- Believers should be continuously transformed through the renewing power of the Holy Spirit and it should be visible in changed perspectives and/or practices.
- Transformation on a wider level is also needed. Through the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Church can help to build a society based on love, peace, respect and justice.

- The Church should be the carrier of hope in this broken world, because hope has transformative power.

8.2.2.2 The Church's message

- The Gospel of Jesus Christ is just as much a liberating message for postmodern people as it was for premodern and modern people.
- Preaching is part of the essence of the Church and the content of the preaching should always be the unchanging Word of God which must be preached in changing circumstances.
- Postmodern people *need* to hear about God revealed (*creatio ex nihilo*).
- The uniqueness of the Christian message (*kerygma*) is centred in the good news about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this, Christ sets Himself above all other gods.

8.2.2.3 The Church's methods

- Pure rationality in a "from above" instructional manner as the only means to communicate the Gospel is no longer acceptable and alternatives like metaphors, symbols, rituals, music, narratives, drama, retreats and meditation should be employed.
- Peoples' attention should be captured and retained by stimulating multimedia presentations.
- The *process* is more important than the *product*. A two-way dialogue in which there is room for insights from the Gospel and questions from people, is thus more productive than one-way preaching.
- Postmodern people need to experience the sermon as a "happening" and want to participate.
- To touch the hearts of young people, the traditional sermon should include narratives filled with principles from the Word of God.
- The Church should speak their "language" and the arts, music, DVD's, dance and drama are very effective.
- The Church should become involved in practical outreaches like care for the poor, food-projects, homeless shelters, job creation, medical help and HIV/AIDS projects.
- The Church needs to become more visible and more available to unbelievers who are seeking help.
- New kinds of Christian communities should be explored, e.g. pub-churches, home churches, biker churches or meetings in coffee shops and movie theatres. The advantage is that there is more spontaneity and an environment is provided where believers have easier contact with non-believers.

8.2.2.4 Closing the Sunday-Monday gap

- Christians may not forget about God from 8am to 6pm on Mondays to Fridays.
- Life should however be lived in the presence of God.
- Church does not happen only at certain "holy" hours during a week in a specific secluded area, but daily where believers move.
- The world is the church grounds and the Church's ministry is a 24/7 ministry.

- People do not necessarily want to listen to a sermon, but they want to hear about peoples' experiences and observe their lives.

8.2.2.5 Not the "insider/outsider" church

- The Church should be inclusive by gracefully accepting those on the margins and by accommodating diversity.
- Postmodern people often need to *belong* before they can *believe*. The Church needs to create an environment where visitors feel welcome.
- The interaction which the Church has with people inside and outside the Church, should be characterised by acceptance and unconditional love.
- The Church should teach believers to follow Christ's example and engage with people who are far from God in conversations about God.
- People must learn to be more attentive to and cooperative with the Holy Spirit to use the opportunities to say a word or to listen to an unsaved person's story.

8.2.2.6 The missional Church

- The Church should not do mission work, but she *is* God's mission to the world.
- The mission field is no longer far away, but right around the church. She needs to go out and discover the needs of the community and tailor an outreach to meet it.
- The task of the missional Church is to take the Gospel into the surrounding culture and to present her faith to non-believers.
- The missional Church exists for the transformation of the community and if the Church is not making an impact outside her four walls, she is not making an impact at all.

8.2.2.7 Leadership

- Leaders should be *poets*, *prophets* and *apostles*.
- A *poet* is somebody who can listen and discern new rhythms of life.
- A *prophet* helps people to re-discover their true stories by unmasking the lies. He/she can reconnect God's people with their core values by inviting them to leave behind the present individualised religious consumerism and journey to a God-centred and neighbour-focused life.
- The *apostle* has a clear sense of calling and can lead people where "the old maps do not work anymore".
- Apostolic leadership is needed for the Church today, leaders who understand that they are *called* by a *sending* God to lead the body of Christ out of the "comfortable known" to *go* to a world in need.

8.3 FINAL CONCLUSION

The following conclusions were reached in the different chapters.

8.3.1 Conclusion of Chapter 2

Christians are more often than not yoked together with unbelievers. Believers and unbelievers share the same context in this world, but believers are called upon to act as witnesses of Jesus Christ. Even when they suffer injustice and affliction, they should take heart, because suffering is never a sign of God's *absence*, but of His *presence*. God does not always deliver his children *from* danger, but always protect them *in* it. The secret for a fulfilling life lies in a personal relationship with God and daily fellowship with Him. Knowledge *about* God is not sufficient. Christians are blessed by God to be a blessing to others and they should therefore understand that their lives should be directed towards service to God and fellow human beings in *all* spheres of life, because God has a mission to fulfil *through* them. It is evident that Christians may not withdraw from life.

8.3.2 Conclusion of Chapter 3

Although Christians may feel like strangers in this world, they may not practice their religion in isolation, because God has called them to be witnesses to the world and He has promised the assistance and presence of the Holy Spirit. Christians should be honest, faithful and obedient and work with respect, integrity and dedication, even if their employers are wicked and harsh unbelievers. Eye-service is ruled out as Christians are ultimately working for God and his Name should never be jeopardised. If they experience injustice and suffering, they should remain faithful by focusing on the Suffering Servant and remembering that God is sovereignly in control. By submitting even to non-Christian authorities, they will make the Gospel attractive, but if the authorities require something against God's will, they may disobey. Christians should not withdraw from civil responsibility, because Jesus Christ never removed his disciples *from* the world, but protected them *in* it. He calls His followers into a *visible* discipleship, to serve Him and their fellow human beings in *all* spheres of life.

8.3.3 Conclusion of Chapter 4

The postmodern way of thinking and lifestyle present unique challenges to Christians. To be effective witnesses of Jesus Christ, believers should take note of these challenges in order to engage appropriately with unbelievers. Postmodernism should not be perceived as a time of spiritual crisis, but rather a *kairos* moment. The best "tool" for Christians' successful journey through this challenging epoch is to show authentic love towards others and to have an integral Christian worldview, as it provides a frame of reference by which human beings understand themselves and others and can form normative guidelines for their daily living.

8.3.4 Conclusion of Chapter 5

Christians should follow the example of Jesus Christ to be *in* the world (they may not isolate themselves from the world), but not *of* it (they may not accommodate the world). The Christian worldview helps believers to "survive" the challenges of the 21st postmodern century and to influence positively the unbelieving world around them because it impacts the *whole* life of the believer, to obey and honour God in every aspect of life. It enables believers to relate their faith to all areas of life by motivating them to live out their calling and responsibility to make the world a better place. Christians have no choice but to be critically and constructively involved in the political, economic, social, judicial, scientific and educational areas of life. The world needs a holistic Christianity which emphasises full-time service to God, independent of one's profession.

8.3.5 Conclusion of Chapter 6

It is clear that Christians have a responsibility to reach out to unbelievers, but it should be done in a careful and sensitive way. An authentic, personal relationship with God is of paramount importance, because the new South Africa brought new challenges to Christians. It is imperative that Christians should be humble people of integrity, living exemplary lives and practice what they preach, because unbelievers are watching them closely. Christianity is not only for Sundays and the believer's whole life should be a witness of his/her commitment to God. There is a need for equipping Christians who are living in an "unequally yoked" context and the church has an important role to play in the process.

