

THIS CHRISTIAN EDUCATIONAL TOOL IS DEDICATED...

For as long as I can remember, my father, Dr. Paul E. Paino, was committed to the next generation. He is known across the country in evangelical circles as the “Sunday School Fanatic”!

This manual is the result of the passion Dad had for providing biblical instruction for children of all ages. The concept of developing a concise program whereby a child could be exposed to the Scripture in a way that would be relevant to this age is demonstrated in the material that is here presented.

Due to modern technology, twelve volumes and thousands of pages have been formatted into CDs that can be held in your hand and easily accessible around the world!

Although Dad accessed Heaven in 2005, his vision and passion for this project lives on. I am sure that this latest step in making this material available around the world joys his heart.

It is only appropriate to acknowledge those who have worked steadfastly to provide this new vehicle of sharing this material. Ann Liechty, Carol Kutzner, Alice Baxter, and Curt Monk have labored immensely to complete this challenge. It has not been without difficulties, but they have refused to give in until the work was done...and they have succeeded!

Our prayer is that, as you use this material, you will be anointed by the Holy Spirit to touch the lives of those who hear it, for eternity.

**Dr. Paul C. Paino
General Overseer-CMI**

Table of Contents

Introduction	ix
Section 1: Welcome to Our Ministry Team	1
To Our Co-Laborers in the Work of the Ministry	3
Our Calling	5
Our Charge	9
My Commitment	13
My Credibility	15
My Goals	17
Section 2: Personnel Job Descriptions	19
Using the Personnel Job Descriptions	21
School of the Bible Flowchart	23
Junior Department Flowchart	25
Administrator	27
Class Coordinator	29
Teacher	33
Musician	39
Worker	41
Secretary	43
Four Things Every Teacher Must Know	47
Three Requirements for Every Teacher	51
Responsibilities of a School of the Bible Worker	53

Section 3: Student Profiles	57
Understanding Your Students.....	59
A Profile of Sixth Grade Students	61
Children of the '90's.....	65
Why Do We Lose So Many of Our Children to the World?.....	69
Do Not Send Them Away.....	77
Why Unserved People Do Not Come to Church.....	81
The Importance of Repentance.....	85
 Section 4: Sensational Sunday School Sessions	 91
The Importance of Scheduling Your Class.....	93
Class Schedule	95
Preparation for Class	97
Singing with Joy	99
Offering and Prayer.....	101
Teaching with Purpose.....	103
Story-telling to Touch Hearts.....	105
Scripture Memorization.....	107
Catechism in Doctrine	109
 Section 5: Life-related Stories.....	 111
Using Life-related Stories.....	113
The Story of Augustine	115
The Story of Robert Blumm.....	117
The Story of David Brainerd.....	119
The Story of John Bunyan.....	121
The Story of William Carey.....	123

The Story of B. H. Carroll.....	125
The Story of the Chicken Church.....	127
The Story of William Cowper.....	129
Deliverance in Brooklyn.....	131
The Story of Christmas Evans.....	133
The Story of Yousouf Ishmaëlo.....	135
The Story of Terry Law	137
The Ministry of Paul E. Paino	139
Pray for Our Bus.....	141
The Story of Bud Sickler.....	143
The Story of T. DeWitt Talmadge	145
George Whitefield in America	147
 Section 6: Promotions.....	 149
The Importance of Promotions	151
Link Up with Jesus	153
Fuel the Flame.....	179
Fall Fun Festival	197
Unlock the Treasure.....	211
 Section 7: Catechism in Doctrine.....	 223
Introduction to Catechism in Doctrine.....	237
Why Are There No Dinosaurs Today?.....	227
What Was the Earth Like Before the Great Flood?.....	229
Why Did God Send the Great Flood?.....	231
What Is Divine Healing?	233
What Does the Bible Say about the Laying on of Hands for Physical Healing? ...	235

How Do We Develop Faith in God?.....	237
What Is the Grace of God?	239
How Can We Know if We Have Eternal Life?.....	241
Did Jesus Do Away with the Law When He Died on the Cross?	243
What Is Regeneration?.....	245
What Is Salvation?.....	247
What Was the Purpose of the Feasts of the Lord?.....	249
Why Is It So Important that We “Fear Not”?.....	251
What Is the Fear of the Lord?.....	253
What Are the Benefits of the Fear of the Lord?.....	255
What Is Fasting?.....	257
What Does “New Testament” Mean?.....	259
Who Is a Jew?	261
 Section 8: Lessons	 263
Lesson 1: Good Grief.....	265
The excellent spirit of David is revealed in the way that he was able to love King Saul, even though Saul was an abusive and bitter enemy.	
Lesson 2: Why Art Thou Cast Down.....	271
Faith in God is the key to overcoming depression and anxiety in life.	
Lesson 3: Killing Giants.....	277
Problems and conflicts are a necessary part of life, because we learn faith, wisdom, and endurance.	
Lesson 4: This Untoward Generation.....	283
Fellowship and communion with the Body of Christ are keys to spiritual victory over negative peer pressure.	
Lesson 5: Sincerity.....	289
We must maintain a testimony of integrity and whole-heartedness in our Christian walk, both before God and before the world.	289
Lesson 6: Three Deadly Sins	295
The three deadly sins -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life -- are the basis of all acts of sin.	

Lesson 7: Solomon's Success Secret	301
God is sovereign, and He is also perfectly just. When someone is greatly blessed by God, there is always a reason.	
Lesson 8: Solomon Built a Temple	307
The focus of God's Word is the house that we are building for God to dwell in; and that should be our focus, too.	
Lesson 9: Solomon Dedicates the Temple	313
The key to living a victorious and joyful Christian life is to be dedicated and consecrated wholeheartedly to God.	
Lesson 10: Fire Out of Heaven	319
The idols of this world are false gods who offer no hope. But our God is real, omnipotent, and wonderful.	
Lesson 11: Loving God's Word	327
A great key to living a successful life is the daily practice of reading and meditating on God's Word.	
Lesson 12: The Discouraged Prophet	333
Sometimes our most discouraging times come after great experiences; and we need to learn to go to God for strength.	
Lesson 13: Naboth's Vineyard	339
Covetousness is the wrongful desire to obtain that which belongs to someone else. It is the opposite of contentment.	
Lesson 14: Micaiah, the Prophet	345
Preachers may be tempted to tell people what they want to hear; but we need to be willing to get close to God, and to hear what He is really saying.	
Lesson 15: Elijah's Rapture	351
Christians in the end times have the glorious hope of the rapture, or resurrection of the church, which will be similar in fashion to the catching up to heaven of Elijah.	
Lesson 16: The Widow's Oil;	357
The way to increase and blessing in God's economy is not the way of demanding rights, but the way of giving.	
Lesson 17: The Spirit World	363
The spirit world is very real. It includes multitudes of non-corporeal beings, which influence lives and events in the physical world.	
Lesson 18: The Shunemmite Woman	371
One way we can honor God is to honor and bless those He has called to preach and teach His Word.	

Lesson 19: Supernatural Sight.....	377
God used his prophet, Elisha and His own supernatural ways to deliver the enemy into Israel's hand.	
Lesson 20: Four Lepers of Samaria.....	383
Sometimes, all that God needs to fulfill His promise is someone who is willing to get up and try.	
Lesson 21: King Asa.....	389
The most important thing in life is to cultivate a close relationship with God, our Heavenly Father, Who is the first one we turn to, in times of trouble.	
Lesson 22: An Attitude of Gratitude.....	395
If we are to be effective, overcoming Christians, we must establish patterns in our life that will stimulate a spirit of gratitude toward God.	
Lesson 23: Jephthah.....	401
A person who is in right relationship with God will keep his vows to God, and will find his self-identity in Him.	
Lesson 24: Moses Wrote of Me.....	409
Moses and the prophets of old saw Jesus and gave us many clear images of Him.	
Lesson 25: The Magnificat.....	415
Jesus Christ is eternally very God and very Man, the only begotten Son of God, and the Savior of the world.	
Lesson 26: The Importance of Prayer.....	421
It is impossible to live a consistent, overcoming Christian life without an active prayer life.	
Lesson 27: Learning from Past Mistakes.....	427
We must seek God's will for us in all situations, instead of depending upon our own wisdom and strength.	
Lesson 28: Final Exam.....	433
As Christians, we have an eternal perspective, which includes the realization that life on earth is preparation for eternity.	
Lesson 29: Daniel: A Genuine Hero.....	441
Daniel shows us that by God's grace, we can be happy and successful in life, even if we suffer hard circumstances and abuse by others.	
Lesson 30: God the Most High Rules.....	447
The Most High God rules in the kingdom of men. He will exalt the lowly, but the proud will be humbled.	

Lesson 31: Supernatural Salvation.....	453
Jesus came to earth and died on the cross, in order to save us from our sins, and bring us into an eternal relationship with God.	
Lesson 32: The Doctrine of Salvation.....	459
Salvation involves many wonderful aspects, which result in a transformed life and a Christ-like lifestyle.	
Lesson 33: The Power of the Tongue.....	465
The words which we speak reflect our heart; and they have great power to heal and bless, or to hurt and curse.	
Lesson 34: Sanctified.....	471
The most joyful and rewarding life that we can live on earth is a life that is fully dedicated to God.	
Lesson 35: The Church at Antioch.....	477
God raised up a great missionary church in the city of Antioch; and He is still doing the same thing today.	
Lesson 36: Missionaries on Cyprus	483
The gospel message is not merely a religious creed with words and ideas. It is the power of God unto salvation.	
Lesson 37: The First Missionary Journey.....	489
We need to learn to handle opposition and rejection, if we are going to serve God with a servant's heart.	
Lesson 38: Jupiter and Mercury.....	495
God is still healing the sick and raising the dead today. All of the glory belongs to Him.	
Lesson 39: The Law of Moses.....	501
In Christ, we are made free from the bondage of sin and the law.	
Lesson 40: Jesus Before Pilate	509
Jesus was falsely accused by Jewish leaders who were motivated by envy; and He was crucified by the Romans.	
Lesson 41: The Crucifixion.....	515
The horror of the crucifixion of Christ gives us a glimpse of how God looks at sin; and it also reminds us that God loves us very much.	
Lesson 42: The Road to Emmaus.....	523
We serve a risen Savior; and we can walk and talk with Him, just as surely as the disciples on the Emmaus Road.	

Lesson 43: Paul in Thessalonica and Berea	529
We should receive and support those whom God has called to preach the gospel; and we should verify the biblical accuracy of any teaching that we receive.	
Lesson 44: Paul in Athens.....	535
We cannot establish a relationship with God through any of the religions of the world, but only through Jesus Christ.	
Lesson 45: Rizpah: A Faithful Mother	543
There are few things as sure and as enduring as a mother's love, and her desire to see her children honored in life.	
Lesson 46: The Ephesian Believers	549
Jesus desires to baptize every born-again believer in the Holy Spirit.	
Lesson 47: Friendship.....	555
Our friendships are very important; and they should be established according to God's plans. Jesus is the greatest Friend of all.	
Lesson 48: Money Matters;.....	563
Money is an important tool that God uses in training us in the principles of wisdom, stewardship, and contentment.	
Lesson 49: Music and Christianity.....	571
Music is an important part of the life of the Christian, both as a ministry to believers and to God.	
Lesson 50: Turning Hearts of Fathers.....	577
When we fully understand the Lordship of Jesus Christ and God's design for authority, we will be more responsive to and grateful for our parents.	
Lesson 51: The Great Commission.....	585
God is raising up a Spirit-filled church that will reach out to the people of the world with the message of His redeeming love.	

Section 9: Activity Pages.....	591
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Introduction

The following comments and suggestions are presented to help you better utilize The Complete School of the Bible Manual.

1. The curriculum for grades 1 through 8 contains 51 lessons per grade level. There is no lesson for the 52nd week of the year. This is "Switch Week," when students are promoted from one class to the next. Due to the time involved in moving students to their new classes, we recommend using this class session to welcome the new students, to introduce teachers and workers and to acquaint students with how the class will operate.

The curriculum for grades 9 through 12 contains 52 lessons per grade level and includes an outline for "Switch Week."

2. The curriculum has been designed to be very flexible. It works equally well in graded and non-graded settings. (In a "graded" program, there is a separate class for each grade level. In a "non-graded" program, two or more grade levels are combined to make one class.)

If you operate a graded program, rotate the lessons in each class on a one-year cycle. At the end of the year, students are promoted to the next grade level and will be exposed to a new set of lessons.

If you operate a non-graded program, you can receive the full benefit of the curriculum without any reorganization of your Sunday School. Simply rotate the lessons in each class on a one-, two-, three-, or four-year cycle. For example, if students in grades one through three meet in the same class, you would rotate the lessons on a three-year cycle. The first year you use the curriculum, teach the lessons in Volume 1; the second year, lessons from Volume 2; the third year, lessons from Volume 3. Then, in the fourth year, begin again with the lessons in Volume 1.

3. The curriculum is designed to run from July through June. The starting date for Lesson 1 is the first Sunday in July. If you are implementing the curriculum at another time during the year, simply count forward from the first Sunday in July to determine the beginning lesson. For example, if you implement the curriculum on the first Sunday in January, you would begin with Lesson 26.
4. Easter lessons should be moved in your manual to begin two weeks prior to Easter Sunday. There should be three Easter lessons for grades 1 through 8.
5. You may need to adjust the lessons for other special days (Mothers' Day, Fathers' Day, Christmas, etc.) depending upon how these holidays fall in the current calendar.
6. There is no established schedule for using the life-related stories. Simply insert them into lessons where you feel they are appropriate. It is helpful to repeat the life-related stories during the year to reinforce the lessons they teach.

7. It is recommended that each teacher receive a copy of this volume, including all the instructional materials in sections one through seven. This will help each teacher to be well-informed and prepared for their responsibilities in the classroom.
8. The lesson outlines in section eight are not designed to be read in class. Teachers should use the outlines to prepare their own presentation. The curriculum manual should not be brought into the classroom and should never be used in front of the class. Instead, use the Bible as you teach. It is important that the students be aware you are teaching from God's Word and not from a manual!

Section 1

**Welcome
To Our
Ministry
Team**

To Our Co-Laborers in the Work of the Ministry

Welcome to the ministry team of the

School of the Bible. To be effective leaders and ministers of the Gospel, it is important to understand these basic principles:

- CALLING:** Who we are in relation to where God has placed us in teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- CHARGE:** Our response to the call of God on our lives.
- COMMITMENT:** Our resolve to give our whole heart to obeying that charge.
- CREDIBILITY:** Our personal and ethical qualifications to fulfill our assigned task "as unto the Lord."

We are grateful for your faithfulness in working with us, and we are committed to the task of equipping you as God enables us.

Please read and study this material carefully; fill in the blanks; and sign your name.

Our Calling

All Christians are called to be separate from the world -- to be God's people in a God-rejecting culture. We are called to be worshippers whose goal is to please God, rather than heathens who live to please themselves. (Isaiah 43:21) We are called to be God's children, His servants, His disciples, His dwelling, His bride, His body. Jesus called us the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world." God has called us to communicate the ethics and the essence of the kingdom of God in our lifestyle and love for people.

The Greek word for "church" is "ecclesia," which means "called-out ones." The root word is "klesis," a "calling or invitation." God has set us apart to live in this world unto Him and for Him, with a view to eternity with Him. God has assigned to us a specific purpose and responsibility in the work of the harvest of souls.

As God's church we are called and commissioned, both individually and corporately. Each of us must know God personally and individually and be accountable to Him as servants. We are also called together as members of a functioning corporate body. This is a practical reality. We are "partakers together" and "co-laborers with Christ." We submit to one another in the fear of the Lord, knowing that none of us has it all or sees the whole picture. God gives us special gifts to be used for building up the whole group. Each of us has weaknesses and strengths, and we need to be interdependent upon one another.

The calling of a teacher is clearly set forth in scripture as a specific commission to chosen, mature believers. This calling is not based on our ambition, but on God's sovereign choice. It is not based on our ability, for God will enable us to do the task He has appointed us to do for Him. Not all of us are called to a full-time pastoral or apostolic ministry, but our calling is just as real to the Lord. We need to recognize that our calling is from God, confirmed through apostolic authority (pastoral leadership) and by the evidence of a supernatural ability to do it well as we "grow in grace."

To serve in any calling is a wonderful privilege, and we need to recognize from God's Word that it is:

A HIGH CALLING.

"...this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14)

A HOLY CALLING.

God "...hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace...." (2 Timothy 1:9)

A HEAVENLY CALLING.

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him,...." (Hebrews 3:1-2)

A HOPEFUL CALLING.

Paul's prayer:

"That...God...may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation...the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe,...." (Ephesians 1:17-19)

A HUMBLE CALLING.

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:...that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus...." (1 Corinthians 1:26, 29-30)

Humility is the deep awareness of our constant need for God's strength and help in life's situations. People who are "gifted" with special abilities or intellect in some areas are tempted to trust in their natural talent. When they do, they become ineffective in the work of the ministry, because they are operating in the realm and resources of the flesh.

Questions To Be Considered As We Pursue A Teaching Ministry In The Local Church

Did God call me to teach?

If you believe God has called you to teach, then do it "as unto the Lord." Do not faint because of fear, weariness, or hurt feelings. Realize you are where God wants you to be; He has placed you there; and He has equipped you for the task. If you are not where God wants you to be, He will start working in you to put you where He wants you to be.

What group am I called to teach?

God has been preparing you to minister to a certain age group. Seek His direction through prayer, fasting, scripture, and counseling of your pastor. Be ready to serve. Let God open the door for you. Do not try to force it open yourself. God is responsible for the breadth of your ministry. You are responsible for the depth of it. As nearly as possible, focus on the group God has given to you and give them your heart.

Has the pastoral leadership confirmed this calling and agreed to oversee this work?

Any ministry to the flock of God must be yielded to and under the authority of the pastor of the flock. God will bear witness to your calling through the pastoral leadership of the church.

Am I called as a part of this local assembly of believers?

If you believe you have been called, then be faithful to your church and your pastor; cultivate and nurture an unshakable love for them.

Am I a team player?

When it is beneficial to the group, am I willing to step back and let someone else take a more dominant role and lead?

What part of the work am I specifically called of God to perform?

When your work is identified, then strive for excellence in it. Do it *"heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men;...."* (Colossians 3:23)

Our Charge

Teaching is a vital part of the Great Commission to believers. We are commanded to teach all "nations" ("ethnos" -- people groups) about the Christian walk and witness. The word "teach," used by Jesus in His charge to His disciples in Matthew 28:19, is actually the word "matheteuo," which means "disciple, to enroll as a scholar." Our commission is to communicate and distribute information, to mold lives, to inform, and to inspire. We are called to teach and train disciples.

As teachers, we have the privilege of working with and for the pastor to strengthen the work of the gospel in this city, and to bless families by imparting Christian values to their children. We also see ourselves as workers with the parents, encouraging them in their role as the primary spiritual influence in the lives of their children.

In order to educate children effectively, there are several biblical principles we need to remember:

A child's life is molded and affected most by what he is exposed to every day.

In Deuteronomy 6:6-9, God, through Moses, instructed the Israelites to teach their children diligently the things of God throughout the day, and to have many reminders of spiritual truths in their homes and throughout their culture.

When the Sunday School first started in America, many Christian leaders had strong reservations about the whole program, because they were concerned that parents would tend to leave the spiritual training of their children to the Sunday School and neglect spiritual training at home. To be effective, you must inspire and influence beyond the one hour teaching session, lead children to a daily walk with God, and help impart vision to parents for daily family devotions, Christian music, and a spiritual atmosphere at home.

A good teacher will inspire more than inform.

The joy of the Lord is more caught than taught. If you have measles and teach all day on mumps, what will you be most likely to impart?

Most of the effort of a good teacher is outside the classroom.

Some of the activities teachers should pursue outside of the classroom include:

- Prayer;
- Preparation;
- Personal visitation;
- Practice (music, skits, etc.);
- Persistent Bible study;
- Purity in lifestyle as an example.

Teams are more effective than individual efforts.

"Two {are} better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him {that is} alone when he falleth; for {he hath} not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm {alone}? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."
(Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

We are soldiers under authority.

Our purpose is to complement and strengthen the vision of this local church. We must always encourage loyalty to the church and honor to the pastor. God will give direction for the church to the pastor. It is our responsibility to support the pastor in the vision God has given to him.

Our purpose is to change lives by stimulating children with a sense of vision and destiny.

Our message is not only, "I can go to heaven when I die," but also that "God made me for a special purpose: to bless Him in my life and worship; to help other Christians; and to win lost people to Jesus."

The charge to Joshua was to love the Word.

"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."
(Joshua 1:8)

Paul's charge to Timothy:

- Stir up the gift of God within you. (2 Timothy 1:6-7)

God gave us spiritual enablements, but it is up to us to focus on and stimulate those gifts, because *"...God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."*

- Be a good soldier in God's army. (2 Timothy 2:4)

Do not get entangled with the affairs of this life. Be a good businessman or worker, but do not let vocational or recreational pursuits control your life to the point that you are too "tied up" to serve the Lord.

- Flee youthful lusts. (2 Timothy 2:22)

Do not just avoid sexual temptation, run from it. Try not to expose yourself to anything that will arouse your mind to lustful thoughts.

- Pray for those in authority over you. (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

- Make a supreme effort to show yourself approved unto God. (2 Timothy 2:15)

If you are a hard worker, you will not be ashamed. A teacher who is a faithful worker will rightly divide the Word of God.

- Avoid fables, and shun profane and vain babbling. (1 Timothy 1:4, 2 Timothy 2:16)

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,...." (Psalms 111:10) and so secular material has no wisdom to impart. Avoid worldly, fabricated heroes and stories. Communicate wisdom and understanding through Bible stories and characters, life experiences, and true-to-life stories. The purpose of secularized education is to create a perspective in children's minds that man is an end unto himself, and that God is unimportant

in the overall scheme of life. Our purpose is to communicate the truth that God is the center of our life, our hope, our purpose, and our daily walk.

- There are three basic character goals to keep in mind when you teach: (1 Timothy 1:5)

(1) Charity -- selfless love -- out of a pure heart, which is a heart that is not polluted with selfishness and willfulness.

(2) A good conscience, which is a spirit that is sensitive to motives or actions that are not pleasing to God.

(3) Unfeigned faith. This is honest faith that is not just "faith in the faith message," but wholehearted trust in God, even when we do not understand the process. Job said, *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:...."* (Job 13:15)

I have carefully and prayerfully read this charge, and I receive it as from the Lord. I will diligently seek to fulfill the calling and obey the charge as God gives the grace to me to do it.

Comments: _____

Signature _____ Date: _____

My Commitment

1. I will pray faithfully for the class, as I take the responsibility, as from the Lord, very seriously. Without His anointing and supernatural help, I realize I cannot be effective.
2. I will be faithful to attend at least 48 classes per year. I will arrive in the room 30 minutes before starting time to greet the students and prepare for the meeting.
3. I will be diligent to prepare myself and the lesson ahead of time.
4. I am committed to the pastor and to his vision for the church. I am a soldier under authority and a reliable member of the ministry team of this local church.
5. I will faithfully attend at least two regular services here every week, in addition to attending the Sunday School hour.
6. I am a tither. I will give the first tenth of all my income to this local church in obedience to the Lord and as a reminder that I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.
7. I am committed to winning the lost to Jesus Christ and to teaching and training my students to remain true to God as long as they live.
8. I will regularly visit the families of the students to whom I am assigned, especially those families with special needs.
9. I regard myself as being a member of a ministry team. If I see a special problem, I will help, if I can; or, I will notify those in leadership who are qualified to minister to the need.
10. I will reach out promptly to those in my charge who are absent or hurting.
11. I will be regular in my personal and family devotions to keep my heart and house in order and my focus on the things of God.
12. As a teacher, I am eager to receive training and instruction. I trust God to build my character and skills through the insights of those He has placed over me in this ministry.
13. When misunderstandings or interpersonal conflicts arise, I will go to the person with whom I have a problem and privately and quickly make every effort to restore a good relationship. I purpose to avoid being any part of gossip or backbiting, either as a listener or a giver of negative talk about a fellow Christian.

- "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." (Ecclesiastes 9:10)*

Comments: _____

Signature_____ Date:_____

My Credibility

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Birthdate: _____ Check One: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Marital Status: _____ Ages of Children: _____

Employer: _____ Work Phone: _____

1. When were you born again? _____

2. Did you experience genuine repentance and faith toward God? _____

3. When were you baptized in water? _____

4. When did you receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit? _____

5. As a Spirit-filled believer, do you pray in tongues? _____

6. Do you read the Bible and pray daily? _____

7. What is your primary vocation? _____

8. What specific skills have you developed that could benefit a Sunday School program?

9. Have you ever been convicted of any crime (other than driving or parking violations)?

Do you have a criminal record? If so, please explain on the reverse side. _____

10. What education or degrees do you have? _____

11. How long have you tithed consistently to this local church? _____

12. Are you willing to receive instruction/correction from the pastors or supervisors? _____

13. Do you know of any personal difficulty or problem that might hinder you from being effective in the work of this ministry to children? _____

Write any additional comments or explanations here: _____

Signature _____ Date: _____

My Goals As a Worker In the School of the Bible

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Section 2

Personnel Job Descriptions

Using the Personnel Job Descriptions

This manual is designed to provide instructions and helps in order to assist churches and schools in developing an effective Bible training program. The charts and lists included in this section are intended to be guidelines. Only in rare circumstances can they be duplicated exactly. The absolutes are all in the Bible. Biblical principles will work in any culture or time.

We strongly encourage developing ministry teams, rather than having a single teacher in the class. Every Bible class should have at least two members on the teaching team, even if the class is small. A team is able to generate more excitement, pray more effectively, and minister more comprehensively than one person. This is a biblical principle. Two are indeed better than one.

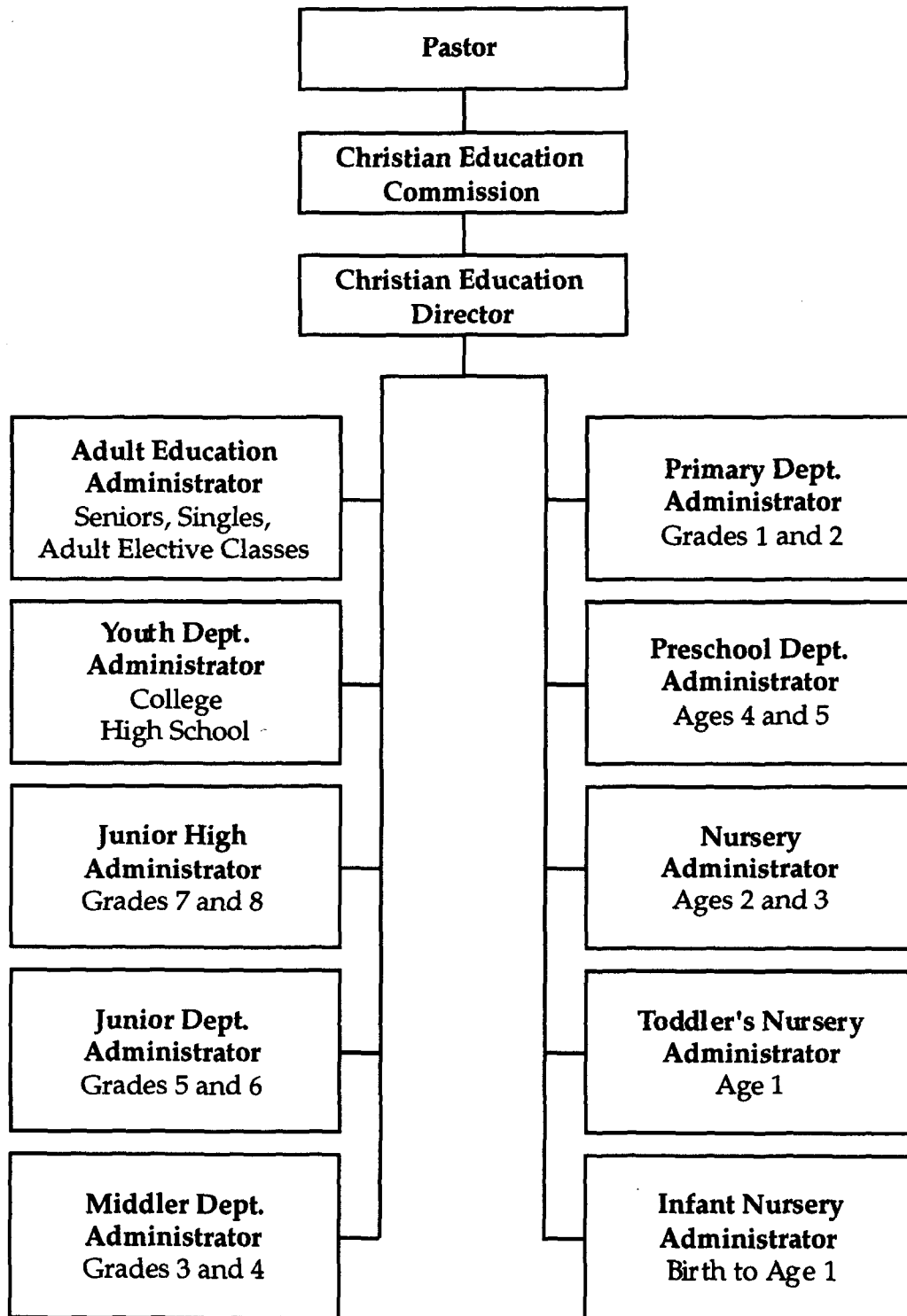
The job descriptions in this section define the responsibilities of the members of an effective ministry team. Sometimes, it may be necessary for a few people to fulfill several responsibilities in the class. However, as the class grows, these responsibilities can be delegated to new leaders as they join the ministry team.

It is also important to establish a clear line of authority in the School of the Bible.

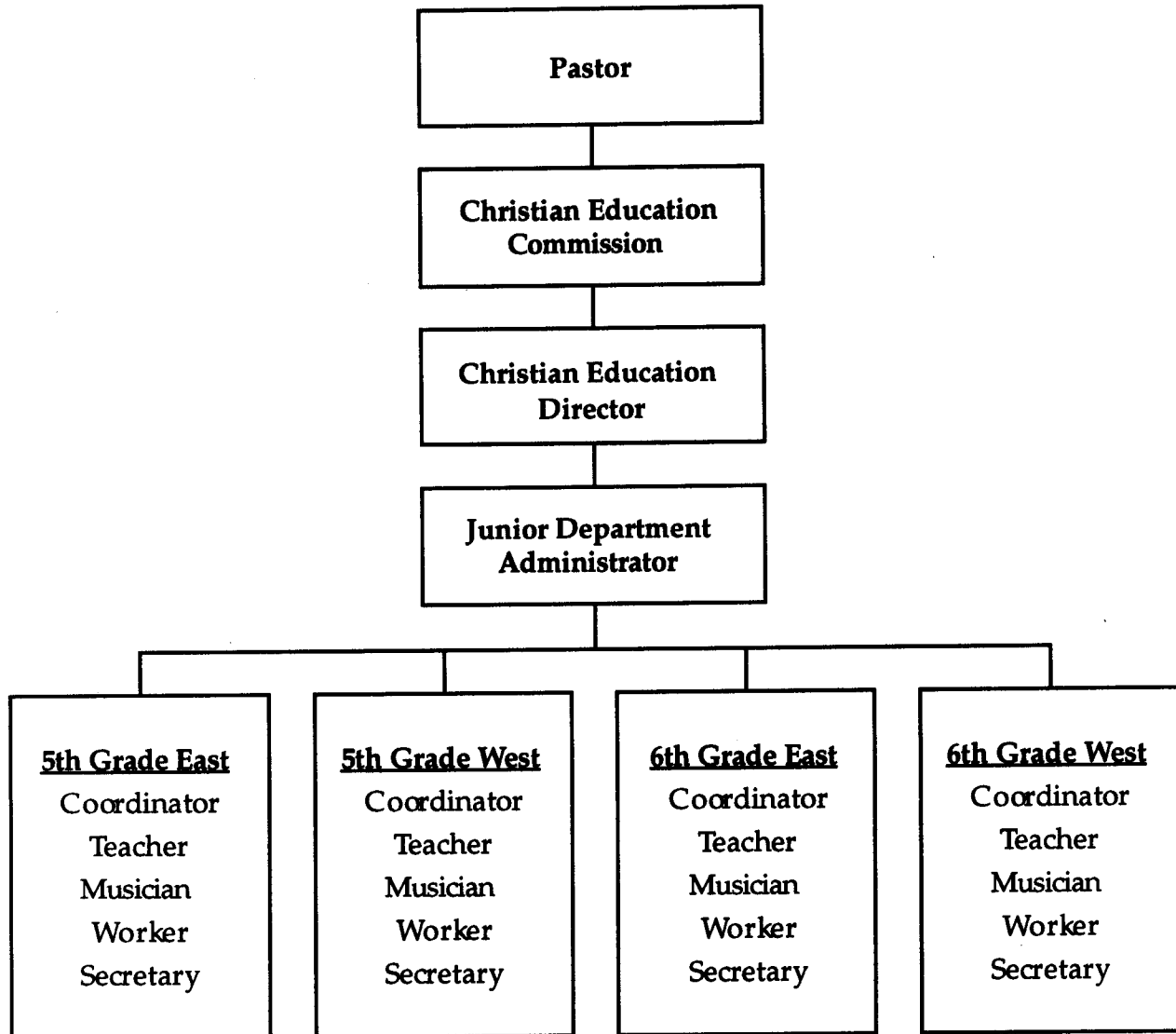
Confusion reigns when there is more than one person thinking they are in charge. The larger the body, the more responsibility needs to be delegated, and the more authority needs to be established on multiple levels. Everyone needs to know to whom they answer, and who has the responsibility to make the final decisions. The pastor is clearly the leader, and needs to have people under his direction who will take the responsibility for creating order and discipline in each class. Then, when there is a difference of opinion, these people graciously defer to him as the leader. One of the most important lessons we learn in Christian ministry is that we must have servants' hearts in order to make it work. Ambition and politics destroy the effectiveness of any ministry team.

Each of us in the family of God has a job to do. We need enough information to do it well. We also need to be a part of something that is bigger than we are; and we need help and encouragement along the way. This section is a tool for Christian leaders to help develop the specific program that will best meet the needs of the people.

School of the Bible Flowchart



Junior Department Flowchart



Administrator (Department Head) Job Description

The Administrator is responsible for the overall function of a department consisting of several classes. In order to achieve an effective and fruitful team ministry, Class Coordinators and Teachers will be under the supervision and guidance of the Administrator, with a view of strengthening the families and the general ministry of the local church.

A. Supervision.

1. Oversee the Class Coordinators.
2. Make certain that a leader for every class is present.
3. Encourage the workers to be punctual, neatly and appropriately dressed, and friendly.
4. Be in the hall 30 minutes before the classes begin to greet the teachers and students as they arrive.
5. Check around to see if there are any physical problems with the building which need to be corrected before the class begins. (Roof leaks, electrical problems, etc.)
6. Be sensitive to the needs of your teachers. Encourage and pray for any of them who are experiencing personal hardships.
7. Know each class team and be ready to step in and oversee a class if the Coordinator's post has not been filled.
8. Make sure the records are being handled correctly, and that the offerings are going to the department secretary with correct designations.
9. Take an active role in promotions and help stimulate interest and growth in the classes.

B. Teacher Training.

1. Conduct regular training sessions for your teaching teams, either as a department, or in conjunction with other departments.
2. Make every member of the group aware of the specific teaching goals of the class, both long and short term.
3. Share your ideas for improving the classes, and listen to the ideas of the Class Coordinators and Teachers with respect and appreciation.
4. Encourage friendship and fellowship among the people in your department.
5. Discuss available, new materials and teaching aids, and continually promote creativity, excitement, and the best audio-visual materials you can use.
6. Minister to the Class Coordinators under your supervision. Visit them as they visit those in their charge. Pray for and with them.

C. Discipline.

1. Be aware of any major discipline problems in the classes.
2. Be ready to handle any special discipline with which the Coordinator needs help.
3. If a child, who has become disruptive in class, is brought to you for correction, make every effort to locate at least one of the child's parents before attempting to discipline the child yourself.
4. NEVER spank or strike a child. Leave that up to the parents. Use physical restraint only if the child is a physical threat to someone. If a child is a consistent source of disruption to his class, you may find it necessary to suspend him. But, realize that disruptive anti-social behavior is a sure indication of severe personal and spiritual problems. Make sure that child is visited several times at home by teachers or others who are competent to minister to families, unless the family declines the offer of help.

Class Coordinator

(Class Leader)
Job Description

The Class Coordinator is directly responsible to the department Administrator. While having the primary responsibility for the class, the Coordinator serves as the leader of the teaching team in each classroom of the School of the Bible.

A. Attend Special Meetings of Leaders.

1. Keep informed on current developments and programs that relate to your class.
2. Share ideas and information with other Coordinators.
3. Receive information, encouragement, and ideas from the Christian Education Director, Pastor, or Administrator.
4. Pray with the other members of the teaching team.
5. Plan for the expansion and improvement of the School of the Bible ministry.

B. Supervise Training of the Teaching Team.

1. Class council meetings.
 - a. Conduct a special meeting with all of your workers at least once each quarter.
 - b. Discuss ideas for improvements in the class.
 - c. Share information from the Coordinators' meetings that is relevant to your team.
 - d. Discuss long- and short-term goals for the class.
 - e. Discuss and try to resolve any problems encountered in the class. Resolve any interpersonal conflicts quickly.
 - f. These meetings could be conducted in one of the homes with fellowship or a shared meal.
2. Assign responsibilities for each class session at least 10 days in advance.
 - a. Require each worker to report on the assignment plans and make sure each segment coordinates with the class theme.
 - b. Have each worker obtain and prepare props and teaching aids ahead of time.

3. Lead the group in goal-setting.
 - a. Attendance goals.
 - b. Offering goals.
 - c. Spiritual goals.
 - d. Visitation goals.
4. Lesson objectives.
 - a. "Quarterly objectives": Outline what you want to communicate for the quarter.
 - b. "Unit" objectives (usually 4 weeks).
 - c. Weekly aim (theme for this session).
5. Work with the team to plan special events, parties, field trips, service projects, etc.
 - a. Make specific assignments and divide responsibilities.
 - b. Fill out and submit the activity form to the Christian Education Director.
6. Lead the team in prayer before the class begins each Sunday.

C. Help Nurture the Spiritual Well-Being of Each Member of the Class.

1. Know the students personally, and be sensitive to their emotional and spiritual needs.
2. Be prepared to counsel on a one-to-one basis, if needed.
3. Set a godly example in your personal lifestyle and disposition.

D. Supervise the Care of the Classroom.

1. Never use tape, thumbtacks or nails on the walls or tape on windows. Use stick-tack.
2. In rooms with drop ceilings, light-weight objects may be hung from the ceiling grids.
3. Remove outdated decorations.
4. Turn off lights after class.
5. Make sure trash is picked up and put in the wastebasket.
6. Report maintenance problems to the Christian Education office.
7. Erase the chalkboards. Never use water on a chalkboard.
8. Arrange the chairs neatly.

E. Storage Cabinet.

1. Clean out the storage cabinet frequently.
2. Do not store food in the room or cabinet. It will draw all sorts of insects.
3. Be conscious of any fire hazard or clutter.

F. Classroom Discipline Problems.

1. The Class Coordinator is responsible for handling any normal discipline problems in the class with patience and consideration for the well-being of the group.
 - a. Never discipline a student with ridicule.
 - b. Never strike a student.
 - c. Convey love and acceptance while trying to determine the reason for the uncooperative or harmful behavior.
 - d. If possible, take a disruptive student aside and try to determine the nature of the problem. Be careful not to convey rejection by saying, "You are a bad child," or "I do not know what I am going to do with you."
 - e. Never leave a student standing or sitting alone in the hall.
2. Severe discipline problems should be referred to the child's father or mother if they are available.
 - a. If the respective parent is not in the building, the Administrator should handle the problem.
 - b. The Administrator should call the parents as quickly as possible.
 - c. The Administrator should give the child some personal attention and seek to discover the real problem behind the behavior, so he can minister to the need.

G. Coordinate and Lead the Visitation Program.

1. Assign a few of the students to each worker on the team.
2. Have each worker keep in touch with and continue to encourage each student assigned to them.
 - a. Birthday cards.
 - b. Phone calls.
 - c. Visits in the home.
 - d. Regular prayer for each one.

3. Organize regular visitations to the students.
 - a. Select a specific day, and get brief written reports.
 - b. Go with a new worker to show them how to make an effective home visit.
 - c. Make visitation an integral part of the Sunday School ministry program.
4. Be aware of absentees.
 - a. Contact missing students on a regular basis by writing, phone calls, and visitation.
 - b. If a student has been absent for more than 6 weeks, and every effort has been made to encourage them to return, contact your Administrator for approval to remove the name from the rolls.
 - c. No name should be removed without the Administrator's approval. It is the Coordinators' responsibility to keep track of extended absentees and not allow them to remain on the records, if they have not indicated that they will be returning soon.
 - d. Keep a record of the name, address, and phone number of each student whose name has been deleted and contact each one again within 3 months.

Teacher

Job Description

A. Communicate the Word of God to the Hearts and Spirits of Your Students. This Involves:

1. Planning:

- a. Think ahead.
- b. What response do I want to stimulate in their hearts this week?
 - (1) What do I want them to know?
 - (2) What do I want them to feel?
 - (3) What do I want them to do?
- c. Suggested goals:
 - (1) Cultivate gratefulness to God as Creator, Provider, and Protector.
 - (2) Lead to repentance by awareness of sin, grace, faith.
 - (3) Combat the "me-centered" mentality of humanism and teach the joy of giving, serving, and preferring one another.
 - (4) Combat the temporal values system with an awareness of the second coming of Jesus, heaven, hell, eternity, and the judgment seat of Christ.
- d. Biblical goals (from 2 Peter 1:5-7 in order):
 - (1) Faith.
 - (2) Virtue (character).
 - (3) Knowledge.
 - (4) Self-control.
 - (5) Godliness.
 - (6) Brotherly kindness.
 - (7) Charity (selfless love).

e. What are the curriculum goals this year?

- 2. Preparation:** This involves work through the week, preparing your heart as well as your mind.
- a. Read the lesson materials you have and all the related scriptures early in the week.
 - b. Incorporate scriptures and materials from the lesson into your daily devotions through the week.
 - c. Create an introduction that will stimulate curiosity and interest.

- d. Know the material thoroughly. Practice by discussing or even presenting the material to your family.
 - e. Look for, or make, props, pictures, or other visual aids which will captivate their interest and reinforce the message.
 - f. Prepare an introduction, main body, and a definite conclusion that will stimulate your students toward the lesson goal.
3. Prayer:
- a. Prepare your spirit as a servant of God. Become sensitive to the will of God and be led by the Spirit.
 - b. Pray every day for each of your students by name, and for the needs in their lives of which you are aware.
 - c. Learn from your students what their specific needs are, and let them know you are praying about those needs.
 - d. Keep notes about prayer needs.
 - e. In praying, privately and before the class:
 - (1) Always begin with thanksgiving. *"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise"* (Psalms 100:4)
 - (2) Pray to the Father in Jesus' name.
 - (3) Bless the Lord, and honor His name.
 - (4) Create a focus on His will, His kingdom, His purposes, and His pleasure.
 - (5) Make specific petitions for healing, provision, and spiritual growth based on His Word and purposes.
 - (6) Ask for His forgiveness for wrong attitudes and deeds and pray for overcoming grace as you come with a grateful and humble spirit. Do not recite prayers. Talk to God. Pray in the Spirit. Pray audibly whenever possible and have set times to pray.

Jesus gave a MODEL prayer to His disciples, not to recite, but to emulate. Here is a similar model:

"Heavenly Father, thank You for loving us and for sending Your only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins. We love You, and appreciate all the wonderful things You have done in our lives. Thank You for bringing us together as a group to study Your Word and learn Your ways. Thank You for Jason, Sarah, Joey, ... and for providing godly parents and a good church where we can worship You. Dear Lord, help us to understand more clearly what You are doing in our lives and what You want us to do with every precious day You give us to live. Teach us to grow in Your love by loving and serving one another; and, today, let every one of us know, without a doubt, that we are born again, changed, and walking with the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. Help us to realize every day that Jesus is

coming soon; and anoint us to worship You in everything we do. In Jesus' name. Amen."

- (7) Start your day by reading the Bible and praying.
- (8) Include prayer at mealtimes and family devotions.
- (9) Pray together and minister to one another as a teaching team before the class.
- (10) Teach the children to pray for each other, or for a leader who has a serious need.

4. Personality:

- a. Communicate the Word with joy, conviction, and confidence. NEVER read a book other than a Bible to the students.
- b. Look at the students and be sensitive to their responses.
- c. Call the students by name often and encourage them to ask questions. They are more important than your presentation.

5. Persuasiveness:

- a. Know what this church believes.
- b. Be able to overcome the mental roadblocks that have been established in the students' minds by the world.

6. Punctuality: Arrive 30 minutes early, so you can quiet your spirit and help greet the students.

B. Share the Responsibility for Instruction in at Least One of These Teaching Segments:

- 1. Bible story.
- 2. Object lesson.
- 3. Life-related story.
- 4. Scripture memorization.

C. Learn to Use a Variety of Teaching Techniques and Aids Effectively:

- 1. Animate your lecture with body language, illustrations, props, and questions.
- 2. Flannelgraph.
- 3. Overhead transparency projector.
- 4. Video cassette.

5. Puppets.
6. Skits with costumes and props.
7. Chalk drawings.
8. Songs that tell or emphasize the story.

D. Learn the Material in Advance:

1. NEVER read a story or carry a quarterly.
2. Do not try to show pictures from a book to a class. Books were made to be used by individuals, not groups.

E. Carry and Read Only a Bible:

1. Make the Bible visible.
2. Encourage the students to bring their Bibles with them and read them.
3. Always teach a lesson or tell a story in your own words.

F. Pray Daily for the Students and for the Sunday Class Session.

G. Greet the Students. Make Them Feel Welcome and Loved.

H. Be Sensitive to Special Needs and Problems.

I. Honor the Class Coordinator as the Team Leader. Give that Leader Your Full Support and Cooperation.

J. Be Ready to Substitute for the Class Coordinator When Called Upon to Do So.

K. Attend at Least 48 Sunday School Sessions Each Year.

L. Be a Faithful Tither to this Local Church.

M. Attend at Least Two Other Regular Services at this Church Each Week to Strengthen Your Own Spirit.

N. Participate in the Visitation Ministry Program for Your Class. Realize That the Students' Parents Are Very Important to the Success of Your Ministry.

O. Attend Meetings and Training Sessions for the Sunday School Workers as Provided, to Develop and Enhance Your Skills and Team Spirit.

P. Be Supportive of the Overall Vision and Ministry of the Church.

1. Always be aware that we need each other.
2. The goal of a true servant is to make others successful.

Q. Be an Example of Christian Purity and Love.

1. Live the lifestyle you teach to your students.
2. Be quick to forgive and resolve offenses and misunderstandings, especially with brothers and sisters in the church.

R. Always Contribute to the Offering, In Order to Set an Example.

S. Teach the Use of Offering Envelopes.

T. DO NOT USE SECULAR MATERIAL, Such As:

1. Secular music lyrics.
2. Secular films (even though they may seem so "nice").
3. Secular books. Expose the students to Christian heroes and stories which put God in the proper perspective.

U. Be Careful to Put Nothing on the Walls Except in Designated Areas.

V. Help Keep the Room and Closets Clean.

W. Turn Out the Lights When You Leave.

Musician

Job Description

A. Strengthen the Message and Impact of the Class Session with Good, Appropriate Music.

1. Planning:

- a. Work with the Song Leader and Teacher prayerfully in choosing songs which will flow with and reinforce the objectives of the lessons.
- b. Know the lesson plan and have the song list several days in advance of Sunday.
- c. Keep looking for new songs which are biblical and fun to sing, particularly action songs.
- d. Refer to the song list in the manual.

2. Preparation:

- a. Make sure you know the correct keys and chord progressions for the songs. You may need to consult one of the senior musicians during the week.
- b. Practice the songs. Get some coaching if necessary.
- c. Practice the songs with the Song Leader.

3. Prayer:

- a. Prepare your spirit as a servant of God.
- b. Become sensitive to the will of God and be led by the Spirit.

4. Playing:

- a. Adjust your instrumental volume to the size of the room and the size and age of the group.
- b. For 10 or 12 first graders, you need to play softly.
- c. Do not play with your back to the Song Leader or group, especially if you play the guitar.
- d. Play with skill and anointing.

B. Support the Teaching Team with Your Presence and Help During the Entire Class Time.

1. Be ready to play at other times during the class as needed for an altar call, special song, etc.
2. Smile.

C. If You Must Be Absent, Contact a Substitute During the Week and Notify the Class Coordinator.

1. Be sure the substitute is approved by the Administrator and Class Coordinator.
2. Make sure the Coordinator has the phone number of at least one substitute available in the event an unforeseen circumstance keeps you out of the class.

D. Honor the Class Coordinator as the Team Leader by Giving Him or Her Your Full Support and Cooperation.

E. Attend at Least 48 Sunday School Sessions Each Year.

F. Be a Faithful Tither to this Local Church.

G. Attend at Least Two Other Regular Services at this Church Each Week to Build Up Your Own Spirit.

H. Be Supportive of the Overall Vision and Ministry of this Church.

1. Always be aware that we need each other, and that the goal of a true servant is to make others successful.
2. We are a team!

I. Be an Example of Christian Purity and Love.

1. Live the lifestyle you teach others to live.
2. Be quick to forgive and resolve offenses and misunderstandings, especially with brothers and sisters in the church.

Worker (Assistant) Job Description

The general worker, one of the most flexible member of the teaching staff, is an assistant to the Class Coordinator, the Secretary, and the Teacher. This worker may be in training for a teaching ministry, or may be one who has a vision for the program, but does not feel called to carry the full responsibility as the leader. As an assistant, the general worker functions in the "ministry of helps," mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12.

A. Assist the Secretary.

1. Know the records procedures, and be able to handle the work when needed.
2. Help with attendance, offering, etc.
3. Assist the Coordinator and Teachers. Be available and willing to teach and to assist with special promotions and events.

B. Help Maintain Discipline in the Class with Firm but Loving Sensitivity, in the Event of Any Disruptions.

C. Participate in the Visitation Program.

D. Attend the Training Sessions and Planning Meetings Scheduled.

E. Be Active in Praying for the Class, the Individual Students, and for the Ministry Team.

F. Relate Personally to the Students Whenever Possible.

G. Come 30 Minutes Before the Class Begins; Stay Through the Dismissal Time; Participate in the Singing, Praying, and Activities; and Support Each of the Team Members.

H. If You Must Be Absent, Notify the Class Coordinator as Soon as Possible.

I. Honor the Class Coordinator as the Team Leader.

J. Attend at Least 48 Sunday School Sessions Each Year.

K. Be a Faithful Tither to this Local Church.

L. Attend at Least Two Other Regular Services at this Church Each Week to Build Up Your Own Spirit.

M. Be Supportive of the Overall Vision and Ministry of the Church.

1. Always be aware that we need each other, and the goal of a true servant is to make others successful.
2. We are a team!

N. Be an Example of Christian Purity and Love.

1. Live the lifestyle you teach others to live.
2. Be quick to forgive and resolve offenses and misunderstandings, especially with brothers and sisters in the church.

Secretary

Job Description

A. Greet Each Student and Help Create an Atmosphere of Love and Joy in the House of the Lord.

1. Learn each student's name as quickly as possible, and use that name often.
2. Always recognize visitors and show a special interest in them.
3. Make name tags for the students.
4. Collect the tags at the end of the class and use them again every Sunday.
5. Introduce each new student to a worker.
6. Help make the students feel special about themselves.
7. Keep track of birthdays and, before the session, inform the Class Coordinator of current ones. Send cards to students with birthdays the following week.
8. Keep a list of absentees for visitation, cards, and calls.

B. Keep Accurate Records of Each Class Session.

1. Attendance.
 - a. Use the computer attendance sheet; mark a black letter "P" for present and a red "A" for absent.
 - b. For a new student who has just become a regular attender, fill out the blue change sheet with the class and department, the student's name, address, telephone number, birthday, parents' names and previous dates attended. A student is a "regular" when he or she has attended at least three times in a consistent manner, e.g., once a month for several months, every other Sunday, etc. Place a blue sheet inside the attendance sheet when finished.
 - c. Fill out or update a yellow form with the visitor's name, address, telephone number, birthday, parents' names, and date attending. Continue to record the dates attended on this sheet until the visitor becomes a regular. Keep the yellow form in the file box with the white permanent cards.
 - d. Total the number of class members and visitors and record it at the bottom of the computer attendance sheet.

- e. Take the completed attendance folder and offering envelope to the Divisional Secretary's office and check it over with the Secretary.
- f. Be sure you have a permanent information card for each student on your attendance sheet.

2. Offering.

- a. The secretary is responsible for counting the School of the Bible offering and putting it in the envelope provided.
- b. Record the total amount for the day on the envelope.
- c. Record the total attendance on the envelope.
- d. Keep any specially designated offerings separate, and turn them in to the Divisional Secretary with a note of explanation.
- e. Take the completed attendance folder and offering envelope to the Divisional Secretary's office, and check it over with the Secretary.

3. Maintenance record keeping.

- a. Always check the computer visitation sheet for correct information. There may be a change of address or telephone number.
- b. If a student tells you of a change of address or telephone number, fill out the blue change sheet, put it inside your attendance sheet, and turn it in to the Divisional Secretary.
- c. Keep the visitation sheet each week for reference.
- d. Keep the birthday sheet, which you will receive monthly. Fill in any birthdays not listed, and report them on a blue change sheet.
- e. Be sure to have a white permanent information card for each student on your computer attendance sheet, and keep it in your file box. Do not forget to fill out a card for a visitor who becomes a regular attender. (Discard the yellow form used for visitors.)

4. Other records.

- a. During some promotions, records may be kept on separate forms relating to memory work, recruiting, or points for special efforts.
- b. Occasionally, you may need some assistance from another worker to keep these extra records straight.
- c. If an instruction sheet is delivered with additional paperwork, keep it in your attendance folder during the promotion and follow the instructions on the page.

C. Follow-Up.

1. Prepare welcome cards for new students.
 - a. Cards may be obtained from the Audio-Visual Room.
 - b. Include a little personal note. Be sure to sign your name and grade level. Do not just write, "Secretary."
 - c. Address the cards.
 - d. Take the cards to the Audio-Visual Room to be mailed.
2. Absentee follow-up.
 - a. One Sunday missed: send a "miss you" postcard.
 - b. Two Sundays missed: give the student's name and phone number to a Teacher or to the Class Coordinator, so a phone call may be made that week.
 - c. Three Sundays missed: make sure the student is visited by a Teacher or by the Coordinator.
3. Decision Cards.
 - a. These cards are available in the Audio-Visual Room.
 - b. Fill out one card for each student who responds to the salvation appeal in a class session, and turn it in to the Administrator.
 - c. Put the date and the student's name on the "Spiritual Life" form.
4. The books should be turned in to the Divisional Secretary no later than 30 minutes after the beginning of class.

Four Things Every Teacher Must Know

I. A Teacher Must Know the Student.

A. Background.

1. In what church was the student trained?
2. What is the student's cultural heritage?
3. What is the student's birth order?

B. Environment.

1. In what kind of neighborhood does the student live?
2. What school does the student attend?
3. What kind of television programs is the student permitted to watch?

C. Spiritual condition.

1. Is the student born again?
2. Has the student received the baptism in the Holy Spirit?

D. Comprehension ability.

E. Interest level.

F. Personality Problems.

1. Is the student shy, introverted, or antisocial?

2. Is the student belligerent or irritable?

3. Is the student hyperactive?

G. Family situation.

1. In what kind of home does the student live?
2. Are the student's parents divorced, separated, constantly fighting, or devoted to each other?
3. Does the family have devotions together?
4. Is the family addicted to television?
5. Are the student's parents Christians?

H. How can a teacher learn about the students?

1. There are books available which explain characteristics of children at every age level. Go to the bookstore or library for general information.
2. Study carefully the material in your manual concerning your students' development.
3. Acquaint yourself with the student. Call him by name.
4. Pray specifically for each student under your charge.

II. A Teacher Must Know Himself. Before Teaching, Ask Yourself:

- A. Am I tired or irritable?
- B. Am I discouraged? *"David encouraged himself in the LORD...."*
(1 Samuel 30:6)
- C. Am I prepared -- really prepared?
- D. Am I enthusiastic?
- E. Am I friendly?
- F. Have I prayed about this class session?
- G. Are there conditions and stresses in my own life that can adversely affect my function in the class?
- H. Am I able to overlook problems and concentrate on the task at hand?
- I. Do I really believe in what I am doing today?
- J. Do I have a positive attitude?

III. A Teacher Must Know the Lesson.

- A. Start preparing well in advance of the day of the class.
- B. NEVER read your lesson or story to the class.
- C. Follow a simple outline. Present specific thoughts.

- D. Use visual aids. Students will remember far more when the idea is reinforced by what they see.

- E. Use illustrations.

1. From the Bible.
2. From your own life.
3. From the lives of others.
4. From Christian literature.
5. From nature.
6. Allegories.

- F. Ask questions.

- G. Leave the students with a desire for more. Do not overdo singing or any one segment.

- H. Be sure the lesson relates to the pupils on their level. Do the insights you are sharing affect the situations they are facing in their lives?

IV. A Teacher Must Know the Overall Church Program.

- A. See yourself as part of the whole ministry team.
- B. Be faithful to the other programs and functions of the church. Attend the other services.
- C. Stay in your class when the other members of the team are ministering. Your presence is helpful and encouraging.

- D. Share in the promotion of special days and general activities.

Adapted from Your Sunday School Can Grow by Dr. Paul E. Paino.

- E. Make church announcements in your class.

Three Requirements for Every Teacher

The Bible has a great deal to say about teachers. Teaching is one of the special types of ministries that Christ Himself has placed in the church as a "gift." Read carefully the following scripture portion (Ephesians 4:11-16):

11 *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;"*

12 *"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"*

13 *"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:"*

14 *That we {henceforth} be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, {and} cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;"*

15 *"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, {even} Christ:"*

16 *"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."*

We discover from these beautiful verses that the Lord places teachers in the church for the following purposes:

- To Perfect the Saints.
- To Accomplish the Work of the Ministry.
- To Build Up the Body of Christ.
- To Help the Church Come Into a Unity of Faith.
- To Give Knowledge About the Son of God.
- To Exemplify a Godly Lifestyle.
- To Establish Us in Doctrine.
- To Prove the Love of God.
- To Help Believers Fit Into the Body of Christ.

The Work of the Teacher Is Important. God Demands That Every Teacher Have:

A Call. (1 Corinthians 12:26-28)

God calls people to be teachers and workers. The gifts and callings of God are without repentance. Once we are called, we do not have an option. God requires a called teacher to teach.

Compassion. (Matthew 9:36-38)

"But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, 'The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.'"

The Master Teacher was moved with compassion. Jesus cared. Jesus wept. Jesus was concerned, because He loved people. He had something to give that would meet their needs. Every teacher needs to have the motivation and conviction that what he has is greatly needed by the people.

When we genuinely give our heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, it naturally translates into a love for people. In loving Jesus, we please him; we become like Him; and our motivations become more and more like His. Jesus was motivated by a supreme devotion to the Father, and by a selfless love for people. He was the consummate servant: He did nothing out of a motivation for self-gratification or self-glory.

Courage. (Joshua 1:1-16)

God spoke words of encouragement to Joshua, and told him "to be of good

courage." The path to courage is to focus on God's Word and on what God has done, rather than focus on our abilities or accomplishments.

Compassion and courage go naturally together. The Apostle John said, *"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear,..."* (1 John 4:18) Fear relates to the apprehension over potential loss. When we are a true servant and focus on the needs of others instead of ourselves, we are set free from fear and can boldly proclaim the Word of God. Daniel said, *"...the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits."* (Daniel 11:32) It takes courage to lead a class and bear the burden of ministering faithfully week after week.

Every teacher must know that he has a call from God, and not just a desire to be in front of people. He must have a genuine compassion for people and a passion for souls, and not just a desire to succeed in a ministry. Every teacher must also have the courage to do what needs to be done in the work, or he will give up when there are difficulties or conflicts.

Adapted from Your Sunday School Can Grow by Dr. Paul E. Paino.

Responsibilities of a School of the Bible Worker

As a teacher in the School of the Bible, you are taking an active part in the ministry of your church. In a sense, you are a minister yourself, serving in the ministry of "perfecting (maturing) the saints." (Ephesians 4:12) As a School of the Bible teacher or worker, you are assisting the professional, ministerial staff in preparing believers to cope with this "present world." (2 Timothy 4:10) The success of a local church is not only dependent upon its pastors, but also upon every saint who is actively doing his part in the ministry of reaching others with the gospel.

What activity is more important than teaching the Word of God? The ministry of teaching is one of the most important jobs in the church. For this reason, every effort has been made to choose individuals who will conscientiously teach God's truths to every person who enters the classroom. Our greatest joy must be in sharing God's Word. Your ministry in the classroom must never be a "burden." Evaluate carefully the potential of each student. Remember that someone needs to share the love of Jesus with them. Also, remember that true ministry is impossible with human strength and wisdom alone: you need God's anointing and grace. Pray for God's anointing, and make it a habit to pray for those to whom you minister.

Responsibilities of a Teacher or Class Worker in the School of the Bible:

Be an Example.

Develop deep-rooted convictions directly from God's Word and live by them. Remember that you are an example to the young believers.

Be Faithful to the Public Services of the Church.

A teacher should be willing to attend all the services of his home church: Sunday morning, Sunday evening worship and the midweek service. As a leader in the church program, you need to be strengthened in your spirit by worship and the preaching of the Word. You also set an example by showing that you are excited about the vision you share with others.

Be a Tither.

The tithe (the first tenth of all our financial increase) is an important mark of God's ownership and one of the first principles of Christian ethics. When we hold back from God, we cannot expect anointing or blessing on our lives, and it shows up in our ministry. Tithing strengthens our commitment to the Lord and to the local church. It also helps to develop the mind-set of a servant rather than a "consumer."

Be Loyal to the Pastor and to the Church Program.

This does not mean that the teacher has to believe everything the pastor believes, or even agree fully with everything the church does. It does mean, that as long as there is no conflict with the scriptures, the teacher should be willing to cooperate with the desires of leadership and be loyal to the pastor, as he presents the program under God's direction.

The most important qualification for fellowship is loyalty. Loyalty means, "I am for you and committed to your success; and, if I have a problem with you, I will go to you first and not discuss it with others behind your back." A "murmurer" is one who voices his complaints to people who are not responsible for the decision. Instead of helping, this only creates confusion and unrest.

Be Faithful to the Class.

The teacher needs to be in his class regularly. Of course, there naturally will be times when absence will occur. Irregular attendance indicates a lack of concern for the spiritual condition of the class. Even the youngest of students can sense your concern for their spiritual needs. Show faithfulness by being prompt, prepared, patient, and pliable. Your attitude of faithfulness will make the difference.

Be Willing to Seek Lost Souls.

Use your class to lead people to Christ. Do not just tell sweet stories. Seek to transform lives. Know how to lead a student to Christ, and plan to give your

students a chance to commit their lives to the Lord.

Be Willing to Become a Member of the Church.

Membership in the local church reflects your commitment to that work. Every teacher should have his ties deeply rooted in the local body in which he teaches.

Be regular in attending the Teacher/Coordinator meetings when they are scheduled. These meetings are designed to help the School of the Bible grow. It is a time of prayer and organization for the class you teach.

Be Willing to Visit Absentees.

Every student in the class must be visited at least once each quarter (13 weeks), and those who miss more than one Sunday should be visited as soon as possible. We are concerned about attendance, because we care about the individual and his spiritual growth.

An apparent lack of concern among church leaders can be a major factor in a student's denial or rejection of the Lord in his personal life. Who knows how history may have been altered if a Sunday School teacher had been more effective in reaching out to Adolf Hitler, Charles Manson, or Madalyn Murray O'Hair?

Be Properly Dressed.

Each worker should be dressed in a manner that is appropriate to the occasion. When we are ministering the Word of God to God's children, we are in a place of honor, and should also demonstrate a

spirit that honors those who have come to grow in God.

Ten Qualifications for a School of the Bible Worker:

1. Love God supremely.
2. Love people and be concerned with the spiritual needs of the community.
3. Develop a pleasant personality.
4. Have a real desire to work for the Lord.
5. Do not be easily discouraged.
6. Be a good follower as well as a capable leader.
7. Believe in the absolute necessity of personal salvation through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.
8. Have a sincere desire to serve Christ in the church.
9. Have clear spiritual perception.
10. Be willing to sacrifice time, money, comfort, and energy for the work of the Lord.

Section 3

Student Profiles

Understanding Your Students

In order to minister effectively to any group, it is imperative that you have a working knowledge of the people you teach. Their individual circumstance and personality will affect their response to you and your ministry. Please read this material carefully as you prepare your heart to minister in any capacity to some of the most important people in the world: our children.

We are concerned that you have a working knowledge of your students in a number of ways. Young people are complex. There are some principles that apply to children at specific age levels, and some that we can all relate to no matter what our age. There are also many variables that distinguish each one as unique, with special potentials, needs, and

distinct problems. We are created body, soul, and spirit. Each part of our being is affected by our heritage, environment, and a vast array of cultural and social factors, which affect our responses and reactions.

The profiles which follow describe a child's development at different ages. The more you understand about each child, the more effectively you will be able to handle his fears, misconceptions, and behavioral problems. These profiles will give you some general insights. You will also need to become familiar with such factors as family background, birth order, school influences, television habits, and family and personal devotional life. In doing so, you will have important resources available to minister to your students.

A Profile of Sixth Grade Students

Physical Development

1. They are healthy and growing. Some of the boys are beginning to catch up with the girls and to develop more physical strength; and so they are not as evenly matched in athletic skills.
2. Their motor skills are greater now than ever, and they should be learning some artistic skills. The voices of the boys have not changed yet. Their range should be higher than in previous years. They are more able to sing in the adult ranges, but without the bass section.
3. Most of the girls are going through puberty, but most of the boys are not. This can have an effect on them emotionally, especially in a culture that flaunts sensuality and promotes a preoccupation with sex. They are extremely self-conscious, and need to be challenged to focus on both character and spiritual maturity.

Today, young people go through puberty at an earlier age than previous generations. Some health professionals have attributed this to our increased use of steroids and other stimulants in livestock, and to our high-fat and protein diet. Whatever the cause, the early development of adult bodies is not good for children's development. It shortens their childhood and thrusts them into pressures and temptations, for which they are not ready. There is social pressure upon them to try to look like adults and to get caught up

in the emotionally devastating dating game. It is far wiser to encourage them to be active in sports, music, academics, and group activities which do not emphasize their gender.

4. Unlike most previous generations, American young people usually have little demand placed on them for physical work. This sedentary lifestyle is a constant temptation; and, coupled with the American fat/sugar diet, it can be very damaging to physical health and well-being. Teenagers need regular physical exercise, and they need to learn physical disciplines that will benefit them for life.

"For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things." (1 Timothy 4:8)

Intellectual Development

1. Sixth graders have a keen mind. They can retain information and memorize much more quickly than they will likely be able to when they have become adults. Do not underestimate their abilities. Challenge their minds, and do not talk down to them. They do not know as much as they think they do; but, they have clear minds (unless they have already damaged them with drugs). Remember that the humanist educators believe in evolution, and often tell students, "You are smarter than your parents." This is often implied, and sometimes directly

stated. As Christian teachers, we need to reinforce the relationship with parents, and encourage respect for godly authority and the wisdom of years. It is amazing how Hollywood and the entertainment world consistently portray parents and teachers as wrong, stupid, and uncaring, while children are portrayed as intellectually superior. This is part of the humanist philosophy. The secular agenda is to encourage everyone to "be his own person" and reject authority, since "there is no absolute authority (God)."

2. They can memorize easily, so challenge them to fill their minds with wisdom and with that which has eternal value.
3. They are less inclined toward hero worship and more involved with visualizing or fantasizing themselves as heroes. They greatly need self-esteem, and should have an abundance of hope for their future.
4. If they watch much secular television and attend a secular school, they will tend to have a mind-set that is focused on temporal values, with little thought for God and eternity. Some of the ideas being promoted by humanism are: "Be your own person." "Life just happens (evolution)." "The purpose of life is to be happy, successful, and free." "If it feels good, do it."

As a Christian teacher, be aware that you need to combat "the lie" and promote a Christian world view in your life and teaching. Let your students know that: "You are not your own; you are bought with a

price." "God is in control, and He has a specific plan for your life." "The purpose of life is to respond and relate to God, and to please Him as a servant." "Real freedom is freedom from sin, not freedom from authority." "If it pleases God, do it."

5. They are probably fairly confident as "top dogs" in the elementary world. They should know the books of the Bible as well as many stories and scripture passages. One danger teachers must avoid is making the Bible too simple and repetitious. The students are starting to grasp abstract concepts and analogies; so, focus on them, and do not be afraid to talk "over their heads" occasionally. They need to see that the Bible is deep and exciting, and that it consists of more than a few simplistic stories with one-dimensional messages. They need a sense of awe about God. In fact, there is a serious lack of the fear of the Lord. So, teach sound doctrine and eschatology.
6. They need to be challenged and stimulated to participate in discussions, and should be especially encouraged to ask questions about the lesson. You know you are keeping their interest if you are stimulating honest questions. Also, do not be afraid to say, "I do not know, but I will try to find out this week." They are capable of some baffling questions.

Social Development

1. On the average, sixth graders are moving toward more group loyalty and away from a family focus. We do

- not consider this good, and we will try to stand against the peer-orientation that is strongly affecting children in our society. Encourage them to trust and to talk to their parents. Encourage the parents to communicate and spend quality time with their children. Let the parents know you are there to support and help them in their role as the primary spiritual leaders of their children.
2. They still prefer the "pals" of their own gender, but that is beginning to change. The girls are already very aware of boys, but the boys are not noticing. Some girls may be "boy-crazy," and, as a rule, that is not healthy. Lead them away from the dating mentality that they are exposed to so often, and toward a healthy biblical view that they should be friends with one another, and act like caring brothers and sisters. Play down the gender emphasis.
 3. They are very concerned with "fairness." Teach them the difference between fairness and justice, and show the values and benefits we can gain, if we respond with a right attitude to the many "unfair" situations in life. Teach them to "prefer one another in love," instead of trying to get "their fair share" in life. Show them that the life message of Jesus was that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."
 4. The boys may be self-conscious, especially about praise and worship. They will want to appear "cool," and may be hesitant about singing. Remember that self-consciousness is an evidence of a lack of God-consciousness, so help them to get close to God and to learn the fear of the Lord. Show them that a healthy response to God in singing is an evidence of strength, and that their silence is the result of fear, not maturity.
 5. This is a time for intense peer pressure toward conformity. They have been involved in peer group training for years; and they are naturally identifying more and more with peers, and moving away from family loyalty and dependence. If they do not have a strong sense of self-esteem and purpose, which has developed in a strong, loving family structure, they will tend to be very insecure and desperate for peer acceptance. They may have a great fear of being different. Teach them the values of standing alone against evil; and teach a values system based on eternity.
- ### Spiritual Development
1. The sixth grade is a critical time to establish children in a spiritual foundation and a Christian world view. Many of them know the Word, and are able to understand spiritually almost as much as the adults; but, they usually have few opportunities for spiritual ministry. They need to realize that they still have much to learn, and they should respect and honor their parents and teachers. They should also be encouraged to take spiritual responsibility and to participate in the work of soul-winning, worship, and service.
 2. **This is a time of spiritual warfare.** The world is making an intense effort

to capture the minds and hearts of our children with the allure of temporal values. Many youth leaders today make the mistake of trying to communicate the message, "You can be saved, and still party and have a good time." That is close; but, remember that we can never compete with the world on the fleshly level. That is their turf. Our message should be, "You can enjoy the Lord and the things of the Spirit. When you delight yourself in the Lord, the phony, substitute pleasures of the world will not compare with genuine, spiritual joy." Proverbs 22:6 says,

"Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it."

In other words, cultivate a taste for the Spirit in a child, and teach him to live for eternity, instead of for the moment. Then, as he grows, he will not have to "sow his wild oats" and then reap a harvest of heartache.

3. They need to minister to the Lord in worship and to minister to one

another in prayer, exhorting, and service. Do not do all the ministering for them; and do not sing songs just to make music. Teach them to enter into God's presence, and teach them to share a good, edifying testimony. Encourage them to work together in ministry projects in which they give to people in need. Make sure their goals are not always centered in fun trips and parties.

4. Their spirits are able to respond to spiritual truths which, perhaps, their minds are yet not able to grasp. Use analogies; and pray for the anointing. Remember that the greatest teacher who ever lived was constantly appealing to the spirits of His listeners, knowing that their minds did not grasp much of what He said.
5. They need to be led and encouraged to respond to the Holy Spirit, and not just to the music and social interaction. They have a tendency at this age to get caught up in a focus on themselves and one another, and to see church activity as more social than spiritual.

Children of the '90's

What is Happening to Children in America Today?
What is an Effective Teaching Strategy for Sunday School Ministry?

A. Education and Entertainment in America Today.

1. This is the most entertained generation in history: the "couch-potato-kid" culture.
2. "Sesame Street" has revolutionized education.
 - a. Quick, creative, colorful. The programs feature a rapid succession of clever, elaborate, and brilliantly entertaining segments of material with a strong humanistic bias.
 - b. To be "secular," the presentation does not have to be blatantly "anti-God." It must only exclude God. Any philosophy that excludes God is, in effect, working against a Christian world view. All education shapes values and morals. There is no such thing as a religiously neutral education.
 - c. The result is:
 - (1) American children are not easily impressed with a flannelgraph lesson or paper maché puppets.
 - (2) They have an even shorter attention span than previous generations.
 - (3) They tend to be more focused on their "rights" and less responsive to authority figures.
 - (4) They tend to be "hyperactive." In 1900 the average American consumed an average of 2 pounds of processed sugar per year. Today, our average consumption is 200 pounds per year.
 - (5) They tend to see God as less exciting than the world.

B. What Secular Education Cannot Do.

1. Television and movies cannot respond personally to the children. "Sesame Street" is strictly a one-way street.
2. They cannot hug, reciprocate, or show personal interest in their special events.
3. Secular educators and entertainers cannot give life a worthwhile purpose or clear direction. (This goes without saying. If you are not going anywhere, it does not matter how you get there.)
4. The "secular" world cannot operate in spiritual giftings and discernment by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Note: It is possible for some to operate in the satanic counterfeit, such as demon-induced psychic powers, "e.s.p.," or other aspects of witchcraft. Some "churched" children, who have had a lack of exposure to the power of the Holy Spirit, have been attracted to the occult world because of the spiritual void in their lives.

5. Secular education has no answer for basic life questions: "Where did I come from?" "Why am I here?" "Where am I going when I die?" "Does life really matter?" "Who am I?"
6. A secular education does not strengthen the family relationship. In fact, the more secular our perspective on life, the weaker our family ties become. Therefore, a secular education cannot make children emotionally or spiritually secure.
7. By excluding God from their thinking, the secular culture diminishes the basis for vision in life, and inadvertently contributes to the epidemic of teen suicide. *"Where [there is] no vision, the people perish."* (Proverbs 29:18)

C. Keys to an Effective Sunday School in the '90's.

1. Do not monologue; dialogue.
 - a. Your effectiveness is limited when you use only the straight lecture method: "You listen; I talk." The idea that "children should be seen and not heard" is not going to be relevant today.
 - b. Get them involved in the dynamics of the lesson. As a one-way communicator, you cannot compete with the world system. If you effectively interact with them and relate personally, you have a strong advantage.
2. Be sensitive to special needs.
 - a. A child who will not sit quietly and obey has a problem -- usually at home.
 - b. He does not need to be humiliated in front of his peers.
 - c. He needs private attention, and his parents probably need ministry of some kind, too.
3. Be creative and open to new ideas and exciting ways of presenting the concepts which children need to grasp.
 - a. Dialogue is better than a monologue.
 - b. A 2- or 3-person presentation is better than a solo act.
 - c. Generally, a video is better than a filmstrip.
 - d. Children need a lot of visual stimulation, as well as audible, tangible, and spiritual stimulation.

4. Do not underestimate children.
 - a. They can memorize, even if they cannot yet read.
 - b. They can perceive things in their spirits before all their mental perception comes into play.
 - c. Expose them to the Word of God.
5. Work with parents.
 - a. Get to know the parents.
 - b. Work to make them feel that they are a part of the team, along with you.
 - c. Help them in their goal of training their children properly.
 - d. Encourage parents to memorize the verses, along with their children. This is essential for parents of pre-readers. Otherwise, the children are limited to learning only a few partial verses a month.
 - e. Give parents suggestions for family devotions which are related to the lessons. Make sure you have devotions with your own family; and, share ideas, preferably with an occasional take-home letter.
 - f. If the parents are unsaved, see their child as a key to winning the parents to the Lord.
 - g. Appeal to the parents' natural sense of responsibility. Help them see that, in order to effectively rear children and ensure their survival in these times, they need God's anointing and help.
 - h. To be secure, children desperately need two parents who love each other and who are responsive to God's authority.
6. Provide incentives and rewards for achievement. Be creative. Recognize your students' successes, and acknowledge their accomplishments and special skills.
7. Let kids have fun.
 - a. Have fun with them.
 - b. Smile.
 - c. Let them see that you enjoy the Lord and life in Christ.
 - d. Teach them to "delight themselves in the Lord," and not just in things.

8. Avoid being too simplistic.

- a. Many people who were raised in Sunday School programs have the impression that the gospel is juvenile, or "kid's stuff," because they heard the stories of Noah and the ark and Daniel in the lion's den over and over again, without much depth or application.
- b. Children can comprehend more in their spirits than you may realize. Include less familiar illustrations in your lessons; present your material in creative ways; and emphasize the spiritual truths in each lesson. Your excitement about the Word and the lesson will be contagious.

9. Remember that children have been exposed to a lot of humanistic philosophy, which makes them the center of their world.

- a. With that kind of mind-set, it is possible for them to "accept Jesus into their lives," along with a pack of Muppets, Ninja Turtles, and power fantasy characters. We need to emphasize the concept of **Jesus as the center** of our lives, and repentance and faith as essentials to Christianity.
- b. The children of today have been overexposed to the occult and to fantasy heroes, and it is not their fault. Let us expose them to the Holy Spirit and to Christian heroes.

Why Do We Lose So Many of Our Children to the World?

Some knowledgeable Christian leaders have estimated that in our evangelical and full-gospel churches, 85% of the children raised in Sunday School turn away from the church of their parents and find the world more enticing. It is time for us to take an honest, hard look at our methods and priorities and seek God for biblical answers.

Why could Joshua say, in Joshua 24:15, *"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD,"* and we cannot? In Joshua's day and culture, the family was strongly the center of society and the life of individuals. By divine mandate, there was less exposure to heathen culture. Moses had conveyed the message from the Lord that the Israelites were not to allow their children to mix with the ungodly people of the land, in order to keep them from the influence of idolatry.

Today, our children have been exposed to far more evil than preceding generations.

The average child today watches 5 or 6 hours of television a day, and it is usually all secular. We need to understand that, although there are Christian programmers and networks, the purpose of secular media leaders is not only to entertain, but also to promote a mind-set and lifestyle that is Godless in perspective and ungodly in practice. Even the highly acclaimed educational television industry is blatantly promoting values and attitudes, which openly oppose Christianity. Not only does

the secular media waste so much time, but the commercial format is also designed to create covetousness as a way of life, and to mold us into "consumers", instead of servants.

The family is portrayed as "any group of people living together," and fathers are mocked as idiots. They are literally "turning the hearts of children from the fathers," as well as promoting witchcraft, immorality, drunkenness, and rebellion. How can a Christian father expose his son to 25,000 beer commercials in the context of sports worship, and then be surprised if the boy is attracted to alcohol as a teenager?

Parents would be far more disciplined about what they allow into their homes and minds, if they were fully aware of the deliberate motives of some powerful media leaders to effect major social change and literally destroy the family and the church. One hour a week of Sunday School, and a little family devotional in the morning, cannot compete with the attraction of endless hours of thrills, cartoons, and entertainment, which promise power illusions and pleasure at the flip of a dial.

"I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes...." (Psalms 101:3)

Today, one philosophy strongly promoted in education is that children need to be exposed to evil so they will reject it and know how to deal with it. This is a false concept. The more you

expose anyone to evil, the more they are attracted to it.

The only biblical way to conquer evil is to focus on good and be drawn to it.

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

(Romans 12:21)

You do not win the battle over temptation by focusing on it and struggling with it. You gain victory over temptation when you live for God, obey

His commandments, and pursue good on a daily basis. The key is found in Galatians 5:16:

"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

Our culture promotes ungodly heroes.

Heroes are very important to children. Who were the heroes in America 30 years

How Can We Develop a Taste for Spiritual Things?	How Are Carnal Appetites Developed?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lead the students to genuine conversion through repentance and faith. 2. Be excited about the Word, godly character, and serving others. 3. Promote good, melodious music. 4. Read about and discuss the godly heroes of the Bible. 5. Teach the children, by example, to "delight themselves in the Lord" and to really enjoy praise and worship. 6. Help the family make God an integral part of daily life. 7. Make a covenant to put God first in your life, and be committed to three church services a week. 8. Make prayer exciting by documenting answers to prayer. 9. Become skilled in areas of service. Study about God and godly people. 10. Honor parents, pastors, and other leaders as God's servants for our benefit, and pray for them. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teach the doctrine of evolution and the basic goodness of man. 2. Focus on physical characteristics, appearance, and entertainment. 3. Allow sensual and carnal music. 4. Keep up with new movies, TV stars, and music idols. 5. Separate "fun" times from "spiritual" times, and treat church attendance as drudgery. 6. Try to take care of all the "spiritual stuff" at church. 7. Practice going to church only when you have time and when it is convenient in your schedule. 8. Try to work things out by talking or meditating. 9. Study drugs, rock music, and sex to create a mental focus on them. 10. Be critical of authority figures, and let your children hear you complain about them.

ago? The Lone Ranger, Roy Rogers, Davy Crockett. Today, children idolize a neurotic Batman, mutant turtles, sodomite rock stars, and a host of occult-based cartoon characters. Christian parents and church leaders need to be familiar not only with Bible heroes and villains, but also with the biographies of great Christians.

Most of our children develop a stronger taste for the world, than for the things of the Spirit.

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6)

This does not say, "Include some Christian training in your family life, and, after the children sow their wild oats in some years of rebellion, they will come back to the Lord when they become adults."

The word "train" comes from a Hebrew word, which means to "touch the palate." When a baby is learning to eat solid food, the mother starts putting some food on her finger, touching the roof of the baby's mouth and causing it to swallow. The analogy relates to taste. The verse really means, "Cultivate a taste for spiritual things in the heart of your child, and as he grows he will not be attracted to the inferior things of the secular world." *"Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good." (Psalms 34:8)*

It is not enough to expose children to part of the Bible message, and then encourage them to "make a decision." Our goal is to impart a thirst for spiritual things, which will continue to motivate them to seek God. A good teacher will

inspire his students to be a lifelong learner. You can be excited about teaching; but, you have not really taught until the children catch your vision. Anyone can get children to recite a prayer. Our goal is to teach them to become praying people. Anyone can recite verses; but, a great teacher inspires others to love the Word and to make it part of their lives.

In our zeal to promote love and gratefulness to God, and to encourage children to accept Christ, we have neglected repentance from sin -- a necessary biblical foundation for genuine conversion.

"Repent, and be baptized ..." (Acts 2:38)

"Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:2)

"And others ... save with fear." (Jude 23)

One hundred years ago, William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, said, "I fear that the day will come when men will preach heaven without hell, a crown without a cross, blessing without suffering, and salvation without repentance."

"Others save with fear." When we emphasize the love of God and unconditional security, the response of some is, "God really loves me. How can I do anything less than give Him my all?" Unfortunately, others will respond with, "God loves me; so, I am going to heaven. I can sin and get away with it." In our fear of overemphasizing the fear of the Lord, lest we be labeled "legalistic," we have

overbalanced the scale and lost the sense of awe for a holy God.

Many people who were "raised in Sunday School" seem to have a mocking disregard for the great eternal Judge of the universe. Let us be conscious of that delicate balance of truth: the God of everlasting compassion is a "consuming fire." It was God's love that sent Christ to the cross; and it was His holiness that demanded the death penalty for sin.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."
(Galatians 6:7)

While it is the goodness of God that brings men to repentance, (Romans 2:4) it is also because of *"the fear of the LORD men depart from evil."* (Proverbs 16:6) The fear of the Lord is not a negative thing. In fact, there are at least 31 benefits listed in scripture which result from the fear of the Lord. It is not a harsh, dark, negative aspect of faith, but rather a *"fountain of life."* (Proverbs 14:27) The fear of the Lord is the awareness that nothing is hidden from Him, and that all of our actions will be judged by a perfect and holy God. It is the understanding that we are "sure our sins will find us out," and that "God is no respecter of persons." We also need to understand that God never changes. We serve the same God that Noah and Abraham served. If we are not careful, we can overemphasize the passive aspects of grace and allow the impression that God is more like Santa Claus, than the holy God of the Bible.

Our message has often been, "Just accept Jesus into your heart."

We base that on an idea taken from Revelation 3:20, *"Behold I stand at the door and knock,..."* which, in context, has nothing to do with salvation. It is Christ's message to the church about spiritual communion. The message of accepting Jesus was important to the Jews, who understood sin, redemption, and covenant; but, their problem was that they did not accept Jesus as the Messiah they were looking for who would fulfill the covenant.

In our Christian culture, we have no problem accepting Jesus as our Savior; but, we tend to have a humanistic mind-set, which rejects His right to lordship. To believe on the **Lord** Jesus Christ is not to decide to accept His genuineness, but to acknowledge His ownership. *"The devils believe and tremble,"* (James 2:19) but they do not give themselves to Him.

The Bible does not tell us to "accept Jesus into our hearts." In fact, it says "We are accepted in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:6) He is the one who accepts us into His heart, as we repent and believe. Many young people can get the false impression that Jesus is meekly "waiting patiently in line" in order to persuade us to allow Him an audience at our discretion. We accept Him into our life, to reside alongside our other beliefs, friends, affections, and habits.

In genuine conversion WE become part of HIS life. We are accepted and adopted, and we become part of His world, His domain, His body, and His army. He is the center of it all, and we become excited about pleasing and glorifying Him. In trying to make the gospel so appealing that

all we have to do is accept Jesus, we have produced many who see Jesus as another source of their pleasure, happiness, and success. Humanism makes self the center of our world and allows for religion, as long as it is not a "radical" transfer of affection and allegiance from self to Jesus.

To "accept Jesus into our heart" is not bad or untrue, but be aware of what an unregenerate mind can do with that concept, especially when there is no emphasis on sin or repentance. Remember that our children have been strongly influenced by humanism, which centers life in self and rejects accountability and authority.

The Bible calls us to "make disciples" -- to challenge the self-willed child of the '90's to "deny self," and to take up his cross daily and follow Christ. There are thousands of people in the world today, who are doing their own self-willed thing, and who at one time accepted Jesus in their heart; but, they never really grieved and repented over their sin, and never surrendered their life to Him as Lord.

We have brought sensual music into the church in an effort to attract the youth and to be "relevant."

We have swallowed the line that "all young people like sensual music," and that "it does not matter what style of music you use, as long as it says something." But music is, in and of itself, a language and a powerful communication medium. Music can touch the spirit, move the soul, and stimulate the flesh.

It is important to evaluate music on the basis of principle, and not label any "singing star" or group as ungodly, or evil.

Indeed, part of the problem is that sincere artists are resorting to sensual styles and secular methods in order to imitate the world and thereby reach people. We do not want to judge anyone's motives, especially if they are in Christian work. But we must evaluate the music and look at the fruit of the ministry. What is the long-term effect of a given type of music on the listeners? Do they tend to be mighty in spirit? Are they soul winners? Do they derive their pleasure from the music alone, or is there a genuine joy of the Lord and spiritual power expressed through their music?

Here are a few things to consider in the evaluation of music in the church.

- Taste in music is developed by exposure. Not all teenagers enjoy screaming "head-bangers" costumed in spandex, chains, and Revlon.
- Some styles are carnal, and they draw undue sensual attention to the singer. Breathy vocalizations, "bedroom eyes," and lewd dress are being tolerated in the name of "relevance;" but, what does it produce in the hearts?
- The argument that "it sells" is the doctrine of Balaam. Market share is not a biblical criteria for validity in the ministry.
- Is there an inordinate effort to imitate the sounds and appearance of the secular and satanic world of music, or is the singer responding to the Spirit in making a joyful noise unto the Lord?
- Test the spirit of the music and of the musician. Is there a smile on his face? Is there a message being communicated? Is the music a vehicle

for the Word that will move the heart, or is the music a vehicle for the musician to draw attention and admiration to himself?

- Our goal is to do all we can in order to expose youth to godly music and to cultivate a taste for spiritual things.

The Sunday School movement in America has largely ignored its greatest potential resource: parents.

The family is God's primary means for training youth. Unless parents have a vision for daily devotions, Christian music and programs, and a Christ-centered lifestyle, the little scriptural knowledge we can convey on Sunday morning will continue to be overwhelmed by a flood of secular, sensual, and satanic influences -- through movies, television, secular education, and carnal friends. Our task is to inspire young people to live a Christian lifestyle and walk daily with God, and to influence the parents to reinforce the message of God's Word during the week.

Children can memorize many times more scripture than we have expected; but, they need help from the family to do it, especially young children who do not read. Parents need to memorize along with them. When educators adopt such a philosophy, even kindergarten students memorize and quote chapters of the Bible, not just segments of verses.

To reach and influence the children of the '90's effectively, we must develop a working relationship with those parents who at least care enough to send their children to Sunday School, even if they do not bring them. We need to visit, motivate, encourage, and use written

communications to get them to work with us as co-laborers with Christ, and let them know that we are supporting them in the minds and hearts of their children.

Many Christian families do not have a strong conviction about speaking negatively about other believers.

There are many warnings and reminders in the Bible about our tendency to speak critically about each other. James 4:11 says, "*Speak not evil one of another, brethren.*" The word for "speak evil" is "katalaleo," which means "negative speaking." When we are offended or disagree, it is our nature to complain, or murmur, to people we trust. It is the most natural thing in the world to discuss the sermon or leaders in the church with our spouse. Unfortunately, many children hear these discussions, and then develop the impression that the church is "full of hypocrites," and, "you cannot trust the pastor." Many parents have tossed around their complaints in the car or at home for years; and then, they have wondered why their children were so attracted to the bar crowd, or to their secular friends.

We need to encourage each other to believe and speak the best of one another. If there are misunderstandings or conflicts, go to the person with whom we have the problem and resolve it quickly and quietly. We need to be aware of the subtle effect our grumbling has on little ears.

We cling to outdated methods and materials.

We must realize that we are in a battle for the minds and affections of children. We are up against a world system which

has at its disposal incredible, innovative, sophisticated technology, with massive budgets and manpower, producing an alluring enticement to sensuality, humanistic values, and the occult. We need to know that we have the Holy Spirit, God's love, and His creative power.

Let us be intense in our planning, preparation, and presentation of the message of a better hope, a better lifestyle, and a purpose for living through the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot compete with the occult powers of He-man or Jem with a one-dimensional flannelgraph lesson; but, when you have an innovative, colorful, team-oriented program combined with agape love and genuine enthusiasm, along with the operation of spiritual gifts and sensitivity to their real need, you can compete with the "darkness" crowd. They have the illusion of power; we have God's power. We are in a war, and we can no longer get by without the anointing and creative skill.

The Sunday School can lapse into a routine of singing and lesson presentations, and neglect visitation and personal relationships, which are essential for effective training.

The purpose for dividing the youth department into small classes is not

limited to communicating the message on different levels. Nor is it limited to giving an opportunity for several people to teach in front of groups. Our purpose is to divide into small groups, so that there can be a more intimate and personal level of ministry to the young people. If a School of the Bible teacher sees his "ministry" as merely talking in front of a class, he does not understand ministry. Ministry means meeting needs, whatever they are.

A teacher who never visits the students, or rarely telephones them, is like a pastor who only preaches sermons and has no personal contact with the people. Children need to relate to godly adult leaders, who show that they care for them personally. They need to hear their name, and they need a listening ear, a hug, and a little present that says, "You are very special to me. Here is how you can see God's love, because I am showing you that I love you." Children, who get only a classroom diet of lessons, seldom stay long in the church. Each of us needs to feel loved, appreciated, and needed.

Do Not Send Them Away

"Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat." (Mark 6:36)

We find one of the greatest Sunday School lessons in this chapter. There are several things that every worker needs to learn from these verses:

"The day was now far spent"

(Mark 6:35)

When we look at the signs about us, we must be aware that the "day of grace" is indeed far spent. The night of God's judgment and tribulation is upon the world. We do not have a guarantee of a tomorrow for laboring in the harvest, so we must have an urgency of spirit as we relate to the work of soul winning. Jesus was stirred by the lack of time to work, and we should be as well.

"This is a desert place...."

(Mark 6:35)

Men and women are looking for something to satisfy their spiritual thirst and hunger for reality. People are flocking to the illusion of drugs and to the deceptions of cults, because they do not have the reality or hope that only Jesus Christ can bring. Young people see the phoniness, emptiness, and hopelessness of their predecessors; but, they do not know where to turn. Water is a "type" of life, and relates to the refreshing of God's Word and His presence in our life. When

we live apart from God, we dry up in every area of life. Life becomes merely existence. *"The rebellious dwell in a dry land."* (Psalms 68:6)

"Send them away."