8.3.6 Conclusion of Chapter 7

Christians individually and collectively (the Church) have an immense responsibility to be Jesus Christ's representatives in this postmodern context and to respond to the renewed interest and quest for spirituality which is currently evident. To impact positively on society, Christians have to demonstrate an authentic Christian lifestyle. They should be people who "walk the talk" and practice an encompassing spirituality in all professions. The postmodern era also brings specific challenges to the Church. The Church has to give attention to *inter alia* the quality of relationships, the transmission of the message and leadership. Believers should demonstrate what it means to live in God's presence, not only on Sundays in church, but wherever they are. The world is their church grounds and they have a 24/7 ministry.

8.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- Equipping Christians to deal with constant conflict.
- Equipping Christians for life in a totalitarian state.
- Equipping Christians for effective ministry among HIV/AIDS patients.
- Equipping Christians to deal with the crime and violence in South Africa.
- Equipping Christians to deal with corruption in the public sector in South Africa.

SUMMARY AND KEY TERMS

Equipping Christians living in an "unequally yoked" context:
A Practical Theological Study.

Believers in Jesus Christ are often "yoked together" with unbelievers, because they have to work and live together. This situation is not always easy, therefore Christians need to be equipped so that they can persevere and have a positive influence on the world around them. The practical theological model of Zerfass (consisting of a basis theory, a metatheory and a practice theory) serves as the theoretical framework to research this issue and consequently propose guidelines for a model to equip Christians for their task as witnesses in the world.

The article format has been used in this thesis and consists of six articles. From the Old Testament (Article 1) and the New Testament (Article 2) it is clear that Christians may not practice their religion in isolation as God has called them to be witnesses in the world. They may even experience unjust suffering, but they should remember that suffering is never a sign of God's *absence*, but of His *presence*. God does not always deliver his children *from* danger, but always protects them *in* it. A personal relationship with God enables believers to experience a fulfilling life.

To be effective witnesses of Jesus Christ, believers should take note of the challenges which the postmodern context presents in order to engage appropriately with unbelievers (Article 3). Christians need to show authentic love towards others and need to have an integral Christian worldview which impacts on the *whole* life of the believer, to obey and honour God in every area of life (Article 4). The attitude of Christians is extremely important. They should be humble, people of integrity, living exemplary lives and practice what they preach (Article 5).

Christians collectively (the Church) also have the responsibility to be Christ's representatives in this postmodern context and to respond to the renewed quest for meaning and spirituality. The Church has to give attention to *inter alia* the quality of relationships, the transmission of the message and leadership (Article 6).

KEY TERMS

- unequally yoked
- believer/unbeliever
- Christian influence
- Christian worldview

- Christian responsibility
- authentic Christian lifestyle
- postmodernism
- equip/equipping

OPSOMMING EN SLEUTELTERME

Toerusting van Christene wat in 'n "ongelyke juk"-konteks lewe: 'n Pastorale Studie.

Christene is dikwels in 'n ongelyke juk saam met ongelowiges omdat hulle saam woon en werk. Dis nie altyd maklik nie en daarom behoort hulle toegerus te word om te volhard en om 'n positiewe invloed op die wêreld rondom hulle uit te oefen. Die Praktiese Teologiese model van Zerfass (bestaande uit 'n basis-, 'n meta- en 'n praktykteorie) dien as teoretiese raamwerk om die situasie na te vors en om gevolglik moontlike riglyne te bepaal vir 'n model om Christene toe te rus vir hul taak as getuies in die wêreld.

Die artikelformaat is gevolg in hierdie proefskrif en dit bestaan uit ses artikels. Uit die Ou Testament (Artikel 1) en die Nuwe Testament (Artikel 2) is dit duidelik dat Christene nie hul godsdiens in afsondering mag beoefen nie omdat God hulle geroep het om getuies in die wêreld te wees. Hulle mag selfs onregverdige lyding ervaar, maar hulle moet altyd onthou dat lyding nooit 'n teken is van God se *afwesigheid* nie, maar van Sy *teenwoordigheid*. God vrywaar nie altyd sy kinders *van* gevaar nie, maar Hy beskerm hulle *daarin*. 'n Persoonlike verhouding met God stel gelowiges in staat om 'n vervulde lewe te lei.

Om effektiewe getuies van Jesus Christus te wees, moet gelowiges kennis neem van die uitdagings wat die postmoderne konteks bied sodat hulle op gepaste wyse na ongelowiges kan uitreik (Artikel 3). Christene moet opregte liefde teenoor ander uitleef. Hulle moet beskik oor 'n integrale Christelike lewens- en wêreldbeskouing. Dit sal hulle *hele* lewe beïnvloed sodat hulle God in elke area van hul lewe sal eer en gehoorsaam (Artikel 4). Die gesindheid van Christene is uiters belangrik. Hulle moet nederig wees, mense van integriteit wat voorbeeldig lewe en wat doen wat hulle sê (Artikel 5).

Christene gesamentlik, die Kerk, het ook 'n verantwoordelikheid om Christus se verteenwoordigers te wees in hierdie postmoderne konteks en om te reageer op die hernude soeke na betekenis en spiritualiteit. Die Kerk moet aandag gee aan onder andere die kwaliteit van verhoudings, die oordrag van die boodskap en leierskap (Artikel 6).

SLEUTELTERME

- ongelyke juk
- gelowige/ongelowige
- Christelike invloed
- Christelike lewens- en wêreldbeskouing

- Christelike verantwoordelikheid
- outentieke Christelike lewenstyl
- postmodernisme
- toerus/toerusting

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ANNEXURE A

<div align="right">

145 Rissik Street

Kanonnierspark

Potchefstroom

2531

25 June 2007

</div>

Dear ....

I am busy with my PhD in Pastoral Studies. The objective of my study is to investigate how Christians can be equipped to have a positive influence on the unbelievers among whom they work and live in our current postmodern society. In our telephone conversation, you have agreed to be a respondent in the study and I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your willingness to participate in the research and assure you that all the information will be handled in absolute confidentiality and anonymity. The material will remain in the possession of the researcher and will not be published uninterpreted.

I would appreciate it if you could complete the questionnaire as thoroughly as possible in your own time. If you find that there is not enough space on the questionnaire, please feel free to turn the page over and continue at the back (please number your answer clearly). Please be so kind also to sign the attached "informed consent form" as required by the Ethics Committee of the North West University.

After you have completed the questionnaire, we will meet again to discuss any uncertainties.

Yours faithfully

Petria Theron

Contact numbers: 018 - 297 4373 (H)

0723 903 767 (Cell)

Rissikstraat 145
Kanonnierspark
Potchefstroom
2531
25 Junie 2007

Geagte ....

Ek is besig met my PhD in Pastoraal. Die doel van my studie is om te ondersoek hoe Christene toegerus kan word om 'n positiewe invloed te hê op ongelowiges saam met wie hulle woon en werk in ons huidige postmoderne samelewing. In ons telefoongesprek het u ingestem om een van die respondente in die studie te wees en ek wil graag my opregte waardering uitspreek vir u bereidwilligheid om deel te neem aan die navorsing en wil u graag verseker dat die inligting in die strengste vertroulikheid en anonimiteit hanteer sal word. Die materiaal sal in die navorser se besit bly en sal nie ongeïnterpreteer gepubliseer word nie.

Ek sal dit waardeer indien u die vraelys so volledig as moontlik in u eie tyd kan voltooi. Indien u vind dat daar nie genoeg spasie vir u antwoord is nie, kan u vrymoedigheid neem om op die agterkant van die bladsy voort te gaan (nommer net asb. u antwoorde duidelik). Wees asseblief so vriendelik om ook die aangehegde "ingeligte toestemming"-vorm te onderteken wat deur die Etiese Komitee van die Noordwes Universiteit vereis word.

Nadat u die vraelys voltooi het, sal ons weer ontmoet om enige onduidelikhede te bespreek.

Byvoorbaat dank.
Petria Theron

Kontaknommers: 018 - 297 4373 (Huis)
0723 903 767 (Selfoon)

PART 1: General Project Information

This part below provides you as a participant in the project with more information, so that you can make an informed decision about your voluntary participation or not.

1. Title of the Project:

   Equipping Christians living in an "unequally yoked" context: A Practical Theological Study.

2. Institution / School / Subject group / Institute:

   North West University, Faculty of Theology, School of Ecclesiastical Sciences

3. Names & contact details of project leaders:

Title, name & surname:	Prof Dr George Lotter
Full names:	George Adrian
Function in Project:	Promoter
Qualifications:	BA; ThB; DMin; ThD
Professional Registration:	-
Telephone (home):	018 297 7634
Telephone (work):	018 299 1840
Cellphone:	083 284 7599
Emergency Number:	083 284 7599
Postal address:	P. O. Box 20777, Noordbrug, 2522

4. You are approached to take part in this project and may now have the following questions:

   What are the set requirements that persons must meet to be able to take part in the project? Why and how was I chosen?

   > The participants must be confessing Christians. The participants were chosen to represent different spheres of life where they work and live together with unbelievers.

   What is the purpose of this project?

   > To investigate the problems Christians experience in their daily contact with unbelievers and how Christians can be equipped to have a positive influence on the unbelieving world around them.

NWU Etiekaansoekvorm: Ingeligte Toestemming

What will be expected of me as a participant? In which interventions / procedures will I have to take part? What exactly will it involve?

It will be required of the participant to respond either verbally or in writing to a number of questions compiled by the researcher. The interview will be recorded. The researcher will interpret/analyse the data and will submit the results to the participant so that he/she can verify whether it corresponds with what he/she intended to convey. The researcher will implement any changes that the participant indicates.

What are the potential discomfort and/or potential dangers and/or potential permanent consequences (however negligible) that participation in this project holds?

Not applicable

What precautions have been taken to protect me as participant?

The researcher will do everything possible to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. The name of the participant will not appear anywhere and no detail is required by which the participant can be identified. The records of the interview will be safely kept by the researcher in a fire proof safe for three years.

How long am I expected to be involved in the project (e.g. number and duration of visits)?

The questionnaire will be given to the participant. He/she can choose whether he/she wants to complete the questionnaire or whether he/she wants to respond to the questions verbally. The interview will last not more than one hour. Afterwards the results will be submitted to the participant so that he/she can confirm whether it corresponds with what he/she intended to convey. This will not take more than an hour.

What direct benefits can I expect from the project? What remuneration (monetary or services) can I expect for my participation?

The fact that the participant is asked to think about certain questions, may have an enlightening effect on him/her, but there is no remuneration.

What potential general benefits are there for the broader community, which may arise from the project?

The researcher hopes that Christians will be, as a result of the research having been published in article form, better equipped for their task to be light and salt for Jesus Christ in this postmodern world.

How will the findings of the project (general results, as well as individual about me) be made available or conveyed to me?

See 4.3

What measures have been taken to handle and store my data confidentially?

See 4.5

What restrictions are there to ensure the confidentiality of data?

See 4.5

If applicable, what is the policy for the handling of results of genetic tests and familial genetic information to ensure its confidentially?

Not applicable

If applicable, where drugs are tested and if they appear to be effective, will they continue to be made available to me after the project, of will I have to pay for them myself?

Not applicable

If applicable, how will biological samples that are not used immediately be destroyed, stored or used later?

Not applicable

How will I and other participants or the community share in any future commercial use of the data's profits?

Not applicable

If I suffer any detrimental effects from the project, to what extent is free treatment available and are there sufficient funds to finance the treatment? If any injury, medical disability or death follows from participating in the project, to what extent will I, my dependants and/or next of kin be compensated?

Not applicable

As project leader, I confirm to participants that the above information is complete and correct.

_____   _____
Signature of Project Leader   **Date**

Signed at   _____

Place of Signature

PART 2: General Principles

To the signatory of the consent contained in Part 3 of this document:

You are invited to take part in the research project as described in Part 1 of this informed consent form. It is important that you also read and understand the following general principles, which are applicable to all participants in our research projects:

1. Participation in the project is completely voluntary and no pressure, however subtle, may be placed on you to take part.

2. It is possible that you may not derive any benefit personally from your participation in the project, although the knowledge that may be gained by means of the project, may benefit other persons or communities.

3. You are free to withdraw from the project at any time, without stating reasons, and you will in no way be harmed by so doing. You may also request that your data no longer be used in the project. However, you are kindly requested not to withdraw from the project without careful consideration, since it may have a detrimental effect on, inter alia, the statistical reliability of the project.

4. By agreeing to take part in the project, you are also giving consent for the data that will be generated to be used by the researchers for scientific purposes as they see fit, with the caveat that it will be confidential and that your name will not be linked to any of the data without your consent.

5. You will be given access to your own data upon request, unless the Ethics Committee has approved temporary non-disclosure (in the latter case, the reasons in Part 1 will be explained to you.)

6. A summary of the nature of the project, the potential risks, factors that may cause you possible inconvenience or discomfort, the benefits that can be expected and the known and/or probable permanent consequences that your participation in the project may have for you as a participant, are set out for you in Part 1 hereof.

7. You are encouraged to ask the project leader or co-workers any questions you may have regarding the project and the related procedures at any stage. They will gladly answer your queries. They will also discuss the project with you in detail.

8. If you are a minor, the written consent of your parent or legal guardian is required before you participate in this project, as well as (in writing if possible) your voluntary assent to take part – no coercion may be placed on you.

9. The project objectives are always secondary to your well-being and actions taken will always place your interests above those of the project.

PART 3: Consent

Title of the Project:

Equipping Christians living in an "unequally yoked" context: A Practical Theological Study.