(Mark 6:36)

The only answer the disciples had for the multitude was to send them someplace else. They could not meet the need of the people who came to them. Unfortunately, many churches are in the same condition. People come for help with spiritual problems and resulting emotional and physical troubles, and the church sends them off to secular agencies and unsaved "professionals."

When the disciples came to Jesus, they discovered that He had the answer. When we are in touch with the Master, we can meet the needs of people, because we are His servants and ambassadors. Through Christ we have the supply. The legitimate church is a "storehouse" which can meet the needs. That is what ministry is all about: find a need and fill it.

"Jesus saw much people."

(Mark 6:34)

It is possible for us to be with thousands of people and never really SEE them. We can overlook their real problems and individual needs. God's people need spiritual perception. Jesus told His disciples to *"look on the fields, for they are white already unto harvest."* (John 4:35) They were waiting for some

astounding event to initiate their ministry, or for some great public appeal for their services, but Jesus told them to LOOK. He was telling them that people are ready to hear and respond; and, if you are perceptive, you will know it.

Jesus "...was moved with compassion...."

(Mark 6:34)

The great heart of God was moved with compassion, because the people were scattered. God is by nature a Father and a Gatherer. Jesus was concerned for the people in their need. Today, there is a dearth in the land. Sin is scattering families by divorce and churches by division, and too many church leaders still work mechanically through their programs and politics. Notice that Jesus was moved by the scattered, hurting people. He had compassion, and it motivated Him to give to them whatever they needed.

"He began to teach them many things..."

(Mark 6:34)

Jesus was a teacher. Probably the greatest need in the lives of the people was a teacher, and they were hungry for the truth. Every Sunday School teacher has a tremendous responsibility to teach the truth. Truth is not just a set of ideas; but, it is also the expression of the person of Jesus Christ. *"I am the way, the TRUTH, and the life...."* (John 14:6) We are not just the ministers of the sayings of Jesus, but we are also *"the ministers of Christ...."* (1 Corinthians 4:1) We give Jesus to people. A key element in the ministry team of an effective church is God-conscious teachers,

who give themselves to the spiritual ministry of teaching.

"Give ye them to eat."

(Mark 6:37)

Jesus placed the responsibility on His followers. "YOU give them something to eat." In John 21:15, Jesus asked Peter, *"...lovest thou me? ... Feed my lambs."* Jesus saw a direct correlation between Peter's love for Him and his ministry to hungry people. "If you love me, you will bless my children."

If you and I love the Lord, we will give the world the "Bread of Life."

"...and they sat down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties."

(Mark 6:40)

It is interesting to note that Jesus separated the people into "departments," and then gave each disciple responsibility over a group. They all had a part in the ministry, and none of them was omitted.

A good Sunday School program makes it possible for every worker to have a valid and fruitful ministry. If all of us do our part and minister to our own group, the hungry multitude will be fed. "We are workers together with God."

"...He blessed and brake the loaves...."

(Mark 6:41)

Jesus gave the bread to the disciples. By the Spirit, He took what was available and made it enough to meet the need. We need to be sure that what we are feeding

people is from the Lord, and not from our own imagination, or something we gleaned from the world's "wisdom." Jesus blessed the bread and He gave it to the disciples. We need to remember that if we have any good thing to give, it was given to us by the Lord. *"Freely ye have received, freely give."* (Matthew 10:8)

"...and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments"

(Mark 6:43)

When God is our source, He is able to supply more than enough to meet our need. He is also a God of order, and He wants nothing wasted. By multiplying the supply beyond the need, He made an opportunity for the disciples to serve as custodians. A teacher's work is not finished when the class has gone. He needs to be responsible for some maintenance and physical preparation as well.

The scripture makes it clear that the whole multitude was filled. Jesus more than met the need. He is the answer! He is the Bread of Life and the Water of Life. He is preparing us, as His disciples, to distribute the abundant life in Christ to the hungry multitude waiting to hear. Do not send them away. Feed them.

Why Unsaved People Do Not Come to Church

Jesus Christ said, *"Go ye into all the world...."* (Mark 16:15) He instructed us to "fish" for men. It is our responsibility to compel others to come in and hear the Word. We are commissioned by God to be His witnesses to a lost world; to go where men are; to reach; and to teach.

The motivating drive of Christians should be to win unsaved people to Jesus. We can only win men if we contact them where they are. If we are indifferent to soul winning, we will deteriorate into a religious club, instead of into God's mighty army. We must develop a passion to obey the Lord in His Great Commission.

We are not called to sit back and "hold the fort" until Jesus comes. We are called to be laborers in the harvest, to "occupy" until He comes. Here are some of the reasons unsaved people do not come to church. As we evaluate these reasons, it is clear that much of the blame is ours; and that, if we will respond to the Great Commission, many more people will come to Jesus and discover that He gives *"life...more abundantly."* (John 10:10)

They are not invited.

Very few of us invite people to church. We invite friends to our home. We invite neighbors to social functions. We invite people to PTA meetings, sports events, or shopping trips; but, how often do we invite unchurched neighbors or co-workers to church? Each year, one out of every five Americans changes residence. Many of them stay home on Sunday, because no Christians have shown an

interest by inviting them to their church services.

They are not welcomed.

It is very difficult for the average outsider to "break in" to the average church group. Most churches are very "close knit." It is good to be close friends with fellow church members; but, if we become exclusive, we miss the blessing of reaching out and growing personally.

We have a natural tendency to like "sameness" -- the same pew, the same songs, the same faces. Often, people who are different (foreigners, people from a different social standing, people with more needs than qualities to offer) are not enthusiastically welcomed in a church.

It is interesting that Jesus spoke of judging "church" people as dividing sheep from goats (Matthew 25:32-33), and the criteria for His evaluation is based on our response to various kinds of hurting, needy people. One major focus of Jesus is our response to the "new guy." *"I was a stranger, and you took me in."* (Matthew 25:35) A great mark of spiritual maturity is our ability to genuinely welcome new people into our lives; to make new friends; and to love the stranger.

They are embarrassed.

We often embarrass people, who come to church or to a class for the first time, by the way we introduce them or insist that they stand or talk. We need to be sensitive

to their personal response to that. Most people like to be welcomed and blessed by individuals in one-on-one conversation, as in a greeting time, or after the service. However, they are very uncomfortable about being put "on display" in front of a group of people whom they do not know.

They are not made aware of the presence of Christ.

If we are not careful, we can spend a lot of time in non-essentials and over-emphasize our programs, instead of the Lord. People today are hungry for reality. They need to see Jesus and hear the Word of God. They do not need more activity. They need a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

They are not attracted.

What is our reputation in the community? Are we known as "The First Church of the Hatfields and McCoys?" Are we seen as a bickering, feuding fellowship, or are we "known by our love?" It is important that Christians do not talk about internal problems with outsiders. The unreached have no desire to become a part of a group which forces them to take sides on issues.

It is also important to keep the building as attractive as possible. If visitors see dirty floors, an unkempt lawn, or a unclean restroom, they will tend to react negatively. The way we care for physical things does reflect the way we feel about ourselves and about our God.

We would also do well to examine our mannerisms carefully and our "worship calisthenics." We are often guilty of doing

things because of habit rather than participating in praise and worship as a true reflection of the heart.

They see too much hypocrisy.

How many times do we ignore people all year, and then invite them to attend church when there is a contest or special program? People often react negatively to Christians when they think they are wanted as a number; or, because we need their money. They also look at our own lives, and sometimes they see our preoccupation with seeking after the same temporal values for which they are seeking.

They do not see us excited about the Lord.

One Christian family was relocated to a new city, and visited a full-gospel church similar in doctrine to the one they had left. Their comment was, "It was a nice church. The preaching was good, and the people were friendly; but, most of them sat in the back pews during the service. We were near the front in a sea of empty seats. We felt self-conscious, and decided that, if they were not excited about being there, we would not be either. We settled on another church down the road."

They do not see that the church can meet their needs.

Sometimes the church becomes too focused on programs and gives the impression that it needs people to meet the needs of the church. Instead, we need to show the world that the church has answers for real problems. In some areas,

there is an exodus from Christian churches to the Mormon religion, because the Mormons are perceived to have a stronger emphasis on family values and relationships. People are hungry for that. "Teach me how to get my marriage healed, and how to handle my rebellious teenager. That is what I really need."

They do not feel that they are loved.

Do we really love outsiders? Too often, we are critical of the unsaved, instead of loving them enough to lead them to the Word of God and to the church. When we are willing to invite and welcome the lost, regardless of their weaknesses, our churches will be filled. Men are hungry for Christ. There is no other real answer to the basic needs and problems in their lives.

The Importance of Repentance

One of the basic motivations among genuinely born-again Christians is the desire to lead people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Heaven is so wonderful; God is so good; and hell is so horrible that we want everyone we know to be saved. We grieve over every soul who dies without knowing God. We agree that it is possible for people to become religious and not really have a spiritual new birth. How do we lead people to a genuine, supernatural, "new creature" experience that will result in a life lived in service and worship to God? How do we influence them to become disciples of the Lord?

Jesus spoke of people in the judgment who will say, *"Lord,...have we not...in thy name done many wonderful works?"* (Matthew 7:22-23) and He will say, *"I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* (Matthew 7:23) There are many people who think they are going to heaven; but, they are not. They call Jesus "Lord," but they "work iniquity." In our sincere desire to see people saved, perhaps we have become too eager to persuade them to "make a confession of faith." We have brought a large number of people into the church who think they have a guaranteed ticket to heaven, because they "believed;" when all they really have done is to assent intellectually to the validity of Christ's messianic claims. Biblically, that is not enough. The Apostle James said,

"Thou believest that here is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." (James 2:19)

God's purpose in the earth is not to create people to populate heaven. His purpose is to have a covenant people, who will live and reign with Him forever. The Bible never says that our part is only to accept Jesus. In fact, it says that He accepts us into His life. (Ephesians 1:6) There are many people who are converts to Christianity; and yet they are not living for Christ. These people have not understood their need for genuine repentance, and live their lives as if to say, "I do not love God; but, I have accepted Jesus into my heart, and I am going to heaven. I am saved by grace, and my works have nothing to do with it. So, I am going to live the way I please and enjoy the world while I am here."

The Apostle Jude warned that ungodly men turn *"the grace of God into lasciviousness...."* (Jude 4) In other words, they would say, "since grace is only unmerited favor, then I can sin and get away with it. God loves me. Therefore, I do not need to fear God."

When Charles Finney preached during the Great Awakening revival in America in the 19th century, he often preached on the fiery judgment of God. He preached that hell is hot and sin is dirty. People went forward to the "mourner's bench," often weeping and wailing as the message was finished. They were under strong conviction, and anxious to be relieved of their burden of guilt. Often, Brother Finney refused to give the altar call, saying, "if you are really sincere, think about it another day, and I will pray with you tomorrow." Historians note that over

85% of his thousands of converts became faithful church members, and served the Lord the rest of their lives. Compare that with the statistic that only 5% of Billy Graham's converts become members of local churches. When asked, "What would you do if you had it to do all over again?" Dr. Graham replied, "I would focus my energies on training leaders, as Jesus did, and not just on mass meetings."

Is it wrong to say, "accept Jesus into your life?" No, not really. That is part of it. But, if that is our only emphasis, it can be dangerous. In recent decades, mercy and love have been emphasized to the point where some have preached and taught an "easy-believism" message. They have made it as easy as possible for people to "make a decision for Christ," and have diluted or eliminated repentance and covenant.

Notice in scripture that Jesus addressed the particular needs of the people to whom He was speaking. When a rich young ruler asked Jesus for the key to eternal life, Jesus said, "give your money away," because that was his problem. He knew who God was, and the principles of covenant with Him, but he loved his money, and that was his only hindrance to following Christ.

What was the basic need of the people in Jesus' time? The Jews had the scripture, and they believed it. They understood the principles of God's lordship and His covenant. They were looking for their Messiah. The one great national problem they had was accepting Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah. The rest was already understood. To say to a modern member of a Christian, but humanistic, culture, that "all you need to do is to accept Jesus" would be the equivalent of telling anyone

that the way to be saved forever is to give away all your money. Today, we should probably say to orthodox Jews that they need to accept Jesus into their lives. In our "Christian" culture, where Jesus is accepted by most people as God's Son -- the baby in the manger -- we have many people willing to accept Him as Savior; but, they have not repented of their sins or surrendered their lives to Him as Lord.

Today, many people in our humanistically-dominated society are "consumers." They live for themselves and for what they can get. They are "their own person." If that person is taught "just to accept Jesus and go to heaven," he probably will accept Jesus as part of his life; and then he will go on living for himself, with the sense that he does not need to repent, because everything will turn out all right for him.

Yes, there will be those who will be genuinely born again when they hear the message of God's love, and many others will take advantage of the "offer." Jude taught that for different people, you need a different approach.

"And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling {them} out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." (Jude 22-23)

Many people will never experience true conversion until they understand the fear of the Lord.

The first word of the gospel is "repent," or "turn from sin." God's purpose is covenant, not converts. He is seeking worshippers, (John 4:23) not acceptance. Jesus died to redeem us from our sinful lifestyle, not just from hell. (1 Peter 1:18) In

genuine Christianity, we do not accept Jesus into our lifestyle. Religion is often the practice of living for self during the week, and then making some time for God on Sunday. The other days are for making money, watching TV, and worshipping sports or soaps. Jesus is seen as a gentle Santa, wanting desperately to give us happiness, standing on the perimeter of our lives, "waiting patiently in line."

God is not a gentle Santa. He is still seeking a covenant people. Most people in America will "accept Jesus," mentally or historically. Most anyone would be willing to accept Jesus as their Savior, in order to accept the free gift of eternal life. But Jesus said,

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23)

In other words, "deny self and become part of the body of Christ, finding your identity in Him and His purposes." We all want a Savior, but do we want a Lord?

Teach a gospel message to any church group and then ask, "who among you would like to be assured of a place in heaven, and would like to avoid hell?" No one wants to go to hell; and yet, Jesus said that most people are going there. When you tell people, "God loves you so much that He sent Jesus to die in your place so you can go to heaven," you are speaking truth. But consider that there are many in our "me-centered" culture who will interpret that to say, "Yes, I believe that I am very important, and that God is waiting eagerly to give me a ticket to heaven." They may accept the deal, especially if there is little emphasis on repentance or turning from their sin to serve God. Is there a legitimate spiritual

birth if there is no conviction by the Holy Spirit, genuine grief over sin, or surrender to Christ's Lordship?

John said,

"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:" (John 1:12)

First of all, he is speaking specifically of the Jews, who, as a nation of God's people, rejected Christ as the Messiah sent by God. Only those who received Him had the potential to become the sons of God. Note that it does not say, "As many as received Him were the sons of God." Jesus taught us that, in order to receive the benefit from the ministry of any prophet, you first had to receive the prophet. (Matthew 10:41) Unless you acknowledge in your heart that Jesus is both Lord and Christ, your repentance will mean nothing. Secondly, to receive Christ as Lord must be more than just an act of the mind or will, because we can be born again only as God works in our spirit, and the mind and will are part of the soul. To receive Jesus Christ as Lord, you must genuinely repent from sin and turn to God. You cannot continue to "be your own person" and also become the "new creation" God wants you to be.

When you are leading an individual or group to Jesus Christ, look for and encourage genuine repentance. Is God dealing with them about their sin, and do they want to be free? The problem with most people is that we often want to be set free from the consequences of sin, but not free from sin. Our nation is working desperately for a medical cure for the disease of AIDS, and we are not crying out against the promiscuous immorality that is spreading it. We are reacting nationally

to the symptom, and refusing to address the cause. It was much the same with the Jews in Jesus' day. The Jews wanted a messiah who would set them free from Rome; but, Jesus came to set them free from sin. They wanted Him to conquer Caesar, but He came to conquer Satan.

Religion is a function of the soul -- mind, will, and emotion -- but genuine Christianity is a relationship with God through the spirit -- *"...and they that worship him must worship (him) in spirit and in truth."* (John 4:24)

Many people are led to accept Jesus emotionally or intellectually; but, that is not saving faith. It can produce good feelings about God, or stimulate hope; but, that is not saving faith. One approach to evangelism is to teach young people "just to accept Jesus," and afterward, when the converts have fears, doubts, and confusion in their lives, reassure them repeatedly that they are saved. But the Apostle Paul said,

"Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)

As a result of true repentance and faith, we will have peace if we have really been born again and have been genuinely justified by a supernatural work of God's grace. We will have a "witness of the Spirit" that we are the sons of God. When a "convert" does not have that peace or witness, we should check his foundation, rather than merely try to "treat the symptoms" and convince him he is saved. Was there repentance? Was there a genuine response of faith to God in the spirit? Was there a supernatural new birth? **There are numerous accounts in**

scripture of people who thought they were in right relationship with God; but, they were not. People who were right with God always knew it; and their works were a testimony to their profession of faith. (James 2:18)

If there is doubt, fear, and rebellion in our converts, perhaps we should not be too quick to minister assurance of their salvation before we check the foundation. The epistle to the Hebrews lists six "foundation stones" in chapter six. They are:

- Repentance from dead works;
- Faith toward God;
- Baptisms;
- Laying on of hands;
- Resurrection from the dead;
- Eternal judgment.

The Hebrew Christians were repeating these basics; and they were encouraged to "go on unto maturity" instead of getting saved repeatedly. Today, many people, who do not have a biblical foundation in their lives, are trying to go on to maturity.

Genuine faith will produce obedience and works. When we lead people to genuine faith in Christ, they will not just use God for "fire insurance;" they will be changed. They not only accept Christ as their Savior, but also as their Lord -- the owner, the one who has the right to make the final decisions. As we *"confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved"* (Romans 9:9) (brought to wholeness, healed, made right). The more we affirm and acknowledge His authority in our lives, the more we will walk in

victory. Sin is the result of our self-centered motivations, as we focus too much on the temporal aspects of life and neglect the spiritual. Sin is always an "I" problem. **Faith is a focus on God and His purposes.**

Genuine salvation involves a spiritual birth by the Spirit of God. There is always conviction for sin and a drawing by the Holy Ghost. Faith stirs in our hearts, and draws us to trust God with our lives, our goals, our dreams, and even our money. We make a covenant with God and seal it with obedience in water baptism. If we are genuinely born again, we would naturally have a desire to hear His Word and love His people. *"Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."* (1 John 4:7) Religion causes people to conform to expectations. True Christianity is a supernatural **transformation**, not a reformation or a conformation. If our lives and lifestyles are unchanged, then we should examine ourselves, whether we are in the faith. (2 Corinthians 13:5)

What is our **Great Commission**?

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...." (Matthew 28:19-20)

What are the actions commanded? **"Go.... teach.... baptize.... teach."** Certainly there is a place for evangelism. Win souls, and lead them to seal that covenant in submission to God in water baptism. Then *"teach them to do what I have commanded you."* Instruct them. Build their character. Teach them to live godly lives in an ungodly world. As we nurture and train young people, they will naturally become positive witnesses to the goodness of God. People who are genuinely saved and living for God in harmony with one another will be the world's most powerful witness that the Bible message is true.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:35)

Section 4

Sensational Sunday School Sessions

The Importance of Scheduling Your Class

Please read this section very carefully! If you are going to be a successful teacher and enjoy an efficient class, it will be necessary for you to schedule the activity of the class.

If you are given an hour to teach the class, take advantage of every single moment. A suggested time schedule follows on the next page. In developing this schedule, both the age and attention span of your students were taken into account. If you will discipline yourself to follow the schedule, you will be able to accomplish all the goals for the class session; keep your students' attention; and minister effectively to all in the class.

There are many advantages to scheduling your class:

1. It makes it easier for you to prepare for the class.
2. It helps you cover much more information in the allotted time.
3. It keeps the class moving and maintains the interest of the students.
4. It allows the leader of the class to involve others in helping with the class. This is one of the greatest advantages of having a schedule. When used effectively, it will help build a strong ministry team. It is also

an excellent way to train and involve new workers. To many people, the responsibility for teaching for an entire hour in Sunday School is overwhelming and intimidating. However, helping with a 5-minute segment of the class is much more appealing. Gradually involve new workers in the class. Invite them to lead the song service, or help with the memory verse, or receive the offering. Encourage them to get acquainted with the students and learn how the class operates by observing the class for a week or two before they actually minister. Then, as their familiarity and confidence builds, assign new or expanded responsibilities to them. Before you know it, you will have trained another worker for the School of the Bible!

5. A well-scheduled class will minimize discipline problems.
6. Keeping a schedule will protect the teacher from spending too much time in one area of class activity.

It is very important to acquaint yourself with all of the suggestions given in this section. Become familiar with each segment of the class and how it is to operate. In so doing, you will become the very best teacher you can be!

Sixth Grade Sunday School Class Schedule

- 8:35 a.m. Team Prayer, Greet Students, Fellowship.
- 9:05 a.m. Song Service.
- 9:16 a.m. Offering.
- Announcements, Birthdays, Promotions.
- 9:22 a.m. Catechism in Doctrine.
- 9:32 a.m. Life-related Story, Object Lesson or Project.
- 9:42 a.m. Bible Lesson.
- 9:55 a.m. Prayer and Closing.
- 10:00 a.m. Dismiss to General Service.

Preparation for Class

1. Pray for the class each day during the week as you **plan early** for your part of the class presentation.
2. On Saturday night, go to bed early to get **rested** and refreshed. Be prepared to give your very best to the Lord and to your class.
3. Arrive in the classroom **30 minutes** before the class is scheduled to begin.
4. **Pray** with your co-workers. Be especially aware of any specific needs or problems which may need ministry before the students begin to arrive. Be honest with one another. If you are "not with it;" or, if you are going through a personal struggle which will affect your ministry, ask others to pray for you.
5. **Share** together concerning the plans of each member of the team for the day. Make sure your themes and songs flow together.
6. Review the **memory verse** together. Every adult on the team should memorize the scripture verse before the class begins.
7. **Greet** the students as they arrive, and have some kind of activity or craft prepared to occupy their time while they are waiting. You may want to let them work on the activity sheet for the lessons. Gently motivate them to come early by making it a rewarding time.
8. Be **sensitive** to any child who arrives with a heavy heart. Pay attention to special problems and to things you might overhear.
9. If you see a child who is having difficulty settling down, do not feel aggravated that he might disrupt your presentation. Remember that a disruptive child usually indicates a need for special attention and ministry. He is not a fleshly interruption to your nice program. **He is the primary reason you are there.** The greatest ministry is that which can meet the greatest needs and heal the greatest hurts.
10. Prepare the room; prepare your hearts; prepare the team; and then **start on time.**

Singing with Joy

Goal: To create an atmosphere of joy and to prepare young hearts to receive the Word of God.

Focus: Lively, active songs.

Time Limit: 8 Minutes.

1. We sing to develop a focus on the Lord. Make sure your songs have a valid biblical message, as well as a happy tune and rhythm.
2. Remember to use songs the students enjoy, rather than songs that best relate to you. Slow, quiet songs should be rare for young classes.
3. Always go through the actions with them. Lead with joy and enthusiasm. Get the students involved. Have them move around with marching, jumping, and other actions.
4. Coordinate the songs with the lesson each week. You are working as a team in order to communicate a central truth with songs, Bible study, stories, and prayer. Use different songs each week.
5. See that the musician gets a list of all the songs for the day and knows the keys and chord progressions ahead of time. Make sure the musician knows the songs you want to sing.
6. If you have times when you have no musician available, soundtracks for a variety of song selections can be made and held in reserve.
7. To teach new songs, sing the song over several times for the class, and reinforce the message with a few words of introduction or a related scripture reference. It also helps to have related actions, or even a few pictures for a visual aid.
8. Generally, it is best to begin with lively, happy songs, and reserve any devotional, slow song for the end. It may also be appropriate to use a song to reinforce or conclude another segment of the class. Be sure the song is directly related to the lesson, and not just something to "fill in" or kill time.

Offering and Prayer

Time Limit: 7 Minutes.

The Offering Time.

1. It is important that young people learn the joy and importance of giving. Make the offering a joyful time in the class. Teach them to rejoice in giving to the Lord's work.
2. Set the **example**. Always contribute something to the offering yourself.
3. Let different students have the privilege of collecting the offering.
4. If you are receiving an offering for a missionary, talk about the work the missionary is doing for the Lord; and let the children share in the excitement of the ministry.
5. Occasionally, it is acceptable to let the boys compete against the girls, in raising money for missions.
6. Try to think of a way to receive the offering which will add variety and relate to the mission or to the lesson.
 - a. Example: If the offering is for Mexico, try to get a piñata or a sombrero to hold the offering.
 - b. If the lesson is on Joash, try to get some kind of chest to use to hold the offering.

Prayer Time.

1. Make prayer time meaningful by first giving an opportunity for reports and praise concerning answered prayer.
2. When prayer requests relate to students, workers, or their immediate families, make sure someone writes down the requests and asks each student during the week concerning the need they mentioned.
3. If there are several prayer requests, lead the prayer yourself. Do not embarrass a student who might forget one of the needs.

4. If you have a small class, have each student, at different times, pray a short prayer. Each student can include a prayer of thanksgiving, as well as a petition that is on his or her heart. Note any major need that is indicated, such as "God, help my parents to stay together;" and bring it to the attention of someone qualified to minister to that need.
5. Try to include each student's name in your prayer in some way. Ideally, you should know something about each of them, so that you can pray for them and not embarrass them.
 - a. Pray, "Lord, we pray that you will heal Jason's grandmother..."
 - b. Do not pray, "Lord, help Angela to conquer her mean temper;" or, "God, help Lisa with her bed-wetting." Pray that God will help Angela and Lisa with their problems.
6. Teach the children to talk to God in prayer. Let them know that God answers prayer. Whenever possible, show them the results of prayer.
7. Do not recite prayers. Teach the Lord's prayer to the children as a model of a good prayer.

Teaching with Purpose

Goal: To communicate the Word of God with skill and excitement.
Focus: One major biblical principle concerning doctrine or Christian character.
Time Limit: 8 Minutes.

Key Principles of Good Teaching.

1. Always know the story well, and tell it in your own words. Never read a Bible lesson to your students.
2. Memorize key names, numbers, and facts.
3. Use some kind of visual aid, such as flannelgraph, overhead, large drawings, charts, puppets, filmstrip, costume, drama, or video.
4. Relate to the students personally by asking them about facts they should know. Never say, "Who knows the answer to..." Instead, say, "Billy, who was the..." Make it a goal to use as many of their names as possible during the lesson. Remember that names are very important. Calling on specific students will:
 - a. Draw them into the lesson by anticipating that a question may be directed at them.
 - b. Avoid the answers being monopolized by a few outgoing students.
 - c. Draw out the shy member of the class, and make him feel that he is a part of it.
 - d. Make each student feel special.
 - e. Help you learn their names.
5. As you tell the Bible story, watch the students. Look them in the eye and be sensitive to their response. The temptation will be to preach to them, or to be more concerned about your lesson and delivery than about the people you are teaching. There is a difference between preaching and teaching. A good teacher will make each member of the class feel a part of the lesson presentation.

6. Always keep in mind that, behind every name and set of facts in the Bible, there is a lesson in life and character. Focus on the character strengths and weaknesses that resulted in the conflict or rewards, and show that God is always just and consistent as our judge and heavenly Father.
7. Never embarrass a student. If you are aware that there is only one student who is not born again, why have an "altar call?" Instead, why not purpose to visit the child and perhaps his family, and lead him to the Lord at home; or, talk to him at another time? Never teach a group something that applies only to one if you can minister to that person alone.
8. To receive the respect of those you teach, show respect for them as individuals. Show appreciation for their attendance and cooperation, and let them know that you see them as very special people. Also, encourage them to honor their parents and their pastor at all times.

Story-telling to Touch Hearts

- Goal:** To reinforce the central theme of the lesson with a related story.
- Focus:** A true or true-to-life story that will help create a focus on God and on godly heroes.
- Time Limit:** 8 Minutes.

Key Principles of Good Story-Telling.

1. Always know the story well, and tell it in your own words.
2. Memorize key names, numbers, and facts.
3. Whenever possible, use some kind of visual aid, such as flannelgraph, overhead, large drawings, charts, puppets, filmstrip, costume, drama, or video.
4. Instead of relying on fiction, use stories that are true. Use biographies of great Christians to illustrate the lesson and stimulate interest in godly heroes.
5. Research the geographic and cultural setting of the story. Paint a picture with words which will keep the students interested and stimulate their imaginations.
6. Be animated and expressive in telling the story. You may even want to enlist a teaching team member to help you act out a part of it; or, ask one or two of the students to help.
7. Make sure that your students can draw a definite biblical conclusion from the story you are telling.

Scripture Memorization

Goal: "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." (Psalms 119:11)

Focus: Memorize key verses of scripture in order to implant the message in the hearts of students.

Time Limit: 8 Minutes.

Key Principles of Scripture Memorization.

1. Many students have a far greater capacity for memorization than we have recognized in the past. Do not make it too easy, or it will not be a challenge to them.
2. It is highly recommended that you try to motivate the parents to memorize the passages at home along with the children. This will greatly increase the children's capacity to retain scripture, and it could be a great encouragement to families in their home devotions.
3. One tool in memorization is to focus on and understand the concept communicated by the verse. It is easier to memorize by visualizing the verse, rather than by trying to recite a group of words by rote.
4. Talk through the verse; explain the meaning of each major word; and review the overall meaning of the verse.
5. Whenever possible, use visual aids to reinforce the idea in their minds.
6. Repeat the verse often. Then, say it at least in one other way, in your own words. Look up the reference in several other translations, and read them to amplify the meaning.
7. Have the students repeat the verse several times as a group. You may also want to call on a few individuals to recite it.
8. Quiz them on the concepts and key words.
9. Have them meditate a few moments on the verse; that is, to visualize the verse being applied to their own lives and situations.

10. Ask for testimonies that might relate to the principle idea in the verse.

Catechism in Doctrine

- Goal:** To build a foundation of wisdom and understanding of the Word of God, *"line upon line, precept upon precept."*
- Focus:** A clear and concise answer to a basic question on Scriptural truth.
- Time Limit:** 8 Minutes.
- Catechism:** One of the Greek words in the Bible for "teach " is *"katechéo,"* which means "to sound down into the ear; to indoctrinate." Our word "catechism" means "to teach systematically with questions and answers."

Key Principles of Youth Catechism.

1. Familiarize yourself with the list of catechism questions included in this manual for this specific grade level. The objective is to systematically communicate a balanced perspective on the essential truths of God's Word, according to the vision of the pastor and the leadership of your local church.
2. It is important that we all "speak the same thing." Probably, all of us believe in the basics, as expressed in the "Apostle's Creed;" but, we will have some different ideas on less critical issues, especially if we have come from different Christian backgrounds. **Do not deliberately teach something which you know will be contradicted in the pulpit.** Even if you feel you are more accurate in your eschatology or hermeneutics, do not create confusion. Be a servant, and let the children hear a harmonious sound from their different authorities.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and {that} there be no divisions among you; but {that} ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Corinthians 1:10)

3. Read the question aloud carefully and deliberately. You may want to read it again , or repeat the thought several times during the discussion. You may also wish to ask for a volunteer to explain his answer; but, be careful not to embarrass him or ignore his erroneous concepts, and thus give tacit approval. Usually, he will be "partly right," or "close."

4. Do your homework. Look up scripture references ahead of time in several translations, and know how to answer misinformed students. This will be more critical as you deal with older classes, especially if they have come from different backgrounds. Try to anticipate the areas where questions will be the most likely to arise in their minds, and explain them with scripture in your presentation.
5. If you have questions on a doctrinal topic that you are to present, contact one of the pastors well in advance of the class. A phone consultation will usually be adequate to clarify the position of your local church and give added insights on the topic.
6. Review related questions and answers from previous weeks in order to refresh the students' memories and help build a solid base in their spiritual foundation of truth.
7. Try to think of some kind of visual aid to strengthen their memories. For reading students, at least write the question on a chalkboard or poster, and then add a brief summary of the answer.
8. Each Administrator will be encouraged to review the concepts periodically with the class, or with individual students in order to reinforce the importance of learning basic truths. At the end of the class year, a quiz will be given to the students on the questions assigned to the teaching team for the year.

Section 5

Life-related Stories

Using Life-related Stories

These stories are to be used to supplement the lessons in the Complete School of the Bible Manual. Since neither series has to be used every week, they can be alternated with the catechism lessons. They will add color and interest to the lessons and should have a greater impact on the students than fabricated stories.

This series is not a compilation of the "best," or "greatest" in Christian history. Many of the accounts are from the lives of "everyday" people, who may not have achieved anything spectacular in life, but who did have a particular experience which illustrated an important lesson. Many people are included, because they happen to be known by the writer. Other stories come from the well-documented biographies of famous people.

We want to promote Christian heroes. All of us tend to emulate the people we focus on, and the secular world is busy promoting the popularity and success of many vain, shallow people, whose lives bear little resemblance to Jesus-Christ. When we do speak of ungodly people, we want to put them into the proper context. We not only want to know their public image and success, but also to be aware of their personal disasters and the moral failures which led to their wrong philosophies and choices.

Some of the stories come from the lives of people who were not Christians at all. As we read the Bible, we see a very comprehensive mix of people, ranging

from a sanctified saint to a surly scoundrel. We learn wisdom from both the heroes and the villains of history. We can profit by understanding both winners and losers. The key is the word *understanding*.

We have avoided trying to create another "Who's Who" in Christianity, because the topic is so subjective.

This is a collection of teaching illustrations from the lives of people. Some of them are notable, great leaders, and some are quite ordinary. The most lauded and visible people are not necessarily the most fruitful. When we get to heaven, all of us will probably be surprised to see that the greatest rewards and highest honors go to faithful "nobodies," while the rich and famous of today may have lesser positions. We seek to glean illustrations from the lives of a variety of people. We want to understand the factors that have resulted in a joyful, fruitful life for others, so that we might apply those same principles in our lives.

This collection should also serve as a model for the teacher. Each teacher can glean some stories from his own experiences, or from the experiences of people he knows. Those Christians who are in the habit of witnessing to the lost and reaching out to people will tend to have many more good stories than anyone else. Use stories you know and try to focus on real people and true stories. This takes more research and effort than fictional stories, but it is far more effective.

The Story of Augustine

Augustine was born in the year 354 in North Africa, in an area that is now Tunisia. During that time, the church was becoming more and more carnal, and the Dark Ages were about to begin. His father was a pagan (non-Christian); but his mother, Monica, was a devoted Christian. Augustine had a sharp mind, and was a brilliant student. He studied the great philosophies of the day, and became well-educated. He moved to Carthage, where he studied to be a teacher and speaker. There, away from his mother's godly influence, he indulged himself in foolish and wicked living. Even though he was brilliant intellectually, he foolishly sought pleasure and wasted much of the strength of his youth. But his mother continued to pray; and God dealt with him in quiet ways. He began his own school, where he did a superb job of teaching. But, somehow the students kept forgetting to pay their tuition. Often, on the day he was to be paid, students would leave the school. Because of Monica's prayers back home in Africa, God would not let poor Augustine prosper in his wickedness.

When he was almost 30 years old, Augustine moved to Rome, where there were many good speakers. He joined a religious cult that focused on heathen philosophies, with a little Bible thrown in to make it seem legitimate. However, he occasionally went to hear a local bishop named Ambrose, because he admired the man's outstanding preaching ability. The preaching of Ambrose and the prayers of Monica were quietly moving his heart toward God.

One summer day, after his mother had visited him, he was sitting in his garden. He heard a soft voice saying, "Take up and

read." He had a scroll of Paul's letter to the Romans, so he opened it and read, "*Let us walk honestly...not in rioting and drunkenness...But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh....*" (Romans 13:13-14) The Word of God touched his spirit; and at the age of 33, Augustine repented of his many sins, and gave his heart without reservation to the Lord.

Augustine began immediately to serve God zealously. He began an intense prayer life, and now used his oratory skills in defense of the gospel. He went back to North Africa, where he settled in the small town of Hippo and became a priest. When the old bishop there died, he took on the task, and served there the rest of his long life. He wrote many great books, and 394 of his sermons are still preserved to this day. He is still regarded as a master thinker and preacher; and he has been a major influence on all succeeding generations of preachers. The great English preacher, C. H. Spurgeon, said that Augustine's sermons are a "quarry from which nearly every preacher of note has dug."

Augustine's mother died before he became famous; but she died knowing that her many prayers were answered and that he was serving God. Later, his old heathen father gave his heart to the Lord before he died. Augustine himself lived to be 76 years old. His 43 years of serving God were filled with joy and diligent work; and the little town of Hippo became renowned as a center for Christian wisdom, because of his influence. He is still regarded as one of the greatest minds the world has ever known.

The Story of Robert Blumm

Robert Blumm has come a long way. Born in New York City, at an early age he became a member of one of the gangs which roamed the streets at night. They were apparently seeking vengeance against the society they hated. At the age of 13, Robert began taking drugs. By the time he was 16, he had become an addict. No one seemed to care for him; and the God he only faintly knew about seemed very remote.

Dropping out of school, he joined the army, vaguely hoping to find some meaning for life. He was assigned to combat duty in Vietnam in 1966. There, fortunately, he became acquainted with two young Christian soldiers, who led him to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ in May of 1967. That same night he experienced a further demonstration of the power of the gospel. He was instantly delivered from his life-controlling drug addiction by the Holy Spirit's anointing.

Bob Blumm learned that God had additional blessings for him in the experience known as the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Three months after his conversion he was baptized in the Spirit; and he spoke with other tongues as the Spirit gave him utterance. He said, "Now I have a language to speak to God with, and the added blessing of power to preach the message of Christ crucified, risen, and coming again." (Of course, God understands English, too.)

Blumm often slipped away when off duty to find a secret place to pray. One night, after treating mass casualties, he left the surgical hospital to take his heavy burden to the Lord. As he felt the presence of the Holy Spirit around him, he began praying fervently in an unknown tongue.

After praying for some time, Bob felt the burden lift. At the same time, he sensed the presence of someone behind him. Looking around, he saw two Vietnamese civilian workers. For two months, they had observed him as he prayed from time to time. They told him that he had just prayed in the Vietnamese language; and through him, the Holy Spirit had addressed them by their names, Moui and Tinh. The Spirit had called them to repent of their sins and receive God's gift of salvation. He had also spoken to them about this supernatural baptism, with speaking in tongues.

Both of the Vietnamese men received Christ as their Savior that night. Robert Blumm is now an Assemblies of God minister, and a youth director in New York.

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The Story of David Brainerd

David Brainerd was known as a man of prayer. He was a missionary to the American Indians, during the early days of the nation.

David was born in 1718. His parents were of godly Puritan stock; but sadly, both of them died when he was young. From his youth, he was inclined to be sober and melancholy. He came to realize his sin at the age of 7 or 8. He was terrified at the thought of death; but he turned to a focus on works, rather than faith. He struggled with thoughts of sin, guilt, and of hell.

When David was a teenager, he spent long hours in intense prayer, seeking for the assurance of God's forgiveness. After seeking God with his whole heart and confessing his sins with deep sorrow, the light of God finally broke through the gloom in his heart, and he was gloriously saved. He later wrote, "Having been endeavoring to pray, then, as I was walking in a dark, thick grove, unspeakable glory seemed to open to the view and apprehension of God....My soul rejoiced with joy unspeakable to see such a God...."

David attended Yale College, in order to study for the ministry. In those early days in America, Yale and all the other colleges were Bible colleges. One day, after a professor gave a particularly dull sermon, David remarked to a friend that the man "had about as much grace as this chair." Someone overheard him, and he was expelled from college for the remark. This was very discouraging to him; but he continued to seek God with his whole heart.

David Brainerd was later accepted by the Scotch Missionary Society as a missionary to the American Indians. For several years, he braved great dangers and hardships in preaching to the Indians. Most Indian tribes were hostile to white men, both because of the unethical way they had been treated by the intruders, and because their religion was filled with superstition and occult practices (witchcraft). Nevertheless, this frail young man who came to them unarmed was accepted and then loved by the Indians, because he demonstrated so much love for them. Though many hardships greatly weakened his failing health, David was a young man given to intense prayer. It was normal for him to go into the woods and pray all night. He was once observed in the morning praying outdoors, with a circle around his body where the snow had melted. The ground was also spotted with blood he had coughed up.

David was in love with the daughter of his friend, Pastor Jonathan Edwards, in Northampton, Massachusetts. At the age of 29, he was told that he was dying. This pleased him, for he longed to be with Christ, Whom he loved more than life. He was concerned with the ministry, especially for the school he had founded for the Indians; but he was comforted by the fact that his brother John would go in his place to carry on the work. For nineteen weeks, Jerusha Edwards lovingly cared for David. But the years of hardship and exposure were too much for his weak body. He told her, "Dear Jerusha, I am willing to part with you....We shall spend a happy eternity together." He died -- young, but very ready to face the Jesus he had served faithfully.

The Story of John Bunyan

John Bunyan was born in England in 1628 to poor, but good parents. Both Thomas Bunyan and his son, John were tinkers by trade. A tinker was a craftsman who repaired pots and pans. As a youth, John was a pleasure-seeker. In the evenings, the young people of the village would gather to dance, play games, and create mischief, and John was a ringleader of the group. He married while still a teenager; but his first wife died. His second wife was a Christian, and she exerted a strong godly influence on his life. The more she prayed, the more God dealt with John about his selfish ways.

John loved to play sporting games, especially on Sunday. This increasingly became a struggle, especially when the preacher would speak against violating the Lord's day. For years, John Bunyan struggled with the gospel. He would try to be righteous, but he was usually overcome with guilt and fears. He was advised to study the Bible. He focused on the Ten Commandments, and sought diligently to keep them. He would be overcome with guilt when he broke one.

One day, John overheard four old Christian women talking about the things of God. They spoke with joy about their salvation and their victorious lives. Even though they were poor, John saw that they possessed the greatest treasure in the world; and he longed to have it, too. He studied the Bible faithfully, and prayed for God's mercy on his tormented soul. For two years, he could not even cry, though he wanted to repent. Finally, the light of God broke through his spirit when he read, *"...having made peace through the blood of His cross,...."* (Colossians 1:20) He received Christ as his Savior; and he

gained peace. Still, for some time, John was beset by doubts and the temptation to renounce Christ. He still tried to be righteous by works of the law. Finally, while walking in a field, the Lord spoke to him, and said, "Thy righteousness is in heaven." His faith responded; and he was baptized a Christian, never to be a doubter again.

John later began to preach on occasion, and many people were saved. He eventually became the pastor of the small church he attended with his wife and five small children. But political strife was brewing. King Charles, out of fear that people would rise up against his rule, banned all "irregular assembly." Churches were to read only the liturgies of the Church of England, and were not to preach the gospel. John Bunyan continued to preach to his little flock; and he was arrested and imprisoned for twelve years. Many preachers died under the persecution; but John was strong, and survived, ministering to all those he could. While there, he wrote three books, including "Pilgrim's Progress" -- which became the most translated and read book in history, next to the Bible. Because of his suffering for the sake of the gospel, John Bunyan's life touched millions with this inspiring analogy of the Christian's quest for heaven. He was pardoned in 1652; but he was again jailed for preaching the Word in 1675. He was released after six months, although the threat of persecution never lifted from his life. John Bunyan died in 1688, at the age of sixty. He was not wealthy or "important" by the world's standards; but he was rich in faith, and great in heaven's view.

The Story of William Carey

William Carey is called the "Father of modern missions." He was born in England in 1761. His father was a weaver, who later became a teacher. As a boy, William had a quick mind, and loved to read and learn. He especially loved to learn about science, history, and travel. He delighted in spending time in the forest, collecting botanical samples. But his frail health dictated that he find indoor work; and so, he learned the craft of shoemaking.

When he was 18, he was dramatically saved. He was zealous for God, and felt strongly the call of God to preach. His father, who was a strict church man, was pleased, although William refused to involve himself with the dead ceremonies of the Church of England. He chose to relate to the Methodists, who preached salvation by grace through faith. His mother even attended meetings in which he preached.

Young William pastored a small church; but he was paid so little that he had to make shoes and take a side job teaching. Because his heart burned with a passion for lost souls, he did not mind. He was troubled by a burden for the lost in foreign lands. In 1789, he started a society for the promotion of missions; and in 1793, he personally sailed with his wife, three children, and another family to India.

After an arduous 5-month voyage, they landed in Calcutta, India. The following year, Mr. Carey and Mr. Thomas were offered the position of managing an indigo factory. They immediately wrote to their society in England, informing them that they no longer needed any missionary support. Carey rapidly learned the

Bengalee language; and he began to preach to the people in their native tongue. He also started a school, and began translating the Bible for the people. During that time of labor, his little son, Peter died of a fever. Mr. Carey also took ill for five months.

The first Indian convert was named Krishnu Pal. It was difficult for Hindus to become Christians, because their families would usually persecute them, and often kill them. But when they realized that Jesus died for them, they saw that no price was too great to pay, compared to the joy of heaven and the Christian life.

As Mr. Carey progressed in his writings and translations, he was offered a teaching job for the government. It developed into a professorship with a large salary, almost all of which he gave to the work of the gospel. He was utterly unselfish; and he gave with kindness, although his wife was insane for years. She constantly ranted and complained, but he always treated her with tenderness. She died in 1807. Later, he married Miss Charlotte Rumohr, who was the joy of his life, until her death in 1820.

Professor Carey translated the Bible into seven languages, having learned to speak 20 languages. He wrote many books in many different tongues; and he taught the nation of India many things about agriculture and science, as well as the gospel. By 1817, he had founded 45 schools, a college, a hospital, and a newspaper. From his secular work in India, he gave over \$230,000 -- which was a large sum, in those days. William Carey worked hard all of his long life, and had many other accomplishments. But perhaps his most satisfying legacy was the

fact that all of his four sons became strong, self-sacrificing Christians. Three of them became full-time missionaries.

It was William Carey who said, "Expect great things. Attempt great things, and

always remember that we are not great men of God, but men of a great God." This is the picture of a great and happy man.

The Story of B. H. Carroll

B. H. Carroll was born in 1843 in Mississippi, the seventh child of Ben and Mary Carroll. In 1858, the family moved to Texas, where he spent most of his life. Young Ben was a big, strong boy. He grew to be six feet four inches tall. He was also blessed with a brilliant mind. Ben was not able to obtain much formal education, but he read a lot on his own. In fact, he was a speed-reader, with a tremendous memory. He could quote many passages from books he had read years earlier, and could even cite the page numbers.

When we think of an intelligent scholar, we do not usually envision such a big, robust man; but B. H. Carroll was blessed both physically and mentally, far above others. He exercised his body and his active mind, and kept them both strong. Seeking excitement, he joined the Texas Rangers in 1861; and then he joined the army, in order to fight in the Civil War. He loved the thrill of fighting; and he was a skilled and courageous soldier. After being seriously wounded in a battle in Louisiana, he was sent home to Texas.

As a young man, B. H. Carroll was not a Christian. He had read many books on religion and philosophy; but he did not believe the gospel. He had read the Bible several times through, and he could debate brilliantly against Christians who were less familiar with their Bible than he

was. He even wrote a book in opposition to the Christian faith.

One day, a friend persuaded him to attend a Christian camp-meeting, where the preacher challenged unbelievers to give Jesus a fair try. He went forward, to the amazement of his friends, saying that he was not converting. He was going to give Jesus a chance. On the way home, he got down on his knees and prayed, wrestling with the claims of the gospel -- and with the conviction of the Holy Spirit that gripped his heart. Jesus won; and B. H. Carroll surrendered his life to His service. He became a devoted follower of Christ.

His conversion was in 1865. The following year, Carroll began preaching; and soon he was named pastor of the First Baptist Church in Waco, Texas, where he served for 28 years. He eventually founded Southwestern Baptist Seminary, and was its first president. As a result of his years of fruitful and exciting ministry, B. H. Carroll wrote An Interpretation of the English Bible, which was originally published in thirteen volumes. It included many sermons from his years in the pastorate, and other writings by this renowned scholar. He is still respected today as one of the great Bible scholars of all time. He died in 1914.

The Story of the Chicken Church

Euley Hudson was a car salesman from Georgia, who loved to lead people to Jesus. In fact, he became so involved in evangelism that he eventually went soul winning full time. He has traveled all over the world, teaching many believers the art of one-on-one evangelism.

In the earlier days of his ministry, he was asked to take the pastoral role in a small southern Church of God church. The congregation had been in existence for 28 years. When the church started, someone suggested a chicken dinner to raise money for the building project. There were several excellent cooks in the group; and the dinner was a great success. In fact, it was so successful that the practice continued every Friday night for 28 years.

When Pastor Hudson arrived, he was blessed by the warm and friendly people. They fixed a delightful dinner for the new pastor and his family, and then informed him of their favorite fund raiser. Businessmen all over town testified that the best meal to be found was the Friday night special at the "Chicken Church." The young pastor was heartbroken to learn that the church was not known for prayer, helping the needy, or soul-winning. It was known only for its chicken.

The people insisted that the dinners were absolutely necessary for the work of the church to continue. After all, the total giving in tithes amounted to an average of only \$584 per month. There were only 37 members of the church -- and 30 of them were women. Without the dinners, the people felt that this nice little Pentecostal church would fold.

But, for the first time, they had a pastor who refused to be a "chicken" pastor. He talked to the ladies about how much time and effort went into their chicken work each week; and he challenged them to spend a third of that time on their knees. "I want you to go from wishbones to prayer bones." He taught them about evangelizing the lost, and about intercessory prayer. He began to challenge them to follow his lifestyle, which involved witnessing to the lost everywhere he went. Very often, he would go to a restaurant and begin to talk to the waitress about her soul. Sometimes patrons would be surprised to see their waitress at this other table, on her knees, asking Jesus to come into her heart.

Pastor Hudson had a prayer meeting with the women, in which he gave them some basic instruction on witnessing. He sent them out by twos. Two hours later, the first pair pulled up the parsonage, their car screeching to a halt. They ran out of the car, shouting, "It works, it works!" "What works?" he asked. "The woman got saved. We got off our wishbones and on our prayer bones, and the woman we witnessed to got saved!" That was the beginning of a revival. Within 30 months, 114 souls were won to the Lord by personal evangelism, and 113 were added to the church. Seventy of these were men. The Sunday School attendance went from an average of 62 to 260 per week. The church that had been such a threat to the area chickens was now a threat to the devil. It all happened, because one pastor decided that a church should be empowered by prayer and do the work of soul-winning.

The Story of William Cowper

William Cowper was born in England in 1731. He was an extremely quiet and gentle boy. His dear mother died when he was only six years old, and he was overwhelmed by grief. At school, a fifteen year old bully decided to pick on him. The larger boy noticed his sad countenance, and he took sadistic pleasure in inflicting pain and fear upon him. Poor William lived in dread of his cruel tormentor; and these early sorrows affected him throughout his life.

William eventually became a law student, but his fearfulness continued to hinder him in life. When he finished his studies, he was scheduled to go before the bar to be examined for his expertise as a lawyer. The thought of this great evaluation filled him with such dread that he could think only of suicide as a way to avoid the moment. One evening, the sad 32-year-old William went to an apothecary's shop and bought a vial of poison. He walked around a field, looking for an isolated spot to end his miserable life.

He then hired a coach to take him to the wharf, where he determined to throw himself into the cold waters of the sea. But the tide was low, and a porter was there. Intimidated by his presence, William went on home.

Struggling with conviction, and now thinking himself a murderer for attempting to end it all, William again listened to the condemning voice of the devil. Since he was not saved, he had no spiritual defense against the evil spirits who sought to drive him to death and destruction. Unable to bear the responsibility for his actions, William

Cowper had a mental breakdown. In the terms used in those days, William went mad. He spent five lonely months in an insane asylum.

After a visit from his brother, a ray of hope came into his heart. He picked up a Bible and began to read. He found Romans 3:25, which said of Christ, "*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.*" In a moment, he believed and received the gospel. His mind was now filled with gratitude and unspeakable joy. William, for the first time in his life, had joy and hope.

William Cowper wrote some of the hymns we sing today. He was the composer who wrote the great words:

There is a fountain filled with blood,

Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;

And sinners plunged beneath that flood

Lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see

That fountain in his day.

And there may I, though vile as he

wash all my sins away.

*Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Be saved to sin no more.*

*When this poor lisping, stammering
tongue
Lies silent in the grave,
Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing thy power to save.*

Deliverance in Brooklyn

All Americans know that the American colonies declared independence from the British Empire in 1776; but today, most do not know that the war effort was motivated by Christian leaders, covered by prayer, and blessed by frequent supernatural acts of assistance by the Holy Spirit.

In August, 1776, shortly after the Declaration of Independence, the British decided to take control of the Hudson River by taking the town of Brooklyn on the western end of Long Island. The Americans had only 8,000 troops there, and half of them were untrained farmers. The British, under General Howe, had 32,000 professional soldiers on nearby Stanton Island, including 8,000 Hessians (German mercenaries).

On August 22, 15,000 British troops landed on the shore of Brooklyn, and were reinforced three days later by 5,000 Hessians. When they attacked the Americans, the defenders fought valiantly; but most of the patriot's lines fell under the overwhelming odds. When fresh enemy troops poured in, General Washington, who was watching from across the river with his generals, cried out to God, saying, "Good God, what brave fellows I must this day lose!"

The Americans grimly waited for the final British assault that would surely crush the group on the island; but, it did not come. Howe, for some unknown reason, did not take advantage of his opportunity, but waited until later to make his final move to crush the resistance. It seems that God had blinded the mind of a noted military genius, for this was a glaring mistake.

The next morning, there was again no final attack, although the Americans were surrounded by great odds, and had their backs to the mile-wide Hudson river which they could not be crossed without boats. That afternoon, a cold, pelting rain fell. It was miserable for the Americans, but it kept the British from attacking them; and the wind was keeping the British warships from entering the East River.

Washington quickly announced his plan to his officers. He would rescue the soldiers by evacuating them from the island on small boats. The other leaders were quick to point out that it was a foolish move. The British would devastate small boats on the wide river. They would be "sitting ducks." But some of the new recruits happened to be expert oarsmen, and there were some boats available.

All night long, the men rowed through the waters, carrying as many grateful soldiers across the river as they could. After midnight, the wind died down, and they glided through still waters. Skillfully they rowed, without a sound. General Washington went to the island, keeping some troops at the front, in order to screen the activity. At dawn, the sun threatened to reveal the vulnerable fleet to the British. But then, an amazing thing happened. A heavy fog rolled in over the island, settling over the front lines. It remained, completely shielding the evacuation; and it did not lift, until the last man had been carried to safety. As soon as the last boat was out of range, the miraculous fog suddenly lifted, revealing to the British that the 8,000 rebels had escaped, without the loss of a single life.

The Story of Christmas Evans

Christmas Evans was born near the village of Llandyssul in Wales, on Christmas Day in 1766. His father, who was a shoemaker, died when he was a baby. Since his mother was unable to care for him, he was given to an ungodly uncle. His uncle was cruel and selfish. He put little Christmas to work on the farm, when he was but a small boy. Christmas was not allowed to go to school. He was virtually a slave on the farm.

When Christmas was seventeen years old, he was sent to a Presbyterian church, where he became the servant of the pastor. He was, however, allowed to attend the church meetings. He was saved in one of the revival services. Under the influence of the church, and with the Holy Spirit burning in his heart, he learned to read and write. He had a deep hunger for the Bible, and he was very diligent in his prayer life.

The teenage Christian also suffered persecution. Some of his childhood companions, feeling convicted by his godly lifestyle, gave him a severe beating. In the process, they gouged out his right eye. But Christmas Evans continued to serve the Lord faithfully, and he never went back to his old life. He began to fellowship with some Baptists, who showed him much kindness.

When Christmas was 24 years old, he was ordained as a minister of the gospel. He began to travel around his home country of Wales (which is a part of Great Britain). He preached in churches, coal

mines, and out in the open fields. Anywhere people were willing to gather and listen, Christmas was willing to preach. Having suffered much in his younger life, he preached a recurring theme of grace and forgiveness. Because of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, thousands responded to his ministry and were powerfully converted.

Revival swept through the nation of Wales. It was referred to as the "Welsh Revival," although it did not have the Pentecostal emphasis of the great Welsh Revival of 1904. The emphasis here was on sin and salvation; and whole towns became dominated by the message of the gospel. Reports of the revival spread throughout the world. As the Welsh people prayed and sought God, there were even sovereign, supernatural visitations of the Spirit. People fell under conviction, even when there were no preachers around.

Christmas Evans is credited as the principle leader of this national revival. He was both an excellent preacher and a fervent prayer warrior. He had the rare combination of a sharp intellect and a humble spirit. He was fascinating to listen to, because he had a wonderful imagination and a quick wit. He was also passionate in his love for souls and his devotion to God. Christmas Evans is a great example of what God can do through a young person, even if he is neglected and abused. Suffering is not a sign that God does not love you. It can be preparation for a great life of compassion and purity.

The Story of Yousouf Ishmaëlo

Yousouf Ishmaëlo was a famous and popular wrestler from Turkey, who lived many years ago. He was a huge and powerful man who enjoyed tossing other wrestlers around a ring, to the applause and cheers of the great crowds who admired him. Yousouf seemed to have everything. He had fame, glory, money, pleasure, and robust health. But he was still empty inside, because he did not have the most important thing in life -- a relationship with God, through Jesus Christ. The more things he had, the more he wanted.

He heard about the great wealth that lay across the ocean in the new land called America. He also believed he could prove to all that he was the greatest wrestler in all the world, and he longed to take on America's toughest opponents. In 1897, he sailed to this great country, in order to follow his dream of greater fame and fortune.

His first match was against the former heavyweight champion Evan Lewis. Yousouf defeated him easily; and then he defeated the Greco-Roman wrestling champion, Ernest Roeber. The mighty Turk crushed every top American wrestler. He was praised and adored by the crowds; but the thing that thrilled his heart the most was the money he was paid to wrestle. He amassed a small fortune, and had all the money converted to gold coins and gold bars. He had a special leather belt made with many strong pouches, so that he could carry all his precious gold around his large stomach, under his clothes. It is believed that he never took his belt off. At night, he dreamed of all the fine things he would

buy for himself back in his Turkish homeland, with the gold that bulged around his waist 24 hours a day. He was never without his wonderful treasure -- the gold he so cherished.

After his great triumph in America, he booked passage on the steamship *Le Bourgogne* in 1898, excited about all the great things awaiting him in the new century that was coming soon. But one night, he felt a great jolt in the ship, and heard a crash. The pilot had been careless; and the ship had collided with another vessel off the coast of Nova Scotia. People were screaming and scrambling for the lifeboats, as the ship began to sink into the dark Atlantic ocean. Yousouf was an excellent swimmer; but as he leaped out of the sinking ship and into the water, he had to struggle desperately to keep his head above the water. Suddenly, the precious gold that had been such a source of security and joy to him was pulling down with relentless force. He had to act quickly. He had only to unbuckle his money belt, and he could make it to the rescue boat. He would be saved, if only he could let go of his money.

But that night, Yousouf Ishmaëlo could not bring himself to let go of his treasure; and so, he sank exhausted below the waves. A few fathoms down, his soul left his body as his lungs filled with the dark salt water; and he went into eternity unprepared to meet God. At that moment, he lost his treasured gold -- his idol -- as surely as if he had cast it away. And now he lost his life, as well. He loved his money; and it was the love of money that destroyed his life.

The Story of Terry Law

Terry Law is a mighty preacher, who leads a great ministry team from Tulsa, Oklahoma. He has had tremendous results in Spirit-led evangelism throughout the world, particularly in the Soviet block countries.

Terry Law was born in 1944. He grew up in Canada, in the home of a Pentecostal pastor. His father was a pioneer preacher, who established churches in Northern Saskatchewan. When Terry was 13, he went with his family to a camp meeting. One night, he was very moved by the service; and he stayed in the tabernacle, while everyone else went to their cabins. Late at night, the speaker remembered that he had left his Bible on the pulpit. He walked into the dark hall, and said, "Is anyone here?" Terry said, "Yes," and the preacher walked over to him and began to pray for him. He then prophesied, "Young man, I see you standing before hundreds of thousands of people, as you preach the gospel throughout the world." Terry knew he was called to travel; but he did not want to go.

When Terry was 16, he was working in a grocery store, making as much money as his poor father made in the ministry. He felt the call to adventure; and he looked forward to getting out of his strict religious home, so that he could have some fun in life. After high school, he went to study law at the university. One night, he got drunk with some college buddies. They all decided to go to his father's church and disrupt the service. Sitting in the back, they made noise talking and laughing; but no one paid any attention to them. Halfway through the service, Terry became instantly sober, and was overcome by conviction. He went forward and

committed his life to Christ. He immediately left law school and started in Bible college.

After graduating, as he was working in a hardware store, the Holy Spirit spoke to him about traveling with his friend, Dennis Bjorgan. He had not heard from him in a year; and he had no idea how to reach him. The next morning, he got a letter from Dennis, which had taken a month to reach him. The letter said that Dennis felt that God wanted Terry to travel with him. And so they traveled through North America, singing and preaching. In 1965, they went by freighter to Africa, where they saw thousands of souls saved by the power of the gospel.

In 1967, Terry went to Oral Roberts University. Soon, he was involved in Dr. Roberts' crusades as a worship leader and assistant. On a trip to Europe with the World Action Singers, he met Jan D'Arpa. They were soon married; and they launched the group, "Living Sound." Through a series of miracles, the Lord arranged for them to spend a year as a ministering music group in Africa, where thousands of people were saved and filled with the Holy Ghost.

God blessed Terry and Jan Law in the ministry; and He also blessed their marriage with three fine children. But one day, in 1982, while Terry was in London preaching, he received word that his beloved wife had been killed in a car accident in Tulsa. He was crushed, and unable to function for some time. He was later called by Oral Roberts, whose own son had recently died. Oral said, "Terry, go home, get down on your knees, and start

to pray in the spirit. You have got to begin to praise the Lord."

The next morning, Terry rose and began to pray. He struggled for hours, trying to praise God; but it seemed so hollow. He struggled with the temptation to become bitter toward God. Finally, the words from Psalms 34:1 came to him: "*I*

will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth." He made the decision to bless the Lord, even though he did not feel like it. As he began to offer the "sacrifice of praise," the bands of bitterness were broken; and God healed his spirit. Terry Law went on to do exploits for God, as a missionary in Communist countries.

The Ministry of Paul E. Paino

Dr. Paul E. Paino was born in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1923. His parents were Italian emigrants who became involved in the Pentecostal revival in America; and they were both outstanding preachers of the gospel. At one point, both Thomas and Lyda Paino pastored separate churches. It should be duly noted that Mrs. Paino had the larger of the two congregations. Many of their children and grandchildren are actively involved in Christian ministry today, which is a strong testimony to their faith and faithfulness.

Paul continued to pursue the ministry, although he was often reluctant. He graduated from Central Bible Institute of Springfield, Missouri, in 1944. That same year, he married his high school sweetheart, Mary Lascu.

With Mary at his side, Paul Paino answered the call to pastor in Lebanon, Indiana. He often thought of his father, who had told him, "A congregation will never be any more spiritual than its leader." In 1950, they moved to Fort Wayne, Indiana, where they eventually founded Calvary Temple Worship Center on June 10, 1956. Calvary Temple began with meetings, first in a garage, and then in a movie theater. Today, the ministry's facilities are located on a large development on the city's northwest side.

During the 1960s, Calvary Temple opened its doors and heart to the "hippies;" and it experienced great spiritual and numerical growth. Dr. Paino earned his reputation as a Sunday School man by reaching out throughout the city with a strong bus ministry and a large team of youth workers. He developed a training program for young preachers,

which has become known as Christian Training Center. It has graduated hundreds of people from its two-year junior college program. Dr. Paino also established a beautiful 220-acre campground near Angola, Indiana, which provides the setting for many Christian camps and activities. He is also the founder of Calvary Ministries International, which is a fellowship of more than 125 churches, worldwide. Dr. Paino, who is a tireless worker and is strongly self-disciplined, is known as a man who is quick to forgive and give people a second chance. He is one of the most sought-after speakers for conferences and conventions in America, because of his ability to inspire and instruct preachers in the practical aspects of Christian ministry.

Paul Paino is motivated with an intense desire to win lost souls and to focus on foreign missions. He has raised millions of dollars for other ministries. Because of his vision for Sunday School, he raised up a staff of workers to develop the Complete School of the Bible Manual, which is now going all over the world as a training tool for young people (and Christian workers, as well). This great resource is the product of the spiritual zeal and leadership skills of this one man, whose influence has touched many nations with a solid, full-gospel Bible message. This dynamic curriculum is revolutionizing Bible classes across America, and is being translated into several languages.

Perhaps the greatest source of satisfaction for this highly honored and successful preacher is the joy of seeing both of his sons also do well in the

ministry. Paul Craig Paino is now the senior pastor of Calvary Temple. He is a strong and capable leader, with a true shepherd's heart. Philip Carter Paino is a brilliant Bible teacher, with an emphasis on ministry to people with addictive and compulsive behavior.

After such a successful and rewarding ministry, which has spanned over 50 years, one would wonder about what title or honor Paul E. Paino would like to be remembered for. But Bishop Paino said, simply, "I would like my epitaph to say, 'Paul Paino, a preacher.'"

Pray for Our Bus

In the late 1960's, a spiritual renewal was sweeping America and other parts of the world. Pentecostal and Charismatic churches were experiencing growth; and many miracles came about, as a result of believing prayer. While many spectacular things happened in the big churches and the cities, God was also moving in the little towns.

Don Burchett and his wife, Bonnie were old-fashioned Pentecostal pastors with a special love for kids. The pastored the Pentecostal Holiness Church in Independence, Kansas, for many years. They had three children of their own; but over the years, many more learned to call them "Mom" and "Dad." They were hard-working folks with big hearts. The church congregation was small; and so it took Pastor Burchett three years to build a new church. He labored on the building 50 hours a week, in addition to his pastoral work. Most of the time, he did the carpentry, masonry, and other work alone; and he built a beautiful building.

As the young people became more and more focused on spiritual things, they developed quite a witnessing program. As youth groups do, they would gather for recreation and eating -- but there was a difference. Instead of the leaders trying desperately to work in a short prayer or devotional after hours of fun and games, they would more often hear, "When do we quit the volleyball, so we can start praying?" "Let us get on with the Bible study." That was not the leaders. That was the kids!

Eventually, the group became very active in weekly street evangelism and open street meetings in other small Kansas towns, as well as their own town of 18,000. The church had purchased an old school bus, which was the only transportation for the youth group.

One evening, as the youth group was preparing for a Friday night street meeting, the sponsor came in with some sad news. The bus had a broken piston rod, which required a complete overhaul. He could hear the clank of metal against metal, as he cranked over the engine of the old bus.

Suddenly, one of the teenagers said, "If God can heal bodies, why can He not heal our bus?" No one seemed to have any better sense, except perhaps for the adults who did not want to dampen their enthusiasm. So they all gathered around the old bus and laid hands on the fenders. "Crank it up." The starter was engaged, and the old engine gave forth a sickening "clank, clank, clank" sound. Undaunted, they prayed again. They lifted their hands, praying in tongues, and someone said, "Try it again." "I did already. It is running." The engine was indeed running, but now it was running smoothly. It had a healed piston rod. God had given the old bus a major overhaul, instantly. That night, the group had extra reason to rejoice, and faith to believe that God wanted them to be out witnessing and singing for Him.

The Story of Bud Sickler

The year was 1944. Bud and Faye Sickler were newlyweds, launching their new life together. But they did not have ordinary dreams of just a house, a car, and a house full of children. They had a missionary call burning in their hearts. That very year, they traveled to Kenya, West Africa, to begin working as missionaries for Jesus. A half century later, they are still there, faithfully and joyfully doing the work of evangelists, pastors, and apostles, and leading thousands of African families in their walk with the Lord.

Bud and Faye began in the bush country of Kenya, where the villages were scattered by the hundreds over vast areas of hot, dry bush country. They taught and cared for the people in their little mission station for nine years. When their missionary term was up, they did not return to the United States. Instead, they moved to Mombasa, a port city, which is the second largest city in Kenya.

They started a church; and they were faithful, hard-working pastors. In 1962, Pastor Sickler felt impressed by the Lord to get some kind of van to use as a church bus. He found an old Volkswagen van for \$800; and he discovered that they could stack in 22 kids. Since he had little money, he decided to obtain a short-term loan, and believed God to raise the money on his next trip to the United States.

But that trip was a disappointment. He was not able to raise any money at all for the van they so needed. He began to

question God about the wisdom of buying it in the first place. It was Friday evening, and the note was due the following Monday. Mrs. Sickler prayed, "God, I am tired of this debt. Please provide the money we need, and show us what You want to do about this vehicle."

On Sunday morning, she saw that the van was a blessing to some very important little people. As she made her rounds, she was startled to see a little girl running behind the van, crying and calling out for her to stop. The girl was entirely naked. She had overslept, and when she heard the sound of the old Volkswagen, she grabbed her clothes and ran for the door. She did not want to miss Sunday School. The van stopped; and she clamored in, happily pulling on her clothes, as they made their way to church.

The next day, the note was due. Pastor Sickler went to the mail box, and he found one letter. It was from an acquaintance in the United States. The letter read, "Dear Bud, You have been on my heart lately, and I felt impressed to send you an offering. Here is \$800. Please use it for any need you might have."

Today, the Sicklers minister in a large church in Mombasa, and oversee some 4,000 native churches in Africa. God has blessed their faithfulness with much fruit; and He has blessed their lives with great joy. Many preachers who attend full-gospel conferences in the States know Bud Sickler for his hearty, shrill, distinctive laugh.

The Story of T. DeWitt Talmadge

Thomas DeWitt Talmadge was born in 1832 at Bound Brook, New Jersey. He was the youngest of 12 children. He was a bright and exceptional child. His parents were loving, godly people who consistently prayed together twice a day. They were faithful in family devotions, and wisely imparted the fear of the Lord and good character values to all of their children. They were faithful to soundly spank each of their children when they were rebellious; but Tom later recalled that they were probably a bit softer on him than they had been on all the others, because he was the baby of the family. It was evident that he was a boy of exceptional talents and potential in life.

Thomas graduated with honors from the University of New York, and then began to study law. But God had mightily saved him at the age of 18; and as he sought the Lord, he felt strongly led to pursue the ministry, instead of the legal profession. After one year of law school, he transferred to the Brunswick Theological Seminary. Thomas again did well in academics, and he finished his seminary studies. During the Civil War, he served as a chaplain in the U. S. Army. After the war, he became the pastor of the Central Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, New York. He had been offered other churches which were larger, because he was already acknowledged as a great preacher. But he prayed, and felt God directing him to this church that really needed ministry. There had been problems in the church, and it was down to only nineteen active members.

Talmadge worked hard, and prayed diligently. Under his leadership, the church grew large and strong. The people,

in one accord, gave and worked together to build the Brooklyn Tabernacle. In 1872, the new tabernacle burned to the ground. Undaunted, the faithful pastor and his congregation set to work rebuilding it. When that second building burned up, they prayed, rolled up their collective sleeves, and built it back the third time. This building was used for the ministry for many years. The 5,000 seats were usually filled every week with eager listeners. For 25 years, he filled auditoriums everywhere he preached, and saw thousands of people saved every year.

Talmadge was a prince of preachers. He was a skilled speaker, and knew how to keep people's attention with stories, gestures, and vivid illustrations. He also had a good sense of humor. He was criticized by jealous preachers for being a "clown;" but he got the message across, and he kept the people coming to hear what God was going to say through him. Talmadge prepared thoroughly, and he habitually preached without any notes. His sermons were printed in 3,000 newspapers and magazines throughout America and Europe every Sunday; and he served as the editor of several Christian publications. He was very active, until his death in 1902.

The greatest preacher of his day in England was C. H. Spurgeon. He once said, "I am often astonished when God blesses me, but I am not surprised when God blesses Talmadge." God used the abilities and gifts of T. D. Talmadge, because he gave himself to the Lord, and was faithful to pray and serve.

George Whitefield in America

George Whitefield, born in England in 1714, was one of the original "Methodists" of Oxford college, and a friend of John and Charles Wesley. He first sailed to America as a young man, with a desire to preach the gospel in Georgia. Although he turned the voyage across the Atlantic Ocean into a virtual revival, he did not meet with that much success in Georgia. Many of the Christians in America were still given to drinking alcohol and other vices, and they did not take kindly to this youngster, who preached strongly against sin. He finally sailed back to England.

Back in England, he was ordained a minister in 1739 at the age of 24; but he met with another kind of opposition there. The church there taught that water baptism was sufficient for salvation -- but he preached repentance and faith. Soon, London was closed to him, as far as the official church was concerned. George preached several open-air meetings in the mining district near Bristol, England, and was often opposed by the Bishop and other church leaders. In Kingswood, he preached on John 3:3 to 2,000 people; and hundreds were saved. In spite of his success, the Bishop informed him that he was not supposed to preach without official permission from the church. He replied, "As for declining the work in which I am engaged, my blood runs chill at the very thought if it. I am as much convinced that it is my duty to act as I do as that the sun shines at noonday. If you and the rest of the bishops cast us out, our great common Master will take us up." He was often expelled from inns and otherwise persecuted by those who opposed the gospel, and met with much opposition. He was also beaten with a club

for preaching. He said, "I am ashamed that I can do no more for Him, seeing that He has done so much for me. His service is perfect freedom. His yoke is easy."

When George Whitefield returned to America, he began preaching in Philadelphia, and spent much time traveling. He would preach to a few people, or to great crowds of as many as 20,000 at a time. He rode on horseback from city to city, enduring great hardships and dangers for the sake of lost souls. In 1740, he started an orphanage called "Bethesda," with three German orphans.

Mr. Whitefield married a godly widow in Scotland when he was 26 years old. In Scotland, as in America, he preached tirelessly, as many as 19 times in four days. We note that this was without a public address system, often outdoors, and usually about two hours or more at a time. In his 56-year lifetime, he won thousands of people to the Lord, and influenced nations with the clear gospel message.

Back in America, as the exhausted Rev. Whitefield was dying, he asked God for the strength to preach one more sermon. He said, "I go to a rest prepared: my sun has arisen, and by and by from heaven it will give light to many; now it is about to set -- no, it is to rise to the zenith of immortal glory. I have outlived many on earth, but they cannot outlive me in heaven. My body fails, but my spirit expands. How willingly I would live forever to preach Christ! But I die to be with Him!" He preached for two hours, his face shining like the unclouded sun. He died the next morning.

Section 6

Promotions

The Importance of Promotions

Promotions are used in the School of the Bible as a tool, which allows us to excite and motivate our young people to grow in the things of the Lord.

All of us are motivated by rewards. Many companies offer bonus and incentive plans, and even prizes, because they have learned the effectiveness of good promotions. Contests are held regularly in order to entice us to buy a product or to try some new service. The cost of the prize never exceeds the benefit received by the sponsor.

Our children are sold things through promotions at school, on television, and by a variety of sources. If we are going to compete for their attention among these promotions, we must be willing to utilize our resources in order to offer our children a healthy alternative.

Promotions have been used in Sunday School programs throughout the country for years. Although many promotions have, admittedly, gotten out of hand, the vast majority of them benefited the kingdom of God. What is the price of a soul? Is a hamburger too much? Is a trip to summer camp too little? There is no price too high. We must be good stewards of God's money and spend it in such a way that we have the greatest impact on the lives of those He wants us to touch. God does want to reach our young people. He cares for them, and so should we.

Because of our love for our children and our desire to offer them the kinds of incentives necessary to motivate them to

do greater things, we are involved in several promotions throughout the year. Certainly, we would hope that our children would be spiritual enough not to need such motivations to spur them into action. However, we cannot expect them to be any more motivated than we are.

As adults, we demand stimuli all the time. To come to church, many need some special, high-priced speaker or singer. To participate or serve, we need to be recognized and seen for our service. Many, but not all, need constant motivation to do greater things for God.

Along the way, motivation becomes less for the sake of the prize on earth and more for the prize that God has promised us in heaven. Please help us motivate our young people so that, when they are adults, they will need less stimulation and will be filled with more anticipation for the great things God has in store for their lives.

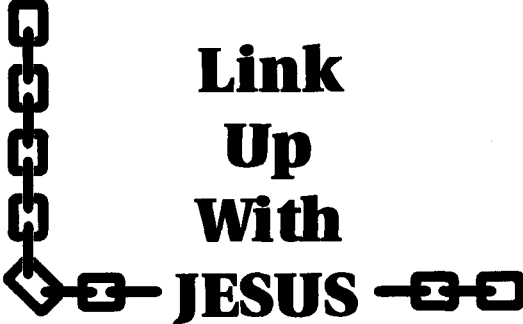
Our promotions are designed to motivate our young people to attend both church and the School of the Bible on a regular basis; to bring their Bibles with them; to bring their tithes and offerings faithfully; to bring their friends to Sunday School on a regular basis; to learn the importance of giving to the needy through participating in the church's emergency food pantry program; and to study and to memorize God's Word.

With these goals in mind, we have designed a set of programs which we plan to promote each year. These programs are

explained on the following pages. They are subject to change and revision; but, the concept of the programs and the basic time of the year during which they will be promoted will remain somewhat constant.

Each class is encouraged to use internal promotions in order to motivate the students to become greater participants in God's work. Bible memory verse contests, attendance awards, and special projects all add to the overall effectiveness of our

program. Special events, such as Christmas and Easter parties, are also encouraged. The church will also hold a "Hallelujah Party" near Halloween in order to provide an alternative to "Trick or Treating" for the children of the church. Change Sunday, when students are promoted to the next grade, is another time to plan special activities in order to say good-bye to one group of students and to welcome the new.



Link Up With JESUS

The "Link Up with Jesus" promotion is designed to encourage students to memorize Bible verses and to increase the attendance in the Sunday School. The spiritual emphasis of this contest is upon hiding God's Word in our hearts. As we memorize His Word, we "link up" with Him and create a bond that cannot be broken.

This promotion is conducted in the first quarter, and is designed to run for six weeks. Students earn points for attendance, bringing their Bibles, memorizing scripture from prepared lists, and bringing friends to Sunday School.

One of the six Sundays of this promotion is designated as "Bonus Sunday." On this day, students who bring five or more items for the church's emergency food pantry will receive five bonus points. Note: If your church does not have an emergency food pantry, substitute another activity for Bonus Sunday.

Each point the students earn is represented by a link in a paper chain. The more points a student earns, the longer his or her chain becomes.

The links in the chains are made from colored strips of paper. A supply of links will be provided for each classroom. There is a different link for every category in which a student earns points (see samples which follow). Chains should be hung around the room to emphasize the students' accomplishments.

At the end of the promotion, students will receive a prize, based upon the number of links they have in their chain. Every student will receive a prize of some kind. Seven levels of prizes are available. In addition, the five students with the longest chains will receive a special grand prize. A prize will also be awarded to the class which accumulates the highest number of links.

Select prizes of increasing value, and list them on the "Prize List" (see sample which follows). A Grand Prize will also need to be selected for the top five finishers, and a special treat arranged for the winning class (perhaps a pizza party or a trip to an amusement park).

Three weeks prior to the beginning of the promotion, prepared lists of Bible verses will be sent home with the students. These lists will also be mailed to the parents, along with a letter explaining

the promotion and asking them to help their child(ren) memorize the verses.

Midway through the promotion, have the students with the largest number of links in their chains parade through the sanctuary in order to show the congregation what they are accomplishing.

Specific Instructions:

At the beginning of the promotion, write each student's name on a 3" x 5" card. Attach the links of each student's chain to their name card. Affix the name cards to the wall (use Sticky Tack!) or bulletin board in order to display the chains.

A Point Chart must be maintained for every student. Keep these charts in the Secretary's folder.

On the Point Chart, mark the "address" (e.g., Psalms 23:1) of every verse the student is able to recite. Then, write that same address on two links and add them to the student's chain. Use your best judgment in listening to the verses. If students know the verses, but stumble over a few words, give them credit. Be

prepared for some students to learn several verses per week!

To record attendance, write the date the student is present in the appropriate box on the Point Chart, and write their name and the date on one link. Add the link to their chain.

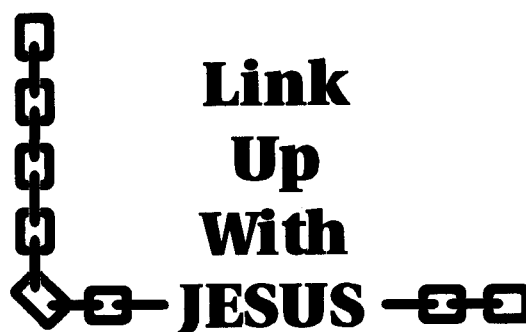
When a student brings his or her Bible, record the date in the appropriate section of the Point Chart, complete the information on the "Brought a Bible" link, and add it to the chain.

When a student brings a friend, record the friend's name on the Point Chart, complete six "Brought a Visitor" links, and add them to the chain.

If a student brings five or more food items for the church's emergency food pantry on the appointed day, place an "X" in the "Qualified for Bonus Points?" box on the Point Chart, and add five links to his or her chain.

If you need additional space to record verses or visitors on a student's Point Chart, attach a second sheet to the original sheet for that student.

YOU CAN



CONTEST BEGINS:	CONTEST ENDS:

**“Link Up With Jesus”
By Earning Links On Your Chain.**

Bring a Friend to Sunday School

Must be someone who has not attended in the last 3 months.

Earn 6 Links

Memorize a Scripture

Earn 2 Links

Attend Sunday School

Earn 1 Link

Bring Your Bible to Sunday School

Earn 1 Link

BONUS SUNDAY: _____

**Earn 5 Links When You Bring 5 Food Items To Help Us
Minister To Those Who Are In Need.**

7 Levels Of Prizes Are Available

At The End Of The Contest,

You May Select One Prize From The Prize List.

The Top Five Students Will Receive Grand Prizes.



**Link
Up
With**

JESUS

PRIZE LIST

LEVEL #1
24 Links

LEVEL #2
36 Links

LEVEL #3
52 Links

LEVEL #4
70 Links

LEVEL #5
100 Links

LEVEL #6
150 Links

LEVEL #7
200 Links

Grand Prize
Top 5 Students

Christ Commands Us

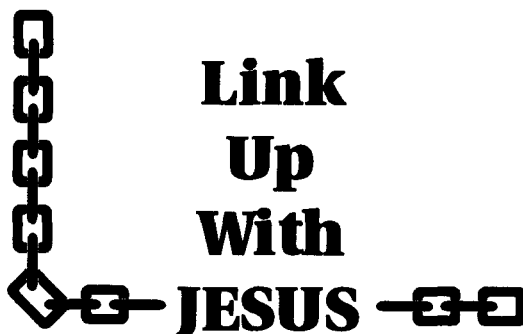
"... Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Matt. 25:40

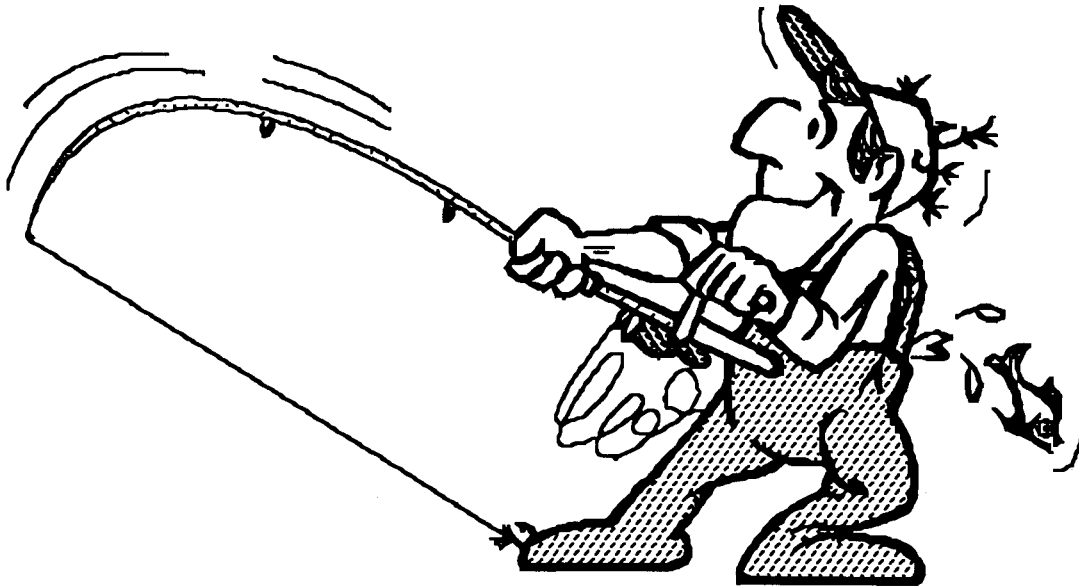
We can fulfill the command of our Lord by ministering to those who are in need.



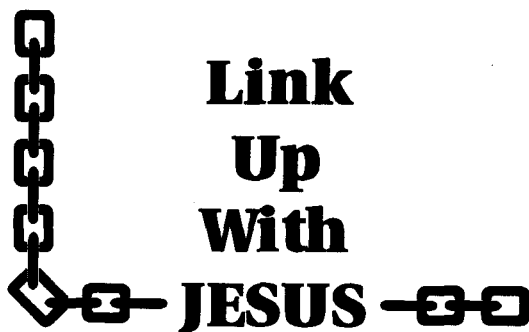
Bring a minimum of 5 grocery items on _____ to your Sunday School classroom, and you will receive 5 links for your chain. You can "Link up with Jesus" and help us reach out to others.



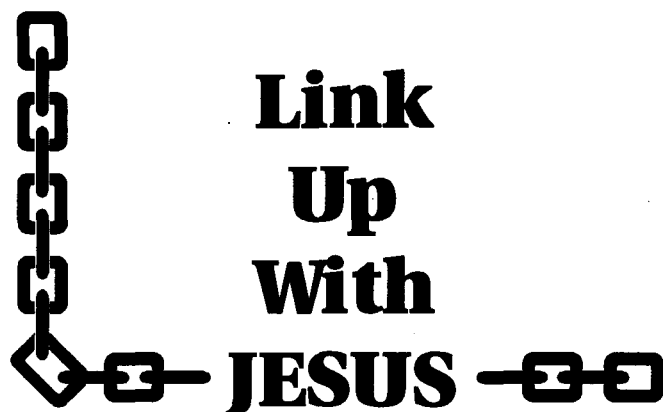
You can't catch fish unless you have the right bait



Spend time this week learning God's Word so you can have the "Right Bait" to catch the biggest fish of all: a person who needs to know Jesus.

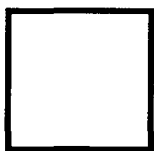


You can earn valuable prizes by learning God's Word and by bringing your friends to Sunday School. Start today, and together we can become "fishers of men".

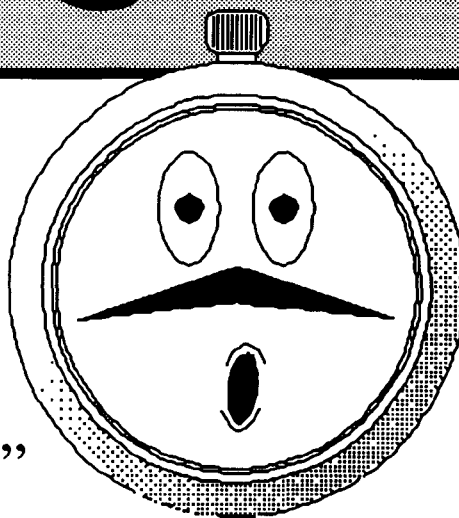


**Time is
getting short**

There Are Only



Weeks Left
In The
“Link Up With Jesus”
Promotion!



**Remember To Bring A Friend And
Learn Your Memory Verses.
Together We Can “Link Up With Jesus”**



**Link
Up
With
JESUS**

NAME _____

CLASS _____

Point Chart

Memory Verses Learned

Record the verse "address," below.

Award 2 links per verse.

Attendance

Record the dates in attendance, below. Award 1 link.

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Brought the Bible

Record the dates a Bible was brought, below. Award 1 link.

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Brought a Friend

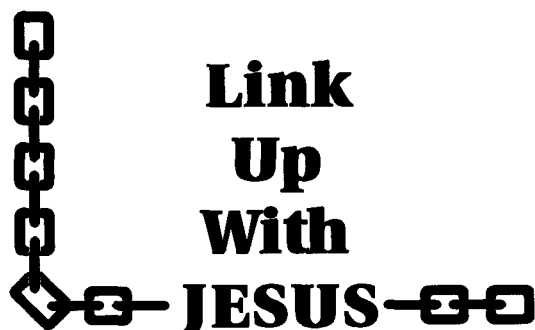
Record the name(s) of the friends, below. Award 6 links.

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Qualified for Bonus Points?

Award 5 links.

☐



Memory Verses List #1

Gen. 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

Gen. 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the Image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Gen. 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Psalms 19:14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, Oh LORD, my strength and my redeemer.

Psalms 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Psalms 23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Psalms 25:1 Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.

Psalms 25:2 Oh my God, I trust thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.

Psalms 25:4 Show me thy ways, oh Lord; teach me thy paths.

Psalms 25:8 Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.

Psalms 25:18 Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.

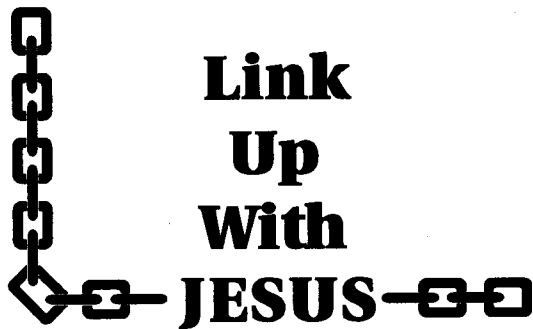
Psalms 25:21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.

Psalms 25:22 Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

Psalms 26:2 Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.

Psalms 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

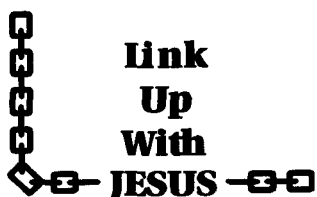
- Matt. 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Matt. 5:4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
- Matt. 5:5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
- Matt. 5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.
- Matt. 5:7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
- Matt. 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
- Matt. 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
- Matt. 5:10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Matt. 5:11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
- Matt. 5:14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.
- Matt. 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.
- Matt. 5:41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him two.
- Matt. 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.
- Matt. 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.
- Matt. 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.



Memory Verses List #2

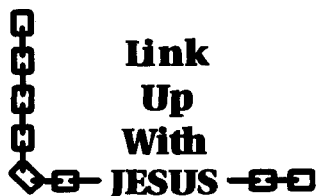
- Psalms 27:7 Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.
- Psalms 27:11 Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.
- Psalms 37:4 Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.
- Psalms 56:11 In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.
- Psalms 95:6 O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.
- Psalms 118:6 The LORD is on my side; I will not fear.
- Psalms 119:11 Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.
- Psalms 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.
- Psalms 120:1 In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me.
- Psalms 121:2 My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.
- Psalms 122:6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.
- Psalms 127:1 Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it.
- Psalms 134:2 Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD.
- Psalms 143:8 Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust.

Psalms 147:1	Praise ye the LORD, for it is good to sing praises unto our God.
Matt. 6:33	But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.
Matt. 7:7	Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.
Matt. 28:6	He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.
Matt. 28:19	Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
John 1:4	In him was life; and the life was the light of men.
John 8:32	And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.
John 14:14	If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.
John 15:7	If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.
Acts 2:1	And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.
Acts 2:21	And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.
Acts 4:29	Grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word.
Acts 10:44	The Holy Ghost fell on all of them which heard the word.
Romans 1:17	As it is written, the just shall live by faith.
Romans 3:23	For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.
Romans 6:23	For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Brought a Visitor**

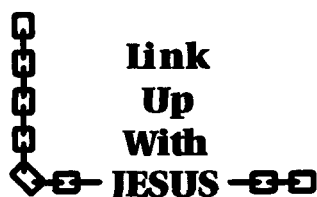
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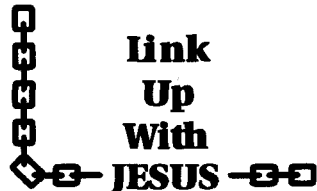
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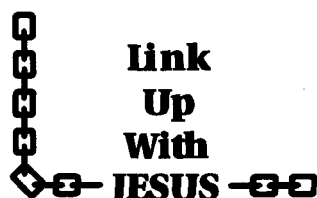
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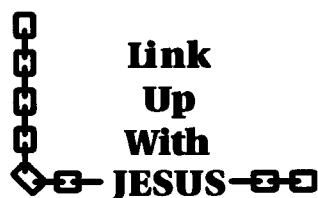
**Link
Up
With**

JESUS

Verse: _____

Name _____

Date _____



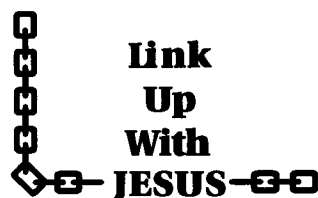
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JESUS

Verse: _____

Name _____

Date _____



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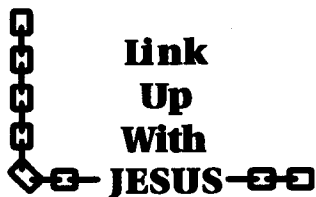
**Link
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JESUS

Verse: _____

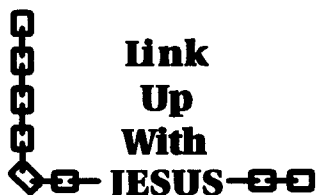
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Date _____

**Attendance**

Name _____

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Date _____

**Attendance**

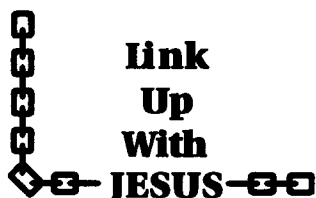
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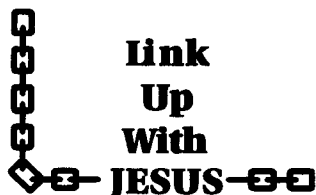
Name _____

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**Link
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Brought a Bible

Name _____

Date _____

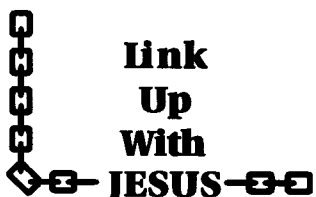


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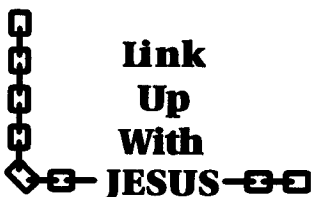


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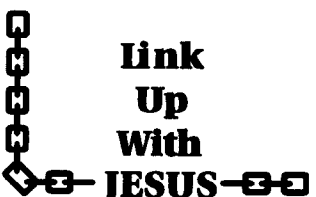


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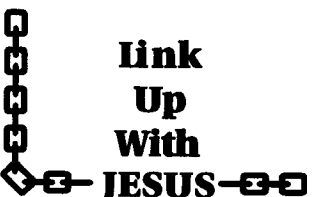


**Link
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With**

Brought a Bible

Name _____

Date _____



**Link
Up
With**

Brought a Bible

Name _____

Date _____

Fuel Flame

The "Fuel the Flame" promotion is centered around the Day of Pentecost. The students "fuel" the flame by bringing their friends to Sunday School. Reaching out to others is the heart of the work of the Holy Spirit. When we emphasize the importance of sharing Christ with others and invite them to church where God can touch their lives, young people will respond to the spiritual aspects of this program.