I, the undersigned   _____

Full names & Surname

have read the preceding premises in connection with the project, as discussed in *Part 1* and *Part 2* of this informed consent form, and have also heard the oral version thereof and I declare that I understand it. I have also initialled every page of *Part 1* and *Part 2*. I was given the opportunity to discuss relevant aspects of the project with the project leader and I hereby declare that I am taking part in the project voluntarily.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   **Date**

Signed at   _____

Place of Signature

WITNESSES

_____   _____

Signature of Witness 1   **Date**

Signed at   _____

Place of Signature

_____   _____

Signature of Witness 2   **Date**

Signed at   _____

Place of Signature

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHRISTIANS LIVING AND/OR WORKING WITH UNBELIEVERS

1. Personal information:

   a) Gender: _____

   b) Age: _____

   c) Occupation: _____

2. How old were you when you believed/realised that salvation lies only in Jesus Christ (Ro 3:28), that you confessed it with your mouth and were saved (Ro 10:10)? How would you describe your relationship with Jesus Christ?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. How would you describe the influence of your being a Christian on:

   a) your private life?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   b) your social life?

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. In which area(s) of your life do you come across unbelievers? E.g. at work, in your marriage or family, your neighbours, etc.

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. If you are working with unbelievers, in what way do you experience that recent changes in South Africa (after 1994) make it more difficult for you to practice your Christian commitment?

   _____

   _____

   _____

6. What kind of opposition and difficulties do you experience in your work situation because of your commitment to Jesus Christ and your Christian faith? Please give examples and list it in order of importance.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. Regarding your position at work, please complete the section applicable to your situation:

a) You are in a leadership position:

i. Can you freely apply your Christian principles in your daily activities? Explain.

_____

_____

_____

ii. How can you live out your Christian witness in your position?

_____

_____

_____

iii. How do the people under your authority, respond to your being a Christian? Explain.

_____

_____

_____

b) Your superiors are Christians:

i. Can you observe any difference in their leadership style? Elaborate.

_____

_____

_____

ii. If your superiors live out their Christian witness, what influence does it have on your non-Christian colleagues? Explain.

_____

_____

c) Your superiors are non-Christians:

    i.   What difficulties do you, as a Christian, experience working under their authority?

_____

_____

_____

_____

    ii. How do your non-Christian colleagues respond to you as a Christian?

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. What objections against Christianity do you frequently hear from unbelievers?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. How do you respond to these objections/attacks?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. Describe the reaction of the unbelievers when you respond in the above-mentioned way?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. How do you manage to persevere in your commitment to Jesus Christ amongst unbelievers?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. How do you respond to people who differ fundamentally from you about God, the Bible, the meaning of life, etc.?

_____

_____

_____

_____

13. What do you think is the role/responsibility of Christians in a secular society? Elaborate.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. How should Christians react to practices like corruption, abortion and pornography in society?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. Name guidelines, as you perceive it, for Christians to be "salt" and "light" (Mt 5:13-14) in the world.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

16. How can Christians have a positive influence on their society? Give examples.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

17. In which areas /aspects would you like to be better equipped for your task as a Christian in this world?

_____

_____

_____

18. Who is responsible for equipping Christians in general? What can be done to equip them specifically?

_____

_____

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_____

_____

_____

19. Anything else not mentioned in the questions above or any other remarks regarding equipping Christians living and/or working among unbelievers:

_____

_____

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_____

VRAELYS VIR CHRISTENE WAT SAAM MET ONGELOWIGES WOON OF WERK

NB: Beantwoord asb. slegs die vrae wat op u situasie van toepassing is.

1. Persoonlike inligting:
   a) Geslag: _____
   b) Ouderdom: _____
   c) Beroep: _____

2. Hoe oud was u toe u besef en geglo het dat verlossing alleen in Jesus Christus te vinde is (Rom 3:28), en dat u dit met u mond bely het en gered is (Rom 10:10)? Hoe sal u u verhouding met Jesus Christus beskryf?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. Watter invloed het die feit dat u 'n Christen is, op u:
   a) persoonlike lewe?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   b) sosiale lewe?

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. In watter area(s) van u lewe het u te doen met ongelowiges? Bv. by die werk, in u huwelik of gesin, u bure, ens.

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. Indien u saam met ongelowiges werk, in watter opsig maak die onlangse veranderinge in Suid-Afrika (ná 1994) dit vir u moeiliker om u Christenskap uit te leef?

   _____

   _____

   _____

6. Watter tipe teenkanting en probleme ervaar u in u werksomstandighede a.g.v. u toewyding aan Jesus Christus en u Christelike geloof? Gee asb. voorbeelde en plaas dit in orde van belangrikheid.

7. Ten opsigte van u posisie by die werk, kies asb. die afdeling wat op u van toepassing is en voltooi:

a) U is in 'n leierskapsposisie:

   i   Kan u vryelik u Christelike beginsels in u daaglikse aktiwiteite toepas? Verduidelik.

   ii   Hoe kan u u Christelike getuienis in u posisie uitleef?

   iii Hoe reageer die mense onder u leierskap op u Christenskap? Verduidelik.

b) U bestuurder/werkgewer is 'n Christen:

   i   Kan u enige verskil in sy/haar leierskap-/bestuurstyl waarneem? Gee voorbeelde.

   ii   Indien u bestuurder sy/haar Christenskap uitleef, watter invloed het dit op u ongelowige kollegas? Verduidelik.

c) U bestuurder/werkgewer is nie 'n Christen nie

    i   Watter probleme ervaar u as Christen om onder sy/haar leierskap te werk?

_____

_____

_____

_____

    ii   Hoe reageer u ongelowige kollegas op u as Christen?

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. Watter besware teen Christenskap hoor u dikwels van ongelowiges?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. Hoe reageer u op hierdie besware/aanvalle?

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. Beskryf die reaksie van die ongelowiges as u reageer soos hierbo genoem.

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. Hoe slaag u daarin om te midde van ongelowiges getrou te bly aan u toewyding aan Jesus Christus?

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. Hoe reageer u op mense wat fundamenteel van u verskil oor God, die Bybel, die sin van die lewe, ens.?

_____

_____

_____

13. Wat is volgens u die rol/verantwoordelikheid van Christene in 'n sekulêre gemeenskap? Verduidelik.

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. Hoe behoort Christene te reageer op praktyke soos korrupsie, aborsie en pornografie in die gemeenskap?

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. Gee 'n paar riglyne vir Christene om "sout" en "lig" (Mat 5:13-14) in die wêreld te wees.

_____

_____

_____

_____

16. Hoe kan Christene hul gemeenskap positief beïnvloed? Gee voorbeelde.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

17. In watter areas /aspekte sou u beter toegerus wou wees vir u roeping/taak as Christen in die wêreld?

_____

_____

_____

_____

18. Wie is volgens u verantwoordelik om Christene toe te rus vir hul bogenoemde taak? Wat kan spesifiek gedoen word om hulle beter toe te rus?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

19. Enige ander saak wat nie in die voorafgaande vrae gedek is nie of enige ander opmerking oor die toerusting van Christene wat saam met ongelowiges woon of werk:

_____

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Participant P1 – Unbelieving marriage partner

P1 is a housewife, 66 years old and already married for 40 years to her unbelieving husband. She and her husband grew up in homes where their parents practiced "religion", but it was mere external acts without any meaning. When they got married, they decided to stop all meaningless religious activities like going to church and praying. She got to know Jesus Christ as her Saviour 13 years ago and ever since has a very intimate relationship with Him. Even though her circumstances did not change, she saw things in a different way after her conversion. She has the desire to live differently, because of what God did for her, but it does not happen instantaneously – it is a process. Through her daily devotions, during which she prays and reads God's Word, she gets guidance and learns to live according to His standards. With His help, she renews her mind every day – Proverbs 4:23.

Some of her children and most of her and her husband's family are still unbelievers. She believes that the fact that their children grew up in their home with its particular difficulties, had a huge impact on their view of marriage and their respective relationships. Two of their children are not married, but live together with partners. Growing up, they did not receive a good example of what a marriage relationship should look like. Despite this fact, the children have better relationships with their spouses/partners and much better communication than she and her husband have.

After her conversion, her social life improved as she now has better contact with people. P1 has some friends alone and her husband theoretically grants her the freedom, but in practice he is often touchy about it – "you leave me alone and do your own thing". He is perhaps envious of her friends as he does not have many, possibly because he is not open. She is actually living in two worlds. At home, she can read and pray, but cannot speak about her relationship with God. Outside of home, she can freely voice her opinion without fear of critique. She experiences the understanding of fellow-believers, even if they do not always agree. She is very privileged as she has a strong support network. At times it is really difficult for her at home, being regularly exposed to criticism and negative comments. During such times, it feels as if she does not have the strength to continue in the situation and wants to walk away from it. P1 repeatedly has to remind herself that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood". It frequently happens that when she feels that she cannot go on anymore, she reads something or somebody says that he/she is praying for her and that gives her the courage to continue. The last part of Psalm 33 in the Spirit Filled Life Bible speaks about the "lifter of my head". She often wants to walk with her head bent down, but God lifts it up and helps her to see the reasons why she *can* lift her head. She experiences that the Lord is on her side and gives her strength and courage to continue. God gives her wisdom and a spirit of "power and love and a sound mind", which irritates her husband, because she often sees/understands things long before he does.

She regularly has to hear that "Christianity does not work" (Christians commit the same errors as unbelievers), "it is a waste of time and unrealistic", "believers are not very intelligent" (they believe in fables and unpractical speculations), "no intellectual proofs can be given" and "one should not be

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dependent on someone else". When these accusations come again and again, she gets irritated, but realises that it is not in her power to convince somebody of the contrary. P1 has learned to keep quiet in these circumstances, as it will only develop into a war which she will never be able to win and it will leave both parties unsatisfied. She has discovered that forgiveness is an important aspect in handling this kind of situation. If she forgives, her husband is usually surprised and the attacks stop. P1 has learned to just continue with life, but it causes separation in their marriage relationship as communication is extremely difficult.

Love, according to P1, is not a feeling. It starts with a feeling, but later develops into a love that "always protects, always trusts, always hopes and always perseveres", but between the two of them is an enormous distance because of the break in communication. There can be good communication between a believer and an unbeliever if there is mutual understanding and if they can connect emotionally, but her husband cannot. He often reminds her of her mistakes and blames her when things go wrong (that was the example he got in his parents' home – always critique). He is not able to communicate on an emotional level and his need stays unsatisfied, while her needs are met in her relationship with her Christian friends.

She believes her task and responsibility as a Christian is to continually be an example to her husband and to live out what the Word of God teaches her, but she cannot take responsibility for his life. For instance, when he is not completely truthful, she has learned not to say a word about it, but in the process, he is moving further and further away from the truth. If somebody would ask her questions about the specific situation, her husband expects of her to give the same information as he does, but she would not be able to do that. She believes that God will help her to respond correctly when she is in such a position. Situations like these contribute negatively to their already poor communication.

P1 believes that Christians should be much more outspoken in society about practices like corruption, abortion and pornography. They should pray more about it and witness more. Christians should each morning wake up with thankfulness. They should count their blessings and spend time with the Lord. This will determine the rest of their day. Christians will never be able to influence society positively if they gossip, point fingers and lie. They should rather be helpful, hospitable and willing to be led by the Holy Spirit. She would like to be better equipped in the area of communication. According to her, pastors, churches, small groups, pastoral counsellors and fellow believers can play an important role in the equipment process.

Participant P2 – Politician

P2 is a 56-year-old member of the South African Parliament. Although he grew up in a Christian home, it was during his time of national military service and university studies (between 18 and 23 years of age) that he struggled with the concept and meaning of Christianity and got answers and peace. He tries to live out his Christianity in his marriage and in his relationship with his children. When possible, he attends church regularly and is often in discussions with others in order to find biblical answers to social and

other problems. P2 is frequently in contact with unbelievers as a result of his work in Parliament, his contact with the media and in his working together with other political parties.

It is now almost 20 years that he is involved in politics. Before he started his political career, he asked many people whether it is "right" for a Christian to become a politician, whether Christians have a role to play in politics and whether Christians can survive in the political arena. The answer that he received was "certainly". Christians have a role to play in all spheres of life, and politics is almost one of the most important areas where Christians should have an influence. The world of politics consists of influencing – politicians are always busy influencing people. The fact that he is as a Christian in politics, certainly helps him, because if you stay in South Africa/Africa and does not believe in Jesus Christ, you will probably become despondent and overwhelmed by the problems, which humanly speaking, cannot be solved. In order to survive in the political arena as a Christian, you must believe that it is a calling of God. It is a huge challenge to be successful as a Christian politician, since practices like bribery are rampant.

The changes that occurred in South Africa since 1994 had definitely made it more difficult for him to live out his Christian commitment in his daily activities. To give a few examples: The ANC government regularly convenes meetings for Sundays and he prefers not to attend those meetings, which is often to his disadvantage. His party does not organise meetings on Sundays, and because of that, they do not get as much coverage on television, since SABC News usually reports about the different political parties on Sundays. Legislation on issues like pornography, abortion and the solution to the HIV/AIDS problem (condoms only) were forced through without giving consideration to any Christian principles. The Comrades marathon was moved from Youth Day to a Sunday because it was a "desecreation" of Youth Day. In the constitution, Christianity is nowhere mentioned. There is increasing pressure on schools to stop any form of Bible study or religious practices. The names of institutions are being changed, e.g. the Potchefstroom University for *Christian Higher Education* is now called the North-West University, without the CHE. As a result of Article 15 of the constitution (freedom of religion), P2 does not experience direct opposition or persecution because of his commitment to Jesus Christ and has often confessed his faith in public without any negative consequences, but he does feel that his working environment is not always sensitive towards his faith.

When it comes to ethical issues, it necessitates great wisdom, as people often perceive issues differently. For example, the abortion debate was, according to P2's party, an ethical issue, but the ANC, and especially the Christian ladies in the ANC, perceived it as an empowerment issue. Another example is the conception of marriage which has consequences for the use of air tickets by parliamentarians. The rule states that parliament provides a certain amount of tickets during the year for the parliamentarian and his/her spouse. What if a man has 2 or more wives or if it is a single person with a partner, same sex or different sex? A relatively easy matter suddenly becomes a problematic ethical question. One more example relates to the upcoming Soccer World Cup in 2010 and the legislation regarding prostitution, drug abuse and the public use of alcohol. The minister is concerned that if they keep these laws in place, many foreigners will be arrested, causing a negative reflection on the country. A debate is currently being

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held whether or not the enforcement of these laws should be relaxed during that time. P2 is of the opinion that the whole world has laws and when a person is travelling in another country, he/she must obey the laws of that country. In this postmodern time where liberalism is widespread and people are free to do whatever they like, morals become a dilemma. Christians become quiet and are afraid to witness, because they are afraid of being branded as judgemental.