This promotion is designed to be conducted for six weeks, during the second quarter. When possible, it will include the special days of Easter, Pentecost Sunday, and Mothers' Day. Because Easter falls on a different Sunday each year, it may not always be possible to include all three special days in this promotion. Including Mothers' Day in this promotion gives a parent, or a close relative, an opportunity to become acquainted with the Sunday School.

As an incentive, points are awarded to the students for attendance, for memorizing Bible verses, and for bringing their Bibles, their offerings, and their mothers to Sunday School.

To reach the first goal, each student is required to bring at least two people to Sunday School. Additional points will be awarded to the students as they bring other friends, and they will be advanced to higher goal levels.

The prize for each goal level is a discount on the fees for one week at summer camp. Students who earn a total of 55 points will qualify for a discount of \$25.00 on their camp fees for one week. Those who earn 80 points will receive a \$50.00 discount, and those who accumulate a total of 120 points will qualify to have their camp fees for one week paid in full.

In addition to these awards, the five students who earn the highest number of points overall will receive an all-expense-paid trip to an amusement park.

During the six weeks of this "Fuel the Flame" promotion, flyers will be distributed to all of the students. Each flyer will contain a different message. Four of the flyers will be mailed to the students' parents, asking for their cooperation. Announcements will also be made from the pulpit and in the church newsletter.

Each week, the children will be encouraged to fill in their "Flame Thermometer." As the promotion progresses, letters will be sent to the top 10 students and, in the last weeks, to the top 20 students in order to encourage them to continue to bring their friends to church.

"Fuel the Flame" has proved to be a successful promotion. It has effectively increased Sunday School attendance, and it has had a positive, spiritual impact on the lives of the students. For children who otherwise may not be able to attend camp,

it provides a way for them to earn their camp fees.

Each week, a Point Tally sheet is completed to record the points earned by each student during that week. Points for attendance will be awarded to each student in the class. Each week, these Point Tally Sheets and your attendance record must be taken to the Department Secretary.

You may also use a Re-Cap Sheet to keep a running total of the points earned

by the students in your class. Keep this Re-Cap Sheet in your Secretary's folder.

After you complete the Weekly Report form, it should be taken to the Department Secretary.

The Flame Thermometers must be filled in each week by the students with red crayons or markers. Please post these forms on a bulletin board or in another conspicuous place.

Fuel the Flame

CONTEST BEGINS:	CONTEST ENDS:

Catch the Spirit of Pentecost

Help Us "Fuel the Flame" by Reaching Out and
Sharing the Word of God with the World.

YOU RECEIVE POINTS FOR THE FOLLOWING

Bringing Your Bible:	1	Bringing a Friend, 2nd Time:	15
Attendance:	2	Bringing a Friend, 3rd Time +:	5
Bringing an Offering:	2	Bringing Your Mother,	
Memorizing a Bible Verse:	2	Grandmother, Guardian	
Bringing a Friend, 1st Time:	10	on Mother's Day:	10

(Visitors who have attended during the last 6 months do not qualify.)

P R I Z E S	GOAL #1 PRIZE When You Earn 55 Points	
	GOAL #2 PRIZE When You Earn 80 Points	
	GOAL #3 PRIZE When You Earn 120 Points	
	GRAND PRIZE The 5 Students Who Earn the Most Points	

Fuel the Flame

Who Can I Invite?

Friends from School

Relatives

Neighborhood Friends

The Children of Your Parents' Friends

Friends from Outside Activities:

Scouting

Athletics

Camp Programs

Clubs



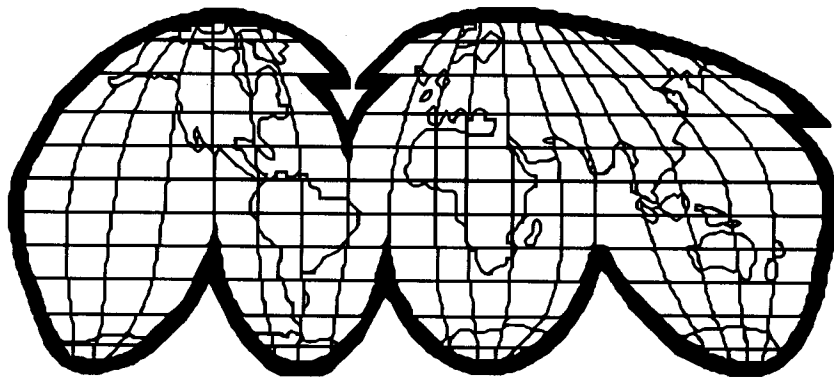
Anyone in the world who needs to know Jesus as their Savior.

List below the names of people you plan to invite. Pray daily over the list. Bring the list to church with you next week, so the entire class may pray for your list.

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Fuel the Flame

Why Save the World?



Without Christ Our Friends Will Not Be With Us in Heaven.

Without Christ There Is NO Forgiveness Of Sins.

Without Christ There Is No True Joy.

Without Christ All Of Us Will Perish.

You can make a difference by reaching out to your friends and inviting them to church. Talk to one person today. Tell them you want them to go with you to a great place on Sunday morning. Christ has called each of us to share Him with our friends. Talk to someone today!

Fuel the Flame

Invite A Friend To Sunday School, And You Could Earn:

GRAND PRIZE

**For the 5 Students
With The Highest
Point Totals**

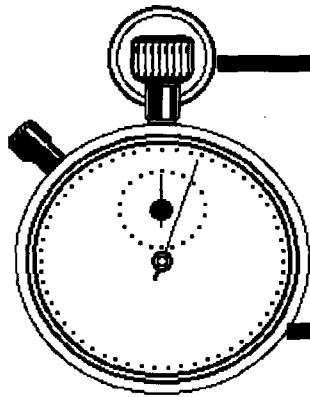
**Students Earning
120 Total
Points Receive:**

**Students Earning
80-119 Total
Points Receive:**

**Students Earning
55-79 Total
Points Receive:**

Invite a Friend Today and Help Us Fuel the Flame!

Fuel the Flame



**TIME IS
RUNNING OUT!**

**Bring a Friend, or Two,
to Sunday School
Next Week
And Help Us "Fuel the Flame"**

Show Your Friends the Way to Jesus.
Bring Them to Sunday School!



Fuel *the Flame*



Mother's Day

Bring your Mother, Grandmother, or Guardian to Sunday School on Mother's Day and receive 10 bonus points in our "Fuel the Flame" promotion.

**Honor Your Mother On This Very
Special Mother's Day.**

Mothers are invited to attend the entire hour of Sunday School, or they may choose to attend the Morning Bible Study in the Sanctuary. Only one mother, grandmother, or guardian may be registered per student. A mother with more than one child in the promotion may register in all necessary classes and then attend the class of her choice.



Fuel the Flame

Point Tally

Name _____

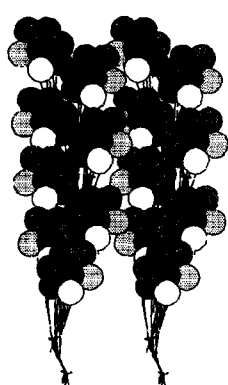
Class _____

Week #	1	2	3	4	5	6
Attendance 2 Points						
Bringing An Offering 2 Points						
Bible Memorization 2 Points						
Bringing A Bible 1 Point						
Bringing A Friend (1st Time) 10 Points						
Bringing A Friend (2nd Time) 15 Points						
Bringing A Friend (Addnl Times) 5 Points						
Bringing Mother on Mother's Day 10 Points						
Total Points For The Week						
Grand Total						

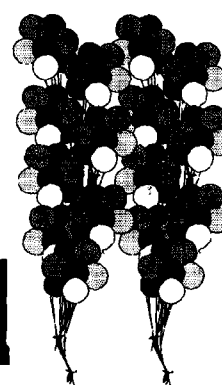
Fuel ***the Flame***

Re-Cap Sheet

Name	Wk #1	Wk #2	Wk #3	Wk #4	Wk #5	Wk #6	Grand Total



Fall Fun Festival



The Fall Fun Festival is a very popular promotion, which is scheduled during the third quarter, usually in September. A variety of games, rides, contests, and concessions make this event a good one for the entire church family.

Prior to the Festival, a six-week promotion will be conducted in which children will be given an opportunity to earn tickets which can be used for the rides, games and various activities. Tickets are awarded for bringing friends: 10; for attendance: 2; bringing a Bible: 1; and memorizing the Bible verse: 1. Tickets will also be given for bringing food items for the church's emergency food pantry.

The Secretary of each class is responsible for keeping a record of the points each student earns each week. To help eliminate lost tickets, they will be distributed to the students at the ticket booth on the day of the Festival.

Each class will be responsible for operating a booth at the Festival. Booths may include games and contests such as:

- Bean bag toss;
- Basketball shoot;
- Cookie walk;

- Ring toss;
- Face painting;
- Fishing: player drops a line over a "wall," and a prize is attached to the line;
- Duck pond: player selects a plastic duck from a tub of water. Each duck is worth a prize.

Use your creativity in selecting the game for your booth. Make it fun and challenging, but not so difficult that students cannot "win." Everyone will receive a prize. Consolation prizes will be given to those who do not complete the game successfully. Prizes of higher value will be awarded to game "winners."

In addition to the booths operated by each class, arrangements can be made for rides, dunk tank, moon walk, etc. Concessions operated by one of the classes (perhaps the high school department) should also be available. A first-aid station, portable restrooms, and a booth for purchasing additional tickets (at a nominal charge) should be included.

The purpose of this promotion is to provide a fun day of fellowship for families. In doing this, we hope to acquaint others with our program, and

encourage other children and parents to join us in the School of the Bible.

Specific Instructions:

Each "point" a student earns is worth one ticket for the Fall Fun Festival. Tickets will be distributed to students at the ticket booth when they arrive for the Festival.

Secretaries will record the points each student earns on the Weekly Point Chart. Totals from this form will then be transferred to the "Re-Cap Sheet."

The Re-Cap Sheets will be used to determine the number of tickets to be awarded to each student. Keep these forms in the Secretary's folder, and double-check them for accuracy.

Fall Fun Festival

Contest begins: _____

The Fall Fun Festival will be held: _____

Earn Tickets For The Festival By:

Attending Sunday School: 3 tickets, Bringing Your Bible: 2 tickets,
Bringing an Offering: 2 tickets, Memorizing a Bible Verse: 2 tickets,
Bringing a food item for those in need: 2 tickets,
Bringing a friend: 10 tickets)

(Friends who have attended Sunday School during the last 4 months, do not qualify.)

Games

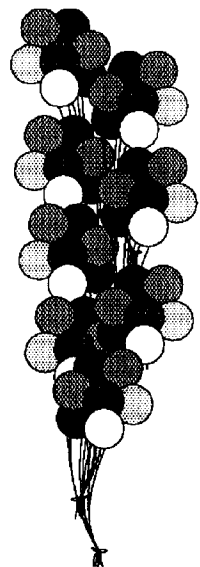
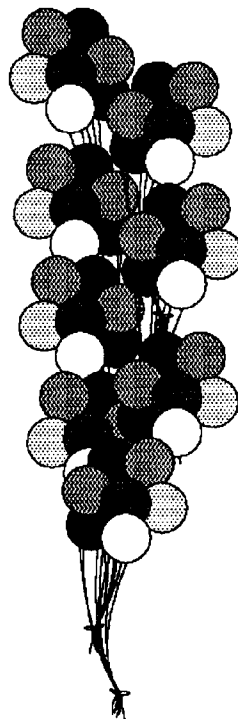
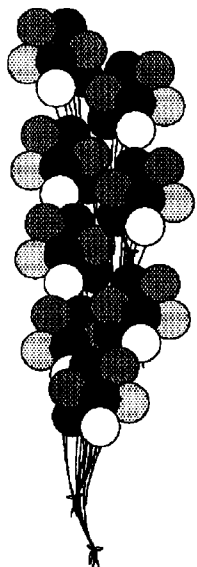
Food

Prizes

**Dunk
Tank**

Rides

Music



Tickets will be distributed to the students at the Festival.

Students will receive certificates each week, showing the number of tickets earned.



**GET
EXCITED**

The

"FALL FUN FESTIVAL"

Date:

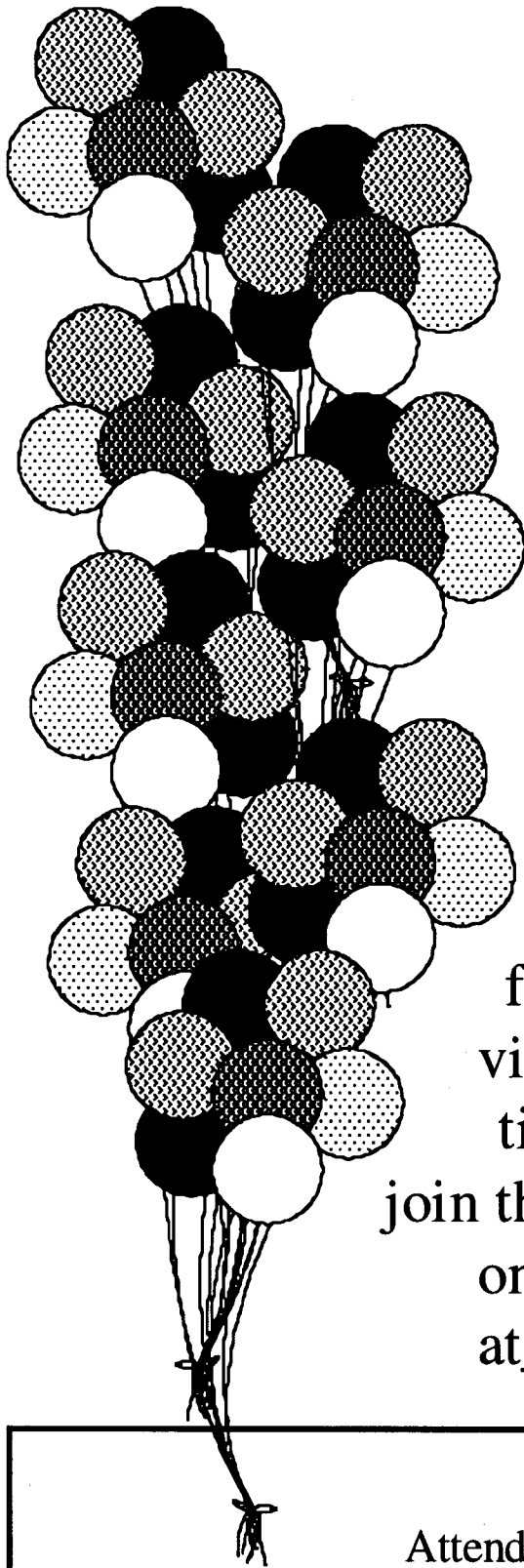
Time:

Place:



*Earn All the Tickets You Can
by Attending Sunday School!
Bring a Friend and Earn Extra Points!*

GAMES PRIZES
MOONWALK
DUNK TANK
FOOD FUN

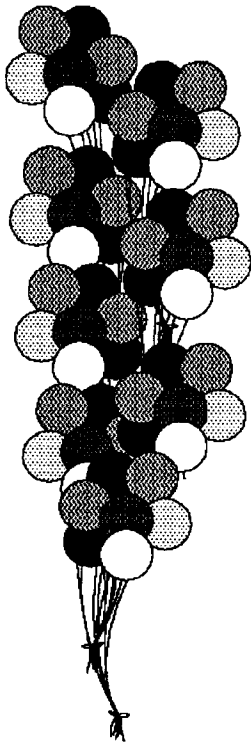


Only Weeks to go in the Fall Fun Festival Contest

Remember to bring your friends -- especially first-time visitors -- and join us for a great time in Sunday School. Then, join the fun at The Fall Fun Festival on _____ at _____

Points are awarded for:

Attendance • Memorizing Bible Verses
Bringing Your Bible • Bringing an Offering • Bringing a Visitor
Bringing a Food Item for Those in Need.



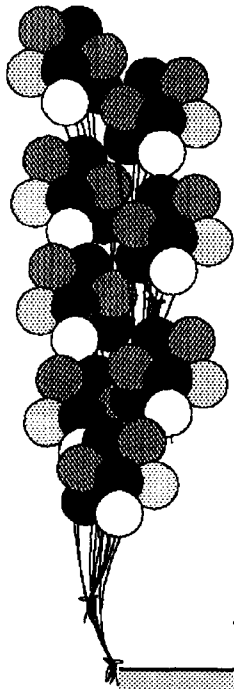
Fall Fun Festival Ticket Certificate

(Name)

*Has Earned a Total of _____ Tickets
for the Fall Fun Festival*

Class Secretary

Have your printer print this form "2-up" (2 forms per page).

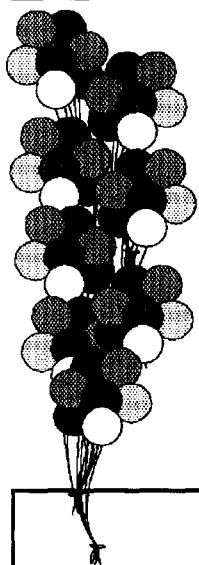


Weekly Point Chart: Week # _____

Date _____

Class _____

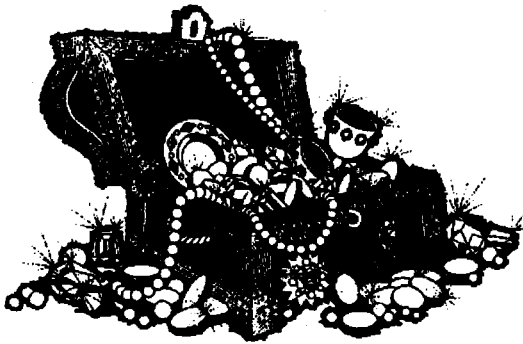
[illegible]



Re-Cap Sheet

Class:

[illegible]



Unlock The Treasure

Christ is truly the "key" to "Unlocking the Treasure." In this promotion, we want to increase attendance in the School of the Bible and emphasize to the students that Jesus is the key to unlocking vast treasures in our lives -- and not just material ones. We want to encourage students to reach out and witness to their friends, so that they, too, may experience the "treasures" Jesus has to offer.

This promotion is held during the fourth quarter, and runs for six weeks. As in other promotions, points are awarded to the students for their attendance; for bringing their Bible and offerings; for learning their memory verse; for bringing friends; and for contributing food items to the church's emergency food pantry.

Every time a student accumulates 40 points, he or she is awarded a special coin, which is worth 1 gift. A variety of gifts will be available, from which students may choose. Gifts should be displayed in a convenient, central location for the students to see. Some gifts will be worth 1 coin; others worth 2 coins; and some worth 3 coins. Students may elect to use the coin(s) they earn, or save them for a prize of higher value.

At the end of the promotion, the student in each class with the highest

number of points over 200, will receive a special, bonus gift and will be given an opportunity to unlock a treasure chest, filled with gifts valued at over \$200.

Only students who have earned a minimum of 200 points will qualify for this honor. If more than one student in the class earns 200 points or more, the student with the highest point total will be the one who qualifies.

During this promotion, the total number of points earned by each student will not be displayed or announced. It is acceptable to let the students know how many points they have earned from week to week. However, their total points should not be revealed, especially during the last week of the promotion.

At the end of the promotion, the top winner from each class will be given a key. Only one of the keys will open the treasure chest of prizes. **IMPORTANT:** because we do not want to award the grand prize based on "luck" or chance, the student who earned the most points will be given the key which opens the chest. Only the person who distributes the keys will know in advance the name of the grand prize winner. Everyone else will discover who the grand prize winner is when the students try their keys in the lock on the

treasure chest. It will add a bit of excitement and suspense if you have the grand prize winner try his or her key last.

During the course of this promotion, it is good to take the treasure chest of prizes into every classroom and display it briefly, as an incentive for the students. Flyers will also be distributed in the classes, and letters and flyers will be mailed to the parents of students, asking for their help and encouragement.

Specific Instructions:

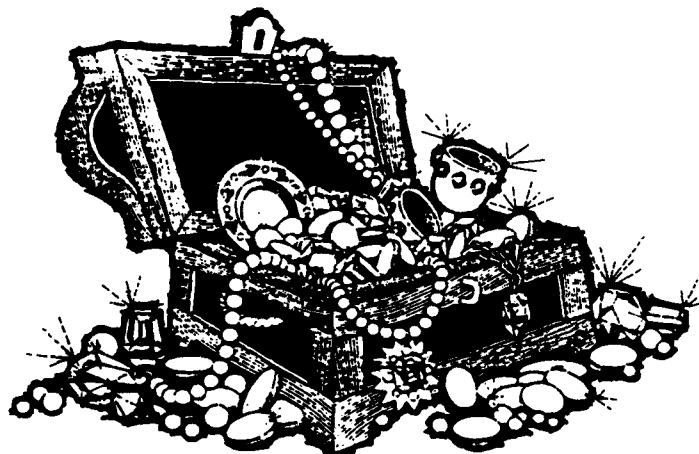
Each Secretary will have a Weekly Point Chart on which to record the points each student earns. A supply of coins will also be distributed to every class. Additional coins will be available in the Audio-Visual Room. Every time students

accumulate 40 points, they will be given one of the coins. Be sure to sign the coins before you distribute them. Coins without signatures cannot be redeemed.

For example: when a student earns a total of 40 points, he or she will be given one coin. When the point total reaches 80 points, he or she will be given a second coin, etc. It is up to the student to decide whether to redeem the coin for a prize, or save it and try to earn a prize of greater value.

Re-Cap sheets will also be included in the Secretary's folder. Record on this sheet the total number of points each student earns each week. This will help you to determine when students qualify to receive a coin.

YOU CAN Unlock The



Treasure

Beginning: _____ and Ending: _____

How Can You Earn Points?

Attend Sunday School: 5 points • Bring Your Bible: 2 points

Bring an Offering: 2 points • Learn the Bible Verse: 5 points

Bring a Food Item for Those in Need: 5 points

Bring a Friend: 20 points



For every 40 points you earn, you will receive a "Gold Coin."

Coins can be redeemed for prizes.

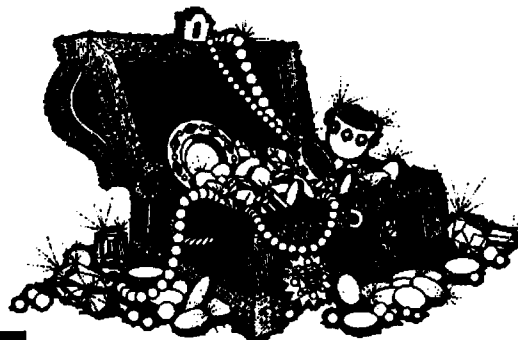
The student in each class, who earns the most points over 200, will win a special prize and will be given a key which may open the Treasure Chest.

The Treasure Chest contains prizes valued at over \$_____.

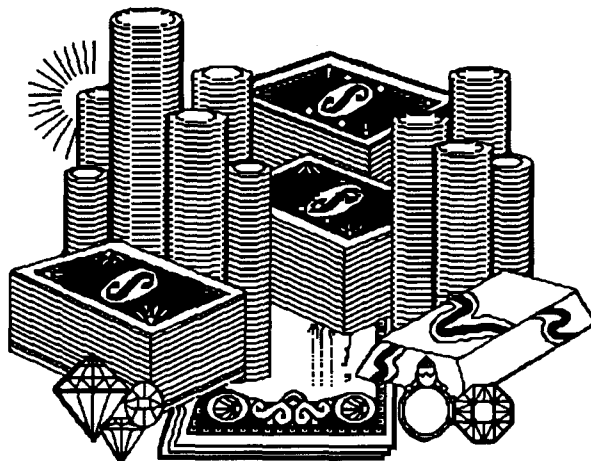
The student whose key opens the Treasure Chest, will win its contents!

Invite Your Friends to Sunday School!

Unlock The Treasure



What Treasure is Inside the Chest?



God says that He is worth more than Silver or Gold, and we are to treasure Him above all earthly riches!

You have the opportunity to win an earthly treasure, while helping others to find the treasure of knowing Jesus. Bring a friend to Sunday School between _____ and _____ and earn the opportunity to open the chest and claim the prize.



Weekly Point Chart



Total points for the week

Bringing a friend (20)

Bringing food item (5)

Memory Verse (5)

Bringing an offering (2)

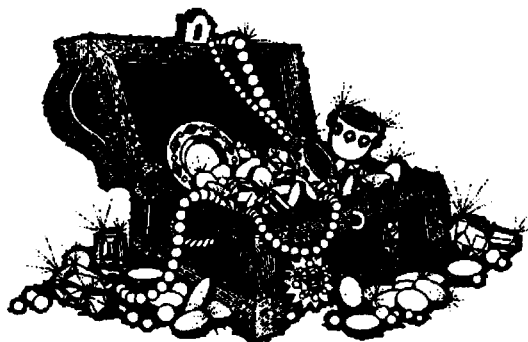
Bringing Bible (2)

Attendance (5)

Name

[illegible]

Re-Cap Sheet



Class:

[illegible]

Section 7

Catechism In Doctrine

Introduction to Catechism in Doctrine

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." (I Timothy 4:16)

Jesus said, *"Take heed what ye hear..."* (Mark 4:24) Be careful about what you allow to enter your mind, because it will affect your heart. We are living in a day that is characterized by the deception Jesus warned about in Matthew 24. Our young people are being taught the doctrine of secular humanism, which leads to rebellion, pride, hedonism, and self-destruction.

The purpose of this material is to help stimulate a focus on truth that will change lives. Truth is not just a set of ideas. No one person has all the right answers to every detail of theological thought. Each of us sees *"through a glass darkly,"* (1 Corinthians 13:12) particularly when it comes to our eschatology. It is important that we respect one another in our pursuit of truth. As orthodox Christian teachers, we agree on the essential basics that are expressed in the "Apostle's Creed." Beyond that, we have different perspectives and insights concerning the particular matters of interest relative to Bible history and application. Our purpose is to present basic concepts that will stimulate an interest in young people to seek after wisdom, not to present our views as the final word on doctrine.

Truth is not a set of concepts: truth is the Person of Jesus Christ. When we know the Truth (Jesus), the truth will set us free. Freedom is not the right to do whatever

we want, but is the power to do what we should.

God's Word includes a curriculum guide for all education. It outlines the priorities that should be the basis for every training program. (I Peter 1) The first objective of a wise teacher is **faith**. We are to define and stimulate a focus on God and His purposes in the earth. Before we can train anyone, we must know that he has been supernaturally born again by God's grace through faith. Unless he is born again, he cannot possibly see the Kingdom of God (spiritual reality). (John 3:3)

The second priority is character training. Peter said, *"Add to your faith virtue."* Virtue is the positive influence that flows out of a life that is whole, and transformed by the power and love of God. After he has been led to a personal relationship with God, he needs *"instruction in righteousness."* (II Timothy 3:16) He needs lessons that will teach him to live well, not just to make a living.

Notice that **knowledge** is third on God's list of priorities, not first, as is the agenda of the secular world of educators. In a secularized education, faith and virtue are eliminated by the state, with the erroneous belief that knowledge apart from faith can bring man to wholeness and fulfillment in life. But knowledge without the balancing perspective of faith results in pride and rebellion. *"Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up."* (I Corinthians 8:1)

These lessons emphasize doctrine that stimulates wisdom, which begins with the

fear of the Lord. (Proverbs 9:10) There is a focus on creation, grace, spiritual gifts, accountability, and eschatology. When young people are taught that they are not a cosmic accident, but an eternal soul designed by a loving Heavenly Father, they will tend to be more responsive to other authorities. They will be more likely to have an attitude of gratitude, and a heart for the things of God.

Our goal is not simply to increase our knowledge, but also to hear those things which will have the greatest possible benefit for our lives: things that will still have value ten thousand years from now.

We do not want simply to learn facts about Jesus, but we want God's abiding presence in our lives. We want to know Jesus. As the Apostle Peter said, *"Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."* (II Peter 3:18) In other words, humble yourself and receive more of God's enabling power and strength, and get to know Jesus more personally and intimately.

We pray that these lessons will stir your faith, encourage your heart, and stimulate your desire to search the Word of God with joy as we anticipate the return of our Lord Jesus Christ to the earth.

Why Are There No Dinosaurs Today?

The fact that many prehistoric species of reptiles are extinct today is scientific evidence of recreation and of a great flood. It does not support the doctrine of evolution, as some suppose.

The doctrine of "secular humanism" is the belief that life just happened. It holds that man is just another animal; he evolved from nothing; and he will become nothing again when he dies. Therefore, there is no need for man to answer to God.

"The fool has said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works,...." (Psalms 14:1)

One of the problems that the ungodly have with their theory of evolution is **creation**. How can there be a creation and order in the earth without a creator? Charles Darwin developed a "Theory of Evolution," which is the idea that life evolved by chance, and that one form of life accidentally develops into a superior form over millions of years. This has been disproved by science; but, many people still believe it.

Evolutionists believe that life evolved in stages, and that 65 or 100 million years ago (numbers made up by "educated" guessing) the large reptiles ruled the earth and became extinct long before men had tails and swung from trees. But more and more evidence points to the fact that dinosaurs existed with man in the last 6,000 years of history, and they have

become extinct just as a matter of chance. In fact, in our time, species of plants or animals become extinct almost every day.

Job described dinosaurs in the Bible. They were called "Behemoth" and "Leviathan." Scientists have found fossil records of men's footprints along with those of dinosaurs. Cave-dwellers left pictures of dinosaurs painted on their walls. In ancient writings, there are records of encounters with huge "dragons," and even pterodactyls -- flying reptiles -- were sighted as late as the 1800 A.D. It is possible that Noah had young dinosaurs of different species on the ark. After the flood, the earth's climate was much different, and many large reptile species died because of the lack of vegetation and more extreme climates.

The fact that there are so many fossils today is proof of a great flood, because, normally, animals would be eaten or would decay, unless they were suddenly covered with water and their bodies settled in the mud under the pressure of the water. Some creatures, like the woolly mammoths, were drowned. The water then froze over them; and, today, their bodies are preserved in ice.

The Genesis account indicates that God first created the earth long ago, and then

the planet became void before the creation or "re-creation" described in Genesis 1:1. The Hebrew words for "was" and "became" are the same: "*The earth was without form, and void.*" Note also that God commanded Adam and Eve to "...replenish the earth,...." (Genesis 1:28) Satan's fall from heaven to the earth could have caused great destruction; and many

species may have been destroyed and were not a part of the Genesis in Adam's time. Some Bible scholars believe that all dinosaurs became extinct before the time of Adam. We are not sure; but, we are given volumes of scientific evidence that there was a great flood and that life does not just happen.

What Was the Earth Like Before the Great Flood?

Before the flood, there was a great vapor canopy in the atmosphere; and the climate was much milder than it is today.

God created the world in six days, and said, "It is good." Everything He made was good. He even made man perfect; but, He allowed man to make choices. When man sinned, he damaged not only himself, but also, the things around him.

After Adam and Eve sinned, they were cast out of the Garden of Eden so they would not eat of the tree of life and live forever in their fallen condition. They had children; then grandchildren; and the family of man grew. After about 1,000 years, the wickedness of man became so great that God decided to destroy mankind with a great flood. Noah and his family were saved, because they obeyed the Lord and built a large ship, called the "Ark," to protect them and the animals from drowning.

Before the flood, people ordinarily lived for hundreds of years. The earth was covered by a great vapor canopy. That is, most of the moisture was in the atmosphere. It shielded the earth from harsh sun rays, diffusing the light and heat from the sun so that it was warm and comfortable all over the world. There was lush vegetation even in the extreme northern and southern parts of the world, where today it is frozen over with ice and snow. Before the flood, huge reptiles could live on the vast amounts of plant life in

these areas; whereas today, only penguins and walruses can survive.

Many scientists and Bible scholars believe that there was no rain before the flood, citing Genesis 2:5-6:

"...God had not caused it to rain upon the earth...but there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the...ground."

No rain is mentioned until the flood. The heavier protective atmosphere was probably a factor in allowing people to live much longer. Apparently, Adam lived 930 years after his fall from grace, and Noah's grandfather, Methuselah, lived for 969 years.

Before the flood, there were no huge oceans as we know them, because most of the water was in the atmosphere. The earth was able to support much more plant and animal life than it can today. After God judged the world with the great flood, He sent a rainbow as his promise to Noah that He would never again flood the whole earth. Later, His prophets said that God would judge the earth "by fire." Peter and John spoke of great fire on the earth, and a "renewed heaven" -- or atmosphere -- "and earth."

After seeing the great judgment of God, John said,

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."
(Revelation 21:1)

It would appear that God is going to restore the earth to its condition before the great flood. (Perhaps all of the mosquitoes will die in the fire.)

The importance of this lesson is the principle that sin has consequences. God restored the earth after the judgment; but, it suffered permanent damage. The temple in Jerusalem was restored; but, the new temple was very inferior. When we rebel against God and turn to sin, we can be forgiven; but, we will not have as fruitful and joyful a life as we could have known if we had remained faithful. Sin does have consequences. Sin always makes life worse and never better.

Why Did God Send the Great Flood?

When mankind became extremely wicked, God judged the world by sending a flood to cover the earth and to drown the people.

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." (Genesis 6:5-8)

God is not only a God of love and kindness, but He is also a perfectly just and holy God. God is so holy that "He cannot look upon sin," and sin cannot enter into heaven. God is the perfect judge. At the end of time, He will judge every individual for eternity. He also judges people as nations or "people groups." When mankind became so wicked that all people became totally preoccupied with evil and selfish desires, He sent destruction on the earth, so that all would know that "...the wages of sin is death,...." (Romans 6:23)

In the story of Sodom and Lot, we learn that the righteous citizens of a city or nation are the key to its preservation. God told Abraham that, if there were ten

righteous people in the city, He would spare the city for their sake. Since there was only one righteous family, God removed them and sent fire and brimstone to destroy the two cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The righteous in the land are like "salt," or the preservative of the nation. The more righteous people there are in the land, the safer and more blessed that nation becomes. When sodomites and perverted people dominate the culture, the nation is in great danger.

Jesus later taught that God will apply this same principle in the end times:

"But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matthew 24:37-39)

The Bible says that, in the last days, men will become more and more wicked; and they will be fighting wars and doing more and more wicked things to one another. As God removed Lot and his

family and then destroyed the cities, and as He preserved Noah and his family in order to bring judgment on the earth, so, in the last days, very soon we believe from scripture, He will take His people who are righteous; He will preserve their lives; and He will send a great judgment of fire on the earth to destroy the wicked and

demonstrate that He is a holy and a righteous God. Remember that judgment means to make things right. For the righteous who are "in Christ," judgment is a positive term, because their Lord is going to bring down the wicked and exalt the humble.

What Is Divine Healing?

Divine healing is the miraculous repair or restoration -- by the supernatural intervention of God -- of that which has been diseased or injured.

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)

Healing for the spirit, soul, and body is part of the atonement provided for believers by the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. Sin brought separation from God in our spirits; guilt and anguish in our souls; and it results ultimately in physical suffering and death. (Romans 6:23) But God is good, and He is the author of blessing and healing. Sin and the devil always tear down; but, God's influence in our lives is always positive.

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

The Bible is full of cases where people were miraculously healed of diseases and injuries, and some were even raised from the dead by the power of God. In His short ministry on earth, Jesus was the best example of a healer. When He commissioned His disciples, He told them to lay hands on the sick and that they would recover. There is no scriptural reason to believe that God has stopped

healing people in response to believing prayer. In fact, Jesus said that one evidence that we are genuine believers is that we would minister healing to the sick. (Mark 16:18)

Healing is also part of God's creation. He designed our bodies to heal our wounds and fight disease. Emotions that result from sin, such as guilt, fear, anger, and depression, work against the body's immune system and diminish its ability to heal properly. A clean heart, joy, and laughter increase the body's healing potential.

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones." (Proverbs 17:22)

When we speak of divine healing, or "miracles," we deal with a supernatural acceleration or bypassing of the natural laws of healing. For instance, when we believe God for healing, growths can disappear suddenly; broken bones can mend in a moment's time; people with destroyed nerve systems can see or feel again instantly; and even the lives of people, who have been dead for days, can be restored, with no brain-damage.

Not everyone who asks for divine healing receives it. We do not know all the answers; but, there are several factors.

One major factor is that God loves to respond to genuine faith. However, if we are not healed, it is not necessarily an indication of weak faith or unconfessed sin. When we pray for healing, we need to do so, in faith, believing God will intervene for us. Another factor is that God sees the larger picture of our lives and knows what is best for us. He is able to make

"...all things work together for good to them that love God,...."
(Romans 8:28)

One definition of healing is "preservation from an early death." God

still heals people today and loves for us to look to Him as our first recourse when we are hurting. It is not a sin to go to doctors or hospitals. Sometimes God uses them as His agents for health and healing. Be sure to keep your focus on faith in God and not just on natural means.

Divine healing is a touch of resurrection power. It is not a guarantee of perfect health. The "law of sin and death" is at work in each of us, and one day, we will all die. (Romans 8:2, Hebrews 9:27) But, until that day, we can look to God for His healing touch.

What Does the Bible Say about the Laying on of Hands for Physical Healing?

We are instructed in the Bible to call for the elders of the church to lay hands on us for healing.

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up;...." (James 5:14-15)

The Apostle James was the pastor of the great church in Jerusalem. He gave many practical insights into spiritual conduct among Christians in a local church. In chapter 5, verses 13-14, he said,

"Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders...."

There are times when we should pray for our own needs and draw close to the Lord. God allows pressures and adversity in our lives, knowing that, as we turn to Him in humility and prayer, we grow spiritually. We tend to get spiritually lazy when everything in life goes easily. However, there are other times when we need others to pray with us and for us, including times of physical illness.

Notice that the pastor -- inspired by the Holy Spirit to speak for God -- tells us that

the one who is sick should call for the elders. Sometimes someone else will want to call for prayer help. But, if the sick person does not ask for it himself, he may not be open by faith to receive from the Lord. If he is able to speak for himself, he should humble himself and ask for prayer.

He should call for the **elders** of the church. It is our natural tendency to relate to our peers; but, God wants us to learn to respond to mature leaders. We see in the next verse,

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." (James 5:16)

Often our physical problems are a result of bitterness or our unconfessed sin. A mature elder would be a good person to talk to about your weak areas and to make yourself accountable to him for victory in those areas.

The elders should anoint the sick with oil, as a symbol of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is a reminder that, while we may be getting medical care, the Lord is our Great Physician and is the source of our healing.

How Do We Develop Faith in God?

We strengthen and develop our faith with reminders of God's greatness, faithfulness, and love; by prayer; worship; Bible reading; and hearing Bible preaching.

*"So then faith cometh by hearing,
and hearing by the word of God."
(Romans 10:17)*

Satan is the enemy of our soul. His great goal is to get us focused on ourselves, on people, or on the things of the world -- anything to keep us from walking in faith and in the joy of the Lord. He especially targets those Christians who are effective and have a potential in God to damage his dark kingdom by becoming soul winners. The more we concentrate on ourselves, other people, and possessions, the less concentration we will have on God. A focus on self produces pride; a focus on people produces bitterness; and a focus on things produces a temporal value system. A carnal, temporal focus on life will also produce fear, which is the opposite of faith.

Conversely, the more we direct our thoughts and energies toward God and His Word, the more we stimulate trust and confidence in Him. After all, He never fails; and He has no faults or weaknesses. All through the Bible, we see people in their ups and downs; at their best and at their worst; but, God never loses a battle or makes a mistake. It is significant that our own failures and sins ultimately cause us to doubt and even to reject God. Or, we react to the humanity in people as an

excuse to violate God's will for our lives and go our own way.

One great attack from the forces of darkness is called "secular humanism." The word sounds like the good word "humanitarian;" but, actually, it is an evil philosophy, designed to turn people away from God. Humanism is simply a perspective on life that excludes God from the picture. It is actually a religion, based on the doctrine of evolution. It leads us to the fatalistic view that "life just happens; and things in life just happen; so, avoid problems and try to be happy." Secular humanism has resulted in widespread rebellion, depression, addictions, and suicide, because it keeps us from God and the fear of the Lord.

When we stimulate our spirit with God's Word, we build purpose, peace, and joy in our lives. We realize that God is in control and has a plan and purpose for our lives. Life has meaning and direction; and God can give us the grace to live it to the fullest. Not only that, but we also have an eternal hope of heaven. No wonder Isaiah said,

*"Thou wilt keep him in perfect
peace whose mind is stayed on
thee:...." (Isaiah 26:3)*

We direct our attention toward God as we read His Word; listen to godly music; gather in church to worship and hear Bible preaching; and have Christian fellowship with one another. The more we include

God in our thinking, the more we build up our faith, because everything about God is good. Indeed, to know Him is to love Him.

What Is the Grace of God?

The grace of God is favor, blessing, and enablement, which are imparted as a gift to those who humble themselves before Him and receive it.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

The grace of God is a powerful and wonderful truth that is unique to the Christian faith. While most religions teach that people must earn eternal life, God's Word says that God gives us eternal life and imparts wholeness to our lives by His grace, not by our own merits. The Greek word for "grace" is "charis," and the word for "gift" is "charisma." So, they are similar. There are two aspects of spiritual gifts:

1. Grace is unmerited. We do not receive it by being good, but by being humble.
2. Grace is the power and virtue of God, working through us and for us, and not our own fleshly will and strength.

"It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

Some people suggest that grace is merely unmerited favor. If that were true, then to "grow in grace" would be to deserve it less, and one should sin more to get more grace. In Romans 5:20, when Paul

said, "...where sin abounded, grace did much more abound;" he was not saying, "people who sin more receive more grace." Rather, he was saying, "when there is much evil in a society, God will give greater grace to His people so they can still be overcomers." Paul warned about those who would "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness." (Jude 4) That is to say, "Since I am saved by grace, then I can be immoral and get away with it." Paul's answer was,

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid...." (Romans 6:1-2)

If grace were only unmerited favor, then it would teach us not to worry if our lives are immoral and less deserving of reward. But, Paul said that the grace of God teaches us

"that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world...." (Titus 2:11-12)

The great truth of the grace of God is that we are not made righteous by our own efforts or intellect. We are destined for heaven, because of the merit of Jesus Christ and His death on the cross. We can

never develop enough goodness to be God's children. However, God is able to impute and impart righteousness to us, as we humble ourselves under His hand. When Paul was suffering, he asked God to remove his "thorn in the flesh." God said, *"My grace is sufficient for thee:...."* (2 Corinthians 12:9) This clearly refers to the fact that God would give him strength and

power. Paul did not need mercy, because it was not a sin problem. Grace is more than unmerited favor. No wonder the apostles said, *"grace to you."* We cannot be overcomers with our own human effort and wisdom. We need God's supernatural gifts in our lives to be "more than conquerors."

How Can We Know if We Have Eternal Life?

We can know we have eternal life if we have a covenant relationship with God through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."
(John 5:39)

Jesus was addressing a particular problem which the Pharisees had -- one that many people still have today. They thought that "truth" would lead them to the Spirit. They were often diligent in memorizing the law and obeying all kinds of rules; but, they missed the underlying purpose. It is human nature to try to "deserve" God's favor and reward. So, many people are desperately and faithfully "religious," but they have no personal relationship with the Lord. All through the Bible, the prophets reminded the people that God was more interested in their hearts than in their religious observances.

In the days of Jesus, the scribes were very respected by the Jewish people. A scribe was a man whose occupation was writing copies of the scriptures. Therefore, the scribes naturally memorized large portions of the Word; and they would answer people's questions, teaching as "experts." But, they rarely knew the Lord. In fact, we know of prostitutes and publicans (I.R.S. men) who got saved; but, we do not know of any scribe who ever became an effective Christian.

The error of man-made religion is the idea that "truth will lead us to God" (the Spirit). Jesus said the opposite: *"The Spirit of truth...will guide you into all truth:...."* (John 16:13) We know that we are the children of God, because

"The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit,...." (Romans 8:16)

We know that we have eternal life, because of the Word of God. John said,

"These things have I written unto you that believe...that ye may know that ye have eternal life,...." (1 John 5:13)

God's purpose is to have a people who fully belong to Him through a covenant relationship, and not merely a group of people who observe religious forms and rituals. The scribes were so busy trying to find God through the scriptures that they missed the greatest revelation of God in history: the Lord Jesus Christ. They were so caught up in details, they did not see the "big picture." Jesus rebuked them for thinking that they could find eternal life through their intellect and debate. Their main purpose was to know "about" God, while God's purpose was to have a people who know Him. Jesus let the people know that the purpose of scripture was to point men to Him -- the *"way, the truth, and the*

life." (John 14:6) Truth is not a set of ideas,
but the person of Jesus Christ.

*"The law was our schoolmaster to
bring us unto Christ."* (Galatians
3:24)

Did Jesus Do Away with the Law When He Died on the Cross?

No. He fulfilled the law of God and made many of the religious ordinances of the Old Covenant unnecessary.

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matthew 5:17-18)

A law is a principle that always works. The law of gravity says, "when you are close to planet earth, it will pull you toward itself. Nothing ever falls upward." The law of sin and death means, "sin always tends toward death. Sin never lifts up a man; it always pulls him down." The law of the Spirit of life says, "God's presence tends toward life, both in quality and quantity."

The Law of the Lord is the sum of the basic principles of life and relationship, as expressed by the anointed writers of the Bible. The Ten Commandments were part of God's basic laws of morality and ethics, given to His people through Moses. Basically, the first four commandments can be summed up with "Thou shalt love the LORD your God," and the other six with "love one another." Paul said,

"...love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the

fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:10)

Many aspects of the old covenant given to Moses were expressed in ordinances, such as rituals and animal sacrifices. By fulfilling all of the offerings and ordinances, which were a "type" of salvation through His blood, Jesus took away these ordinances, nailing them to the cross:

"...blotting out the handwriting of the ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross." (Colossians 2:14)

Sin is rooted in selfishness; and genuine Christian conversion is expressed by love. (John 13:35) Sin seeks selfish goals and pleasure at the expense of others, while God's love prompts us to give; to share; and to serve. When you understand the definitions and implications of each, sin and genuine love are mutually exclusive. Sin is the opposite of love. When Jesus reigns in our hearts as Lord, He gives us the grace to obey the prompting of God's Spirit and to care genuinely about the needs and feelings of others. This is the Law of God written in our hearts, not just in our minds.

Law is the irreducible minimum of ethical behavior; but, God's grace gives us the power to live for others. When Jesus is in your heart, no one needs to tell you, "do not steal." In fact, you are already doing the opposite by being a giver. You do not covet what your neighbor has; in fact, you want to bless him.

"The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient...." (1 Timothy 1:9)

The law is not just a set of strict rules to keep us from having fun.

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul:...." (Psalms

19:7) "The law is good, if a man use it lawfully." (1 Timothy 1:8)

We are not saved by keeping the law; we are saved by God's grace through faith. But, if we find ourselves living in violation of God's laws, it is an indication that we need to go to Jesus; repent; and make things right:

"...the law was our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ...." (Galatians 3:24)

What Is Regeneration?

Regeneration means "new birth".

It refers to the new spiritual life believers receive when they repent of their sin and entrust their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

The Greek term "genesia" means "beginning", or "birth". That word is the title of the first book of the Bible. "Regeneration" means "born again." The classic teaching was given to a church leader, named Nicodemus, who came secretly to Jesus by night, because most Jewish leaders were critical and skeptical of Jesus. Jesus said to him,

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:5-6)

In this present physical life, we are born with an active and functioning body and soul; but, our spirits are dead, because we were born in sin. Our spirits are that part of us that can know and perceive God and the things of the spirit. Our natural minds are limited to this physical, three-dimensional world; and they cannot relate to supernatural things.

"...the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14)

The "natural man" means anyone who has not been born again spiritually by faith in Jesus Christ. That is why Jesus said to Nicodemus,

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

Without being born again, Nicodemus would not be able to "see," or perceive, the kingdom of God.

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, their disobedience caused a separation from God's holy presence; and separation from God is spiritual death. Their perception was changed, and

"...the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked;...." (Genesis 3:7)

That is, they had formerly seen with spiritual vision; and they had seen the glory of God in one another. Now, they had a carnal focus, and could see only the

physical. They were afraid and ashamed. They became insensitive to the Spirit, because of the damage they had done to their spirit. Everyone born to a human father inherited that "sin nature," and is born spiritually blind. That is the reason we are naturally drawn to selfish and sinful desires. We see only a time-space world, where we are allured to a temporal values system. It is only when we are born again that our spiritual sensitivity is restored, and we can see from an eternal point of view.

When the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and deals with our spirit, we either resist

Him and justify ourselves, or we respond to Him and confess our guilt and sin to God. By repentance and faith we receive God's forgiveness, based on the fact that Jesus paid the death penalty for us on the cross. At that moment, by the power of God's grace, we are "born of the Spirit." We have eternal life in us as the gift of God; and we know that when we die (physical death is separation from the body), we will go to heaven and live with God forever. There is no other way to know you are going to heaven. You must be born again.

What Is Salvation?

Salvation is a broad term. It involves all the positive changes which occur in a person's life, as he responds to God by repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"...if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:9-10)

The doctrine of salvation involves **regeneration** -- new birth; **conversion** -- change; **adoption** -- becoming a child of God; **sanctification** -- being set apart for God's purposes; **justification** -- legally acquitted from the penalty of our sins; and **redemption** -- being bought back as God's restored possession. The term "salvation" literally means, "to be made whole; healing for spirit, soul, and body."

We understand the term "saved" in natural physical terms as being protected from an early death. If we are about to drown and we are pulled from the water by a rescuer, we have been saved from drowning. Because of His death on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, Jesus became *"...the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."* (1 Timothy 4:10) He saved us from the controlling power of sin and, therefore, saved us also from the

penalty of sin, which is eternal separation from God in hell.

Many people see the term as synonymous with regeneration, or a "ticket to heaven;" but, it is really more than that. As we are "saved," our sin is removed; our spirits are made alive; our minds are renewed; our emotions are healed; and we are transformed *"...from glory to glory,...."* (2 Corinthians 3:18) God's goal is not just to get as many sinners as He can to go to heaven. His objective is to have a covenant people who love Him and give their lives to Him, allowing Him to make them whole and heal all the destructive effects of sin. The Bible does not teach that we are just "saved sinners;" it refers to us as "saints of God."

A common concept is that we are only saved from hell. But, the Bible teaches that we are saved from our old sinful lifestyle. (1 Peter 1:18-19) We are saved -- made spiritually whole -- by God's grace through faith. We are also told to *"...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."* (Philippians 2:12) That is, we are responsible for our own spiritual maturity and strength.

The Apostle James said, *"...the prayer of faith shall save the sick,...."* (James 5:15)

"Salvation" is the same Greek word as "healing." Salvation, as it relates to our spirit, is being "quickened" -- made alive -- and made right with God by a covenant relationship through the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 2:1) Salvation of the soul is renewal and healing in the mind and

emotions. Salvation for the body is healing, strength, and resurrection. To be **saved** means more than just being freed from the **penalty** of sin. It also involves freedom from the **power** and the **consequences** of sin.

What Was the Purpose of the Feasts of the Lord?

God commanded the people of Israel to gather together three times a year to offer sacrifices and to celebrate their relationship with Him.

"Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread:... and the feast of harvest, ... and the feast of ingathering...."
(Exodus 23:14-16)

It is a natural human tendency to get so caught up in the activities and pursuits of life and living that we neglect to direct our attention toward God. He is the most important person in life; and He deserves to be first in our affections and priorities. God commanded His covenant people to take a day off each week to rest and to focus their attention on Him. He also established three major feasts during the year to encourage the people to be mindful of eternal values, and to commemorate His great work in their lives in the past.

The first feast was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, in which the Passover was celebrated. The Israelites were reminded each year of the day of their deliverance from Egypt. They had obeyed God's command: each family had slain and sacrificed a lamb in the prescribed manner; and then they had applied the blood to the doorposts of their houses. The death angel came to kill all the firstborn males; but, the death angel passed over the homes where the blood was seen as a propitiation. This was also a picture of Christ, who, 1500 years later, was the

"...Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29)

Jesus was crucified on the cross on the very day of Passover. Because His blood is applied to our hearts when we repent and believe, the death penalty for sin will pass over us, and we have the gift of eternal life. We also celebrate the Passover every time we partake of the Lord's supper in communion.

The second feast was the Feast of Harvest, or Pentecost. Fifty days after the Passover, God gave Israel the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai. "Pente" means "fifty." Not only had the Lord set them free from the bondage of Egypt, but He had also given them principles for living. In the new covenant, we receive the fulfillment of this feast when we are baptized in the Holy Ghost. Again, on the exact historic day of Pentecost, the believers gathered in Jerusalem; were baptized in the Holy Ghost; and spoke in tongues as the Spirit gave them the utterance. God makes us His children and sets us free in salvation. Then He gives His Spirit to live and work in us so that we are able to live effectively for Him in a wicked world. God intends for every believer to be filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38-39)

The third great feast was the Feast of Ingathering, or the Feast of Tabernacles, which had its climax in the Day of Atonement. On that day, the high priest went into the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and offered the blood of the lamb on the mercy seat, to cover the sins

of the people for one year. Of course, this was also fulfilled by Jesus, who offered His own blood on God's mercy seat, to atone for every born-again believer once and for all.

Why Is It So Important that We "Fear Not"?

Fear is caused by a wrong focus on self and temporal values.
Fear is the opposite of faith, without which we cannot please God.

"....Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." (Isaiah 43:1)

The Bible frequently admonishes us not to fear. We find this command in over 300 references in scripture. Fear is a natural human response to that which is new or unknown, and it is the first indication of a lack of faith. The first recorded words of man after the fall in the garden were, *"I was afraid."* (Genesis 3:10) Adam had never known fear until he disobeyed God.

Fear is the sense of apprehension or dread over the perceived threat of personal harm or loss. We fear when we are threatened with injury, death, or the loss of freedom or property. Fear is caused by ownership. Adam and Eve had dominion over all God had created on earth, as long as they recognized God's ownership. The moment they disobeyed, they declared independence and took possession of their own lives. When they took ownership, they lost dominion. They said, *"I am my own person,"* and they were cast out of the garden.

Christians realize that everything in this life belongs to God. We are stewards of His property, whether it be money, children, our bodies, or whatever. Jesus said,

"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." (Matthew 10:39)

We become fearful -- insecure -- when we base our happiness or security on things we cannot keep. When we cling to temporal possessions we cannot keep and "own," we establish the basis for fear. When our whole life is centered in this life on earth, we become afraid to die. The more we can "die to self," the more we free ourselves from the bondage of fear.

If you look to men for your security or blessing, you will be basing your hope on an unstable source and will not be free. *"The fear of man bringeth a snare...."* (Proverbs 29:25) God's purpose is to bring us into a personal, continual walk with Him, so that we can look to Him as our source and our protection.

Fear is an indicator of a lack of faith, which is sin. Sin always causes us to focus on ourselves; God's love causes us to seek the blessing and good of others. The more we are concerned with the needs of others, the less fear we will have for our own wants.

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear...." (1 John 4:18)

The psalmist trained himself to let fear be a reminder that his faith was weak, so he would turn to God and stir up his faith. *"What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee."* (Psalms 56:3)

Fear is the opposite of faith. Faith focuses on God and His purposes and causes us to be positive and courageous. Fear focuses on negatives in people and in

life and causes us to fail. Our decisions should never be based on fear. "I was afraid people would laugh at me, so I did not respond to God." The servant with one talent tried to use that as an excuse, but he did not get sympathy from the master. (Matthew 25:18, 24-30) Let faith rule your decisions, and not fear.

What Is the Fear of the Lord?

The fear of the Lord is the understanding and awareness of God's justice and holiness. It is the realization that God will hold us accountable for all that we do in this life.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." (Proverbs 9:10)

While it is important that we do not fear things, or people, or death, it is equally important that we learn the fear of the Lord. In fact, the greatest key to overcoming fears in life is a healthy sense of the fear of the Lord. When we have a proper sense of the fear of the Lord, we will be continually aware of His presence. We will be constantly reminded of His goodness and power. We will tend to see life as a part of His plan and purposes -- we will see the bigger picture. We become less inclined to be shaken up by the material things of life, because we see this brief life on earth as a beginning and preparation for eternity. We are less fearful of man, because we understand that God is infinitely greater than man.

As a youth, David had the fear of the Lord. He went boldly to the battlefield where the other Israelites were quaking in terror of the giant warrior, Goliath. David was not afraid of the giant, as the Israeli soldiers were, because he saw that Goliath was in defiance of God and was no match for Him. David overcame the fear of man, because he was so strongly aware of God's power. (1 Samuel 17)

Satan's goal with man is to get man's attention focused on things, money, himself, and anything but God. When we get our eyes off God, we become proud, weak, and easily manipulated. The "secular humanist" philosophy of seeing life as if there were no God is a classic form of satanic deception. In Deuteronomy 6, God told Moses to have the people talk to their children about the Lord several times every day, in order to prevent them from becoming secular and proud in their thinking.

We are commanded to fear the Lord. (Ecclesiastes 12:13) When we have the fear of the Lord, we will also love Him more. We tend to focus on whatever we fear. Everything about God is good: to know Him is to love Him. We will also have peace, because

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee...." (Isaiah 26:3)

The fear of the Lord is not a negative dread; but, rather, it is a positive response to life. *"The fear of the LORD is clean...."* (Psalms 19:9) We are commanded to *"serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice...."* (Psalms 2:11) So, the fear of the Lord and rejoicing go together. When we fear the Lord, we will honor our parents and other

authorities God has placed over us, and we will depart from evil. *"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil...."* (Proverbs 8:13) When we fear the Lord, not only will we avoid evil because we do not want to suffer the consequences; but, we will also hate evil because of all the damage it does to people.

"Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."
(Revelation 14:7)

What Are the Benefits of the Fear of the Lord?

The fear of the Lord causes us to receive all manner of physical and spiritual blessings.

"By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honor, and life." (Proverbs 22:4)

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...." (Proverbs 1:7) It is also the beginning of wisdom. (Psalms 111:10) That means, if you do not fear God, you really do not know what you need to know in life; and you will not be able to see truth until you know the fear of the Lord.

There are more than 30 benefits to the fear of the Lord listed in scripture. It is an important part of wisdom and an essential key to a successful life. The Bible promises that *"the LORD is with them that fear him...."* (Psalms 25:14); He is good to all that fear Him (Psalms 31:19); *"The Lord is upon them that fear him..."* (Psalms 37:18);

"The angel of the LORD encampeth around them that fear him, and delivereth them." (Psalms 34:7)

When you fear the Lord, **God supplies your needs** (Psalms 34:9); and God will be your **banner** (Psalms 60:4). God will give you a special **heritage** (Psalms 61:5); **mercy** (Psalms 103:11); and **pity** (Psalms 103:13). God will provide **food** for those who fear Him (Psalms 111:5) and will **bless** them (Psalms 115:13). God will **teach** you His

ways. Your soul shall **dwell at ease**; and your descendants will **inherit** the earth (Psalms 25:12-13). *"The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant"* (Psalms 25:14).

When you fear the Lord, **godly people** will relate to you (Psalms 119:63); and you will be **glad** in the Lord (Psalms 119:74). God will **fulfill your desires** (Psalms 145:19); and He will **take pleasure in you** (Psalms 147:11). The fear of the Lord will cause you to **hate evil** (Proverbs 8:13). It will also cause you to **live longer** on the earth (Proverbs 10:27). God promises that you shall be **rewarded** (Proverbs 13:13); and you will have a strong **confidence** (Proverbs 14:26). Notice that, when you fear anyone or anything else, it will have the opposite effect. The fear of man makes you timid and bound, but not the fear of the Lord.

The fear of the Lord is a **fountain of life** (Proverbs 14:27); and it will cause you to **learn righteousness** (Proverbs 15:33). It is really the only thing that will cause men to **depart from evil** (Proverbs 16:6). The fear of the Lord has a tendency to make **life** in general better and longer (Proverbs 19:23). The fear of the Lord will also cause more **wealth** and **honor** to come into your life (Proverbs 22:4). God promises that your hopes and **expectations** will not be cut off (Proverbs 23:17-18); and, in general,

life will go well with you (Ecclesiastes 8:12).

Fear motivated Noah to build the **ark** which saved his family (Hebrews 11:7). In fact, it is the response that will **motivate** some people toward **salvation** who may not be moved by the message of God's love (Jude v. 23). Also, the fear of the Lord

makes us candidates to receive physical **healing** from the Lord (Malachi 4:2). When you fear the Lord, you are going to be **happy** (Proverbs 28:14).

What Is Fasting?

Fasting is the practice of giving up food -- or food and drink -- for a time, in order to devote special time to prayer and to seeking God.

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?" (Isaiah 58:6)

One practice that should be a part of every believer's life is fasting. Jesus did not say, "If you fast," but, rather, "*when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites....*" (Matthew 6:16) As we see in Isaiah 58, and also in Matthew 6, it is possible to fast with wrong motives. Such abstinence will not receive the same rewards from the Lord.

Fasting benefits the spirit, soul, and body. It strengthens the spirit by exercising control over carnal desires and making a person's spirit more sensitive to God. Fasting helps the soul by stimulating humility (Psalms 35:13); and it has a wonderful cleansing effect on the body when it is done properly. (Isaiah 58:8)

There are several types of fasts. In a regular fast, the believer abstains from food for a specified time, drinking only water. The duration can vary from one meal to forty days. Moses and Jesus each fasted for 40 days. The Bible does not say that Jesus was thirsty after His fast. It only tells us that He was hungry. It is helpful to avoid caffeine and sugar for a few days before a fast and to drink plenty of water

throughout the fast. During the first day or two, the person is very hungry. After the second day, most people experience little hunger problems. In fact, we usually discover numerous health benefits as an extra benefit.

In a partial fast, we omit one or two meals each day; or we eliminate certain kinds of food. Generally, a partial fast will exclude rich foods and desserts and focus on bread or vegetables. (Daniel 10:3) Another variation of this is the liquid fast, which allows for juice, broth, or beverages, but no solid food. This is recommended for long fasts.

In a complete fast, neither food nor liquid is taken at all. Both the Apostle Paul (Acts 9:9) and Esther (Esther 4:16) each went on a complete fast for three days. Such a fast can be dangerous if extended further than that. Long, complete fasts are not recommended.

Fasting should always be accompanied by prayer and Bible reading. Otherwise, it could just be a hunger strike. When combined with fervent prayer, fasting brings deliverance, healing, and discipline in a person's life. It also releases faith.

Jesus encourages us to fast in secret; that is to say, do not make a show of it and spread the word to impress people. There

are times when a group of believers will fast together and encourage one another. Obviously, it will not be entirely "secret;" but, the key is the motive. God also encourages us to pray and give alms (for

the poor) in secret; but, there are times to pray and give publicly to encourage others to do so.

What Does "New Testament" Mean?

A testament is a will or covenant.

"New Testament" refers to the new covenant God offered to mankind and is based on the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."
(Matthew 26:28)

The Greek word for "testament" comes from a verb which means "to dispose," or "to assign, as in a will". A will is the statement of a person concerning what he would like to have done with his property after his death. It expresses his will about the use of the things he owns. A testament goes into effect after his death. The person who makes a will is called the "testator."

"For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all...." (Hebrews 9:17)

When man sinned, he broke his relationship with God and lost dominion over God's property. It is only on the basis of a legal covenant that any person or group can be restored to God; become His people; and thus enjoy the blessings and benefits of God's domain. God made a covenant with the descendants of Israel, whereby they could be His chosen people and receive His protection and blessing. Although there were many laws relative to the peoples' responsibility to God, the basis of the covenant was the sacrifice of animals, which represented the people

and paid the penalty of death in their place. This is called "atonement."

One problem was that the people were never able to live up to the perfect standards of the law consistently. Another weakness was that the blood of animals was not valuable enough to atone permanently for the sins of the people. The priest would offer fresh sacrifices regularly as sin offerings.

The book of Hebrews is God's best explanation of the difference between the old covenant and the new. Basically, the old covenant was a picture and preparation for the new, which came into effect when Jesus died on the cross as the Lamb of God.

"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle,....neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us....And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of

eternal inheritance." (Hebrews 9:11-15)

The old testament -- or covenant -- is the picture of the new. The new testament is the fulfillment of the old. The old covenant gave man the law of God, which teaches us righteousness. The new covenant gives greater grace, which changes our hearts and enables us to be righteous. Under the old covenant, Israel had the law on tables of stone; but, we have it written in our hearts by grace.

"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much

also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." (Hebrews 8:6)

When Jesus offered His blood of atonement on the mercy seat in heaven, the people who had received the old covenant by faith entered into the new covenant and were given entrance into heaven. (Ephesians 4:8)

Who Is a Jew?

The term "Jew" refers to a person who is one of the natural descendants of Israel, or to one who has been converted to the religion of Judaism.

"What advantage then hath the Jew? ...Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."
(Romans 3:1-2)

God made a special covenant with His friend, Abraham, concerning his descendants. He said that they would be

"as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore...." (Genesis 22:17)

This is perhaps referring to the fact that Abraham would have many natural descendants through his son, Isaac, as well as many spiritual descendants who are *"...Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."* (Galatians 3:29)

Israel (or Jacob), Abraham's grandson, had twelve sons. Their descendants became the mighty nation of Israel. After Solomon's reign, the kingdom was divided by political strife. Ten of the tribes formed a new kingdom. They adopted the practice of idolatry and turned away from God. Eventually, they were scattered and destroyed by the nation of Assyria, about 722 B.C. The other two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, became the southern kingdom and were known as the nation of Judah. They continued the dynasty of King David, who was from the tribe of Judah, and

maintained their capitol in Jerusalem. The worship of the true God, Jehovah, was usually the official religion; and they were not destroyed.

Later, the region of the nation of Judah was called Judea, and the descendants of Israel became known as Jews. Jesus Christ came to earth through the Jewish line. In fact, Jesus was a direct descendant of David. Even His foster-father Joseph was of the tribe of Judah. The disciples of Jesus were Jews. Virtually all of the Bible was given by God through Jewish writers. The apostle Paul had a Jewish mother and a Roman father.

Because of God's covenant with Abraham, God chose to identify with the Jewish people. God had given to Moses the Levitical covenant of the law and had laid the foundation for the new covenant through Jesus Christ, their Messiah. The people of Israel largely rejected Jesus. Many are still waiting for another messiah. John said that Jesus

"...came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God,...." (John 1:11-12)

In the Bible, any person who was not a Jew was called a "Gentile." To a Jew, that

usually implied inferiority, because the Jews were very much aware of their special place in the economy of God. Until Jesus came, a person had to convert to the Hebrew, or Jewish, faith in order to get right with God. But now, because of the cross, anyone who will repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ can be born again and enter into the new covenant with God.

Since Jesus came and fulfilled the law of the old covenant, no one can have a valid relationship with God through the

old feasts, observances, and sacrifices. In fact, to sacrifice an animal today, as in the old days, would be to deny the work of Christ on the cross and would not be pleasing to the Lord. Jews have a special place in the heart of God; but, they still need to accept Jesus as their Messiah and to be born again in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Section 8

Lessons

Good Grief

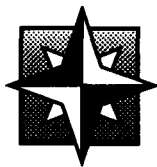
Volume 6

Lesson 1



Bible Reference

2 Samuel 1



Theme

The excellent spirit of David is revealed in the way that he was able to love King Saul, even though Saul was an abusive and bitter enemy.



Scripture Reading

2 Samuel 1:17, 19-27

17 *"And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son:"*

19 *"The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!"*

20 *"Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph."*

21 *"Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil."*

22 *"From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty."*

23 *"Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions."*

24 *"Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel."*

25 *"How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou was slain in thine high places."*

26 *"I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."*

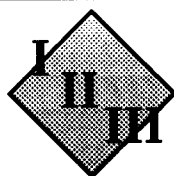
27 *"How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"*



Memory Verse

Matthew 5:43-44

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;"



Outline

I. Saul's Death.

A. King Saul had been:

1. Humble.
2. Righteous.
3. Anointed by God's grace.
4. Blessed and honored by God.
5. Talented, good-looking, tall.
6. Chosen by God.

B. Saul became proud and rebellious.

1. When he became rich and famous:
 - a. His heart was lifted up with pride.
 - b. He disobeyed God.
2. Rebellion is like witchcraft. (1 Samuel 15:23)
 - a. Witchcraft is submitting to the kingdom of Satan.

- b. It is the opposite of yielding to God and receiving God's power (grace) to do good.
- c. If we come out from under God's authority, we automatically subject ourselves to Satan's authority.
- d. All of us serve either God or Satan.
- e. Satan is a deceiver, making people think they are "free" under his dominion.

C. Saul opened his spirit to demonic oppression, when he became self-willed and disobedient toward God. (1 Samuel 16:4)

1. An evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.
 - a. Darkness cannot dwell with light.
 - b. The Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul.
 - c. Saul lost God's anointing and God's presence, because of persistent rebellion.
2. Saul counseled with a witch for guidance, because he could no longer hear from God, and Samuel was dead.
3. Saul was wounded in battle; and he committed suicide. (1 Samuel 31:4)

II. David.

A. The Amalekite soldier.

1. He found the bodies of Saul and Jonathan.
2. He thought he could get a reward from David, because everyone knew how much Saul had hated and persecuted David.
3. He told David that he had killed Saul.

4. He was a liar.
5. David had him executed, because he claimed to have killed God's anointed king.
6. The world expects us to be bitter and hateful, like them.

B. David mourned for Saul and Jonathan.

1. We expect David to mourn over Jonathan.
 - a. He was his best friend.
 - b. They had a spiritual covenant before God.
 - c. They enjoyed a holy, intimate friendship.
 - d. That is why Jonathan's love was better than the love of women. (2 Samuel 1:26) It was an unselfish, giving friendship (Greek word *agape* : "charity," or "godly love").
2. David also mourned for Saul.
 - a. He forgave Saul's jealous hatred.
 - b. He still honored the office of king.

III. David's Lamentation.

A. A lamentation is a song that expresses grief, and sorrow.

1. One book of the Bible is called "Lamentations," and it is the grieving song which Jeremiah wrote over the fall of Judah, when it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.
2. "*Sorrow is better than laughter...*" because unselfish sorrow strengthens our character. (Ecclesiastes 7:3)

B. David's song.

1. Honored Saul.
2. Expressed great sorrow.

3. David did not rejoice over the death of his enemy, even though it meant that he would become a billionaire king.
4. David focused on others, and not on himself.

C. God loved and honored David, because he had an excellent spirit.

IV. Love your Enemies.

A. "Love" is not an emotion, nor a sense of pleasure or affection.

1. Love is caring about the needs and feelings of others.
2. Love is "your good at my expense."
3. Love is the opposite of selfishness.
4. 1 Corinthians 13 -- the "love chapter."
5. *Agape* is translated "charity" in the King James; and it refers to unselfish love.
6. "...God so loved...that He gave...." (John 3:16)

B. Enemies.

1. Anyone who seeks to do you harm.
2. Or seeks to harm someone you love.

C. Loving enemies. (Matthew 5:44)

1. Does not mean that you have to hang around them or be friends.
2. Love seeks the best for others, and desires their salvation.
3. Love is concerned with the problems in peoples' lives, which cause them to harm others.
4. Love looks beyond faults and sees needs.
5. Forgive enemies; and do not be bitter.

6. Sometimes we need enemies, in order to motivate us to pray.



Spiritual Truths

- Witchcraft is coming under the rule and authority of the kingdom of darkness.
- If we are not under God's authority, then we cannot expect His protection from Satanic deception.
- Rebellion, alcohol, drugs, and perverted music can draw people out from under God's authority and protection.
- Satan is the author of suicide, because his whole purpose is to kill, to steal, and to destroy. (John 10:10)
- The friendship of David and Jonathan is a great example of pure, covenant love.
- David's ability to forgive Saul, even after years of undeserved persecution, is the result of his faith in God.
- Loving enemies does not mean we must be influenced by them. It means that we can see their hurt and honestly desire to see them saved and set free from their bondage.
- Love is the opposite of selfishness; it is the desire to help and heal others.



Lesson Material

"So then faith {cometh} by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17) When we read the Word of God and receive it into our hearts, we reinforce the concepts of wisdom, because we see repeatedly that God is all-powerful, and that He is *"...a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."* (Hebrews 11:6) David is one of many heroes of the Bible whose whole life illustrates the fact that God is in control, and that He is good. In spite of great hardships and human failures, David lived a positive, good life, because he sought the Lord with all his heart. The battles and difficulties he faced were ultimately for his good; and he became stronger because of them.

Studying the Bible always builds faith, because we see life from God's point of view. We see the result of life's choices; and those who choose God's way always end up winners, even if they are persecuted or killed for doing right. Those who make wrong and selfish choices in life prosper for a while; but they always end up losing, as a result.

Satan always wants to get us focused on immediate gratification; and that is why temptation is tempting. If we would just think about hell and other consequences of sin, it would not be attractive, because it is never worth it. But the payoff is always immediate, so there are many "takers."

Saul is a tragic example of a young man who had it all, and then lost it all, when he got his focus in life on himself. Proud selfishness is really the heart of sin. God designed people for Himself, to worship

and enjoy Him forever, and to be God's holy children. But sin takes possession of life, and we seek to become "our own person." Saul was blessed, chosen, anointed, and talented; but he lacked the depth of character necessary to handle riches and honor. Note the contrast with the life of David. David was rejected by his peers, hated by his king and father-in-law, betrayed by friends, and hunted by nations. We wonder, "Why did God allow such hardships in the life of a young man that He loved so much?" Obviously, these hardships developed David's character; and they were really God's blessings "in disguise." Perhaps if young Saul had gone through the fire too, he might have had more wisdom and faith in his life, in order to stand against the temptations he faced later.

When Saul became proud, arrogant, and disobedient against God, the Spirit of the Lord departed from him.. The Bible says that God will never leave us or forsake us. (Hebrews 13:5) God will never break His covenant with us; but men sometimes break their covenant with God. There are many scriptures that remind us of God's faithfulness never to leave us, but there are also many scriptures that let us know that if we forsake Him, He will forsake us. (2 Chronicles 15:2) Samson was another one who broke his covenant with God; and God left him. Fortunately, he was restored, when he repented and humbled himself.

However, Saul never repented. Pride is a hard sin to detect, and a hard sin to repent from. Even after Samuel's death, when Saul was tormented by demons and could not hear from God, he went to a witch, instead of humbling himself before God. Because of his rebellion, Saul had lost the protective covering of God over his life. The principle of rebellion found in 1

Samuel 15:23 needs to be understood today by young people, especially in a day where the doctrine of secular humanism is taught. Humanism denies the existence of God, rejecting the ideas of creation and accountability. Therefore, parents and other authority figures are really obstacles to personal freedom; and so, rebellion is encouraged.

But rebellion (leaving the place of protection under authority), has the same effect as witchcraft. Witchcraft is submitting to the authority of Satan. If we are not under God's authority, we also forfeit His protection. We have no power over Satan, unless we are in God's will. Some people quote James 4:7b, which says, "*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*" But it is impossible to effectively resist the devil in our own strength. We need to know the first half of the verse, which is the key: "*Submit yourselves therefore to God.*" Then, by walking in grace, you can resist the devil.

Saul left God, because he thought he could live successfully on his own. He was proud. So God's Spirit left Saul; and Saul became spiritually vulnerable. Demon spirits came into his life; and he was tormented and driven to anxiety, jealousy, and a nervous breakdown. He had an irrational hatred of David, to whom God had given the anointing. Saul made many bad choices; and he eventually committed suicide, after being wounded in battle.

After he died, an Amalekite chanced upon his body and recognized him, along with his slain son, Jonathan. He went to David's camp, reasoning in his mind that since Saul was David's enemy, David would be delighted to learn of Saul's death. In our text chapter, the Amalekite claimed to have killed Saul. But the Holy Spirit had recorded through the scripture

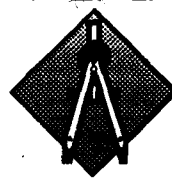
writer that Saul had killed himself. Who lied? Was it the heathen Amalekite, or the Holy Spirit?

David did not know that the man was lying. He only knew that this man boasted of killing the king of Israel. Upon the Amalekite's own testimony, David gave him the reward for the deed that he confessed to; but it was not the reward that the man was expecting.

David then wrote a song of lament for Jonathan and King Saul, and he commanded Israel to grieve over their dead king. This is a powerful evidence of the faith of David, and his greatness of heart. Lesser men would have been delighted at the death of their enemy; but David was not, because he was not a self-centered man. He had his focus on God and God's purposes. David had two opportunities to kill the king; but he refused, out of respect for authority and because of his faith in God. David rightly reasoned that when God wanted to remove Saul from office, then God was able to handle him. David refused to touch God's anointed, even when the man in office was a reprobate.

David was able to love his enemy, because he had faith in God. An enemy is any person who seeks to harm you. Jesus taught us to love our enemies. That does not include our greatest adversary, Satan, because he is also God's enemy -- and he is beyond redemption. Neither Satan nor his angels can ever be saved; and they do nothing but evil. But we should love God enough to love our enemies. Love is not an emotion, but rather, the selfless attitude of caring for the needs and feelings of others. Bullies, abusers, and other hurtful people are invariably people who have deep problems. When we are mature in

God's love, we are set free from a selfish focus, and we can see beyond the need to protect ourselves from others. We are secure enough in God's love to discern the causes of the harmful behavior in others; and we also want God to develop our character through the adversity. Knowing we are loved by God sets us free to love even our enemies.



Methods

Discussion questions.

God will never be the One to break a covenant. But do people break their covenant with God?

The Bible says that God is able to keep you from falling (Jude 1: 24); but does it say that He will never let you fall?

Can demon spirits rule our lives, if we abide in Christ and have the Holy Spirit in our hearts?

What is an enemy? Was Saul David's enemy? How could David genuinely grieve over the death of Saul?

What is genuine love, as described in 1 Corinthians 13?

Have you ever known a person who really was against you, and sought to do you evil? Can you pray for that person, and genuinely desire their salvation? Discuss the statement: "The best way to get rid of an enemy is to make him a friend." Read and discuss Romans 12:21.

Why Art Thou Cast Down

Volume 6

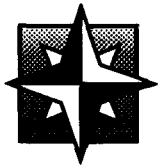
Lesson 2



Bible References

Psalms 42

Psalms 43



Theme

Faith in God is the key to overcoming depression and anxiety in life.



Scripture Reading

Psalms 42:1-8

1 *"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.*

2 *"My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?*

3 *"My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?*

4 *"When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.*

5 *"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.*

6 *"O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.*

7 *"Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.*

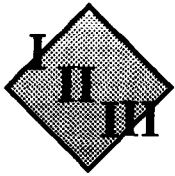
8 *"Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life."*



Memory Verse

Psalms 42:11

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."



Outline

I. David.

A. The Bible calls him a "man after God's own heart." (1 Samuel 13:14)

1. David genuinely loved God. (Psalms 27)
2. David loved God's house and God's people.
3. God delighted in David.
4. David's name is mentioned more than any other name in the Bible.

B. David: a hero for today.

1. David suffered the rejection of his peers.
2. David experienced every human emotion and hardship.
3. David learned to seek God with his whole heart; and he was an overcomer in life.

4. The Psalms are especially helpful, when you go through emotionally hard times.
5. Every human emotion is dealt with in Psalms, along with solutions.

II. As the Hart Pants for Water.

A. David had a passion for God.

1. To him, God was not just "fire insurance."
2. He did not want to live for himself, and then just make it into heaven.
3. David delighted in God, even as a young man.
4. In his days as a lowly shepherd, David used the time to get close to God, instead of feeling sorry for himself and becoming bitter.

B. As the deer pants for water.

1. A deer will pant for water.
 - a. When chased by a predator.
 - b. In time of drought.
2. David desperately longed for God's presence.

III. Cast Down.

A. Cast.

1. A shepherd's term.
2. When its wool is heavy, a sheep might fall on its back and be unable to right itself.
3. Its thin legs are too weak.
4. Unless someone comes along to pick it up and put it on its feet, a cast sheep might die.

B. Cast down.

1. Soul, why are you cast down?
2. Our soul is our personality.

- a. Mind.
- b. Will.
- c. Emotion.
- 3. "Cast" refers to emotional depression.
 - a. Being despondent, discouraged, unhappy.
 - b. Unable to cheer up, without help.
- C. Disquieted.
 - 1. Means a sense of anxiety.
 - 2. Emotionally troubled, distressed, distraught.

IV. Hope In God.

- A. What do you do, when you are "really down?"
 - 1. Do not let your emotions rule your life.
 - 2. Do not focus on the problem.
- B. Conquering depression.
 - 1. David overcame depression by turning his thoughts to God.
 - 2. He looked at God's plan, and he thought about God's presence.
 - 3. Faith is a focus on God, and on what He can do.
 - 4. Fear is a focus on self, and on what might go wrong.
- C. Hope.
 - 1. A positive expectation for good.
 - 2. Hope keeps us emotionally steady. (Hebrews 6:19)
 - 3. When you get depressed, start focusing on faith and hope.
 - 4. Think about God, and about what He is doing in you and for you.

- 5. Think about heaven, eternity, reward, overcoming, victory.
- D. What did David meditate on, in order to conquer depression?
 - 1. I will think about God. (Psalms 42:6)
 - 2. God will command His lovingkindness to me. (Psalms 42:8)
 - 3. I can still have a song in the night. (Psalms 42:8)
 - 4. I will appeal to God. (Psalms 42:9)
 - 5. David made a decision to praise God, and to put his hope in Him. (Psalms 42:11)
 - 6. God *"...is the health of my countenance (my "face-healer"), and my God."* (Psalms 42:11)
 - 7. *"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee:...."* (Isaiah 26:3)



Spiritual Truths

- You cannot overcome depression with pleasure, entertainment or drugs.
- You can conquer depression and anxiety by directing your focus toward God, and trusting in Him.
- There are no negative side-effects to being a hope addict.
- Christians whose lives are ruled by the soul (emotions) are "carnal" Christians; and they tend to be spiritually unstable.
- The key to living with peace of mind is training your mind to focus on God.

- The spiritual man is one whose spirit (God-conscious part) rules his soul (self-conscious part).
- We were created to be dependent upon God and His Spirit; and we cannot live a victorious life by human effort or earthly wisdom.
- You cannot be emotionally stable or secure, if you do not have hope.



Lesson Material

David is a great example of the truth that you are not just a product of events, but rather, you are a product of the choices you make in life in response to events. We cannot help it if other people sin against us; but we can keep ourselves from becoming bitter or angry in return. David experienced rejection, abuse, back-stabbing, infidelity, and every other kind of human mistreatment, usually from people he trusted and who were closest to him in his life. However, he did not spend his life feeling sorry for himself, because he kept his focus on God.

David loved God; and that was the secret to his great success in life. He was honored, prospered, and blessed about as much as a man can receive in one life; and he has a glorious place in history and in heaven that will endure forever. The secret to his great life is his personal love for God. God is not looking for people who try to earn their way to heaven with works; and He is also not looking for people who want the eternal wealth and blessings of heaven. What God wants is

relationship. God is looking for worshippers who will love Him with all of their hearts, souls, minds, and strength, like David did.

David loved God -- and not just because of what God could do for him. David had responded to loneliness as a young boy in the fields by spending countless hours in prayer and communion with God. He developed a keen sensitivity to God and to God's voice; and it was the source of strength and victory throughout his happy life.

Yes, David enjoyed life to the fullest, even though people constantly wronged him. If David had put his confidence in people as his source of joy, he would have been a miserable, bitter man, because people let him down. But David looked to God -- and God never fails.

Read the Psalms. David wrote most of the Psalms that are recorded in the Bible. In this collection of 150 songs, you will see every human emotion that any of us can ever experience in life. Note that David feels all of the fears, hurts, discouragement, disappointments, and failures we can have. But he always ends up on top, because, through all of the mess of human frailty and emotion, he turns his thoughts upward, and he considers God into the equation. When you meditate on God, you have the secret to overcoming success in the arena of human emotion. Perfect peace does not come from having life go your way. It comes from having God in your life, and on your mind. (Isaiah 26:3)

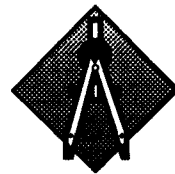
David begins Psalms 42 with an allegory that illustrates the secret of his success. He longs after God, like a panting deer longs for the clear, cool water of a mountain stream. His goal in life is to be in God's presence (Psalms 27); and the

source of his joy and his pleasure is the presence of God. (Psalms 16:11) No wonder God loved David so much!

David wrote songs under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Often, the Spirit spoke prophetically through David's songs. In Psalms 42, David is anointed by the Spirit to speak courage to his soul. The Bible teaches us that there is a difference between the spirit and the soul. Your spirit is your God-conscious being. Because of sin, your spirit is dead, until you confess your sins and are born again -- born of the Spirit. Then, you can see spiritual things (John 3:3); and you are able to receive the Bible in your heart. Your spirit is not your mind. Many people are very intellectual, but spiritually dead; and so, they are easily deceived by cults or false teachings. Your soul is your mind, will, and emotion. Your soul should be under the control of your spirit, which in turn is sensitive to God's Spirit.

David, by the anointing of God's Spirit, often communed with his soul. He would tell his soul how to think and feel. (See Psalms 103:1, for example.) In Psalms 42, David's spirit is dealing with his emotional depression. He uses a term he had learned as a shepherd. He had seen cast sheep; and he had learned to pick the sheep up off its back and set it on its feet again. He knew that the sheep could not get up on its own if it was "cast;" and he knew that he could not overcome his emotional depression without help. He is almost rebuking himself. "All right, soul, why so down? Get up and put your trust in God. I am going to praise Him, because he is the One Who makes my face shine with joy. God is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation." David had the maturity and discipline of mind to direct his thoughts toward God, and not let them wallow in self-pity and anxiety.

We will all experience hardships in life. We will all have some people in our lives who let us down, or even do us wrong. We will have ups and downs in life; and we will all be tempted to feel sorry for ourselves and to focus on the problems. God never intended for any of us to be led by problems. We should be led by the Spirit. David overcame depression by making a decision to focus on hope -- and his hope was in God. We can never be emotionally healthy, without something to look forward to. We have to have hope, which is the anchor of the soul. (Hebrews 6:19) No matter how rough the sea of life, if you have hope, you can keep connected to the Rock, Jesus Christ; and you can make it through the storm of personal adversity.



Methods

Reinforce the principle that we do not have to be controlled by problems in life. We all have problems; and we will become better or bitter, depending on the way we handle them. David dealt with his emotional problems correctly.

The world has a method called "positive thinking" that sounds like faith; but it is an exercise of the mind, and not of the spirit. It is good to be positive, but the world's positive thinking methods focus on self rather than God, leading to pride. Hope and faith focus on God and His purposes in life, causing us to respond to life with wisdom and love.

Hope is essential to emotional stability. Discuss the difference between hope and wishful thinking.

Also, define the difference between vision and fantasy. Vision is based on godly hope, and on reality. (Proverbs 29:18)

Fantasy is an illusion of power, based on a self-centered focus; and it leads to pride, witchcraft, discontent, and depression.

Do you know of any secular movies or programs that are based on unscriptural fantasy?

Killing Giants

Volume 6

Lesson 3

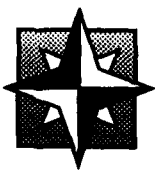


Bible References

2 Samuel 21

Psalms 144

Psalms 18



Theme

Problems and conflicts are a necessary part of life, because we learn faith, wisdom, and endurance. You cannot be an overcomer if you have no conflicts; and there is no victory without a battle.



Scripture Reading

2 Samuel 21:15-22

15 *"Moreover the Philistines had yet war again with Israel; and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought*

against the Philistines: and David waxed faint.

16 *"And Ishbibenob, which was of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of brass in weight, he being girded with a new sword, thought to have slain David.*

17 *"But Abishai the son of Zeruiah succoured him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David swore unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel.*

18 *"And it came to pass after this, that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob: then Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Saph, which was of the sons of the giant.*

19 *"And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaareoregim, a Bethlehemite, slew the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.*

20 *"And there was yet a battle in Gath, where was a man of great stature, that had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, four and twenty in number; and he also was born to the giant.*

21 *"And when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimeah the brother of David slew him.*

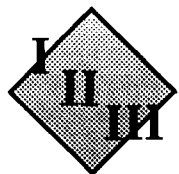
22 "These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants."



Memory Verse

2 Timothy 2:4

"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."



Outline

I. David.

- A. Took five smooth stones out of the brook, when he faced Goliath.
 - 1. Why five, when he only had time to get off one shot?
 - 2. It was prophetic.
 - 3. God caused him to get five stones, because he would face 5 giants in his life.
- B. David had faced problems before.
 - 1. Rejection by his king.
 - 2. A lion and a bear.
 - 3. Rejection and condemnation from his brethren.

II. Giants.

- A. A type of problems in life.
 - 1. In David's day, there were real-life giants.
 - 2. Huge, powerful men, eight to ten feet tall.
 - a. It is likely that this group of giants were taller than any humans alive today.
 - b. They were 5 sons of one big and evil man.
 - 3. Most of our problems in life have "brothers," too.

B. The lion and the bear. (1 Samuel 17:37)

- 1. Smaller problems, in his youth.
- 2. The fact that David killed the lion and the bear gave him the courage and confidence to face Goliath.
- 3. If we run from small problems, we are less likely to handle the bigger ones that come later in life.

C. God did not promise anyone an easy life.

- 1. He did promise that He would never leave us. (Hebrews 13:5)
- 2. He does promise victory, as we abide in Jesus, and pray and believe. (1 John 5:4)

III. Goliath.

- A. David's first giant was a military hero -- the champion warrior of the Philistines.
 - 1. When Israel went into Canaan, they had to fight to take the land.
 - 2. The Philistines were one of seven nations which were each stronger than Israel.

3. They needed God's grace to possess the land.
4. God could have given them the land easily; but they needed to learn to be faithful soldiers, instead of slaves.

- b. We should be edifiers (builders of one another).
5. *"Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off:...."* (Psalms 101:5)

B. Goliath.

1. His name comes from a root word meaning "to shamefully reveal; to make naked; to make a vulgar show."
2. What we say reveals what is in our hearts; and we are commanded to carefully guard our tongues and our hearts.
 - a. Jesus said, *"...Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."* (Matthew 12:34)
 - b. James said, *"...The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity:...."* (James 3:6)
 - c. *"...The tongue can no man tame;...."* (James 3:8)
 - d. *"The words of a talebearer are as wounds,...."* (Proverbs 26:22)
 - e. *"...Where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth."* Proverbs 26:20
 - f. *"...A whisperer separateth chief friends."* (Proverbs 16:28)
 - g. See also Proverbs 11:13; 20:19.
3. Many people are tempted to gossip about others, because they make themselves look good by comparison.
 - a. They focus on the faults of others, and ignore their own.
 - b. The root of gossip is pride and self-deception.
4. *"Speak not evil one of another, brethren...."* (James 4:11)
 - a. This means "Do not speak negatively about other believers."



Spiritual Truths

- If we never have a conflict or difficulty in life, we will not develop strong character.
- There are two basic ways to deal with guilt and shame: one is to repent, and the other is to become bitter by blaming other people.
- Great minds tend to discuss ideas; normal minds discuss events; and small minds discuss other people.
- There are two guilty parties in any gossip situation: the one who spreads negative talk, and the one who encourages gossip by listening to it.
- You cannot take in the poison of gossip without being damaged by it.
- Christians are commanded to love one another, and to be "builder-uppers" of the body of Christ.
- The test of whether or not a report is evil is not its factual accuracy, but its positive or negative intent.
- All of us have to battle the giant of gossip and negative talk, and realize that we cannot damage a fellow believer without damaging ourselves.

- We should always seek to edify with our tongue. This includes addressing our peers with given names or positive nicknames, and addressing adults by their last names or proper titles.



Lesson Material

Nearly everyone is familiar with the great story about David and Goliath. But, unlike the fairy tales the world presents, the story does not end there. We do not go through one problem in life and then "live happily ever after." We have more problems -- normally, bigger problems. You see, Goliath had four giant brothers; and they would all figure into the life of David before it was all over.