South African politics is even more complex and one should be extremely careful how issues are addressed, as it develops so easily into a "white-black" situation, especially after 1994. White politicians should be particularly cautious when they engage in debate, never to give the impression of white superiority. The same is true when the argument is based on Christians values, one should be very wary, otherwise it is interpreted that Christians think they are better than others. Christians can and should still be "salt and light" for the world, but they should do it with care. P2 has learned that one's behaviour often "speaks" louder than words and Christians should be consistent in their behaviour (also body-language). In order to earn respect, believers should always be respectful and kind.

P2 regularly hears the accusation that Africa suffered under the Colonialism of the West and the debate frequently gets an anti-Christian colour to it when missionaries are directly accused of being instrumental in the process. The arguments in the Middle-East debate are also often based on an anti-Christian foundation. He experiences that Christians are being watched very closely and if they make mistakes, the finger is quickly pointed to their double standards. He believes that Christians have the responsibility to prove to people by their behaviour that they are honest, sincere, non-superior and non-racist. Actions always speak louder than words, but if he must react verbally to these objections against Christianity, P2 always tries to remind people that the mistakes or crimes of individuals can never be projected on all. He also reminds them that all religious groups have "evildoers" in their midst, but Christianity at least provides an opportunity for forgiveness, which is not true of other religions like Islam. In his response to accusations against the work done by missionaries, he reiterates that the majority of African leaders got their initial training at mission schools. P2 has found that if one responds to accusations in a logical and collected (unemotional) manner, people "hear" what you say and respect your point of view, but if one responds in an emotional way, using "religious jargon", people respond negatively.

He believes that Christians have a responsibility towards the society in which they live, just like Esther and Moses of old. According to P2, Christians often interpret the Scripture passage of 2 Corinthians 6:14, namely that you may not be yoked together with unbelievers, wrongly and withdraw into their personal monastery. He feels that Christians should be active and involved in all spheres of life and should condemn practices like corruption, abortion and pornography as part of their daily witness, but they should also do everything possible to force government to do something about it by legislation. But he warns strongly that Christians should not do it with a superior, "know it all" attitude. One's faith in Jesus Christ should be visible in one's everyday life, in one's behaviour, in one's interaction and in one's conversations with other people.

P2 experiences a need to be better informed about new scientific discoveries like cloning and stem cell research. These developments require ethical responses and they happen so fast that Christians are not

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always well prepared to respond to it in an informed way. He believes that it is the duty of Christians to become better informed by means of Bible study and conversations with knowledgeable people. It is his experience that pastors in general do not succeed to address efficiently current "hot" issues in their preaching, thus not equipping their members effectively.

Participant P3 – Medical doctor

P3 is a 61-year-old female medical doctor who has been working for almost 40 years in a state hospital. She surrendered her life to Jesus Christ when she was 12 years old. She has a trusting relationship with God and believes that He influences her everyday life and her attitude towards others. God is her fortress and strength in times of trials and tribulations and provides her with the necessary insight to cope every day. Through her relationship with the Lord, she has gained wonderful, supportive friends and has also realised her social responsibility.

She is often in contact with unbelievers at work. She has not experienced that the changes which occurred in South Africa in 1994 have made it more difficult for her to live out her Christian commitment, but it brought unbelievers closer to her and the changes caused more openness to speak to each other and to get to know each other better. P3 is not somebody who speaks easily about her faith and will only give her witness if asked to do so, but believes that one's behaviour should demonstrate empathy. She finds that people respond to that with appreciation and respect. If you take time to show compassion, more than what is required of you and walk the extra mile, it has impact on people. People often speak to and confide in her. Jesus's great task in this world was to serve and love others, and she follows his example by being sensitive to the pain of others – nobody rejects that. She also has the opportunity to work with a wonderful social worker who has the gift of talking to people and she often refers people to her. P3 finds that people under her authority respect her for being a Christian, because she acknowledges their needs and their efforts to do their duty well. Some of her superiors were initially "hostile" in their approach, but respect her now, perhaps because of her hard work and her "genuine" interaction with other staff members. She also makes sure to give to her non-believing superiors the respect due to their positions. Non-Christian colleagues generally respond to their Christian superiors by doing their duty better, because they experience that they are seen as people in their own right. In their hospital, most wards still open daily with hymns and some form of "good message" and it is P3's experience that very few staff members do not attend the opening.

The work pressure has increased considerably over the last number of years because so many professional people, especially specialists, emigrated. They only have time to do clinical work and have less time to spend quality time with their patients. Although the work pressure is more, P3 believes that the standard of work has improved as more "checks and balances" are put into place to increase the quality of work. This brings about more administration and paper work which again adds to the work load, but this does not happen only in South Africa, but worldwide. Because of the big number of doctors which left the country, the government recruited many medical doctors from Cuba. They are well trained, but cannot help with everything, because they received specialised training, so the pressure is still on the

South African doctors. She sees the medical career as a calling, although there are people who should rather not have become doctors, but that happens in all careers.

The fact that a person is a Christian does not necessarily make him/her a better doctor. P3 knows so-called Christian doctors who are really lazy and self-indulgent, while she also knows some Muslim doctors who are really working in a self-sacrificial manner. Any doctor with a passion for medical work will make a difference and will do everything possible to relieve pain and suffering. Christians must be careful not to put themselves on a pedestal and think of themselves as some kind of "elite corps". Many other religions live by high moral and ethical standards.

The focus of the work of a medical doctor is the preserving of human life, thus he/she is often confronted with the ethical issue of the meaning/value of human life. Two issues that come to mind, are the termination of pregnancy (which is not the focus of the department in which she currently works) and the prolongation of life, which is very much part of her daily work. P3 feels strongly about the fact that suffering should not be prolonged. It is her policy to be frank with the family and to tell them the truth so that they can be clear about the prospects of the situation. It is not a case that the medical personnel are too lazy to put on one more intravenous infusion, but sometimes one comes to the point that you feel "enough is enough". It is never easy to reach that point, and they try to prepare the family as well as possible with the help of the social worker. The senior doctors come together and they have certain tests which they must perform in order to declare the patient brain dead. This is a clinical procedure and Christianity does not really play a part in the process, although the doctor's faith in Jesus Christ helps him/her to be more compassionate in his/her contact with the family. Regarding the issue of donating organs, P3 is of the opinion that it should be done if possible, because God has given the medical profession the ability to do it in order to save lives.

She has not encountered in her work situation any objections to her being a Christian, but she has encountered objections to her sex and her white skin. She has learned not to see those remarks as personal, but as reactions to previous hurt and injury suffered by the offender. She prefers not to enter into a debate with the person and rather focuses on the immediate task at hand. If she encounters people who differ fundamentally from her in spiritual matters, she prefers not to respond verbally, although she believes that Christians should maintain a high moral and ethical standard in society and they should be consistent in living it out. She believes corruption should be reported. She condemns abortion, except if it is done for therapeutic reasons. Pornography, according to P3, has no place in a Christian's life.