David is an example of the classic believer. He experienced every human emotion we could face; and yet, he lived life to the fullest, because he never lost his perspective on why he was on the planet, and Who God is. When confronted with problems, David simply got closer and closer to God. He was unsinkable and unstoppable, because he was a man of faith, love, and godly vision.

God does not promise us an easy life. He does promise us a victorious life, if we seek Him with an honest heart and do His will. Salvation is the beginning of an eternal relationship. Life is preparation for eternity. In life, we will have battles and conflicts. God wants a people who will be true to Him forever -- a people who love Him with a true heart and a strong faith. Man never drifts toward God. If we had no conflicts or difficulties in life, most of us

would tend to forget God and just enjoy ourselves. It is when we have enemies that we press most vigorously into prayer. We learn faith, not in the place of blessing and convenience, but in the fire of problems.

We all have little problems in life; and most of us will face at least one giant or two. A giant is a big problem -- one that we cannot possibly overcome, without supernatural help. It should be quickly noted that no giant is anywhere near the size of God. Compared to Him, they are gnats. The problem is that we tend to drift from God, going about life in a normal, human fashion.

Look through a telescope. What does magnification do? It makes the image larger, and makes the object appear to be closer. David said that we should "Magnify the Lord," or focus on Him, in order to bring His image closer. God's whole purpose is to motivate us to get close to Him; thus, the reason for problems. We have a natural tendency to think, "If God really loved me, I would not be going through this. God would keep my parents together, or help me make the team." Actually, the fact that God allows us to experience difficulties in life is evidence of His love, because difficulties motivate us to get as close to Him as we can. God wants us to pray often. Honestly, how often do we really pray with fervor and zeal, when we are not facing a serious problem?

Each of these five giants in David's life had a name; and names all have meanings. We can draw some analogies from that fact, although we need to recognize that different people will face different groups of giants. It is important to know that Goliath had some mean brothers, and that problems in life do not come by themselves. Also notice that

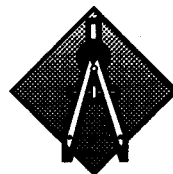
David was a "five-talent" man, and not a "one-talent" man. He was gifted with much ability and opportunity in life; and he faced bigger problems in life. Do not be quick to envy someone who seems to have more in life. He also has more problems, and more responsibility. (Luke 12:48)

The name "Goliath" means "to shamefully denude; to reveal." Some of us face the giant of a negative tongue. It is such a temptation to talk negatively about other Christians, especially when we lack love. 1 Corinthians 13 speaks of the actions associated with genuine love, which is positive, and quick to believe the best concerning others. Pastor James had a problem in the Jerusalem church with Christians gossiping about one another, because he said, "*Speak not evil one of another, brethren....*" (James 4:11) Evil does not mean "false." It means "negative." "Do not give negative reports about one another." We are tempted to focus on the faults of others, when pride causes us to hide our own weaknesses. People who are very critical and negative about other people never seem to talk much about their own faults. This is the opposite of biblical ethics. We are told to judge ourselves, instead of other people. (1 Corinthians 11:31) We should be positive and encouraging. The word "edify" comes from the same root word as "edifice," or "building." It means "to build up" one another. Satan would love it, if all Christians were discredited and defamed, because then they would not have the influence to win the lost to Jesus Christ. We should seek the best for one another, and carefully guard our tongues from speaking anything that will cause others to disrespect a fellow-Christian.

There are several words that relate to gossip. A "busybody" is someone who gets

caught up in the private lives of others, and who is always negative. A "scorner" is someone who is always criticizing others, and who finds fault with every ministry. A "talebearer" is one who shares private information for the sake of personal pleasure; and a "whisperer" is one who spreads damaging news about others, in secret. A "slanderer" is one who speaks the truth about others, with an intention to hurt their reputation. David said, "I am going to cut off anyone who privately slanders his neighbor." (Psalms 101:5) He did not necessarily mean that he would kill them, but rather, that he would have nothing to do with them. His desire was to still their mouths and stop their influence.

The Bible has much to say about the ethics of the tongue. Words have great power for good or evil. We bless and encourage one another with words; and we can destroy a life, a relationship, or a ministry with only a few words. "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can crush my spirit." "*A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.*" (Proverbs 25:11) "*A wholesome tongue is a tree of life:....*" (Proverbs 15:4)



Methods

An obvious question with which to begin the class is: "Why did David pick up five smooth stones from the brook, on his way to fight Goliath?" Most people do not know that this had prophetic significance.

Why does God allow us to go through major problems in life, if He really loves us? What is a "giant" a type of, in life?

Have you ever faced a problem that was so much bigger than you were, that you had to have God's help to conquer it?

How can we use the tongue to edify one another? How could a familiar salutation be a negative use of the tongue? (When we address our elders on a first

name basis, we are expressing a lack of respect; and we are putting ourselves on a peer level with them with our tongue. Always address adults by their last name, and with appropriate titles, such as "Pastor.")

This Untoward Generation

Volume 6

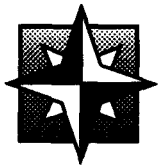
Lesson 4



Bible References

Acts 2

Acts 4



Theme

Fellowship and communion with the Body of Christ are keys to spiritual victory over negative peer pressure.



Scripture Reading

Acts 2:38-47

38 "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of

sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

40 "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

41 "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

42 "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43. "And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

44 "And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45 "And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

46 "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

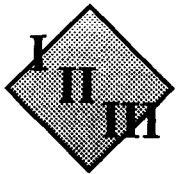
47 "Praising God, and having favour with all the people."



Memory Verse

Proverbs 13:20

"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."



Outline

I. This Untoward Generation.

A. Perverse generation.

1. "Untoward" means:
 - a. Crooked.
 - b. Warped.
 - c. Perverse.
 - d. Corrupt.
2. "Generation" means "the people which are generated from."
 - a. It usually refers to a people, such as "the generation (descendants) of Abraham."
 - b. Today, it is also used to denote a progression of family lineage (grandparents "generated" parents, who produce this "generation," etc.).
3. Either way, we are living in a "perverse" people group.

B. Untoward:

1. Not going anywhere.
2. No spiritual vision.
3. "Where there is no vision, the people perish (cast off restraint, become undisciplined):...." (Proverbs 29:18)
4. People who are not living with an eternal purpose in life tend to be immoral and rebellious against authority.

II. Save Yourself.

A. Save.

1. Jesus saves us from sin.
2. God's redemption plan saves us from hell.
3. But Peter was saying, "Save yourselves from the influence of perverse people."

B. Work out your own salvation.

1. "Save" (Greek *sodzo*) means "to be made whole, healthy, complete."
2. People who have something spiritually wrong with them indulge in sinful behavior.
3. God's purpose is to bring us to spiritual wholeness, so that we do not have to live in sin.
4. We become spiritually whole, when we repent, confess our sins, and receive forgiveness and spiritual cleansing from sin.
5. We continue to grow spiritually strong and healthy by reading the Bible, praying, worshipping God, and fellowshiping with godly people.

C. Protect yourselves from wrong peer pressure.

1. Jesus gave us authority over disease and demons (Luke 9:1), but not over men.
2. We do not have authority to make people get saved, because God lets people make their own choices.
3. Jesus said, "Beware of men." (Matthew 10:17)
4. Paul warned, "Beware of dogs (People who live to satisfy their appetites and lusts)." (Philippians 3:2)
5. Beware of evil workers (people who seek to hurt others). (Philippians 3:2)
6. Beware of the concision (religious people who seek to promote themselves, rather than Jesus). (Philippians 3:2)

III. Peter's Sermon.

A. Repent.

1. Turn from sin, and turn toward God.
2. Stop living for self, and live for Jesus.
3. Go the opposite direction in life.

B. Be baptized.

1. *Baptizo* means "to be immersed, buried, covered over completely."
2. All believers should be baptized, as a seal of their covenant with God.
 - a. Water baptism is a testimony to the world that we are identifying with Jesus Christ.
 - b. We are commanded to be baptized in obedience to the Lord.
 - c. Water baptism does not save us; but it is necessary, in order for us to be a disciple.
 - d. Water baptism is a funeral service for the "old man."

- e. It is an outward expression of the inward work of the Holy Spirit, Who has baptized us into the Body of Christ. (Romans 6)
3. In the Name (authority) of the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. For the remission of sins.
 - a. To bring the disease into remission.
 - b. Sins are the evidences of the disease of sin in the heart.

C. Receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost.

1. This Gift is the Holy Spirit Himself. (John 14:17)
2. Jesus gives us the Gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit. (John 20:22)
3. The Holy Spirit indwells all believers. (Romans 8:9)
4. As believers, our bodies are the temples of Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:19)

D. And with many other words.

1. It was a long sermon.
2. Most of it was exhortation about how to save yourselves from this perverse generation.

IV. Communion.

A. Greek *koinonia* -- partnership; participation; benefaction; sharing together; fellowship; communion.

B. The people responded to Peter's sermon. They continued steadfastly in:

1. The apostles' doctrine (Bible study).
2. Fellowship.
3. Breaking of bread.
4. Prayers.

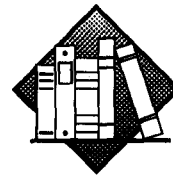
C. Breaking of bread.

1. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.
2. Partaking of the bread and cup with the believers.
 - a. The cup, as a reminder that we are the redeemed of God, and a family purchased by the precious blood of Christ.
 - b. The bread, as a reminder that we are "one bread" and one body, and that His body was broken for us.



Spiritual Truths

- Jesus saves us from sin; but we must save ourselves from evil peer pressure.
- The key to overcoming wrong peer pressure is to seek to be strongly influenced by the people who love God.
- God intends for His people to be firmly planted in a Bible-believing local church, and to be influenced by godly friends.
- We should seek to influence the unsaved people around us, while determining not to be influenced by them.
- Good preaching will not only include encouragement and evangelism, but also "instruction in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16)
- Anyone who is not living for God and seeking God's will tends to make evil choices and pervert his steps, because he is not going toward anything.



Lesson Material

Recently a man was riding in the car with his son, and they heard some music on the radio. It happened to be some improvised jazz, on a public radio station. Since they were both musicians, the father asked, "Son, can you tell that this is humanistic, instrumental music? What is there about it that shows that the musician is not saved?" He said, "It is not going anywhere." He was exactly right. He could see easily that there was no order or direction to the music. It was predominantly piano music, with no theme, climax, or real ending. It was only pleasant sounds, which were not going toward anything.

Music can reflect order or chaos. Good music reflects the order of God's creation. It will have a distinguishable melody, consonant harmony, and a definite rhythm. A heart that is in tune with God will respond to good, anointed music. A rebellious heart will be drawn to music that communicates anger, dissonance, and chaos. Music is the language of the soul.

The basic problem in a perverse generation is a lack of purpose or vision. Solomon said, "*Where there is no vision, the people perish:....*" (Proverbs 29:18) The

word "perish" means "to cast off restraint; to run wild; to become undisciplined." He also said that *"...By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil."* (Proverbs 16:6) When man is seeking God, he will tend to walk in harmony with life as God created it. When he is alienated from God, he loses his sense of purpose. Life becomes a meaningless pursuit of pleasure for the moment; and there is little motivation toward personal purity.

John spoke of the coming of the Lord, and then concluded that *"...every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."* (1 John 3:3) People who are not going toward God will tend to live a chaotic life; and they will make many wrong choices. They will tend to do evil, because they live to gratify themselves for the moment, rather than living for an eternal purpose. When you take God and the Bible out of society, you take away the basic motivation for righteous living; and you set up that society for destruction.

The United States is a good example. In 1962, the Supreme Court took God and the Bible out of public schools, using false humanistic reasoning; and they effectively declared secular humanism as the official state religion. Since then, literacy has dropped dramatically, and every kind of crime has skyrocketed. The Congress has indulged in an insane spending spree, knowing that they are already so far in debt that national bankruptcy is inevitable. And yet, they spend on, because of the lack of a fear of God in the nation. Unless there is a spiritual revival, the nation will collapse. The only thing that keeps the nation from destruction is the prayers of the remnant who still fear God.

The term "generation" usually refers to a nation, or people group. It can also refer

to each succeeding parents-to-children group in families. Either way, we are living among a generation that is perverse. There is enormous pressure to do evil, not only from peers, but from the world at large. The only way to save ourselves from the perverse among men is to seek to be influenced by the godly.

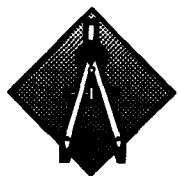
There is much talk to young people today about abstaining from drugs or sexual promiscuity; but the more the media talk about it, the more young people are drawn to it. This is because of a basic fallacy in the reasoning of the humanist leaders, who are trying to save a generation from destructive behavior, by telling them how bad it is. First of all, the attraction to immorality and dangerous drugs is so strong, because the kids have a spiritual void in their lives. This void is there because humanism has taken the focus in life away from God; and this has led to the weakening of the family and the destruction of vision. If you take God out of anyone's thinking, you open him up to deception and destruction. If life is just an accident of evolution; if I am just going to die like a dog and that is all there is to it, then the purpose of life is to feel good and have a good time.

You cannot remove God and the Bible from a culture, and have a healthy society. Without the fear of God, there is no incentive to love or live right. You create a spiritual vacuum which alienates children from their parents and all authorities, and sets them up for a worthless life of feelings and fantasy. The more you talk about the evils of drugs and sex, the more you will attract them to it. The only way to have clean, joyful children is to have strong families and active churches who constantly give hope, faith, and spiritual vision. As George Washington, our first

president, said, "This nation cannot long endure without God and the Bible."

Peter preached about being saved, baptized, and receiving the Gift of the Holy Spirit; and then he exhorted the people to save themselves from this perverse generation. As believers, we are in the world, but not of the world. (John 17:14-16) In order to be saved from the world, we must receive salvation by repentance through faith in Jesus Christ; and then, we must continue steadfastly *"...in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."* (Acts 2:42) Peter preached on the importance of getting into the Word together, and of being strong in communion with other believers.

We need each other. We need to break bread together in a biblical way. This involves forgiving one another for past offenses, and relating together as members of the body of Christ. We not only remember the cross, but we see ourselves as part of His Body on the earth. We renew our covenant of love, not only with God, but with the members of the local church to whom we are related "by blood" -- the blood of Christ. We have a common union in Christ; and we are joint heirs with Him of the kingdom of God. (Romans 8:17) When we are strongly influenced by believers, we will not be led away with the workers of iniquity.



Methods

Our purpose is not only to lead young people to a personal relationship with

God, but to strengthen each one in their relationship to their parents, their family, and the local church. As society becomes even more evil, they are being pressured more and more to conform to a self-centered, humanistic image of life; and they need strong, godly relationships, in order to spiritually survive.

These are the "perilous times" Paul spoke about to Timothy. (2 Timothy 3:1) We must have strong families. Try to interview each family leader represented in your class. Take a survey. How often do you have family devotions? How often do you pray together as a family? How often do you talk about God and the Bible at home? What kind of music is played in your home? What kind of pictures and plaques do you display on the walls?

As a Christian teacher, do all you can to exhort the children to honor their parents; and encourage the parents to provide and promote a Christian atmosphere at home. Encourage the replacing of secular television with reading, conversation, and wholesome family activities.

Also, encourage Christian fellowship. Have a special fellowship activity for your class, outside of the Sunday meeting hour. Invite all of the family members if you can; and be sure to pray together, as a group.

Ask the pastor, or an elder appointed by him, to come into the class and lead in the breaking of bread for all of the born-again members of the class. Encourage efforts to restore and reconcile any broken relationships among Christian young people, before you break bread.

Sincerity

Volume 6

Lesson 5



Bible References

James 1

2 Timothy 4

Revelation 3

3 "Knowing {this}, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

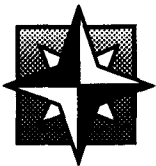
4 "But let patience have {her} perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

5 "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all {men} liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

6 "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

7 "For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

8 "A double minded man {is} unstable in all his ways."



Theme

We must maintain a testimony of integrity and whole-heartedness in our Christian walk, both before God and before the world.



Scripture Reading

James 1:2-8

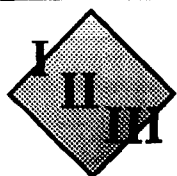
2 "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;



Memory Verse

James 1:8

"A double minded man {is} unstable in all his ways."



Outline

I. Make Up Your Mind.

A. The carnal mind.

1. Opposed to God and godliness. (Romans 8:7)
2. Earthly-minded. (Philippians 3:19)
3. Selfish.
4. Interested in only temporary things, rather than eternal things.
5. Unable to comprehend the things of God. (1 Corinthians 2:14)

B. The spiritual mind.

1. A renewed mind. (Romans 12:2)
 - a. Not conformed to the world.
 - b. Transformed; changed.
2. "...But we have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:16)
 - a. "Let this mind be in you,...." (Philippians 2:5)
 - b. Thinking as Jesus would think.
 - c. The lowly heart of a servant.
 - d. The loving heart of a Son.

II. The Mind of Man.

A. Man -- a three-part being.

1. Spirit -- God-conscious part.
2. Soul -- Self-conscious part.
3. Body -- Sense-conscious part.

B. The mind.

1. The soul of man is his mind, will, intelligence, and personality.

2. Our spirits are made alive, or "quickened" at the new birth. (Ephesians 2:1)
3. But the mind must be renewed. (Romans 12:2)
 - a. Greek *metamorphosis*.
 - b. A process of change.
 - c. A daily transformation.

III. A Double-Minded Man.

A. The opposite of single-heartedness.

1. "A doubleminded man is unstable in all his ways." (James 1:8)
2. Some people want to serve God; but they will not let go of their sin.

B. Demas.

1. "...Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world,...." (2 Timothy 4:10)
2. "...If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John 2:15)

C. Lukewarm Christians.

1. Jesus said, "I would rather you were hot (on fire for God) or cold (spiritually dead)." (Revelation 3:15, paraphrased)
 - a. "Hot" means I am excited about God, and I love to witness and worship.
 - b. "Cold" means I am excited about pleasure, things, self-interests.
 - c. "Lukewarm" means I want to go to heaven, but still "be my own person" and "do my own thing."
2. Half-hearted Christians.
 - a. A poor witness to the world.
 - b. "Why should I get saved, if Jesus did not do any more for you than that?"

IV. Sincere.**A. Philippians 1:10.**

1. "Sincere" -- from the Latin *sin* ("without") and *cere* ("wax").
2. When marble or pottery cracked, merchants found that they could patch the crack with wax; and it could not be seen.
3. As soon as heat was applied, the wax would melt; and the buyer would realize that he had a worthless piece of merchandise.
4. Some began to advertise their marble pillars as "pure," or "without wax" ("sincere").

B. "Sincere" means "real; not putting on a front."

1. If you are going to be a Christian, be a Christian all the time.
2. Do not try to "blend in" with the world's crowd, or be accepted by those who hate Jesus.
3. Do not cover your faults -- confess them. (James 5:16)
4. Do not cover over. Be an overcomer.

C. Hypocrite.

1. From Greek *hypocritos*.
 - a. "One who wears a mask."
 - b. Pretending to be something that you are not.
2. God knows your heart. (1 Samuel 16:7)
3. Be honest with yourself, and with God.
4. Take responsibility for your sin; and ask God to forgive you and set you free.
 - a. 1 John 1:9.
 - b. Proverbs 28:13.

D. Integrity.

1. The state of being whole, complete, pure (implying soundness of moral character); uprightness.
2. Psalms 7:8.
3. A person of integrity is one who serves God with his whole heart, and who is honest and transparent, regardless of the circumstances.



Spiritual Truths

- Everyone who gives his heart to Jesus Christ will be tempted to turn back to sin, and to compromise his integrity.
- Satan is not going to battle against those who do not love God. He already has that crowd under his authority.
- Our culture highly esteems people who are play-actors; but God's culture does not.
- Lukewarm believers try to mix the fire of God's Spirit with the cold slime of sin; and they become obnoxious to God.
- The greatest hindrances to world evangelism are mediocre, insincere Christians, because they convey the message that Jesus is not really the Answer.
- The Christian's life is the most delightful, wonderful life possible -- but only if you live it honestly, and seek God with your whole heart.

- Church people who love the world are too guilty to enjoy their sin and too carnal to enjoy God's presence.
- Double-minded people have a hard time worshipping freely, because they are self-conscious, and they always look to see what other people are doing.



Lesson Material

In our scripture passage from James, it is evident that even in the early church, there were those Christians who were not fully committed. Ananias and Sapphira are also examples of Christians in the early church, who attempted to appear fully committed, even to the point that they were willing to lie about it. (Acts 5)

When we are born again through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, our spirits, which had been dead toward God, are immediately "quickenened," or made alive, by the Spirit of God. Our bodies, on the other hand, remain the same, until the day of resurrection, be it by the Rapture, or by way of the grave and subsequent resurrection. But our minds become subject to a process of renewal.

The scripture commands us to *"Let this mind be in you,..."* (Philippians 2:5) The Holy Spirit is certainly willing to renew our minds; but the choice is up to us. God does not force us to submit to the renewing of our minds, any more than He would force us to be born again. God never violates the will of man. We know that He is *"...not willing that any should perish,...."* (2 Peter 3:9); and yet, the Bible is clear that *"...strait {is} the gate, and [narrow {is} the]*

way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matthew 7:14)

God wants to change the way we think. In Proverbs 23:7, we learn that the way a man thinks is directly related to what that man is. God wants to lift our thought life above the earthly and temporary, and on to the heavenly and eternal. We can directly influence our thought life by what we allow to enter into our minds. If I fill my mind with sensual, carnal things through secular books, television, movies, music, or ungodly relationships, I will become what I am thinking about. On the other hand, if I fill my mind with the Word of God, prayer, godly music, worship, and Bible reading, I will become more godly and more God-conscious. David said, *"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."* (Psalms 119:11) When Jesus was preparing his disciples for his impending death, he comforted them with the promise that the Holy Spirit would *"...bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."* (John 14:26) The reason that they could be reminded of the words of Jesus was that they had listened to His words in the first place. We are responsible for what we put into our minds; and when we choose to fill our minds with godly things, the Holy Spirit is faithful to renew our minds by His transforming power.

Double-mindedness is a battle that all Christians face. It is the temptation to try to "straddle the fence" -- to take on the "mind of Christ," until it becomes inconvenient, or until it clashes with our own will. When we were born again, we repented of our sin. To "repent" means to "turn around," and to seek God and His kingdom, rather than seeking our own selfish pleasure. But, we are still human, and we are tempted to turn back to the "beggarly elements" of this world.

(Galatians 4:9) Man never drifts toward God. As long as we are in this life, there will be social, cultural, and spiritual pressures to get us to turn back. Paul said that *"...We are not of them who draw back unto perdition;...."* (Hebrews 10:39), or to the destruction of sin. Paul also said, *"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but {this} one thing {I do}, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 3:13-14)

James said, *"A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."* (James 1:8) In other words, those who try to have one foot in heaven and one foot in the world will have trouble being consistent in everything they do. When we try to be mediocre Christians, we make lousy sinners, because our conscience bothers us, and we are always trying to hide what we do wrong. Also, we make lousy Christians, because we do not really enjoy worship, and anything other than sugar-coated sermons irritate us in church. We are not really free to worship God, because we are so self-conscious.

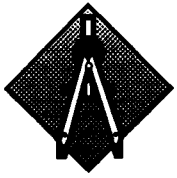
Do not judge one another; but do judge yourself. (1 Corinthians 11:31) Are you battling the giant of double-mindedness? Do you really love God more than the world? Check out your worship. Do you enter into singing and praying with joy and abandon, or are you intimidated by your peers. Do you look around to see if the others are raising their hands, or are you free to worship God?

The problem with double-minded people is that they are too self-conscious to be God-conscious. *"The fear of man bringeth a snare:...."* (Proverbs 29:25) On the other hand, *"In the fear of the LORD is*

strong confidence:...." (Proverbs 14:26) When your focus in life is on yourself, you are really operating in the realm of carnality; and you are, at best, a "lukewarm" Christian. The term "Christian" means "little Christ;" and it implies a focus in life on eternal things. If we are intimidated by peers to the point that we cannot sing to the Lord beyond a mumble, then we need to examine our hearts and our relationship to God. What is our priority? Are we concerned about what God thinks of us, or what people think?

Lukewarm Christians tend to admire and respect those who have the integrity to worship God freely. They do not really enjoy being mediocre; and they certainly do not have enough power to be witnesses to the lost, if they cannot even shine in church.

In Revelation 3:15-16, Jesus indicated that He would rather we were cold than lukewarm. A lukewarm Christian has little joy; and he is terrible advertising for the unsaved. He is saying, "Jesus did not do me much good, because I am still wishing that I could sin, and get away with it. I want heaven when I die; but oh, how I would like to sin some, on the way." We need to realize that the genuine Christian life is the happiest, most blessed life a human can live. When God told us to quit sinning (1 John 2:1), it is not because He wanted to keep us from having fun. Sin is deadly; and regardless of what the movies and television fantasies say, sin always has consequences. Do not be deceived. The world (*kosmos*, the world system that is against God and God's kingdom) has nothing of real value to offer us. It is deception, darkness, and death; but Jesus is *"...the way, the truth, and the life:...."* (John 14:6)



Methods

Discussion:

What does "double-minded" mean to you?

Since you became a Christian, have you battled with double-mindedness?

Have you noticed that sin always has its reward immediately, but that God always gives His reward in the end?

Have you ever noticed that the world and the devil never emphasize the consequences of sin, and that they are always deceptive?

How does the world advertise beer? (With healthy, happy people.)

Is this deceptive?

What does it mean to give Jesus your whole heart?

Have we really done that?

Three Deadly Sins

Volume 6

Lesson 6



Bible References

1 John 2

Galatians 5

pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

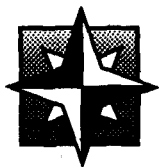
17 "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Galatians 5:19-21

19 "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are {these}; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 "Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21 "Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told {you} in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."



Theme

The three deadly sins -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life -- are the basis of all acts of sin.



Scripture Reading

1 John 2:15-17

15 "Love not the world, neither the things {that are} in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

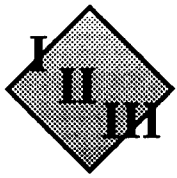
16 "For all that {is} in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the



Memory Verse

1 John 2:16

"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."



Outline

I. The World.

A. A Bible term for the world system.

1. Greek *kosmos*.
2. Secular; humanistic.
3. Natural; temporal. (1 John 2:17)

B. Love not the world.

1. Addressed to believers.
2. "[Set your affection] on things above, not on things on the earth." (Colossians 3:2)
3. Demas. (2 Timothy 4:10)
 - a. Loved the world.
 - b. Abandoned the work of God and the fellowship of believers.

II. The Sin Problem.

A. Man is sinful by nature.

1. We are not inherently good.
2. Death is proof that we are sinful. (Romans 6:23)
1. Sin is inherited from the father of the human race, Adam. (1 Corinthians 15:21-22)
2. We are born in the darkness of sin, with a deadened spirit. (Ephesians 2:1-3)

B. Acts of sin.

1. Manifestations of the sinful condition of man.
2. Always involve the breaking of God's righteous laws. (1 John 5:17)

3. "Sins" are symptoms of the disease called "sin."
4. Our sin separates us from God. (Isaiah 59:2)
5. In this life, we will always struggle with sin.
6. Jesus Christ is the Answer to the sin problem.
 - a. He came to destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8)
 - b. Jesus has freed us from sin. (John 8:36)
 - c. If we confess (acknowledge) our sins, the blood of Jesus cleanses us. (1 John 1:9)
 - d. When we sin, Jesus is our Advocate. (1 John 2:1)

C. The three "deadly" sins. (1 John 2:16)

1. The lust of the flesh.
2. The lust of the eyes.
3. The pride of life.
4. Every sin that we commit can be traced to one of these three "root" sins.
5. The only sinless human being is Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 4:15)
6. "[If we say that we have no sin], we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8)

III. The Lust of the Flesh.

A. "Flesh" defined.

1. The natural, carnal nature of man.
2. The state of unregenerate man.
3. Does not refer to "flesh," as in "flesh and bone."

B. Works of the flesh.

1. See listing in Galatians 5:19-21.
2. The "outworking" of the sin nature.
3. Not limited to sexual sin only.
4. Ungodly, fleshly appetites (lusts).

5. Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

C. Overcoming the lust of the flesh.

1. Walk in the Spirit. (Galatians 5:16)
 - a. Recognize the battle between the flesh and the Spirit. (Galatians 5:17)
 - b. Fill your heart with the Word of God, prayer, worship, and Christian fellowship.
 - c. You cannot do these godly things and fulfill fleshly lusts at the same time.
 - d. Remember that the indwelling Holy Spirit is the One Who empowers us; we cannot overcome the flesh on our own.
2. Crucify the flesh. (Galatians 5:24)
 - a. Crucified with Christ. (Galatians 2:20)
 - b. Reckon yourself dead to sin, and alive unto God. (Romans 6:11)
 - c. *"For [ye are dead], and your life is hid with Christ in God."* (Colossians 3:3)
 - d. Behave yourself according to what God has done in you.
 - e. You cannot "cast out" the flesh; you must crucify it.

IV. The Lust of the Eyes.

A. An ungodly appetite for whatever the eye sees.

1. Greed.
2. Selfishness.
3. Excessiveness.

B. Avarice.

1. Covetousness.
2. An excessive desire to possess that which belongs to someone else.

C. Hoarding.

1. It is good to save money, but wrong to hoard.
2. Hoarding is motivated by a trust in things.
3. If I have enough money, then I will feel secure and happy.
4. Our security should be in our God. (Deuteronomy 8:18)

D. Overcoming the lust of the eyes.

1. Learn to be content. (Philippians 4:11)
2. Cultivate a grateful spirit, by continually giving thanks to God and to people. (Ephesians 5:20)
3. Look for ways to give to others and to God.

V. The Pride of Life.

A. "Pride" defined.

1. An undue focus on self.
2. A tendency to center one's values on self-interest.
3. Placing primary value on self, rather than on God.

B. Humility.

1. Placing highest value on God, and seeing self as a servant.
2. Recognizing an absolute need for God and His strength.
3. *"...God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace (the desire and power to be an overcomer) to the humble (those who know they cannot do it in their own strength)."* (1 Peter 5:5)

C. Overcoming the pride of life.

1. Realize that the proud are self-deceived.

- a. Proud people tend to think they are humble.
- b. And they are proud of their humility.
2. Humble yourself by bowing or kneeling in prayer regularly, and by fasting.
3. Give thanks to God often. (Ephesians 5:20)
5. Determine to esteem other people as better than yourself. (Philippians 2:3)
6. Develop a Christian world view (see Christ as the center of everything in life).

- You cannot humble yourself by putting yourself down. You overcome pride by lifting Jesus high.
- If you love, seek, trust, and delight in money, then money is your god; and you are an idolater.



Lesson Material

There are three basic sin categories listed by John in his first epistle: The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. He said, "This is all the world has to offer; and it is all sin." Satan is the master of temptation; and temptation is based on illusion and deception. Sin never really satisfies, because the heart of man was originally made for God -- and there is a "hole" in our heart shaped just like Jesus. No matter how much of the world's garbage you fill your heart with, there will always be the deception that fulfillment will come with just a little more.

That is why John used the term "lust of." The classic phrase of the unregenerate sinner is, "Is that all there is?" The word "human" literally means, "in God's image;" and satisfaction comes only when we are walking in the will of God, in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and in the sweet presence of God. (Psalms 16:11) *"...I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."* (Psalms 17:15)

The first of the three sins that John mentioned is the lust of the flesh. Normally, when we think of fleshly lusts, or appetites, we immediately think of sexual sin. While all types of sexual sin are certainly manifestations of the lust of the



Spiritual Truths

- Every form of sin can be divided into three categories: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.
- The world ultimately offers only the illusion of fulfillment. Only Jesus Christ can give "life more abundantly." (John 10:10)
- Sin never fully satisfies -- you always want just a little more.
- Just as Jesus Christ is the only One Who can deal with our sin nature, so also the Holy Spirit is the only One Who can empower us to deal with our fleshly nature.
- God is very real. The problem is that some of us are not.
- Most proud people really think that they are humble. That is what makes pride such a deadly sin.

flesh, there are many other manifestations listed in Galatians 5:19-21, such as witchcraft, idolatry, hatred, strifes, envyings, drunkenness, etc. And the list is not confined to only seventeen "works of the flesh" -- the scripture then says, "And such like." All of these works of the flesh represent the outworking of the sin nature which is inherent in man. Because we are born in the condition of sin, we will naturally manifest these and other works of the flesh. You do not have to teach a duck to quack; sooner or later, you will hear him make that sound that only a duck can make. He comes by it, naturally.

We must recognize as believers that we are in a battle against the old, fleshly nature. (Romans 7) The Bible says that the fleshly nature constantly wars against the Spirit in us. (Galatians 5:17) Our willingness to "walk in the Spirit" is the determining factor as to whether we will fulfill the lusts of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16) The choice is up to us. The story is told of the missionary who met an Eskimo man. After learning the man's language and establishing communication with him, the missionary was explaining the battle that all of mankind faces in dealing with good versus evil. The Eskimo nodded in agreement and said, "I have two dogs in my head. One is an evil, black dog. The other is a good, white dog. They are fighting all of the time!" The missionary asked the Eskimo, "Which dog wins the fight?" The Eskimo replied, "The one that I feed the most." The key to not fulfilling the lusts of the flesh is to choose to walk in the Spirit. All of the power of heaven is available to assist us, in the Person of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

It should be noted that these manifestations, or works, of the flesh are often mistakenly identified as demonic activity. While Jesus has given us

authority on earth to cast out demons (Mark 16:17), the flesh cannot be cast out -- it must be crucified. (Galatians 5:24) We must bear the responsibility for our own fleshliness, instead of saying, "The devil made me do it!" There are times when it is difficult to tell whether a certain problem is fleshly in nature or the result of demonic oppression. This is why the Holy Spirit operates in believers the "discerning of spirits." (1 Corinthians 12:10) The Holy Spirit knows where the problem originates, and how to solve it.

The second of the three sins is the lust of the eyes. This sin is manifested in greed and selfishness. If you set your heart on "things," you will always want more; and you will never be satisfied. Some people suggest that Paul was rich, because he said "*Not that I speak in respect of want:....*" (Philippians 4:11) They imply that Paul lacked nothing, because he did not speak in respect of want. But that is not what he said. Why did he not speak in respect of want? Because he had learned to be content with whatever he had. "*I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound:....*" (Philippians 4:12) Where was Paul when he wrote this? He was in prison. Paul wrote to Timothy, "Please bring me my cloak." (See 2 Timothy 4:13) He evidently did not keep a large wardrobe with him in prison.

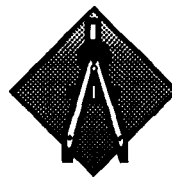
It is not a sin to be rich, nor a sin to be poor. God's focus is on our character; and, ultimately, the thing that matters is our attitude. Money is not the root of all evil. It is the love of money. (1 Timothy 6:10) If we set our heart on money, then we have an idol, because not only do we love money, but we look to money as our source of security. Whatever we love, trust in, and depend on in time of need is our god. Money is a fine servant; but if it takes

your heart, it is a powerful and wicked master, and a disappointing god.

The third sin, the pride of life, is perhaps the most deadly sin of all. Pride was the sin which split the angelic congregation of heaven, because Lucifer got his focus on his own beauty and power, and off of God. (Isaiah 14:12-14) Pride caused him to stop worshipping God; and pride has long been one of Satan's most effective weapons against the heart of man. It is easy to get caught up in self and get your focus off of God, especially if you are blessed in life. We can quickly get sidetracked from a walk of humility; and so, we need to deliberately and regularly humble ourselves, in order to keep a right perspective on life. (James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6))

Worship is an act of humility, because in praise and worship we "magnify the Lord." We direct the focus of our attention where it belongs -- on God. You do not overcome pride by putting yourself down, or by being a failure. Some people are very down on themselves, living with self-pity; and they may very well have merely another form of pride, because their focus is still on themselves. You do not become humble by putting yourself down, but by

lifting God up. God hates a "proud look" (Proverbs 6:17), because it diminishes the image of God in a person. Ultimately, man was made to be a vessel to reflect the light of the glory of God; but pride makes him absorb the light, instead.



Methods

Discussion:

John teaches us that all that the world has to offer is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These are three "root" sins.

See if you really understand how basic these three root sins are.

Name a specific act of sin; and see if it fits into one of these categories.

Does Jesus intend for us to be slaves of sin in this life? (John 8:34-36)

How can we conquer giants of sin in this human life? (1 John 5:4)

Solomon's Success Secret

Volume 6

Lesson 7

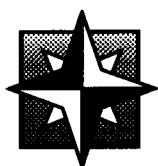


Bible References

1 Kings 3

2 Chronicles 5

Psalms 18



Theme

God is sovereign, and He is also perfectly just. When someone is greatly blessed by God, there is always a reason.



Scripture Reading

1 Kings 3:3-6, 8-10

3 *"And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places.*

4 *"And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar.*

5 *"In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.*

6 *"And Solomon said, thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee;"*

8 *"And thy servant {is} in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.*

9 *"Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?"*

10 *"And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing."*

2 Chronicles 5:6

6 *"Also king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel that were assembled unto him before the ark, sacrificed sheep and oxen, which could not be told nor numbered for multitude."*

2 Chronicles 7:4-5

4 *"Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the Lord.*

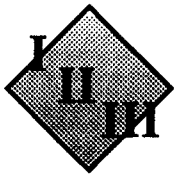
5 *"And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of 22,000 oxen, and 120,000 sheep; so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God."*



Memory Verse

Psalms 18:20

"The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God."



Outline

I. Solomon was blessed by God.

A. Solomon was made king.

1. He was the son of Bathsheba.
2. David had many older sons.
3. God chose Solomon.

B. God appeared to Solomon.

1. In a dream.
2. God can speak through dreams.
 - a. Joseph.

- b. Nebuchadnezzar.
- c. Jacob.

C. God's promise.

1. "Ask me for anything."
2. "I will give it to you."

D. Solomon's request.

1. "I do not know what to do."
2. "Give me an understanding heart."

E. God's response.

1. "I will give you wisdom and understanding."
2. "I will also give you great wealth and honor."
3. "And if you keep living right, I will give you a longer life."

II. Why Was Solomon So Blessed?

A. Solomon was David's son.

1. God keeps covenant to a thousand generations. (Deuteronomy 7:9)
2. People love to see God blessing their children.
3. One way for God to bless David was to let him see Solomon blessed.

B. Solomon loved the Lord.

1. He had learned to worship and love God.
2. If we learn to delight ourselves in God, He will give us our hearts' desires. (Psalms 37:4)
3. God's desire is to have a people who love Him with all their heart, soul, mind and strength. (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37)
4. Since God loves us, He wants us to love Him in return.

5. When people feel that you love them, they want to bless you.
6. Parents naturally want you to love them.
 - a. Do not whine and nag.
 - b. Show love and respect; and they will do anything they can for you.

C. Solomon gave lavishly to God.

1. He offered 1,000 burnt offerings to God.
2. A burnt offering was a sign of dedication to God.
 - a. Other offerings involved burning the fat and other parts, and then eating the meat.
 - b. But a burnt offering meant complete sacrifice of the whole animal in the fire.
 - c. Solomon offered 1,000 sacrifices, instead of the usual one.
3. In response to his extravagant gift to God, God said, "Solomon, you can ask me anything."

III. The Law of Reciprocity.

A. God's favor is not just by chance.

1. The secular world promotes the idea of luck.
2. In fiction, people usually stumble on a "magic" lamp.
 - a. A "genie" appears, and grants a wish, or three.
 - b. This is a perversion of the concept of God's power to answer prayer.
 - c. Satan wants us to fantasize about luck and to rely on chance, to grant us happiness.
3. In reality, God does not operate by "luck," but "according to" His promises.

B. God's promises.

1. In the Bible, the promises of God are based on conditions.
2. God responds with the new birth to those who repent and confess their sins.
 - a. God never forgives anyone who does not repent.
 - b. "Whosoever will" may be saved. (Romans 10:13)
3. Philippians 4:19.
 - a. "My God will supply all of your needs."
 - b. This is not written to everyone.
 - c. It was written to the church in Philippi, after they had given a large sacrificial offering for missions.
 - d. Paul knew that God would bless them because of it.
4. When we tithe our money, God rebukes the devourer of our money. (Malachi 3:11)

C. Law of reciprocity.

1. You will receive in life when you give.
2. You will reap what you sow. (Galatians 6:7)
3. Give, and it will be given to you. (Luke 6:38)

IV. According To....

A. David had been faithful to God.

1. So God was very faithful to David.
2. David was a man "after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22), because David loved God with all of his heart.

B. "The Lord rewarded me according to...." (Psalms 18:20)

1. David knew why God had blessed him so much.
 2. According to the cleanness of his hands.
 3. The more I obey and trust God, the more God is able to bestow blessings on my life.
- C. Our eternal salvation is not by works. It is the result of the exercise of faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.
1. But the Bible is full of the principle of reciprocity.
 2. My happiness and success in life are constantly affected by my responses to God and by the choices I make.
 3. The Beatitudes speak of the kinds of people who are most blessed in life. (Matthew 5:3-12)
- D. God's blessing and favor on your life are not based on your good looks, brains, or gender, but on your response to His Spirit and His Word.



Spiritual Truths

- Luck is the world's counterfeit to the principle of faith.
- The law of reciprocity is, "You will reap what you sow, and you will receive according to your giving."
- God was lavish in His offer to Solomon (a "blank check"), because Solomon had been lavish in his giving to God.
- God's promises in scripture are either in response to someone's faithfulness,

or in conjunction with specific conditions.

- If God arbitrarily blessed some people more than others, then He would not be the just God that He is.
- God established the principles that humility tends toward honor, and that generosity tends toward prosperity.
- The way to riches, honor, and the good life is paved with humility and the fear of the Lord.
- David was grateful to God; but he did not want his descendants to think that he was so blessed in life just because he was "lucky."



Lesson Material

We are all familiar with the dream that Solomon had in Gibeon. God appeared to him, and said, "Ask of me what you will." We are impressed by the fact that Solomon did not make a selfish request. Instead of asking for wealth of fame, he asked for an understanding heart, so that he could wisely lead the nation of Israel. God was pleased; and He gave him immense wealth, fame, glory, success, and belongings. As children, we probably thought, "Well, I know what to do if God comes to me like that. I will ask for wisdom, and then get the goodies." After all, Jesus did say, *"...Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* (Matthew 6:33)

But there is more to it than that. The question arises, "Just exactly why did God come to Solomon and make such an offer? Would He do that to just anyone? Who would be so lucky? The ten-millionth believer to accept Jesus?"

We tend to be programmed that way in our lives, because we have been trained to focus on self. We tend to expect blessings, especially if we hear only sugar-coated sermons, which make heaven so easy, but which rarely deal with the fear of the Lord or personal responsibility.

We need to clearly understand that while God is sovereign, He is never arbitrary. That means, although God is in control of the universe, He does not just pick out some to be saved and individually decide who will be lost; and He does not bless some people over others at His whim, or just because they "name it and claim it."

God has sovereignly set principles in motion in the world; and He has established that when people respond in certain ways to life, they will reap certain benefits or consequences. Wickedness and rebellion always have consequences. They tend towards death.

"...The soul that sinneth, it shall die."
(Ezekiel 18:4)

"...The wages of sin is death;...."
(Romans 6:23)

On the other hand, faith in God has specific results.

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."
(Romans 10:13)

If you look carefully through the Bible, you will see that God's favor and blessing

are tied to conditions; and they are connected to faith and righteousness.

"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." (1 Peter 3:12)

Note that the classic promise of Philippians 4:19, *"...My God shall supply..."* was written to a church that had just given a lavish missions offering, even though they were suffering themselves. People often wonder why God is not supplying so generously for them, even though they claim that verse.

The problem with seeing the principle of reciprocity at work more clearly is that there are billions of people on the planet, and they are interacting with one another in many ways. Some are extremely evil, and they will harm others who are in their way. Some people are so full of the devil that their lives are only negative. They give nothing to society, and they only hurt others in their selfish pursuits. Others are so full of God that they are constantly blessing everyone with whom they come into contact. They influence their families and friends to love and seek God; and their descendants are blessed. Note that Pharaoh was blessed by having Joseph around; and Laban was blessed because of Jacob.

Ultimately, the level of goodness in a given individual is determined by the degree to which he allows the Holy Spirit to rule in his life. Goodness is a fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22) Conversely, some people are more controlled by the devil than others; and they have varying degrees of evil influence in life. In the final analysis, each of us must answer to God for the choices we make in life, even though we are affected by the influences around us. For example, if your father

spent all of his money on himself, or lost it all, you would not receive an inheritance. Or, if your relative or parent was wise and diligent with money, you would probably receive some of it; and it could be a potential blessing. The same is true with life in general. We are affected by the blessings of those whose authority we are under. That is why Paul said,

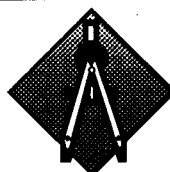
(Pray) *"...for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life...."* (1 Timothy 2:2)

The more the people in your life are blessed and prospered, the more you will tend to benefit from them.

There are several lessons here. First, be careful with whom you associate. As you get older, you will have more and more choice, in the matter of relationships. As a young person, your parents have most of the control. Pray for them. The more God blesses them, the more blessing you will reap, in a quiet and peaceable home.

Secondly, realize that life does not "just happen." Even if other people in your life fail to do you good in some way, you have the final choice whether to forgive or to become bitter. You will be affected in life by the choices you make as a Christian. If you choose to be a lazy "couch potato," you cannot be a skilled musician, or an effective athlete. Achievement and faithfulness produce reward; and sin always has consequences. You can live a

life that is blessed, and that will produce good for everyone in your life; or, you can become a self-centered leech, always taking, and never giving. You have a choice. Life does not just happen.



Methods

It is important to emphasize the principle of reciprocity in life. We will reap what we sow, even though there is a multiplicity of interacting lives that tend to obscure the blessed from the cursed. We need to clearly oppose the false concept that success is a matter of chance. Note the focus of Hollywood, which promotes a life of pleasure-seeking, and gives the idea that happiness is dependent on physical beauty and dumb luck. How often does Hollywood encourage achievement, skill, or diligence? It usually glorifies magic (witchcraft) as the key to being lucky.

Have a Bible search, or a "Wisdom Search." Have the students look through Proverbs to find verses that connect consequences with a lazy lifestyle (key words, "slothful" and "sluggard"), or a diligent, hard-working lifestyle. Also, look for benefits connected to the fear of the Lord, or generosity.

Solomon Built a Temple

Volume 6

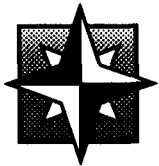
Lesson 8



Bible References

1 Chronicles 28-29

2 Chronicles 2-6



Theme

The focus of God's Word is the house that we are building for God to dwell in; and that should be our focus, too.



Scripture Reading

2 Chronicles 6:1-4, 6, 10-11

1 *"Then said Solomon, The Lord hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness.*

2 *"But I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever.*

3 *"And the king turned his face, and blessed the whole congregation of Israel: and all the congregation of Jarod stood.*

4 *"And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath with his hands fulfilled that which he spake with his mouth to my father David, saying,"*

6 *"But I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there; and have chosen David to be over my people Israel."*

10 *"The Lord therefore hath performed his word that he hath spoken: for I am risen up in the room of David my father, and am set on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and have built the house for the name of the Lord God of Israel.*

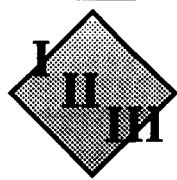
11 *"And in it have I put the ark, wherein is the covenant of the Lord, that he made with the children of Israel."*



Memory Verse

Ephesians 2:22

"In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."



Outline

I. God's Dwelling Place.

A. Our dwelling place.

1. The Bible tells us a little about the place Jesus is preparing for us.
2. The word "mansion" appears only once in the Bible -- John 14:2.
3. It means "place to dwell."

B. God's dwelling place.

1. There are large sections of the Bible which tell of the tabernacle and temple.
2. These are types of the place we are preparing for God to dwell in.
3. The emphasis of scripture is not on the place that Jesus is preparing for us, but on the place that we are preparing for Him to dwell in.

C. We are the temple of God.

1. The church: the corporate body of believers.
2. The Holy Spirit dwells in our bodies.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 6:19.
 - b. We are instructed to keep His house clean and pure.
 - c. Do not let the devil in.
3. The Lord dwells in the midst of our praise.
 - a. Psalms 22:3.
 - b. Praise and worship bring the manifest presence of God.
4. God dwells among believers, who gather in His name to glorify Him. (Matthew 18:20)

II. The Temple.

A. Tabernacle in the wilderness.

1. "Tabernacle" means "tent."
 - a. Peter called his body a tent. (2 Peter 1:13-14)
 - b. Speaks of a temporary dwelling place.
2. A picture of the church today.
 - a. Israel was called the "church in the wilderness." (Acts 7:38)
 - b. The people of God, led by Pastor Moses, God's spokesman.
3. A picture of our ministry.
 - a. Outer court -- evangelism.
 - b. Inner court -- fellowship.
 - c. Holy of Holies -- worship.
4. A picture of the believer.
 - a. Outer court -- body.
 - b. Inner court -- soul.
 - c. Holy of Holies -- spirit.

B. The temple.

1. "Temple" implies a permanent dwelling for God.
2. A great, solid building.
3. We are to be an eternal dwelling place for God.
 - a. He lives in our hearts.
 - b. He lives in our praises.
 - c. He lives in our midst.
3. Jesus Christ is the Covering, Head, and Chief Cornerstone (Isaiah 28:16, 1 Peter 2:6) of the temple of God.

C. A temple is made of:

1. Wood, a type of humanity.
 - a. Trees are used as allegories of people. (Psalms 1, Judges 9, John 15, etc.)
 - b. We should be planted, nourished, fruitful.

- c. Wood reminds us that we are but flesh; but God can use us, if we are dedicated to Him.
- 2. Gold.
 - a. A type of the glory of God.
 - b. Beauty is not in the wood (our fleshly efforts), but in the presence of God.
 - c. When we give our life to God, we take on the righteousness of Christ. (Philippians 3:9)
 - d. God puts His glory on us by grace.
 - e. *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."* (2 Corinthians 4:7)
 - f. Gold reminds us that every excellent thing in us comes from God.
- 3. Silver.
 - a. A type of redemption.
 - b. The Old Testament redemption tax was always silver.
 - c. New Covenant: We are not redeemed with silver, but with the precious blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:18-19)
 - d. Silver reminds us that we are a redeemed people, who belong to God.

III. The Ark of the Covenant.

A. God's agreement with man.

- 1. Covenant is more than a contract.
 - a. I give myself to you.
 - b. Without reservation.
 - c. And I will never leave you nor forsake you. (1 Kings 8:57; Hebrews 13:5)
 - d. All that I have, I give to you.
- 2. Marriage.

- a. A picture (type) of Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:22-33)
- b. A relationship based on giving to the other (love).

B. The Ark -- a picture of God's presence.

- 1. Made of acacia wood.
 - a. Gnarled, twisted tree.
 - b. Formed by a master craftsman into a perfect vessel.
- 2. Covered with gold.
 - a. Sanctified humanity covered by God's glory.
 - b. Glory in the Lord.
- 3. Contained:
 - a. A golden pot of manna.
 - b. The ten commandments.
 - c. Aaron's rod that budded.



Spiritual Truths

- We like to focus on the dwelling that God is building for us; but the Bible focuses on the dwelling we are to build for God.
- Our bodies were designed to be the temple of the Holy Spirit; and we should seek to glorify God in the way we use them.
- The temple in Jerusalem was a type of the church, which is the eternal place of God's habitation.
- God's emphasis is not on any physical temple, but on the spiritual temple, which is made up of genuine believers in harmony with one another.

- God literally dwelt in the ark of the covenant in Solomon's day; but now He literally dwells in the hearts of His people.
- The temple must be sanctified (set apart) and dedicated for the exclusive use and pleasure of God.
- One evidence that one is a true child of God is that he glories in his Heavenly Father, just as a small child will glory in his father, and never in his own strength.
- The temple is a picture of the true Christian -- a wooden building (humanity), covered with gold (God's glory) and silver (redemption).



Lesson Material

It is very important for us to emphasize what God emphasizes, if we are going to be balanced teachers of God's Word. People tend to focus on self, because we have been schooled in the "me generation" of humanism to varying degrees; and it is easy for us to get into "me-centered" Christology, which is "Jesus died for you, and He is desperately eager to get your permission to load you with wealth, happiness, and eternal life."

We do need to establish the fact of God's love. It is central and basic to the message of the gospel. But the first attribute of God in scripture is that He is holy. We want to teach the fear of the Lord along with the mercy message; and we want motivate young people toward purity, maturity, and responsibility, as we

teach the Word. Remember that Jesus, in the Great Commission, instructed us to preach the good news (of salvation) and to be "...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:...." (Matthew 28:20) In the School of the Bible, most of the task is discipling, and not evangelizing, because most of our class is made up of young believers, rather than heathens. They need "instruction in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:17) They need to be inspired and challenged to pursue God with all of their hearts. It is fine to sing and teach about heaven and the "mansions" Jesus is building for us in heaven; but the overwhelming majority of scriptures teach us about the building we are to build for God. Heaven is a true reward; but the Bible is a book of instructions on how to get there, and how to become the kind of people who will be comfortable there. Heaven does not center on or cater to the individual -- the focus is on Jesus.

The temple is an important subject in the Bible. The physical tabernacle of Moses and the temple of Solomon were real dwelling places for God; but we need to see them in light of God's eternal perspective. Their greatest importance lies in the fact that they foreshadowed the eternal temple of God, which is the church, the body of Christ. God dwells in every believer; but, ultimately, His temple is the whole church, which is made up of a large throng of Christians who work together as a great team to worship, honor, and serve God as His representatives in this world.

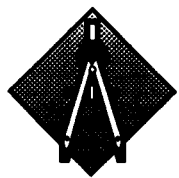
God's purpose is not to persuade a crowd of selfish people to go to heaven. Everyone wants to go to heaven. The problem in the human race is that, since Adam and Eve disobeyed God and lost dominion, everyone wants to be his own person. People naturally are drawn to a

religion that says, "You can live like you want (sin), and still make it to heaven." While we know that we are not perfect in this life, we do find that the Bible commands us to "repent," which means to "turn around" -- to leave a life motivated by self and, instead, live for God. To "live for God" means that we are motivated to do what God wants, rather than what we want. "Sanctification" is a part of true regeneration. It means to be "set apart" for God's exclusive use. Remember that it was the "father of lies" (John 8:44), who sought to remove the fear of the Lord by telling Adam, "...Ye shall not surely die." (Genesis 3:4)

When God blessed David and Solomon, it was natural for them to want to bless God. "Covenant" means "giving of self;" and when we make a true covenant with God in the Spirit, we will become worshippers. We will want to be with God, to praise and honor His name, and to feel His presence. We naturally become givers and servants. When people have a religious experience but are not really born again, they tend to focus on themselves. They are always focusing on what God will do for them, and trying to "name and claim" their wealth or other temporal reward. They will often try to use "faith" in such a way as to make God their servant, because they have mentally assented that Jesus is God's Son. Note the difference between believing in your head and believing in your heart. Jesus said, "*If ye love me, keep my commandments.*" (John 14:15) John taught that our lifestyle is an indicator of the genuineness of our conversion. If we consistently are conquered by sin, then we need God in our hearts. When Jesus is Lord in our lives, we have the grace to be overcomers in this life.

The teaching on the temple is a good reminder of the greatest priority of life for the Christian. Yes, there is a reward in heaven; but the focus of life is not "how to get what I want from God," but it is "how can I serve God, and how can I fit into the plans and purposes of God in my family, church, and community?" A Christian world view sees Jesus Christ as the center of life. The more we can learn to base our decisions and value judgments on His pleasure and on the Word of God, the more we will be useful and fruitful for God. As we seek His kingdom and His righteousness in this life (Matthew 6:33), we discover that He is well able to meet all of our needs and to bless us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 1:3) We find joy and fulfillment in doing His will -- much more than we ever found in getting our own way.

God's focus is on this spiritual temple, constructed of sanctified humanity and covered with His glory and beauty (wood overlaid with gold). As we "grow in grace" (2 Peter 3:18), and learn to trust and obey the Lord in life, we are able to fit more precisely into His plans. True faith is not getting what you want from God; but rather, it is surrendering in trust and devotion to His plan, so that He can do whatever He wants in our lives. True faith may or may not produce financial wealth in this life; but it will certainly produce true riches: character, wisdom, and eternal reward in heaven.



Methods

Use a model, or at least find pictures, to illustrate the tabernacle.

Discussion Questions:

What is the difference between the tabernacle and the temple?

Can you think of other aspects of our life in God, which are illustrated by the construction of the temple? How do we know which physical materials are types of spiritual truths? (From scripture -- we always use scripture to interpret scripture.)

Why did God create the human race?
Why did God create you?

Solomon Dedicates the Temple

Volume 6

Lesson 9



Bible Reference

2 Chronicles 7

clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness.

42 "O Lord God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember the mercies of David thy servant."

2 Chronicles 7:1-5

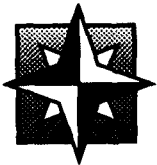
1. "Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house.

2 "And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house.

3 "And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever.

4 "Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the Lord.

5 "And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God."



Theme

The key to living a victorious and joyful Christian life is to be dedicated and consecrated wholeheartedly to God.



Scripture Reading

2 Chronicles 6:41-42

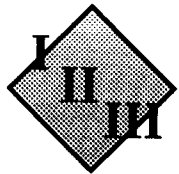
41 "Now therefore, arise, O Lord God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O Lord God, be



Memory Verse

Luke 9:23-24

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall find it."



Outline

I. Dedicating the Temple.

A. King Solomon built the temple for God.

1. He wanted God's house to be the finest in the world.
2. The building reflected the attitude of Solomon towards God.
3. The buildings we have for the church to gather in reflect our hearts.
 - a. We invest in buildings to make the ministry functional.
 - b. We make them as nice as we can, with the funds God provides.
 - c. We keep the buildings clean, as a praise to the Lord.
 - d. We honor and respect God's house, because it is dedicated to Him.

B. Dedication.

1. To publicly declare that this is set apart for God's glory.
2. Sanctified -- limited to the exclusive use of blessing God.
3. It was an abomination to use something sanctified to God for any other purpose.
4. Our bodies should be dedicated to God; and they are not to be used for fornication. (1 Corinthians 6-7)

II. Sacrifice of Praise.

A. Burnt offering.

1. A symbol of total dedication.
2. Solomon offered 22,000 head of cattle and 120,000 sheep and goats.
 - a. This is a picture of lavish praise.
 - b. Extravagant worship.
3. We do not offer animal sacrifices today, because Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice for sin. (Hebrews 9:12)

B. New Covenant sacrifices.

1. Give your body as a living sacrifice to God. (Romans 12:1)
 - a. Body dedicated to God's service.
 - b. Sanctified; not available for immoral acts.
 - c. When offered something that will defile your body, say "I have given my life to Jesus Christ, and so I cannot do that."
2. Sacrifice of praise. (Hebrews 13:15)
 - a. Praise God, because He is worthy.
 - b. Not because I feel like it.
3. Sacrificial giving.
 - a. Widow's mite. (Mark 12:42)
 - b. Church at Philippi. (Philippians 4:10-19)
 - c. Giving, even when you cannot afford it.

III. The Glory of God.

A. God consumed the sacrifice.

1. Fire came down from heaven.
2. Our God is a consuming fire.
(Hebrews 12:29)
3. Fleshly glory cannot abide in God's presence. (1 Corinthians 1:29)

B. Glory.

1. Hebrew *kabod* -- means "weighty; honorable; important."
2. When we humble ourselves (set aside our own glory), then God is able to put His glory on us.
 - a. *"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:"* (1 Peter 5:6)
 - b. *"That no flesh should glory in his presence."* (1 Corinthians 1:29)
 - c. *"But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."* (2 Corinthians 10:17)
3. *"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass:...."* (Psalms 72:6)
 - a. *"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass...."* (1 Peter 1:24)
 - b. God will rain upon people who do not have self-glory.

C. Adam and Eve.

1. In the garden, were clothed with God's glory.
2. When they disobeyed, they saw their nakedness. (Genesis 3:7)
3. Humanity, without God's glory, is shameful.

IV. Solomon's Temple Dedication.

A. God's glory filled the house.

1. After the temple was built, according to God's pattern.
2. And dedicated to God's glory.
3. After Solomon prayed the prayer of consecration.
4. And the people were in one accord.

B. There was great joy and celebration.

1. Dedicated the altar seven days.
2. Seven days of feasting.
3. A great orchestra played with skill and anointing before the Lord.

C. God's promise. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

1. *"If my people, which are called by my name:*
 - a. *"Shall humble themselves...*
 - b. *"And pray...*
 - c. *"And seek my face...*
 - d. *"And turn from their wicked ways;*
2. *"Then will I:*
 - a. *"Hear from heaven..*
 - b. *"And will forgive their sin...*
 - c. *"And will heal their land."*



Spiritual Truths

- When we give our life to the Lord, we acknowledge that we belong to Him, and that we do not have the right to do anything we want in life.
- The key to a happy, fulfilled life is not seeking happiness; but it is seeking God.

- To "deny self" means to refuse to allow appetites or selfish motives to rule your decisions and activities, but, instead, to make Jesus Lord.
- God will bestow His glory only on those who do not glory in themselves.
- God's glory comes with wisdom, power, and blessing, as well as eternal honor.
- The way we respect and care for God's house and God's anointed leaders reflects the way we feel about God.
- Joy and gladness of heart are natural by-products of faithfully doing a task for God and for God's glory.
- The most blessed and worthwhile lifestyle involves giving, serving, and sacrificing for God.



Lesson Material

The Old Testament is not just a historical record of the nations of the world leading to the time of Jesus Christ, but it is also a record of life stories, which gives a comprehensive picture of life, as God sees it. We are given many illustrations that apply to life, both in the biographical sketches and in the events that surround them. The Old Testament is full of interesting and accurate pictures of spiritual truths; and we see them come to life and explained in the New Testament.

For example, the nation of Israel is a picture of the believer, and also of the New Testament church. The bondage in

Egypt is a type of sin; the Red Sea is a picture of the blood of Christ. The Passover shows us the principle of redemption; and the wilderness wandering is a picture of sanctification (death of the "old man"). Canaan is not a type of heaven, because there were still giants to be fought and battles to be won. Canaan is a type of the Spirit-filled life, which God desires for every believer.

The temple is also a clear type of the Christian, and of the church. Both the ark of the covenant and the temple were constructed of wood overlaid with gold, which pictures humanity covered by the glory of God. The temple was designed specifically as a place for God to dwell. It was constructed by men, according to the patterns given by the Holy Spirit. One significant factor is that God's house was always built out of materials that were given in freewill offerings by the people. We do not become part of God's eternal house, until we voluntarily give ourselves to God. God will not force anyone to become a Christian.

The New Covenant with God is based on the blood of Jesus Christ, which supersedes any animal sacrifices. Those were done away with, because to offer them up now would imply that something more is required for our redemption than the blood of Jesus. In a similar way, those who base their salvation on the works of law are denying the power of the completed work of Christ on the cross. There are people today, for example, who teach that we must keep the seventh day Sabbath, just as the Jews under the Old Covenant did. But Jesus fulfilled the Sabbath; and, therefore, it is "dead works" to judiciously observe the Sabbath as a work of the law. It denies that Jesus is our "Sabbath rest," as clearly revealed in the book of Hebrews, Chapter

4. We now celebrate the Lord's day, giving God the first day of the week in celebration of the resurrection, just as they did in the New Testament Church. (Acts 20:7) The Sabbath was a beautiful type; but we are not under the Old Covenant statutes.

Solomon built the temple according to God's pattern, because every dimension, material, and even color had a spiritual meaning. God was directing Israel to build a picture of many spiritual truths. David had a strong desire to build the temple; but God did not allow him to do it, because he was a man of war, and he had shed so much blood. David did, however, donate huge quantities of gold, silver, gems, and other materials for the temple; and he prepared his son to build it.

Solomon built the temple according to God's specifications. We need to see the task of the church as that of a builder. As the Apostle Paul saw his work as preparing and equipping a church to be a bride for the Lord, so we need to see our task as those who disciple and equip believers for service to God. We are a habitation of God through the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:22) The first quality of a temple is that it is built according to the pattern of God. We need to build our lives according to the pattern life -- Jesus Christ. The Bible is full of instructions about how we are to live life, and how we are to focus our affections and attentions on the Lord. We need "instruction in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16)

The second principle about this temple is that it was wholly dedicated to the Lord. That means that Solomon and all the people were declaring that this temple was to be used exclusively for God's pleasure and purposes. It was first designed to please God, and, secondly, as a place where people who were seeking God could find

Him. Note that when Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, used the dedicated cups and utensils of gold from this temple many years later for his lavish feast (which involved vile, immoral practices, and his fleshly pride), God wrote his epitaph on the wall; and he was destroyed that very night. (Daniel 5) *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* (Hebrews 10:31)

We need to understand the principle of dedication. To say that I am "living for the Lord" does not just mean that I am giving up cigarettes and booze. It means that my motive for doing what I do comes from God's heart, and not mine. Instead of living for self, I live for God. That was the secret of the life of Jesus. He was totally dedicated to the will of the Father. He only did what He did to please the Father; and He was never selfish in His heart. (John 8:29) He never did anything to make Himself happy. The result: He is the happiest person in the universe. (Hebrews 1:9)

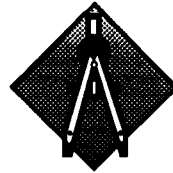
Sometimes, in our eagerness to win people to Jesus, we only speak of heaven and forgiveness; and we may imply that God's desire is only to persuade people to accept His gift of life, whether they live for Him or not. Jesus did not make it so easy. He said, *"...If any {man} will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."* (Matthew 16:24-25) Every one of the gospels has this message (with some differences in the wording), implying that Jesus spoke it often, in slightly different ways. It is a basic part of the message of the kingdom of God.

The world says, "Grab for life. Go for the gold and the glory. You deserve the

best. Assert yourself." However, Jesus said, "Deny self. Kick self off the throne, and live for God instead." It is like an ideal marriage. A man and a woman each say, "Instead of living for myself, I will devote myself to making you happy. I put you ahead of myself." When we deny self, and live for God, God responds with tremendous blessings in return. When we lay down our life (rights) for His sake, and seek God instead of our own way, we discover that we have found the secret to the "abundant life." (John 10:10) The secret to eternal prosperity is not to "name it and claim it," but it is to "die to self." *"The meek... (those who do not assert their rights) ...shall inherit the earth (they will get it all in the end)." (Matthew 5:5)* This wisdom is the opposite of "earthly wisdom," which says "To get, you have to take."

Glory works the same way. God's glory comes down *"...like rain upon the mown grass:...." (Psalms 72:6)* Again, we interpret scripture with scripture. What did Peter say about grass? Grass is a picture of flesh. (1 Peter 1:24) It lives briefly; and it is relatively insignificant. The glory of man is like the flower of grass. This is an allegory. The flower of grass is very temporary and fragile. Put these two verses together; and you will see a principle illustrated. If we are going to see the glory of God manifested in power in the church, we cannot be promoting the glory or importance of individuals. God cannot pour out His glory in a church that idolizes the preacher, or focuses adoration on any "stars," whether they are singers, speakers, or important board members. When all of us become servants; when the only "star" in the church is Jesus; when all eyes and hearts are focused on that Name which is above every name, the glory and beauty of the Lord can rain down from heaven on that people. When the people

are in one accord to build a holy temple for God's honor, and they honestly dedicate themselves as vessels unto honor and as His servants, then God can dwell in power among them; and the world will see a living testimony to the goodness of God.



Methods

Discussion Questions:

What does it mean to "live for the Lord?"

D. L. Moody said, "The world has yet to see what God can do with a man who is totally dedicated to God." What do you think of that?

Jesus said, *"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."* (Matthew 16:25) Insert the word "happiness" for "life;" and see if the principle applies. Try "wealth." What really happens when we honestly give ourselves to God?

What happened to Solomon, when he lavishly gave to God, and put God first?

What happened later in his life, when he put his heathen wives first?

How will it affect my life, if I really dedicate myself and my body to God?

If I dedicate my body to God now, does that mean I will stay a virgin until I get married? (1 Corinthians 6:18-19, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4)

Fire Out of Heaven

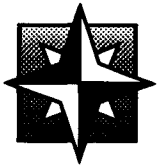
Volume 6

Lesson 10



Bible Reference

1 Kings 18



Theme

The idols of this world are false gods who offer no hope. But our God is real, omnipotent, and wonderful.



Scripture Reading

1 Kings 18:17-19, 21-24

17 "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?

18 "And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim.

19 "Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table."

21 "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

22 "Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baals' prophets are four hundred and fifty men.

23 "Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock and lay it on wood, and put no fire under:

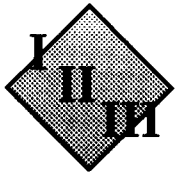
24 "And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken."



Memory Verse

Deuteronomy 4:23-24

"Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God...for the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God."



Outline

I. Elijah the Prophet.

A. Elijah.

1. A prophet of God (one who speaks for God; a "seer").
2. Name means "God is the Lord."
3. He served God faithfully; and God answered his prayers with mighty miracles.
4. He prayed that it would not rain; and there was no rain for over three years.

B. The times of Elijah.

1. After Solomon died, the nation of Israel divided into two kingdoms:
 - a. Israel, the northern kingdom.
 - b. Judah, the southern kingdom.
2. All of the kings of the northern Israeli kingdom were wicked.
3. Some of the kings of Judah were good, and some were evil.

4. There had been no rain for over three years, because Elijah had prayed that it would not rain.
 - a. God controls the weather.
 - b. This is a classic example of the power of the prayers of a righteous man. (James 5:16-18)

II. Ahab.

A. The king of Israel. (northern kingdom.)

1. He was a wicked heathen, who served Satan and worshipped idols.
2. He had an evil wife named Jezebel.
 - a. She was a heathen -- a Phoenician.
 - b. Her father was the king of Tyre.

B. Ahab and the nation of Israel worshipped Baal.

1. Baal means, "possessor," or "lord."
2. Basically, Baal was the sun-god.
3. Many people were deceived into thinking that Baal was merely an expression of the true God, Jehovah.
 - a. As Moslems today think that Allah is the true God.
 - b. The religion of Islam is similar to the Baal worship of Elijah's day.

C. Baal worship.

1. Baal was a god of prosperity and greed.
2. There were many different forms for Baal, and many local Baals.
3. When the people wanted good crops, or business, they would offer sacrifices and chants before Baal.
4. Sometimes they would sacrifice their children.
 - a. They would burn them to death.

- b. It was called "making their children pass through the fire." (Deuteronomy 18:10)
- c. These were not nice people.

D. The wicked kings of Israel led the people away from Jerusalem, by substituting false gods and false worship in Samaria.

III. Elijah's Challenge.

A. Elijah confronted Ahab.

1. Ahab was angry with Elijah.
 - a. He knew that Elijah had called off the rain for 3-1/2 years.
 - b. "You caused all of this trouble (drought)!"
2. Elijah responded: "No, it is your fault."
 - a. God was punishing Israel for their idolatry.
 - b. God had prompted Elijah to pray that it would not rain.
 - c. Elijah could pray with great faith, because he was praying for God's will, and not for his own selfish motives.

B. Elijah confronts the prophets of Baal.

1. 450 prophets of Baal. (vs. 22)
2. Also 400 "prophets of the groves."
3. 850 men plus demons, against one prophet plus God.
 - a. No contest.
 - b. God is the Lord.
 - c. Elijah's name constantly reminded him of that fact; and it built his faith.
4. Why halt between two opinions?
 - a. They were not sure of their beliefs.
 - b. Their conscience still bothered them; and they realized that they were evil.

5. If God is God, then serve Him.
 - a. If the gospel is true, then it makes sense to serve God with all your heart.
 - b. If hell and heaven are real and eternal, then we are really foolish to live for the moment.

IV. The Contest.

A. Let us each offer a sacrifice, but do not put fire to it.

1. Let the true God answer by fire.
2. A true God will have true power.

B. Demonic activity.

1. Satan's crowd uses trickery and deception.
2. Or, the devil could have tried to set the offering on fire.
3. But God had angels who kept the devil from doing anything.
4. The false prophets worked themselves into a frenzy, cutting themselves with knives.

C. Elijah's confidence.

1. He mocked them. (1 Kings 18:27)
2. "Shout louder. Maybe your god is asleep."
3. "Maybe he is sitting in the bathroom."

D. Elijah's faith.

1. Pour water over the offering to God.
2. Do it two more times.
3. If God can send fire from heaven, then He can send a supernatural fire that will burn water and rocks.
 - a. Water and rocks do not normally burn.

- b. Elijah wanted a clear demonstration of God's power, with no room for doubt.
- c. No one could question that God was the true God.

E. The response of Ahab and Jezebel.

1. They were angry, because they lost the contest.
2. They should have repented of their sin; but they were so evil, they did not.
3. Their desire: Kill the preacher!
4. They are like the people who hear the gospel and see it confirmed with miracles.
 - a. In the end, they will believe what they want to believe.
 - b. People will ultimately do what they want to do.

- God has all power; but He chooses to reveal His power through surrendered people, or in response to their specific prayers.
- The fear of the Lord does not result in timidity. In fact, it produces strong confidence, which is born of hope.
- People are ultimately going to do and believe what is in their hearts, regardless of the clear evidence.



Lesson Material

The nation of Israel was divided, as a judgment of God against Solomon and the people. Solomon, in the end, was drawn away from God by many of his heathen wives. His pursuit of pleasure damaged his spirit, and caused great harm to him and to the whole nation. God took the kingdom from his son, Rehoboam. However, out of regard for David and for the covenant He had made with him, God caused the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to stay loyal to David's line (dynasty), while the northern ten tribes followed Jeroboam.

Jeroboam knew that God had given him the kingdom; but, ultimately, he was not a man of faith, and so he "did his own thing." In order to keep the people away from Jerusalem (where they might be prompted to become loyal to David's line again), he introduced idolatry in Israel, setting up a temple in Samaria. The southern kingdom, under David's dynasty, went through ups and downs spiritually. There were periods of spiritual decline, and times of revival. Some of the kings were good, and some were wicked.



Spiritual Truths

- The intense prayer of a person with pure motives produces powerful results.
- Elijah had great power in prayer, because he had a servant's heart and he prayed for God's will to be done.
- Ahab lived his life in the strength of political manipulation and maneuvering; but Elijah lived for God.
- One plus God is a majority.
- If God is God, and hell is real, then sin is a very poor investment of our time and effort in life.

The official religion was always the worship of the true God, Jehovah; but there was also some idolatry.

The Northern kingdom never had a good king; and the official religion was idolatry, from the time of Jeroboam until the destruction of the nation by Assyria in 722 B.C. God sent them many prophets and gave them many chances to repent; but they never did repent, as a nation. The end of their story was a violent destruction, with a few becoming the slaves of their captors. God is patient and kind, and He wants everyone to repent. But judgment is certain; and the end result of a lifestyle of sin is death. (Romans 6:23) Sin has consequences.

Ahab was one of the most notoriously wicked kings of Israel. He was a master politician, although he did not have a strong personal character. He looked to people as his source in life, and he made alliances with other nations. He married Jezebel, the daughter of the Phoenician king of Tyre. She was the real power behind the throne. She was as wicked as they come. Later, Ahab and Jezebel gave their daughter Athaliah in marriage to Joram, king of Judah, in order to strengthen that political alliance. Athaliah was also a wicked manipulator. After her husband died, her son Ahaziah became king. When he was killed, she had all of the descendants of David killed, so that she could be the queen of Judah. But God arranged for one baby boy to be saved to carry on the dynasty; and she was executed for her treachery.

When Ahab was in power, God raised up the prophet, Elijah to give the nation another opportunity to repent and turn back to Him. Elijah had great faith. He had "mustard seed faith." Now some suggest that mustard seed faith means "small

amount;" but note that Jesus said, "*...If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye will say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.*" (Matthew 17:20) What is the seed principle? It is that it must "fall into the ground and die," in order to produce. (John 12:24) In other words, faith is not getting God to do what you want. Faith dies to self, and focuses on God with a servant's heart. When you die to self and pray with a servant's heart, you can "*...ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*" (John 15:7) God loves to answer the prayer of a pure-hearted servant. He is not excited about the selfish requests of people who are out to "do their own thing." They can have all kinds of positive thoughts and positive confessions; but their prayers will not have the power of the meek, who do not demand their rights.

Elijah prayed that it would not rain on the earth. It was not a selfish prayer. He suffered from the drought and famine, too. He earnestly wanted Israel to repent; and he prayed for God's will to be done. God wanted to withhold rain, in order to motivate Israel toward repentance.

When Ahab confronted Elijah, he blamed the prophet for Israel's troubles. That is like America blaming its current financial crisis on the Christians. Actually, it is the Christian influence that caused the nation's prosperity, in the first place. But America turned from a Christian emphasis to a humanistic one, and began to worship money. When a nation worships money, it tries to solve all of its problems with money. The result is moral and financial bankruptcy. When a nation takes God out of its focus, they remove the incentive for righteousness, because "*...by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.*" (Proverbs 16:6) But humanists will

always try to blame the Christians for social ills, because they do not want to admit that their philosophy destroys moral restraint and promotes rebellion and wickedness.

Elijah said, "Wait a minute. I am not the cause of this famine. You are." He did not allow the king to saddle him with the blame. The judgment of God came because of sin, not because of the believer. Elijah was simply praying for revival.

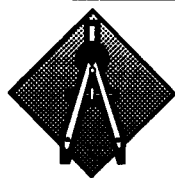
Elijah said to the people, "Why do you not make up your minds? If God is the true God, then serve Him." That only makes sense. Years ago, a man in England talked to a group of Christians. He said, "Gentlemen, I do not believe your gospel. But I will tell you this. If I believed in an eternal, burning hell, or in an eternal, beautiful heaven, I would give everything I had and expend all of my energy in life, to warn everyone I could about that awful hell." If God is really God, then the warnings of the Bible are true, as well as its glorious promises. Then, it makes absolutely no sense to serve sin, or to live for the moment. If we believe the Bible, we will focus on eternity and serve the Lord with fear and with gladness of heart.

The confrontation on Mount Carmel between Elijah and the 850 prophets of idols is a very familiar one to most of our young people. We all realize that Elijah made the challenge; and then he mocked the prophets of Baal, while they tried desperately to get their "god" to send fire out of heaven. They probably thought that it would be easy. Baal was the "sun god." They actually worshipped the sun. How natural for the sun to shine down and burn up a sacrifice. But Elijah's faith prevailed; and God's angels would not allow any demon to sneak in with a

match, or even allow one of the false prophets to light it by trickery.

Elijah ordered a great quantity of water to be poured over his sacrifice, even though there was a drought going on. He reasoned correctly that if God was going to send supernatural fire, it would be just as easy to burn rocks and water, as a dry pile of wood. God can do anything; and Elijah had great faith in his great God. Before a large crowd of people, God's prophet prayed a short prayer (verse 37): "Lord, let the people know that You are the true God, and that You have not turned your back on them." The fire of the Lord fell; and it consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the twelve stones of the altar, and the water in the trench.

What did the people do? They fell on their faces, and said, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!" Then, they helped Elijah to kill all of the prophets of Baal. God enabled Elijah to conquer the false prophets, because He is a jealous God. Jealousy is the attitude toward being replaced. Godly jealousy is the concern that someone will replace God in their hearts with some idol, and thus lose out eternally.



Methods

Israel had a great problem with idolatry. Usually, they would get into it by allowing heathens to teach them to make stone or wooden images to "represent the true God." But God had commanded them to carefully avoid carved images, because He knew their tendency was to focus on

the image, instead of worshipping God in their spirit. (Exodus 20:4)

Do people today get their focus on images (statues or pictures)?

Do we have a tendency to focus on people, instead of God?

What is an idol?

God is our ultimate Source of peace and hope in life. He is our Provider. When we look to money, to man, or to ourselves as our source instead of God, we are moving into idolatry. An idol is anything that takes the place of God in our lives. God should have first place in our affections and devotion.

Some entertainers are called "idols." Are they? (Yes, they certainly are, to those who worship them.) Have you ever been to, or seen, a rock music concert? Did you see the people lifting their hands, surrendering to the power of the beat, obeying the singers? Do you realize that this is worship? Can we make idols out of people who sing Christian music, by loving them more than God?

If money is your source of your security, then money is your god. If you love pleasure more than you love God, then you have an idol. Idolatry is a serious problem in the church today; and we need to make the same decision that the Israelites made. If God is really God, then we should serve Him.

Loving God's Word

Volume 6

Lesson 11

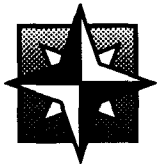


Bible References

Psalms 1

Joshua 1:8

Psalms 119



Theme

A great key to living a successful life is the daily practice of reading and meditating on God's Word.



Scripture Reading

Psalms 1:1-6

1 *"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*

2 *"But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*

3 *"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*

4 *"The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.*

5 *"Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.*

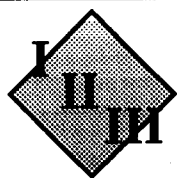
6 *"For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."*



Memory Verse

Psalms 1:1-2

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night."



Outline

I. Blessed Is the Man.

A. "Blessed."

1. "Happy; fortunate; to be envied."
2. The world has different criteria for a high quality of life.
 - a. The "good life" is having money, good health, and few problems.
 - b. A man's "worth" is determined by that which he owns.
3. God defines the "good life" in terms of character, and the influence you have on others for good.
4. Matthew 5:3-12.
 - a. Jesus defines the blessed man in terms of being like Him in character.
 - b. The blessed man is not the rich man, but the one who is "poor in spirit."
 - c. The blessed man is not the one who accumulates for himself, but the one who is meek, and who denies himself.
 - d. The blessed man is not the prosperous, but the persecuted.

B. "Walks not in the counsel of the ungodly."

1. Jesus said, "...take heed what you hear:...." (Mark 4:24)
2. We choose who will influence our lives.
3. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise..."
4. "...but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." (Proverbs 13:20)

5. Wisdom is seeing God's perspective, and focusing on Him.
 - a. Wise people talk about spiritual things.
 - b. Fools focus on temporal things, and on themselves.

C. "Nor stands in the way of sinners."

1. Sin causes us to be selfish, and to live for the moment.
2. There is a lifestyle that naturally flows out of the heart that rejects God.
3. "And be not conformed to this world:...." (Romans 12:2)
4. People who reject God are irritated by the righteous, because they feel convicted about their sin.

D. "Nor sits in the seat of the scornful."

1. People who habitually criticize others are generally not "doers." (James 1:22)
 - a. Thus the "seat" of the scornful.
 - b. Some people accomplish little in life, other than finding fault with those who do.
2. Scorners focus on the faults of others, in an effort to make themselves look superior.

II. Meditate In His Law.

A. "His delight is in the law of the Lord."

1. Law -- a principle that always works (as in the law of gravity).
2. God's Word reflects His wisdom -- the principles of God's kingdom. (James 3:17)
3. God's wisdom is contrary to human reasoning; but it never fails.
4. The Book of Proverbs is full of God's principles.

5. Psalms 119, the longest chapter in the Bible, celebrates God's Word.
6. The Psalmist loved the Word of God; and he meditated on it day and night. (Psalms 119:97)

B. Meditation.

1. First read; then memorize; then meditate.
2. Meditation is like a cow chewing the cud.
 - a. It brings up eaten, but undigested food, chewing it thoroughly.
 - b. Ruminating (pondering at length).
3. Meditation involves personalizing and visualizing the Word.
 - a. Repeat the verse in your mind, applying it to your own life, and using your own name where possible.
 - b. See yourself doing what the Word says.

C. Transcendental meditation.

1. A Satanic counterfeit to godly meditation.
2. This opens the mind to evil, by clearing out the mind and meditating on nothing, or by repeating a "mantra" (an assigned word or phrase, often the name of a demon idol).

D. Worldly visualizing.

1. The secular world seeks to fill our minds with godless images of life.
2. Anything to keep our minds occupied with the secular aspects of life.

III. Prosperity.

A. Biblical prosperity is not just the accumulation of money and things.

1. The use of money is a temporary training ground for eternity.
2. In this life, we are just "stewards."
3. It all belongs to God; and we cannot take it with us.

B. Prosperity is the progressive realization of worthwhile goals, and the development of a Christ-like character.

1. *"...I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."* (Psalms 17:15)
2. If you meditate in God's Word day and night, you will prosper and have good success. (Joshua 1:8)
 - a. Bad success -- gaining wealth at the expense of health, joy, or relationships.
 - b. Good success -- *"The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it."* (Proverbs 10:22)

C. "Like a tree planted by the river."

1. Drawing its life from deep down in the soil of God's grace.
2. Unaffected by drought or storms.
3. Bringing forth fruit in season.

IV. The Ungodly Are Not So.

A. Ungodly.

1. Selfish, self-centered people.
2. The opposite of love is selfishness.
3. God is love. (1 John 4:8)

B. Like the chaff.

1. Just a hard shell, with no nourishing substance to it.

2. "...Carried about with every wind of doctrine,...." (Ephesians 4:14)



Spiritual Truths

- We tend to become like the people with whom we choose to spend our time.
- God's value system is radically different from the humanistic value system.
- The people who do the most criticizing and fault-finding are generally the ones who accomplish the least in life for others.
- The secular world wants you to conform to its image of self-centered rebellion, laziness, and indulgence, which hinders you from being excellent in spirit.
- There is no physical ideal in life; but there is a character ideal on Whom we should focus -- and that is Jesus Christ.
- The key to success in life is the practice of meditating on God's Word daily.
- Meditating involves memorizing, visualizing, and personalizing the Word.
- There is no true wisdom, apart from God's Word.



Lesson Material

Young people today are being indoctrinated with a false values system, which centers on themselves. The agenda is to build self-esteem (pride) by exalting the individual and denouncing authority. The focus is on rights and "free expression." But when we promote any view of life apart from God's purposes and power, we are ultimately demeaning life and removing the ultimate Source of joy, hope, and love. The flood of humanistic teaching in schools, education, and entertainment has produced a generation with nothing of substance to live for, and few positive role models to look to. By removing the Bible, we have produced a generation with poor values, low literacy levels, and no vision. The Bible warns us that "*Where there is no vision, the people perish* (cast off restraint):...." (Proverbs 29:18)

The goal of a good teacher is not merely to inform, but to inspire. Every teacher has an influence on character and values, whether he realizes it or not. Our goal in teaching the Word of God is not merely to acquaint students with stories and characters from the Bible, or to preach our ideas; but it is, ultimately, to inspire a love for the Word of God, and to encourage others to be lifelong lovers of the Bible.

We do not inspire anyone to read the Bible by making it sound simple. We inspire by making it come alive -- by making the Word of God relevant to our lives. We need to relate to Bible writers and characters as real people, with the same problems that we have today. We also need to communicate a sense of awe

about the Word. It is sometimes wise to teach "above their heads," or to challenge their thinking with some of the profound things of God. That would be better than making the Bible sound like "kid's stuff," by trying to make everything so simple. Preachers and teachers have a hard time admitting things like "I do not really understand that verse" -- although all of us ponder over many passages, when we do not have even a foggy notion of what the writer is saying.

The Word of God is a rich treasure; and we should communicate an excitement about learning the Word that will be the pattern for a lifetime of learning. Let the students know that you are still a learner, and that you still study and memorize the Word. Do not ever ask a class to memorize a verse that you cannot recite easily, or that you do not understand. Your job is to make the Word come alive; and it has to be in your heart, as well as in your brain.

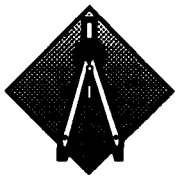
We are agents of change. We have a values system based on God's perspective of life. We usually have a group of young people who are being strongly influenced by many hours of humanist indoctrination every week; and we only have a short time to challenge the false doctrines they are learning all week. God's wisdom is vastly superior to the world's wisdom, and His reward is infinitely better; but Satan has blinded the minds of people with a flood of teaching to clarify false values, and we need to directly attack the lie of humanism. Our greatest educational tool is the Bible. If we can get people's focus onto God's Word, they will learn faith and wisdom. They will see in all of the Bible's historical accounts that it always pays to seek and obey God, and that sinners are always losers.

Any time you figure God into the equation, you will have a better perspective on life. You will make better decisions, if you consider the eternal consequences; and you will be a better person, if you are a giver.

Psalms Chapter 1 is a pattern for success in life. Encourage your students to apply the principles personally. Challenge the values system of the world. What makes life worth living? What is true success, or prosperity? While the secular world seeks to indoctrinate with "values clarification" courses that lead minds away from a Christian world view, you need to proclaim that God's ways are much higher than man's ways. (Isaiah 55:9)

Remember that the Bible is not written initially to the carnal mind (1 Corinthians 2:14); but it is God's communication to the spirits of believers. We do not just communicate facts and figures; but we are communicators of spiritual life and hope. We are not to merely parrot the words of Jesus; but we are to communicate the lifestyle and values of Jesus. In His days on earth, there were many scribes who made their living copying the Bible, but it did not get into their hearts. They were experts on scripture, but most of them did not really know God. It was merely religion -- man's efforts to find God. The Bible is God's revelation to regenerated man; and the Holy Spirit must quicken our spirit, in order to make it come alive. (Ephesians 2:1) Someone once said:

"I once thought that the Bible was a dry, dead book. Then I was born again, and I found out that the Bible was vibrant with life. It was I who was dead."



Methods

Challenge your students to memorize and meditate on the Word of God. Teach them the difference between transcendental meditation and godly meditation. Inspire them to be lifelong students of the Word, and not just faithful members of your weekly audience. Be excited about the Word; and communicate an awe of scripture and of God to your class.

Start the class by quoting Psalms 1 from memory; and then challenge the class to memorize the chapter by the next week.

Have them personalize it, as the example below:

"See yourself rejecting the counsel of the ungodly teacher, or the ungodly entertainer on television. See yourself resisting the influence of unsaved peers, and refusing to sit in the 'seat of the scornful.' Visualize yourself as a solid tree, drinking in the Word of God like sweet, life-giving water. See yourself bearing the fruit of positive influence in the lives of others, and living a prosperous, joyful, successful life, in harmony with God's plan and purpose."

"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom;...." (Colossians 3:16)
And then, inspire your class to delight in the Word, too.

The Discouraged Prophet

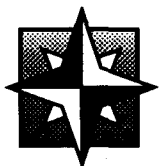
Volume 6

Lesson 12



Bible Reference

1 Kings 19



Theme

Sometimes our most discouraging times come after great experiences; and we need to learn to go to God for strength.



Scripture Reading

1 Kings 19:1-6, 9-10, 15-16, 18

1 *"And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.*

2 *"Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time.*

3 *"And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there.*

4 *"But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.*

5 *"And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat.*

6 *"And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again."*

9 *"And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?*

10 *"And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."*

15 *"And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazeel to be king over Syria:*

16 "And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint (to be) king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint (to be) prophet in thy room."

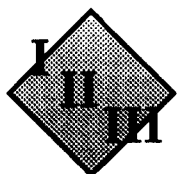
18 "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal."



Memory Verse

Romans 10:17

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."



Outline

I. After Mount Carmel.

A. In our last exciting episode.

1. God's prophet Elijah put God to the test, proving that Baal was a false god.
2. He killed the prophets of Baal.
3. Then, there was a great rain storm.
4. Elijah outran Ahab's chariot to Jezreel.

B. Jezebel's reaction.

1. She did not repent, when she heard the miracle God had performed.

2. She swore to kill Elijah.

C. Elijah ran for his life.

1. He who had just rebuked the king and mocked 850 men with knives.
2. Now he was running from one woman.
3. This was one mean woman!

II. Elijah In the Wilderness.

A. "God, please let me die."

1. He was not suicidal.
 - a. Suicide is rebellion.
 - b. He was asking for God to end his life.
2. He was very discouraged.
 - a. When we make choices based on fear, we lose faith.
 - b. Faith focuses on God and His purposes.
 - c. Fear focuses on self and dangers.
3. Elijah had faced danger before; but he had a mission, and he was more concerned with his message than his own safety.
4. Now Elijah was worried about his own safety.

B. The angel.

1. Elijah slept under a tree.
2. An angel woke him up twice, and fed him each time.
 - a. It was special "high-octane" food.
 - b. He did not eat again for 40 days.
3. Elijah needed rest and food.
 - a. Sometimes we get "down" when we are tired, or have not eaten well.
 - b. There is a time to rest, and a time to work.
 - c. It is hard to have spiritual victory, when you are not feeling well physically.

- d. We should take good care of our bodies. (1 Corinthians 6:18-20)

III. Elijah On Mt. Horeb.

- A. He went to live in a cave on the mountain.
- B. God's question.
 - 1. "Elijah, what are you doing here?"
 - a. Elijah probably wanted a little sympathy right then.
 - b. He had worked for God; and now he was threatened by Jezebel.
 - 2. Elijah said, "God, I am the only one you have got left; and they want to kill me."
 - 3. God said, "Go, and stand on the mountain." (1 Kings 19:11)
 - a. Elijah was feeling sorry for himself; and God was giving him orders, instead of sympathy.
 - b. Elijah went.
- C. God's voice.
 - 1. God sent a great wind that broke the rocks apart; but the Lord was not in the wind.
 - 2. He sent an earthquake; but He was not revealed in that, either.
 - 3. Then came a fire, but no revelation.
 - 4. Then God was revealed in a still, small voice.
 - a. God never shouts.
 - b. God wants you to get close to Him; and so, He speaks softly.
 - c. When you are big and strong, you do not have to shout.