South Africa's civil service recently experienced the first ever prolonged strike about salaries and the state's health care institutions were seriously affected by it. P3 is of the opinion that nurses are receiving too little money. They are professional people who underwent a tough training and who are working very hard, but they do not get the necessary recognition for it. She is also worried about the future of the South African health care sector. It seems as if the government does not understand the magnitude of the AIDS problem and the ever increasing pressure it puts on the medical profession. The emigration of specialists and doctors is a matter of great concern. The ratio of doctors versus the population in South Africa is

10% of what it is in first world countries – this causes immense work pressure. This pressure causes doctors to have no family life – so even more doctors are moving abroad.

In order to be "salt and light" in the world, Christians should not participate in slander, bad jokes and unsuitable reading material. They should be genuine in their dealings with all people and true to Christ and themselves. They should be ready to testify if necessary. They should see their contact with unbelievers as an opportunity where their "light" can be seen, but they must be careful *how* they live, because people watch Christians carefully. Behaviour often has more impact than words. P3 would like to be better equipped by the church and its leaders to be able to talk more freely to non-Christians. It troubles her that Christians are so easily influenced by the secular world. She is also worried about the selfishness of Christians who think that they are entitled to their comfort zone.

Participant P4 – Lawyer

P4 is a 57-year-old lawyer. He always knew that salvation could only be found in Jesus Christ, but as a child received the message at home and at church that he was not "good" enough (people do not deserve salvation – it is pure grace) and that caused him to have doubts about his salvation. Now, however, he sees Jesus Christ as his Friend, although he still fears God. Sometimes he still doubts whether he is saved or not, but then he prays and asks God to help him to believe. Personally, he is looking forward to death so that he can be free from this broken world and can live as a servant in the kingdom of God. He struggles with the brokenness of this world. He attempts to live out his Christianity in his workplace and does his consultations from a Christian point of view. P4 does not often come across unbelievers, but if it happens, it is at work and he always tries, when possible, to witness to the person without being degrading or arrogant.

Up to now, P4 has never experienced that he could not live out his commitment to Jesus Christ in his workplace. He expects of all the people working under him to follow the correct Christian principles in their work, although not all of them agree with it or are happy with it. He experiences that people, including so-called "Christians" and "business men for Christ", when it comes to money or other material gain, will throw all Christian principles overboard in order to obtain the most profitable deal.

Thinking of the instruction in the Bible to "not be yoked together with an unbeliever", P4 is of the opinion that it is easy to avoid it if the person says that he/she is a Muslim, but the great danger is that one may think that the person is a "Christian", but in the meantime he/she has another agenda.

P4 has often heard that people refer to Christians as being hypocritical, inconsistent and "flaunting" their faith. Christians are accused of pretending to serve the "case", but are actually more concerned about themselves, about their prestige, popularity and acceptance. When these attacks are directed at him, he tries to forget it and attempts not to entertain any negative feelings. He believes that accusations about hypocrisy can only be overcome by sincerity. When he reacts like this, people often do not understand his behaviour. To persevere in the Christian walk in the midst of constant accusations and attacks by other people, he believes that one should pray on a daily basis and should believe that the Holy Spirit is

with you and will guide you. You should also make a calculated decision to believe, because your mind is as important in your every day life as faith is.

In the legal profession, one is frequently confronted with ethical decisions. It regularly happens that a client asks advice and the lawyer knows what he/she would like to hear. P4 thinks it is dishonest to give that specific answer just to please the client. Many lawyers do that for the money they can earn. He believes that it is better to give your honest opinion, e.g. "I do not think you have a strong case, but we can try this or that" or "I do not think you have a strong case, but you are welcome to consult another lawyer – perhaps he/she sees the situation differently and is willing to take your case". There is no doubt that Christians are necessary in the legal profession and they can bring about change in peoples lives, but they should also know that they will sometimes be forced to do something against their Christian principles. They must then be willing to speak out or withdraw from the case.

Believers, says P4, have the responsibility to live exemplary lives and to share their faith in a humble and modest way. They must prayerfully resist the temptations that come their way. They must be careful what they read, what they watch on TV, how they behave, how they drive their car, etc. Every Christian should be "salt and light" in the world, starting at home, at work, the individual crossing your path, also the least important person. Christians are called to make a difference there where they move and the equipment for this task starts at home.

Something that really bothers P4 is that theologians and leaders in the church so often bring discord between churches and among Christians about the interpretation of the Bible, other faith issues and sometimes unimportant issues. He wishes that this kind of behaviour could stop and that believers could live as one true, Christian church to God's honour.

Participant P5 – Lecturer

P5 is 40 years old and a lecturer at a College. His father is Muslim and his mother Christian, but she died when he was 3 years old. He grew up with his mother's family. When he finished Grade 12, his father came to him and asked whether he did not want to consider becoming a Muslim, because he would offer him a good life. By the grace of God he declined the offer. He became a born again believer when he was 18 years old. Years later, his father approached him again and tried to convince him, but he did not give in and after that P5 broke all contact with his father. From that day onwards, God is his Father. His relationship with Jesus Christ is the most important thing in his life and he cannot live without God and his Word. His whole life, his marriage, his family, his relationship with his friends and colleagues is based on the Word of God. Christianity influences his social lifestyle and all his friends know that he is serving God. P5 has everyday contact with unbelievers in his work and where he moves.

Since 1994, he has experienced the following changes: affirmative action, equality between men and women whereby women can rule over men, different religions are considered as right and Biblical Studies are being removed from schools and other institutions. P5 experiences discrimination at work because of his faith in Jesus Christ. He also experiences unfairness and provocation (to see how he as Christian will respond). In spite of this opposition, he is free to live out his Christian values and

principles in his classroom and at staff meetings. He does it by not being a hypocrite, by standing out for the truth without being afraid of the reactions of others and by demonstrating Godly values, norms and principles in his behaviour. Sometimes people react to this by teasing him for being a Christian, but other times people show respect, honour and appreciation for his stand.

Some of his superiors claim to be Christians, but he experiences them as hypocrites and sees no godliness in their leadership styles. Others are non-Christians and it makes him uneasy to work under them, as they do not support his Christian way of living. They often think that he thinks he is better than they are. Sometimes they reason with him, trying to convince him with secular arguments. Arguments that he regularly hears are that the Gospel is incorrect, that Jesus never arose from death, that Christianity is dead and gone and that Christians are sinners, hypocrites, insensitive, unfair and evil. He responds to such accusations by speaking the truth and correcting them from the Word of God without being judgemental. P5 believes that Christians should practice what they preach. Then people will see that they are real and will respect and honour them.

One of the most complicated things that teachers/lecturers daily have to handle is discipline problems. With the new government came new laws and with that the abolishment of corporal punishment. Discipline problems negatively influence students' results and their relationships at home. Kids often see "bad" as "good" and it is nowadays a great challenge to discipline and educate these children. It is P5's experience that God gives wisdom and grace to address the issues, to enforce biblical norms and values and to live a godly example. Believers are currently living in very difficult and challenging times where not only Christian values are acknowledged as true and it is expected that all values should be respected. He strives to convey to the students his Christian values, but cannot force them to accept it or to make the right choices. It is also true that one cannot convey good values with a rotten attitude – one's behaviour and conduct must confirm the values you want to teach. P5 feels that many Christians nowadays struggle with integrity – they say one thing but do another.