IV. God's Voice.

- A. God quietly said, "Elijah, what are you doing here?"
 - 1. When we hear from God, we will not always hear what we want to hear.
 - 2. God did not give Elijah praise or sympathy.
 - a. God checked his motives.
 - b. God was dealing with Elijah's attitude.
- B. "Go and anoint Hazael and Jehu to be kings."
 - 1. God dealt with Elijah's discouragement by giving him another assignment.
 - 2. If you are discouraged, sometimes the best cure is responsibility.
 - 3. Sitting around feeling sorry for yourself will not build you up.
 - 4. Go and build up someone else who is discouraged.
 - 5. Many people are discouraged, when they have nothing of value to do.
 - a. It is lack of responsibility, which produces discouragement.
 - b. It is not the task which produces discouragement.
 - 6. People are not failures because they fail; they are failures because they quit.
- C. "And anoint Elisha to take your place."
 - 1. Elijah was probably surprised at this.
 - 2. He thought God would say, "Please, Elijah, I really need your ministry."
 - 3. Instead, God said, "OK, if you want to resign, here is the new man to take your place."
- D. "I have 7,000 in Israel who have not bowed to Baal."

1. Israel, as a nation, had adopted Baal worship as their religion.
2. This did not count the nation of Judah.
3. God says, "You are not alone in your faith."
4. It also says, "You are not indispensable. If you quit, God will still accomplish His plan in the earth; but you will miss out."

- The best cure for discouragement is a fresh anointing and a challenging assignment from God.



Lesson Material



Spiritual Truths

- Sometimes our most dangerous battles come after times of great victory and blessing, because we are not expecting them.
- You cannot live on yesterday's success for long. You need a fresh vision and a fresh anointing from God.
- Even the most spiritual men of God are still human, with emotional ups and downs.
- When you get discouraged, get alone with God and listen for His commands.
- It is never healthy to get alone by yourself; but it is good to get alone with God.
- When you are a faithful soldier in God's army, you are never completely alone. God has angels, and He has many people who love Him.
- God never shouts; and so, we need to get close to Him, in order to hear His voice.

People are funny. Elijah faced the whole nation of Israel without fear. He stood up to an army of demonically inspired false prophets who were armed with knives, and mocked them. He believed God for the supernatural; and He had seen God do awesome things that day, in response to his prayers. God sent fire out of heaven. God enabled him to kill a large crowd of false prophets, and then He sent a mighty torrent of rain on the land after a 3-1/2 year drought. Then God gave him the strength to outrun horses.

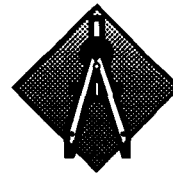
After all this, Elijah was fearful, and he seemed to lose heart when he found that Queen Jezebel had vowed to have him killed. Fear comes not because of danger, but because of our wrong focus. When Elijah was serving God in faith and obedience, he had no fear, because he was excited about God's will. He was focused on his evangelistic mission, which was to show the nation of Israel that God was the true God, and that they should serve Him. When God answered by fire out of heaven, the people did acknowledge that God was indeed God. This was a great victory -- a "mountain top" experience for Elijah. But, after all that, came the word of Jezebel; and it filled Elijah's heart. He ran for his life, fleeing to the wilderness to get alone. He asked God to please take his life, because he did not want to live. That does not make sense. If he really wanted to die,

then why did he not just pay Jezebel a visit? No, he probably wanted sympathy. He wanted God to encourage him. God did, but in some unusual ways.

As he was resting, an angel came and woke him up. "Get up and eat." This happened twice; and he went on the strength of that food for 40 days. God had him go over to Mt. Horeb, so that He could talk with him there. There we had the familiar scene of the wind, earthquake, and fire. God showed him these natural wonders; and He taught us a lesson about Himself. God did not reveal Himself through these powerful events; but instead, He revealed Himself in a still, small voice. God is not out to impress anyone. God is very secure about Who He is; and He is not nervous, if heathen people or nations do not know Him. You see, whatever men do or say today in defiance of God, there will come the time that *"...every knee should bow,...and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* (Philippians 2:10-11)

Elijah got discouraged, because he got his focus off of God. He started thinking about his own safety, because his mind was no longer concentrated on the task God had for him. Instead of sympathy, God gave him a new assignment. When life does not go our way, we are often tempted to try to avoid problems by avoiding responsibility. We want to "be alone;" and that can be dangerous. Satan is like a wolf, or a lion. (1 Peter 5:8) Predators look for lambs who are away from the flock and the shepherd, because they have no natural defense, and they are easy prey. We need people; and we need to stay close to Jesus every day. He is the good Shepherd (John 10:11); and He is a great protection against the enemy of our soul.

When Elijah got alone with God, he received what he needed, but not what he expected. Perhaps he thought God was feeling sorry for Himself, too. "God, I am the only one You have left." Note that, in this case, the seer did not see it all. He had some misinformation. He did not know that God had 7,000 faithful disciples, even in the wicked nation of Israel. God took the discouraged prophet, and gave him an assignment. He was to anoint two kings and a prophet to take his place. God did not join his "pity party." God let him know that he was not indispensable. You are loved by God; but God will accomplish His purposes in the earth, whether you serve Him or not. You will benefit greatly if you live your life for Him; but He will not force you to do His will. God wants an all-volunteer army.



Methods

Talk about the emotion of discouragement. Sometimes we get discouraged, when we least expect it. It means to "lose courage," and to "lose hope." We all need hope -- something to look forward to. Note the difference between discouragement and depression. Which Psalms apply to a discouraged heart? Notice that God did not spend a great deal of time in talk therapy with Elijah. He spoke briefly and quietly. Instead of asking, "What is wrong?" God asked, "What are you doing here?" God focused on responsibility, which was the best cure for discouragement. Faith is a focus on God and His purposes. What happened to Elijah's faith, when he focused on Jezebel? What happens to our

faith, when we focus on problems? What happens to our faith, when we concentrate our attention on God? *"So then faith [cometh] by hearing], and hearing by the*

word of God." (Romans 10:17) How do we get ourselves in a position to hear from God?

Naboth's Vineyard

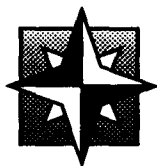
Volume 6

Lesson 13



Bible Reference

1 Kings 21



Theme

Covetousness is the wrongful desire to obtain that which belongs to someone else. It is the opposite of contentment.



Scripture Reading

1 Kings 21:1-4, 7-8, 11-13, 25

1 "Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, (close) by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria.

2 "And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good

to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.

3 "And Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.

4 "And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: ...And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread."

7 "And Jezebel his wife said, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth.

8 "So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city."

11 "And the men of his city...did as Jezebel had sent unto them, and as it was written in the letters which she had sent.

12 "They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.

13 "And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died."

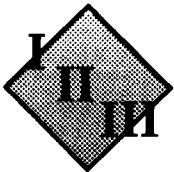
25 "There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up."



Memory Verse

Philippians 4:11

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."



Outline

I. Naboth's Vineyard.

A. King Ahab.

1. Covetousness is the sin of desiring to have the property of another.
 - a. Stealing is not caused by poverty, but by covetousness and laziness.
 - b. All sin is based on selfishness and a lack of regard for the rights and needs of others.
2. Ahab's heart was focused on things.
 - a. No matter how much he had, he still wanted more.
 - b. Wealth does not satisfy.
3. Someone asked John D. Rockefeller:
 - a. "How much money does it take to satisfy a man?"
 - b. His reply: "Just a little more."

4. Ahab worshipped idols and hated God.

B. Naboth's vineyard.

1. This was his inheritance.
2. The Israelites were commanded to keep their land in the family.
 - a. It was regarded as an act of disloyalty to sell the family estate.
 - b. God wanted Israel to maintain property rights, so that wealth would not be concentrated in a few individuals.
 - c. Every 50th year was a "year of jubilee," when any property sold was returned to the original families, and slaves were set free. (Leviticus 25:9-16)
3. Naboth could not "sell out" to the king, because it would compromise his integrity.
 - a. "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set." (Proverbs 22:28)
 - b. Do not despise your family heritage.

II. Jezebel's Treachery.

A. She was an evil influence on the king.

1. She was a heathen, with heathen ways.
2. She did not seem to be bothered by a conscience.

B. Her rebuke.

1. "Are you not the king?"
2. "Kings can do whatever they want."
3. "I will get you that vineyard."

C. Her plan.

1. She called a fast, and hired two wicked men to testify against Naboth.
2. "Sons of Belial."
 - a. "Belial" means "worthless; ungodly; evil."
 - b. Two scoundrels who were so worthless, that they could lie convincingly enough.
 - c. They must have had no conscience, because they caused the death of an innocent man.
3. It was not hard to find two such men.
4. Two witnesses.
 - a. No man could be put to death as the result of the testimony of one witness.
 - b. In God's order, no serious accusation could be used to convict someone without two or more witnesses. (Numbers 35:30)
 - c. One witness could be mistaken, or could be the guilty party trying to pass on the blame.
 - d. *"Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses."* (1 Timothy 5:19)
5. Naboth was tried, convicted, and immediately executed.
6. King Ahab took possession of the vineyard.

III. Consequences.

A. God sent the prophet Elijah to Ahab.

1. "You have sold yourself to work evil in the sight of the Lord."
2. We need to realize that all sin is "in the sight of the Lord."
3. God said, "I will bring evil upon you."
 - a. "I will cut off your posterity."

- b. "By killing every male descendent."
- c. "Dogs will eat Jezebel by the wall."
- d. "Dogs will lick your blood in the same place as they licked up Naboth's blood."

B. Sin always has consequences.

1. You will reap what you sow. (Galatians 6:7)
2. God will not be mocked.
3. Some consequences of sin.
 - a. Guilt.
 - b. Fear.
 - c. Harm to others.
 - d. Damage to your body.
 - e. Broken relationships.
 - f. Sickness.
 - g. Death.
 - h. Separation from God, Who is holy.

IV. Repentance.

A. Ahab was repentant.

1. Vs. 27.
 - a. He tore his clothes.
 - b. Put on sackcloth (sign of remorse).
 - c. Went "softly" (contrite, humble).
2. Result.
 - a. God saw his response, and had mercy on him.
 - b. Judgment deferred.

B. However, the consequences still came.

1. Dogs did eat his wife and licked his blood.
2. All of his sons were killed.



Spiritual Truths

- Contentment is not caused by getting what you want, but by a decision to appreciate and enjoy what you have.
- Contentment is a character quality that comes by the joy of the Lord in the heart; and it has no relation at all to a person's wealth or status.
- Ahab was rich and powerful, but he was still covetous.
- Covetousness is a strong, evil desire to possess that which rightfully belongs to someone else.
- Envy is the resentment over the superiority or success of another -- a grudging desire to have his advantage in life.
- Jealousy is the fear of being replaced.
- Sin always has consequences, even when you think you "get away with it."
- God will have mercy on anyone who humbly repents, no matter what they have done wrong.



Lesson Material

The story of Naboth's vineyard is a classic illustration of the sin of covetousness; and it is familiar to most Christians. We can see clearly that there is

no relationship at all between covetousness and the amount of wealth one has. Ahab had vast wealth and power as the king of Israel; and yet, he was miserable in his desire to have a certain thing, largely because he did not already own it. Such is the frailty of the sinful heart. We tend to want most what we cannot have. God specifically commanded Israel not to covet "thy neighbor's wife," among other things. (Exodus 20:17) People tend to see other people at their best in social situations; and then they become bitter at home, when they try to get along with each other. They think, "If only I had married someone else," not realizing that they themselves are usually the problem.

"The grass is greener on the other side," because we see it from a different angle. When you look down at a lawn, you see the bare spots, the weeds, and the stones. When you look at the same lawn from a distance, you see it from the side. From that perspective, sure enough, it is greener.

One myth perpetrated by a humanist mentality is that crime is caused by poverty -- therefore, we need to be generous with criminals, and throw money at social problems. This is not true. Stealing is not the result of poverty. If it were, only poor people would steal. The fact is that most poor people do not steal. But people who steal have in common an attitude that life owes them something. They do not have respect for property rights of others, because they did not learn to work hard for what they received in life. That is why God's wisdom says that the treatment for a thief is hard, physical work, and restitution. (Ephesians 4:28) People who learn to work hard for what they get, value property rights; and they will not steal. Covetousness and stealing

are the result of a lack of character training and a wrong attitude about life.

Ahab was something of a "son of Belial" himself. He was an idolater. He was selfish and spoiled. When he did not get his way, he pouted and whined. His heathen wife, Jezebel was the dominant personality. As far as the record of history shows, she never repented or acknowledged God before she died. Of course, the moment she landed in hell she was very much a "believer;" but it did her no good. She rejected God; and all of her pleasure was in her short, earthly life. She will have all eternity to regret her choices -- but she cannot change that, now.

Since Jezebel did not regard the Lord in her life, she thought, "How silly for Ahab to act this way. What a wimp. Does he not realize that he is the king? He can do what he wants, and no one can do anything about it." She devised the plan to set up a court and have Naboth falsely accused and executed. Then Ahab could get his vineyard.

Jezebel realized that she would have to hire two false witnesses to lie about Naboth, because throughout history, God always required at least two witnesses for a serious crime. It was also a principle in the New Testament church (1 Timothy 5:19), because one person might have a motive to mislead a judge about someone else, or one could be mistaken in their observation. Two witnesses were needed to establish guilt. When a group of Jews came to Jesus with the woman caught in the act of adultery, Jesus acted in full accord with the law. (John 8:3-11) First of all, they had not fulfilled God's law. The law of God stated that the man and woman were to be tried and stoned. These men caught her in the act of adultery. Was she by herself? No. But they took only her

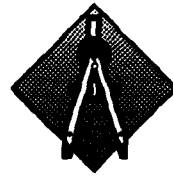
to Jesus, to see if this gentle teacher would uphold God's law. When Jesus said, "He that is without sin, cast the first stone," they all left. Jesus then said to her, "Woman, where are your accusers?" "Well, they are not here." "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more." Jesus knew that she had sinned; but He would not condemn her without another witness; and the witnesses had all gone. He did not legally have to condemn her. He did say, "Go, and do not do that again."

Jezebel got her conviction of Naboth, thanks to two "sons of Belial." This was a term for a reprobate person. A reprobate is someone who is so spiritually dead that he does not feel guilt. His conscience is "seared over with a hot iron" (1 Timothy 4:2); and he can lie and feel good about it. The conscience is a part of the spirit; and it is like the sense of pain. When your finger touches a hot stove, nerve fibers carry a signal to your brain called "pain." The brain sends a message back to the muscles, which says "Get that finger off the stove, or it will do great damage." If we did not have the ability to feel pain, we could cut a foot and bleed to death before we realized it. Pain is protection for the body. In a similar way, the conscience is the "pain" sensor in our heart. When we do something wrong, our spirit knows that it will do us spiritual damage. It bothers our conscience. If we keep on violating our conscience, we can become insensitive to it, and wrong will seem right. A reprobate "son of Belial" will not be bothered by his conscience. A "good conscience" is one that is sensitive to sin; and it is upset when it is violated. (1 Timothy 1:5)

Ahab got his vineyard; but the deal was not satisfying, because he knew that an innocent man had died. We know that he still had some spiritual sensitivity, because he experienced remorse when he was

confronted by the prophet Elijah. He was told that the dogs would lick up his blood, and that dogs would eat Jezebel. (See 2 Kings 9) She was later thrown out of a high window and eaten by dogs. Elijah also told Ahab that all of his male descendants would be killed. Ahab went into mourning; and, because he humbled himself before the Lord, God deferred judgment until after his death. This is a prime example of God's willingness to forgive, no matter how serious the sins are. Another example of God having mercy on an extremely wicked king was Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, who was even more wicked than Ahab. (2 Chronicles 33:11-13)

Note that while God had mercy on Ahab, the consequences of his years of wickedness and his murder of Naboth still came to pass. There are many times that we are forgiven, but we still have consequences. A man can be wonderfully saved after living many years as a drunkard, but still die from the effects of alcohol. Even as Christians, we need to know that sin has consequences, and that it never pays in the long run to disobey God. It was to the Christians that Paul wrote, *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption (damage, decay); but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."* (Galatians 6:7-8)



Methods

This is a good lesson to dramatize with a skit, using students or a team of teachers (or a combination of both). Ahab is portrayed as a weak fool (wimp), and Jezebel as a loud, domineering, manipulator. You could do it with a *minimum of four players*: Ahab, Jezebel, Naboth, and the prophet Elijah. If you have a larger group, you could write in parts for the judge and the two false witnesses. Any other participants could be the crowd who convicts and stones Naboth. Provide some foam balls or large paper wads to serve as stones for the stoning. Be sure no one uses real stones.

Discussion Questions

Ahab is a classic example of the sin of covetousness.

Who is a biblical example of jealousy? (King Saul, jealous of David.)

Who is a classic example of envy? (Joseph's eleven brothers.)

Did Ahab think he could really get away with murder? (Of course he did, or he would not have done it.) Discuss the deception of temptation.

Micaiah, the Prophet

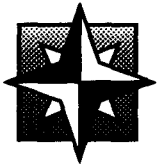
Volume 6

Lesson 14



Bible Reference

1 Kings 22



Theme

Preachers may be tempted to tell people what they want to hear; but we need to be willing to get close to God, and to hear what He is really saying.



Scripture Reading

1 Kings 22:6-9, 15-17, 19-22

6 "Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.

7 "And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him?

8 "And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.

9 "Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Hasten hither Micaiah the son of Imlah."

15 "So he came to the king. And the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.

16 "And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord?

17 "And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no master:"

19 "And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

20 *"And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?"*

21 *"And there came forth a spirit, and said,*

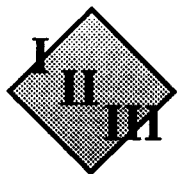
22 *"I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets."*



Memory Verse

Jeremiah 6:14

"They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying peace, peace, when there is no peace."



Outline

I. Ahab and Jehoshaphat.

A. Ahab.

- 1 Wicked king of Northern Israel.
2. Henpecked husband of wicked Queen Jezebel.

B. Jehoshaphat.

1. Good king of Judah.
2. Not very good at choosing the right friends.
3. A direct descendent of David.
4. Entered into a military alliance with Ahab.

II. Prophets of Israel.

A. Ahab had about 400 prophets.

1. He asked them if God would bless them, if they attacked Ramoth-Gilead.
2. They all spoke blessing and prosperity.
3. They all thought that they were hearing from God.
4. We are not sure how godly they were.
 - a. They were possibly left over from Mt. Carmel.
 - b. Priests of the groves.
 - c. They probably thought that they were godly.

B. God sent a lying spirit.

1. They heard a voice, and they thought it was God, or an angel.
2. Many cults today are led by people who think they are in touch with God, but actually are led by a lying spirit, or demon.

C. God's plan.

1. God wanted Ahab killed.
2. God used the lying spirit to convince Ahab to go to battle.
3. It was time for Ahab to die.

III. Micaiah.

A. Prophet of Israel.

1. God's seer.
 - a. Another term for prophet.
 - b. One who sees spiritual things.
2. He was right; but he was not popular.

B. Ahab hated him.

1. "Is he wrong?"
2. "No, he is always right, but he is so negative, I hate him."
3. Tests of a true prophet (from Deuteronomy):
 - a. Accuracy (true prophets hearing from God are 100% accurate).
 - b. Focus (he will never lead you away from God).
 - c. Motive (godly).

C. Micaiah was called in.

1. "Sure. Go up, and be a winner."
2. He told the king what he wanted to hear -- a prosperity message.
3. Ahab said, "Now tell the truth."
4. "All right. You are going to die."
5. "These men have heard from a lying spirit, to convince you to go to Ramoth-Gilead."

D. Ahab's response.

1. He put Micaiah in jail.
2. He disguised himself as a common soldier.
3. He made sure Jehoshaphat wore his bright, kingly robe and crown, so that the enemy would shoot at him.
4. The enemy always attacks the leader.
 - a. Pray for your pastor.
 - b. Be careful not to speak against him to other people. (1 Timothy 5:19)

E. God's Word came to pass.

1. Ahab was hit by a stray arrow.
2. They took him to Jezreel, where he died.
3. They washed out his chariot, and dogs licked up his blood, in the same place they had licked up Naboth's blood.

IV. The Message of Peace.

A. When God comes with judgment.

1. Many will be preaching peace and prosperity. (1 Thessalonians 5:3)
2. It happened in Jeremiah's day.
 - a. All of the other prophets were preaching victory over Babylon.
 - b. The people were not prepared for the captivity and loss that happened.

B. Paul said:

1. *"...The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night...."*
2. *"...For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them,...."*
3. 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3.

C. Jesus said:

1. *"...Take heed that no man deceive you."* (Matthew 24:4)
2. *"...I came not to send peace, but a sword."* (Matthew 10:34)

D. Solomon said:

1. *"A prudent man forseeth the evil, and hideth himself: (prepares for hard times)...."*
2. *"...But the simple (stupid) pass on, and are punished (suffer the consequences)."*
3. Proverbs 22:3.



Spiritual Truths

- What people in the church like to hear and what they need to hear are usually two different messages.
- God's goal is not our immediate happiness, but rather, our ultimate victory in life.
- We are engaged in a spiritual warfare, involving both good and evil spirits.
- When God says it, it will come to pass.
- God said it, and that settles it, whether I believe it or not.
- The message of peace and prosperity is good, as long as it is really what God is saying for this time.
- Micaiah was not pessimistic when he predicted defeat and captivity. He was real; and he tried to get the people to prepare for what was coming.
- Every prophecy must be tested and measured by the proven, written Word of God -- the Bible.



Lesson Material

God prepares us for eternity through this life; and He uses interpersonal relationships in doing so. In this historical account, we have the interaction of a good king and a bad king, a good prophet, and a

whole pile of bad prophets. Ultimately, the quality of a person is determined by the depth of his relationship with God. If a man has a heart for the Lord and walks in His ways, he will be a good man. *"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way."* (Psalms 37:23) God is inherently good; and so, goodness, in human terms, depends on how much of God is in the man. All good men are under the leadership (in fact, the Lordship) of God. He orders their steps. If a man is not serving God, he is not a good man. If a man's steps are ordered by the Lord, he will not only produce a good life, but he will reap the side benefit of enjoying it. God is good; and His wise ways are ways of pleasantness. (Proverbs 3:17)

In this story, God had determined that it was time for the evil king to die, and that he was destined to die in a battle against Ramoth-gilead. Ahab had been given plenty of opportunities to repent and serve God; but he had made most of his choices against the Lord, and had instead submitted to Jezebel, his wicked wife, and to the devil. He was determined to be his own person; and it was time to raise up another king.

It was normal for Hebrew kings to seek the guidance of prophets, even if they did not have a heart for God. Ahab had somehow persuaded King Jehoshaphat, who was basically a good king who feared the Lord, to enter into a military alliance with him. It was the North and the South, together again. But it was not a union blessed by God, because it was a carnal union based on military pursuits, rather than on God. Today, churches often join with other religious groups for social or political pursuits, believing that there is strength in numbers. If they gather for political strength and compromise the truth of God's Word, then it is carnal; and

God cannot bless it. We should desire unity among all genuine Christian groups, and we should unite to promote evangelism and righteousness, but not if we have to compromise basic doctrines of the Bible. We can have unity with the Baptists and the Nazarenes, because they preach salvation by the blood of Jesus Christ; but we cannot join in an unholy alliance with such groups as the Mormons or the Jehovah's Witnesses, because they are not of the same faith.

Ahab worshipped idols; and he rejected God. Jehoshaphat should have spent more time with godly prophets in Judah, trusting God to give him victory. The problem with making friends with unsaved people is that they are never true friends. We want to relate to unsaved peers so that we can influence them to become Christians; but we want to be careful that they are not an influence on us. If you find that your friends are carnal and are causing your heart to turn away from God, you would be wise to relate more to your parents, and ask them to help you find better friends. We should always seek to be close to the parents God gave us, and to find our close friends among those who are seeking after God. *"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."* (Proverbs 13:20)

What kind of friend was Ahab to Jehoshaphat? Well, when he found out that God wanted him to be killed in the battle against Ramoth-gilead, Ahab said, "Jehoshaphat, you be sure to wear your best kingly robe. You know -- the one with the bright red cloth and the gold trim. The one that really sparkles in the sun. I will just wear this camouflage outfit here, and stand behind you." What a friend! Ahab knew that any enemy would aim for the leader; and so, he got Jehoshaphat to take

the fire. There are people like that today in some churches. They want to have control of a church; but they do not want to be the pastor, because the pastor gets most of the attack. Be sure to pray for your pastor; and defend him, if the need arises. Satan loves to turn people against shepherds, so that he can cause division and confusion in the church.

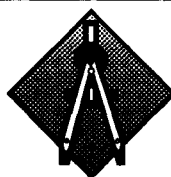
When Micaiah was called in to prophesy to Ahab, he was told that 400 other prophets had prophesied a win for Israel. He went in, and echoed the same message. Ahab said, "I want the truth." Then Micaiah told him the truth, and was put in jail for it. Did Ahab really want to know the truth? Obviously not. He also did not believe it. Of course, he believed later, when the fatal arrow was protruding from his chest; but then it was too late. Everyone will be a humble believer in Jesus when they die and face God; but for most, it will be too late. (Philippians 2:10-11)

The prophets were preaching peace and prosperity, just as they did later in Jeremiah's day. Jeremiah was God's prophet to the nation of Judah, just before the Babylonian captivity. They also had sinned as a nation, and had grown spiritually cold in their prosperity. They had never known real hardship; and they did not believe that God would really judge them. After all, they were God's chosen people. It was easy for them to believe a peace and prosperity message.

Jeremiah spoke out against the prosperity preachers, saying, *"They have healed the hurt...slightly, saying peace, peace; when there is no peace."* (Jeremiah 6:14) You can tell people what they want to hear, and they will feel better for a while. But when hard times come, they will be unprepared. We need to understand that

we are living in perilous times (2 Timothy 3:1), and that the Bible does not guarantee an easy life for believers. Some of us may face serious persecution, and some of us may be martyred for our faith. (Hebrews 11:35-39) God's priority is not our immediate happiness, but rather, our character. God is preparing us for an eternity of peace and prosperity; but in this life we will have battles. We need to be prepared, by building up our spirits through prayer, Bible study, fellowship, and faithfulness in a local church. The most important part of life is the spiritual, because that will continue forever. That is a long time.

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall [have tribulation]: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."
(John 16:33)



Methods

Discussion Questions

What do we learn from Jehoshaphat's friendship with Ahab about the importance of choosing the right friends?

On what basis should we select our friends?

Should we make friends with unsaved peers? (Yes, if we can win them to God without being influenced by them.)

Should we be under the influence of ungodly teachers or role models? (No.)

What do we learn from Micaiah about spiritual warfare and spiritual discernment?

Elijah's Rapture

Volume 6

Lesson 15

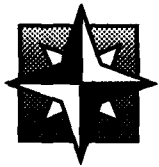


Bible References

2 Kings 2

1 Corinthians 15

1 Thessalonians 4



Theme

Christians in the end times have the glorious hope of the rapture, or resurrection of the church, which will be similar in fashion to the catching up to heaven of Elijah.



Scripture Reading

2 Kings 2:5-12

5 "And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto

him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head today? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.

6 "And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.

7 "And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan.

8 "And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

9 "And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

10 "And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee, but if not, it shall not be so.

11 "And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

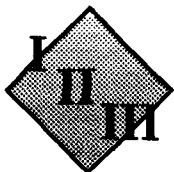
12 "And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof."



Memory Verse

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."



Outline

I. Elijah and Elisha.

A. God told Elijah to anoint his successor.

1. Elisha was a prosperous young farmer. (1 Kings 19)
2. Elisha left it all, to follow Elijah.

B. Elisha's training.

1. He served Elijah.
2. He was with him constantly.
3. Elijah did not choose him; he anointed Elisha, because God said to do so.

II. The Sons of the Prophets.

A. Elijah went to Bethel.

1. "Elisha, wait here. God told me to go to Bethel."
2. "I will not leave your side. I am going, too."
3. Sons of the prophets in Bethel.
 - a. "Elisha, do you know that God is going to take your master away today?"
 - b. How did they know that? (They had heard from God.)
 - c. Elisha said, "Yes, I know. Hold your peace."

B. Elijah went to Jericho.

1. "Elisha, wait here. God told me to go to Jericho."
2. "I will not leave your side. I am going, too."
3. Sons of the prophets in Jericho.
 - a. "Elisha, do you know that God is going to take your master away today?"
 - b. Elisha said, "Yes, I know. Hold your peace."

III. Elijah's Exit.

A. The Jordan River.

1. Elijah parted it with his mantle.
2. They went across on dry land.

B. The chariot of fire.

1. Came between Elijah and Elisha.
2. It did not take Elijah up.

C. The whirlwind.

1. After they were parted by the chariot.
2. The whirlwind took up Elijah.

3. His mantle fell, as he went up.
4. That outer garment was all that he left for Elisha.

D. Elijah did not die.

1. Many Bible scholars believe that he will come back to earth, during the Great Tribulation.
2. He will be one of the two witnesses, who will be killed and then resurrected. (Revelation 3:11-12)

IV. The Rapture of the Church.

A. Similar to Elijah's going up to heaven.

1. We shall not all die.
2. We shall be changed, in a moment.
3. Elijah went up quickly; and he did not die.

B. The rapture. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17)

1. When Jesus comes again, the elect saints who have died will be physically resurrected from the dead, and will be caught up.
2. The living elect saints will go up in the clouds with them.
 - a. They will not die.
 - b. They will be instantly changed.
 - c. Resurrected bodies will be immortal.
 - d. Bodies of "flesh and bone" like that of Jesus Christ. (1 John 3:2)

C. Matthew 24.

1. Directed to Israel; but these principles can apply to us, also.
2. We do not know the day or the hour.
3. But we do know the "season."
4. In the "last days."
5. All the signs are fulfilled today.

6. Jesus will come "as a thief in the night."



Spiritual Truths

- Elisha was tested by Elijah for faithfulness and determination, when Elijah said, "Wait here."
- God granted Elisha's request for a double portion of Elijah's anointing, because it was an unselfish prayer for the ability to serve others.
- Only two men in history have moved to heaven without dying first -- Enoch and Elijah.
- When Jesus comes again, many believers will also be "caught up" to meet Him in the air, along with the saints who have died.
- In the resurrection, we will be physically like Jesus. We will not get a new body; but our bodies will be transformed, changed, and made immortal.
- We do not believe that we will get a new body. That is the doctrine of reincarnation. We believe in resurrection.
- Jesus will come at a time that will surprise us, because He wants to find a people who have a faithful heart, and who are serving Him.
- There will be turmoil, wars, and distress of nations, until Jesus comes to

the earth and establishes His sovereign rule over the planet.



Lesson Material

Elijah was the greatest prophet of his day. He was sent by God to the nation of Northern Israel to warn them of the coming judgment of God. After many years of idolatry, the people of God still had not repented, even though God had sent many prophets and was graciously patient with them. But sin must be judged, both individually and nationally. God Himself raised up Assyria to be His "rod" to chasten Israel. (Isaiah 10:5) God first judged the leadership, and then the whole nation. We have to clearly understand that sin always results in bondage and, ultimately, death.

Elijah means "God is the Lord." That is an important message for us today. We acknowledge His Lordship (ownership), when we give God the first tenth of our financial increase, and when we give God the first day of the week. We should also pray and have family devotions in the morning if possible, in order to give Him the first part of the day. When we recognize that He is Lord of our lives, we handle life much more wisely. Only then can we know the "abundant life" Jesus spoke about. (John 10:10) When we "do our own thing," we cause difficulties, stress, and conflicts.

When Elijah confronted the people of Israel at Mt. Carmel, he was probably amazed at the lack of repentance in the leadership. The people acknowledged that

God was indeed the true God; but Elijah realized that if the leaders continued in idolatry, the people would ultimately follow them back into heathen practices. Perhaps this contributed to his great discouragement. When he became discouraged, he asked God if he could please quit the ministry. It is ironic that one of the two men in history who did not die had asked God to let him die. (1 Kings 19:4) Note that God did not get upset with him, or rebuke him. God merely said, "OK, but first, anoint your successor."

There were many prophets in the land; and some of them were in the "school of the prophets," studying under senior prophets like Elijah. But God chose a farmer who was busy plowing his fields. His name was Elisha, which means "God is our peace." When you recognize and serve God as the Lord of your life, the result is an abiding peace in your heart, because He is such a good and loving Lord. God chooses whom He will for leadership ministry. God wants everyone to be saved and to serve Him; but the specific place of ministry (service) is entirely up to His will. *"For many are called, but few are chosen."* (Matthew 22:14) Not all of us are chosen by God to be pastors or apostles; but we are all called to be saints, and we are all called to minister in various ways.

When Elijah let Elisha know that he was chosen to take his place, Elisha immediately burned his plow, and offered his ox as an offering to the Lord. (1 Kings 19:21) God knew that the heart of this farmer was faithful. Elisha never looked back. He had a heart to obey God; and God was delighted with this good man.

How did he prepare for the ministry? He stayed with Elijah, and served him. We have no record that Elijah was especially kind or considerate of him. In fact, he

probably just "used" him. But Elisha was faithful; and when it came time for Elijah to pass on his mantle, Elisha was still there. Twice, the prophet instructed him to "Stay here, while I go to town." Both times, Elisha said, "Nothing doing. I am staying with you." When Elijah came to the river Jordan, he slapped the water with his mantle, and the river parted, just like the Red Sea. After they crossed over, a fiery chariot pulled by horses of fire came out of heaven and passed between them. Many people, if they do not read the account carefully, think that Elijah was carried up into heaven in this chariot; but he was not. The chariot simply separated the two men, and Elijah was caught up in a whirlwind to heaven.

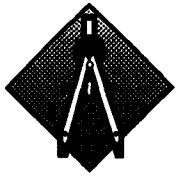
When Jesus comes again to the earth, there will be a similar event, but on a much larger scale. According to New Testament prophecy, there will be a resurrection of the dead in Christ, and a rapture of all the elect saints, both living and dead. The saints who are alive at that time will not die, but will, like Elijah, be caught up to meet Jesus in the air. (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17) They will be instantly changed physically, according to the glorified form of Jesus, Who is the "firstfruits of the resurrection." (1 Corinthians 15:20)

"Rapture" has two meanings, both of which apply. The first definition is "to be caught up, snatched away." The second meaning is "a feeling of ecstasy, of overwhelming joy." Those who will be caught up to meet the Lord will certainly experience great joy.

Debates have continued for nearly two thousand years as to the time of the Lord's coming, and as to what exactly will take place. There are many vague details; but the key is that Jesus is coming, and we will

not know the exact time of His coming. (Mark 13:33) He is coming at the end of the age. His coming will be connected with major signs in the earth and the heavens, and a time of worldwide problems and wars. (Matthew 24) There will be a Great Tribulation and many other major events during "the day of the Lord." We interpret these prophecies in different ways; but all Christians believe that Jesus is coming again, and that it will be soon. He will come "as a thief in the night;" and we must be ready.

Who will be in the rapture of the church? Again, there are many opinions. It is ultimately up to God; but there are many things that Jesus said to indicate that not all who "confess Christ" will be raptured. Everyone wants to go to heaven; but not every person who believes really serves the Lord. Many people want Jesus as Savior, but they reject Him as Lord. They want to live their own life, "do their own thing," and still receive the reward of the righteous. Note particularly Matthew 25, which shows that some of the "virgins" with white garments and lamps have run out of oil; and they are not allowed in. The servant who was fearful and did not use his talent was rejected, and cast into "outer darkness." The "goats" were separated from the sheep, because they had not been kind to strangers, the sick, and the hungry, hurting people around them. We do know this: If you seek the Lord honestly, abide in Him, and serve Him faithfully, you will not regret it, particularly in the day of the Lord. Jesus is coming soon. Maranatha! Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!



Methods

The Old Testament is the greatest illustration and amplification of the New Testament. God has never changed. His style never changes. God gives us many pictures in the natural realm of spiritual and prophetic truths.

When we look at the rapture of Elijah, we cannot help but notice that it is a shadow of that which is to come. It is a vivid reminder that *"...we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."* (1 Corinthians 15:51)

The early Christians did not greet each other with meaningless phrases like "hello." They used the word, "Maranatha," which means, "Our Lord cometh." (1 Corinthians 16:22) They were constantly reminding each other to look forward to His coming. We can see clearly that the signs are being fulfilled in our day.

What are some of the signs of His coming?

Imagine what the rapture will be like.

Are you ready for that event, if it happened right now?

The Widow's Oil

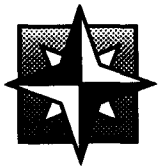
Volume 6

Lesson 16



Bible Reference

2 Kings 4



Theme

The way to increase and blessing in God's economy is not the way of demanding rights, but the way of giving.



Scripture Reading

2 Kings 4:1-6

1 *"Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen."*

2 *"And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil."*

3 *"Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few."*

4 *"And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full."*

5 *"So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her, and she poured out."*

6 *"And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed."*

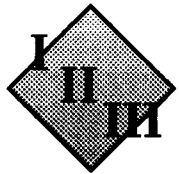


Memory Verse

Acts 20:35

"Ye ought to support the weak, and remember the words of the Lord Jesus,

how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."



Outline

I. The Widow.

A. Her need.

1. Her husband died.
2. He left debts.

B. Her problem.

1. They had no insurance, in those days.
2. The creditors were legally allowed to take her children as slaves to work off the debt.
3. This was a common practice.
4. Many Israelites and their children became servants, to pay off debts.
5. Debt is a form of bondage; and it should be avoided, as much as possible.
 - a. *"...The borrower is servant to the lender."* (Proverbs 22:7)
 - b. Do not presume upon the future. There is no guarantee that you will make more money next year. (Proverbs 27:1)

C. Her strategy.

1. Call on the Lord.
2. Go to God's prophet for help.

D. God's answer.

1. "What do you have?"

2. "Borrow all of the pots and bowls you can."
3. "Fill them all with the oil you have."
4. "Sell the oil, and pay the debts."

II. My God Shall Supply.

A. God has unlimited resources.

1. God loves to provide needs through people.
2. God is also able to supply through miracles.
3. God is a good, loving Father.
4. God is more concerned with our character than our gratification.
5. God wants to teach us to turn to Him in our time of need.

B. Philippians 4:19.

1. Paul was speaking to the church at Philippi.
2. They had just given a large, sacrificial offering to help the poor.
3. Paul told them, *"...My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."*

C. Some people have claimed that verse, but it did not work for them.

1. God's promises have conditions.
2. They are not just for everyone who names them and claims them.
3. Philippians 4:19 will not work for people who are stingy or selfish.
4. God's purpose in giving is to develop faith and relationship, and not just to get rid of His wealth.
5. Paul knew that God would give to the Christians in Philippi *"according to His riches,"* because they had given according to an obedient, generous heart.

- a. God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7)
- b. God loves to give to givers. (Luke 6:38)
- 6. God is under no scriptural obligation to give to stingy people.
- 7. The key to receiving is giving.
 - a. Luke 6:38.
 - b. Galatians 6:9.

D. Why was this widow blessed?

- 1. Her husband was a preacher, who served God.
- 2. Her husband feared the Lord.
 - a. Humility and the fear of the Lord are the keys to riches. (Proverbs 22:4)
 - b. In the Bible, there are more than 30 benefits connected to the fear of the Lord.
 - c. There is no lack to those who fear Him. (Psalms 34:9)
- 3. She was a godly widow.
 - a. God is a Protector of the widow.
 - b. And a Father to the fatherless. (Psalms 68:5)
 - c. Those who love God come under God's special protection, when they no longer have a man as their covering, provider, and protector.

III. Poured Out.

A. John 7:37.

- 1. Jesus said, *"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."* (John 7:37)
- 2. *"...Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."* (John 7:38)
- 3. Out of?
 - a. Many people preach that if we go to God, a river will flow into our belly.

- b. God's purpose -- to have a people who are givers.
- c. The Gift of the life-giving, refreshing Holy Spirit will flow out to all around us.

B. Widow's oil.

- 1. Oil is a type of God's spiritual anointing.
- 2. Elisha's question: "What do you have?"
 - a. "I have no money or valuable possession."
 - b. "All I have is oil (spiritual anointing, or gift)."
 - c. God takes what you have, and makes it enough.
 - d. God gives the increase, when we give Him our all.
- 3. Her need was met, when she poured out what she had.
- 4. Vessels.
 - a. A biblical "type" of people.
 - b. Invest your time and efforts in people.
- 5. All of God's spiritual gifts are to enable us to serve people, and not to make us feel gifted.

C. Moab. (Jeremiah 48:11)

- 1. "Moab has been at ease from his youth."
- 2. "Moab is settled on his lees."
- 3. "Has not been emptied from vessel to vessel."
- 4. "Therefore, his scent is not changed."
- 5. Moab (a neighboring nation) was being condemned by God.
 - a. Pictured as a vessel of wine.
 - b. Full of dregs (particles).
 - c. Wine needed to be poured out after the dregs had settled, in order to clean them out.



Spiritual Truths

- God provides according to His riches, and according to our faithfulness in giving to others.
- When God abundantly blesses certain individuals, there are always definite reasons, even though we do not always know what they are from our perspective.
- God especially loves to protect and provide for godly widows and fatherless people, who look to Him as their Father.
- True faith results in obedience, but not necessarily in wealth.
- People who never pour out to others will eventually stink.
- Some people think that since God is a giver, He is looking for takers. This is false. As a giver, God is looking for people who are generous, like He is.
- When a man fears God, he is in a position to really live life in joy and freedom, because he does not have to fear man, death, or anything else.
- God can take what we have and make it enough, as long as we give Him our all.



Lesson Material

There are many rich spiritual truths in this familiar short story in the Bible. All of these miraculous events in the life of Elisha were recorded by the Holy Spirit, in order to teach us some of God's ways.

Our immediate reaction might be to generalize the concept of this account, thinking that God is looking down from heaven, just waiting for someone to ask Him to do something for him. "If He did it for one simple woman, He will certainly do it for me." Many people have been disillusioned with God, because they asked and believed, but nothing happened. Certainly God can do anything; and He continues to do mighty miracles today, but perhaps not with the frequency we would like.

The "name it and claim it" version of faith has the value of being positive, but also the danger of being condemning. When someone does claim their blessing in Jesus' Name and it does not happen, they often feel betrayed, or condemned. "Why did it not work? I must not have real faith."

Years ago, some writers developed a theatrical version of the story of Peter Pan. He was a fictional character who could, among other things, fly. Peter's friends asked him how he could fly. He said, "If you wish hard enough, and believe you can, then you can fly." So the children closed their eyes, squinted hard, and... they could fly. Unfortunately, this had an effect on the audience. Some imaginative youngsters in the balcony squinted their eyes, wished really hard, and flew off the

balcony. After several broken legs and arms, the script was quickly revised. From then on, Peter and Tinker Bell were careful to include a condition: "You must be sprinkled with magic fairy dust." People were being hurt, because even though they believed and acted on their beliefs, they did not meet certain conditions, such as the law of gravity; and so, they did not fly.

We need to realize that God is looking for more than mental belief. He wants to develop our character, and teach us principles of true faith. True faith is not the ability to demand what I want with confidence, but a focus on God and His purposes. Real faith causes us to be content, and grateful, and obedient. Real faith causes us to focus our will on His will, and seek His honor, instead of ours. Real faith causes us to become servants and givers; and giving does tend to be reciprocated, both by God and by people.

Let us look more carefully at this woman who received the blessing of prosperity. She was not just an Israelite with a need. She was a woman who was in a specific position to be so blessed. First of all, she was a godly widow. God takes special delight in answering the prayers of the fatherless and widows, because they have no male head, or covering. God wants husbands and fathers to take responsibility for the protection and provision for their families; and He will not step in and do it for them, without good reason. But when a godly woman loses her husband (this includes those who are deserted or divorced, in Bible terminology), then she is in a position to turn to God to fill that vacancy. Note that God also instructs Christians to be especially generous with the fatherless and widows. (1 Timothy 5:3-16; James 1:27)

Secondly, this was not only a widow, but the widow of a man who was a prophet (preacher) and who feared the Lord. God takes care of His anointed; and there are at least thirty-one specific benefits in scripture designated for those who fear the Lord. The fear of the Lord is the first ingredient in wisdom (Psalms 111:10); and it is the basis for a joyful, successful life. When a man fears God, he views life from the perspective that his life belongs to God, and that he will give an account for it some day. When, for example, you realize that all of your money belongs to God, you will be better at handling it than the man who thinks it is his to keep.

Thirdly, this woman did not turn to carnal means to deal with her problem. She rightly recognized that God was her Source; and she turned to the preacher for direction. She did not expect a handout; but she expected an answer.

The prophet gave her some strange instructions. First of all, he answered her with a question: "What do you have?" Again, the lesson is that if we want to receive from God, we need to give. Since God is a Giver, He is looking to develop and train a people who will be like Him in character. God loves to give to givers, and not just to "askers."

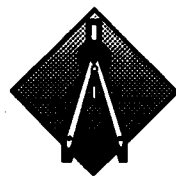
The prophet instructed her to take the bit of oil she had (a biblical type, or picture, of the anointing of the Holy Spirit), and pour it into all available vessels. Throughout the Bible, vessels are prophetic types of people. We are all vessels -- either vessels unto honor, or vessels unto dishonor. (Romans 9:21; 2 Timothy 2:21) "...We have this treasure in earthen vessels,...." (2 Corinthians 4:7) The picture for us here is very clear. God wants us to pour out to others.

When God gives spiritual gifts, they are always given to enable us to give to others. Note particularly the seven gifts in Romans 12, and the nine spiritual manifestations listed in 1 Corinthians 12. Every one of these various gifts is given for the benefit of others. The one who is used in that way is the vessel used to contain and convey the blessing to others. The life message of Jesus was that there is more fulfillment, satisfaction, and personal benefit derived from giving than there is in receiving. (Acts 20:35) While the world says, "Get all you can, can all you get, and sit on the can," Jesus is still saying "Give, and it shall be given you." (Luke 6:38) Bible wisdom is the opposite of natural wisdom. It also works, while the world's wisdom does not.

One other illustration of this comes from the prophet Jeremiah. He prophesied about Moab, a nation of selfish people who were descended from Lot. *"Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees,...."* (Jeremiah 48:11) In those days, everyone knew that juice freshly squeezed from grapes was full of small particles, called dregs, or lees. The wine maker would put the wine into a container, and allow the dregs to settle on the bottom. Then he would pour it into another container, but leave the dregs on the bottom to be washed out later. After a number of pourings, the wine would be clear and clean. If the wine was not poured out, the worthless particles would grow bacteria, which would ruin the wine.

Moab was a nation that rejected God. The people "did their own thing;" and they took life easy. They never learned to "pour out." As one preacher put it, they would come to church to "sit, soak, sour, and stink." Your character will never develop properly, unless you learn to pour

out to others. We need to learn to give, not only money, but time, and effort, and concern. That is the path to the really blessed life.



Methods

Make sure your students are fully aware of the conditions behind the miracle of the cruse of oil. Emphasize that God always has specific and just reasons for the way He responds to people and their petitions. So many get disillusioned with God or confused, when they think that they have met the conditions to receive a miracle -- especially when they have heard some "name it and claim it" teaching that implies that God is just waiting for anyone to ask. Paint a broader picture of faith; and look at life from God's eternal perspective. Note that God is looking for ways to enable us to pour out, rather than ways to pour in. When we pour out in obedience to God's command, we can expect our faithful God to take what we give Him and make it enough.

Object Lesson

Take some clear, glass jars, and fill one with water and some dirt. Stir it up, and let the students see it begin to settle on the bottom. Then pour it out, leaving the "dregs" behind. This will illustrate the principle of Moab, and the need for us to be "poured out." Do not think you need to be perfect before you can be used of God. Give what you have; and let God pour you out as a blessing. It will do you good.

The Spirit World

Volume 6

Lesson 17



Bible References

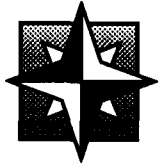
Acts 8

Acts 16

Deuteronomy 18

Leviticus 18

Galatians 5



Theme

The spirit world is very real. It includes multitudes of non-corporeal beings, which influence lives and events in the physical world.



Scripture Reading

Acts 8:5-13

5 "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

6 "And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

7 "For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

8 "And there was great joy in that city.

9 "But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

10 "To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

11 "And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

12 "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13 "Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done."

Acts 16:16-18

16 *"And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:*

17 *"The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.*

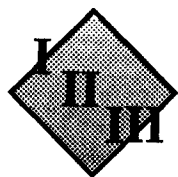
18 *"And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."*



Memory Verse

1 Thessalonians 5:5

"Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness."



Outline

I. The Spirit World.

A. Before God created the earth, He created a host of angels.

1. Beings who are spirit, with no physical body.

2. Immortal.
3. More powerful than humans.

B. Lucifer rebelled in pride. (Isaiah 14)

1. He was cast out of heaven.
2. Cast down to the earth.
3. One-third of the angels fell with him.

C. Evil spirit beings.

1. Satan and his angels.
2. Demons.
 - a. Disembodied spirits -- not fallen angels.
 - b. Possibly the disembodied spirits of the pre-Adamic race that was destroyed before the re-creation.
3. Demons do not have bodies; but they have will, personality, and intelligence.
4. Satan and his army of spirit beings are not gods.
 - a. They can be only one place at a time.
 - b. They do not know exactly what is going on in God's plan.

D. Angels.

1. Serve as God's messengers to men.
2. Warriors.
3. Worshippers.

E. Demons.

1. Seek to possess the minds of people who are not protected by the blood of Christ.
2. Torment, deceive, and delight in driving people to murder, suicide, perversions, etc.
3. When a demon is cast out of a person, or if the person dies, he seeks another victim. (Matthew 12:43-45)
4. Demons are real.

II. Witchcraft.

A. "Psychic phenomena" are actually manifestations of demonic power.

1. Familiar spirits get information and relay it to the persons they possess.
2. Satan has the power of "lying wonders;" and he is a master deceiver.

B. Necromancers.

1. Consulting with the "dead."
2. The unsaved dead are in hell; but demons can imitate dead people as "ghosts."

C. Witchcraft.

1. Greek word is *pharmakia*.
 - a. Basis of the English word "pharmacy."
 - b. Drugs are a form of witchcraft, because they work to deceive the mind.
 - c. Drugs, alcohol, and rock music have the effect on the mind and spirit of opening a person to the demonic realm.

D. Astrology.

1. A Satanic counterfeit to the gifts of the Spirit.
2. "Observers of times." (Deuteronomy 18:14)
3. Deceptive manipulation, posing as "prophecy."

E. The New Age.

1. A blend of secular humanism (Greek philosophy), Hinduism, and witchcraft.
2. New Age is false, Satanic religion.

III. The Spirit of Halloween.

A. A Satanic holiday.

1. Based on the ancient Druids (witches) of Old England and Gaul.
2. Pre-dates Christianity.
3. October 31.
 - a. Evening before the feast of Samhain, the god of the dead.
 - b. Celebrates death, darkness.

B. Druids' celebration.

1. They believed that on October 31, the wicked people who died that year would wander through the streets, terrorizing people in grotesque forms.
2. Black cats were said to be reincarnated wicked people.
3. Jack-o-lantern -- ancient symbol of damned souls.
4. The dead were said to terrorize the living, demanding food at the threat of punishment ("trick or treat," or extortion).
5. People would masquerade as ghouls or ghosts, so that the dead would not recognize them.
6. Witches would celebrate their holiday with blood sacrifices and evil practices.

C. Christianizing.

1. Around the fourth century, the Eastern church started a day to celebrate saints, and pray to them.
2. In the eighth century A.D., this celebration was moved to November 1, to coincide with the pagan holiday of death.
 - a. The night before was called "All Hallows Eve."
 - b. It became the word "Halloween."

3. But the theme of "Halloween" is still death, witchcraft, and the continuation of all of the symbols for damnation, evil, and the occult.
4. Halloween has been "Christianized" in name only.
 - a. It is still a pagan holiday.
 - b. Halloween should be avoided by all Christians.



Spiritual Truths

- The spirit world is just as real as the physical world.
- Most people are unaware of the fact that their lives are greatly affected by the events that are happening in the spiritual realm.
- Satan has a counterfeit for everything in the kingdom of God; but his focus is on death, darkness, and destruction.
- If we are submitted to God, then we have the power to resist the devil so strongly that he will run from us. (James 4:7)
- One sign of genuine faith in God is the authority to cast out demons in Jesus' name.
- Halloween is a pagan holiday, based on pagan practices; and it promotes false values.
- The secular world is working hard to promote a positive image and public acceptance of witches and sexual pervers; but the church needs to take a stand against these abominations.

- God commands us in His Word to avoid the ways of the heathen, and to abstain from all appearance of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:22)



Lesson Material

When Philip was in Samaria, he came across a sorcerer named Simon, who became a believer after he perceived that these Christians had far greater spiritual power than he did. A sorcerer was one who was involved in witchcraft -- a human who generally had dealings with demon spirits. Many people in witchcraft are themselves deceived into thinking they are dealing with the ghosts of dead people, or with some impersonal "force" in the universe. Most witches do not believe in a personal God, or in a real "devil." They draw people into darkness, while they themselves are deceived.

The Hindu religion is a form of witchcraft, because the Hindus worship three million "gods," or idols, represented by strange, brightly colored statues. They are perverted human and animal images; and they are used to lead people into demon possession, and into the fatalistic idea of reincarnation. Witchcraft leads people away from God, from light and truth, and from love, by the promises of power, pleasure, or human glory. It is all based on illusion, visualization, deceit, and perversion of truth.

There is a strong movement in the world to make witchcraft and other enemies of the Christian faith legitimate; and so, we need to be on guard, and to

understand that we are in a spiritual warfare. Halloween is promoted as a "nice, fun" time for kids -- a time when it is acceptable to practice innocent extortion (give me a treat, or I will play a trick on you). It is a time when people by the millions buy and wear predominantly ugly costumes, flowing with the theme of death, filling their homes with Satanic symbols, and even converting some church buildings into "fun" houses to promote fright with reminders of death and decay. But we are commanded to *"Abstain from all appearance of evil"* (1 Thessalonians 5:22); and everything about witchcraft is evil.

Simon practiced his magic by cooperating with Satan's demons. He became wealthy through witchcraft, and he was highly regarded by the people. Simon very probably did not really know where his power to manipulate people came from. Most witches are in such a state of darkness that they view everything from a humanistic perspective; and they do not believe in a real devil, in demons, or in God. They often believe in evolution (and that man is evolving into god-hood); and they believe that there is some kind of universal cosmic "force" that determines the course of life. They usually believe in astrology, which is the idea that our lives are affected by the stars and planets, through some mysterious force. When demons come into their lives, they often think that they are deceased people, or "spirit guides," who have come to do them good. Or, they will think they are alien beings from other planets.

There is a very real spirit world. God is a very real God. He does not have a physical body. God can be everywhere in the universe, which is infinite. That means that there is no end, and no limits to God. Jesus is the only member of the

Trinity who has a physical body; but He, too, is still able to be spiritually "omnipresent." God created millions of angels, who are spiritual beings with no physical body. They can only be in one place; but they can move around quickly. They have varying degrees of power.

God also created angels to worship and serve Him. The worship leader of heaven was named "Lucifer," which means "light-bearer." He became proud of his beauty and skill; and he said, "I will be like the Most High God." (Isaiah 14:14) His pride led to rebellion; and he was cast down to the earth, where he influenced man to break his perfect communion with God by also rebelling. This selfish lifestyle of turning against the life God designed for us to live is called "sin."

When Lucifer fell, one-third of the host of heaven fell with him. They work together to seek to turn every person they can against God, by whatever means they can. Remember that Satan is not God. He can only be in one place at a time; and he does not know everything. He cannot read your mind like God can; and you probably have never met him. But he does have an army of spirit beings, called demons. Some Bible scholars believe that these demons are the spirits of the race of beings who inhabited the earth long before the creation of the human race, which began almost 6,000 years ago with Adam and Eve. It is possible, because the Hebrew word for "was" is the same as for "became." Genesis 1:1-2 says that *"In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was (became) without form, and void;...."* God did not make anything evil or imperfect. But He did allow for choice, making it possible for angels or men to choose corruption. That is why we do not believe that God created any being to be a demon, but that all evil

spirits were originally created good. So it makes sense that the world itself was created perfect, and then it became corrupted and void as a result of the fall of some ancient race of beings. Perhaps God allowed Satan to recruit them in his battle to destroy man.

One question always arises: If God is so good, why does He allow Satan and the demons to kill, steal, and destroy? Why does God not just lock him up? The reason is that in order for us to have a relationship with God, we must be free moral agents who can choose to do so. Also, in order to grow spiritually, we need adversity. In order to be victorious, we need battles to fight. We need enemies to motivate us to pray and to press into God. If life was easy, with no challenges or problems, we would tend to be lazy and immature; and we would tend to forget God in our selfish pursuits. That is human nature. God's plan for us is to seek after a strong relationship with Him, because we have a devil who goes about *"...as a roaring lion,...seeking whom he may devour."* (1 Peter 5:8)

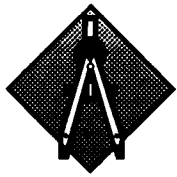
In a world where evil spirits seek to interact and to control every human they can, there are always some who will subject themselves to them, either by inviting them into their hearts because they think they are good "spirit guides," or by opening up their spirits to the demonic through alcohol, drugs, moral perversion, or rebellion. Samuel told King Saul that *"...rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft,...."* (1 Samuel 15:23) If you rebel against God's authority, then you are not under God's protection. You are vulnerable. An evil spirit can control you, if he so chooses. But demons are subject to the authority of believers. (Luke 10:19) If you are a believer, then demons cannot control you. (1 John 5:18) If you submit yourself to God, then

you can *"...resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* (James 4:7) Always remember that *"...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."* (1 John 4:4)

Do not be deceived. All witchcraft is evil, because it involves demon spirits, who want to control and destroy people. Demons deceive people into thinking they are good angels, or space aliens, or spirit guides, or that their victim is "channeling a dead person;" but it is all the same. Psychic phenomena are the result of either human trickery or demon involvement. Mediums (necromancers) consult with evil spirits, and not the dead; and the use of "mind-expanding techniques," transcendental meditation, and fortune-telling are very, very dangerous.

Jesus was very aware of the spirit world; and He dealt with evil spirits often. When a person had an affliction, Jesus was able to discern whether it was a physical or a spiritual problem. This is called "discerning of spirits." (See 1 Corinthians 12:10) If a person had a physical problem, Jesus healed them. If it was something caused by a demon, He would speak to the spirit and cast it out.

People in their unredeemed state cannot see or understand what is going on in the spirit realm; and so, they try to explain everything in terms of people and things. But we are not ignorant about the reality of the spirit world (2 Corinthians 2:11); and we should be on our guard against anything that will expose us to the influence of evil. The best safeguard is to be securely under godly authority -- and to get as close to God as possible.



Methods

Discussion Questions

What is the basic purpose of Halloween?

Should Christians participate with "trick-or-treaters," in order to keep their homes from being vandalized?

Should Christians wear masks and ugly costumes on Halloween?

Should we be afraid of demons?

Emphasize the importance of factual information. Many people are defeated, when they are not even aware that they have an enemy, or that there is a spiritual war going on. (Hosea 4:6) Make sure that the students understand the reality of the spirit world -- particularly the reality of God, Who is a loving, personal Heavenly Father.

Read "This Present Darkness," (or another of the novels by Frank Perretti), which gives a vivid picture of the interaction between people and the spirit world. How did the Christians ultimately defeat the enemy?

The Shunemmite Woman

Volume 6

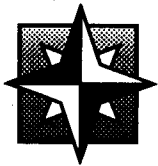
Lesson 18



Bible References

2 Kings 4

2 Chronicles 20:20



Theme

One way we can honor God is to honor and bless those He has called to preach and teach His Word.



Scripture Reading

2 Kings 4:8-16

8 *"And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread.*

9 *"And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually.*

10 *"Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.*

11 *"And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there.*

12 *"And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunemmite. And when he had called her, she stood before him.*

13 *"And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people.*

14 *"And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily, she hath no child, and her husband is old.*

15 *"And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door.*

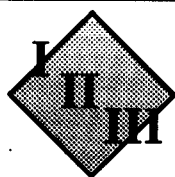
16 *"And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son."*



Memory Verse

Matthew 10:41

"He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward."



Outline

I. A Great Woman of Shunem.

A. What made her great?

1. She was given to hospitality.
2. She was a giver.
3. She was sensitive in her spirit to God's anointing on Elisha.
4. She was unselfish.
5. She was content. (vs. 13)

B. What did she do?

1. She gave meals to the prophet.
2. She insisted that he come for dinner.
3. She had a room built on to her house for the prophet to stay in, when he was in town.
4. She did not do it to get any favors from God.
5. She blessed God's servant "as to the Lord." (Ephesians 6:7)

II. The Response of the Prophet.

A. "What can I do for you?"

1. "Shall I talk to the king for you?"
2. "Shall I talk to a military leader on your behalf?"

B. "I dwell among my own people."

1. "I am content."
2. "I did not bless you, in order to get any favor in return."

C. "How can I bless her?"

1. Gehazi said, "She does not have any children."
2. A serious reproach for a woman in those days.
3. But she had learned to be content.

D. "You will have a son next year."

III. Receive a Prophet.

A. Prophet.

1. One who speaks for God.
2. One to whom God gives information by His Spirit. (Amos 3:7)
3. One who is called to a prophetic ministry to the church. (Ephesians 4:11-12)

B. Receive the man.

1. "I acknowledge that you are a man of God."
2. "I believe God speaks to and through you."
3. "I accept you as God's servant; and so, I will receive what you say."
4. If you do not receive the messenger, you will not believe the message.

5. If you receive a prophet, you will receive what he has to give.

C. The Shunemmite received Elisha as a man of God.

1. She recognized him as a prophet.
2. She was in a position to receive what he had to give.
3. Elisha had faith in God.
4. He imparted restoration and healing to her and her husband.

IV. The Vision of 2 Chronicles 20:20.

A. Believe in God, to be established.

1. Beginning of faith: a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.
2. Faith in God to believe what God has to say to you.

B. Believe His prophets, to be prospered.

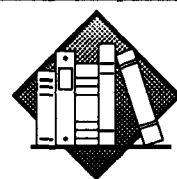
1. I not only believe God, I believe the pastor, parents, prophets, etc. that God sends to me.
2. Some people will only believe what they personally hear from the Lord.
3. But God also speaks through delegated authority.
4. Prosper: To receive the blessing from the message of the prophet of God.

- There is a special blessing in life to those who love to bless God's chosen preachers.
- The highest honor anyone can receive in life is to hear the words, *"...Well done, thou good and faithful servant:...."* (Matthew 25:21)
- When many people hear that a man of God is in town, they think immediately about what they want from God.
- The Shunemmite realized that Elisha was a man of God; and she immediately wanted to bless him.
- God especially delights in blessing people whose goal is not to receive a blessing, but to bless others.
- You cannot receive the ministry into your life, until you receive the minister into your heart.
- God sometimes speaks to us through others; but any "word from the Lord" will always line up to the Bible and to the inner witness of the Holy Spirit in our lives.



Spiritual Truths

- God delights to meet the needs of His people through other people.



Lesson Material

The woman of Shunem is a special study in character. Her name is not given. She did not possess any notable skills. She was barren; and barren women were rarely noted in that culture. The highest honor in those days for a woman was to be the mother of sons, or at least daughters. Men usually wanted sons to carry on the family name.

The Holy Spirit, in inspiring the books of the Kings, called this woman "great." What a testimony! What would it be like, to know that for all of history, among the billions of people who have lived on earth, you would be one of few that God calls great? There are many people today who are known as great and important in society; but most of them will be forgotten in a few hundred years. However, the ones that God calls great will still be known and honored even millions of years from now. That is why *"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches,...."* (Proverbs 22:1)

This woman was honored by God, not for what she had, but for what she gave. The world evaluates our "worth" by the amount of money and possessions we have. "He is worth millions." This is because, in our society, people tend to worship money. Therefore, they are evaluated (given worth) according to money. But God does not care about how much money we have. We do not really own it, anyway. We will lose every cent of it, the moment we die. Then, we will be given eternal possessions, based on our lives and on what we gave.

The Shunemmite woman had many character qualities. She was given to hospitality, because she insisted on feeding Elisha. She was kind and generous. She was spiritually sensitive, because she recognized God's anointing on Elisha. At first, her motive was to bless the gentle Israelite neighbor who was passing by. When she realized that he was a prophet, she became highly motivated; and she had an addition built onto her house for his exclusive use. When you bless the servant of God, you are in line for a great blessing.

So many people in our "me generation" cultures have a different

focus. "A man of God is coming to town. Come, and get your blessing!" Obviously, this type of selfish mentality is encouraged by some who want to attract a crowd by appealing to that mentality. But this woman did not think, "Oh, a prophet. He can pray for me, and I will get what I want." Instead, she thought, "Oh, a prophet of God. I love God. How can I bless His servant?" Apparently she did not even think of her own need, because when Elisha asked what he could do in return, she responded, "I dwell with my own people." In other words, "What more could I want?"

There is a law of reciprocity at work here. You cannot really give without receiving, unless perhaps you give with only a motive to get; and then, you are not really giving -- you are trading. Real giving gives, without expecting anything in return. Perhaps this explains why some people claim to be generous with the ministry, but are not blessed. Keep in mind that there are other factors involved in financial prosperity; and so, we cannot judge, based on only one factor. For example, some people may be lazy tithers. So there is one factor that tends toward poverty, and one toward blessing. We rarely see the whole picture; and so, we are commanded not to judge other people.

The woman of Shunem "received" the prophet as a man of God. She said, "I perceive that this is a man of God." She opened her heart and her home to him; and she sought to bless God, by blessing Elisha. Jesus said, *"He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward."* (Matthew 10:41) In other words, if you receive the man, then you are in a position to receive what he has to

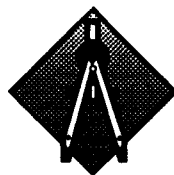
give. When people in a church receive a preacher as a man of God, they can receive the message as from the Lord. If anyone is resentful or bitter against the preacher, or if anyone has judged him in his heart, he will not receive the Word. If you reject the messenger, you cannot receive the message, or the healing, or the reward that the messenger has to bring. Every prophet has something to give; but you have to receive the man, in order to receive the blessing he brings from God.

One other scriptural teaching on the subject of prophets is 2 Chronicles 20:20. *"...Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper."* This is real 20/20 vision. Some people believe and receive only that which they hear from God themselves. They will hear a prophecy or a sermon, and accept only that which agrees with them. But often God speaks through His preachers or other ministers for our benefit. Have you ever thought that God was speaking to your parents for you? Did you know that God often speaks through authority? If you have faith in God to believe that He can bless you through other people, then you are in a position to receive more from the Lord than the one who will receive only what he thinks he hears directly from God.

By the way, when God blesses you, it is a sure blessing. This woman did indeed have a son the following year. When he was a boy, he had a headache (possibly a brain aneurysm), and fell over in the field. They took him home, where he died. The woman knew exactly what to do. She went to Elisha. He sent his servant, Gehazi with his staff, and told him to lay the staff on

the boy's face. The boy did not revive. Gehazi went back to Elisha disappointed. Elisha went himself; and he laid himself on top of the body, until life came into the boy -- and he was raised from the dead. (2 Kings 4:18-37)

If God does not answer your prayer immediately, it is all right to pray again. (Matthew 7:7-8) Your faith is not necessarily defective. God wants you to pray, and to pray often. The goal is not just to get problems resolved. God's goal is that we pray, because prayer is communication and intimacy with God. Pray, and believe, and receive. (Mark 11:24)



Methods

Discussion Questions

What kinds of qualities in people tend to impress the world? What kinds of people are considered "great" in our culture? What kinds of people in the Bible were considered great by God? What qualities does God look for in people?

What is the difference between giving and trading? Why does God heal some people, and not others? Are there some factors in their lives that we might not be aware of? Is God fair, in the way that He blesses people? Is God just and right, in the way that he deals with people? How should we treat our pastors and other spiritual authorities?

Supernatural Sight

Volume 6

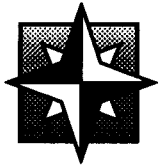
Lesson 19



Bible References

2 Kings 6

2 Corinthians 4



Theme

God used his prophet, Elisha and His own supernatural ways to deliver the enemy into Israel's hand.



Scripture Reading

2 Kings 6:10-12, 14-18, 20, 22

10 "And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice.

11 "Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing, and he

called his servants and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel.

12 "And one of his servants said, None my Lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber."

14 "Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots...and compassed the city about.

15 "And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

16 "And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

17 "And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

18 "And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness according to the word of Elisha."

20 "And it came to pass, when they were come to Samaria, that Elisha said, Lord open the eyes of these men, that they may

see. And behold, they were in the midst of Samaria."

22 *"And he answered, "Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master."*

Joshua 1:9

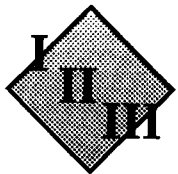
"Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."



Memory Verse

Psalms 34:7

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."



Outline

I. The Plan of Attack.

- A. Syria planned an attack on Israel.
- B. The attack plans failed every time.
 - 1. The king planned his camp site.

- 2. The Israelites were warned to avoid that area.
- 3. This kind of warning came several times to Israel.

C. A spy was suspected.

- 1. Carnal men think only in terms of human activity.
- 2. They do not realize that there are spiritual beings at work, too.
- 3. 1 Corinthians 2:14.

D. Finally, one servant knew enough to tell the king about a prophet named Elisha.

- 1. Prophets can hear from God.
- 2. God knows everything.
- 3. "He can even know something you whisper in your bedroom." (vs. 12)
- 4. Amos 3:7 -- "...God revealeth...unto his servants the prophets."

E. God still has prophets.

- 1. Ephesians 4:11.
- 2. They are gifts to the body of Christ.
- 3. Their "words" from the Lord always confirm, and never contradict scripture.
- 4. Ephesians 2:20 says that the ministry of prophet is foundational.

II. God's Intervention.

A. The Syrians surrounded Elisha.

- 1. They tried to sneak up on him and take him by military force.
- 2. This is a very funny story.
 - a. If Elisha could know anything the Syrians did, how could they sneak up on him?
 - b. Would he not know that plan, also?
- 3. Elisha's servant.

- a. He was very nervous when he saw the enemy.
 - b. He did not see the angels.
 - c. This is normal for us. We often see the problem; but we do not see God's power.
 - d. Elisha prayed for God to open his eyes; and God did so.
4. There are angels around us; but we do not usually see them.

B. Elisha prayed.

1. Elisha and his servant saw God's spiritual forces.
2. The Syrians were blinded; and they did not see anything.

III. God's People Victorious.

- A. Elisha led the blinded enemy soldiers into the city of Samaria.
- B. Israel was victorious by God's power, and not by her own.
- C. The Syrians were humiliated.
 1. They finally realized that God is God.
 2. Carnal men have no power against God.

- God's forces are far superior to man's or Satan's.
- Man has spiritual eyes that can be opened or blinded by the Lord.
- God is omnipotent (all powerful).
- God is omniscient (all knowing).
- God is omnipresent (all places at one time).
- God's nature has not changed. He is the same today, as He was in the days of Elisha.
- Our battles are won by God's might, and not our own. (Zechariah 4:6)



Lesson Material

Syria had been an age-old enemy of Israel. In our lesson today, Syria had decided to raid Israel again. The king of Syria (probably Ben-Hadad) set a certain place for his camp. He did not know that Israel had a prophet of God (Elisha) to warn them of approaching danger to God's special people.

Elisha the prophet sent a warning to the king of Israel (Joram) telling him not to go near a certain place, for the army of Syria was encamped there to ambush them. The king of Israel sent scouts to verify the word. Sure enough, Elisha was right; and so, Israel stayed out of danger. This happened at least three times, when the Syrians changed their location. Elisha received information from God, because he was sensitive in his spirit to the word



Spiritual Truths

- God uses prophets to warn people, or to confirm His direction for them.
- God commands spiritual forces, which are usually unseen by man.

of the Lord. Another name for prophet in those days was "seer," because they could see with their spirit the things that were happening beyond the natural realm of life.

Now the king of Syria was becoming disturbed. He assumed that Israel had planted a spy in his camp. How else could Israel know all of their plans? He said, "Will you show me whom of us is for the king of Israel?" One of his servants spoke up and said, "None of us; but there is in Israel a prophet named Elisha, who tells the king of Israel the words you speak in your bedroom."

The king of Syria said, "Go, and see where this prophet Elisha is, so that I may send and seize him;" and he was told that Elisha was in the city of Dothan. Note the brilliant reasoning power of this great king. "This man is causing us great trouble, because he knows everything we say and do. Let us sneak up on him and capture him!" So the king sent horses, chariots, and a great army by night to surround Dothan and Elisha.

When Elisha's servant arose early in the morning and looked around, he was somewhat troubled by the sight of a large armed force surrounding their little house, much the same way you and I might be today, if we found ourselves surrounded by a large pride of hungry lions. He said to Elisha, "Alas my master, what shall we do?" Elisha's answer is recorded in 2 Kings 6:16-17.

After Elisha prayed, the servant could not only see in the natural, but he could see with spiritual eyes. (If the Lord opened your spiritual eyes right now, you might be very surprised at what you would see.) For all around Elisha and his servant, completely surrounding the enemy, was a

host of God's angels, sent to deliver these men of God.

Psalms 34:7 says that the angel of the Lord encamps around those that fear Him and He delivers them. In Hebrews 13:5, we are told that the Lord will never leave us or forsake us. If you could see into the spirit realm, you might even see enemy forces being held back from you by angels. Anyway, the servant could see that the Syrians were out-numbered by God's horses and chariots of fire.

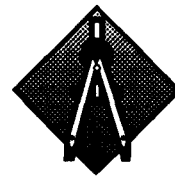
Read 2 Kings 6:18. It may have been that God did not strike the enemy totally blind, but rather struck them with confusion, and an inability to recognize Elisha or even where they were going.

God does this type of thing over and over yet today. Relate real life stories here: Bible smugglers filling autos with Bibles and passing through searches; Demi and Marta (members of Calvary Temple, Fort Wayne, Indiana) escaping through guarded check posts in Ethiopia; God causing enemies to see mighty warriors on top of an orphanage where women and children were praying inside for protection; and mighty sounds of war, causing men to flee camp. Remember, our God is: omnipotent -- all powerful; omniscient -- all knowing, and omnipresent -- all places at one time. What else could we need? He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow! (Hebrews 13:8)

To go on with our story -- the Syrians came to Elisha in their blinded state, and he led them into Samaria. Samaria was the king of Israel's headquarters; and Elisha was leading them right into the midst of the people that they had been trying to kill. Can you imagine how you' would feel, if you were suddenly surrounded by the very men you sought to

kill, and some were yelling, "Shall I kill them?" Elisha answered, "No, we are going to feed them and send them home." It is important for us to see that this whole scenario was God's way of showing Israel that He, God (and not their own might), delivered the enemy into their hand.

Also, in that land and day, if you sat to eat with a person, you were saying that you were his friend. Who would dare refuse this offer and say "I will not eat your loathsome food," when the alternative would seem to be death? You would force a smile and humbly accept the meal and act friendly, right? After the meal, the Syrians were sent home; and the bands of Syrians came no more into Israel. Once again, God had greatly demonstrated His delivering power for his people.



Methods

Divide the blackboard into two sections for early arriving students to illustrate the story, using their imaginations. More than one student can work on an illustration. Give them the scenario for each section. An example might be: Dothan surrounded by Syrians, or Dothan as seen by Elisha's spiritual eyes.

Display or draw a general map, showing the location of Syria and Samaria.

Allow students to volunteer to read the portions of scripture. Have the scripture portions to be read posted on the blackboard; and encourage the students to read loudly enough for all to hear. We want them to bring their Bibles for a reason. We want the Bibles to be used!

Four Lepers of Samaria

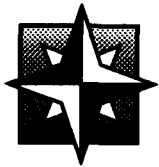
Volume 6

Lesson 20



Bible Reference

2 Kings 6-7



Theme

Sometimes, all that God needs to fulfill His promise is someone who is willing to get up and try.



Scripture Reading

2 Kings 6:24-25

24 "And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria.

25 "And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver."

2 Kings 7:1-7

1. "Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord, To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.

2 "Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

3 "And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?

4 "If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.

5 "And they arose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there.

6 "For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses...

7 "Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their

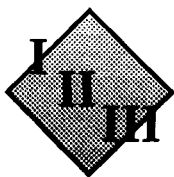
horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life."



Memory Verse

1 Corinthians 1:27, 29

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty...that no flesh should glory in his presence."



Outline

I. The Siege of Samaria.

A. Samaria.

1. Capitol city of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
2. "The king" in this story is probably Joram (or Jehoram), son of Ahab.
3. The people were practicing idolatry; and they had not turned back to God.
4. When Israel sinned, God allowed enemies to overcome them, so that they would repent.

B. Syria.

1. A powerful kingdom to the north.

2. Under King Ben-hadad.

C. Siege.

1. The enemy could not come in and conquer Samaria, because it was surrounded by high, strong walls, and well-fortified.
2. It was a military stronghold.
3. They camped around the city, preventing the people from going to the fields, and cutting off all supplies for many months.
4. It went so long that people began to eat bird droppings, and even their own babies.

D. The king's reaction:

1. He grieved because the people were suffering.
2. His command: Go, and kill the prophet, Elisha.
3. Sometimes, when people are suffering because of their own sin, they want to attack the preacher.

II. The Prophecy.

A. God told Elisha that the Israelites would be buying grain at cheap prices in the gate of the city on the next day.

1. People were paying fabulous prices for donkey heads and dove's dung.
2. Elisha claimed that wheat and barley would be sold for pennies.

B. The high government official.

1. Said to Elisha, "That is impossible!"
2. Elisha further prophesied: "You will see it with your eyes, but you will not eat any of it."
3. The next day, that same cynical official was put in charge of the gate,

when the people came back with the spoils from the Syrian camp.

4. He saw the food; but he was trampled to death by the crowd.
5. Another skeptic bites the dust.
6. Another amazing prophecy comes to pass.

III. The Lepers.

A. Leprosy.

1. A biblical type of sin.
2. Leprosy makes its victims insensitive.
3. It leads to damage and ultimately death, because the victim does not realize that cuts, infections, or injuries are taking place.

B. Lepers.

1. Considered "unclean."
2. Outcasts from society, because people did not want to be infected.
3. They were waiting to die.

C. "Why sit we here?"

1. They knew that they were going to die.
2. It would be better to die trying, than to die doing nothing.
3. "Let us go to the enemy camp. The worst thing that can happen is that they kill us."

D. God's strategy.

1. God amplified the sound of their feet.
2. In the ears of the Syrians, it was the sound of a great army.
3. They became terrified, and they fled in a panic.

IV. The Principle.

A. Publicans and harlots.

1. Jesus said to the religious Pharisees, "...*The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.*" (Matthew 21:31)
2. Why?
 - a. They realize that they are sinners.
 - b. But people with religious pride and spiritual sins do not recognize how far they are from God.

B. Lepers.

1. Realized that they were lost (dying).
2. The people inside the city were dying, too; but they did not realize it.
3. The lepers were the ones who got up and did something.
4. They simply tried; and they did not give up.
5. They alone realized that they had nothing to lose.



Spiritual Truths

- God does not need to use the best and the brightest. All He needs is someone who will obey Him.
- God delights to use people who are not qualified, because it is easier for them to see that they could not have done it in their own strength.

- Godly people never glory in themselves, but always glory in their God.
- When a prophecy is from God, it will come to pass.
- Our physical and natural weaknesses can work to our advantage, if they prompt us to become dependent upon God.
- It is good for us to be in impossible situations, because then we realize how much we need God's help.
- God can take an enemy who means to destroy us, and actually make him the source of our provision and blessing.
- No one can get saved, until he first realizes that he is terribly lost.
- God never saves "good" people. He only saves sinners. (Matthew 9:13)



Lesson Material

In spite of many warnings from God, Israel persisted in the practices of idolatry. The appeal of idolatry is that you can shape your own god, and worship according to your own heart. People who love money or pleasure imagine their gods accordingly; and they devise their "worship" ceremonies to satisfy their own cravings. Sometimes idol worship is extremely wicked, or cruel. We need to understand that we worship God, not because we feel like doing it a certain way, but because He has outlined what He wants in His Word, particularly in the

Psalms. True churches do not pattern their services to attract a crowd or to appeal to people. They structure their services according to the Bible, seeking to please God.

It was actually the mercy of God that prompted Him to stir up the Syrians against Israel. God often used heathen nations as His "rod" against His people, much like a loving father will use a rod on the backside of a rebellious child, in order to motivate him to repent. Good parents teach their children to associate rebellion and disobedience with pain. This helps them to associate sin with hell, and encourages a tender heart for God.

Israel had many opportunities to repent, but the king and the people still "did their own thing." So God allowed Ben-hadad to come against the capital city of Samaria, and to set up a siege. Since they could not successfully attack the city because of the strong, fortified walls, they worked out another strategy, which was to cut off the city's food supply, until they starved them out. This took many months; but, finally, the people were starving, and about to give up. Still, they did not repent.

The king heard that some people were killing and eating their own children; and he became enraged. He swore that the prophet, Elisha would die that day. Is that not human? When things go wrong, blame the preacher. Of course, Elisha had not caused the problem; but the king could not attack God, and so he tried to act like he was solving the problem, by blaming the prophet.

Elisha was the one man who could help, because he could pray. Still, the king did not repent. Nevertheless, God, in His compassion, decided to put an end to the suffering and deal with the wicked

Syrians. Israel was being chastened by God; but God Himself always dealt severely with the nations who raised their hand against His people, even when they deserved it.

The king sent some men to kill Elisha, but Elisha knew it through a word of knowledge. He had some men bar the door, and then he told the king's official, "Tomorrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel (around ten pounds of flour for about a dollar)." In other words, "There will be plenty of food in Samaria, and the famine will be over." The government official was incredulous. "That is impossible!" He knew that there were no crops; so how could they have flour, in one day's time?

The man had a narrow field of vision. He thought only in terms of the immediate. It never occurred to him that the Syrians would desert their well-stocked camp because of an irrational mass hysteria, prompted by four sickly lepers. He heard Elisha's prophecy and rejected the idea, even though the prophet had never missed it yet with a word of knowledge. Of course, it came to pass.

God used a very unlikely group to accomplish the deliverance of Samaria. There were four lepers who camped outside the city, because of their contagious condition. Leprosy was a dreaded disease, because it made the nerves insensitive to pain, resulting in great damage to the bodies of the lepers. Some had ugly wounds that did not heal; and some suffered the loss of fingers or limbs, largely because they were unaware of the damage of injuries or infections.

Leprosy is a picture of sin. When a person had a spot of leprosy, he had to go to the priest, who would declare him unclean. (Leviticus 13:2-6) Strangely, when

his body was covered with leprosy, he was declared "clean," because he was obviously a leper. But a person with a spot could cover it up; and people needed to be warned, "Unclean! Unclean! Do not come near me!" We need to see sin as God sees it. Sin is unclean, destructive, ugly, and deadly. The world is constantly painting a picture of sin as attractive, exciting, and inviting. Worst of all, sin is portrayed with no consequences, so that we get the illusion that we can get away with it.

We need to do all we can to focus our attention on godly people and on images of wisdom. If we focus too much on evil (horror, crime, violence, immorality, lewdness, etc.) we will tend to be attracted to it. Conversely, if we set godly images before us, with beautiful pictures, good music, and biographies of Christians, then we will be more inclined to a godly lifestyle. The world is promoting images of evil in ever-increasing doses, making us less and less sensitive to the ugliness of witchcraft, immorality, and other forms of wickedness.

"Sin is a monster, of such awful mean,
That to be hated is but to be seen.
But seen too oft, familiar with face,
We first endure, then pity, then
embrace." (author unknown)

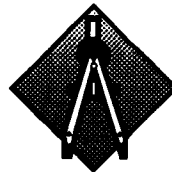
These four lepers knew that they were going to die; and so, they realized that they had nothing to lose. "Why sit we here until we die? Let us get up and do something." There is wisdom in what Solomon said: "*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do {it} with thy might; for {there is} no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.*" (Ecclesiastes 9:10) Get up and try. The person who tries and fails is much better than the person who does not even try. People who never try because

of the fear of failure are guaranteed to find their fear realized.

Jesus spoke to the most religious people of the day, and said, "...*The [publicans] and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.*" (Matthew 21:31) Why? Probably because they at least know that they are sinners. Their sins are open and obvious; but the sins of pride, envy, and gossip are less obvious. The Pharisees saw themselves as very good people; but they had some serious spiritual problems. They did not know they needed a Savior. They rejected the very One Who could bring them into a real relationship with God.

These four lepers got up and marched to the Syrian camp. God stirred up the enemy soldiers, and they fled the camp in a panic, even leaving their horses behind. Fear will lead you to do unreasonable things. Fear is a poor motivation to do anything. Fear is the opposite of faith, because it magnifies the problem and the danger. But faith magnifies God. The lepers were amazed. They did not understand why, but the Syrian camp was deserted, and they were suddenly rich. When they went back to Samaria and reported their findings, the people were skeptical. But soon they were all rejoicing in their newly found wealth -- all except that cynical government official who was trampled to death, when they came through the gate. He saw the food; but he never ate of it. How sad for someone to

come to a good, Bible-believing church, see the power of God in operation, and hear the Word brought forth as the bread of life, and never partake of it.



Methods

Discussion Questions:

How hungry would you have to be, in order to be willing to pay \$50 for a piece of bird dropping?

Why did God allow Samaria to suffer so much?

What is idolatry?

Why is leprosy a type of sin?

How does the world portray sin, in general?

Can you think of instances when you saw immorality suggested, and then there were no consequences for the sin?

Does this lead us to think that we can get away with sin?

Can we?

King Asa

Volume 6

Lesson 21

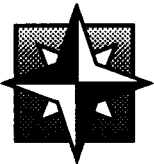


Bible References

2 Chronicles 14-16

Psalms 1

Psalms 62



Theme

The most important thing in life is to cultivate a close relationship with God, our Heavenly Father, Who is the first one we turn to, in times of trouble.



Scripture Reading

2 Chronicles 15:1-8

1 *"And the spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded:*

2 *"And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.*

3 *"Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law.*

4 *"But when they in their trouble did turn unto the Lord God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them.*

5 *"And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries.*

6 *"And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity.*

7 *"Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.*

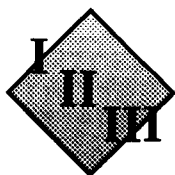
8 *"And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin."*



Memory Verse

2 Chronicles 16:9

"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."



Outline

I. King Asa.

A. King of Judah.

1. In the divided kingdom, after the days of Elisha.
2. A descendent of King David.
3. Classified as a "good" king.
4. He reigned 41 years in Jerusalem.
5. He was the father of King Jehoshaphat.

B. His accomplishments.

1. He destroyed heathen idols.
2. He took down the high places.
 - a. Places usually associated with idolatry and moral impurity.
 - b. Temples or pillars set on hills, to exalt man or the idol.
 - c. High places were sometimes used to worship the true God.
3. He broke down (idol) images.
4. He cut down the groves.

- a. "Grove" actually meant "Asherah Pole," or "image."
- b. Asherah was a Phoenician goddess.
- c. Associated with lewd sexual practices.
- d. Usually involved trees and an outdoor setting.
5. He demoted his mother, the queen, when she made an idol.

II. The Prophets.

A. Azariah.

1. "The Lord is with you, while you are with Him."
 - a. God is faithful.
 - b. God will never be the One to break a covenant.
2. "If you seek Him, He will be found of you."
 - a. God is no respecter of persons. (Acts 10:34)
 - b. "Whosoever will" may come. (Revelation 22:17)
 - c. All who honestly seek God with a humble heart of repentance will find God, regardless of their background.
3. "If you forsake Him, He will forsake you."
 - a. This does not contradict Hebrews 13:5.
 - b. God is a covenant-keeping God.
 - c. We are secure, as we abide in Him.
 - d. Some believers will "depart from the faith." (1 Timothy 4:1)
 - e. Some will become "reprobate" concerning the faith. (2 Timothy 3:8)
 - f. Nothing can force you to turn away from God against your will.

B. Hanani. (2 Chronicles 16)

1. Came later to Asa, after he had put his trust in Syria's army, instead of in God's might.
2. "Since you did not rely on God, the host of Syria will escape you."
3. You will have wars, from now on."
4. Asa was angry; and he put Hanani, the prophet in prison.
 - a. He was really angry with God; but he took it out on the preacher who gave the message.
 - b. People still do that kind of thing.

4. Prophecy: "God is looking to show Himself strong, on behalf of those whose heart is perfect." (2 Chronicles 16:9)
 - a. A "perfect heart" means one who honestly seeks God first in life, and who is not just out to get what he can get.
 - b. God wants to show the world that He can greatly bless the one who loves Him.
 - c. David had a perfect heart; and he was greatly blessed and prospered in life.

III. The Ethiopians.**A. King Zera came up against Judah.**

1. From Ethiopia, in Africa.
2. His army had 1 million soldiers.
3. And 300 chariots.

B. Asa had an army of 580,000.**C. Asa cried out to God.**

1. 2 Chronicles 14:11.
2. The Lord smote the Ethiopians.
 - a. Possibly with confusion
 - b. Or through the Israelite soldiers.
 - c. God has many ways of defeating our enemies.
3. Judah gained a large amount of spoil.

B. Disease in Asa's feet.

1. He sought the physicians, instead of God.
2. It is not wrong to go to a doctor; but we should make prayer our first recourse.
3. Faith focuses on God, recognizing that He is in control.

C. Asa had a sad end, because he began in faith and obedience, but ended in carnality.**IV. Asa's Lack of Faith.****A. Conflict with Baasha, king of Israel. (2 Chronicles 16)**

1. Instead of calling on the Lord, Asa hired Syria to help against Israel.
2. This time, he was trusting in man instead of God.
3. Jeremiah 17:5-8.



Spiritual Truths

- When God is on your side, it does not matter how many are against you, or how impossible the problem is.
- Everyone in scripture who cried out to God for help was helped; but everyone who looked to man for his help failed.
- It is not a sin to go to a doctor or a hospital; but it grieves God when we

look to people in our need without looking to Him.

- God is a very present help in time of trouble. (Psalms 46:1)
- No matter what our problem is, we should focus on God, and not on the problem.
- The first time Asa had a military crisis, he cried out to God. Later, when he had time to think it over, he worked out his own strategy and failed.
- God delights to show the world His faithfulness, by blessing and protecting those who have a perfect heart for Him.
- God wants a people who seek Him and His righteousness before anything else in life. (Matthew 6:33)



Lesson Material

If we are going to learn wisdom, we need to be familiar with many of the people in Bible history and the lessons that they learned in life. King Asa is an excellent example of faith, being both a positive and a negative role model. Asa succeeded militarily with the simple strategy of crying out to God for wisdom. He was hopelessly outnumbered by the Ethiopian one-million man army; and he had no other option. He reacted to the situation with prayer -- and God delivered him.

It is ironic that Asa himself failed to learn from his own success. Years later, he

had another military threat, but he followed a different tactic. When he was threatened by the Northern kingdom of Israel, he looked to his money to buy him the help of another nation, Syria.

When does money become your god? Money is not the root of all evil, but the love of money is. (1 Timothy 6:10) God desires to be our God. Note that in our worship and service to God, we learn to look to God as our first resource. We love God, seeing Him as our Provider, Protector, Guide, and Owner. We serve God in life, knowing that He is our "exceeding great reward." (Genesis 15:1)

When we love something or someone more than we love God, then that thing becomes an idol to us. If we trust in and rely on something as our first resource instead of God, then that thing replaces God and becomes our god. Some people see money or things as their provider. Even church people have been known to say, "If we had so much money, we could do great things for God." Think about it. "Money can help God out." This is a subtle form of idolatry. We should say, "With God, all things are possible. If we have faith, God will supply the money we need." (Matthew 19:26) We need to see God as our Source, and never look at money as our objective or our strength. It is such a temptation to look at money as a provider, or as a goal in life.

God looks at money as a servant and as a training tool. God provided Israel with money; and then He had them give a voluntary offering for the building of the tabernacle. Jesus taught often about money, although he never asked for any, as far as we know. Money can be your servant, if you are God's servant. You should always work for God, and never work for money. That is not saying you

should not get paid for working; but as a Christian, your focus should not be on money, nor should money be your only motivation. If you love money, you will be tempted to be dishonest; and you will look to money as your source in life. Money is a good servant, but a demanding master.

When people put their security in money, it becomes an idol. "If I had so much money, then I would feel secure." Asa put his confidence in his money. He looked to it as his source of defense against his attacker; and it failed. The more he used his wealth for a defense, the more other nations sought to take it from him. God did not bless his efforts, because He saw that money was Asa's god. Asa had learned to love money; and he got his eyes focused on it. When trouble came, he looked to his money (his god) to provide the security he needed. He loved, trusted, sought for, and thought about money. That is what we should do with God.

Many nations today have repeated the tragic mistakes of Asa. We will use America as an example. In the eighteenth century, that nation was birthed in prayer and a desire to worship God in freedom. George Washington led a ragtag army against the overwhelming military might of Great Britain -- and he did it, literally, on his knees. Washington was a man who cried out to God; and he was given victory through many amazing miracles. The Bible was central in American life, and it was the basis of American law. Because of its strong focus on God, the United States became a blessed, strong nation.

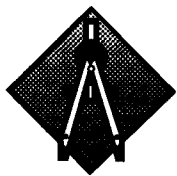
However, in this century, we have seen the secularization of the nation; and one result is the national worship of money. Today, the American congress tries to solve every problem by throwing money

at it, bringing the nation to financial ruin. Our national love of money is actually destroying the wealth God had provided, because it leads us to the lie of socialism -- the idea that we can get something for nothing. When money becomes the object of our love and trust, it becomes our master and our god. This idolatry naturally causes financial destruction.

Asa was a good man. He started out right, but he missed God's best later in life. He never denied the Lord. He just drifted from God, and got his focus on things. This failure to diligently seek God is the scourge of the church today. In our prosperity, it is so easy to get focused on "the good life" and all of the activities of life and living, gradually getting more and more centered on things and pleasure. You see, God loves to bless His children; and the Christian ethics of work and honesty tend to produce prosperity. But then, when we gain the prosperity that results from the work and prayer of our parents and grandparents, we tend to get our heart set on it. David wisely said, "*...If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.*" (Psalms 62:10)

Asa missed God's best in his life, because he failed to diligently keep on seeking God. He started out well, but his end was tragic. He started out in faith, but he ended in unbelief. In his wealth, he trusted in his money. In his sickness, he trusted in man. Jeremiah said, "*...Cursed {be} the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh;....*" (Jeremiah 17:5-6) A heath is a tumbleweed. Tumbleweeds are round bushes with a weak stem. When hot winds pick up, the bush is pulled and broken off. It quickly becomes brown as it dies and is blown about by the wind.

People who have a weak "stem system," who are not strong in prayer and the Word of God, are easily "...carried about with every wind of doctrine,...." (Ephesians 4:14) They are dried up; and they cannot receive the water of the Spirit, because they have no root. But the righteous are like trees. Even when there is a drought, they hardly notice, because they are drawing from the well of "living water" (John 7:38); and they are green and flourishing. (Psalms 1:3)



Methods

Discussion Questions

Are we more likely to pray diligently when we are faced with big problems, or with little problems?

Why does God allow good people to have enemies and adversity?

What attitudes of the heart determine whether we have made something or someone an idol?

Many people throughout history have worshipped money, pleasure, and power. Is that true, where you live?

What happens eventually to the economy of a nation that worships money? Why?

If it is not a sin to go to the doctor when you are sick, then why was Asa wrong in seeking the physicians?

When faced with a serious need or difficulty in life, where do you go first for help?

An Attitude of Gratitude

Volume 6

Thanksgiving

Lesson 22

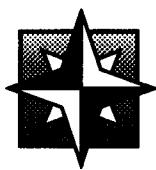


Bible References

2 Chronicles 31

Psalms 95

Psalms 100



Theme

If we are to be effective, overcoming Christians, we must establish patterns in our life that will stimulate a spirit of gratitude toward God.



Scripture Reading

Psalms 95:1-11

1 *"O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.*

2 *"Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.*

3 *"For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.*

4 *"In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also.*

5 *"The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land.*

6 *"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker.*

7 *"For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today if ye will hear his voice,*

8 *"Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness:*

9 *"When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work.*

10 *"Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not know my ways:*

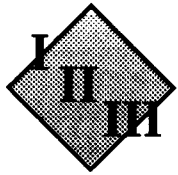
11 *"Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest."*



Memory Verse

Psalms 95:2-3

"Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods."



Outline

I. What Is Thanksgiving?

A. Expressions of appreciation and gratitude.

1. We should be full of thanks.
2. Praise is bragging on God for what He has done.
3. Thanksgiving is a specific kind of praise.
4. We magnify the Lord.

B. When should we thank God?

1. Continually. (Hebrews 13:15)
2. When we approach God's throne in prayer or praise. (Psalms 100:4)
3. When we partake of food, or other blessings from God. (1 Corinthians 11:24)

C. What should we thank God for?

1. In everything, give thanks. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

2. Give thanks **for** everything. (Ephesians 5:20)
3. God is the Creator and Author of every good thing in life. (James 1:17)
4. God can even take the "negatives" in life to build our character and turn it around for our good. (Romans 8:28)
5. Thank God for trials and persecution.
 - a. 1 Peter 5:10.
 - b. Matthew 5:11-12.

D. Thank people who bless and help you in life.

1. This helps to prevent a spirit of pride.
2. It causes them to want to do more for you.

II. The Value of Giving Thanks.

A. Builds the character quality of humility.

1. Thanksgiving is a reminder that what we have and what we are comes from God.
2. Humility is a strength -- the awareness that we need God.
3. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (James 4:6)

B. Prevents the sin of pride.

1. Pride is an excessive focus on self.
2. An over-inflated sense of self-esteem, which is manifested in a lack of gratitude to God and to others.

C. Thanksgiving to God helps us to come into God's presence and pray effectively.

1. Psalms 100:4.

2. Psalms 22:3.
- D. Thanksgiving builds our faith by magnifying God in our minds and hearts.
- E. Thanksgiving pleases God; and it causes Him to want to do even more for us.
 1. No one likes to do things for a selfish, ungrateful child.
 2. Like all of us, God loves to be appreciated.
- F. Giving thanks stimulates an attitude of dependence and trust, because we are reminded that we need God.

III. Israel's Failure.

- A. In the wilderness wanderings.
 1. 40 years under Moses.
 2. The people focused on what they did not have, rather than on what they had.
 3. They were sustained with miraculous food, water, shade, and fire.
 4. But they longed for the leeks, garlic, and meat of Egypt.
 5. God had provided all of their needs -- but not all of their wants.
- B. Provoking God.
 1. Their ungratefulness provoked God to send quail, until they were sick of it.
 2. *"And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul."* (Psalms 106:15)
 - a. God gave them the meat they asked for, but they did not get a spiritual blessing.
 - b. It was a selfish prayer. (James 4:3)

- c. God may answer a selfish prayer, in order to show that His way is far better.
3. The 40 years of wandering in the wilderness was called the "Provocation," because Israel provoked God with their ungrateful attitude. (Psalms 95:8-9)
4. They saw the acts of God, but they did not understand His ways.
 - a. Psalms 103:7.
 - b. Israel knew about God's deeds; but Moses knew God's ways.
 - c. Israel knew what happened; but Moses understood why it happened.

IV. The Consequences of Ungratefulness.

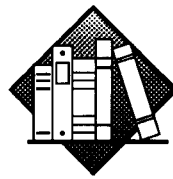
- A. Leads to pride.
 1. Deuteronomy 8:11-17.
 2. Beware, lest you forget the Lord.
 3. And say, "My hand has gotten me this wealth."
 4. God gives us the power to get wealth.
- B. 2 Timothy 3:1-5.
 1. Self love leads to covetousness and pride.
 2. Ungratefulness leads to unholiness.
 3. The root cause of crime is not poverty, but rather, a spirit of ungratefulness.
 4. Ungratefulness comes from focusing on things, instead of on our relationship with God.
- C. Romans 1:21-32.
 1. Unthankfulness leads to vain imaginations.
 2. Which leads to darkness of heart.

3. Which leads to moral perversion, idolatry, homosexuality, rebellion.



Spiritual Truths

- We cannot correctly approach God's presence without giving Him thanks for what He has done for us.
- Thankfulness is an attitude which is developed by a habit of giving thanks in and for all things.
- Thanksgiving should be a part of the Christian's lifestyle, rather than a once a year event.
- Like God, we are most motivated to bless those who demonstrate gratefulness for what we have done for them.
- We should thank God even for the ability to work and make wealth, because that comes from His hand, too.
- We are commanded not only to thank God in all things, but also for all things.
- Poverty does not cause crime. It begins with a selfish and unthankful heart.
- An unthankful heart leads to an unholy life, because it tends to focus on self and flesh, rather than on the fear of the Lord.



Lesson Material

The largest book in the Bible is the book of Psalms. This should tell us something about God's priority list. The Psalms are full of admonitions to express gratefulness to God. The book of Psalms is the song book of the Bible. It is also a book of thanksgiving. David was a man of faith and power, largely because he was a man of thanksgiving. He learned early in life to focus on the positives in life. Instead of becoming bitter because he was rejected and abused, he became close to God. As the old saying goes, "When life hands you a lemon, make lemonade." The sugar that makes the lemonade sweet is the attitude of gratitude, developed by a habit of thanksgiving.

It is so easy to focus on people and things; but this only leads to selfishness and bitterness. Thanksgiving develops an ongoing sense that we are continually dependent upon God. The more we focus on God, the more likely we are to want to please Him, and the more likely we are to turn to Him in times of distress.

Paul said that in the last days, "perilous times" will come (2 Timothy 3:1) -- not because of nuclear weapons, but because of the attitude of people in the end times. He predicted the rise of humanism, when he said that *"...men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy."* (2 Timothy 3:2) Humanism is the focus on man for man's sake; and it sees pleasure as the purpose of life. Man was not created for the purpose of his own pleasure, nor to live by his own devices. Man was created for God's

pleasure, and he was designed to be dependent upon God. (Revelation 4:11)

The habit of thanksgiving reinforces a sense of God's presence, and strengthens our faith focus in life. The more we thank God, the more likely we are to trust Him with our needs in life. When we "magnify the Lord," we bring His presence into focus into our minds; and we see that He is *"...a very present help in trouble."* (Psalms 46:1)

The 40 year wilderness wandering of Israel was called "the Provocation," because the people provoked God with their wrong attitude. Instead of magnifying God for the supernatural provision of perfectly balanced food, pure water, shelter, and clothes every day, the people let their minds focus on what they did not have. They had all of their needs met, but not their selfish wants. Of course, if they had had a spirit of faith back at Kadesh-Barnea (Numbers 13), they would have been in Canaan much earlier, enjoying the land of milk and honey. They were in the wilderness because of their unbelief. Israel did not understand God's ways. They only saw what God did. In their unthankfulness, they provoked God, Who gave them their request, but sent leanness to their souls. In other words, they got what they whined for, but it did not develop their character or bring them joy. Real joy comes from seeking God's will, and being content with what He provides. When God sees a grateful heart, He delights in blessing that person all the more.

When the Bible speaks about the wickedness of men, there is generally a connection to a heart of ungratefulness. Thanksgiving causes us to naturally focus on God, which is God's purpose for man. God made us for relationship with Himself. When we neglect to thank Him,

we tend to get the idea that we deserve the good things we have. We tend to take credit for the blessings in life, and to blame God for our problems. Wisdom reverses that. A grateful heart will give God credit for every good thing in life, and take responsibility for the sin which causes most of our problems. Even when we suffer because of the sin of other people, we should be careful to thank God for the grace to overcome it, and for protecting us through it. The flesh and the devil will tempt us to blame God, by saying, "Why did God not prevent this?" Instead, we should focus on the positives; and we should be careful to recognize that the problems in life are caused by Satan, the sin which binds other people, and the sin in our own lives. Whatever happens, thank God, because every good thing comes from Him; and He is able to make even the negatives of life turn out for our good. (Romans 8:28)

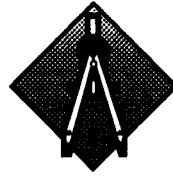
A stone can be a stumbling block or a steppingstone to you, depending on the way you respond to it. A person with a grateful attitude will keep his head up and his focus on God. An ungrateful person is more likely to become bitter with the negatives of life, and allow obstacles to hinder his growth and his joy.

How do we develop a grateful spirit, so that we can have full access to joy in life? First, take responsibility for your own sin, and repent before God. Ask for His forgiveness; and then believe that He has fully forgiven you. Then thank Him for the gift of salvation, and develop the habit of thanking Him for it throughout your Christian life. Make it a habit to look for the benefits and positive aspects of every situation in life, and thank God for each of them. Make thanksgiving and praise a part of your daily routine. Start each day with thanks to God for another day, and remind

yourself of His goodness. Remember how it pleases you when someone else thanks you for your kindness to them; and realize that God feels the same way. No one likes to bless a selfish, ungrateful person -- not even God.

Make it a habit to thank every person who does even the seemingly insignificant things -- the clerk who gives you back your change or smiles at you; the friend who asks you how you are doing; the police officer who works diligently to ensure the safety of the community; or the teacher who taught you good information in school. People who have an attitude of gratitude are the most likely to enjoy life, and the most likely to be blessed by God and by other people. Those who fail to learn to show thankfulness tend to be the most selfish and bitter. Poverty has nothing to do with the cause of crime. Stealing (and other crimes against others) comes from an attitude that "life owes me a living;" and those who do such things fail to see the value of work or ownership. Crime generally starts with an unthankful heart and a bitter spirit; and it is an expression of rebellion toward God.

Learn to give thanks for every day you live, for every meal you eat, and for every need God meets. Learn to thank everyone you can, at every opportunity. You will discover a key to a joyful and productive life, because you will learn to live beyond the circle of your own fears and limitations, and walk in hope and confidence in God.



Methods

Skit

For two persons:

One person is describing to another the meal she has prepared for him. She goes into great detail about the delicate pastries, the succulent, slow-cooked meats, the beautiful vegetable platter, etc. She goes on and on, while the second person in the skit sits with a sad, long face. When she finishes describing the supper she has prepared, she then asks, "What is wrong?" The other person replies, "I wanted pizza."

Relate this to the "Provocation" in the wilderness. How did God feel, after He had done so many miracles for Israel, only to see them grumble and complain that they did not have onions?

How does it make you feel when you go out of your way to help someone else, and they do not even thank you?

How do you think God feels, when we receive everything we have from Him (everything is "unmerited favor") and then do not even say "Thank you?"

We are commanded to "*Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise:....*" (Psalms 100:4) Why is this? (Explain "court etiquette.")

Jephthah

Volume 6

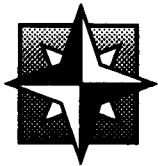
Lesson 23



Bible References

Judges 11

Psalms 42



Theme

A person who is in right relationship with God will keep his vows to God, and will find his self-identity in Him.



Scripture Reading

Judges 11:1-3, 5-6, 29-35

1 *"Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah.*

2 *"And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou*

shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of a strange woman.

3 *"Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him."*

5 *"And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob:*

6 *"And they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon."*

29 *"Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh...unto the children of Ammon.*

30 *"And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands,*

31 *"Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.*

32 *"So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the Lord delivered them into his hands.*

33 *"And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, {even} twenty*

cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

34 "And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child.

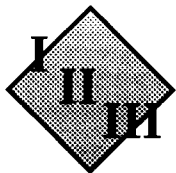
35 "And, when he saw her, he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low...for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back."



Memory Verse

Ecclesiastes 5:4

"When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed."



Outline

I. Jephthah's Response to Rejection.

A. Jephthah.

1. His father was an important, successful man.
2. His mother was a prostitute.

3. Jephthah was an illegitimate son -- the product of adultery.
4. The other sons rejected him.
5. He had no inheritance and no good name.

B. His response.

1. He was very competitive, and he became a hardened man.
2. He ran away from home.

C. Jephthah joins a street gang.

1. "...A companion of fools shall be destroyed." (Proverbs 13:20)
2. Proverbs 1 (the lure of wrong friends).
3. Street gangs are the result of the breakdown of the family in a society.
4. Gangs fill the need to belong, the need to have the security of authority and discipline, and the need for acceptance, all of which should be met by a strong family.

II. Self-Esteem.

A. Poor self-image.

1. We tend to feel devalued as a person, when other people reject us.
2. We tend to associate our self-image with what other people have done to us.
3. Jephthah had a desperate need for acceptance and success, because he was rejected by his family.
4. Jephthah had low self-esteem; and he suffered a disadvantage in life, because of his father's sin.
5. If you have been abused or misused by an adult, you need to understand that it was not your fault.

- a. We can be affected and hurt by the sins of other people.
- b. We need to forgive; and we need to trust our lives into God's ultimate care.

B. Low self-esteem caused by:

- 1. Rejection.
- 2. Sins committed against you by people you trust.
- 3. Your own failures.
- 4. Not receiving God's grace in your life.

C. The world's solution.

- 1. Focus on yourself and on how develop a sense of self-importance.
- 2. Build pride and independence.
- 3. Self-affirmation; ego-building.

D. God's wisdom.

- 1. Humble yourself under God's mighty hand. (1 Peter 5:6)
 - a. God resists the proud. (1 Peter 5:5)
 - b. God gives grace (His strength, favor, and help) to the humble.
- 2. Develop self-acceptance.
 - a. Know that you are created, loved, redeemed, and called by God.
 - b. Accept the things you cannot change as opportunities to build character and compassion.
- 3. Exalt and esteem God.
 - a. Magnify the Lord. (Psalms 34:3)
 - b. "Exalt" -- "To honor; lift up."

III. Jephthah's Rash Vow.

A. Jephthah was asked to be the leader.

- 1. He did not need to join the evil young men.

- 2. He had ability that was finally recognized.

B. Jephthah made a foolish vow to God.

- 1. He made a deal with God.
- 2. We should always let God lead in any covenant.
- 3. Let God tell you what to vow.
- 4. Jephthah took control; and he tried to bargain with God.
- 5. His vow.
 - a. I will offer whatever greets me first at home as a burnt offering.
 - b. If I win the battle against Ammon.
 - c. A burnt offering means a complete, total sacrifice.
- 6. His regret.
 - a. He was thinking that one of his animals would run out to him.
 - b. But it was his precious daughter, his only child.
 - c. He was bound by his foolish vow to kill her as a sacrifice.
- 6. The daughter's response.
 - a. Please let me mourn for two months, because I will not have the joy of getting married and having children.
 - b. Then she came home to give her life, to honor her father's word.

IV. The Importance of Vows.

A. A vow is a serious, binding commitment.

- 1. The expression of a solemn covenant.
- 2. A strong promise that you will do what you say.

B. God always keeps His Word.

1. He is the God Who keeps covenants to a thousand generations.
(Deuteronomy 7:9)
 2. He will never be the One to break the covenant between you and Him.
- C. You should make vows, but very carefully.
1. *"Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God:...."* (Psalms 76:11)
 2. A vow will keep you committed to doing right, even when you do not feel like it.
 3. It is important for people who get married to make a vow that they will never be unfaithful, and will never divorce.
 4. We do not always feel like doing what we should.
 5. A strong vow will keep you from doing evil, if you are a person of integrity.
- D. Today, many people must rely on written contracts, notaries, and courts, because sin makes us dishonest.
1. Christians take vows very seriously; and they keep their word. (James 5:12)
 2. You are as good as your word.
 3. Keep your vows. (Ecclesiastes 5:4-5)

- If you have been abused, misused, or battered as a child, it is not your fault.
- We must see our worth as a person through God's eyes, rather than feeling devalued by a sin-dominated culture, or by sin-dominated people.
- Your eternal value as a person is determined by your relationship with God. If you seek God and walk in His ways, you will have a good name forever.
- It is better to have a good name than riches, because your name will last forever.
- God designed the family to be a place where we are accepted, loved, trained, and nurtured by a godly father and mother.
- It is extremely and eternally important that you always keep your word, especially with God.
- We should make covenants and vows in response to God's direction, and not make deals with God.



Spiritual Truths

- We cannot control the way we are treated by adults who are in sin; but we can decide to forgive, and to not become bitter or depressed.



Lesson Material

Jephthah is a good case study in low self-esteem, which is a vital topic for many young people today. It is a popular term; but there is a right way and a wrong way to handle it. Jephthah handled it the wrong way; and he ruined his potential in life, and ultimately lost his most precious treasure -- his daughter.

Jephthah started life as an illegitimate son. He did not have the advantage of being raised by a godly father and mother. He was conceived in sin; and it was not his fault. Unfortunately, his brothers rejected him on the basis of his disadvantaged birth. It really was not fair to be rejected and lose his inheritance because of his parent's sin; but life is not usually fair.

Jephthah was greatly troubled by his lot in life, and was crushed by this rejection. What should he do? Remember that Joseph and David were also rejected and mistreated; but they turned to God as their Source, and maintained a humble spirit. Joseph trusted in God's promise; and David became the greatest worshipper in history. God blessed them both with great success in life, and with names that will be honored forever.

Jephthah did not handle it so well. Instead of getting alone with God like David did, Jephthah hardened his heart and joined a gang. Gangs rise in societies where the family is generally weak. Gangs are carnal substitutes for the family. God designed the family to be a place of security and peace -- a place where you belong unconditionally. But with the rise of secular humanism and wickedness in society, the family unit is attacked. Divorce has divided many homes; and sin has caused fathers to focus more on money and themselves, and less on their children. A secularized, mechanized society places less and less value on children, resulting not only in fewer numbers of children, but also resulting in children with poor self-images. Some parents even misuse their children, which tends to cause them to feel that they are worthless. Many physical and emotional problems trace back to devastating childhood experiences, in which a trusted protector became an abuser.

People who lack wisdom react to low self-esteem with the shallow idea that the answer is to build high self-esteem. They will focus on the "You are important," "You are special" routine that is even popular in many churches. But if everyone is "special," then no one is special. There has to be a basis for a positive self-image other than self-promotion. The world teaches people to look to themselves and exalt their egos. We need to teach young people that the key to a healthy self-image is relationship -- first with God, and then with family and godly people.

When we build ourselves up with positive confessions about self, we promote pride -- and pride is a sin. Pride takes credit for that which God and others have done for us, and it focuses undue attention on self. Pride tends to be selfish and ungrateful; and it keeps us from entering into God's presence or receiving God's grace.

Ironically, the best way to gain a positive self-image is not through self-esteem, but through godly self-acceptance. This is the idea that God is great and wonderful, and that He has a plan for our lives. Self-acceptance is the understanding that we are created, designed, planned, accountable to, and loved by our great heavenly Father. Here we focus on God and His purposes; and we find our value in the fact that we are loved by Almighty God. We see our lives as ordered by a great God; and we reject the view of life that we are victims of chance, and circumstances, and people. We attach our self-image to God and His grace, rather than allowing the sin of other people to establish a lack of self-worth. We are special, because we have chosen to give our hearts to God and live faithfully for Him. We are special, because of Jesus in our lives. He is

absolutely wonderful; and He is the source of sublime peace and strong confidence.

Since Jephthah felt rejected, he became a "macho" man; and he turned to a group of vain, selfish hoodlums as a surrogate family. When his abilities were needed by the Gileadites, he said, "I will help you, only if I can become the leader." He had a need to be successful -- to prove himself -- because he did not feel good about himself.

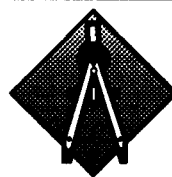
When Jephthah became the leader, God blessed his efforts. He did have special ability. But he became anxious about facing the army of Ammon; and so he made a rash promise to offer the first thing that greeted him at home as a burnt offering. He thought that it would mean the death of an animal. He never considered that the one to first greet him upon his triumphant arrival would be his darling daughter.

Why did God not stop him from sacrificing his daughter, as He had stopped Abraham from sacrificing his son? The difference was that God had told Abraham to sacrifice his son, while Jephthah was the one who initiated the deal with God. It is unwise to do this, because it puts you in a leadership position over God; and God will not give such an honor to a man. God initiates covenant with man; and He offers eternal life to those who respond to His Word, in His way. Jephthah was dishonoring God by cutting this deal, as if God had to be bribed in order to help him out. God is our heavenly Father Who loves us; and He wants our heart, and not just our sacrifices. (Psalms 51:16-17)

When Jephthah saw his mistake, it was too late. He had made a vow to God, and so he had to sacrifice his only child. He knew that a vow means everything, and that a man's word is more important than life itself. You are no better than your

word. If you make a vow, you must keep it. The Psalmist said, "*LORD,...who shall abide in thy holy hill?...He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.*" (Psalms 15:1,4) We need to make biblical vows, in order to help us do what is right when we do not feel like it. But we need to make vows that God prompts, with a servant's heart. Wedding vows are important. People do not always feel romantic, and they do not always feel like talking through their problems. Wedding vows are designed to keep the parties from committing adultery or from becoming bitter toward their partner. It is important to make the right commitments in life, and to have the mentality that you are going to keep your word, no matter what.

One of Jephthah's biggest mistakes was that he attempted to establish his relationship with God on his own terms, according to his own vows. We must remember that our relationship with God can only be established on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus Christ, through repentance and faith in Him. Then, our vows become expressions of our love for, and service to, Him.



Methods

There are two important lessons in the life of Jephthah. In fact, this material can easily be extended into two full class sessions.

The first is about self-acceptance. You need to study the material carefully, in order to understand the difference between self-esteem and self-acceptance.

Also define the concepts of self-worth, and a positive or negative self-image.

Self-esteem means pride. God's word commands us to esteem others, and not ourselves. (Philippians 2:3)

Self-acceptance means knowing who I am in God, and accepting those aspects of my life that I cannot change, as well as taking responsibility for the things I can change. As Christians, our sense of self-acceptance comes from our being *"...accepted in the beloved (Jesus)."* (Ephesians 1:6)

Self-worth speaks of how I value myself in my world view. Again, our true worth is determined by the value that God has placed on us -- the precious blood of Jesus. (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Self-image is a general term for how I see myself. If you see yourself as devalued or worthless, you cannot effectively bless other people or really enjoy life. We must endeavor to see ourselves according to the way that God sees us, as revealed in His Word.

The human nature tends to promote self worth by exalting self over others; but God's Word teaches us to promote self-

worth by being humble before God, and by seeking the kingdom of God. When we exalt God in praise, worship, and obedience, then we can feel good about ourselves, because we identify with Him as our Protector, Father, Lord, and Savior. The key to a positive self-image is the relationships with which we identify.

Men tend to base their self-image on their work and their income, while women tend to base their self-image on relationships.

The second lesson is the importance of vows -- and the danger of making rash vows. We must be people of our word. Jephthah missed it, because in his excessive focus on his own career, he tried to make a deal with God. God wants us to make covenants with Him, but on His terms. He is the Lord, and we are the servants. When we try to manipulate God, we always foul things up. Faith responds to God with trust and obedience; but presumption tries to get God to do what we want to do. Jephthah did not make a vow through faith, but rather, through presumption; and so, God was not obligated to bail him out of his situation. God is only obligated to His Word -- and we can depend on Him for that, for all eternity.

Moses Wrote of Me

Volume 6

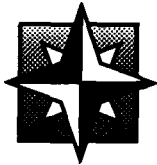
Lesson 24



Bible References

Deuteronomy 18

John 5



Theme

Moses and the prophets of old saw Jesus and gave us many clear images of Him.



Scripture Reading

John 5:39-47

39 "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

40 "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

41 "I receive not honour from men.

42 "But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.

43 "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

44 "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only.

45 "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.

46 "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.

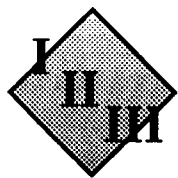
47 "But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"



Memory Verse

John 5:39

"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."



Outline

I. Search the Scriptures.

A. Jesus addressed the Jews who rejected His authenticity.

1. They worshipped the law of Moses.
2. They were so caught up in legalism, that they did not recognize the Messiah, Who came to fulfill the scriptures.

B. Scriptures.

1. "You think you have eternal life in the scriptures."
 - a. Some people think that they have eternal life, because they believe in the Bible.
 - b. Or because they mentally believe that Jesus is God's Son.
 - c. Even demons believe; and they do not have eternal life. (James 2:19)
2. But eternal life is because of a relationship with God, through Jesus Christ.
 - a. Scriptures point to Jesus.
 - b. Jesus is the revelation of the Father. (John 14:9)
 - c. He is the way, the truth, and the life. (John 14:6)

C. "I receive not honor from men."

1. I do not look to people for my sense of self-worth.
2. Your approval or disapproval means nothing to me.
3. I know Who I am in God, and that is what matters.

4. When we know that we are "accepted in the Beloved," then we are free from the fear of man's disapproval, and free to love others. (Ephesians 1:6)
 - a. Look to God for His acceptance and approval.
 - b. Do not attach your self-worth to what other people have done to or for you.
 - c. Self-esteem is not built by exalting yourself, but by exalting Jesus.

II. Moses Wrote of Jesus.

A. Passover. (Exodus 12)

1. The lamb was slain to cover the sins of the people in the house.
2. The blood had to be applied, before the death angel would "pass over."
3. Jesus became the sin offering for the world -- the "Lamb of God." (John 1:29)

B. Sabbath.

1. God commanded Israel to rest on the seventh day of the week (Saturday). (Exodus 20:10)
2. This was a natural picture of the spiritual reality of salvation.
3. To be born again, we must repent from dead works and believe on the completed work of Christ on the cross.
4. Jesus is our Sabbath rest.
5. To try to force the Sabbath laws on New Testament Christians is to go back to the law. (Galatians 3:1-3)
6. We are saved by grace through faith, not by the keeping of the law. (Ephesians 2:8)

C. The Prophet.

1. Deuteronomy 18.
2. Moses foresaw a great Prophet from God, Who would come and teach about God's kingdom.
3. Jesus is the prophet Moses foresaw.

D. Other types of Jesus in the life of Moses.

1. Jesus was revealed in the burning bush.
 - a. He is a "refiner's fire." (Malachi 3:2)
 - b. He is the "Light of the world." (John 8:12)
2. The rock that followed Israel. (1 Corinthians 10:4)
 - a. Moses smote the rock; and water poured out for the people. (Numbers 20)
 - b. Moses smote the rock a second time out of frustration; and he spoiled a type of Christ.
 - c. Jesus was smitten once for all for the sins of the people. (Hebrews 10:10)
3. The door of the tabernacle. (Exodus 26)
 - a. There was only one entrance to the tabernacle, to the east.
 - b. There is only one door to God, and that is Jesus. (John 10:7)
4. The pillar of cloud and fire. (Exodus 13:21)
 - a. Jesus is our Spiritual Covering and Protector.
 - b. He watches over us day and night.
 - c. He is our Authority and Head. (Ephesians 5:23)

III. Messianic Prophecies From the Pentateuch.**A. Genesis 3:15.**

1. The seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head.
2. Jesus did not have a human father. (Luke 1:26-35)
 - a. He was the seed of woman. (Galatians 4:4)
 - b. He defeated Satan (the serpent) on the cross. (Colossians 2:15)

B. Numbers 24:17.

1. The star out of Jacob.
2. The ruler (Messiah) would descend from Jacob.

C. Genesis 49:10.

1. The scepter shall not depart from Judah.
2. An eternal king.
3. From the tribe of Judah.
4. Luke 3:33.

D. The Prophet will come. (Deuteronomy 18:15)**E. The serpent in the wilderness.**

1. When the people looked up to the brazen serpent Moses lifted up, they were saved from the death of the snake poison.
2. Jesus became cursed for us by hanging from a cross. (Galatians 3:13)
3. Jesus referred to the brazen serpent as a type of Himself. (John 3:14)

IV. Moses and Jesus.

A. We see a foreshadowing of Jesus in Moses himself.

1. Moses was a kinsman of the Hebrews.
2. The ruler tried to destroy him by killing all the male babies among the Hebrews.
3. He was miraculously preserved.
4. He was misunderstood and rejected by his own people.
5. He went into the wilderness.
6. He was a shepherd.
7. He was very meek.
8. He heard from God; and he taught the people.
9. God confirmed his ministry with signs and wonders.
10. Moses was God's means of saving His people from slavery.

B. We are all to be "living epistles," and reflections of Jesus in our lives. (2 Corinthians 3:1-3)

a desperate need for self-affirmation from people; and so, you are free to reach out and love them.

- Jesus came to earth as God's love gift, God's revelation, and God's means of redemption and restoration for lost humanity.
- Moses prophesied that Jesus would be the great Prophet who would speak for God.
- The Old Covenant Sabbath was a law designed to benefit man; and it was fulfilled in Christ, Who is our Sabbath rest.
- Jesus is our Rock, our Sin Offering, our High Priest, our Sabbath, our Prophet, and our King.



Spiritual Truths

- The Bible is not our source of eternal life; but it does point to Jesus, Who is.
- There is a "scarlet thread" running through the entire Bible that holds it all together; and that red thread is the blood of Christ.
- The Bible is a verbal image and expression of Jesus Christ, Who is the revelation of God to mankind.
- When you have God's approval and acceptance in your life, you do not have



Lesson Material

Christmas is a time to reflect on God's great love Gift to the world. From the time that Adam and Eve first disobeyed God and required a covering because of their nakedness, God had been preparing the world for the day when He would send His Son to be the "Lamb of God," for the sins of the whole world. (John 1:29) We see the seriousness of sin as man was cast out of the garden (Genesis 3:24); and later, when God sent the great flood to destroy mankind from the face of the earth, because of their wickedness. (Genesis 7-8) We also see God's plan of redemption, as He led Noah to build an ark, which was another picture of Jesus. (1 Peter 3:20-21) In Christ, we are safe from the death that

comes to claim all humanity, as a consequence of sin. (Romans 6:23)

Moses himself was a picture of Jesus Christ, the Messiah from God. Moses was raised up by God for the express purpose of saving the people of God from the bondage of Egypt, just as Jesus saves us from the bondage and penalty of sin by becoming a curse for us. (Galatians 3:13) Moses was called the meekest man who ever lived. (Numbers 12:3) That is, he never demanded his rights. He acted in obedience to God. He was a servant; and God honored his ministry with great signs and wonders.

Moses went out into the wilderness to be tested; and he became a shepherd. He led the people of Israel out of bondage and through the wilderness. Moses was God's prophet and spokesman. He knew God face to face, and was God's personal friend. (Exodus 33:11) Moses led the people through the Red Sea by a miraculous work of God. The Red Sea is a type of salvation through the blood of Christ.

Salvation is not just a ticket to heaven. The Greek word for "salvation" is the same word for "healing," or "wholeness." Many people have the idea that God just saves us from hell, or the consequences of sin. Actually, the Bible emphasizes the fact that Jesus saves us from sin, or the dominion of sin. We are saved from our vain, empty lifestyle. (1 Peter 1:18) We are brought into spiritual wholeness, as we are reconciled to God and set free from the control of the sin nature that had been our master. (Colossians 1:21-22) Eternal life is only one of the benefits given to those who are saved by grace through faith. Sadly, some believe that as long as they are in this life, they are to be controlled by their sin nature as "saved sinners." But God has called us unto wholeness and

holiness. We are "called to be saints." (1 Corinthians 1:2) While we are not perfect, but are subject to weaknesses, we serve a God Who is able to "...cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

After nearly 4,000 years of human history, God sent His only begotten Son to the world. "Begotten" means that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and not by a man. (Luke 1:35) His mother was a virgin (Luke 1:34; Matthew 1:24-25); and so, Jesus did not inherit the sin nature from Adam's race. Jesus was fully human as the Son of Mary (seed of the woman); but He was not carnal. He had a human nature, but no sin nature. (Hebrews 4:15)

Like Moses, Jesus was rejected by the Hebrew people. (John 1:11) The Pharisees, a special dedicated sect of Hebrews, were especially strong in their general denial of His ministry as the Messiah, or promised deliverer. They were very loyal to Moses, to the point of almost worship; but they rejected the One of Whom Moses prophesied. They were very strict in keeping the laws of the Bible; but they missed the primary significance of the message of Moses. They could not "see the forest, for the trees."

Jesus said, "If you really believed Moses, you would receive me, because Moses wrote about me." He also said, "Search the scriptures, for in them you think that you have eternal life." They thought that the laws of Moses were the keys to eternal life. If they could keep the law, then they felt that they could be good enough for God. The problem is that we all fall short of that. We cannot be good enough for God, because we have all sinned. (Romans 3:23) So did the Pharisees. They struggled in their own goodness to give at least the appearance of

righteousness; and they were so busy with their religion that they missed the Master.

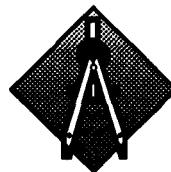
They looked for a Messiah Who would save them from the dominion of Rome. But Jesus came to save them from the dominion of sin. (Romans 6:14) They wanted and looked for a king to conquer their enemies with a display of power (John 6:15); but Jesus came to conquer their hearts with a display of love. They wanted a natural kingdom; but Jesus came to establish a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of true believers. (Luke 17:21) They wanted a king to come in majesty and splendor; but Jesus came in meekness and humility.

When God sent His Son to earth, He came quietly, as prophesied. He came to a mother who was a young virgin of the tribe of Judah in Bethlehem, the city of David, her more immediate ancestor. Jesus grew up, as prophesied, in Nazareth, and was called a Nazarene. (Matthew 2:23) He did not draw people with his natural beauty; but rather, He drew them with His love. And God confirmed His ministry with supernatural miracles.

The Old Testament is really the story of Jesus and redemption. We can see the history of mankind, and particularly the history of Israel and the tribe of Judah. We see how God continually gave natural pictures (types) of Christ, as well as specific and exact prophesies throughout the 1,100-year period from Moses to Malachi. God revealed His ways in creation, through angels and prophets and miracles, and particularly in His dealings with the Hebrew people throughout history.

The Christmas story is the culmination of centuries of promise and prayers, and of hope and anticipation. Jesus came in simplicity as the servant of all. (Matthew

20:28) He came in meekness and gentleness, emphasizing faith and character, and always looking forward to an eternal life in relationship with His heavenly Father and all of His redeemed. God keeps His word; and He never fails. All of the more than 300 prophecies and types of Jesus in the Old Testament came to pass, as promised. We know without a doubt that His second coming to earth will also fulfill all the prophecies of the Old and New Testament, even though, as before, we do not yet fully understand every detail. But we do know that the Bible is undeniably true and wholly reliable; and this same Jesus will come again, as surely as He came at Christmas. (Acts 1:11)



Methods

Examine a model or at least a picture of the first Christmas scene in Bethlehem. What similarities do you see between Moses and Jesus? What differences are there between them? How could such meekness and humility conquer the forces of hell so powerfully? What was God teaching us by this kind of entrance into the world? How will the second coming of Christ be different from His first coming?

Some people like to focus on Jesus as a baby in a manger, because He is less intimidating. What kind of prophetic image did John see of Jesus in Revelation, Chapter 1? Should we think of Jesus as a baby in a manger, or on the cross (as in a crucifix); or should we see Him as our conquering, risen Savior and Lord?

The Magnificat

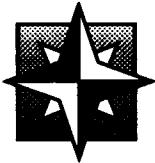
Volume 6

Lesson 25



Bible Reference

Luke 1-2



Theme

Jesus Christ is eternally very God and very Man, the only begotten Son of God, and the Savior of the world.



Scripture Reading

Luke 1:26-35, 38, 46-50

26 *"And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,*

27 *"To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.*

28 *"And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.*

29 *"And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.*

30 *"And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.*

31 *"And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name JESUS.*

32 *"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.*

33 *"And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*

34 *"Then said Mary, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?*

35 *"And the angel answered, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."*

38 *"And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,*

46 "My soul doth magnify the Lord,

47 "And my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour.

48 "For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

49 "For he that is mighty hath done great things; and holy is his name.

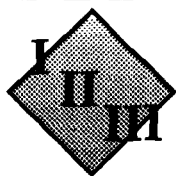
50 "And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation."



Memory Verse

Psalms 92:1-2

"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: to shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night."



Outline

I. The Angel Gabriel.

A. Gabriel.

1. An archangel.
 - a. A high ranking spirit being.

- b. Other archangels mentioned in the Bible are Michael and Lucifer.
2. The highest ranking messenger angel.
 - a. Gabriel is a warrior angel.
 - b. Lucifer was a worshipping archangel; but he fell because of pride. (Isaiah 14)
 - c. Lucifer is now known as Satan, the devil.

B. Gabriel's message.

1. He appeared to a teenaged Hebrew girl named Mary.
2. "You will conceive and have a son."
3. "His name will be Jesus ('salvation,' or 'savior')."

C. Mary's question.

1. "How can that be?"
2. "I am a virgin."

D. "The Holy Ghost will come upon you."

1. "The child will be the Son of God."
2. "Your cousin Elizabeth is also pregnant."
 - a. "Even though she is old and barren."
 - b. She was six months pregnant; and her son would be John the Baptist.
 - c. John's birth was not a virgin birth, but it was a miraculous birth.

II. The Visit With Elizabeth.

A. Mary went to see Elizabeth.

1. Elizabeth was the wife of the priest, Zechariah.
2. The baby (John the Baptist) leaped in the womb.

3. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost when she greeted Mary.

B. Blessing.

1. "Blessed are you among women."
2. "Wow! Did you get blessed!"
3. Elizabeth knew that Mary was carrying the Messiah, the Son of God.

- a. Everyone will know that I am very blessed.
- b. Not exalted, but favored and fortunate.

5. Mary went on to prophesy about the eternal justice of God.
 - a. God is a great Judge over all the earth. (Psalms 9:8)
 - b. He brings down the proud, and exalts the humble. (James 4:6)

III. The "Magnificat."

A. Mary's response to Elizabeth is called the "Magnificat."

1. It was a great expression of praise and worship.
2. She expressed the magnificence of God.
3. She also prophesied the Word of the Lord."

B. Praise plus prophecy.

1. "My soul magnifies the Lord."
 - a. The soul is the mind, will, emotion, and personality.
 - b. Our self-conscious being expresses praise.
 - c. Exalt God with praise.
2. "My spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour."
 - a. Our spirit is our conscience, intuition, and communion.
 - b. It is the God-conscious part of our being.
 - c. Each of us are spirit, soul, and body. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)
 - d. We can only know God with our spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:14)
3. "He has regarded the low estate of His handmaid."
 - a. God cares about humble people.
 - b. A handmaiden is a servant.
4. "All generations (nations) will call me blessed."

IV. The Christmas Story.

A. Joseph.

1. Mary's espoused husband.
 - a. They were already legally committed to each other.
 - b. They would not be physically intimate, until after their wedding. (Matthew 1:25)
 - c. God designed us to be virgins until we are married.
2. When Joseph learned that Mary was pregnant:
 - a. He thought that she had been immoral.
 - b. He planned to divorce her quietly. (Matthew 1:19)
 - c. Legally, he could have had her executed. (Leviticus 20:10)
3. Gabriel paid him a visit; and he learned the rest of the story.

B. Bethlehem.

1. Joseph and Mary were both descended from David.
2. They had to go to their home town to be taxed.
3. It was Mary's due date.
4. There was no room in the inn.
 - a. Jesus never forces Himself into our lives.
 - b. We crowd God out easily, when we focus on other things.

5. Joseph and Mary spent the night in the stable, where Jesus was born.
 - a. Jesus did not come in fleshly glory, but in humility.
 - b. Philippians 2:5-11.
 - c. His first coming was as a "lamb without blemish." (1 Peter 1:19)
 - d. Meek and mild.
 - e. His second coming (soon to take place) will be as the Lion of Judah. (Revelation 5:5)

immediately give all of the honor and glory to God.

- We should praise God with our body and soul, and worship Him in Spirit and in truth. (John 4:24)



Spiritual Truths

- There are different kinds of angels, with different levels of rank and power.
- One third of the angels followed Lucifer in the fall; but God still has twice as many angels as the devil has.
- Gabriel had to let Mary and Joseph know what was happening ahead of time, because this was the only time in history that God would supernaturally cause a woman to conceive.
- Nothing is impossible with God. (Matthew 19:26)
- Mary saw her role as that of a humble servant.
- Mary is not to be worshipped or venerated, because she was only God's vessel; and the glory belongs to God alone.
- When blessed and favored by God, the response of those with wisdom is to



Lesson Material

Christmas is a time to remember God's love Gift to the human race, and to reflect on the wonders of His plan of salvation. It is a tendency of the flesh to focus on symbols and vessels, and miss the true message. When we remember the scenes relating to the birth of Jesus, we should always do what Mary did. She immediately believed and trusted God; and she gave all of the glory to God. She did not focus on herself, or on the miracle. She realized that God was the infinite, all-powerful God; and she accepted her role in the incarnation as a necessary vessel, and not as the center of attention.

It is important for us to emphasize what God emphasizes. Many people have a hard time relating to God, because they think of God as harsh, or hard to approach. There are millions of people in the world who pray to, or even worship Mary, because a mother is perceived as being more sensitive and compassionate. This is a pagan myth. No one is more perfect in love and compassion than God, the Father. Furthermore, God's purpose for us is personal, intimate relationship with Him. God commands us to love Him and to bring every petition to Him. Jesus taught us to pray to the Father in His name. (John 14:13) To ask Mary to be an

intercessor for you is actually demeaning to God, and is contrary to scripture, for there is *"...one God, and [one mediator] between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."* (1 Timothy 2:5)

Mary was a teenager, probably only 15 years old. But she understood the bigger picture in the incarnation. God's purpose in the plan of redemption required a Savior Who was both God and man. Only One Who was perfect and divine could be worthy to pay the sin penalty for the human race, who had all sinned and merited an eternity in hell. (Romans 3:23) Only a perfect man could fulfill the principle of the "kinsman redeemer," as illustrated in the story of Mary's ancestor, Ruth.

In the fall of man, God spoke of the fact that the "seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent." (Genesis 3:15) Every other person has a father, and is the seed of the man. But Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost. He is uniquely the "seed of the woman;" and He fulfilled that prophecy when he conquered death, hell, and the grave by dying on the cross almost 2,000 years ago. Jesus had a unique blood type, because the blood type is determined by the father, even though the baby grows inside the mother. Jesus is the only Saviour of the world, and the only One who could have become our Redeemer.

Mary was a virgin. In today's culture, virginity is widely disregarded; but it is a wonderful gift for anyone to give to a spouse at his or her wedding. It was normal for young people to respect one another enough to limit sex only to marriage; and for anyone to commit fornication (sex before marriage) was a serious offense, because it damaged the spirit of a marriage, and it damaged the lifelong potential for happiness in the

marriage. It was the responsibility of a father to guard the virginity of his daughters. But that is very difficult, in this day of sensuality and lewdness.

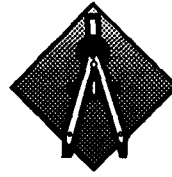
Mary was at first troubled when Gabriel appeared to her; but she was quickly reassured that it was a blessing from God, and so she yielded to God's purposes. Gabriel informed her that her much older cousin, Elizabeth was six months pregnant. This was also a miracle, because she was barren, and very old. God provided a supernatural birth for the prophet John, who was to be a forerunner for the Lord.

When Mary and Elizabeth met for a visit, the Holy Spirit moved powerfully. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and the baby leaped in her womb for joy. Both of these godly women were sensitive to the Spirit and had prophetic insight.

In response to Elizabeth's benediction ("bene" means "good;" "dicto" means "saying"), Mary spoke out in praise and prophecy. She was anointed by the Holy Spirit to speak for God; and she uttered things as prompted by the Spirit. Her response of adoration, praise, and prophecy is called the "Magnificat."

After Gabriel informed Joseph about what was happening to Mary, he became a faithful supporter, willing to bear the reproach of Mary's scarred reputation. People would naturally count the months and assume that Mary had been immoral, or that Joseph had dishonored the marriage by being intimate with her before the wedding. When Joseph learned that she was pregnant, he immediately planned to divorce her quietly. But he believed the angel, even though he did not know at first what to make of Mary's story. Who could blame him?

God worked his plan through Mary; and Joseph was a faithful and loving supporter through it all. They were apparently simple and humble people. They went to Bethlehem to pay their taxes to the Roman government; and they stayed in the stable, when there was no room for them in the inn. Jesus came in the incarnation as a humble servant. ("Incarnation" means "to become flesh.") Jesus conquered death, hell, and the grave in meekness and humility. This is a great life principle. We will never overcome the power of sin in our lives or the pain of guilt, by the strength of our will or the best of our human efforts. We cannot be saved by works. We can only deal with sin by being humble, and by repenting of our sin before God, asking for His grace and mercy. Grace means that we can be changed and saved by God's work for us and through us, apart from our own goodness or power to be clean. (Ephesians 2:8-9) Just as Jesus overcame with humility and meekness, so also we can overcome in life, by surrendering in faith to God.



Methods

Discussion Questions:

In what ways was Jesus like us, in the incarnation?

In what ways was Jesus uniquely different?

Why did the Jews as a nation generally fail to recognize their Messiah and Redeemer when He came, even though He fulfilled all of the Old Testament prophecies?

How important is virginity before marriage, in our culture today?

How important is it to a Christian?

How did Joseph feel, when he learned that Mary was pregnant?

What was Mary's focus when she spoke the "Magnificat"?

What should our focus in life be?

The Importance of Prayer

Volume 6

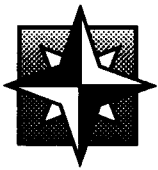
Lesson 26



Bible References

Matthew 6

Luke 18



Theme

It is impossible to live a consistent, overcoming Christian life without an active prayer life.



Scripture Reading

Matthew 6:5-15

5 "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites (are): for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

6 "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

7 "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen (do): for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8 "Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

9 "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as (it is) in heaven.

11 "Give us this day our daily bread.

12 "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

13 "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

14 "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

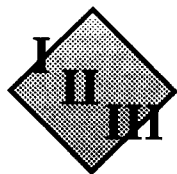
15 "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."



Memory Verse

Luke 11:9

"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."



Outline

I. The Purpose of Prayer.

A. Prayer is not a religious exercise.

1. Hypocrites used prayer to impress other people.
2. Some use prayer to manipulate or preach.
3. Some think that God wants us to pay homage, or to do religious works.

B. God wants relationship.

1. Jesus did not say that the Father seeks to be worshipped.
2. God seeks worshippers. (John 4:23)

C. Prayer is not:

1. Informing God.
2. Impressing God.
3. Instructing God.
4. Getting God to do what we want.

D. Prayer is:

1. Talking to God.
2. Thanking God.
3. Seeking God's face.
4. Looking to God for help and strength.
5. Interceding for the needs of others.
6. Waiting on God with a listening heart.
7. Communing with God in spirit.

E. Prayer brings us into contact with God, so that our will becomes yielded and pliable to His will.

1. It is not to get what we want from God.
2. True prayer enables us to do what God wants.
3. True faith produces obedience, and not selfish gain.

II. The Power of Prayer.

A. Prayer is the way a human being can relate to Almighty God with his spirit and soul.

B. Sincere praying by righteous people produces powerful results.

1. James 5:16.
2. Elijah was a mortal man; but one man's prayers stopped rain on the earth for three and one-half years. (1 Kings 17)
3. Hezekiah's prayer turned the earth back. (2 Kings 20)
4. Joshua's prayers stopped the rotation of the earth. (Joshua 10)

C. God has chosen to allow mankind to go his own way; and He will intervene only in response to the prayers of believing Christians.

1. God requires that we go to Him with our petitions, and not make flesh our first recourse.
2. God requires that we ask with faith and with thanksgiving.
 - a. Hebrews 11:6.
 - b. Mark 11:24.

D. Mustard seed faith.

1. "...If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed,..." Luke 17:6
2. A mustard seed falls into the ground and dies (to self); and then, it can produce life. (Luke 13:19)
3. Mustard seed faith is not small faith; but rather, it is faith that dies to self and has a servant's heart, with no will of its own.
4. Selfish self-willed prayers do not produce results. (James 4:3)

III. The Pattern of Prayer.

A. Prayer is not "saying prayers," or repeating something someone else wrote.

1. That would be worthless, because it is not true prayer.
2. It is ironic that some churches have taken the "Lord's prayer" and have done with it exactly what Jesus said not to do.
3. This is not a prayer to recite, but a general pattern with which you talk to God.
4. "After this manner therefore pray ye:...." (Matthew 6:9)
5. Reciting the Lord's prayer is reciting scripture, but not necessarily praying.
6. You are only praying, if you are talking to God.

B. Jesus set forth the pattern of prayer in His "model," which gave basic

elements to be included in effective prayers.

IV. The Elements of Prayer.

A. "Our Father, which art in heaven...."

1. Acknowledge relationship.
2. Come as God's child, "...boldly unto the throne of grace,...." (Hebrews 4:16)

B. "Hallowed be thy name."

1. Worship God, and bless His Name.
2. There are many Names, or titles, which express aspects of God in His perfect fullness.
 - a. *Jehovah* -- the Lord, Master, Owner.
 - b. *God* -- the Judge of all.
 - c. *El-Shaddai* -- the Breasted One.
 - d. *Jehovah-Shammah* -- the Lord Who is present.
 - e. *Jehovah-Tsidkenu* -- the Lord our Righteousness.
 - f. *Jehovah-Shalom* -- the Lord our Peace.
 - g. *Jehovah-Nissi* -- the Lord our Banner.
 - h. *Jehovah-Jireh* -- the Lord provides.
 - i. *Jehovah-Raah* -- the Lord our Shepherd.
 - j. *Jehovah-Rophe* -- the Lord our Healer.

C. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done."

1. "Kingdom" means "the king's domain."
2. We are part of the kingdom of God when we are "in Christ" and come under God's authority.
 - a. "...The kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21)

b. *"The kingdom of God is...righteousness, and peace, and joy...."* (Romans 14:17)

3. We should seek God's kingdom and God's righteousness. (Matthew 6:33)

4. The expression of His kingdom is that His will is done.

a. If we are under His rule, we will obey Him.

b. 1 John 3:6-10.

D. "Give us this day our daily bread."

1. Petition.

2. Ask God for basic needs.

3. God wants us to pray daily, recognizing that He is our Source for all of life's needs.

E. "Forgive us, as we forgive others."

1. The only way to deal rightly with sin is confession and repentance.

2. God links His willingness to forgive us to our ability to forgive others. (Matthew 18:23-35)

F. "Lead us not into temptation."

1. Ask for God's guidance and direction in life.

2. Base your petition on spiritual goals, rather than just physical goals.

G. "But deliver us from evil."

1. Not "God do not let me have problems."

2. But, "God, deliver me from the evil one (Satan)."

H. "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever."

1. Praise and worship.

2. Focus on God and His purposes.



Spiritual Truths

- Prayer is not saying or reciting prayers; prayer is talking personally with God.
- Jesus taught us to pray to the Father in His name. (John 14:13) We are not told to pray to Mary or to any other intercessor. (1 Timothy 2:5)
- Jesus said "When" and not "If" you pray, because He knows that every person who is genuinely born again will pray regularly.
- If our life is controlled and dominated by the domain of sin and darkness, then we are not walking in the kingdom of God.
- Jesus taught that the kingdom of God is not a place or a time period, but the expression of a relationship in which God is the sovereign King of our hearts.
- The "Lord's Prayer" is not a saying designed to be memorized and recited. It is a guideline for Christians in talking personally with God.
- Prayer is not just petition, but it is also worship, intercession, communion, and listening.
- Prayer is much more a method of bending our will to God's than it is of getting God to do our will.



Lesson Material

It is significant that when the disciples had an opportunity to ask the Master Teacher a major question concerning His ministry, they did not ask, "Lord, teach us to preach," or "Teach us to take offerings," but "Lord, teach us to pray." They had observed His miracles and wisdom and love; and they recognized that the defining distinctive aspect of this marvelous Man's life was His prayer life. Everything else was the result of prayer. They realized that if they could pray like Jesus prayed, then they could live like Jesus lived.

Jesus kept in intimate contact with the heavenly Father through consistent, diligent, sacrificial prayer. It seemed so easy when Jesus confronted a fatal illness, a demon-possessed maniac, or a lifeless corpse. He usually spoke a quiet word, and supernatural miracles occurred. But Jesus had often agonized in prayer, laboring through the night in communion with the Father, laying His will down in total submission as the Servant of servants. He prayed until He had submitted His own will; and in His humility, the Holy Spirit was able to operate freely and powerfully through Him. He seemed to know exactly what the Spirit wanted; and He was very sensitive to every whispered directive. Jesus taught us that the way to an overcoming life was through prayer.

We have a human tendency to focus on the outward aspects of prayer. We listen to people when they pray, and we are sometimes impressed with their religion. Jesus was not saying that it is wrong to pray in public, because we do need to set examples, and lead others in

prayer. We need to pray audibly for one another on occasion. Jesus was dealing with motives and with the personal aspects of prayer, when He said "Go into your closet and shut the door, and pray to your heavenly Father in secret." (Matthew 6:6) Jesus was not interested in religion, which focuses on people. He came to reveal the Father's heart of God, and to let people know that God was looking for those who would know Him intimately and seek Him diligently.

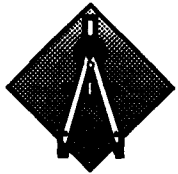
Jesus taught His disciples that the key to effective praying, and thus to effective living, was talking to God as our Father. God's purpose with the human race is personal relationship, and not public displays and religious exercises. When you know someone personally, you do not have to read or recite something to say to them. Heathen gods are impersonal images of stone or wood, and do not respond. People who worship dumb idols are merely going through chants, incantations, or rituals, and stirring up their own emotions. But God is real; and He is not impressed with "vain repetitions." (Matthew 6:7) He wants us to talk with Him.

We do not naturally know how to pray, because we do not naturally relate to God. (1 Corinthians 2:14) We cannot relate to God just with our mind, because He is Spirit, and He is infinite. We cannot relate to God just through our emotions, because they are always changing, and God is not. We can only relate to God with our spirit; and we communicate with God through prayer.

Prayer is not just letting God know what we want. God is not a Santa. God is a real, personal, and present God. He is not there just to give us what we want. God created us to relate to Him forever. Prayer

involves praise and worship, as well as petition. It should always include thanksgiving and adoration. Prayer also involves communing with God in your spirit. Mature prayers include intercession, which is praying for the needs of other people, and praying for those in authority over you. (1 Timothy 2:2) Effective prayer should involve praying in tongues, because our spirit is then praying regarding spiritual matters (1 Corinthians 14:14-15); and the Holy Spirit can direct our prayers, whether in the natural language or in tongues. (Jude 20)

Prayer is absolutely essential to an overcoming Christian life. John Wesley said, "God has chosen to do nothing except in answer to believing prayer." Paul told us to pray without ceasing. (1 Thessalonians 5:17) In Luke 18, Jesus gave an illustration of persistence in prayer. He told about a woman who wanted justice from a judge. She pestered him so persistently, that he took care of it, even though he did not care about her. Jesus said, "How much more will your heavenly Father take care of your needs, when you ask Him?" God wants us to pray, because He wants us to spend time in communion with Him, both privately and corporately.



Methods

Make sure that every student understands the difference between prayer and saying prayers.

Have each student and teacher share a personal need that they would be willing to receive prayer for. Normally, we all tend to mention some relative or acquaintance with a special need, and avoid sharing our own personal need. Certainly some needs might be embarrassing and should not be shared in an open meeting; but sometimes, we mention some relative in a far-off location, when we really do have a personal need. We should "bear one another's burdens." (Galatians 6:2) Do you have a personal request, or a request about someone we all know and can effectively pray for?

What about the tradition of praying for an "unspoken request?" Where do we get that in the Bible? If we are not speaking our request, then why are we speaking it?

Pray a good, anointed prayer before the students, as an example. Give an opportunity for those who need the prayer of the whole class; and have everyone agree together in audible prayer for one person at a time.

Finally, have the students pair up and pray specifically for each other.

You might want to encourage the class to keep a prayer log for a month, listing the people and needs they are praying for, and any specific answers to those prayers.

Learning from Past Mistakes

Volume 6

Lesson 27

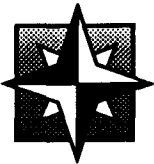


Bible References

2 Kings 18:13-19

2 Chronicles 32

Isaiah 37:17-20,33-38



Theme

We must seek God's will for us in all situations, instead of depending upon our own wisdom and strength.



Scripture Reading

2 Kings 18:13-17

13 "Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.

14 "And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.

15 "And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house.

16 "At that time did Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

17 "And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsaris and Rabshakeh from Lachis to king Hezekiah with a great host against Jerusalem...."

Isaiah 37:14-17, 20

14 "And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

15 "And Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD, saying,

16 "O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubim, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.

17 *"Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God."*

20 *"Now Therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD, even thou only."*



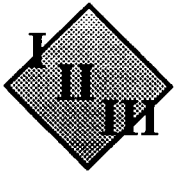
Memory Verses

James 1:5

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

Jeremiah 33:3

"Call unto me and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."



Outline

I. Hezekiah Was a Good King.

A. 2 Kings 18:5.

B. 2 Chronicles 31:21.

C. What determines a good king from a bad one?

1. "Good" kings in the Bible were those who sought God and obeyed Him.
2. Good human qualities are always the result of the presence and influence of the Holy Spirit in one's life.
3. All men who have rejected God in their hearts will ultimately do evil in the world.
4. Evil deeds are the end result of a selfish heart and a godless mind.
5. What we do flows out of what we are.
6. Proverbs 4:23.

II. Hezekiah Encountered a Battle; But He Failed to First Seek the Lord.

A. Hezekiah gives his wealth to the enemy.

1. We always lose, when we look at the situation instead of to God.
2. Satan's goal is to rob us of our natural and spiritual resources.

B. The enemy could not be trusted.

C. God wants us to inquire of Him for direction in all situations.

1. God loves us, and desires to bless us.
2. God's goal is relationship with us.

III. God Encourages the People of Judah Through Hezekiah.

A. Hezekiah and the people acted on their faith.

1. Fear looks at the problem and magnifies it.
2. Faith looks at God and magnifies Him.

3. Fear causes us to defend ourselves.
4. Faith causes us to pray and obey God.

B. Be sensitive to encourage others.

IV. Hezekiah Learned From His Past Mistakes.

A. Hezekiah sought God's will.

B. He asked another believer to agree in prayer with him.

1. He got the prayer support of Isaiah, the prophet.
2. This was a wise choice for a prayer partner.

C. What did God do?

1. God sent one angel to defend Jerusalem.
2. That angel killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in the night.
3. This was very discouraging to Sennacherib; and so, he gave up.

V. Application To Our Lives.

A. Pray with thanksgiving.

B. Pray earnestly -- prayers are not always answered immediately.

C. Seek to glorify God, and not man.



Spiritual Truths

- Seeking God first puts us in a position to receive blessing.
- God orders our steps and brings good out of difficult circumstances.
- Many of the dangerous situations in our lives are the result of our own spiritual indifference and neglect.
- Prayer is greatly enhanced, when we pray with other believers in one accord.
- Satan will always seek to discourage you, for you are more easily conquered when you are discouraged.
- The most effective prayers are those motivated by a desire to see God honored and glorified, rather than those motivated by selfish gain.
- Assyria conquered northern Israel, because the people did not turn to the Lord; but God delivered Judah, when the king and the people prayed.
- One angel from God, under God's authority, is mightier than a whole multitude of problems.



Lesson Material

Hezekiah was the king of Judah. He was a good king, in so much that 2 Kings 18:5 says that there were none like Hezekiah among the kings of Judah, neither before nor after him. 2 Chronicles 31:21 says that Hezekiah worked and sought God with all his heart; and he prospered.

When we determine to serve God with all of our hearts, God will make us prosper. However, God does allow us to be tested and have battles in our lives, in order to accomplish His purpose.

Read 2 Kings 18:13-19. We see that Hezekiah faced a battle, but as a result of it, he learned to depend upon God, instead of upon his own strength. God works the same way with us today.

Read 2 Chronicles 32:1-2. What was Hezekiah to do? The Assyrians were again preparing to capture the capital city, Jerusalem. Hezekiah had been through a battle like this before, as we read in 2 Kings 18. He had already given Sennacherib, the mighty and terrible king of Assyria, the entire wealth from his palace, treasures, and God's temple. They had even stripped the gold from the doors; but still, the enemy was threatening to take them prisoner. What was Hezekiah to do now? He had nothing more to give.

What had he done wrong? Hezekiah had failed to inquire of the Lord before he faced the enemy; and he had willingly surrendered everything that God had allowed him to accumulate over the years.

God wants us to inquire of Him in all matters of importance. (Give examples: our friends, classes, purchases, giving, dating, etc.) Throughout the Bible, kings (good kings) lost battles, because they failed to inquire of the Lord. When they asked God, "Should we pursue?" God responded, "Pursue, and I will deliver the enemy into your hand" -- when that was His will.

Read 2 Chronicles 32:7-8. God gave a word of encouragement to the people of Judah through King Hezekiah. When we are in a battle in our own lives, God often gives us encouragement through His Word or through a fellow Christian. We must be sensitive to let God use us to encourage someone in their time of trouble.

Read 2 Chronicles 32:17-18. Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, sent his army leader to try to discourage the people of Judah. He tried to make them doubt that their God would deliver them from his mighty army. The devil continually tries to do the same thing to God's children, today. He will say, "You cannot make it. You will fail. You are no good. God will not help you." We need to know the devil's tactics, and not let him destroy our faith. (2 Corinthians 2:11)

Let us see what Hezekiah did. He took the letter to the temple of God. He had acted on his own strength in the previous battle; and he had lost everything. This time, Hezekiah went straight to God with his problem -- which is exactly what God wants us to do.

Hezekiah did not seek God alone. He asked Isaiah, the prophet of God, to agree in prayer with him. Here is another lesson for us, showing us to agree together with another believer in prayer. Matthew 18:19-20 says:

"...that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

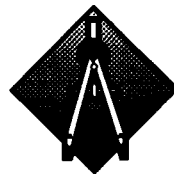
"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16)

We urge you to pray together. Seek God's will and direction. One reason that God has brought us together is so that we can benefit from having God's people pray with us about our needs and concerns. Always be ready to pray with other believers; and never be hesitant to ask another believer for prayer. God answers prayer; and we can believe God together for an answer to each need.

Read Isaiah 37:17-20. Note: He prayed, "O Lord our God." He made an open confession that the Lord was his God. Also note that Hezekiah asked that God would receive the glory from the victory, rather than man receiving the glory. Hezekiah said, "That all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone are the Lord." (Because this event is recorded in the Bible, the kingdoms of the earth were able to learn about it. Little did Hezekiah know how it would come to pass.)

Read Isaiah 37:33-38. See how much better it was for Hezekiah to seek the Lord in his trouble. God wants us to learn the same lesson. It is God, and only God, Who holds our world together (Colossians 1:17); and the sooner we learn that, the better off we will be! Colossians 4:2 exhorts us to pray earnestly, continually, and with thanksgiving. God orders our steps (Psalms 37:23); and He makes good come out of disaster! (Romans 8:28)

Seeking God first puts us in a position to receive blessing. (Matthew 6:33) God loves to turn the devils' threats into victory for His children.



Methods

Since there are a number of different scripture passages suggested in this lesson, it might be good to have the students each read one of the small sections. Be aware that there may be one or two in the class who have difficulty reading for one reason or another; and they might be embarrassed, if they are called on in a group to read anything. There are a few ways to encourage public reading, while avoiding this problem. First, you should always ask for volunteers to read, if they are expected to read on the spur of the moment. Secondly, ask the students to prepare ahead of time, assigning a specific scripture to read during the next class. If a student has trouble reading, he may get coaching at home with a parent.

With regard to Hezekiah, discuss ways to relate to him as a historical figure. You may note that some Bible characters are portrayed in only a positive light, while others are complete scoundrels. Hezekiah is a good person to study, because he was a good man at heart, but some of the things he did were really foolish. He was a good man who made some serious blunders. Study the life of Hezekiah, who is mentioned in several books of the Bible; and note the good and the evil deeds in his life. What caused his successes? What caused his failures? How can we learn

from his life, to help us avoid making the mistakes he made?

Encourage the students to always take their needs to God in prayer, whether

alone, or in agreement with another believer. Remind them of God's faithfulness and ability to supply every need. Encourage students to share testimonies of answered prayer.

Final Exam

Volume 6

Lesson 28



Bible References

Luke 19

Matthew 25

15 "And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

16 "Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

17 "And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

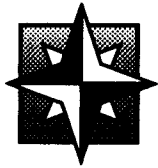
18 "But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

19 "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

20 "And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

21 "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

24 "Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strowed:



Theme

As Christians, we have an eternal perspective, which includes the realization that life on earth is preparation for eternity.



Scripture Reading

Matthew 25:14-21, 24-28, 30

14 "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

25 "And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, {there} thou hast {that is} thine.

26 "His lord answered...thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strowed:

27 "Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have receive mine own with usury.

28 "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents."

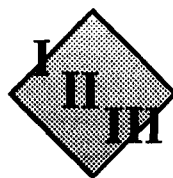
30 "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."



Memory Verse

2 Peter 3:11-12

"Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God,...."



Outline

I. The Purpose of Life on Planet Earth.

A. Secular humanist view.

1. The doctrine of evolution teaches us that life is a cosmic accident.
 - a. Life just happens.
 - b. Therefore, right and wrong are determined by what people think.
2. There is no enduring purpose for life.
3. The goal of life is to have a good time.
4. If it feels good, do it.
5. Since there is no Judge, there will be no final judgment on our lives.
6. Death means either the end of existence, or perhaps the chance to be recycled and come back as a slug.

B. The Christian world view.

1. God created us for Himself. (Isaiah 43:21)
2. Our bodies belong to God. (1 Corinthians 6:20)
3. Jesus purchased our redemption on the cross, so that we can be reconciled to God and be His children forever.
4. We do not own anything in life.
 - a. We are stewards (servants who take care of their master's property).
 - b. Stewards of money, time, gifts, opportunities, etc.

5. All stewards will give an account to the owner.
 - a. All of us will be evaluated by Jesus.
 - b. Giving an account plus evaluation equals final judgment.
6. All Christians will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:10)
7. All unbelievers will be judged after the 1,000 year reign of Christ at the Great White Throne Judgment. (Revelation 20:11-13)
 - a. They will be judged for their works, and for their rejection of Christ.
 - b. They will be cast into an eternal lake of fire, along with the devil.

II. The Parable of the Talents.

A. We are all stewards in life.

1. Jesus is Lord.
 - a. He is the Owner of everything.
 - b. The One who has the right to make the final decision.
2. Nothing we have in this life is really our property.
 - a. We will give an account to Him.
 - b. We will receive eternal possessions in the judgment. (1 Corinthians 3:14)

B. Talents.

1. We are not all equally gifted.
2. We have different levels of ability, potential, opportunities, beauty, and years of life.
3. *"...For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required:...."* (Luke 12:48)
4. Those who do not have much ability or many opportunities will not have to produce as much in life,

in order to be judged faithful.

C. Joy.

1. Those who produced an increase with what they were given received the joy of the Lord.
2. Joy is a product of living for God on God's terms.
3. Some people refuse to serve God because they are "down."
4. They have it backwards.
 - a. They say, "God, give me joy, and I will be faithful."
 - b. God says, "Be faithful, and you will enter into joy."

D. The lazy servant.

1. His excuse: "I was afraid."
 - a. Jesus gave him no sympathy.
 - b. Fear comes from a focus on self; and it is the result of the sin of unbelief.
 - c. God has not given us the spirit of fear. (2 Timothy 1:7)
2. His sin: doing nothing.
 - a. Jesus will judge us according to what we could have done in life.
 - b. *"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth {it} not, to him it is sin."* (James 4:17)
 - c. Many people are deceived into thinking that they are good, because they mind their own business and do not hurt anyone.
 - d. It is serious to stand before God in judgment, having done nothing for His kingdom.
3. His punishment.
 - a. He lost his inheritance.
 - b. He was cast out.
 - c. He was placed in "outer darkness."

III. The Final Exam of Life.

A. We will all be evaluated in life for what we have done.

1. We will be judged for the choices we made in life.
2. We will be judged according to the opportunities we had in life.
3. We will be judged according to our works, and not by what we confess. (Matthew 7:21)
4. 3 John 11.

B. Some questions on God's final exam.

1. What did you do with Jesus Christ?
 - a. When you realized that you were a sinner, did you repent, confess your sins, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation?
 - b. Or did you decide to "be your own person," and resist the convicting Holy Spirit?
2. Did you live for yourself, or did you live to please God?
 - a. Luke 9:23-24.
 - b. Basically, rebellion is a motive to live for self.
3. Did you build your life on sand, or on Jesus Christ? (Matthew 7:24-27)
 - a. Sand -- whoever hears God's Word, and does not do it.
 - b. Sand is fragmented rock (bits of truth).
 - c. Rock -- hearing and doing God's Word.
 - d. The Rock is Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. (John 14:6)
3. What did you do with your spiritual gifts?
 - a. God never gives gifts to us just to make us feel gifted.
 - b. All gifts come with the responsibility to serve others through them.
4. How did you treat people who were hurting?
 - a. Matthew 25:31-46.
 - b. This is the basis for separating the sheep from the goats.
5. Did you live with a focus on God, by faith?
 - a. Hebrews 11:6.
 - b. What motivates your decisions in life -- faith in God, or fear?
6. Are you a worshipper, who worships God in spirit and in truth?
 - a. John 4:24.
 - b. That is what God is seeking.



Spiritual Truths

- It is impossible to be wise and to live a good life, unless you are aware of judgment and eternity.
- If Satan can deceive us into looking at life only in the now, he can persuade us to do evil.
- Our eternal destiny is determined by our response to the message of the gospel: that Jesus Christ died on the cross to purchase our redemption from sin, and to bring us into relationship with the Father through His blood.
- God's grace for salvation is given to all those who repent from sin and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, receiving Him as Savior and the Lord of their lives.
- Grace is free; but it is not cheap.

- The fear of the Lord is based on the understanding that Jesus is the Lord of all, and that we will give an account for every choice made, every deed done, and every word said in this life.
- The Bible was not written to sinners, but to believers.
- The purpose of this one life on earth is to determine our eternal destiny and our position in the kingdom of God.
- Jesus will judge between the true sheep and the phony "goats," by noting the way that they treated people who were hurting.
- The Christian world view is based on the scientific fact of creation. If we are created, then we have a Creator to Whom we will give an account for the one earthly life we are allotted.



Lesson Material

Suppose someone came to you and said, "I have a copy of the final exam; and the teacher said we are welcome to study it. It has all of the questions on it, along with all of the right answers." Would you not like to see that final exam, before you go in and take the test? That is a little like life. Life is an education, which prepares us for eternity. We are all given opportunities and abilities; and when life is over, we will be evaluated. *"...It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."* (Hebrews 9:27) Jesus Christ is the eternal Judge of every human being who has ever lived on earth.

Heaven is the eternal home of those in this life who have acknowledged Christ's Lordship and given their lives to Him as their Savior and Master (Lord, or Owner). Hell was designed for Satan and his angels, who stopped serving God and decided to "do their own thing." All of those among men who have "gone their own way" will be assigned to hell with them, because God is perfect, and He cannot look upon sin. The only way to gain entrance into heaven is to be pardoned from the death penalty by pleading guilty before God (confession of sins) and repenting (turning from sin to serve God), and receiving forgiveness and salvation by faith in God. The primary reason that people, even Christians, have a hard time resisting the temptation to sin is that we lack the fear of the Lord. That is, we live in a time when we are being taught a humanistic world view -- life just happens, self is the center, and the purpose of life is to have a good time. Whenever we focus on the here and now, we will be motivated toward those things that have immediate gratification. Sin always has its reward first, and then the consequences. *"...By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil."* (Proverbs 16:6) The Christian world view looks at life as a preparation for eternity, with Jesus Christ as the Center of life.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul wrote extensively about the resurrection from the dead. He spoke about the difference in destiny between those who live for God, and those who choose to live for self. In the 58th and last verse of this chapter, he uses the word "therefore." A good rule of thumb in reading the Bible is this: When you see the word "therefore," find out what it is there for. It is always a conclusion based on the preceding information. When we study the resurrection from the dead, as opposed to annihilation or reincarnation, what do we

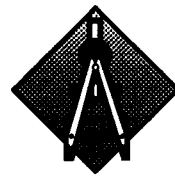
do in response? *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."* (1 Corinthians 15:58) Do all that you can for God in this life. You know that it will pay off forever.

Peter saw a vision of the earth being purged by fire; and this was nearly 2,000 years ago. He said that the earth would be burned up in the day of God's wrath, in the end times. God is going to renew and restore the planet, after a period of great cataclysmic tribulation. The point is that there will soon be an end of the "world" as we know it; and the earth will be different in eternity. Everything we possess in this life is temporary. Therefore, *"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation (lifestyle) and godliness."* (2 Peter 3:11) Do not focus on the temporary. Focus on that which will have lasting value.

Paul said, *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above,...Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."* (Colossians 3:1-2) You determine what your heart (affection) is set on. You will tend to love the people you hang around with the most; you will develop a liking for the music you listen to the most; and you will tend to enjoy those things on which you decide to focus your attention. The world wants you to focus on things, so that you will be a good "consumer" (and buy their products, even if you have to go in debt to do it). God says to focus on eternal values. Cultivate a liking for godly music, good people, wholesome activities, wisdom, understanding, and character. Develop a taste for worship -- a delight in the presence of God. Expose yourself to all of God that you can get; and saturate your

mind with the Word of God. This will keep you focused on eternal values; and it will make the "beggarly elements" of this world (Galatians 4:9) look like the garbage that it really is.

The Teacher has already given us a copy of the Final Exam. It is called the Bible. We will be judged for eternity by the Word of God. The standard will be Jesus, and not our peer group. God tells us what He is looking for; and He gives us enough of a glimpse of the future to know that it is really foolish not to serve the Lord. The problem is that we are headed for the final exam, and we are not all fully aware that we are going to take it. Some of us do not really know what God is looking for in His stewards; and some are trying to live as "Christian humanists" (religious, hoping to go to heaven, but living for self). If you are going to live a full life, live with the realization that it all belongs to God, and that we will give an account for everything. The fear of the Lord is indeed the beginning of wisdom. (Psalms 111:10) If you want to know what is on the final exam of life, just read the Bible. When you are right with God and ready to die at any time, then you are ready to really live without fear.



Methods

The secular world of men has sought diligently in many nations to exclude God from education, law, and public focus. Now, men are desperately trying to battle the crime, drug use, sexual promiscuity, and witchcraft that results inevitably from this spiritual void. Let your students

clearly see the direct cause-effect relationship here. Develop the analogy of the Final Exam; and discuss the implications of the many parables and references by Jesus to principles of judgment. If we can reinforce the truth of creation and the Lordship of Jesus Christ, then we can give people hope and vision,

and the strongest motivation for morality. You cannot lead people away from drugs and sex by focusing on evil; you can only lead them to Jesus, and He will fill the void in their lives and give them positive reasons to abstain. Focus on hope, eternity, the future, and judgment.

Daniel: A Genuine Hero

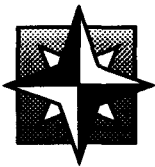
Volume 6

Lesson 29



Bible Reference

Daniel 1-6



Theme

Daniel shows us that by God's grace, we can be happy and successful in life, even if we suffer hard circumstances and abuse by others.



Scripture Reading

Daniel 1:1-8

1 "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.

2 "And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he

carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought of the vessels into the treasure house of his god.

3 "And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes;

4 "Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

5 "And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.

6 "Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:

7 "Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel {the name} of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.

8 "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself."

Daniel 5:12

12 "Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar:"

Daniel 6:4

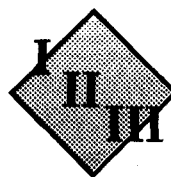
4 "Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he {was} faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him."



Memory Verse

Philippians 1:9-10

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ."



Outline

I. Daniel's Circumstances.

- A. Daniel could have become a bitter man.
- B. Nebuchadnezzar had conquered his people.
 - 1. Daniel's home and nation had been destroyed by the Chaldeans.
 - 2. His family had probably been slaughtered.
 - 3. The better-looking young people were taken as slaves to Babylon.
 - a. Mentioned are Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.
 - b. They were forced to become palace slaves, called eunuchs.
 - 4. These teenagers suffered the loss of home, family, dignity, freedom, and hope.

II. Daniel's Integrity.

- A. Even far from home, in the most negative circumstances:
 - 1. Daniel honored his family's convictions about defiled meats and alcohol.
 - 2. Daniel forgave the Babylonians, and he did not become bitter.
- B. He refused the king's meat.
 - 1. The best slaves were wine and dined with the finest foods, to prepare them to be presented to the king.

2. Daniel and his friends asked for a strict vegetable and water diet.
 3. After 10 days, they were tested; and they were found to be in better condition than those on the rich food.
 4. Discipline and good health habits will give you a natural advantage over those who live on television and junk food.
- C. Integrity comes from knowing that you belong to God.
1. You do right, even if no one is around to see.
 2. Even far from home, Daniel did what was right.
 3. Daniel determined to keep himself pure in heart and consistent in prayer, even though it was unpopular.
 4. The name "Daniel" means "God is my Judge."
 - a. Even if no one else knows, God knows.
 - b. I answer to God for my life; therefore, I will be true to my convictions.
 - c. Even if it costs me my life.
(Chapter 6)
- ### III. Daniel's Excellent Spirit.
- A. Daniel was under ungodly authorities.
1. Nebuchadnezzar was very wicked, proud, and selfish.
 2. Daniel still honored the office; and he was respectful.
- B. Appeal to authority.
1. Daniel appealed respectfully to authority, and disobeyed only when the authority directly contradicted God's Word.
2. Romans 13:1.
 - a. *"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers...."*
 - b. Always obey your parents, teachers, etc., unless an authority tells you to sin.
 - c. When two authorities give you conflicting orders, always obey the higher authority.
 - d. God and His Word are the supreme Authority.
 3. When King Darius made it illegal to pray to God, Daniel submitted to God; and he was willing to give his life, in order to keep his convictions.
- C. Daniel was made prime minister of the world empire.
1. Even when the Medo-Persian empire conquered the Chaldeans, Daniel was given a high office under the new government, because he had such a good attitude.
 2. Daniel was strong in God.
 - a. He had the power to forgive.
 - b. He was sensitive to God; and he could receive words of knowledge and words of wisdom.
 - c. He was respectful of authority.
 - d. He never became proud or arrogant, even when he was given a high office.
 - e. He never compromised his convictions.
 - f. He was disciplined; and he never let his appetites or his ego control his life.



Spiritual Truths

- People do not become bitter because they have been mistreated or abused. They become bitter because they do not receive God's grace to forgive.
- No one can make you bitter.
- No matter what other people do to you, you still have the choice to forgive and be happy, or to see yourself as a victim in life.
- Daniel lived a great life, because he stayed close to God and maintained a good attitude.
- When two authorities give different commands, always show respect to both; but obey the one with the higher authority.
- God is the supreme Authority in the universe; and the Bible is His Word.
- The integrity of your character determines what you do when you think no one else sees.
- Daniel was successful, because he always recognized that God was his Lord, and the final Judge of his life.



Lesson Material

One result of the humanistic reasoning in our culture is the epidemic rise of child abuse. When God and the Bible are taken out of education and public focus, there is a decline in the fear of the Lord. When men do not fear God, there is a great increase in evil. (Psalms 14) Only by the fear of the Lord, do men depart from evil. With the great increase in abuse, divorce, and crime, more and more children are facing hardships that no one should ever have to deal with. Incest is a particularly horrible crime against a child, because, number one, children need to trust their parents; and, number two, they gain their first impressions of their heavenly Father through the lives of their natural fathers. When their father is evil and unworthy of trust, it is much harder for that child to trust other authorities, including God.

Every Bible teacher needs to be aware of the fact that not all of their students will necessarily be in a good situation at home. Many today are from broken or dysfunctional families; and they are in need of special care to guide them to be overcomers. Without some good influence, many of these children will grow up with severe emotional and spiritual problems, unable to trust, to love, or to cope. Many will try to assert their own power later in life, by becoming abusive themselves; or many will react in other negative, anti-social ways, unless someone gives them the right kind of positive influence.

Daniel is a great role model for anyone who has been abused because of sin in the life of an authority figure. Just as David

overcame the rejection of his peers by seeking an intimate relationship with God, so Daniel overcame hardship by being mighty in spirit, even as a teenager. He also maintained his strong commitment to God throughout his long and exciting life, in spite of circumstances that have destroyed many people of lesser character and integrity.

Daniel had suffered great mistreatment by the Chaldeans. His family was probably killed, for Nebuchadnezzar was a vicious mass-killer who had ordered the deaths of great masses of people. He spared the lives of those he considered useful for his own purposes -- those who were young and good-looking and strong and talented. He took them as slaves to Babylon, where they would spend their whole lives serving the king. To the Jews, not being able to live in their own land and carry on their own family lineage was a fate worse than death.

If anyone had an excuse to be bitter, Daniel did. But Daniel always had a good attitude -- and that impressed his captors. The people assigned to oversee him loved him, because he was kind, considerate, and cheerful. No one enjoys being around someone who wallows in a pool of self-pity. How did this teenager maintain such a good disposition?

The secret is in his name. Daniel knew God personally and intimately; and he never lost sight of the fact that "God is my Judge." The Chaldeans gave all of the Hebrews new names, because they wanted to identify them with the world and compromise their convictions. Daniel, although named officially "Belteshazzar," kept referring to himself as "Daniel." In spite of his situation, he never lost sight of who he really was; and that is why he

stayed sweet, even in the most bitter waters of life.

Hebrews 12:15 says that we should be "*Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.*" People do not become bitter because they have been wronged; but they become bitter because they fail to receive the grace of God to forgive. Grace is the power and ability of God in operation in our lives. We cannot be overcomers in life by natural human ability, intellect, or will-power. We need a power beyond our own works. We can overcome only by the grace of God: "*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*" (Philippians 2:13)

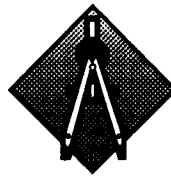
People often compromise in a worldly environment. They do not want to cause people to react to them, so they become "chameleon Christians." They "blend in" at school or at work; and so, no one knows that they go to that "radical" church, where they worship loudly and talk in tongues.

Daniel never compromised. He honored his family convictions; and he refused the wine and anything else that was below his standards. He was not obnoxious or defiant. In fact, he appealed to authority. He said, "I know that you want us to look good, and that is why you want to give us this rich diet. But, let us try this. Give us vegetables for ten days, and see how we do on our test scores; and check us out." Afterwards, they looked better and worked better than those who compromised and indulged.

Here is another principle of life. We are given choices every day. We can make "soft" choices, and relax with all kinds of entertainment and leisurely activities. People who habitually choose pleasure

tend to be less happy than those who choose self-discipline. You will find in life that your most rewarding and happy days are those in which you accomplished worthwhile tasks, rather than the ones in which you sought to have a good time.

Daniel never sought a life of luxury or wealth. He merely determined to keep a good attitude, and live in a way that would be pleasing to God. He lived for the day when he would stand before the Lord and hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." (Matthew 25:23) Daniel never tried to get elected to an office. He had such a good attitude that the leaders kept promoting him. He spent most of his life working in a high office, even though the authorities were heathens. Daniel never sought man's favor. He sought God's favor. But God gave him favor with man; and he became the prime minister of a great world empire. God was able to use him to influence the course of several nations, and to affect world history. No matter what others have done, you can be successful in life if you keep a good spirit, and keep your focus on God and His purposes.



Methods

The story of Daniel is an important lesson for anyone who has suffered because of the sin of someone in authority. Daniel is an excellent role model; and young people today need to become very familiar with him. Daniel is a great hero of faith.

Make the story come alive. Let students identify with Daniel as a real person who suffered real abuse, but kept his faith in the living God and won the respect of the king. (He was not just a spiritual old man who spent a night in the lions' den).

Let the students know that there is an answer in the Bible for their situation. What do you do, when one in authority is wrong? You do what Daniel always did. First, you appeal with respect and meekness; and, when all else fails, you must be willing to suffer for doing right.

Discuss the subjects of bitterness and forgiveness. Let children know they have a choice whether to be influenced by God and by good, or by evil.

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:21)

God the Most High Rules

Volume 6

Lesson 30



Bible Reference

Daniel 4,5,6

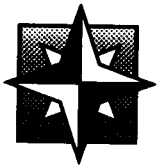
25 *"That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."*

Matthew 23:12

"And whomsoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. "

James 4:6

6 *"But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."*



Theme

The Most High God rules in the kingdom of men. He will exalt the lowly, but the proud will be humbled.



Scripture Reading

Daniel 4:17, 25

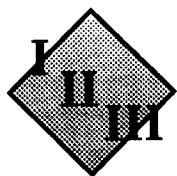
17 *"This matter {is} by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men."*



Memory Verse

Jeremiah 33:3

"Call unto me and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not. "



Outline

I. Daniel and King Nebuchadnezzar.

A. Nebuchadnezzar's dream. (Daniel 4)

1. He saw a great tree in a vision.
2. The tree was cut down.
3. It had metal bands.
4. Its roots remained.

B. Daniel's interpretation.

1. It was about the king.
2. God would cut him down, because of his pride.
3. He would eat grass for seven time segments.
4. God would restore his sanity, when he realized that God was God.

C. Daniel's warning.

1. "Humble yourself."
2. "God will deal with you, if you do not."

D. Nebuchadnezzar's dream fulfilled.

1. Nebuchadnezzar's plight.
2. Nebuchadnezzar's outcome.
 - a. His mind was restored.
 - b. Daniel's God honored.

II. Daniel and King Belshazzar.

A. General situation. (Daniel 5)

1. Security, power, wealth.
2. Evil use of sacred vessels, which had been dedicated to God.

3. He used them for his great party.

B. God's warning.

1. "God has judged you."
2. "You are finished."
3. "You will lose your kingdom tonight."

C. Belshazzar's response.

1. He was so frightened, his knees knocked.
2. But he did not repent.

D. Fulfillment of the warning.

1. The Medes and Persians conquered the impregnable Babylon that night, while the great party was being held.
2. Many Babylonians were killed.
3. Daniel's position elevated.
4. Death of Belshazzar.

III. Daniel and King Darius.

A. Daniel's favor with king.

B. Jealousy of the princes.

1. Plot and devious petition.
2. The pride of Darius.
3. Darius' regret.

C. Daniel's outcome.

1. Trial in lions' den.
2. God's intervention.
3. Daniel's God honored.



Spiritual Truths

- God wants men to know that He is sovereign in the affairs of men.
- God warns people through His prophets and His Word.
- God gives men freedom to choose their way; but unrepented sin will be dealt with.
- God does supernatural acts to get men's attention and to deliver His people.
- God even controls the behavior of animals.
- God hates pride and loves a humble heart.
- Pride focuses on self instead of God, and is, therefore, a form of idolatry.
- If we learn by others' mistakes, we will not have to learn the hard way.
- Those who plan a snare for another will become a victim of their own snare.



Lesson Material

We are told in the Bible to forget not God's benefits. (Psalms 103:2) In this lesson we hear about two kings that did just that. King Nebuchadnezzar had witnessed our God's power first-hand, in the fiery

furnace account -- even to the point of decreeing that no one could say anything amiss about God, or they would be killed.

In 580 B.C., ten years later, he related a fascinating (and puzzling) dream that he had had seven years before. He told how the dream came to pass in his life, being very careful to point out that God hates pride and exalts the humble. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he saw a flourishing tree as high as the heavens and spread out to the ends of the earth. It was laden with fruit for all of the animals; and it provided great shelter. Then, an angel came and instructed that the tree be cut down, scattering the branches and leaving only the stump; and its portion was to be with the beasts in the grass. His heart was to be changed from a man's to a beast's for seven portions of time (seven years).

In Daniel 4:6-24, Nebuchadnezzar made a decree to bring in all of the wise men and magicians to interpret this dream; but no one could. At last, Daniel was brought forth. He listened intently to the dream; and then, he was astonished and troubled for a whole hour, before telling the interpretation. He did not want to tell the king the bad news; but the king urged him to tell, no matter what.

Finally, Daniel said that the tree represented the king. God was saying that the king would be cut down and be driven from men, and would live like an animal of the field in the dew, eating grass until seven years passed over. Daniel then counseled Nebuchadnezzar to repent of his sins and show mercy to the poor.

Nebuchadnezzar, no doubt, was very concerned for a while; but before long, he was committing the same sins. Since judgment did not fall right away, he figured he could go on, and probably

nothing would happen. We also think that way, when we have overstepped our bounds and are out of God's will or our parents' will. We just keep testing the boundaries, hoping that the "hammer will not fall."

One year to the day later, the dream was fulfilled: *"...Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee."* (Daniel 4:30-31)

This was just as it had been told in the dream. God's judgment would be upon Nebuchadnezzar, until he knew that *"...the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."* (Daniel 4:25) Read Daniel 4:33: *"The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws."*

Picture one whole year of Nebuchadnezzar eating grass like an animal, out of his right mind. Picture two whole years, then three, four, five, six and seven. What a terrible thing to go through; and yet, at the end of seven years, God restored his right mind, and he was very willing to say: *"Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."* (Daniel 4:37)

If we do not learn by our own and other peoples' mistakes, we may have to go through a whole awful ordeal ourselves. A little over forty years later,

the king's son, Belshazzar, had to learn all over again Who the real God is. He did not take seriously what he had heard or witnessed about his father.

In Daniel 5, King Belshazzar was feeling secure in his strong, walled city; and he decided to have a great feast of at least one thousand people. They were having a hilarious time, laughing, drinking and eating. Belshazzar thought it would be a great idea to go get the gold and silver vessels that had been taken from God's temple in Jerusalem and use them for his party. These vessels had been made exclusively for worship to our God. Belshazzar and his friends ate and drank and lifted those sacred cups to honor their false gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood and stone.

In the midst of the fun, a terrifying thing happened: *"In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another."* (Daniel 5:5-6)

The king cried out to bring in the astrologers and the magicians and soothsayers; and he promised a gold chain, scarlet robes and the third position in his kingdom to anyone who could interpret the writing on the wall. No one could; they just stood amazed and confused. Then the queen said, *"There is a man who, in your father's day, could interpret dreams and the like."* She was speaking of Daniel.

Daniel was much older now; and he was summoned to interpret. He was told of the gifts he would get for interpreting,

but he said, "Keep the gifts, or give them to someone else; but I will read the writing."

Daniel told Belshazzar of his father, Nebuchadnezzar. He reminded him that when his father's heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was removed from his throne and was as a beast of the field. He remained in that state, until he knew that the Most High God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He appointed over it whomever He pleased. (Daniel 5:20-21) Notice that this is the third time that this is brought up. God was placing great emphasis on His sovereignty over all men.

Daniel then told Belshazzar that even though he knew all of this about his father, he had never humbled his own heart; he had even used the sacred vessels to praise false gods. Then Daniel interpreted the writing: (Daniel 5:25-28)

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

MENE -- God has numbered your kingdom and finished it.

TEKEL -- You are weighed in the balances, and are found wanting.

PERES -- Your kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

The king quickly clothed Daniel in scarlet, gave him a big gold chain, and made him third ruler in his kingdom. That night, the king was slain; and King Darius of the Medes and Persians took over the kingdom, just as the writing had proclaimed.

Darius, the third king in our story, preferred Daniel above all of the other princes and presidents in the kingdom. This made the princes and others jealous.