Another big challenge which lecturers face at present is to motivate the students to study. Different lecturers use different methods. P5 tries to do it from a biblical point of view – to show students their responsibility, to remind them that God has a plan for their lives and that they are instrumental in the direction their lives will take. If he manages to help one student, P5 feels that all his efforts were worthwhile. Teachers/lecturers should not look at the big number of students, but should concentrate on individuals. The reward for a teacher lies in the *one* life he/she was able to touch. There are many challenges in education and P5 does not know how teachers/lecturers survive if they do not have the Lord to lean on. A Christian also makes mistakes and your colleagues are quick to remind you that you are a "believer", but one has the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to help one overcome through forgiveness. It does wonders if the believer is willing to ask forgiveness and to forgive.

Teachers are often confronted with ethical issues, e.g. less qualified people get the promotion or people who want to give something under the table as a motivation to get something done. As a Christian, P5 feels that he must address the situation, even though he runs the risk that he may be branded, but he has learned not to do it when he is upset, because it does not bear good fruit. It is very difficult for the person

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on the receiving end and the person often denies it or attacks. It is therefore imperative to pray before one speaks – if the Lord is not in the situation, there can be no success. The recent strike about salaries is in a certain sense also an ethical question. P5 feels that although his career as a teacher is a calling, teachers deserve to receive decent salaries. So it was a good thing to force the government to look seriously at the desperate financial situation in which teachers find themselves, but what resulted from it, e.g. the vandalism and the fact that some students' future are in jeopardy, is unacceptable. One may protest, but is must be done in a non-violent way.

It is not easy to persevere in one's commitment to Jesus Christ amongst unbelievers, but if he remembers what God did for him, that he found everlasting life, it gives him courage to hold on and to stay committed to Him. He also regularly participates in spiritual activities, devotions with his family, fasting and praying at home, Bible studies, meetings in church and praying for other people. Through his conduct and behaviour, unbelievers can see that he has Someone on whom he depends. If he is confronted with somebody who differs radically from him, P5 responds in a positive, friendly, Christ-like manner, without being judgemental and accommodative. Sometimes he does not even say a word, because people can be touched and influenced by observing Christian conduct.

Christianity is not only for Sundays. Your whole life should be a witness to your commitment to God, when you do shopping and when you visit friends. Your career then becomes a calling. Christians should stand their ground in secular society. They should live their Christian lives practically by showing love, peace, fairness, integrity, mercy, empathy and sympathy, and not only talking about it. When they encounter practices like corruption and abortion, they should compare it with the Word of God and stand for the truth. If pornography is found in his class, he will even go so far as to report the student – even if it only serves as a warning to the other students. Christians ought to be "salt and light" in the world by being fair and honest, by being merciful and graceful and by having a giving spirit. They should follow Christ's example, live holy lives and avoid evil deeds and wrong decisions. They should spread the Gospel and lift Jesus Christ up in difficult circumstances. God calls people in different careers to be "salt and light" in the world. It is the task of the local church to equip believers for their mission in the world.

P5 feels that he sometimes gets more opposition from so-called "Christians" than from unbelievers. It even happens *in* church. There are often more fights among "Christians" than among Christians and unbelievers. There are many people who live good lives, but they do not know Jesus Christ. Believers should always put God first and never doubt that He is a *good* God, even when things are not running according to plan – God is still in control.

Participant P6 – Chaplain

P6 is a 53-year-old male chaplain in the Defence Force. He accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour when he was 12 years old. The fact that he is a Christian is for him like a tool for discipline and guidance in his personal life. In his social life, his relationship with God keeps him free from negative influences by friends and colleagues and helps him to stay true to his Christian principles. He comes in contact with unbelievers daily, whether it is at work or where he stays, since some of his neighbours are non-

Christians. He does not experience that recent changes in South Africa make it more difficult for him to practice his faith, it only opened the way for non-Christians to be more outspoken. People now openly drag their feet to attend church services and chaplain's periods and non-Christian colleagues often challenge him with questions based on the Scriptures. Interesting enough, P6 has found that if they force people to attend chaplain's periods, they refuse to come, but if it is not compulsory, people are more spontaneous.

Referring to objections against Christianity, P6 regularly hears the accusation that Christians are also sinners. He responds to this by saying that all people are fallible and need the grace of God in order to prepare them for the world to come. Some respond positively, but others just stick to their beliefs. Non-Christians observe Christians very closely, how they behave, how they control their lives, and if they see something, e.g. smoking, drinking alcohol or extra-marital affairs, they are quick to point the finger. There is no way in which one can defend some things that Christians do and non-Christians are eager to criticise. Unbelievers are actually a blessing to believers, because they serve as watchdogs/keepers, ensuring that Christians live upright lives and are always drawing closer to God.

The government has given blanket permission to all to practice their religion, also in the SADF. In his daily activities at work, he can freely apply his Christian principles in his counselling, in his personal disciplines and when he presents courses. He lives out his Christian witness by being an example. He experiences that people respond positively to him and he also believes that his example has a positive influence on people around him. He knows of many extra-marital affairs that have been ended. In his work, he is sometimes in a position where he is forced to make a decision using the principles of the SADF. If he could have made the decision based on his own Christian principles, the outcome probably would have looked different. This is difficult for him as a Christian, because his decision sometimes sounds harsh, although he knows the action taken is for the benefit of the person.

Before 1994, a great number of people went to communist countries to be trained as soldiers. There they had no choice but to become atheists. After they came back, they are in contact with Christianity and many are becoming Christians again. When he is conversing with them, it is important to him that the communication remains open and that their relationship will not be damaged. In order to ensure this, they agree to listen to each other's opinions and if necessary, they agree to differ. A topic which often makes unbelievers think and is effective to bring them back, is the topic of "the world to come", in other words, life after death. Death confronts people with the importance of being ready. One cannot force people to become Christians, but if you display and advertise it, they end up buying it. If he is in conversation with people who differ radically from him, he never imposes himself on them, because then one meets resistance, but he sees every conversation as part of a process to prepare the ground.

To persevere in his commitment to Jesus Christ, he always reminds himself of the passage in Matthew 4:18-22 where Jesus called his first disciples – He needed men with perseverance, patience and courage. P6 feels that it is the responsibility of Christians to be a "*lux-in-tenebris*", meaning a light in the darkness. They should share the Good News and bring the message of hope to the hopeless and courage to the discouraged. In order to fulfil this responsibility, Christians may never be neutral about values.

They need to speak out against things like corruption, abortion and pornography. They should be "light and salt" in the world by being upright and by practicing perseverance, patience and courage. Christians can positively influence their society by giving freely, by demonstrating care and love and by encouraging others to love. P6 feels a need to be better equipped to reach out effectively to others and to be better disciplined himself. He believes Jesus Christ will equip Christians, but also other Christians. He believes that believers should wash one another's feet and be one another's keeper.

Christians should never be discouraged by the challenges which unbelievers present, but should venture out to address it and to take their stand. They will overcome with the help of the Lord. They should be open towards each other and love one another.