Is this not the inborn nature of unsaved man? Do you not see jealousy in your unsaved schoolmates, when they do not want another student to have more things or do better than they? These jealous princes tried to find fault in Daniel; but they could not, and so they deviously made a plan (snare) to appeal to King Darius' pride, knowing that most people will tumble, when it comes to pride. They knew that Daniel prayed three times a day to his God, our God. They showed King Darius a plan they had drawn up, proclaiming that if anyone asked a petition of any man or god other than King Darius within thirty days (since King Darius was so great a king), that person would be cast into a den of hungry lions. King Darius, tumbling in pride, agreed; and he signed the petition into a law that could not be changed.

The jealous leaders then spied on Daniel as he prayed to God; and they hurried back to report that Daniel had broken the law. King Darius was deeply disturbed. He was angry at himself, for falling for this sham. He tried every way he could to change that law; but there was no way. He had to summon Daniel, his friend, to be brought and cast into the lions' den.

In Daniel 6:16, The king spoke to Daniel and said, "*..Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.*" A stone was pulled over the top of the den, and it was sealed. The den was probably a deep, narrow pit -- or the lions would be able to leap out. How many of your students have a cat? You know how they can jump, claw and bite, if necessary. A lion is a large, fierce type of cat.

Picture the scene: those lions were hungry, and they no doubt were sniffing at Daniel, perhaps even pawing him a bit

with those huge paws and claws. Their teeth were sharp; and they snarled at each other and at Daniel in the dark, foul pit. If you were in Daniel's position, would your heart be totally clean before God? What great faith you would need to have, when the circumstances spelled certain death!

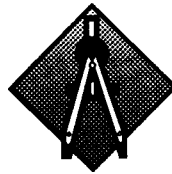
King Darius went back to the palace. He could not eat; he could not sleep; he could not be entertained. Perhaps King Darius prayed to Daniel's God. He was up all night, in misery. Very early in the morning, he hurried to the lions' den; and in a frightened voice he cried, "...O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" (Daniel 6:20) Miracle of miracles, Daniel answered, "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me;..." (Daniel 6:22) King Darius was delighted; and he commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den.

Notice that the lions' mouths were shut by the angel of God; it was not a matter of the lions not being hungry. "And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den." (Daniel 6:24)

Then the king decreed, in Daniel 6:26-27: "That in every dominion of my

kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God,...He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

All of the kings in these stories had to come to the realization that God is sovereign in the affairs of man. They all had let pride be a stumbling block to them.



Methods

Teachers pre-read all of Daniel 4, 5 and 6.

Reflect on these:

Matthew 23:12 -- "And whosoever shall exalt (lift up) himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."

Proverbs 16:18 -- "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

James 4:6 -- "...God resisteth the proud but giveth grace unto the humble."

Proverbs 16:5 -- "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord:...."

Supernatural Salvation

Volume 6

Lesson 31



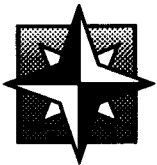
Bible References

Luke 18

Romans 6

Romans 10

Ephesians 2



Theme

Jesus came to earth and died on the cross, in order to save us from our sins, and bring us into an eternal relationship with God.



Scripture Reading

Luke 18:18-25

18 *"And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"*

19 *"And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God."*

20 *"Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother."*

21 *"And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up."*

22 *"Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me."*

23 *"And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich."*

24 *"And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"*

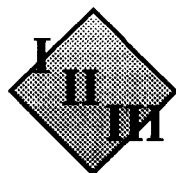
25 *"For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."*



Memory Verse

Romans 10:9-10

"It thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."



Outline

I. Why Do We Need Salvation?

A. We are all born sinners. (Romans 3:23)

1. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, they died spiritually. (Genesis 3)
 - a. They were cast out of God's garden.
 - b. They needed a "covering" for their sin.
 - c. The skins of animals that were slain atoned for their sin.
2. We all inherited the sin nature from our fathers.
 - a. All but Jesus, Whose Father is God.
 - b. We are born with the nature and tendency to be selfish, dishonest, and carnal.

3. Sin.

- a. The ability and desire to do wrong things.
- b. Disobedience born out of selfishness.
- c. The nature to do evil.

B. God is holy.

1. God is perfect, pure, holy.
2. God is so holy, that He cannot look upon sin.
3. Sin cannot enter God's eternal heaven.

C. Hell.

1. A place prepared for Satan and his angels to spend eternity without God's presence. (Matthew 25:41)
2. A place of burning and torment, where there is total absence of:
 - a. Joy.
 - b. Light.
 - c. Peace.
 - d. Chance for salvation.

D. Everyone in the human race is going to hell, unless they are born again. (John 3:3)

E. We need to be saved (rescued) from:

1. Hell (spiritual death).
2. Sin (the power of evil that controls our lives and keeps us from serving God).
3. This perverse generation (the influence of evil around us). (Acts 2:40)
4. Our vain conversation. (1 Peter 1:18-19)
 - a. Saved from a selfish mind set.
 - b. From the sinful lifestyle that we learned in our culture.

II. What Does it Mean to Be Saved?

A. The word "saved" means to "be made whole."

1. It is the same Greek word for "healed."
2. When God saves us from sin, He saves us from the controlling power of the sin nature, and makes us able to live right. (Romans 6)

B. Saved does not just mean:

1. A ticket to heaven.
2. Fire insurance (rescued from hell).

C. The Jews wanted Jesus to save them from Rome; but He came to save His people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)

1. Everyone wants to be saved from hell; but many want to keep living in sin.
2. God's purpose is to have a people who are free and whole.
 - a. Spiritual wholeness leads to practical holiness.
 - b. Jesus sets us free from sin. (John 8:34-36)

D. 1 John 1:9.

1. We confess our sins.
2. He is faithful and just (legally justified) to forgive us our sins.
3. He cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

E. When we are born again, we are not perfect.

1. But we do have a new nature that loves God and seeks to do right.
2. The Bible does not call us saved sinners, but saints (holy people).

3. As sinners, we had to sin -- we were bound to it.

4. As believers, we can walk in God's grace; we are not the servants of sin any longer.

F. Work out your own salvation. (Philippians 2:12)

1. This does not mean that we are saved by works.
2. It means that we have a responsibility to pursue after God, and to enter with faith into our covenant with God.
3. Save yourselves from this perverse generation. (Acts 2:40)
 - a. Protect your heart from evil influences.
 - b. We are responsible to go to church, serve the Lord, and do the things which preserve and promote our spiritual health and well being.



Spiritual Truths

- Sin separates us from God, because God is perfectly holy.
- God does not owe anyone even one chance to be saved, because each of us has chosen to do wrong and to rebel; and we deserve to go to hell.
- The fact that Jesus had to die on the cross is the greatest evidence of the holiness and justice of God.
- The fact that Jesus died on the cross is the greatest evidence of the love and compassion of God.

- Jesus indicated that there are many people who think they are saved but are not, because they have no intimate relationship with God.
- Biblical salvation saves you from the power of sin, and not just from the consequences of sin.
- When you are genuinely saved, you will have a witness in your spirit and an abiding peace in your heart; and you will not need constant reassurance from other people about your security.
- True salvation involves a relationship and a lifestyle, and not just an experience.



Lesson Material

Perhaps the most fundamental questions concerning the Bible and Christianity revolve around our salvation. What is true salvation? How do I know for sure if I am saved and going to heaven when I die? How can I "examine myself," to see whether I am in the faith? (2 Corinthians 13:5) What is repentance? What is faith in God?

First of all, let us establish the principle that biblical salvation does not just mean a ticket to heaven. It involves wholeness and relationship with God; and it results in eternal life. We realize that evangelical Christians use the term "salvation" to denote eternal life; and so, in this study, we will use the term in that sense as well, because they are directly related.

In the story of the rich young ruler, the question is directly addressed about inheriting eternal life. "What must I do to get in?" It seems strange that Jesus would bring up the question of money; but, that was the man's heart problem. He had no problem accepting Jesus; but he did have a problem with his heart. He loved money; and so, he did not follow Jesus. Then Jesus spoke of the fact that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter God's kingdom.

Many people like to point to the gate in Jerusalem called the "Eye of the Needle," where the camels had to go through on their knees, because it was built low to prevent a mounted attack. By this they interpret that Jesus was saying that a rich man could struggle through to the kingdom of heaven. But He was saying that it is impossible for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. "Rich" is not an amount, but an attitude. When we enter God's kingdom, we realize that He owns it all. "Kingdom" means "king's domain." When a man thinks that he owns things in life, the things really own him. The rich young ruler did not need to buy his way into heaven; he needed to give up his idol. For him, it was necessary to surrender his idol, in order to really give his life to the Lord.

We know that it is possible for a person to think he is saved, but not actually be saved. Jesus dealt with that problem often. However, it is not possible to think you are lost, but actually be saved. No one who goes to heaven will be taken by surprise; but millions of souls in hell will be. Many people who called on the name of the Lord will be lost, because they did not have a personal, intimate relationship with God.

In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus said,

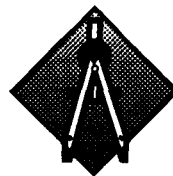
"Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

This is a sobering lecture from Jesus Himself. He speaks of very religious people, who had called on the name of the Lord, and had done many good works in His name. The issue was relationship -- "I never knew you." Of course, God knows all of us. The word here implies intimacy of relationship. Adam "knew" Eve; and she conceived. (Genesis 4:1) Jesus is speaking of the many people who are religious converts -- who think they are saved -- but who do not really know God. They know about God, and they seek to do God's work; but they do not have spiritual life in them. They are lost, and deceived.

What is genuine salvation; and, how do I know I am genuinely saved? This is important -- it is the most important lesson we can teach. In our eagerness to see as many people as possible make decisions for Christ, we often make it easy for people to respond to an altar call. We will say, "Who wants to go to heaven?" "Who will accept Jesus?" According to scripture, it is possible to mentally accept the Person of Jesus and think that we are saved, when we are not. The Jews accepted the principles of God's covenants, but they rejected Jesus as the Messiah of the covenant. What they needed was to accept Jesus. Many people today accept the Person of Jesus, but they do not want to repent of their sins, or change their way of living. We have a world full of people who think

they are going to heaven; but most are not, according to Jesus. (Matthew 7:14)

In many cultures, it is easy to accept the Person of Jesus and to believe that He is the Son of God. But "...the devils also believe, and tremble." (James 2:19) There is a difference between believing in Jesus and believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. "Believing in" is an act of the mind, while "believing on" is an act of faith -- a function of the spirit. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:10) When we believe with our heart, it will naturally result in doing right things. This is an evidence of genuine salvation. We are not born again by doing good works. (Ephesians 2:8-9) We are born again, because we repent and believe. But our assurance of salvation comes when we are enabled by grace to do right. (1 John 3:7) If we continue on in a self-centered lifestyle, bound by the habits and desires we had before, then we need to check our foundation. And God Himself provides us with an inner witness of our salvation -- the indwelling Holy Spirit, who "bears witness" with our spirit, that we are the children of God. (Romans 8:16) Have we had a religious experience, or were we really born again?



Methods

Discussion Questions

What is the difference between a religious conversion experience and the new birth?

How do we know that we are not deceived by another religion?

What is the difference between being saved from hell, and being saved from sin?

Altar call:

We are not to judge one another; but we are wise to judge ourselves. Have I genuinely repented of my sins before God? Have I repented of my self-willed, sinful life; and do I really live for God? Do I love God and the Bible; and is my life really transformed by the grace of God? Am I free to serve God in righteousness, or am I

bound to the same wrong desires and habits that bound me before? Is Jesus the Center of my life, or have I just tried to include Him into my life, so that I can avoid hell?

Prayer:

"Dear God, forgive me of my selfish, rebellious sins. I have grieved your Holy Spirit; and I ask you to forgive me and cleanse my heart, so that I can be free to live for you. I give myself to You without reservation; and I thank You for saving me from sin. I receive Jesus, not only as my Savior, but as the Lord of my life. I belong to you. Amen."

The Doctrine of Salvation

Volume 6

Lesson 32



Bible References

Ephesians 2

Romans 5, 10

John 3

2 *"By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

3 *"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;*

4 *"And patience, experience; and experience, hope:*

5 *"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

6 *"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

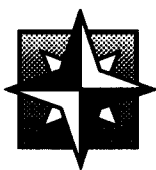
7 *"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.*

8 *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

9 *"Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

10 *"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

11 *"And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."*



Theme

Salvation involves many wonderful aspects, which result in a transformed life and a Christ-like lifestyle.



Scripture Reading

Romans 5:1-11

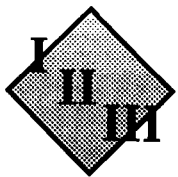
1 *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:*



Memory Verse

John 3:17

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."



Outline

I. What is Involved in Biblical Salvation?

A. Regeneration.

1. Means "born again."
2. John 3:5 -- "Born of water and of the spirit." (Born both naturally and spiritually)
3. Spiritual birth.
 - a. Spirits "quickened," or made alive. (Ephesians 2:1)
 - b. Able to relate to God.

B. Justification.

1. Means to be "made just."
2. Romans 5:1 -- we are justified by faith.
 - a. Made just, by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, our Righteousness. (1 Corinthians 1:30)
 - b. Put in legal right standing.

- c. As we put our trust in Jesus, we are just before God; and it is reflected in our changed lives.
3. Justified by works.
 - a. James 2:24.
 - b. If we do justly, we are reflecting the state of our changed heart.
 - c. We do not get into heaven by works; but we will be judged according to our works.

C. Adoption. (Romans 8:15)

1. We become the children of God eternally.
2. Those who are born again by the Spirit of God become part of God's family.
3. We were "aliens" from the commonwealth of God (Ephesians 2:12); but we are now citizens of heaven, and "pilgrims and strangers" here on earth. (Hebrews 11:13)

D. Sanctification.

1. Means "set apart for God's use."
2. Called to holiness.

E. Redemption.

1. Means "purchased back."
2. As Boaz purchased Ruth's lost inheritance as a "kinsman redeemer."
3. Jesus purchased our salvation with His own blood.
4. 1 Peter 1:18-19 -- Jesus redeemed us from our sinful lifestyle.
5. We are saved from sin, and not just from hell. (Matthew 1:21)

F. Pardon.

1. Legally released from the penalty due, even though we have been tried, and have admitted guilt.

2. Pardoned on the basis of the sacrifice of Christ.
3. If you do not plead guilty, you can never receive pardon for sin.

G. Atonement.

1. Sins covered by the blood.
2. To condone, cancel, placate, cleanse, disannul, forgive.
3. Basis of spiritual justification.

II. Who Can Be Saved?

A. Whosoever will.

1. God is *"...not willing that any should perish,...."* (2 Peter 3:9)
2. We can all make the choice.
3. No one will be able to blame God for sending them to hell.
4. They will be there, because they chose to reject Jesus Christ.

B. All who repent of their sin and believe on the Lord.

1. The Holy Spirit convicts our hearts of our sin. (John 16:8)
2. The Spirit draws us to God and to faith.
3. God gives to every man the measure of faith. (Romans 12:3)

C. Why did Jesus say to the rich young ruler that he needed to give up his money, to be saved?

1. He knew that money was this man's problem, and the one thing that hindered him.
 - a. He accepted Jesus.
 - b. But he was not willing to give his whole heart to the Lord.
2. Many people want Jesus as their Savior, but not as their Lord.

3. Everyone wants to make heaven their home; but most want to "be their own person."

D. To the Jews, God was not the problem.

1. They did understand God's covenants, but they did not receive Jesus as their Messiah.
2. The Jews needed to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 16:31)

E. God's purpose.

1. God is not looking for people willing to go to heaven.
2. He is looking for a bride, who loves Him and will obey Him.
3. God seeks worshippers, and not just converts. (John 4:23)

F. What must I do to be saved?

1. Repent of your sins.
 - a. Turn from living for self to living for God.
 - b. Respond with grief and sorrow over the way you have rebelled against God. (2 Corinthians 7:10)
2. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - a. Not just with your mind, but with the heart.
 - b. Not just a belief that Jesus is God's Son.
 - c. But receiving His sacrifice and God's forgiveness by faith.
 - d. Placing your life in His hands; and giving yourself to God without reservation.



Spiritual Truths

- Religion involves a decision and a conformation; but true Christian salvation involves a relationship and a transformation.
- Salvation is a new birth by the Spirit, based on the finished work of Christ on the cross, and on our response of repentance and faith.
- Salvation involves a new birth, whereby we are made spiritually alive.
- Salvation involves adoption, whereby we become children of God, and citizens of heaven.
- Salvation involves sanctification, whereby we are set apart for God's purposes, and our bodies are dedicated to Him as living sacrifices. (Romans 12:1)
- All true believers are part of the bride of Christ, which is called to love and honor Him forever with great joy.
- The purpose of man is to know and love God, and to serve Him forever.
- God made man for Himself; and He does not want any of us to lose out eternally.



Lesson Material

What does God want? Basically, the message of the Bible is that God wants a people for Himself (Isaiah 43:21) -- a people who are worshippers. (John 4:23) The Bible says that God designed marriage to be an illustration of Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5) As a man, do I look for a woman who is willing to give up her dirt floor hut and live in my palace, or do I want a woman who loves me? God does not seek to fill up heaven with people who want to live in mansions and be wealthy. God wants and seeks a people who will turn from sin to live for Him -- a people who will live for Him, instead of for themselves. God does not seek a people who want to use Him, but a people who will love Him.

Perhaps we are trying as Christian teachers to assure some people of their salvation, when what they need is to be genuinely saved. As Christians, we are still human, subject to failure. When we fail, we need to call on the Lord. We are seeking to live a godly life by His grace. But when someone is full of evil and rebellion -- if he is bound by ungodly desires and habits -- then he needs to check his foundation. In Hebrews 6:1-2, the Apostle Paul spoke of our spiritual foundation as being:

- 1] Repentance;
- 2] Faith;
- 3] Baptisms;
- 4] The laying on of hands;
- 5] Resurrection;
- 6] Eternal judgment.

Many years ago, William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, said, "I

fear the day will come when men will preach salvation without repentance, a crown without a cross, and heaven without hell." What he said came to pass. In our eagerness to be positive, we tend to promise heaven without emphasizing the need for godly sorrow over sin. We do not talk much about confession of sins, or about the fear of the Lord. We wonder why we have so many church kids who are so lacking in the fear of the Lord that they think that they can sin and get away with it. We must not preach grace in such a way as to say "I can sin and get away with it." The Bible admonishes that true grace teaches *"...that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."* (Titus 2:12) If we teach that we can live in sin and get away with it, then perhaps we are *"...turning the grace of God into lasciviousness,...."* (Jude vs. 4)

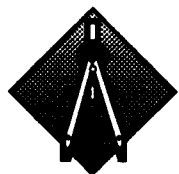
When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, the people cried out, "What shall we do?" Peter replied quickly, *"...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,...."* (Acts 2:38) The first word of the gospel is "repent." In order to be forgiven, we need to confess our sins and turn from our wicked ways. The purpose of God is that people are reconciled to Him, forming an eternal relationship. Before we can be legally justified, we must plead guilty before our holy God, and receive a complete pardon. "Justification" means "to be made just." That is, the penalty for our sins against almighty God has been paid in full by Jesus Christ. If we try to justify ourselves (make excuses, blame other people, etc.), we will be judged on the basis of our sin, which merits the eternal torments of hell. If we confess our sins, God is faithful (He never fails) and just (legally right) to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all

unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9) He not only cleanses our record, but He also cleanses our heart. When we repent and believe on the Lord, we receive a full pardon. He covers us with His righteousness. The record of our sins goes to the cross; and the garment of His righteousness becomes our covering. We stand just and righteous before God, not because of our goodness, but because we received the righteousness of Christ.

Charles G. Finney was a great preacher of nineteenth century America. He won thousands of souls to the Lord in his time; and he was used by God in miraculous ways. Rev. Finney preached about hell and the fear of the Lord, often bringing people to deep sorrow and conviction. When they came to the "mourner's bench" in tears, he would often say, "I am not going to have you pray the sinner's prayer tonight. I want you to think about it now; and if you still want to be saved, come back tomorrow night." It was estimated that more than 85% of his converts went on to become faithful, functioning Christians, and to raise up godly children. What a contrast to the easy pleas we make today, when we have great crowds make "decisions for Christ," and 90% leave to go their own way, seldom even darkening a church door. Perhaps in our zeal to see people accept Jesus, we often fail to bring people to true repentance. We bring them to an experience, rather than a relationship. Jesus told the church to make disciples to Himself, and not just converts to the church.

Genuine, biblical salvation leads to a spiritual, joyful walk with God in this life; and it culminates in an eternity of service to a loving Heavenly Father. Our purpose in sharing this lesson is not to condemn, but to motivate young people to live a transformed life, rather than a grudging,

religious exercise in church activity. We are not seeking to impress some board with our statistics of large numbers of converts. We want to bring people genuinely and wholly to Jesus, and to raise up a godly generation who will carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth in the end times. We do not want a crowd of people who think they are saved; we want to see people transformed by the grace of God into dynamic disciples of Jesus.



Methods

The first priority of every Sunday School teacher is to bring every student to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. We are to teach them to all things that Jesus has commanded (Matthew 28:20), and to give "instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16); but we must first be sure that they have a living, personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jude said, *"And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."* (vs. 22-23) Generally, when you are ministering to people in a heathen culture, or under an oppressive government, you will need to emphasize the love of God. Some people are open and tender, needing only to know that

God loves them. Second and third generation church young people tend to hear John 3:16 a lot; and many of them grow up very protected, and have little sense of the fear of the Lord. They are often the ones who need to be "saved with fear," and need to learn to hate sin. The church in America, particularly, is losing many of its youth in the teenage years, largely because they have no fear of the Lord. They are often convinced that they can live a selfish life of sin and still "make it to heaven," because they have heard countless messages on the love and mercy of God, and know very little about God's holiness. The Apostle Paul served God with all of his heart; yet, he still had a healthy fear of the Lord. (1 Corinthians 9:27)

Do not be afraid to encourage young people to search their hearts and check their foundation. Our goal is to lay a solid, spiritual foundation, and then go on to Christian maturity. (Hebrews 6:1-3)

Make sure you understand the difference between religious conversion and regeneration.

Make sure you know the difference between legalism and the fear of the Lord.

Remember that the reason some people have such a struggle living an honest Christian life is that they may not be genuinely born again. When we are born of the Spirit, there will be evidences in our life. Works do not save us; but they do tend to naturally flow out of a redeemed heart.

The Power of the Tongue

Volume 6

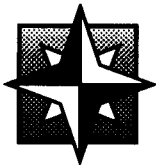
Lesson 33



Bible References

James 3

Matthew 12



Theme

The words which we speak reflect our heart; and they have great power to heal and bless, or to hurt and curse.'



Scripture Reading

James 3:3-10

3 "Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

4 "Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

5 "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

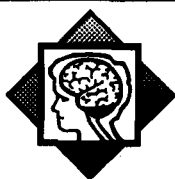
6 "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

7 "For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

8 "But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

9 "Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

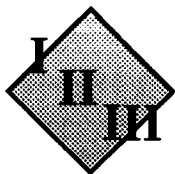
10 "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so."



Memory Verse

Proverbs 25:11

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."



Outline

I. The Tongue Is a Rudder.

A. The tongue reflects the heart.

1. "...Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." (Matthew 12:34)
2. "...The tongue can no man tame;...." (James 3:8)
 - a. You can try to make your tongue speak what you want other people to hear.
 - b. But eventually the tongue will tend to speak according to your heart.
 - c. A foul mouth always indicates wickedness in the heart.

B. The tongue affects the heart.

1. Like a bit in a horse's mouth.
2. Our words tend to influence our focus and opinions.
3. If you decide to speak only positive things about that person, you will tend to have a high opinion of them.

4. What I say about you affects my opinion of you, more than what I hear about you.
5. People who speak positively tend to think and act positively.

II. The Tongue Is a Fire.

A. Characteristics of fire.

1. Fire is limited only by the supply of fuel and oxygen.
 - a. "Where no wood is, {there} the fire goeth out:"
 - b. "So where {there is} no talebearer, the strife ceaseth." (Proverbs 26:20)
2. Fire attacks structure and order, leaving useless rubble.
 - a. Proverbs 26:22 says that the words of a gossip are like wounds.
 - b. Proverbs 26:28 says that a flattering mouth works ruin.
3. Fire spreads in the direction of the prevailing winds.
 - a. Negative talk thrives, where there is a focus on people and things.
 - b. A focus on God and the Bible hinders gossip.
4. Water quenches fire.
 - a. The rain of the Holy Spirit brings life, causing us to talk about Jesus, rather than one another.
 - b. Genuine Christians tend to be "edifiers" (those who build up others and help their reputations).

B. "...How great a matter a little fire kindleth." (James 3:5)

1. A tiny match can destroy a large forest.

2. A tiny misunderstanding or a subtle suggestion can destroy a family or a whole church.
3. It is not the size of the offense, but the way we handle it.

III. The Power of Words.

A. Ways to misuse words.

1. Gossip.
 - a. Sharing personal information with people who do not need to know.
 - b. Trying to build up self by focusing on the faults of others.
2. Slander.
 - a. Sharing information, with a motive to hurt someone's reputation.
 - b. The opposite of edifying.
3. Whispering.
 - a. Sharing subtle suggestions of evil or wrongdoing about others.
 - b. A whisperer causes even close friends to break apart. (Proverbs 16:28)
4. Flattery.
 - a. To play on the vanity of people.
 - b. An insincere compliment, designed to manipulate.
 - c. A focus on physical features, rather than character or accomplishment.
5. Busybody.
 - a. Actually, a busy tongue.
 - b. One who loves to dwell on the private matters of the lives of others.
6. Murmuring.
 - a. Complaints about leadership behind their backs.
 - b. We are to do everything without arguing or murmuring. (Philippians 2:14)

B. The tongue is a weapon.

1. More powerful than a fist.
2. Sticks and stones may break my bones; but words can crush my spirit.
3. Words can also encourage or build up a whole room full of people at a time.

C. Do not be "double-tongued."

1. 1 Timothy 3:8.
2. A snake has a tongue that goes in two directions.
 - a. Serpent -- type of Satan.
 - b. The deceiver.
 - c. Speaks one way to your face, and another way behind your back.
 - d. Insincere, dishonest.

IV. The Power of Names.

A. What are you called by other people?

1. We tend to live up or down to what we think other people expect of us.
2. Negative nicknames or ethnic slurs are hurtful.
3. Rachel and Jacob. (Genesis 35:18)
 - a. She was dying; and she wanted to name her second son "Benoni" ("Son of my sorrow").
 - b. Jacob said, "No, we will not give him a negative name. We will name him "Benjamin" ("Son of my right hand").
4. Do you know the spiritual meaning of your name?
5. Were you named for a good person, whom your parents respected?

B. Expressions of respect.

1. Always address your elders, parents, teachers, and anyone in authority

over you by their formal, family name, or title.

- a. Call the pastor "Pastor," or "Pastor Brown."
 - b. A title ("Officer," "Doctor," "Pastor," or "Sir") may be used instead of a family name.
 - c. It is respectful to use first names for your peers, or for those who are under your authority or age level.
2. Use only nicknames that are acceptable and preferred by the person being addressed.
- a. To label a person by a derogatory nickname is demeaning, unkind, and unchristian.
 - b. Unkind nicknames reflect on the person speaking, and not the person referred to.



Spiritual Truths

- What I say about you affects my opinion of you, more than what I hear others say about you.
- A person who speaks vulgar or profane words is actually defiling his own soul, as well as broadcasting a picture of his heart.
- No one can tame the tongue, because sooner or later, what is really in the heart is manifested by the tongue.
- Some folks seem to get their exercise by running down other people and jumping to conclusions.

- A subtle suggestion of doubt can do more to damage a good name than a loud accusation.
- A fist can damage the body; but a tongue can destroy a whole life.
- The right words at the right time are delightful and blessed, both to the speaker and to the hearer.
- You can change the course of a nation, if you have the power to affect the definitions of words.
- We have great power to edify or tear down, according to the way we address one another.



Lesson Material

The Apostle James was the pastor of the great church in Jerusalem, which had thousands of members. His letter to the church is a classic example of Spirit-inspired wisdom from the heart of one of history's greatest Christian leaders. He had some clear and practical teaching regarding the tongue. Apparently, the early church had some problems with gossip and negative talk among the people.

James 4:11 says, "*Speak not evil one of another, brethren....*" Actually, he said, "*Do not katalaleo ('against, speak') each other.*" The word "evil" does not mean "lies." It means "negative." Note in Exodus that the ten spies with Joshua and Caleb came back with an "evil report." They told the truth about the land and about the great nations in it. But it was an evil report, because it focused on the

negatives and disheartened the people. James was writing to Christians who were speaking about each other and damaging the reputation of each other -- especially the leaders. As Christians, we want other Christians to have the best reputation possible, because they will have a greater ability to influence the lost for Christ. Many unbelievers are persuaded to reject the gospel, because they have heard so much garbage about Christian leaders -- and most of it came from other Christians.

We do need to oppose the false cults like the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses; but we need to be careful to speak positively about the churches which are preaching the Bible and salvation through the blood of Jesus, even though we may have some different ideas about the Holy Spirit, or the Second Coming, or other things. We should highly esteem other Christian groups who love Jesus. They are winning souls; and there will not be a Pentecostal or Brethren floor in heaven. We will all be together.

James was saying that even though the tongue is a small member of the body, it affects the course of one's life and one's attitudes, more than any other member of the body. Some people might disagree with this. They might say, "But I am very objective. I base my opinions of people on what I hear them say and what I see them do. I am a good judge of character." Jesus never said, "Blessed are those who are a good judge of character ('fruit inspectors')." In fact, Jesus said, "Do not judge." (Matthew 7:1) That means, do not think that you can look into peoples' hearts and always know their motives. You do not know what they have been through, or exactly what they are thinking. You can only see the outward appearance. Only God can see the heart. (1 Samuel 16:7)

We can resolve to "speak no evil" of the brethren (James 4:11); but it is even more effective if we determine to love one another, as Jesus taught us to do. We can decide that Jesus put us together in families and church congregations, and that by God's grace, we are going to get along with each other. If there are conflicts and differences of opinion, we should be honest with one another, and clear them up. In Matthew 18:15-20, Jesus taught us that if a brother sins against you (misses the mark), go to him "one-on-one;" and tell him his fault, in private. If he will not listen, then go again, with one or two other people. The idea is that we should not ignore personal conflicts. We need to heal hurts and restore relationships, before we get to the point of turning against one another and damaging the reputation of Christianity.

Love is not just having warm feelings about each other. Love is caring for others and caring about their reputations, as well as their feelings. Love is the distinguishing quality of genuine Christians (John 13:35); and it is always being attacked by the devil. If Satan can get believers to distrust and even dislike each other, then he knows that they will be ineffective in their war against him. Kind words greatly encourage covenant and brotherly love.

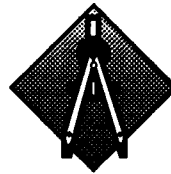
When we speak of the power of words, we have a prime example in the way we address one another. The world today is strongly promoting the use of first names with everyone, in the guise of "friendliness." Humanism is the religion of equality. Everyone strives to be a peer with everyone else, and authority structure is either disregarded or dismantled. But Christianity is the faith of the servant's heart, in which we are taught that each should "esteem others better than ourselves." (Philippians 2:3)

Humanism sees children as "equals" with adults; but the Bible teaches us to respect our elders, because they have more wisdom and experience. "*Honour all {men}. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. [Honour the king].*" (1 Peter 2:17) Parents and other authority figures are very important in our lives; and we will live longer if we honor our parents. (Exodus 20:12)

It is unwise and unbiblical for teachers to encourage students to address them on a first name basis, because they will learn to show disrespect to other authority figures. Do not let the world force you into its mold. (Romans 12:2) There is an anti-Christian mind set behind the current fad of over-familiarity; and we should not get caught up in it. You are not a peer of your students; and you do them a disservice, by allowing them to call you by your first name. A first name basis is fine for peers, friends, and students, but not for those who are in leadership. Teach respect for those who are older and more experienced, because the secular society is blatantly teaching disrespect.

It matters what we call one another. Negative names and verbal abuse can leave lifelong scars; and they should be handled on the same level as physical abuse. Derogatory names should never be used by Christians. We should build one another up, especially those that are "weak." The sin nature loves a "practical joke," which is actually a way of deriving pleasure at the expense of the humiliation or embarrassment of someone considered different, or weak. This is called "folly" in the Bible; and "*folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom:....*" (Proverbs 15:21) Christians are to be encouragers, edifiers, and exhorters. When we find that we

enjoy cutting other people down or reveling in the shame of others, then we should give ourselves a spiritual checkup, and see whether we are "in the faith." (2 Corinthians 13:5) Make it a point to use your tongue to bless and encourage others; and be a positive influence in a negative world.



Methods

Solomon had much to say about the power of the tongue for evil or for good. Have the students look through Proverbs, and see how quickly they can each find a verse or two relating to the tongue (or lips, or words, etc.)

What is the message learned in the verse found?

Why did the apostles have to include instructions to the Christians about being nice to one another?

Is anyone in the class being called by a name that is unpleasant or embarrassing to them?

Is there anyone who would like to apologize to someone for negative name calling?

Why does it matter that we call our elders by their title or family name?

Why does the secular world try so hard to dishonor people in authority?

Sanctified

Volume 6

Lesson 34

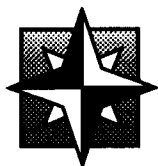


Bible References

1 Thessalonians 4

Romans 12

2 Chronicles 29



Theme

The most joyful and rewarding life that we can live on earth is a life that is fully dedicated to God.



Scripture Reading

2 Chronicles 29:2-9, 11, 15, 27

2 *"And he did {that which was} right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.*

3 *"He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them.*

4 *"And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street,*

5 *"And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy {place}.*

6 *"For our fathers have trespassed, and done {that which was} evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned {their} backs.*

7 *"Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy {place} unto the God of Israel.*

8 *"Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes.*

9 *"For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives {are} in captivity for this."*

11 *"My sons, be not now negligent: for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense."*

15 *"And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came, according*

to the commandment of the king, by the words of the LORD, to cleanse the house of the LORD."

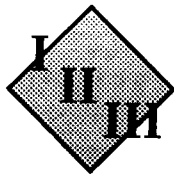
27 *"And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began {also} with the trumpets, and with the instruments {ordained} by David king of Israel."*



Memory Verse

Romans 12:1-2

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."



Outline

I. What Is Sanctification?

A. Hebrew *qadesh* (ko-desh).

1. To be clean.
2. To consecrate, dedicate, appoint.
3. To keep holy, to purify.

B. Greek *hagiadzo*.

C. "Sanctification" means "to be set apart" unto God.

1. I belong to God.
2. Therefore, I am not my own; and my body is not available for acts of moral impurity. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
3. The Holy Spirit lives in me; and He has set me free from the things that defiled my spirit.

II. Hezekiah the King.

A. Sanctified the priests and Levites to the Lord.

1. They were set apart to serve God in the temple.
2. They were full time worshippers and servants in God's house.

B. Sanctified the temple.

1. Cleansed the filth.
2. Dedicated it to the Lord.

C. Burnt offerings.

1. Expression of total dedication.
2. The offering was consumed by the fire, and none of it was eaten by the people.

D. Result.

1. The song of the Lord began.
 - a. Spontaneous, anointed song given by the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Similar to prophecy, in which the Holy Spirit speaks through an individual.
2. Great joy.

III. Is Sanctification an Event or a Process?

A. It is an event.

1. It is part of salvation. (1 Corinthians 6:11)
2. When we are born again, we are set apart for God.

B. It is a process. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

1. We continue to grow in grace. (2 Peter 3:18)
2. We "die daily" to the world and self. (1 Corinthians 15:31)
3. We "purify ourselves" because of the hope of the coming of Christ. (1 John 3:3)

IV. Who Sanctifies Us?

A. God sanctifies us.

1. 1 Thessalonians 5:23.
2. John 17:17.

B. Jesus Christ sanctifies us.

1. Hebrews 13:12.
2. Ephesians 5:26 -- "...with the washing of water by the word."

C. We are sanctified by the Holy Ghost. (Romans 15:16)

D. We receive sanctification by faith. (Acts 26:18)



Spiritual Truths

- All those who are genuinely born again by the Spirit of God are sanctified, or set apart, for God's service.
- God, Who is able to forgive our sins, is also able to set us free from the power of sin.
- Our bodies belong to God; and we have no right to abuse them or to use them for unholy purposes.
- Sanctification is part of our relationship of covenant with God; and it is expressed in the purity of our lifestyle.
- The power of sanctification is not legalism, whereby we live by a set of rules, but relationship, whereby we know who we are in God.
- People who are involved in moral impurity have a spiritual problem; and they lack understanding of the true consequences of sexual sin.
- It is by God's grace and truth that we are sanctified, and not by our will or our works.
- Sanctified people are not giving up their freedom to sin. They are gaining the freedom not to sin.
- The closer you get to the source of a stream, the purer the water is.



Lesson Material

Hezekiah was a good king of Judah, even though his father was a very evil man. King Ahaz was descended from David, but he was very wicked. He even sacrificed some of Hezekiah's brothers and sisters to heathen idols, and defiled the temple of the Lord. He destroyed the golden vessels in the temple, and shut the temple doors. Perhaps Hezekiah saw the miserable state of his father and the destruction that his wickedness caused in the nation of Judah. For whatever reason, when Hezekiah's father died and Hezekiah became king, he immediately set about to restore the temple.

Hezekiah told the priests and Levites to sanctify themselves and to sanctify the temple. Now we know that the temple of the New Covenant (or New Testament) is not a physical building, but it is the body of Christ. We are a dwelling place for God. (Ephesians 2:22) The physical church building is a facility for the church in which to gather, fellowship, and worship. We are corporately the temple of the Lord. The physical temple in Jerusalem was a type, or picture, of the true temple, which is us. Individually, our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. (1 Corinthians 6:19) That is, when we are born again, He indwells us. Because He is holy and pure, He overpowers the influences of darkness (when we let Him take control); and He continues to wash our hearts, as we allow Him to flow through us.

There are two important aspects of sanctification that are illustrated in this scene in Jerusalem. First, "sanctification" means "dedication," or "consecration."

The Levites were set apart for God's service. They were not to be builders, or bakers, or shepherds; they were to be servants in the house of the Lord, helping with spiritual worship and activities. Some of them were full time musicians; and some were priests, dedicated to offering up the sacrifices of the people to the Lord.

The other aspect of sanctification is cleansing, illustrated by the cleaning of the temple. They got the garbage and dirt out, in order to present a clean temple to God. This naturally flows with consecration. When we are set apart for God, we are cleansed from the defilement of the world. For instance, in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7, Paul expounds on sanctification, making a clear contrast with fornication (sexual immorality). When we are dedicated to God, we naturally live for Him; and we give our bodies to Him as our "reasonable service." (Romans 12:1) After all, Jesus gave His physical life for us. It is unreasonable to say, "God, I want to go to heaven when I die, but I want to be my own person here on earth, and indulge myself in fornication, drugs (witchcraft), and other evils."

Solomon said, "*{But} whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he {that} doeth it destroyeth his own soul.*" (Proverbs 6:32) Solomon had seen the damage that sexual sin had done to his father's life, the results of which affected the whole nation. He said, "He destroys his own soul." Adultery damages a person, both emotionally and spiritually, because he has defiled the temple of the Holy Ghost.

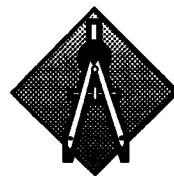
The world is constantly promoting recreational sex, while portraying fornication and adultery as inconsequential. Those who are promoted

as the “heroes” on television and in the movies are constantly enjoying the pleasures of the marriage covenant without the bond of marriage; and there is no disease, pregnancy, broken home, or even guilt portrayed. It all seems so good. But this is a deception, because in real life, there are always consequences. They may not always be caught; but there is always guilt, pain, and the damage to the integrity of the people involved.

It is clear that God is the One Who sanctifies us. The whole Trinity is involved in the work of sanctification; and it is an important part of our spiritual life. God sets us apart for Himself. If we fail morally, the Holy Spirit will bring us to conviction; and we will need to repent and receive forgiveness. When David committed adultery with Bathsheba, the prophet Nathan came to him with a word of rebuke. A year after the deed, God dealt with him. Even though David was humble and repented, there were lasting consequences of his sin that affected many people, and the baby died. (2 Samuel 12) The higher your spiritual office, the more serious the consequences of moral sin, because you affect more people. (Ecclesiastes 10:1)

“For God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” (1 Thessalonians 4:7) Holiness is the opposite of uncleanness; and it is related to wholeness. Why do people indulge in sin? It is always a symptom of a spiritual problem. People do not commit adultery, when they are committed to their mate. People do not give their bodies to drug abuse or drunkenness, when they are full of the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18) People do not lie, when they are walking in the light of the Spirit. Sin is a terminal disease; and it is pictured in the Old Testament as leprosy. The only cure is the blood of

Christ, which is able to cleanse our hearts, as well as our record.



Methods

There are several fine Christian organizations which teach that sanctification is a second definite work of grace, subsequent to regeneration and prior to the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is our understanding of scripture that the initial work of God in sanctifying the believer occurs at the time when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Every genuine believer is sanctified, or set apart for God. As believers, there may be experiences in which God sets us free from some controlling sin, and we enter into a deeper level of dedication to God; but we see this as an ongoing work of sanctification, and not necessarily as a one-time work of entire sanctification.

Also, there are those who strongly emphasize behavioral guidelines in connection with spiritual holiness. When we approach the topic of holiness with a list of “do’s” and “do not’s”, we get into legalism. Legalism is trying to be sanctified by works. It is trying to do in the flesh what God does in the spirit. To understand it fully, we need to see sanctification from the spiritual perspective. “Sanctification” means “set apart” to God. The practical outworking of that is personal holiness, or moral freedom. We should not put our focus on our rules, but on relationship. If we are living a substandard life, let that motivate us to restore the relationship, by placing Jesus on His rightful throne as

Lord of our lives. Law does not save us; but is it a schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ. (Galatians 3:24) Because the law shows us that there is a relational problem in our spirit, it is good. But the focus and purpose of God is still relationship. My conduct will not restore my relationship

with God; but my relationship with God will be reflected in my conduct. You do not have to put laws on someone who is full of the love of Christ. The goal of the teacher is to inspire toward relationship, rather than to beat people over the head with law.

The Church at Antioch

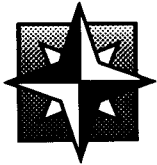
Volume 6

Lesson 35



Bible Reference

Acts 11



Theme

God raised up a great missionary church in the city of Antioch; and He is still doing the same thing today.



Scripture Reading

Acts 11:19-30

19 *"Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.*

20 *"And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they*

were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.

21 *"And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.*

22 *"Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.*

23 *"Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.*

24 *"For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people were added unto the Lord.*

25 *"Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:*

26 *"And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*

27 *"And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.*

28 *"And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.*

29 *"Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea:*

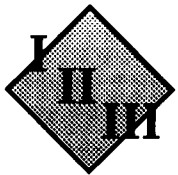
30 *"Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."*



Memory Verse

Acts 11:24

"(Barnabas) was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people were added unto the Lord."



Outline

I. The City of Antioch.

A. A great commercial city.

1. In what is now Syria.
2. On a major trade route, 15 miles from the Mediterranean Sea.
3. Population 500,000.
 - a. The third largest city in the Roman Empire.
 - b. Main street was 90 feet wide, and extremely beautiful.
4. Much wealth, immorality, indecency.
5. The people worshipped false gods and reveled in wealth and sexual

pleasure.

B. The birth of the church.

1. After Stephen was martyred, there was much persecution in Jerusalem.
 2. Christians scattered, and preached as they went.
 3. Jesus had said, *"....Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."*
 4. Initially, the Christians only preached to Jews, because they thought salvation was only for them.
 5. Peter's encounter with Cornelius opened the leaders to the idea that gentles could be saved by grace without becoming Jewish proselytes. (Acts 10)
 6. Some Christian "missionaries" came from Cyprus and Cyrene.
 - a. Cyprus was a large island in the Mediterranean Sea.
 - b. Cyrene was a city in Africa near the coast.
 - c. Lucius was a preacher from Cyrene. (Acts 13:1)
 7. God anointed these Christian leaders; and many people in Antioch turned to the Lord. (vs. 21)
- C. Years later, after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., Antioch became the center of Christianity, with a church of about 100,000 people.

II. Barnabas.

A. A great apostle.

1. Name means "son of consolation."
2. He was known as:
 - a. A good man.
 - b. Full of faith.
 - c. Full of the Holy Ghost.

3. He was evidently gifted in "mercy."
(Romans 12:8)
 - a. He was very sensitive to the feelings of people.
 - b. He was kind and compassionate.

B. Sent by the church in Jerusalem.

1. When the leaders heard about the revival in Antioch, they sent Barnabas there, to oversee the church.
2. It was about 300 miles from Jerusalem.

C. An apostle.

1. "Apostle" means "one sent."
2. There were more than 20 apostles in the New Testament, including the 12 who were personally trained by Jesus.
3. There are 5 kinds of apostolic gifts (anointed church leaders and spokesmen) mentioned in Ephesians 4:11.
 - a. "Apostle" is the first office mentioned.
 - b. Apostles did the work of overseeing churches, as well as pioneering them.
 - c. Apostles were pastors to pastors.
4. The apostle Paul was a "pastor," or "father in the Lord" to pastor Timothy, Titus, and other pastors.
5. Apostles are often called "bishops" ("overseers") today, because they oversee churches.

III. Barnabas and Saul.

- A. Barnabas led the church in Antioch.
- B. He heard about the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

1. He journeyed 100 miles to Tarsus, to get Saul.
2. He knew that Saul (later called "Paul") would be a great help to him.
3. Barnabas had persuaded the Christians in Jerusalem to accept Saul.
 - a. They were afraid of him, because he had persecuted the church.
 - b. Saul was converted by a sovereign work of God on his way to Damascus. (Acts 9)

C. Teamwork.

1. Barnabas and Saul were very different.
 - a. Barnabas was gentle, compassionate.
 - b. Saul of Tarsus was zealous and bold, like Peter.
2. God put them together for balance.

IV. Agabus.

A. A prophet from Jerusalem.

1. A prophet is one who relays a message from God to His people.
2. Agabus was able to see some things about the future.
3. Agabus later correctly told Paul that his life was in great danger in Jerusalem. (Acts 21:10-11)
4. In this account, Agabus was ministering in the church in Antioch.

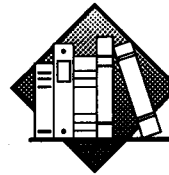
B. His prophecy.

1. A time of great dearth (famine; scarcity).
2. It soon came to pass, when Claudius Caesar became emperor.

C. God warned the church.

1. God tells His prophets when hard times are coming, so that His people will be prepared.
2. Some would rather preach that everything will go well, because that is what the people want to hear.
3. Hard times are coming to the nations of the world, because of their wickedness.
 - a. Make sure your life is solidly built on Jesus Christ.
 - b. Focus on things that are eternal. (Colossians 3:2)
 - c. Be ready and willing to suffer persecution for the sake of the gospel. (John 15:20)
 - d. Work for God. (1 Corinthians 15:58)

- The "Great Commission" is the primary mandate for any Christian church.



Lesson Material

For several centuries, the Roman Empire ruled the known world which surrounded the Mediterranean Sea. The Romans were pagans, who worshipped man-made gods of mythology. The world in the days of the early church was also influenced by the culture of the Greeks, even though the Greek empire had been conquered by the Romans long before Christ was born on earth. The Greek language was still the predominant language, and it was the language used for the New Testament, because it was very precise and more universally used. The Greek culture was very humanistic and secular, as is the culture of many nations of the world today.

The Jewish people in Palestine tried to maintain their culture and religion, although they were virtual slaves of the Romans, who controlled them with large standing armies. Only Roman citizens were given real political freedom and the protection of the courts. The government appointed governors over the different nations under its rule, including Judea. The fact that Saul of Tarsus (the apostle Paul) was a Roman citizen helped him greatly in his travels. Because his mother was Jewish, he also had an open door with the Jewish leaders. These factors were beneficial to his becoming the first missionary in the New Testament.



Spiritual Truths

- God always works and speaks through His chosen vessels.
- Great churches are built on the solid foundation of God's Word and worship, rather than on a man or his work.
- Jesus Christ has gifted the church with apostolic ministry gifts -- apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers -- for the edification of the body of Christ.
- The purpose of apostolic ministry is to prepare believers to do the work of the ministry.

The Jews continued to practice the principles of the Old Covenant; but they generally rejected Jesus Christ, Who brought eternal salvation through His blood, fulfilling all the principles of the old covenant, and making blood sacrifices and the sabbath unnecessary. The believers began to spread the gospel through the Jewish community, because the Jews were the descendants of Abraham. God offered them His covenant first.

But many of the Jews refused to acknowledge Christ as their Messiah; and they regarded this powerful Christian movement as a threat to their culture. Many of them strongly opposed Christianity, thinking that they were doing God a service. They had been instrumental in the crucifixion of Jesus, because the Roman officials really had no problem with Jesus. The Jewish leaders appealed to the courts of King Herod and Pilate, and persuaded Pilate to crucify Jesus as a rebel against Caesar (the emperor of Rome). (Luke 23)

Together, the Jewish leaders and the Roman empire persecuted the Christians in Jerusalem, causing many of them to flee for their lives. One result was the expansion of the Christian church. The Jewish leaders thought that the blood of believers would quench this Holy Ghost fire of revival; but instead, it fueled the flames. Christians moved into all of the cities of Asia Minor and to some of the Mediterranean islands, including Cyprus. They also went to Africa.

After some notable "missionaries" moved to Antioch from Cyprus and from the African city of Cyrene, a great fire of evangelism burned in that wicked city. Many people were gloriously saved from sin; and a strong church developed. It was not a revival, because a revival means that

a lukewarm, complacent group of Christians is stirred up and fired up. This was evangelism, in which multitudes who did not know God became zealous, young believers.

Antioch was a large, prosperous city. The people were generally very hedonistic. They worshipped false gods and reveled in lewd behavior and immodesty. They were part of a "sexual revolution;" and they had no fear of God. When the gospel came to Antioch, the people in general saw their need for a Savior, and there was an explosion of evangelism. Eventually, the church grew to 100,000 in that city.

The church in Jerusalem heard about the move of God in Antioch; and they were led by the Lord to send one of their finest preachers. Barnabas moved to Antioch, in order to provide them with apostolic leadership. Barnabas was highly respected by everyone. Of course, the most important thing in life is God's opinion of you. However, it is valuable to have a good reputation; and only a fool says, "I do not care what anyone thinks of me." The Bible says that *"a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches,...."* (Proverbs 22:1)

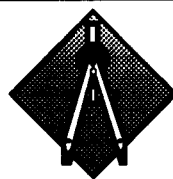
Barnabas went to Antioch and became the senior leader of the church. One of his first priorities was to get the right team together. He traveled to Tarsus, where he talked to Saul. Saul had been a powerful enemy of the church, until he had an amazing encounter with Jesus. Now Saul was even more zealous for God. Saul of Tarsus was not an eloquent speaker like Apollos; but he a brilliant thinker in his day, and he was a great writer. Saul was short, and he probably had some physical problems; but he was totally committed to God and to the gospel. Many of his letters have been preserved as part of the New

Testament scriptures; and so, we are all still influenced by this great writer and apostle.

One important thing for us to realize is that in those days, it was easy to tell the Christians from the world. Those who rejected the gospel lived grossly immoral lives, while the believers lived pure and wholesome lives. It has been rightly said of believers in our day that "the world is getting "churchy," and the church is getting worldly." In the sixties, it was hard to tell the boys from the girls; and in the nineties, it is still hard to tell the believers from the world. Many of them have some of the same vices, use the same words, listen to the same style of music, and dress and act the same. It is sad when people who profess to be Christians look, act, and smell like the people who have no hope. No wonder our message is not impressive to the heathens. They do not see the Christians living any differently than they do.

If we want to win the world, we need to let them see that there is a difference. We can have a far better life; and we do not need their sensual music, their fads, their shallow entertainment, or their vices. We can live clean lives and be full of the Holy Ghost, and have more fun by accident than they have on purpose. Serving Jesus is the most joyful life on earth, because we have freedom from the dominion of sin, the grace of God in our lives, and the peace of God that passes understanding. (Philippians 4:7) We can enjoy the Lord -- but only when we serve Him with our whole heart. To try to be a half-hearted believer is a pain and a bore, because you cannot really enjoy God's presence with sin in your life, and you cannot really enjoy the sin in your life, because of God's presence in you.

The believers at Antioch were dramatically changed; and they were so full of love for one another that the unbelievers began to mock them. They called them "little Christs," or "Christians," because they were so much like Jesus. That really is the heart of evangelism. People do not generally respond to someone stumping on street corners and shouting that they are going to fry in hell; but they do need to see us acting like Jesus, with compassion, care, and love for one another. The more we live like Jesus, the more likely we are to draw people to Him -- and the more we will enjoy our new life in Him.



Methods

Discussion:

When was the last time someone accused you of being a "little Jesus," or saw the character of Jesus in your lifestyle? Why is it better to be a heathen than a mediocre Christian? (Revelation 3:15-16)

Who do you know that is like the apostle Barnabas? Who do you know that is like the apostle Paul?

Claudius Caesar was hostile to Christianity. The governments in many countries today are increasingly anti-Christian. What is the position of the government in your country toward Christianity? How would you really react if you were confronted with serious persecution, with the possibility of real suffering, for refusing to renounce Christianity?

Missionaries on Cyprus

Volume 6

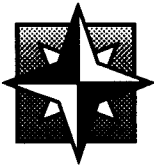
Lesson 36



Bible References

Acts 13

Ephesians 4



Theme

The gospel message is not merely a religious creed with words and ideas. It is the power of God unto salvation.



Scripture Reading

Acts 13:1-12

1 "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 "And when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4 "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

5 "And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.

6 "And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus:

7 "Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

8 "But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

9 "Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

10 "And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou

enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 "And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

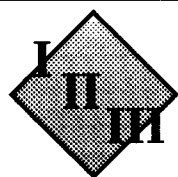
12 "Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord."



Memory Verse

1 John 4:4

"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."



Outline

I. The Ministry Team at Antioch.

A. The church at Antioch.

1. A church with spiritual authority.
 - a. There was a strong, balanced, leadership team.
 - b. All five apostolic ministries were included. (Ephesians 4:11)

2. Smaller churches should be under the authority of a strong, mature church like Antioch.
3. Most small churches today have only a pastor, with no resident apostle, prophet, evangelist, or teacher.

B. The leadership team at Antioch included:

1. Barnabas, a loving apostle.
2. Simeon.
 - a. Called "Niger."
 - b. Latin name, which means "black."
 - c. Apparently he was a black man.
 - d. The church was happily integrated racially.
3. Lucius.
 - a. A preacher from Cyrene.
 - b. Northern Africa.
4. Manaen.
 - a. Had grown up with Herod, the governor (or king) of Antioch.
 - b. Manaen was probably wealthy, and influential with the city government.
 - c. He was like a foster brother to Herod.
5. Saul.
 - a. The apostle Paul.
 - b. A brilliant intellectual, and a zealous believer.

C. Prophets and teachers.

1. Prophets tend to focus on the inspiration of the Spirit speaking through people.
2. Teachers tend to focus on the written, established word. (Greek -- *logos*).
3. Together, they are balanced.
4. Antioch had a large, diverse leadership team.

II. Sending Out the Missionary Team.

A. The preachers fasted, worshipped, and prayed.

1. They "ministered to God."
2. This is an important part of the three-fold ministry of the church.
 - a. Ministry to God (worship).
 - b. Ministry to believers (body ministry).
 - c. Ministry to the world (evangelism).

B. The Holy Ghost spoke.

1. One of the prophets spoke a prophetic word.
2. The other prophets judged the word; and they agreed that it was from God.
3. Prophecy should be judged (confirmed) by other, spiritually mature believers or apostolic leaders. (1 Corinthians 14:29)

C. "Separate unto Me Barnabas and Saul for the work."

1. Called by God to go out as a ministry team.
2. Confirmed (ordained) by established Christian leadership.
 - a. Be careful about following any leader who has not been ordained by an established Christian leadership group or organization.
 - b. The church has a responsibility to protect its people from false leaders.
 - c. There are many who want to "have their own ministry" and be a leader.
 - d. False leaders tend to want to have authority, without being

under authority.

D. Barnabas and Saul went to Cyprus.

III. Ministry at Cyprus.

A. They preached in the Jewish synagogues.

1. They preached the gospel.
2. John Mark was their assistant. (Acts 12:25)
3. When they got back to the mainland, he quit; and he was later restored by Barnabas. (Acts 15:37-40)

B. Sergius Paulus.

1. A high, government official in the city of Paphos.
2. He was a wise man.
3. He invited the ministry team to his estate to talk about Jesus.

C. Bar-Jesus.

1. Means "son of Jesus."
2. Also called "Elymas."
3. Opposed Paul and Barnabas.
4. He sought to convince Sergius Paulus to reject Christianity.
5. He was a sorcerer, who practiced witchcraft.
6. It was a struggle between satanic witchcraft and Christianity.

D. Paul's response.

1. Instead of debating, he rebuked the sorcerer.
2. He cursed him with blindness in the name of the Lord.
3. Bar-Jesus became instantly blind; and he groped around, looking for someone to guide him.
4. Bar-Jesus could have repented; but he did not.

5. The governor was very impressed; and he became a Christian.
6. He was even more impressed with their doctrine. (verse 12)

- We are called not only to preach the teachings of Jesus, but also to do the works of Jesus, by the power of the Holy Ghost. (John 14:12)



Spiritual Truths

- God works through apostolic authority and authority structure, so that the work of the ministry can be accomplished.
- The church leadership team at Antioch was interracial, multi-cultural, and diverse in many ways; and yet, the Holy Spirit united them as one.
- The Holy Spirit speaks through prophets; and when He does, other spiritually mature believers know by a witness in their spirits if the message is clearly from God.
- Those who are chosen and anointed by God to preach the gospel and lead the church will be recognized, approved, and ordained by established ministry leaders.
- Wolves tend to be loners, while true shepherds tend to work together.
- If you confront people who have occult power, you can overcome them, only if you are full of the Holy Ghost.
- Supernatural miracles are confirmations to unbelievers that your message is true, and that they need to be born again.



Lesson Material

Acts 13 gives us a brief, but interesting glimpse into the life of the church in Antioch. It was birthed in supernatural power; and it was exploding with growth, because of the love of the people for one another. There was a vast difference in lifestyle between the heathens and the believers. The believers were so much like Jesus that they were called "Christians;" and the name is still used today. However, not all who claim to be Christians really deserve the title, because it means "little Christ."

Notice the diversity of the leadership team in Antioch. They included black and white men, Jews and gentiles, rich and poor, intellectual, educated scholars and working class folks. They were from different countries, and continents, and different cultures; but they were brought together by the Holy Spirit to be a powerful leadership team of a "church with authority." It became the center of a Christian movement that eventually eclipsed its "mother" church in Jerusalem. Many other churches looked to Antioch for guidance and spiritual authority, because there was a ministry team that had spiritual strength and balance, including apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

Every small local church should look to an "Antioch" church as its spiritual covering. It is very dangerous for a preacher or a local church to be "independent," although in western culture that is a prized designation. Paul later warned the elders in the church in Ephesus that *"...after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock."* (Acts 20:29) Wolves tend to be loners. They distrust established preachers; and they function like Bar-Jesus, in a sense. They seek to draw people out of the church, so that they can have their own church. Sometimes they succeed in getting a crowd; but it will never have God's blessing and anointing like a church which is under balanced, spiritual authority.

It is so easy to think that you have heard from God, because God speaks through our mind -- and so, His voice sounds like our own thinking. How can we know the difference? Well, for one, the Bible is able to discern between "soul and spirit." (Hebrews 4:12) In other words, we can tell if it is really from God, if we know the Bible and have seen how God has spoken to others. God has never changed. If what you hear is appealing to your ego or carnal desires, it probably is not from God. If it tells you to do something that is wrong or dishonest, then it is not from God. The more you know of the Bible, the more you can tell if you are hearing from God (in your spirit) or your own imagination (soul).

The Holy Spirit also speaks through manifestations (1 Corinthians 12), including prophecy. Prophecy is God speaking through a human vessel. While any Spirit-baptized believer can receive a word of prophecy, it will be limited to "edification, exhortation, and comfort." (1 Corinthians 14:3) However, there are

prophets who can give a directional word, but only through a confirmed word. In 1 Corinthians 14:29, Paul gave some instruction on this. He said, *"Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge."* Even a prophet ministers under spiritual covering, so that he will have someone to help determine if it is really a word from God. They can confirm, or "judge" the word. This does not say that the whole congregation is responsible to judge a prophet's words, but that the leadership, and other spiritually mature believers, should. There is safety in numbers. If some well-meaning believer gives you a private, personal word of direction and calls it an unconfirmed prophecy, let them know that you will take it seriously only when God confirms it through your pastor or an established spiritual authority.

When the leadership team at Antioch worshipped, prayed, and fasted together, a prophetic word of direction came through one of them that Barnabas and Saul should go out as a ministry team. The men laid hands on them and sent them out. It is most likely that they not only ministered to them spiritually, but also financially.

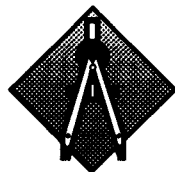
The first stop on the missionary journey was the Island of Cyprus. God blessed the ministry; and they were summoned by Governor Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. He was very open to the gospel. But somehow a sorcerer named "Bar-Jesus" got into the meeting; and he opposed the Christians. He hated God and promoted witchcraft. Today, there are similar enemies of the gospel, such as psychics, witches, New Agers, or others who have been blinded by false cults. There are many types of deception, all designed to get people focused on themselves, pleasure, people,

or religious things, so that they will not turn to God. This sorcerer had all kinds of arguments. He was probably possessed by an evil spirit, which gave him some ability to deceive people.

Paul did not play his games. While the governor listened to this man opposing the preachers, Paul turned to the false prophet and rebuked him. He was very precise and direct. "You are full of subtle lies, you child of the devil. You enemy of righteousness, will you never stop perverting the right ways of God? Now, God's hand is on you, and you will be blind for a time." The same power of God that makes blind eyes see also can make seeing eyes blind. Paul was a brilliant intellectual. He could have debated the false prophet; but he knew that God wanted to do a greater work than that. God caused the man to be blinded, as a sign to the unbelievers present. As the enemy went away groping and stumbling, the government official was convinced. He believed; and he became a Christian. Paul later said, *"But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power."* (1 Corinthians 4:19)

Jesus said that the gospel message would have "signs following." (Mark 16:17-18) Those who are called to minister in heathen cultures (especially those cultures which practice the occult), need to be full of the Holy Ghost, so that they can believe for the supernatural confirmation of their message. It is easy for heathens to believe, when they see the miraculous. Understand that Satan can also work "lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9); and so, you need to be strong in faith. Believers who are full of the Spirit of God never need to fear a confrontation with a demon or a false prophet, because God's power is far greater than the combined forces of the

whole kingdom of darkness. *"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because [greater is he] that is in you, than he that is in the world."* (1 John 4:4)



Methods

Discussion:

Is our church a church with apostolic authority (with a five-fold leadership team), or is it a developing, local church under authority?

Who is the covering and spiritual protection for our pastor?

Discuss the diversity of people among the few leaders mentioned in Acts 13:1.

Should we receive personal prophecy from an individual believer?

How did the Holy Spirit say, "Separate unto Me Barnabas and Saul..."?

What were these men doing, that caused the Holy Spirit to move with a powerful word of direction?

How did Paul win the "debate" with Bar-Jesus?

Does God still give power to us today, in witnessing situations?

Are there demons and false prophets functioning today?

What should we do, in order to prepare for a confrontation with a spiritual enemy?

The First Missionary Journey

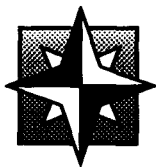
Volume 6

Lesson 37



Bible Reference

Acts 13-14



Theme

We need to learn to handle opposition and rejection, if we are going to serve God with a servant's heart.



Scripture Reading

Acts 14:1-6

1 *"And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed."*

2 *"But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren."*

3 *"Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands."*

4 *"But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles."*

5 *"And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,"*

6 *"They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:"*

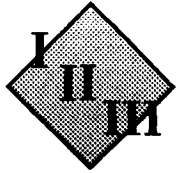


Memory Verse

Romans 12:3

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly,

according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."



Outline

I. In Antioch of Pisidia.

A. Paul and Barnabas left the island of Cyprus.

1. They went to Antioch of Pisidia.
2. This Antioch was in Asia Minor.
3. It was in what is now the nation of Turkey.

B. They went to the synagogue on the sabbath.

1. The Jewish leaders read the scriptures; and then they offered to let Paul speak.
2. Paul stood up and began to preach Jesus to them.

C. Paul's message. (Acts 13:16-41)

1. He told the Jews that Jesus was their Messiah.
2. Jesus is the Son of God.

D. The response.

1. Many of the Jews believed, and followed the apostles.
2. Also, many Jewish proselytes.
 - a. A proselyte was someone who was not born a Jew, but who chose to adopt the Jewish faith.
 - b. Jews were allowed to take in "strangers" who chose to believe.

3. The next sabbath, nearly everyone in town came out to hear Paul.
 - a. He was quite a preacher.
 - b. This made the Jewish leaders jealous and angry.
 - c. They stirred up the "important" people in town, who threw them out of town.

II. Handling Rejection.

A. Paul and Barnabas had a successful ministry in Antioch.

1. Many people were saved; and they served the Lord.
2. God blessed their efforts.

B. But the Jews were "filled with envy."

1. So they spoke against their teachings.
2. They contradicted everything they said.
3. They cursed them.

C. Paul said that the gospel was for gentiles.

D. The Jews threw them out of town.

E. Paul and Barnabas "shook off the dust" and went on.

1. Jesus taught the apostles to "shake the dust off" when they were rejected by a city. (Luke 9:5)
2. This signifies two things.
 - a. It was a testimony that the city had rejected the gospel, and that God would deal with the people.
 - b. I will not let this affect my joy. I will shake it off and go on.
3. If you are serving God faithfully, and you are persecuted or rejected by people, shake the dust off, and go on serving God.

III. The Apostles in Iconium.

A. Preaching in the synagogue.

1. Multitudes of Jews and Greeks believed.
2. The Jews who did not accept the gospel spoke bitterly against them.
3. They stirred up hatred for the preachers.

B. Spiritual warfare.

1. God allows people to choose to believe or reject the gospel.
2. People who reject the gospel tend to feel conviction (or guilt) when they see others serving God with joy.
3. They stir up their minds against the Christians with negative talk.
 - a. Slander.
 - b. Gossip.
 - c. Backbiting.
4. Demons also help to stir up strife and opposition to the gospel.

C. The ministry.

1. Paul and Barnabas preached boldly.
2. God used them to do miracles.
3. But some of the people still refused to believe.

D. Rejection.

1. The more the opposition talked, the more violent they became.
2. They were actually throwing stones and injuring Christians.
3. The apostles left to preach in other cities.



Spiritual Truths

- It is important to have teams for ministry, because it is easy to get discouraged or overwhelmed alone.
- If God sends you to do a job, He will give you the grace that you need to accomplish what He wants you to do.
- God is under no obligation to help you succeed in a ministry, if He did not call you to do it.
- If you do right and still get rejected by people, shake the dust off of your mind and heart, and go on.
- The goal of genuine soul-winners is to minister Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, and not just to parrot His teachings.
- God confirms His Word through supernatural provision, anointing, and signs and wonders.
- Everyone who is serving the Lord will have some people who hate them -- and it is usually religious people, who hate the most.
- Paul and Barnabas were filled with joy, even though they were severely persecuted by people, because they knew that God was pleased with them.



Lesson Material

The apostle Paul went on three missionary journeys as a Christian leader, before he was beheaded in Rome. At first, Barnabas was the leader. He had seniority. Barnabas was the one who had convinced the church to accept the hot-headed Saul of Tarsus into fellowship and to receive his ministry. Barnabas was a godly, honest man; and he was highly respected. Even the prophetic word which sent them out mentioned Barnabas first. But as their team ministry progressed, things changed. As Saul of Tarsus continued to grow in the Lord, he became known more often as Paul the apostle. Over the course of time, it became apparent that he had a more prominent ministry. How was Barnabas going to handle the fact that Paul was a more notable leader than he was?

Jealousy is the fear of being replaced. As Christians, they had seen the bitter fruits of jealousy and envy in the ugly reaction of the Jewish leaders who did not believe the gospel. Barnabas could have felt that way; but, he did not. He was such a man of grace and integrity, that he stepped back and allowed Paul to become the spokesman and leader of the team. The team of Barnabas and Saul became Paul and Barnabas; and Barnabas was pleased that the gospel was proclaimed even more strongly. He believed that the man with the greater ability should do the job; and he did not cling to his position. This preacher was more concerned with soul-winning and the work of God, than with his own career. Barnabas was clearly out to build God's kingdom, and not just build a name for himself. What a man!

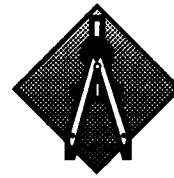
History remembers Paul much more than Barnabas; but that is not necessarily the way it will be in eternity. Paul is historically prominent for two reasons. First, he was a gifted writer; and he spent a great deal of time in prison, because of his boldness for Jesus. Consequently, he had to write to various preachers and churches, in order to carry on his ministry; and many of those letters are preserved in the canon of scripture as "epistles." Secondly, Luke spent much time with Paul; and Luke was the historian who wrote the book of Acts. Naturally, there is a lot about Paul's ministry, because that is what Luke saw. If Luke had gone with Barnabas when they split, we would know many more details about Barnabas' ministry today.

After Paul and Barnabas left the island of Cyprus, they sailed to Asia Minor (Turkey) and went inland to a city in Pisidia, which was also named Antioch. They went to the Jewish synagogue on the sabbath, where they were asked if they would like to share a word, after the scriptures were read. This was probably because Paul was himself a Pharisee, and he had maintained his identity as a Jew. He was in a unique position to relate as a Jew as well as a Roman citizen; and he used both to good advantage. Paul immediately gave a powerful discourse, showing from the Old Testament that Jesus Christ was the Messiah they had long sought for. It must have been a great sermon, because a multitude of people turned to the Lord; and the next sabbath, nearly everyone in the city came out to hear Paul preach.

When the Jewish leaders saw the crowd, they were filled with envy. They wanted crowds to come to hear them, and not this Christian. They were so busy trying to get their credibility back, that they apparently did not stop to see if this man

was right. They opposed whatever Paul taught, because they had a predisposed negative attitude. They had a political agenda, which was not concerned for the people. They were looking out for their religious careers. They cursed the preachers, and slandered them all over town. They stirred up so many people against them, that they threw them out of town.

At this, the apostles "shook the dust off their feet," and went on to Iconium. Jesus had taught His disciples that principle (Luke 10:10-11). If you do right and are rejected, do not take it as personal rejection. Rejoice, if you are persecuted for righteousness' sake. (Matthew 5:10-12) It is a mark of excellence as a Christian to be hated by the people who hate Jesus, and to be rejected by those who reject Him. Jesus said, "...Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!...." (Luke 6:26) If nobody hates you, then maybe you are not doing much to promote God's kingdom. Realize that if you are being faithful to God, they may be reacting to you because of their attitude toward God. These early Christians were fanatics. They got excited when God-haters persecuted and rejected them. The same thing happened in Lystra. The jealous religious leaders even became so angry that they threw stones, hoping to injure or kill the Christians. Throwing stones was not just symbolic. They were large and plentiful, and a common means of killing people. But Paul and Barnabas were not preaching to gain success or popularity. They were preaching, because they had been commissioned by Almighty God; and they wanted to please Him. When a whole city rejected them, the Lord moved them on to another place, to minister to those who would hear and believe. God is seeking worshippers; and He will not force the truth onto those who do not want to hear it.



Methods

Be sure to have some kind of map to show the class, if you can. It does help to have an idea of the location of events, particularly if it is in an unusual location. The emphasis of this lesson should be on the gracious spirit of the apostle Barnabas. Barnabas was more concerned with furthering God's kingdom, than he was about his own ministry. All too often, we get caught up in advancing ourselves socially and financially; and we get into subtle competition with one another. "This is my class. This is my ministry, etc." There are numerous times when the New Testament exhorts Christians to avoid "bitter envyings" and strife among themselves (2 Corinthians 12:21), because it is a common problem. Philippians 2 is a prime example of the kind of selfless attitude demonstrated by Barnabas, and of course, by Jesus Christ. How do you feel, when you see that someone in the church can do what you like to do better than you can? Of course, it is an entirely different matter if someone rejects you for being obnoxious, or boring. But if you are a committed Christian and you are opposed or persecuted for your faith, or you are mocked because you politely refuse to participate in sin, then you are due for a great blessing. It is personally satisfying to know that someone who hates God also hates you, because it identifies you more closely with God. Also, those who mock you for standing alone against evil will sometimes turn to you when their life falls apart; for then, they will be looking for someone stable to lean upon, and you will have the opportunity to lead them to Jesus.

Jupiter and Mercury

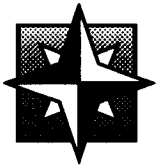
Volume 6

Lesson 38



Bible Reference

Acts 14



Theme

God is still healing the sick and raising the dead today. All of the glory belongs to Him.



Scripture Reading

Acts 14:8-15, 19-20

8 "And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from he mother's womb, who never had walked:

9 "The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,

10 "Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

11 "And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

12 "And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

13 "Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

14 "Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

15 "And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:"

19 "And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

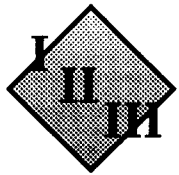
20 "Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe."



Memory Verse

Psalms 115:1

"Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."



Outline

I. A Lame Man Is Healed.

A. At Lystra.

1. Timothy's home town.
2. Timothy probably saw this miracle.
3. His mother and grandmother became Christians.

B. The lame man.

1. Crippled from birth.
2. He was listening to Paul preach.

C. Faith.

1. Paul kept watching the man.
2. He had a word of knowledge that the man had faith to be healed.
3. When he told the man to get up, he instantly obeyed.
4. He not only stood -- he leapt and walked.

D. God heals today.

1. God loves to respond to faith and prayer.
2. In this case, it was the lame man's faith, which was stirred and reinforced by Paul's obedience to the Holy Spirit.
3. There are many factors involved in a given healing; and there are many "gifts of healings." (1 Corinthians 12:28)
4. We do not understand why some are healed and not others; but we do not know the background, the hearts of people, or God's specific plan for that person.
5. It is always good to pray for the sick, and to exercise faith in God.
6. Then, leave the results up to God; and trust that He knows what He is doing.

II. Jupiter and Mercury.

A. People's response.

1. In Antioch and Iconium, the apostles were thrown out and rejected by many.
2. In Lystra, they were worshipped.
3. People can be extreme, when they are reacting out of carnal minds.
4. When you serve God, some people will hate you, and some may exalt you too much.

B. Mercury and Jupiter.

1. Roman gods of mythology.
2. Man said, "Let us make God in our image."
 - a. Men created many gods in their own minds.
 - b. Roman and Greek gods were fickle, mean, selfish, lascivious, and wicked, just like the people who invented them.

3. The Greek gods were similar.
 - a. Their "kingpin" god was named Zeus (equivalent to Jupiter).
 - b. Their "Mercury" was called Hermes.

C. Worship.

1. The people believed that gods could come in human form.
2. They saw the miracle; and word spread that the apostles were gods.
3. People today still have a natural tendency to over-exalt those whom God uses in supernatural ways.
4. It is dangerous for us to take God's glory and honor.
5. Paul and Barnabas immediately turned the attention to God, giving Him all of the glory.
6. They were not out to build a preaching career, but to build God's kingdom.

III. Paul Was Stoned.

A. From the pedestal to the pits.

1. After the people tried to worship Paul, they were persuaded by some out of local Jews to turn against them.
2. The people went from one extreme to the other very quickly.
3. If you gauge your success in life by popular opinion, you become susceptible to either pride or depression.

B. The apostle Paul was stoned.

1. The people angrily threw large rocks at Paul, until his body was broken and covered with blood.
2. His body was carried out of the city; and he was left for dead.

3. Paul suffered many life-threatening attacks for the sake of the gospel. (2 Corinthians 11:23-28)

- C. The city that had exalted Paul the most also was the one which treated him the worst.

IV. Return to Antioch.

A. The apostles backtracked through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.

1. They encouraged the churches there.
2. They told them that it is not easy to really serve the Lord.
3. They ordained elders in every church.
4. They preached in other cities as they passed through.

B. They then sailed home to Antioch.

1. They gave a full report to the church leadership.
2. They spent much time with the believers there.



Spiritual Truths

- God still heals today.
- Faith is not a positive mental attitude; it is a spiritual ability to take hold of the reality and integrity of God.
- Healing can be by an instantaneous miracle, or by a gradual process; but true healing is always from God.

- Most people have a natural tendency to exalt the man when God works through a vessel, because they have a carnal focus and cannot see God.
- It is critically important to always give glory to God in your heart when He does something supernatural and exciting through you.
- God is able to restore a body, and even raise the dead, when He knows that a person's life is not finished, and when believers pray in faith.
- Physical death occurs when the spirit leaves the body. Spiritual death is separation from God. Resurrection is the return of the spirit to the body.



Lesson Material

The apostles Barnabas and Paul were on their first missionary journey, designed especially to carry the gospel to gentiles and Jews in Asia Minor. They had seen many miracles and conversions; and they had also been bitterly opposed and rejected by the people who rejected God. They had been severely persecuted; but they were rejoicing, because they knew that God was pleased with their faithfulness. They witnessed thrilling signs and wonders; and they loved to see the gospel flourish in the hearts of people. In each city, they left angry mobs; but they also left a strong core of believers, whose lives would be forever changed.

They did not stay in a city in which their witness was wholly rejected. They were bold in preaching the gospel; but they

did not force people to believe. One of the last towns they visited before heading back to Antioch was Lystra, the home town of Timothy. His mother, Eunice and his grandmother, Lois were probably saved under the preaching of Paul; and Timothy later became a great Christian pastor.

When Paul was preaching in Lystra, he noticed a lame man in the audience. He kept watching the man, because the Holy Spirit was giving him the strong impression that he had faith for healing. The man had been a helpless cripple from birth; and everyone knew it. Finally Paul looked directly at the man, and fairly shouted, "Stand up on your feet!" Instantly, the man knew that God had given the apostle a word of knowledge, and that God would heal him at that moment. He not only stood -- he jumped up and started walking around. The people were thrilled; and they looked at Paul and Barnabas with great admiration. The word quickly spread, "The gods have come to town!"

Lystra was dominated by the Roman culture and religion. Since the people did not know God, they had followed the heathen religions of mythology. Like the Greeks, the Romans had developed a whole group of gods to worship. These gods came out of the vain imaginations of godless people; and so, the gods of mythology were seen as mean and temperamental. The gods of mythology were perceived to be like people. When men invent gods, they usually have multiple gods, because the mind of man cannot comprehend a God Who is infinite and perfect. Man's mind can only invent gods that are limited, because he cannot see a God as big as infinity.

Still, they thought of their gods as powerful, immortal beings; and they had

great reverence for them. Now, the Greek equivalent of the gods Jupiter and Mercury were called Zeus and Hermes. In Greek mythology, long ago, Zeus and Hermes had once visited the area of Lystra, disguised as men. They asked people for lodging; but they were turned down by one thousand people. Finally, a poor old man named Philemon and his wife took them in and fed them the best food they had. The gods killed all of the people who had refused to be kind; and they turned this couple's little straw cottage into a great gold and marble temple. It is no wonder that the people of Lystra were eager to be hospitable to these two "gods."

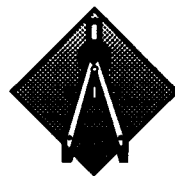
The people quickly mobilized for an animal sacrifice to Jupiter and Mercury. When Paul and Barnabas realized what was going on, they tore their clothes and shouted, "Stop! We are just mortal men, like you. We serve Jesus Christ; and He is the One Who healed the man!" The people were so eager to worship them that it was hard to hold back their zeal; but, they finally backed away.

Then the most amazing thing happened, which shows how easily carnal people are led. Some of the Jews who had opposed the apostles in Antioch and Iconium followed Paul and Barnabas to Lystra; and they immediately started spreading slander and gossip about them. The people who wanted to worship Paul (and had seen him heal the lame man) heard a few words from a few strangers; and immediately, they became an ugly mob. They instantly turned on Paul and picked up large stones to kill him.

They took his broken body outside the city and threw it on the ground, apparently (and possibly) lifeless. The other members of the ministry team stood around, probably praying and weeping with grief.

Many Bible scholars believe that Paul actually did die at this time, but that his spirit was sent back. The amazed team saw him get up, although he was undoubtedly covered with his own blood. He must have had some instantly healed bones, because he went on with the team to preach in the cities that they had been in before. There is very little mention of this; but there were so many supernatural things that happened to these men, that it would fill many volumes to cover it all.

They spent much of their time "confirming the souls" of believers. That is, they gave them instruction in righteousness, and in-depth teaching about God's Word and ways. They probably ministered on the baptism in the Holy Spirit; and they did some ministry training. Before they left the area, they picked out and ordained elders in each city, in order to oversee the Christians and act as spiritual fathers for the many new believers. Then they sailed back to their home church, where they reported on their work with rejoicing.



Methods

Secular humanists today like to exalt the ancient Greek humanists as great role models for our youth; but these men, though clever and intellectual, were often sexually perverted; and they worshipped pagan gods of mythology.

A person can be intellectual and still be a fool, because "*the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom:....*" (Psalms 111:10) Intellectuals who do not have wisdom can

have much knowledge about natural things; but they will still be spiritually blind. (1 Corinthians 2:14) They will know facts; but they will not make the right basic conclusions about life or morality. They will see the physical side of an issue, but not the eternal. They will tend to be vain and haughty; and they will mock the truth.

Look into the gods of Roman and Greek mythology -- but only briefly -- and with the understanding of the reasons that men invented such gods. When you realize the morality of the people who designed the gods, then you will

understand how the stories came about. Also understand that such myths can be demonically or Satanically inspired.

It is possible to have faith in the "faith message," or to worship a style of worship, or to focus on the preacher, instead of the God he presents. Lystra is a classic example of how fickle people can be, when they focus on the flesh and miss the message. People may put you on a pedestal; but they will just as quickly bring you down. Our statement of balance is that *"...we have this treasure (the gospel of Jesus Christ) in earthen vessels (ordinary people),...."* (2 Corinthians 4:7)

The Law of Moses

Volume 6

Lesson 39

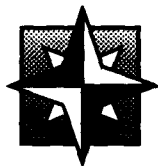


Bible References

Acts 15

Galatians 2-3

Psalms 19



Theme

In Christ, we are made free from the bondage of sin and the law.



Scripture Reading

Acts 15:1-7, 10-11

1 "And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

2 "When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

3 "And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

4 "And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

5 "But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

6 "And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

7 "And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe."

10 "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

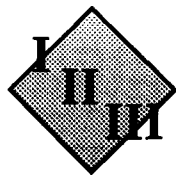
11 *"But we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."*



Memory Verse

Romans 6:14-15

"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid."



Outline

I. The Debate in Jerusalem.

A. Wrong teaching.

1. Some Christians were teaching that physical circumcision was necessary for salvation.
2. They had been trained under the Old Covenant Law.
3. They did not understand that the ordinances of the law of Moses were types of spiritual principles.

B. Circumcision.

1. All covenants are confirmed by blood.
2. The Old Covenant required the circumcision of males as a sign.

3. In the New Covenant, the circumcision is of the heart, rather than the flesh. (Colossians 2:11)
 - a. It is an inward sign of covenant, rather than an outward sign.
 - b. We are "in Christ."

C. The apostles and elders.

1. The apostles were the overseers of the churches.
2. The apostles had the responsibility to lead, and to establish church policy.
3. They had a conference in Jerusalem, to discuss the matter of law.
4. It was quite a heated debate.

D. Judaizers.

1. These were believers who tried to combine the Old Covenant ordinances with their new faith in Jesus Christ.
2. They tried to mix the old and the new, because they lacked understanding about spiritual principles.
3. They caused many problems in the early church, because they brought people under bondage.

E. The apostles.

1. Determined together that the church would not require circumcision or enforce the Old Testament religious ordinances.
2. Established and enforced some basic rules. (Acts 15:20)
 - a. Abstain from meat from animals which had been offered to idols.
 - b. Do not eat or drink blood.
 - c. Do not engage in sexual activity outside of marriage.

II. The Law of Moses.

A. Under the Old Covenant:

1. The people were required to observe many statutes and ordinances, which symbolized spiritual truths.
2. Some of the rules were for health reasons.
3. All taught a spiritual lesson.

B. Old Covenant fulfilled.

1. The blood sacrifices were fulfilled when Jesus became the perfect Lamb of God.
2. Jesus fulfilled the sabbath.
3. On the cross, Jesus took away the ordinances which were against us, nailing them to His cross. (Colossians 2:14)

C. The Ten Commandments. (Exodus 20)

1. These were basic commandments of God; and they were not abolished on the cross.
2. Jesus reinforced all of the ten commandments, except for the one regarding the sabbath, which was fulfilled spiritually.
3. These commandments amplify the basic law of ethics given by God.
 - a. Love the Lord your God (commandments 1-4).
 - b. Love your neighbor as yourself. (commandments 5-10).
 - c. Love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:10)

III. Legalism.

A. Looking at the law, rather than God's grace, as a means to eternal life.

1. People trying to be good enough to get into heaven.

2. This is impossible, because we have all fallen short. (Romans 3:23)

B. Seeking to do with fleshly effort that which only God can do through the Spirit.

1. Man, apart from God's enabling presence, is incapable of holiness.
2. Romans 7:14-21.

C. Focusing on conformation, rather than transformation.

1. Religion seeks to get us to conform to a set of rules.
2. The world seeks to get us to conform to a secular image. (Romans 12:2)
3. But God is able to transform us spiritually and to set us free from the power of sin, so that we are able to live in freedom, joy, and purity.

IV. We are Not Under Law, but Under Grace.

A. Romans 6:14 is an often misunderstood verse.

1. It does not say that we are lawless.
2. Being under grace is not a license to violate the law, but the power to live above it.

B. Law.

1. The irreducible minimum of ethical behavior.
2. Thou shalt not kill, steal, commit adultery, covet, etc.
3. People who are evil and selfish must be given restraints and rules, because they will naturally harm others if they are not put "under law."

- a. If you have a criminal over for dinner, you might need to say, "Do not steal my silverware."
- b. "You must not murder anyone."
- c. The law was made for the lawless, and not for good people. (1 Timothy 1:9)
4. Good people who love do not need to be put under a law, because they have no desire to hurt others.

C. The law is not evil.

1. God's laws are good and perfect. (Psalms 19)
2. Jesus did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. (Matthew 5:17)
3. The law of God (biblical standard of behavior) is still universally true.
4. But the way people use law to bring others into bondage or condemnation is wrong.

D. What is being under grace?

1. "Grace" (*charis*) is the Greek root word for the word "gift," which means "that which we have been given apart from our own effort or ability."
2. Grace is the dynamic power of God operating in the life of a human being.
3. Grace is the virtue and ability of God imparted to people who are humble before God.
4. "Under grace" means that we have Christ living in and through us, so that we are not controlled by the sin nature.
 - a. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:2)
 - b. We are not saved by the works of law (what we do in our fleshly effort), but by God's grace (what

Jesus did for us and does in us).
(Romans 8:3; Ephesians 2:8-9)

5. Grace is the enabling power of God, which sets us free from the control of sin.
 - a. Grace teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldliness.
 - b. And to live "...soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." (Titus 2:12)



Spiritual Truths

- The Christian faith is based on transformation by the Spirit, rather than conformation to the law.
- The focus of our faith is not on what we do for God, but on what Christ did for us on the cross.
- Grace does not mean that we can sin and get away with it. It means that we have Christ living in us; and He is our righteousness.
- Grace is not the same as mercy or pardon.
- Since the fall of man in the garden, God has always imparted grace to those who were humble and received it by faith.
- In the New Covenant, the law of God is not voided; it is fulfilled, as Jesus lives and loves through us.
- The law of God does not save us; but it helps us see our desperate need for Jesus Christ and for His mercy and grace.

- The teaching that grace means we can sin and get away with it is "...turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness,...." (Jude 4)



Lesson Material

The early church was spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the Roman empire, and people were getting saved by the thousands. One problem with growth is that there are always people who want to be teachers and leaders, but who are not called of God. They are motivated by pride, or by greed. They long to be important; and they cause confusion, because they do not "rightly divide the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15), like those who are called of God and trained by true apostles.

One dilemma that was prevalent in the early church was over the question of law versus grace. Paul addressed it often in his epistles. The Hebrew people had been taught the law of Moses for fifteen hundred years. It was the only way to God that they knew; and it was a valid word from God. No one could enter into a covenant with God, apart from the laws and ordinances of Moses. Gentiles could come into the covenant; but they had to become Jewish proselytes and, if they were males, they had to be physically circumcised.

People always have a tendency to focus on the physical, rather than the spiritual. That is why God commanded Israel to avoid making statues. Even today, there are some religious groups who create

many statues of Mary, Jesus, and the saints; and so often, people worship statues and buildings instead of God, Who is Spirit. People did the same thing with God's laws. They got so focused on the rules and precepts that they lost sight of God. God's purpose was never to have a people who trusted in laws. He wanted a people who loved and trusted Him.

When Jesus came to earth, He brought the spiritual perspective to God's covenant. He showed that the statutes and ordinances in the Old Testament were physical types of spiritual truths. Now, for us to offer animal sacrifices to God for our sins would be an abomination, because Jesus died for the sins of the whole world; and any other sacrifice would imply that His blood was not sufficient for all of our sins. Our works can never be adequate to save us from death and hell -- only the blood of Jesus Christ is adequate.

When the message of salvation by God's grace came to the Jews, and then to the gentiles (non-Jews), it was a dramatic change in focus -- particularly for the Pharisees, who were very strict in their observance of the law. They had piled on hundreds of little additions to the ordinances that God had given to Moses, so that it became impossible for anyone to live up to all of it. Their focus generally was on their works, rather than on relationship; and they missed the Messiah, when He came to them.

Some became believers, but they still did not quite grasp the spiritual nature of what God was doing. They sought to be teachers among the Christians; and they continually tried to mix the gospel of faith and grace with all of their traditions and knowledge about the established ways of God. Just as some try to mix the revelation of creation with the doctrine of evolution

that they were taught in school, so they tried to mix Christianity with Judaism, resulting in condemnation and confusion.

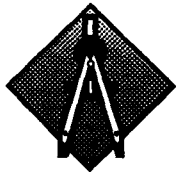
The apostles, most of whom were also Jews, met at a great conference in Jerusalem; and they had a lively debate. They even argued with one another, because they each had different ideas about things. No one has all of the right ideas. Truth is not a set of ideas -- it is the Person of Jesus Christ. (John 14:6) It is sad when any church leader thinks that he has all of the right ideas about the Bible, because then he cannot learn from his brethren. Even though we are guided by the Holy Spirit and are given an ability to rightly divide the truth, we only "know in part" (1 Corinthians 13:9, 12); and so, we always need to listen and learn from others of like precious faith. The apostles did learn from each other; and, eventually, they came to an agreement on what God wanted for the gentile believers. They would not impose circumcision on them, and they would not put them under a load of legalism. There would still be some rules of conduct; but, the focus would be on God working in their lives by grace, and not on their rules and regulations.

We do need to be careful in the way we respond to the "law versus grace" passages, lest we oversimplify to the extent that they become mutually exclusive. Jesus made it very clear that He did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. (Matthew 5:17) That is, grace does not give us license to sin; but it actually teaches and enables us to live a godly lifestyle. (Titus 2:12) "Grace" is the root word for "gift," or "that which we receive apart from our own ability or achievement." When God gives grace, He becomes the source. He works through us. We are not saved by our works, but by the work that Christ did on the cross; and we do not do good works as a result of our

will, but as we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit. We are not saved **by** good works; but, we are saved **unto** good works. (Ephesians 2:10)

Some people interpret the fact that we are not under law but under grace as meaning that we are no longer subject to any of God's moral laws. They think that "grace" means that we can sin, and not suffer the consequences. What does it mean to be under law? Paul said that the law was not made for the righteous, but for the ungodly. For example, if you had a thief to your house, you might need to impose restrictions. "Do not steal the stereo. Keep your hands off of the silverware." Law is the minimum standard of ethical conduct. "Do not murder. Do not covet my possessions." But God's grace enables us to love others. When you love people, you naturally give; and you will do nothing to harm them. Therefore, no one has to put restrictions on your behavior. "*Love worketh no ill to his neighbor* (love does not hurt others): *therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*" (Romans 13:10)

We are not under law, because, by God's grace, we are free from the evil desires that result in evil deeds. The law says "Do not murder;" but grace says, "Do not even hate." Law says "Do not commit adultery;" but grace says "Do not even lust in your heart." Law says "Love your neighbor;" but grace says that you can even love your enemies. Law says "Do not steal;" but grace is always giving to others. We are not under law, because we are walking in God's grace; and so, we do not have to be restricted to the minimum ethical standards. We are free to give, and share, and care for others, as transformed people of God.



Methods

Define the term "legalism," because many people in our culture today would define all "instruction in righteousness" as legalism. "Do not put law on me. I am under grace; and so, I can do what I want." False religions thrive on legalism, because they impose restrictions on the people, who endeavor to live up to a set of rules. But Christianity is a relationship with God; and our godly lifestyle is a result of

that relationship, and not the basis of it. God saves us from the controlling power of selfishness, so that we are no longer slaves of sin, living below the standards of law. We are servants of God; and Christ now lives in us and shines through us.

Focus on God's grace. If we are struggling with a controlling sin pattern, the key to freedom is not reformation or conformation, but it is transformation. (Romans 12:2) Turn to God in humility and repentance, and draw near to Him in prayer with commitment. He can impart grace to you, so that you can be an overcomer through His grace, and not by your own works of the flesh.

Jesus Before Pilate

Volume 6

Lesson 40



Bible References

Matthew 27

Luke 23

Philippians 2

12 *"And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.*

13 *"Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?*

14 *"And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.*

15 *"Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would."*

17 *"Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus, which is called Christ?"*

19 *"When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him."*

22 *"Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.*

23 *"And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified."*



Theme

Jesus was falsely accused by Jewish leaders who were motivated by envy; and He was crucified by the Romans.



Scripture Reading

Matthew 27:11-15, 17, 19, 22-23

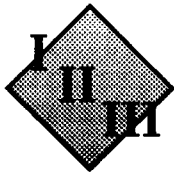
11 *"And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.*



Memory Verse

Isaiah 53:3

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not."



Outline

I. The Lamb of God.

A. God's plan.

1. The primary purpose for Christ's incarnation was for Him to become the sin offering for the human race.
2. Jesus came to earth, and emptied Himself of His glory (Philippians 2:5-8).
3. He came as a baby, and grew up in Nazareth.
4. He taught and ministered for three and one-half years.
5. He was rejected by the Jews and crucified near His beloved Jerusalem.

B. God's purpose.

1. God's holiness required that the penalty for sin must be paid.
2. Only a perfect sin offering would atone for the world.

3. The Redeemer must be a near kinsman.
4. The sin offering must be a man; and he must be God.
5. John 3:16.

II. Jesus Betrayed and Tried.

A. In the garden. (Matthew 26:36-56)

1. Jesus was betrayed by Judas.
2. He was mocked and blasphemed by the angry mob.
3. He was taken at night.
4. At sunrise, the Jewish religious leaders gathered for their council.

B. At the council. (Matthew 26:57-75)

1. The elders, chief priests, and scribes (those who worked full time copying the scriptures) interrogated Jesus.
2. "Are you the Christ?"
 - a. *Christos* means the "anointed one."
 - b. "Are you the Messiah we have been looking for, for centuries?"
3. Jesus answered:
 - a. "You would not believe Me, or let Me go."
 - b. "You will see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God."
4. "Are you the Son of God?"
 - a. "It is as you say."
 - b. This was a positive affirmation, as evidenced by the Jew's reaction.
 - c. They cried, "Blasphemy!"

III. Jesus Before Pontius Pilate.

A. Authority.

1. The Jews were under the authority of the Roman government.
2. Judah had been conquered by Babylon, which was taken over by the Medo-Persian Empire.
3. Then, the Greeks conquered the world.
4. Then, the Greek Empire was conquered by the Roman Empire.
5. All of the nations in the area were subject to Roman rule.
6. The people under bondage paid taxes to Rome, and had to obey Roman laws.
7. The Jews had little authority.
8. Only the Romans could execute criminals.

B. Pilate, the governor.

1. Pilate was the representative of Caesar, the Roman Emperor.
2. He was the governor of Judah, with his headquarters in Jerusalem.
3. The Jewish mob took Jesus to Pilate, thinking that they had a legal case against Him, for being disloyal to Rome.
 - a. They accused Jesus of not paying taxes.
 - b. And of making Himself a king.
 - c. "He stirs up the people." (Luke 23:5)

C. Pilate spoke with Jesus. (Luke 23:1-5)

1. Pilate said, "I find no fault in this man."
2. The people said, "He is stirring up trouble, all over Galilee!"

D. When Pilate heard that Jesus was from Galilee, he sent him to Herod, who

happened to be in town at the time. (Luke 23:12)

1. Herod was the Roman governor of Galilee, where Jesus lived.
2. Herod was very excited, because he wanted Jesus to do a miracle.
3. Jesus did not answer Herod.
4. Herod's men mocked Jesus, and put a beautiful robe on him, sending him back to Pilate.

IV. Jesus Again Before Pilate.

A. Pilate's wife. (Matthew 27:19)

1. She had a troubling dream about Jesus.
2. "Do not have anything to do with this just man."
3. Pilate had Jesus crucified; but he tried to excuse himself by washing his hands.
 - a. He was saying, "It is not my fault."
 - b. But he was still responsible.
 - c. He failed to listen to his wife's warnings.

B. Barabbas. (Matthew 27:15-26)

1. A notorious thief, scheduled to die.
2. At the Passover, the Romans had a tradition of setting one criminal free, by the choice of the people.
3. Pilate hoped that they would let this gentle Man go, and crucify the evil Barabbas.



Spiritual Truths

- Jesus Christ is the Son of man, and also the Son of God.
- Jesus Christ is the only One Who could satisfy the demands of God's holiness, by dying for the sins of the whole world.
- Jesus suffered at the hands of the Jews and the Romans, representing the religious and the secular elements of the whole human race.
- It was necessary that Jesus suffer and die at the hands of sinful men, because it fulfilled the plan of God.
- The priests determined that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God; but they made no effort to find out if He really was the Son of God.
- The Jewish leaders questioned Jesus, but they had already made their decision to reject Him.
- You can blame your wrong choices on other people and try to wash your hands of the responsibility, but it will not wash clean.



Lesson Material

It was the most significant night in the history of the human race. The very Son of God, Jesus Christ, had come to

Jerusalem to the praise and adulation of the people, knowing full well that many of the same people would be screaming for His death in a few eventful days. He tried to prepare His disciples, but they still did not really understand what was happening. Only later would they look back and realize what He had done, during that awful time in Jerusalem. When Jesus broke bread and renewed His covenant with the men, Judas went out into the night to make his deal with the Jewish leaders, who were trying to find and capture this famous Galilean, Who had stirred up so many people, and Who seemed to be a threat to their religious monopoly among the Jews.

Judas sold out for thirty pieces of silver -- the price of a slave -- the price of betrayal prophesied about in the Old Testament hundreds of years earlier. (Zechariah 11:13; Matthew 26:15) Isaiah had given such a vivid prophetic picture of this Messiah, with such accurate details, that he is sometimes regarded as a "fifth gospel writer." Isaiah had many rich insights into the heart and life of this Great Savior of the world.

It would seem that the scribes would have recognized the One Who was fulfilling all of the prophecies of scripture, for their full-time job was in the Word of God. There were no printing presses. All books were hand-copied; and the scribes' only work was to copy scriptures. They were held in high esteem, and they were considered experts on the sacred writings; but, they missed it. They knew all about God -- but they did not know God. How tragic to see people who are in full-time "ministry," who do not know Jesus. Had they had a spiritual relationship with God, they would have recognized that Jesus was one with the Father; and they would have received Him gladly.

Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss, letting the Jewish leaders know which one was the Lord. Apparently, he did not hate Jesus. He probably thought that Jesus would escape, for had He not done so before? (Luke 4:28-30) Judas was motivated by greed and not hatred, because when he saw the results of his disloyal act, he was filled with anguish; and he tried to give the money back, before he committed suicide.

Jesus was harshly treated by the mob. The disciples scattered into the night. Peter stayed nearby; but he denied knowing Jesus three times when confronted, even though he had just insisted to Jesus that he would never deny Him. (Matthew 26:35) When morning came, the angry mob took the weary Jesus to the Jewish leaders, and to Caiaphas, the high priest. They spoke with Jesus long enough to confirm their accusations; and they decided that they had a legal case against Him. The Jewish leaders had no national autonomy, because the Roman Empire was in control of the known world in Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Only Roman citizens were free; and only Roman authority could enforce a death penalty.

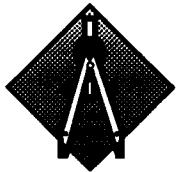
Jesus was taken by the high priest and the Jewish leaders to Pilate, the Roman governor who ruled over Judea. Pilate decided that this Man was not worthy of the death penalty; but, when he learned that Jesus was a Galilean, he sent Him to Herod, who happened to be in Jerusalem. Herod was delighted, because he had heard so many things about Jesus; and he expected to see a miracle. Not only did Jesus refuse to do a miracle for him, He would not even talk to him. Herod was angry; and he sent Jesus back to Pilate, wearing a gorgeous robe. Interestingly, Herod and Pilate became friends after this,

although there had been strife between them before. They were brought together on the common ground that they both rejected Jesus. What a sad basis for a friendship. But Christians should be friends on the basis of the fact that they have surrendered to Jesus Christ, and are going to heaven together.

Pilate's wife was troubled by a dream about Jesus; and she warned her husband. Pilate tried to release Jesus, but he was not willing to go against the will of the people. So many times, the crowd is wrong. He had the power to do the right thing, and he had even been warned; but, he followed the crowd. Pilate tried to ease his conscience by putting the responsibility on the people. Indeed, the people cried, "His blood be upon us, and on our children." (Matthew 27:25) The Jewish people suffered much because of their rejection of God's Son; but, so did Pilate. No amount of ceremonial washing could take away the guilt for his action. He knew what was right; but he obeyed the people, instead of God. When Pilate stands before God to give an account of his life at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20), he will have to answer for what he did; and he will not be able to blame other people.

It is generally thought that Barabbas was in a prison cell nearby, and that he might have been able to hear the crowd. Perhaps he heard their replies to Pilate, but it is likely that he could not hear Pilate's questions. What would he have heard? "Barabbas! Barabbas!....Crucify him! Crucify him!" As humans, we do not usually get all of the information about things that affect us. We have limited perception. We only get part of the picture. However, God sees it all. How important it is for us to rely on what God says, and to trust our lives into His leadership. Jesus

was so wise, when He decided not to go by what He saw or felt in life, but by what the Father was saying. *"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."* (John 5:30)



Methods

It is important that young people are reminded of the suffering of Jesus, both in terms of His physical suffering on the cross

and the emotional suffering of rejection and cursing by the people He so loved. It is easy for us to become accustomed to the story of Easter and to become less sensitive to it. As we examine the momentous events of that day, we should gain a fresh appreciation for what our Lord went through for us. Study the story in the gospels; and picture the scenes in your mind until you can, in your own words, describe the situations and conversations, as they are vividly portrayed by the gospel writers. The apostles spent time going into detail about Pilate and Herod, because the whole series of events revolves around the most important events in history -- the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Crucifixion

Volume 6

Lesson 41



Bible References

Matthew 27

Luke 23

John 19

Psalms 22

helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

2 "O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent."

6 "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

7 "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

8 "He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."

13 "They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

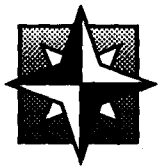
14 "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

15 "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

16 "For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

17 "I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

18 "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."



Theme

The horror of the crucifixion of Christ gives us a glimpse of how God looks at sin; and it also reminds us that God loves us very much.



Scripture Reading

Psalms 22:1-2, 6-8, 13-18

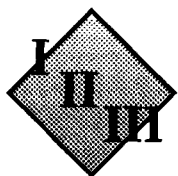
1 "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from



Memory Verse

Isaiah 53:5

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."



Outline

I. The Psalmist.

A. King David's song.

1. David prophesied about Jesus.
2. 1,000 years before Jesus Christ came to earth.
3. Psalms 22.

B. Prophecy.

1. David was moved by the Holy Ghost to see the suffering of the Messiah.
2. He identified with Christ's sufferings in his own life.
3. But he described the cross in great detail.

C. Isaiah also had great prophetic insight into the life and death of Jesus.

II. Suffering On the Cross.

A. In Gethsemene.

1. His sweat became as great drops of blood. (Luke 23:44)
2. Called hematidrosis (bloody sweat).
 - a. During intense stress.
 - b. Blood capillaries in the sweat glands break.
 - c. Mixing sweat with blood.
3. It was there that the battle for our salvation was won, for Jesus totally submitted Himself to the Father's will.

B. Jesus was arrested and taken to the Sanhedrin court. (Luke 23:66-71)

1. To Caiaphas, the high priest.
2. They spit on His face and struck Him in the face.
3. The people also mocked and reviled Him.
4. Jesus was battered, dehydrated, and exhausted from a night without sleep.

C. Scourged before Pontius Pilate. (Matthew 27:26)

1. Beaten with a flagellum (short, multiple whip).
2. Leather thongs, with small, rough lead balls attached near the ends of each strip.
3. 39 stripes.
 - a. Jews had a law limiting a whipping to 40 lashes.
 - b. They wanted to make sure they did not miscount; and so, they always wanted 39 for the most severe punishment that they could give.
 - c. Some criminals had died, when they received more than 40 stripes with this kind of whip.

4. The lead weights produced deep bruises, and then tore open the skin.
5. Then the flesh was torn, cutting into larger blood vessels.
6. After 39 lashes with this Roman whip, the back was torn apart and completely covered with blood and loose strips of flesh.

D. Robe and crown. (Matthew 27:27-30)

1. A robe was placed on His back, and a reed put in His hands.
 - a. They were mocking Him by using symbols for a king.
 - b. A scepter was an ornate instrument used in ceremonies.
2. They made a crown out of long, sharp thorns.
3. When they tore the robe off, it tore the scabs loose; and more blood flowed.

E. Via Dolorosa.

1. He carried the cross beam (patibulum), which weighed about 110 pounds.
 - a. The other part of the cross was on Golgotha.
 - b. The cross beam was set on top of the main beam (called the "stipes").
 - c. The cross was like a "T," not like a "t" as we often think.
2. Jews were allowed to wear a loincloth.
3. The beam was tied to His arms with ropes, as He carried it.
4. Jesus was weak and in shock, because of the extreme loss of blood.
5. An African man named Simon of Cyrene was called on to carry the beam for Him. (Luke 23:26)

F. Crucifixion.

1. Rough iron nails were driven through the wrists of Jesus and into the cross beam.
2. The beam was then lifted up and put on the post.
3. A large nail was driven through both of His feet.
4. These nails produced extreme pain, because He supported His body by pulling on His wrists or pushing up on His feet, where the nails struck the nerves.
5. Jesus had to push Himself up to breathe.
 - a. Soldiers broke the legs of prisoners, so that they would suffocate and die faster.
 - b. They did not break Christ's legs, because He had already died. (John 19:32-33)
6. Blood and water poured out of His side, when the soldier pierced Him. (John 19:33-34)

III. The Seven Last Words of Christ.

- A. "...Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do...." (Luke 23:34)
- B. "...Today, shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43)
 1. Spoken to one of the thieves on the cross who said, "Remember me."
 2. He believed.
 3. He could not be baptized as a believer, but Jesus knew that he had no opportunity.
 4. He did not go to heaven yet, but to Paradise.
- C. "...Behold thy son!...Behold thy mother!...." (John 19:26-27)
 1. Spoken to Mary and John.

2. Jesus gave John the responsibility to take care of His mother, after His death.

D. "...My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46)

1. Jesus became sin for us. (2 Corinthians 5:21)
2. God cannot look upon sin.

E. "...I thirst." (John 19:28)

1. Jesus was dehydrated, but he refused the sour wine offered by the soldier.
2. He endured unspeakable agony in His death.

F. "...It is finished:...." (John 19:30)

1. The demands of God's holiness were satisfied.
2. The price for the sins of the world was paid in full.

G. "...Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit:...." (Luke 23:46)

1. Jesus chose the exact moment of His death.
2. No man took His life; He laid it down of His own accord. (John 10:17-18)

- The crucifixion was neither an accident nor a victory for Satan; but it was the basis for reconciliation to God and eternal life, for all who believe on the Lord.
- Jesus took on Himself the sins of the whole world, as a vicarious sacrifice.
- The people who rejected and crucified the Lord actually represented the whole human race -- Jew and Gentile.
- The beatings and execution of Jesus were far more painful than our minds can possibly comprehend.
- We should respond to the story of the cross with overwhelming gratitude and with deep sorrow for our sins, which nailed Him there.
- Jesus finished the work of redemption on the cross; and so, our efforts to earn salvation are not only useless, but demeaning to the Lord.



Spiritual Truths

- Jesus endured the most painful and horrible death possible, to show us the awfulness of sin.
- The Psalmist David prophesied concerning the manner of Jesus' death.



Lesson Material

When we consider the horror and the agony of the cross on which our Lord died for our sins, we tend to have a deeper sense of gratitude and humility before Him. We want to be careful that we put it all in proper perspective. The cross was not a place of defeat. It brought about the greatest victory ever accomplished. By laying down His life, Jesus was able to redeem all who would believe on His name and receive God's gift of eternal life. We should never take lightly the scene of

the cross, for this is the basis of our hope for eternity.

The symbol of Christianity is not a crucifix, but an empty cross. Jesus died on a cross just outside of Jerusalem; but He rose from the grave, and He is alive and ruling from heaven today. He was also a baby in a manger for a few days; but He is now the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and He is coming again in power and great glory to the earth.

We serve a risen Savior; but, we remember the cross with deep emotion, if we love Him. What supreme sacrifice! Why did He do it? What was He thinking, as He endured such humiliation and suffering, knowing that at any time He could just say the word, and the most powerful military force in the universe would be there at a moment's notice to destroy His tormentors and ease His pain? (Matthew 26:53)

The apostle Paul encouraged us to keep our eyes on the goal and to press forward in our spiritual walk, by reminding us that Jesus was goal-oriented when He was suffering for us. He exhorted us to *"...run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of {our} faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."* (Hebrews 12:1-2)

He "despised the shame." The word "despise" in this passage does not mean to "hate" or "dislike." It means to "set at naught; to count it as nothing." Jesus compared the moment's suffering with the eternal joy of bringing many sons to glory and filling His Father's house with redeemed people; and He endured it all. He knew that the pain would be temporary, but the joy would last forever.

(Isaiah 53:11) We should be reminded that the most important aspects of our lives are not the temporary pleasures we enjoy, but the development of spiritual wisdom and character. God is more concerned with developing our character than our comfort.

When we consider the sufferings of Jesus in His death, we are surprised that the most descriptive text is not in the Gospels, but in the Psalms, which were written one thousand years before the event, by the Psalmist, David. David endured much rejection and suffering in his life; but in this song, he goes far beyond the realm of his experience. By the anointing of the Spirit, David sings the "song of the Lord," by uttering things that prophetically identify with the feelings of Jesus at the crucifixion. Crucifixion had not even been invented yet as a means of execution; but there are prophecies in the Old Testament that indicate that several prophets were given specific details concerning the Lord's impending death. It is probable that the people in the days of Jesus were all too familiar with this horrible mode of death; and the writers did not need to elaborate on the specifics. It was sufficient to say, "and then they crucified Him." But we are not so familiar with it, having never witnessed anything like it. Indeed, when we on rare occasion execute one of our most hardened criminals, we do so in a humane manner.

Crucifixion was developed by the Persians (the people who conquered the Babylonian empire and ended Belshazzar's wicked reign, in Daniel's time). It was designed to be a means of torture and extreme punishment for condemned criminals. By contrast, the French Guillotine was invented by a Doctor (named Guillotine) as a means of quick and almost painless death.

Alexander the Great adopted the Persian's method of crucifixion; and the Romans learned of it from him. It was not enough to end the life of their prisoners. They often felt it desirable to inflict the most humiliation and agony possible, before the victim expired.

They combined the historic curse and shame of hanging with several elements of torture and suffocation. They also inflicted further shame on their victims, by publicly crucifying them naked (although they allowed Jews to wear a loincloth).

One thing we need to remember in life is that, no matter what we may suffer, we cannot experience any pain greater than that which Jesus endured for us. We also note that many of our troubles are the result of our own mistakes or wrongdoing; but Jesus did nothing but good to anyone. You may experience rejection or humiliation, but nothing like that which was experienced by Jesus. He endured, because He had a vision to fulfill the heart of the Father, and because He loved us. Should not we bear *"...our light affliction, which is but for a moment,...?"* (2 Corinthians 4:17)

When we picture the cross, we usually think of the Latin cross, which has the cross beam mounted a little above the center of the vertical post. But Jesus was probably crucified on a cross which mounted the cross beam (called a "patibulum") on top of the post, forming a "T." However, it was also customary to nail a sign on a small post to the top of the cross; and so, the general silhouette would still be something like what we commonly envision. On this sign, Pilate ordered it written, "JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS." (John 19:19) The Jewish leaders were not happy with this.

They wanted it to say, "He says that He is the king of the Jews;" but Pilate said, *"...What I have written, I have written."* (John 19:21-22) Even in his sinful state, God used Pontius Pilate to declare a prophetic truth.

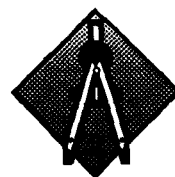
We note that all of the types of suffering that Jesus endured that day were extreme. Jesus was beaten severely and reviled mercilessly. The whip used to scourge Him before Pilate's judgment hall was a lethal weapon, which had killed many a lesser man with its combination of heavy leather straps and lead pieces. The lead inflicted deep bruises and then open wounds, cutting into arteries and veins and leaving the flesh in strips on the back and legs of our Lord. The people, in their selfish and sinful condition, were bitter at this One Who seemed so promising as a military savior; and they felt personally justified in destroying His life. Sin greatly perverts judgment, causing people to justify, in their own minds, the most wicked acts of cruelty.

The mocking crown of thorns was pressed deep into the head of Jesus. There are many blood vessels in the head; and so, this produced much bleeding. Jesus could not carry the 110-pound beam to Golgotha, because His body was in shock, from loss of blood. When they came to the hill of crucifixion, the soldiers pounded large, rough iron nails through the wrists of Jesus. If they had put the nails through His palms, the weight of his body would have torn through the flesh, and He would have fallen to the ground.

One large nail was driven through His feet, which were placed one on top of the other. In order to breathe, it was necessary to push up with the legs, making the nail push against the sensitive nerves in the foot, and causing excruciating pain. When

He supported His weight with His hands, the same thing happened there. Still, in the midst of this unspeakable pain, Jesus thought to pray for His tormentors; and He had compassion on them. He received the thief who asked Him to remember him; and He gave him the assurance of salvation. While enduring blinding, shooting pain, He thought of His mother's needs; and He spoke other great words for our benefit.

Jesus committed His spirit to God, and then He died. His spirit left His body, which had completely ceased to function. With great sorrow, His followers anointed His body with a large amount of spices, and wrapped it in cloth. The body was put in a rich man's tomb (John 19:38-42); and on Sunday morning, it was discovered that He had risen from the dead. (John 20) After going to Paradise and meeting the thief from the other cross, as well as all of the saints who had died in faith, Jesus went back and entered His physical body, which had been restored to life and supernaturally transformed by the Holy Spirit into an eternal body of flesh and bone. He appeared to His disciples for 40 days (Acts 1:3); and He then ascended into heaven in a cloud. In a similar way, He is coming back to the earth, to receive us to Himself. (Acts 1:9-11) Hallelujah! He is alive!



Methods

This Easter lesson is very important to young people who have little or no concept of this kind of death or suffering. The more we realize the severity of what Jesus went through for us, the more we tend to respond to the cross with gratitude. We should seek to give them a clear picture of what happened, particularly concerning the physical aspects of His sufferings.

A common problem in our culture is an inability to realize the seriousness of sin. We see it glamorized and glorified daily all around us; and it is hard for us to realize how horrible sin is to our Holy God. The detailed and graphic depiction of the crucifixion gives us a better comprehension of the way God feels about sin, and the importance of real repentance. It is good and right to "sorrow unto repentance" (2 Corinthians 7:10), and to grieve over our sin, which put Jesus on the cross.

Another problem we have is an inability to handle adversity or suffering in life. We see the lesson given in Hebrews 12:2 about the fact that Jesus endured, because of the joy that was set before Him. Teach your students that life is not easy. "...Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalms 30:5) -- if we do not give up. If you know the "why," you can endure any "how."

The Road to Emmaus

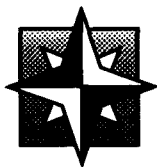
Volume 6

Lesson 42



Bible Reference

Luke 24



Theme

We serve a risen Savior; and we can walk and talk with Him, just as surely as the disciples on the Emmaus Road.



Scripture Reading

Luke 24:13, 15-20, 22-23, 25-27, 30-32

13 "And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs."

15 "And it came to pass, that, while they communed {together} and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

16 "But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

17 "And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these, (and why are you so sad?)

18 "And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

19 "And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

20 "And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him."

22 "Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;

23 "And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive."

25 "Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken;

26 "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

27 *"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."*

30 *"And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed {it}, and brake, and gave to them."*

31 *"And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight."*

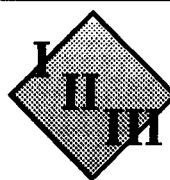
32 *"And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"*



Memory Verse

Luke 24:46-47

"...Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."



Outline

I. The Resurrection.

A. On the first day.

1. Jesus died (physically) on the cross.
2. His spirit and soul left His body.

B. On the third day.

1. Early on Sunday morning, Jesus was restored to His body.
2. It was not a new body, but the same one -- transformed and perfected.

C. Mary and some other women went to the tomb. (John 20)

1. They found the great stone moved.
2. The tomb was empty.
3. The grave clothes (large cloths used to wrap the body) were there.

D. Alive.

1. Jesus had a perfect body of flesh and bone. (Luke 24:39)
2. Immortal; perfect; unlimited by natural laws.

E. Firstfruits. (1 Corinthians 15:20)

1. *"...We shall be like him;...."* (1 John 3:2)
2. "Firstfruits" means that He was the "beginning" of the resurrection.

II. The Emmaus Road.

- A. Jesus appeared to two disciples on Sunday.
1. He walked with them.
 2. But their eyes were holden.
 - a. They did not see Who He was.
 - b. God changed their perception.
 3. They were talking about Jesus between themselves.
 4. "We thought that He was the Redeemer of Israel."
 5. "Some women claim that He is alive."
- B. "Oh, fools, and slow of heart."
1. Fools.
 - a. This is the mildest word for "fool" in the Bible.
 - b. It means "unwise; not discerning."
 - c. They did not seem to be insulted by it.
 - d. Other references to "fool" in the Bible speak of reprobation, or "one who willfully rejects truth."
 2. "Slow of heart" means "slow to receive truth."
- C. Expounding Messianic scriptures.
1. Beginning with Moses and the prophets.
 2. There are over 300 prophetic verses about Jesus in the Old Testament.
 3. There were plenty to choose from.
 4. Jesus taught them about God's plan of redemption, from the Old Testament.
 5. "Should not Christ suffer these things, and enter into His glory?"
 - a. The suffering was necessary.
 - b. Glory comes out of dying to self and doing God's will.

III. Breaking Bread.

- A. "Stay with us."
1. It was late.
 2. They had arrived at Emmaus.
- B. He took bread.
1. When He broke the bread, they saw Who He was.
 2. He then vanished.
 3. "Did not our hearts burn within us?"
 - a. "We should have known Who He was, because of the powerful anointing."
 - b. "He made the scripture come alive."

IV. The Sunday Evening Service.

- A. The two men went back immediately to Jerusalem.
1. They found the apostles.
 2. They were still together.
 3. "The Lord is risen indeed!"
 - a. They confirmed what Mary had told them earlier.
 - b. "Jesus is alive!"
 - c. "He was made known to us, in the breaking of bread!"
- B. Jesus appeared among them. (Luke 24:36-43)
1. Suddenly, He was in their midst.
 2. "Peace be unto you."
 - a. But they were terrified, anyway.
 - b. They thought they saw a ghost.
 - c. They had already heard two reports that Jesus was alive; but they still did not believe it.
 3. "Why are you troubled?"
 - a. "Look at my hands and feet."

- b. "I am not a spirit, because I have a body of flesh and bone."
- 4. "Touch Me."
 - a. He had told Mary earlier, "Do not touch Me." (John 20:17)
 - b. "I have not yet ascended to My Father in heaven."
 - c. Now, He says, "Touch Me."
 - d. Ephesians 4:8-10.
- 5. They still could not believe.
 - a. But it was because they were so full of joy.
 - b. This was a great wonder to them.
- 6. Jesus ate some fish and honey, in front of them.

C. The scripture.

1. Jesus explained the scriptural plan of salvation to them.
2. Then, they understood why He had to die as He did.
3. Until then, they were confused.
4. "You are witnesses." (Luke 24:48)

- The Moslems are looking for Mohammed to rise from the dead. He will not; but Jesus did, on the third day.
- When we walk together with Jesus, He makes the scriptures come alive in our hearts and minds.
- Most of us tend to be a little slow to believe.
- It was necessary for Jesus Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, in order to fulfill God's plan of redemption for mankind.
- It takes faith to believe the word spoken by other eyewitnesses; and God is pleased when we respond to His Word with faith.



Spiritual Truths

- Jesus rose from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- That same Holy Spirit lives in us, if we are born of the Spirit; and He is able to make us alive in our spirits and in bodies.
- "Resurrection" means the same body is transformed, as well as restored. It does not mean that we will get a different body.



Lesson Material

Jesus had many disciples, or followers; but the original twelve were closer to Him than others were. Just like today, some people are closer to God than others. The twelve lived in His presence constantly for over three years. Judas became a reprobate because of his love of money; but the other eleven are greatly honored in the kingdom of God. Apparently they even have their names engraved in the foundations of the New Jerusalem. (Revelation 21:14) What an honor. There were also friends of Jesus, like Mary and Martha, who had the privilege of sharing their home with Him on many occasions.

God loves us according to the integrity of His perfect being. He created us all for Himself. He is able to manifest His love

more to those who respond to Him with a pure heart of devotion and adoration. People who have a half-hearted acquaintance with the Lord will not experience the joy of His presence like those who love Him. God's goal is to be loved and worshipped (John 4:23); and the more we respond to Him, the more He pours out His love on us.

These two disciples had the wonderful privilege of being the second group to witness the proof of the Resurrection of Christ. Jesus had appeared to Mary in the garden near the tomb; and He told her to tell the disciples. After He made Himself known to the two followers, they went immediately back to Jerusalem, because they just had to tell the main body of disciples. Jesus waited until Sunday night to appear to them personally. He first spent time with the women and with these two men, largely so that they would give the word to these "main" disciples. He was closer to the eleven; but He wanted them to learn to trust the witness of others who had a revelation about Him.

Some people will believe only what they personally receive from God. If someone else gets a revelation of a truth, they tend to reject it, because it did not come to them directly. There is a prophetic verse, 2 Chronicles 20:20, which says, *"...Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper."* In other words, you first must have a personal and spiritual encounter and relationship with God for yourself. Your faith in God establishes your eternal destiny. But there are great blessings in life that God desires to give to us through other people. God speaks through preachers, teachers, prophets, etc. (Ephesians 4:11), in order to give us instruction in righteousness, encouragement, healing, and other

positive benefits. If we believe God to speak to us through His servants, then we are able to receive far more from Him than we would if we were limited only to what we got personally. We will tend to prosper (gain more in life), if we believe God's prophets.

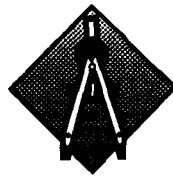
Even after the witness of the godly women and the two men on the road with Jesus, the eleven disciples still had a hard time believing that Jesus was really resurrected. When He appeared to them, they were terrified. They thought that He was a ghost. He had to convince them that He was truly alive. They were overcome with joy. Then He spent some time teaching them out of the Old Testament, and explaining that it had to be this way, in order to fulfill God's plan.

You would think that, after nearly four years of constant companionship, these men would have understood the plan. Jesus had given them many insights; and He even had explained it clearly to them. (Matthew 16:21) But they still did not understand. Part of the test of faith is that we do not know exactly what to expect. We cannot comprehend spiritual things, when we are depending upon our human understanding. (1 Corinthians 2:14) We may only have part of the information; and the rest must be taken on faith. Part of faith is that it is *"...the evidence of things not seen."* (Hebrews 11:1) If I cannot see the plan, then I have to trust God to work it out.

Notice that when Jesus was on the road to Emmaus, the two men's "eyes were holden." That is, God supernaturally affected their perception, so that they did not recognize Jesus. He had the same body that they had seen before; but they were being tested. These men did not know that Jesus was the One talking; but, their spirits

were stirred in them. They knew that, Whoever this was, He was right. When Jesus taught, the people noticed how different He was. They said of Him, "This Man speaks with authority. He is not like the scribes." (Matthew 7:29)

When they got to Emmaus, the men asked Him in. Jesus always waits for us to invite Him in. Even though these were believers, Jesus did not force them to be with Him. We often think that Revelation 3:20 is for sinners: "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock:....*" But that was written to the church. Jesus wants to have fellowship with His people, but we must invite Him in. We must seek His face continually. God will not force us to be spiritually alive or mature. When these disciples invited Him in, Jesus broke bread with them. Jesus was revealed in the breaking of bread. When we break bread with one another, there is something of Jesus revealed in us. He is the Lord of covenant. When we agree together and renew covenant, we are obeying His command (1 Corinthians 11:24-25); and we gain spiritual strength, as well as a fresh revelation of Jesus and His body, the church.



Methods

After focusing on the dark reality of sin and the crucifixion of Jesus, it is very important for us to celebrate the resurrection. There is a biblical principle which relates joy to sorrow. (John 16:20-23) In fact, there seems to be a direct correlation. The height of your joy cannot exceed the depth of your sorrow. Those who never experience grief cannot know true joy. If we have genuinely been moved by the message of the crucifixion of our Lord, then we will be utterly delighted by the message of the resurrection. Rejoice in it. Savor the moment. Jesus is alive! He is risen indeed!

Think of how the eleven must have felt when they heard the reports about Jesus being raised from the dead. Think of that moment when He appeared to them in that first Sunday night service. Think of how they felt when they were finally given the understanding about all of the dark events they had witnessed that week. How tragic that Judas reacted with such despair, and yielded to Satan's lie of suicide. How wonderful for Peter, who wept the most bitterly of all of them, because he had denied the Lord. But he had repented; and he was especially blessed to see the confirmation of his forgiveness in the loving eyes of his Lord. Resurrection Sunday. What a day!

Paul in Thessalonica and Berea

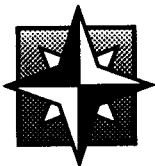
Volume 6

Lesson 43



Bible Reference

Acts 17



Theme

We should receive and support those whom God has called to preach the gospel; and we should verify the biblical accuracy of any teaching that we receive.



Scripture Reading

Acts 17:1-5, 10-12

1 *"Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:*

2 *"And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures.*

3 *"Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.*

4 *"And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.*

5 *"But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people."*

10 *"And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.*

11 *"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*

12 *"Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few."*

III. Paul in Berea.

A. The Christians sent Paul and Silas by night to Berea.

1. To escape the danger in Thessalonica.
2. Paul immediately again started preaching Jesus in the synagogue.

B. The Bereans.

1. "More noble" than the Thessalonians because:
 - a. They received the Word with a ready mind.
 - b. They searched the Bible, in order to check out the sermons.
2. They were not skeptical; but they did not just swallow everything they heard.
3. The Bereans had a good spirit; and they were eager to hear Paul's preaching.
4. But they were wise, and they studied the Word every day.
5. God was pleased with the group.

C. More persecution.

1. The same rascals who fought them in Thessalonica came over to Berea, in order to stir up the Bereans against the apostles.
2. Paul was sent on to Athens, Greece.
3. Silas and Timothy followed, soon after.

in order to show the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah for whom they were looking.

- The Old Testament always points to Jesus Christ, and to God's plan of salvation and holiness.
- When you support and defend God's preachers, you may get ridiculed or rejected by the people who envy them; but God will bless you, for blessing His servants.
- If you do not receive the preacher, you cannot receive the ministry or the blessing he has to give.
- God loves it when people are eager to hear good preaching.
- It is important that we not only receive the Word with gladness, but that we also check out the scriptures for ourselves, in order to confirm and clarify the Word.



Lesson Material

Paul and Barnabas were an excellent missionary team, but even they had problems. They had different leadership styles; and the day came in which they parted company. They each led a separate ministry team; and both were mightily used of the Lord.

They had a disagreement over John Mark, an associate minister. When things got tough, John left the team. Later, he came back; and he wanted to go on the second trip. Paul, who was so zealously



Spiritual Truths

- The apostles generally began their ministry to any city in the synagogues,

dedicated to God that he could not understand why anyone would quit, had little tolerance for John Mark; and he said, "Nothing doing. He is a quitter." But Barnabas tended to be more patient than Paul; and he insisted that they put John Mark back on the team. John Mark did not have a moral failure -- he just could not handle the persecution. Paul and Barnabas split up, so that Barnabas could continue to work with John Mark, who eventually proved himself, even to the apostle Paul. (2 Timothy 4:11)

Paul had a strong team, including Silas, and young Timothy, from Lystra. Timothy was probably a convert from Paul's first missionary journey -- his own "son" in the faith. (Titus 1:4) Luke also accompanied Paul on most of his trips, although he rarely mentioned himself in the account in Acts.

In Thessalonica, a wealthy and important city of Asia Minor, Paul and the team focused the first part of their ministry on the Jewish synagogue. Paul spent three sabbaths teaching about Jesus from the Old Testament; and many people responded to the Word and were saved. Note that Jesus had told them to go first to the *"...lost sheep of the house of Israel."* (Matthew 10:6) Of course, they also preached the gospel to the gentiles everywhere they went; and many of the gentiles were also added to the number of believers.

God worked through Paul in a mighty move of the Spirit at the local synagogue. Eventually, the Christians were rejected by the Jewish leaders; and a great Christian church was formed, which God blessed and honored. The Jews who rejected the gospel also rejected the preachers; and they were driven with a deep sense of envy. Envy is a strong sense of animosity and ill

will, focusing on the success or superiority of another. Envy seeks to exalt self, by destroying or damaging the success or reputation of someone who is perceived to be better. 1 Corinthians 13 is called the "Love chapter" of the Bible; and it tells us that real love does not envy. (1 Corinthians 13:4) In fact, God's grace enables us to delight in the success and blessing of our brothers, and to even prefer others above ourselves. (Romans 12:10) Grace causes us to seek glory and honor for Christ, and to be content, as long as His will is done, whether we are rewarded or not. Envy is one of the damaging results of pride and selfishness, which are works of the flesh. (Galatians 5:19-21) The more we love God, the less we struggle with the "green monster" of envy.

Jason is an unsung hero of the early church. He was one of the new converts to Christianity; and he opened his home to the apostolic team. He probably helped to hide the preachers and defend them from the angry mob, which had been stirred up by the unbelieving synagogue leaders. Note that the Jewish leaders had gathered a group of "lewd fellows of the baser sort." That means that they were wicked people, who loved violence and evil. Today, there is a great emphasis on violence, profane language, and lewd behavior in the world's entertainment. As Christians, our hearts should be grieved by this focus on evil. We should be careful to avoid exposing our minds to it, because we can become insensitive to it. These men naturally fit in to the unbelievers' plans. They loved violence; and so, they were easily persuaded to attack the Christians.

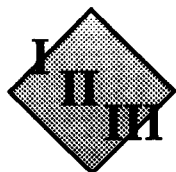
When the mob could not find Paul and his team, they hauled Jason to court. Jason was ordered to pay "security." It was probably a sum of money, which was paid in order to guarantee that the Christians



Memory Verse

Acts 17:11

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."



Outline

I. Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica.

A. Second missionary journey.

1. Sent out with a team.
2. Barnabas and Paul had parted company over the issue of John Mark. (Acts 15:37-40)
 - a. Barnabas, wanted to keep John on the team, even though he had quit earlier.
 - b. Paul was less tolerant; and he refused to include him.
 - c. Paul later accepted John Mark as a "profitable" minister, after he had proven himself. (2 Timothy 4:11)
3. Other members of the team:
 - a. Silas.
 - b. Luke.
 - c. Timothy.
 - d. Other preachers and helpers.

B. First to the Jews.

1. Paul generally started in any city in the Jewish synagogue.
2. He taught about Jesus from the Old Testament.
3. He showed them that Jesus was the true Messiah of the Jews.
4. Many Jews and Greeks believed the gospel and were born again.

C. Opposition.

1. Some Jewish leaders who did not believe were envious; and they stirred up people against the Christians.
2. They assaulted the house of Jason.

II. Jason.

A. A prominent man in Thessalonica, who supported Paul's ministry. (Acts 17:5-9)

1. An unsung hero.
2. He probably kept them in his home and was hospitable toward them.

B. Association.

1. When the angry mob could not find the apostles, they attacked Jason's home.
2. They called the preachers "these that turn the world upside down." (Acts 17:6)
 - a. That was their perspective.
 - b. Actually, they were turning the world "right-side up."
3. Jason was persecuted for supporting the missionaries.
4. He was taken to court, and fined.
5. Jason paid a price, in helping the work of the gospel.

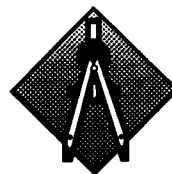
would not cause trouble. Actually, it was the men who opposed Christianity who caused the trouble; but, that is the way of the world. Christians have been blamed for many of the evils in the world, which were actually brought on by those who hate the gospel. There have been so-called Christian leaders (who were actually cultic), who have amassed to themselves the fortunes of hundreds of followers, and then destroyed those same followers by encouraging mass suicide. The news media then associates such activity with Christianity, stirring up hatred and persecution of true believers.

Jason blessed the men of God; and God honored him for it. He endured persecution, just because he received the preachers and supported them. You may be in a place at some time to defend the reputation or even the life of a preacher from those who would seek to harm him or his ministry. Be quick to defend those who defend the gospel.

When Paul and the team went on to Berea, they used the same evangelism technique; and they encountered the same kind of opposition. It was basically the same wicked people, because they followed them from Thessalonica, in order to stir up opposition.

The significant difference was the quality of people in Berea. Generally, the Bereans were very receptive to the gospel message. They were eager to hear the Word. But they were not gullible or passive. They delighted in the great preaching; and then they searched the Word, in order to make sure that the preaching was biblical. All preaching that is anointed by God will stand the scrutiny of the Bible. Now, even the most honest preacher will make mistakes. He will say something on occasion that is not accurate,

or say it in a way that will lead to a wrong conclusion. If he is honest, he will be open to the balance of other ministers; and he will respond positively, when he is shown the Word. We need to receive much feeding by the preaching of the Word. This creates a focus on God, and it helps keep us in the Word. We should always love the preaching and teaching of God's Word; and we should love and honor those who preach it. But we are responsible to maintain our own Bible study and devotional time before the Lord, rather than totally depending on the preaching and teaching received in our church meetings. Only then can we search the scriptures, and "see if these things be so." (Acts 17:11)



Methods

Our function as teachers goes far beyond the imparting of a segment of biblical or ethical knowledge to be given in a short weekly Sunday School class. We are called to inspire those we influence to become lifelong students of the Word. It is more important to inspire than to inform. Seek to cultivate a group of "Bereans," who love the Word, and who check out all preaching and teaching with daily scripture searches.

Discuss Jason, and others who supported the preachers. Let us realize that these people are essential to the progress of the gospel. For every one who goes full-time in ministry, there must be many others who keep them going, both with their financial support, and with their prayers.

Paul in Athens

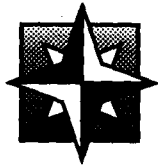
Volume 6

Lesson 44



Bible Reference

Acts 17



Theme

We cannot establish a relationship with God through any of the religions of the world, but only through Jesus Christ.



Scripture Reading

Acts 17:15-18, 22-24, 26-28, 30-31

15 "And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

16 "Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him,

when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

17 "Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

18 "Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods; because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection."

22 "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

23 "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

24 "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;"

26 "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

27 "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find

him, thought he be not far from every one of us:

28 "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."

30 "(God) now commandeth all men everywhere to repent:

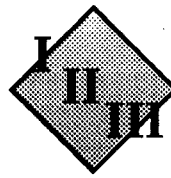
31 "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by {that} man whom he hath ordained; {whereof} he hath given assurance unto all {men}, in that he hath raised him from the dead."



Memory Verse

Jeremiah 9:23-24

"Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight saith the LORD."



Outline

I. Athens.

A. Part of Paul's second missionary journey.

B. Center of Greek culture.

1. Many scholarly philosophers.
2. City of idolatry and immorality.
 - a. Athens was named for the goddess, Athena.
 - b. Mars' Hill was named for the Greek god, Mars.

C. The Unknown God.

1. Mars' Hill had many temples and monuments to gods.
2. They even had a generic god, in case they came across a situation to which they had no god assigned.
3. Paul said, "The God you do not know is the one true God."
4. The true God is not a glorified human, or an animal, or a star.
5. God is the infinite, Triune God.
 - a. "Trinity" means "three persons, yet one God."
 - b. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (1 John 5:7)
 - c. Hebrew *Elohim* is a plural noun, used with a singular verb in the Old Testament.
 - d. Jesus prayed to the Father; and He sent the Holy Ghost. (John 14:16-17)
 - e. The doctrine of the Trinity is generally rejected by cults.

- f. Man would never invent a concept that he could not comprehend.

II. Athenian Philosophy.

A. Greatly influenced by heathen philosophers who lived 300 to 400 years B.C.

1. Socrates.
2. Plato.
3. Aristotle.
4. Many of these philosophers were brilliant but morally perverted men, who glorified their own intellect.
5. Greeks were known as "highbrow" intellectuals.
 - a. The Greeks seek wisdom. (1 Corinthians 1:22)
 - b. The world by (natural, or intellectual) wisdom knew not God. (1 Corinthians 1:21)
6. Actually, they had no wisdom at all.
 - a. *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom:...."* (Psalms 111:10)
 - b. Wisdom is seeing life from God's eternal perspective.
 - c. They had some knowledge and understanding, but no wisdom, because they arrived at wrong basic conclusions about life.

B. The Greeks glorified the flesh and sensual lust.

1. They worshipped goddesses of fertility with sexual orgies and prostitution.
2. Greek Olympic games.
 - a. Men competed naked.
 - b. Greeks glorified the naked body, because they were full of lust.
 - c. Their *"...glory is in their shame,...."* (Philippians 3:19)

III. Epicureans.

A. A Greek school of philosophy.

1. 400 B.C..
2. Believed in egoistic hedonism.
 - a. Focus on selfish pleasure.
 - b. Pride.
 - c. 1 John 2:16.
3. They were probably the ones who flatly rejected Paul's teaching, and who told him to leave.

B. Epicureanism.

1. The purpose of life is pleasure.
2. Life is defined only by experience.

C. Forerunner to its modern cousin, secular humanism.

1. "Secular" means "leave God out."
2. Humanism is the worship of and focus on mankind.
3. This has become the unofficial state religion of many nations of the world.
 - a. They must leave God out of (secularize) education.
 - b. They leave God out of government, literature, and any other media of communication.
4. Based on the doctrine of evolution.
 - a. Life just happens by accident.
 - b. People are highly evolved mammals.
 - c. Nations rise and fall, for no reason.

IV. The Stoics.

A. A more religious philosophy.

1. Founded by the Greek philosopher, Zeno.
2. 280 B.C.
3. Philosophy -- "follow nature."

- a. Believed that you should be resigned to fate.
 - b. Based on pride, independence.
 - c. Code of ethics based on fleshly pride, and not on humility and faith, like Christianity.
4. Pantheism: the belief that everything is God.
- a. Universal consciousness.
 - b. Anything can be a god.
5. Stoics were generally the ones who wanted to hear more from Paul.
6. Forerunner of the New Age Movement and other cults.

B. Cults.

1. There are about 5,000 cults (false religious systems); but only one true faith.
2. Cults are systems of religion based on man's ideas and Satan's influence.
 - a. All include some biblical truths, mixed with perversions and deceptions.
 - b. Vast variety of concepts about God and man.
3. All cults reject the deity of Jesus Christ.
4. All cults reject the biblical teaching of an eternal hell, because the natural mind rejects the idea of eternal punishment for sin.
5. Cults always reject the basic principle of eternal salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ, apart from works.

C. Non-Christian cults.

1. Islam.
 - a. Moslems.
 - b. Worship a false god named "Allah."

- c. They hope that their dead prophet, Mohammed will rise from the dead.
2. Hinduism.
- a. Three million gods.
 - b. They worship demon spirits, thinking that they are gods.
 - c. They teach reincarnation, instead of resurrection.
3. Scientology.
- a. Invented by a science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard.
 - b. "Dianetics" an intelligent sounding bit of "psycho-babble."
4. New Age.
- a. Mixture of Hinduism and secular humanism.
 - b. "Channeling" is actually becoming demon-possessed.
 - c. Just old idolatry and witchcraft.

D. Pseudo-Christian cults.

1. False religions that call themselves Christian.
2. Mormonism.
 - a. Invented by Joseph Smith, who was given a book which superseded the Bible by an angel.
 - b. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.
 - c. Headquarters in Utah.
3. Jehovah's Witnesses.
 - a. A religion invented by Charles Taze Russel.
 - b. Mixture of Old Testament law, works, and some Bible.
4. Christian Science.
 - a. Invented by a woman named Mary Baker Eddy.
 - b. Inspired by demonic hallucinations and weird dreams.
 - c. There is nothing Christian or scientific about it.



Spiritual Truths

- Jesus taught in parables, because He wanted a people who would know and worship God in spirit, and not just as an intellectual concept.
- A man's theology is dictated by his morality more than by his intellect.
- It is possible to be intellectually brilliant and still be a fool, if the mind has only secular knowledge and no fear of God.
- We are not transformed by the removal of our minds, but by the renewing of our minds.
- Paul is a good example of a powerful intellect which was made subject in humility to the control of the Holy Spirit; and the result was great wisdom and joy.
- It is proper, healthy, and intellectually sound to glory in God with great joy, admiration, and zeal.
- The doctrines of the Trinity and of hell must be received as revelation from God, because they would never have been invented by the mind of man.
- Satan lures more people away from truth by counterfeiting Christianity, than by openly opposing it.
- There are millions of people who think they are going to heaven, but who are not.
- Cults ultimately appeal to pride, bitterness, lust, or greed, in order to attract converts.



Lesson Material

When Paul went to the great city of Athens, he had quite a task to face. Athens was the heart of Greek culture. The Greeks were very proud of their knowledge; and they spent much of their time debating and discussing philosophy in the markets and other public places. It was not unusual for large groups to gather around a speaker who proved to be articulate and interesting; and so, we are not surprised that Paul was able to get an audience on Mars' Hill.

There were several basic schools of philosophy that dominated the Greek culture. Two of them were mentioned by Luke in the text: the Epicureans and the Stoics. In the final analysis, philosophy and religion are generally the same. Philosophy is the search for meaning and truth, and religion is the search for God. Ultimately, there is no real purpose or truth in life apart from God; and so, all legitimate philosophy must be centered in God. Otherwise, it becomes a meaningless mix of worthless ideas, resulting in hopelessness and confusion.

The Epicureans were the secular humanists of the day. They were influenced by Plato and other sodomites who gloried in their brilliant minds and who were turned away from God by their wicked and perverted hearts. Their ungodly lifestyles caused them to reject truth; and their pride drove them to exalt the mind and body of man above everything else. Modern humanists like to refer to the Greek philosophers as sincere and honest pioneers of humanistic wisdom; but they were generally immoral

rebels against God, who loved to influence people with weaker minds. Today some people try to portray the Greeks as being so pure of mind that they thought nothing but beautiful thoughts about the unclad human form. Actually, they were moral perverts who loved nakedness, because it appealed to their lust. The original Olympic games were open only to men who were willing to compete naked, thus pleasing the perverted hearts of the patrons of the games. The worship of many of their false gods involved all kinds of sensual practices, spreading disease and folly, and breaking down the family. This rise of humanism resulted in rebellious children, broken homes, and national strife, which ended in the destruction and failure of the society as a whole. Later, the wealthy Romans brought in these Greek humanist thinkers to tutor their children; and the result was the fall of the Roman Empire. Nations always rise and fall according to their response to God. Today, even nations which were established as Christian nations have adopted the philosophy of the Epicureans; and they are falling socially and economically, as well as spiritually.

The Epicureans were egoistic (self-centered) hedonists (lovers of pleasure). Their philosophy was very contrary to Christianity, which is Christ-centered. The Psalmist said, *"The fool hath said in his heart, {There is} no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, {there is} none that doeth good."* (Psalms 14:1) When you remove God from your thinking, you remove accountability from life. If there is no God, then I can do what I want, without restraint. If you take God out of education, you produce a generation of aimless rebels, because *"...by the fear of the LORD {men} depart from evil."* (Proverbs 16:6)

The Stoics were religious. They thought that life was controlled by fate, and that ethics should be controlled by a proud, self-sufficient spirit. They thought that "god" was everything -- that there was some sort of "universal consciousness" or god-likeness in everything. But if everything is god, then there is no personal God. God becomes merely "the force" of nature. The basis of the Bible is the revelation of a living, eternal, personal, loving God. The Stoics were very religious; but there was no true object of their religion. Ultimately, their religion turned in on itself; and they became no more spiritual or wise than the Epicureans. They were in just as much darkness with a mindless, universal god, as the Epicureans were with no god at all.

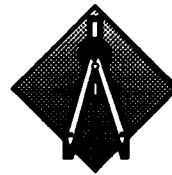
We can see the results of the Stoic influence in the modern cults of today. While true Christianity is God's revelation of Himself to man (through the spirit), false religions are based on man's attempt to explain or find God through intellect or emotion (soul); and they are influenced by demonic personalities and doctrines. Sometimes demons will appear to a person and impersonate God or angels, as they did to deceive Joseph Smith and other religiously deceived people. The Greeks, like the Romans after them, invented gods according to their own lusts and personal flaws. Like Joseph Smith, they saw gods as glorified men of some sort. The Mormon church teaches that Adam evolved and is God, and that men will eventually become gods, if they are good Mormons. They present themselves as Christian; but they do not really believe that Jesus is God the Son, or that His blood is sufficient to atone for the sins of the world. They believe in "another Jesus." (2 Corinthians 11:3-4)

There are thousands of religions in the world; but only faith in Jesus Christ will get you to heaven. All religions give people a false hope, and draw them away from Jesus. But Christianity is more than a religion -- it is a relationship. Religion is man making his way to God; relationship is God making His Way (Jesus Christ) to man. (John 14:6)

One reason that there are so many false religions flourishing in the world is the spiritual vacuum caused by the lukewarm church. With little spiritual emphasis in our public life and little Bible study in our homes, the church becomes easily drawn into worldliness. When the church fails to teach fathers to have good marriages and strong families, the Mormon church comes along and promotes itself as having answers for the family. When the church fails to move in the supernatural gifts of the Spirit and divine healing, the occult world comes to glorify witchcraft and promise supernatural power. While the church fails to train up disciples to take the gospel into all the world, the Jehovah's Witnesses come along and promise salvation by works, motivating people to spread their doctrine with dogged determination.

Paul gave the answer to the cult problem in Acts 17:30 -- God "...now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." God is not looking for a people who are willing to accept Him into their philosophy base. God wants a people who will deny self and seek Him with all of

their hearts. If you seek truth with your mind, you will find deception. If you seek God with an honest heart, you will find truth. Repent of your self-willed rebellion. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, not only as your Savior from sin, but also as the Lord and Ruler of your life. Repent, believe, and be saved.



Methods

Discussion:

Define the differences between the Epicureans and the Stoics.

Why do modern historians like to promote Plato, Socrates, and other Greek philosophers as great men of history, while ignoring men like Moses, David, Paul, and of course, Jesus, Who is the central Person of history?

What is philosophy?

What is the religion of secular humanism?

What is the New Age religion, and how is it similar to Stoicism?

What did Paul mean by "*Beware lest any man spoil you (take you as spoils of war) through philosophy and vain deceit,....*" (Colossians 2:8)?

Rizpah: A Faithful Mother

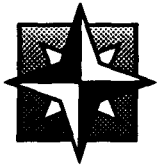
Volume 6

Lesson 45



Bible Reference

2 Samuel 21



Theme

There are few things as sure and as enduring as a mother's love, and her desire to see her children honored in life.



Scripture Reading

2 Samuel 21:1-6, 8-10

1 "Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.

2 "And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them; (now the Gibeonites were

not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.)

3 "Wherefore David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD?

4 "And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. And he said, What ye shall say, {that} will I do for you.

5 "And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and that devised against us that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel,

6 "Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, whom the LORD did choose. And the king said, I will give them."

8 "But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite:

9 "And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them

in the hill before the LORD: and they fell {all} seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first {days}, in the beginning of barley harvest.

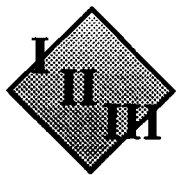
10 "And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night."



Memory Verse

Proverbs 22:1

"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold."



Outline

I. The Gibeonites.

- A. Joshua had made a covenant with them hundreds of years before Saul was king.
 - 1. They had tricked the Israelites into thinking that they were from a far, distant country.
 - 2. Israel was ordered to wipe out the people in Canaan, including the Gibeonites.

- 3. Joshua went by what he saw; and he did not investigate them.

- B. They had been a problem to Israel ever since.

II. King Saul.

- A. Saul broke the treaty and attacked the Gibeonites.
- B. He killed many of them.
- C. Then Saul died, and David became king of Israel.
- D. The famine.
 - 1. God caused a three-year famine.
 - 2. God told David that it was caused by Saul's treachery in breaking the treaty.
 - 3. To remove the curse, David had to make it right with the Gibeonites.
- E. The settlement.
 - 1. The Gibeonites wanted revenge on Saul.
 - 2. They asked for seven of his descendants to be executed in shame.
 - 3. David gave them the seven men to kill, including Rizpah's two sons.

III. Rizpah.

- A. Saul's concubine.
 - 1. A concubine was a woman who served as a wife, but who did not have a covenant with the man.
 - 2. She did housework and bore children for him; but she did not have the rights and privileges of a wife.

3. Some women today live with a man, without a legal marriage.
 - a. They give marital privileges to a man, but they do not have the same security and rights as a wife.
 - b. This is like being a concubine; and it is not wise.

B. Rizpah loved her sons.

IV. A Good Name.

A. Rizpah's sons were hanged, and their bodies were left to the beasts and vultures.

1. To be hanged was the most shameful way to die.
 - a. "...Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (Galatians 3:13)
 - b. A burial was a sign of honor for the dead.
2. Rizpah could not save her sons from death; but she could protect their honor.

B. Rizpah put sackcloth (a sign of mourning) on a rock, and stayed out by the bodies to protect them from predators.

1. This is a picture of love and devotion.
2. She was determined that they would not be devoured by predators.
3. This is a picture (a "type") of mothers who fast and pray for their children faithfully, so that the devourer (Satan) does not destroy their children.

C. David heard of Rizpah's heroic deed, and he ordered a proper burial for her sons.



Spiritual Truths

- A mother will tend to love you and believe in you, when no one else will.
- A mother will be the first one to bless you and the last one to give up on you.
- A mother will usually want honor and blessing for her children more than for herself.
- God designed marriage; but men designed the concubine strategy, because of their selfish lack of commitment.
- Foolish is the woman who lives with a man without marriage. She makes herself a concubine, without the security of a covenant.
- A good name (reputation) is more important than wealth.
- Reputation (what people think I am) is important; but it is not as important as good character (what God knows I am).
- A proper burial is a sign of belief in the resurrection; and it has always been associated with honor and respect.



Lesson Material

In the story of Rizpah, we not only have an allegory of a faithful mother and her care for the honor of her children, but

we also have an illustration of the importance of keeping your word. Note the significance of God's actions toward the nation of Israel.

There are a number of reasons why Saul could have rationalized his attacks on the people of Gibeon. We all know that their treaty was obtained by fraud. (Joshua 9) When they learned that Israel was called of God to conquer the land of Canaan and destroy the nations in it, they sent some ambassadors to the Israeli camp with old, moldy bread and worn-out clothes, and the story that they were actually from a far, distant land. Joshua was supposed to kill them. God had ordered their death. With God, a man's word is extremely important. God is a God of covenant; and He always keeps His word. Even though there were negative circumstances, God expected Israel to keep their covenant.

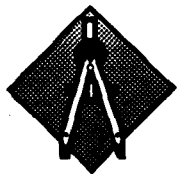
The Psalmist asked, "*LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?*" (Psalms 15:1) One of the qualifications was, "*...he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.*" (Psalms 15:4) In other words, if you want to walk with God and not fall by the wayside, keep your word, even if it turns out not to be in your best interest. Today, even Christians make agreements and covenants; and then, if they decide that it is not in their best interest, they break their word. We should remember that the purpose of a marriage ceremony is to make a vow before witnesses that we will stay married "for better or for worse." Christians do not have a right to divorce when things get "worse;" but, they often do. Then they wonder why there is such a drought in their spiritual life. We need to be people who keep our word, so that we can be in a position to enjoy the blessings of God.

When the Gibeonites caused trouble against Israel, Saul felt quite justified in attacking them. It was, after all, in the best interest of Israel. They were a source of irritation; and does God not want His people to be happy, and free from hassle? Were they not tricked into giving their word? They were heathens, were they not? We can easily talk ourselves into breaking the covenants that we have made. We can have many excuses. But, will God bless our choices?

It was God Himself who withheld the blessing of rain on Israel. Saul had broken the covenant; but God wanted to teach His people to be covenant-keepers. King David found out from the Lord that God was holding the nation accountable for the word of Joshua, and that they needed to make things right.

It sounds strange to us that, when the Gibeonites asked for the lives of seven of Saul's sons, David complied. But the Israelites needed to learn a hard lesson; and God was showing them the seriousness of breaking a vow. When vows are broken, innocent people are seriously hurt. Our choices affect other people. In this case, Saul's choice cost the lives of Rizpah's poor sons.

The Gibeonites hanged the seven men, because hanging has always been a sign of dishonor. Rizpah was rightly grieved; but she did all that she could to honor her two sons. She stayed out in the field, protecting the bodies from the scavenger birds and beasts. She was determined that they would not be eaten by the vultures; and she hoped for an honorable burial. Her faithfulness paid off, for David finally sent for the bodies and gave them a burial. Once again, the sacrifice and faithfulness of a mother prevailed; and the names of her sons were preserved.



Methods

Discuss the life and role of a concubine. Is this God's best for a woman? Should we promote and esteem the marriage covenant?

What about a covenant? Have you known of people who broke covenants and then rationalized it away, like Saul did?

What do we learn from the story of the Gibeonites about the importance of keeping our word?

What do we see in Rizpah that reminds us of the heart of a good mother?

The Ephesian Believers

Volume 6

Lesson 46



Bible References

Acts 2

Acts 19

1 Corinthians 14

Romans 6

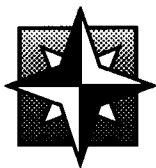
2 "He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

3 "And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said unto him, Unto John's baptism.

4 "Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

5 "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."



Theme

Jesus desires to baptize every born-again believer in the Holy Spirit.



Scripture Reading

Acts 19:1-6

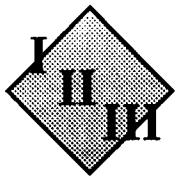
1 "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coast came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,



Memory Verse

Matthew 3:11

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the [Holy Ghost], [and {with} fire]:"



Outline

I. The Question at Ephesus.

A. Paul met some Christians in Ephesus.

B. "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed (became a Christian)?"

1. There is a difference between the indwelling Holy Spirit and the baptism in the Holy Spirit.
2. This is why Paul asked the question.
3. He acknowledged that they were believers; but they did not seem to have the manifestation of the Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:1)
4. It is possible to be a genuine believer, and not receive the Holy Spirit baptism.
5. But God wants every believer to receive.

C. They said, "We have not even heard whether there is a Holy Ghost."

1. They had learned about repentance and faith.
2. No one had taught them further about the things of God.

D. "Unto what were you baptized?"

1. Paul wondered if they had received true Christian baptism.
2. He was trying to determine what they had been taught.

II. Water Baptism.

A. Baptism.

1. From the Greek *baptizo*, which means "to be completely immersed, covered over."
2. A burial in water, symbolizing our baptism into the body of Christ at regeneration. (Romans 6)
3. Symbolizes our identification with the death and resurrection of Jesus.

B. John's baptism.

1. Preparing the way for Christ.
2. A baptism unto repentance.
 - a. John led people to show their sorrow for their sins by submitting to baptism.
 - b. They showed their humility and desire for God's righteousness.
3. Jesus came to John to be baptized. (Matthew 3)
 - a. John was surprised, because he only baptized for repentance.
 - b. Jesus had no sin to repent of.
 - c. Jesus initiated Christian baptism by being buried in water, in order to show His total commitment to the Father.
 - d. It also symbolized His future death and resurrection.

C. Baptized into the body of Christ. (Romans 6)

1. An act of the Holy Spirit.
2. He places us into the body of Christ.
3. We are "in Him."
4. The Holy Spirit does this at the moment of salvation for every believer.
5. This work of the Holy Spirit is symbolized by water baptism.
6. "*Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive*"

unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:11)

- D. Jesus commissioned the disciples: *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"* (Matthew 28:19)

III. The Baptism In the Holy Ghost.

A. An immersion in the Holy Spirit.

1. A further work of God, subsequent to regeneration.
2. Jesus Christ Himself is the baptizer. (Matthew 3:11)
3. This can only happen to born-again believers.

B. They spoke with tongues. (Acts 19:6)

1. Since the initial outpouring in Acts 2, the gift was accompanied by the glossolalia, or "speaking in unknown tongues." (1 Corinthians 14:2)
2. Sometimes, they also prophesied. (Acts 19:6; 1 Corinthians 14)
3. There was always a supernatural manifestation, although "tongues" are not always specifically mentioned in every instance of the Holy Spirit baptism in Acts.
4. When Peter heard the Gentiles speaking in tongues, he immediately knew that they were genuine believers; and he needed no other evidence. (Acts 10)
5. We speak with tongues "as the Spirit gives utterance (gives the words)." (Acts 2:4)

C. Why tongues?

1. The tongue is our most unruly member. (James 3:8)
2. The key to receiving the Holy Spirit baptism is yielding our hearts and our tongues to His control.
3. Speaking in tongues builds our spirit up. (1 Corinthians 14:4)
4. When we pray in tongues, our spirits are praying. (1 Corinthians 14:14)

D. Prophecy.

1. Another of the nine "spirituals," or manifestations of the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:7-11)
2. The Holy Spirit gives the thought, or words; and we speak out as yielded vessels.
3. Tongues builds up our spirit, while prophecy builds up the whole church. (1 Corinthians 14:4)



Spiritual Truths

- It is possible to be born again and go to heaven, without ever receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit; but this baptism is available to every believer.
- The more that evil abounds in our surroundings, the more we need the power and boldness that the Holy Spirit baptism provides.
- The baptism in the Holy Ghost is a one-time experience; but we need to keep on being filled with the Spirit.
- Water baptism does not save us; but it is a necessary response of obedience, whereby we testify that we are

identified with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- Praying in tongues means that our spirit is given the utterance to speak things which we do not understand with our minds, but which God does understand.
- Prophecy means to speak what God puts in your mind to speak; and it is limited to edification, exhortation, and comfort.
- Speaking in tongues builds up the spirit of the one speaking, while prophecy builds up everyone who hears the word from God.
- God chose the tongue to be the instrument for manifesting the baptism in the Holy Spirit, because the tongue is the hardest member to yield.



Lesson Material

The city of Ephesus was an important part of the New Testament church. Paul wrote his grand thesis on the vision of the church to that congregation years later, when he was in prison for preaching the gospel. Paul had spent a year and a half in Corinth, where he became close friends with an Italian Jew named Aquila, and his wife, Priscilla. They were also tentmakers, who had a natural affinity with this zealous little Jewish Christian. Paul was undoubtedly a major influence in their lives; and they did some missionary work with him.

They were later in Ephesus, when they heard about an outstanding preacher named Apollos, who was from Egypt. Apollos was an excellent speaker; but he did not really know about all that God was doing. He had heard about the baptism of John, and about Jesus; and he did a great work in the ministry. But Aquila and Priscilla went to him and spent much time teaching him about the things of the Spirit. Apollos was preaching what he knew; and he had an honest heart. Aquila and Priscilla discovered this when they went to him; and they taught him about Christian baptism, the Holy Spirit, and all of the other things that God was doing through the apostles. So Paul greatly influenced Apollos -- but indirectly, because Aquila and Priscilla taught what they had learned from Paul. Apollos was the one to do the mass preaching.

This explains why Paul found these young Christians in Ephesus, who had not heard about the Holy Ghost. They did not know about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. They were walking faithfully in the light they had; and they were open to further revelation about God and His ways.

"Have you received the Holy Ghost, since you believed?" The Holy Spirit indwells all believers at the moment of salvation. (Romans 8:9) Paul's question was asked in order to determine whether these believers had received only John's baptism, or were actually born-again believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Otherwise, he would have presupposed that they had received the Holy Ghost.

John baptized people in the muddy Jordan river, as a sign of repentance. He was surprised when Jesus came to be baptized, because repentance baptism was all he knew, and Jesus had nothing to repent about. Jesus was initiating Christian

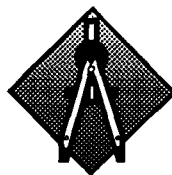
baptism, which is different from John's baptism. He was showing His complete submission to the Father. At the age of 30, He was beginning His ministry by an act of humility and covenant. Water baptism says, "I am born again. I renounce my past selfish life. I renounce my sin, and dedicate my body to God." *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."* (Galatians 2:20) In water baptism, we testify to our covenant with God, which we received when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation.

As believers, we are baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 6) Water baptism is an outward sign of this inward experience. Just as the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ, so also Jesus baptizes us into the Holy Spirit. The baptism in the Holy Spirit results in the believer's ability to operate in the "spirituals," or "spiritual gifts" listed in 1 Corinthians 12. The baptism in the Holy Spirit enables us to operate in these supernatural manifestations of the Spirit, and edifies us and empowers us for the purpose of witnessing for Jesus Christ. (Acts 1:8)

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a one-time experience for the believer; one does not need to be "re-baptized." However, the infilling of the Holy Spirit is a continual process, which results in the production of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, which is the character of Jesus Christ formed in us. (Galatians 5:22-23) There is only one Holy Spirit baptism; but there must be many infillings, because there are many "leaks." In Ephesians 5:18, the command to "be filled with the Spirit" can be more accurately translated as "be continually being filled (refilled) with the Spirit." How

are we filled with the Spirit? By Psalms, hymns, giving thanks, submitting one to another, etc. (Ephesians 5:19-21). Jesus baptizes us in the Holy Spirit, in response to believing prayer; but it is up to us to stay filled with the Spirit. The evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is the manifestation of the Spirit (initially, speaking in tongues); and the evidence of being filled with the Spirit is the fruit of the Spirit being manifested in our lives.

When the Ephesian Christians were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, the apostle Paul then laid hands on them; and they received the glorious baptism in the Holy Spirit. They spoke in languages that they had not learned, and they also prophesied. They knew without question that they had received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, because they had received a supernatural sign. It is not essential that we receive the laying on of hands to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit; but it does help us to release our faith and receive it. We need to all receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit -- not so that we can feel the excitement and joy, but so that we can receive power to be bold witnesses for God, and have a greater ability to pray effectively.



Methods

Discussion:

What is the difference between John's baptism and Christian baptism?

What is the difference between baptism in water, and the baptism in the Holy Spirit?

What is the difference between the infilling of the Holy Spirit and the baptism in the Holy Spirit?

Object Lesson:

Fill a small fish tank, or large-mouthed jar, with water. Dip a glass or cup into the water to illustrate being "filled" with the

Spirit. Now take the same glass and completely submerge it in the water. That is a baptism. Pour out the water as you talk about John 7:37, and other references to giving and pouring out; and then refill the glass several times. Note that Ephesians 5:18 says "...*Be filled* (present progressive Greek tense, 'Keep on being filled') *with the Spirit.*"

Friendship

Volume 6

Lesson 47



Bible References

Ephesians 4

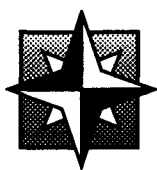
Ecclesiastes 4

1 Samuel 18

10 *"For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up."*

11 *"Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?"*

12 *"And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."*



Theme

Our friendships are very important; and they should be established according to God's plans. Jesus is the greatest Friend of all.



Memory Verse

Proverbs 18:24

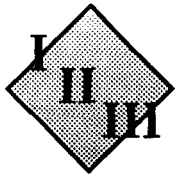
"A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."



Scripture Reading

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

9 *"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour."*



Outline

I. The Value of Relationships.

A. Family.

1. God sets us in families. (Psalms 68:6)
 - a. A school for our training and development.
 - b. A place where we should be loved and accepted.
 - c. We should have a godly father and a loving mother.
 - d. If we do not, God will make provision for us Himself, and through other godly people.
2. Family is for:
 - a. Provision.
 - b. Protection.
 - c. Shaping our values.
 - d. Giving us a sense of self worth.
 - e. Counseling in wisdom.
3. Spiritual family.
 - a. Our local church.
 - b. Fellowship, worship, service to God.

B. Friends.

1. To share burdens and pray together. (Galatians 6:2)
2. To laugh together and enjoy life more.
3. To help shape our values and character.
4. To sharpen our skills in communication.
5. To demonstrate Christ's love. (John 13:35)

C. A good friend will.

1. Care about and defend your reputation.
2. Not gossip about you behind your back.
3. Tell you privately when you are wrong.
4. Be glad, and not envious, when you are blessed.
5. Be quick to believe the best about you.
6. Seek to restore you when you fail. (Galatians 6:1)
7. Be a positive influence in your life, and cause you to grow closer to God.
8. Not seek to enrich himself at your expense.
9. Never embarrass you to get a laugh.

II. Levels of Friendship.

A. Casual acquaintance.

1. Share general information.
 - a. Weather.
 - b. Current events.
 - c. School and family background.
2. Mutual acquaintances.
 - a. You know about famous people; but they would not know you.
 - b. An acquaintance is someone who knows your name when he sees you; and you know his.

B. Casual friend.

1. One who shares common interests or activities, and who sees you occasionally.
2. Freedom to share more specific information, but not deep personal feelings.
3. Ball team members, neighbors, church acquaintances, schoolmates.

C. Close friend.

1. One you can really open your heart to.
2. One in whom you have invested your time and emotion.
4. One you would go out of your way to help, though it might be a personal sacrifice.
5. One whom you care about deeply and seek to bless.

D. Intimate friend.

1. One who shares the same life goals.
2. One with whom you can have spiritual fellowship.
3. One who knows your faults, and loves you anyway.
4. One with whom you can be completely honest, and still be friends.
5. One with whom you can make a covenant.
6. A Christian cannot be an intimate friend with an unbeliever, because:
 - a. They do not have the same life goals.
 - b. They cannot experience spiritual fellowship.
 - c. Christians are commanded by God not to be unequally yoked. (2 Corinthians 6:14)

III. Great Friendships In the Bible.

A. Ruth and Naomi.

1. A woman's friendship with her mother-in-law.
2. God used Ruth to fill an empty place in Naomi's life.
3. God used Naomi to be a wise counselor to Ruth.

B. David and Jonathan.

1. They loved each other more than self.
2. Jonathan literally gave David his own right to the throne.
3. They were willing to lay down their very lives for one another.
4. Jonathan gave to David, at his own expense.
5. They made a lifelong covenant, which was never broken.

C. Peter and John.

1. They were different, but they complemented one another.
2. Together, they served God faithfully.
3. John let Peter take the lead; but he was more gentle, and he kept Peter balanced.

D. Jesus, Martha and Mary.

1. True friendship.
2. Jesus treated them with great respect and kindness.
3. They honored Him greatly.

E. Jesus and us.

1. He is our greatest Friend.
2. He laid down His very life for us.
3. *"Greater love hath no man than this,...."* (John 15:13)
4. Jesus said, "You are My friends." (John 15:14)
 - a. "If you keep My commandments."
 - b. We show our friendship to the Lord by obeying.
 - c. If we are self-willed and disobedient, then we are not a good friend to God.

IV. Love.

A. Levels of love.

1. Greek -- *eros*.
 - a. Physical (or sensual) love.
 - b. Taking personal pleasure from a relationship.
 - c. The most selfish kind of love is one which is focused on *eros*.
2. Greek -- *phileo*.
 - a. Friendship, affection.
 - b. Love of family, companion.
3. Greek -- *agape*.
 - a. Covenant love.
 - b. God-like love.
 - c. Giving kind of love; charity.
 - d. Your good at my expense.
 - e. 1 Corinthians 13.

B. Covenant.

1. "Blood is thicker than water."
 - a. Water -- from the same womb, physical brother.
 - b. Blood -- an intimate friend, by choice, with a blood covenant.
 - c. This saying originated in covenant relationships.
2. "Covenant" means "I give myself and all that I have to you."
3. Involves the freedom to correct, rebuke, counsel.
4. Christianity is based on a personal covenant with God, made possible by the blood of Jesus Christ.



Spiritual Truths

- God designed us with a need for both family and friends to help us grow in character and in wisdom.
- We are like sheep, in that we need to herd together.
- Some of our most important choices in life will be the selection of friends.
- As we get older, we have more personal control over our choice of friends and associates.
- We should see Jesus as our best Friend in life.
- It is wise to regard parents as friends -- not as peers, but as people who seek the best for us, and who can be trusted.
- A Christian cannot possibly have an intimate friendship with an unbeliever, because they have opposite goals and destinies.
- The best basis for friendship is spiritual fellowship, and not physical attraction.
- God allows some things in life to come our way that are impossible to deal with alone. We need to pray; and, sometimes, we need the help of a friend, too.



Lesson Material

We all need personal friends. It is a basic part of being human. We need a family in which we are loved and accepted no matter what; and we need friends in order to develop as a person -- to become all that God wants us to be.

The world tends to influence us to make the wrong kind of friends for the wrong reasons. It is important to understand what we are up against, and to keep a focus on Jesus and our spiritual goals in life. We note that there are levels of friendship. We all have many casual acquaintances and casual friends. Even Jesus had friends on different levels. Among His most intimate friends, some were closer than others. We cannot like or relate to everyone equally. We will tend to become closer to a few people with whom we have the most in common.

The secular world always focuses on the physical part of life, because there is a denial of spiritual reality. People who are not Christians will tend to base their relationships on physical factors, such as physical attraction, wealth, or position in life. They will focus on the most "beautiful" or influential people they can, because the sin nature tends to focus on selfish interests, while looking at other people as a means to further self-interests. *"...The rich hath many friends"* (Proverbs 14:20), because people want to share in the luxuries that the rich have to give.

When Jesus was on the earth, He showed us what God's values are. He was not an exceptionally attractive man. He had *"...no beauty that we should desire*

him." (Isaiah 53:2) People were not drawn to Him for His money, either, because He made Himself poor. (2 Corinthians 8:9) Jesus was very popular, because He was totally unselfish. He focused on the needs of others, and everything that He did was for them. He was a servant. A servant is one who exists to make someone else successful or happy. God is looking for people who have a servant's heart. Even preachers with a high position of authority should have that kind of heart, if they are going to be pleasing to God. The world rates your "importance" or success on the number of people who work for you. But God sees your value based on how many people you can serve. (Mark 10:44)

We all want to be "popular," or well-liked by people. If we are wise, we will first seek to be pleasing to God. If we are accepted by Him, then we are free to accept other people. If we are not right with God, we will tend to look to people to build up our self-esteem. We will tend to focus on wanting to be liked, rather than on helping others. Generally, the more we try to get people to like us, the more we will come across as self-centered. If we are "accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6), then we know who we are in God; and we can reach out to others with kindness and godly love. Jesus knew who He was in God; and so, He was free to be honest with people. He cared and gave; and many people loved Him. Those who did not know God hated Him, largely because of envy. They wanted people to love and serve them; and they hated Jesus because He was so popular and respected.

"A man that hath friends must show himself friendly:...." (Proverbs 18:24) How do you do that? First of all, smile at people. When you frown, you appear to be angry, or seeking sympathy. You tend to draw attention to yourself by wanting them to

ask "What is wrong?" On the other hand, a smile says, "Life is good. How can I help you?" A smile will draw people to your countenance, and open a door for you to share God's love. People tend to smile back when you smile. People tend to be uncomfortable around a "frowner;" and they will want to move toward the "smiler."

If you want friends, you will not get them by complaining about how unfriendly people are. You cannot get friends by demanding attention -- either by complaining, or by trying to be superior to them. Ultimately, the quality that draws people to others is friendliness -- that is, an open and obvious interest in them. People respond to love. Sin causes us to be focused on self, demanding that others do for us. But Christian character is based on love, which includes the ability to care about others even more than for self. If you want people to like you, just show that you like them. Remember their name, and use it in conversation. The sweetest sound in any language is a person's own name. If you talk about yourself all the time, you will be known as a bore; and people will tend to avoid you.

The secular media places a great amount of emphasis on "boy-girl" relationships and on physical affection. Even among pre-teens, there is pressure to "date," or to get caught up with sensual games. This is based on the fact that the focus of the world is physical. Satan wants us to get caught up with sensuality and selfishness. The basic focus of the dating game is self. It is a competition to be popular; and there is much chance for painful rejection for most of the young people who get caught up in it. Be careful. First of all, realize that Christian relationships are based on spiritual goals. We should develop friendships as

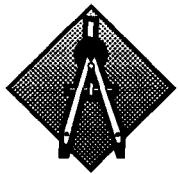
brothers and sisters in Christ, rather than focusing on courtship. God designed sex for marriage; and outside of that, sensuality becomes a very deadly game to play. It is like a fire. In the stove, a fire can serve us well, by cooking great meals. But if the fire gets into the living room, it can be destructive; and it can kill people. Make a covenant with God and with your parents to be a virgin when you get married; and decide to be a friend to everyone you can, boys and girls alike.

You will tend to be closer to peers of your own sex; and this is proper. You have more in common. It is also common to feel closer to your parent of the opposite sex. You need that parent's insights; and will learn from that parent how best to relate to people of their gender. Always seek to be closest to God, and then to your parents. Then the peer relationships will stay in their proper perspective and balance. Seek to be a friend, and you will have plenty of good friends.

The purpose of friendship is influence. You will be influenced by your friends, and you will influence your friends. Be careful that you avoid close friendships with non-believers, because close and intimate friends will influence your values and attitudes. You can have casual friends who are not believers, if your goal is to influence them to become Christians. If you find that a person is drawing you away from God and toward evil, then avoid that person, and get close to people who will build up your spiritual life. Our purpose with unbelievers is to influence them, without being influenced by them. If you can do that, then God will lead you to people who need to be saved; and you will have great joy as a soul-winner.

"...There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." (Proverbs 18:24). Always

remember that the best Friend any person can have is the Lord Jesus, Himself. He has already proven his love for you, by giving His life on the cross for your salvation. And, unlike earthly friendships, Jesus will never fail. He will never leave you nor forsake you. (Hebrews 13:5)



Methods

Discuss Friendships.

Do you feel that your parents are good friends?

Do you have close friends?

Is there one person that you would like to become a friend to?

What qualities attract you to that person?

What character qualities do you have that would make you a good friend to someone else?

How does television isolate us from friendships? (It puts a focus on the people on the screen; and it replaces our conversation. We do not respond -- we only absorb. It also puts a focus on beautiful, artificial people).

How are we affected by smiles and frowns?

Have we developed a close, intimate friendship with Jesus?

How do we know that Jesus wants us to be His friends?

Money Matters

Volume 6

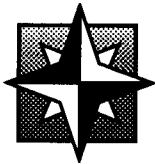
Lesson 48



Bible References

1 Timothy 6

Matthew 6:24-35



Theme

Money is an important tool that God uses in training us in the principles of wisdom, stewardship, and contentment.



Scripture Reading

1 Timothy 6:3-12

3 "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, {even} the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness;

4 "He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,

5 "Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

6 "But godliness with contentment is great gain.

7 "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

8 "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

9 "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

10 "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

11 "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

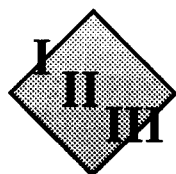
12 "Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life."



Memory Verse

1 Timothy 6:10

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."



Outline

I. The Purpose of Money.

A. Faithful stewards of God's property.

1. It all belongs to God.
2. God's training tool.

B. God's test for a faithful man. (Luke 16:10-12)

1. Faithful in little things.
 - a. We learn to handle small amounts first.
 - b. If we are faithful stewards of small things, we will be faithful with more.
2. Faithful with money.
 - a. "Unrighteous mammon." (Luke 16:11)
 - b. Money is morally neutral.
 - c. It is neither good nor evil to have money, or to be poor.
 - d. The key is your heart attitude.
 - e. "Mammon" means "material wealth (money)."

- f. True riches -- eternal values; things you can keep.
3. Faithful with someone else's property.

C. The way we relate to money reveals what is in our heart.

1. Money is not the root of all evil.
2. The love of money is the root of all evil.

D. Money is a servant.

1. Should be seen as a reward for diligence, and a tool to help people. (Proverbs 10:4)
2. Not as a goal, or the basis for our security. (Proverbs 11:28)
3. When money becomes our goal and our god, it damages our character.

II. The Value of Giving.

A. Tithe.

1. The first 10% of our financial increase belongs in the storehouse.
2. The "storehouse" is our local church.
3. Jesus taught tithing. (Matthew 23:23)
4. The tithe principle has been part of the Christian ethic from throughout history; and it is not just a part of the law of Moses.
5. We do not give when we tithe, because it does not belong to us.
6. The tithe is like the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden.
 - a. A reminder that it all belongs to God.
 - b. We are commanded not to touch it.
 - c. When we violate it, we suffer spiritual consequences.

7. Tithing is an evidence of our obedience to God.

B. Offerings.

1. God gives to us; and then, He gives us opportunities to give to His work.
2. God moved the Egyptians to give to the Hebrews; and then, He told Moses to take an offering to build the tabernacle. (Exodus 12:36)
3. God operates the ministry with the tithes; but He builds buildings with offerings.
4. Offerings are indicators of our faith in God.

C. Alms.

1. Giving to the needs of the poor.
2. God allows some to have an abundance, while others have needs.
 - a. Also basis of spiritual ministry.
 - b. Testing the heart and faith of both.
3. Motive element in Matthew 6.
 - a. Do not give alms with the motive of getting glory.
 - b. Give God the glory; and try to give to the needy in secret.

D. *"It is more blessed to give than to receive."* (Acts 20:35)

1. God is a Giver. (John 3:16)
 - a. He loves to teach His children to be generous givers.
 - b. God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7)
2. The basis of sin is selfishness.
3. The basis of Christian ethics is unselfishness.
4. By giving, we demonstrate the Spirit of Jesus; and we gain great joy.

III. The Principle of Prosperity.

A. Prosperity. (Joshua 1:8)

1. A fruitful, rewarding life.
2. Not just obtaining material wealth.
3. Sometimes the wicked prosper; but their end is not blessed.
4. "Good success" means attaining goals without losing something else, such as health, family, reputation, etc.
5. God gives us the ability to make wealth. (Deuteronomy 8:18)
6. Real prosperity is a result of faithfulness to God and diligence in life.
7. Meditating on God's Word continually causes prosperity. (Psalms 1:2-3)

B. *"...My God shall supply all your need...."* (Philippians 4:19)

1. Not a general promise to everyone.
2. It was written to a church that had just given a sacrificial offering for another ministry.
3. It was a prophecy of blessing, because of obedience in giving.

C. Financial freedom.

1. Having more money than I need for my daily needs.
2. Able to give with a clear conscience.
3. Not in bondage to creditors.
 - a. Involves paying any credit card off each month, without paying the interest.
 - b. Saving up to buy wanted items, not borrowing to buy what we cannot afford.
 - c. If God wants me to have it, He can provide the money in time to pay cash for it.

4. Not borrowing money for depreciating items.
 - a. Car.
 - b. Furniture.
 - c. Vacations, etc.
5. Spending less than I take in each week.

IV. The Principle of Contentment.

A. "...Supposing that gain is godliness....." (1 Timothy 6:5)

1. This is the opposite of the idea that "If you really have faith, you will have wealth."
2. Jesus did not live His earthly life in wealth.
3. There are many factors contributing to financial prosperity, including:
 - a. Diligence.
 - b. Generosity.
 - c. Fear of the Lord.
 - d. Faithfulness.

B. Contentment. (Philippians 4:11)

1. It does not come from getting what you want.
2. We learn contentment by developing a grateful spirit.
3. Contentment is a sense that God has supplied all that I really need.
4. Contentment is the ability to appreciate and enjoy what God has given me.



Spiritual Truths

- There is no inherent virtue in having money. The important thing is our attitude toward it.
- One of the earliest indicators of spiritual problems is an unwillingness to tithe to the local church.
- The tithe is our weekly reminder that everything we have in this life actually belongs to God, and that we are stewards of it, and not owners.
- God never intended His people to be borrowers, because the borrower is servant to the lender; and we should be God's servants. (Proverbs 22:7)
- Giving is a basic and essential part of Christianity. Sin makes us selfish and stingy; but the Holy Spirit makes us givers.
- Jesus often used the topic of money to illustrate eternal, spiritual principles.
- If we are faithful in handling money, we are likely to handle true riches faithfully.
- Money should not be our goal or source of security, but simply a servant to be used wisely.



Lesson Material

It is very important for all of us to see money from God's perspective, and to develop a healthy and positive attitude about it. Money is the god that many people in our culture serve. Their goals in life are based around money. Many people spend their lives focused on money; and they make major decisions based solely on the prospective dollar amounts involved. They work at jobs they do not enjoy; and they move around the country in the pursuit of financial security.

Money is like electricity. Electricity is a force which can serve us well, when it is harnessed correctly. It can heat a home, run appliances, and help us to do a multitude of things. But if we relate ourselves wrongly to electricity, it can burn us severely, or even kill us. Electricity is a neutral power. It is neither good nor evil. It depends on what we do with it. If it gets hold of us, we are in trouble.

Money is a good servant. We use it to provide basic needs, and to enjoy many things. But if money gets into our heart in the wrong way, it can destroy us spiritually. Jesus gave many illustrations about money. He spoke of the sower who sowed the Word of God (Matthew 13); and some fell among thorns (the cares of this life, and focus on money), which choked the Word. He spoke of the rich man who sat back with his wealth and felt very satisfied and secure, when he realized that he had "much goods" laid up in store. God said, "You fool. You are going to die tonight." (Luke 12:20) *"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world,*

and lose his own soul?...." (Matthew 16:26) This life, at best, is very short, compared to eternity. True riches are those values in life that last forever.

It is true that God loves us, and that He enjoys blessing His children with material things. But God is looking at life from the viewpoint of eternity. He is more concerned with developing our character for eternity, than securing our comfort for the moment. God has a tendency to prosper and financially bless people who have a pure heart toward Him, and who would love Him, whether He made them rich or not. In the process, God often uses times of stress or need to prove our hearts and to develop our faith. Joseph went from riches to rags to riches; but he stayed faithful to God, even during the 13 years of poverty and mistreatment. David loved God more than anything; and so, God was able to make him very rich and popular, without all of it going to his head.

King Saul started out very spiritual and humble, but wealth ruined him. He got his heart set on things; and it turned him away from God. Money was Saul's servant, until it got a hold of his heart and led him to pride. Judas was another man who let money get a hold on his heart. With Judas, it was only a small amount of money that led to his destruction. The amount does not matter. The important thing is the attitude of the heart.

When the nation of Israel sought the Lord, there was a natural tendency to prosper financially, as there is today. When God is in charge of a nation, there is justice, integrity, and a solid work ethic. Work tends to produce wealth. A nation which is right with God will also protect the people from crime and from aggressor nations. The problem was that Israel's wealth, which was caused by God's

presence, led to pride, when they forgot to be thankful and to celebrate God. Pride led to destruction, as it always does. (Proverbs 16:18) One way to stay financially blessed is to continually thank God, always realizing that He is your source. Work hard and keep a positive attitude, and you will tend to prosper.

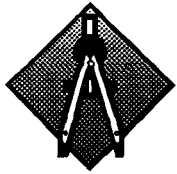
Job lost his wealth for a season, because God was testing his attitude. We should never judge others, because we do not know the cause of their adversity. Poverty is not proof of God's disfavor. We notice that Job lived 140 years after his time of poverty; and he enjoyed it all the more, because of it.

One of the wisest prayers about money is in Proverbs 30:8-9. Agur said, *"...Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny {thee}, and say, Who {is} the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God {in vain}."* He wisely recognized the dangers of both poverty and wealth; and he saw the potential effects of either on his heart. Another wise admonition is this: *"...If riches increase, set not your heart upon them."* (Psalms 62:10) Again, the problem is not monetary amounts, but the attitudes we have. We must be careful to love God more than things.

People have a tendency to look to money as their source. Money is not our source. God is our source. If God does not provide the money for a specific need, we need to seek Him in prayer and fasting, in order to know whether we are praying according to His will. The moment we see money as our source or as our security, we are in danger. God is our Master, and money is our servant. That is the way it should be.

One of the best indicators of our heart is the way we give money. God designed the tithe as a reminder that it all belongs to Him. It is incorrect to think that one cannot "afford" to tithe. It may seem to be a large sum, to a person who has little. If a person has a large income, then the tithe is "too much money" to give. The fact is that everyone can "afford" to tithe, because it is always 10 % off the top. When we acknowledge God with the tithe to the local church, we establish the principle of ownership. God is the Owner, and I am a steward (a caretaker of another's property). As a steward, I tend to be far less likely to mishandle money. I am less susceptible to impulse buying, or to the misuse of credit. I will be more likely to wait on God to provide what I need, and less likely to purchase what I do not need. The truth of the matter is that I cannot "afford" not to tithe.

Sin is basically selfishness. More exactly, sin is the process of taking ownership of life -- of putting self on the throne. When we become a Christian, we "deny self" as lord, and put Jesus Christ on the throne. We live for Him, instead of for ourselves; and our goals change, along with our lifestyles. Look at the ten commandments. (Exodus 20) Note that *"...love is the fulfilling of the law."* (Romans 13:10) "Love" means "functional altruism," or "unselfishness." God is love. (1 John 4:8, 16) When we love God, we become Christ-centered, instead of self-centered. We demonstrate our changed heart by the new way in which we relate to money. It belongs to God; and it is a great tool to bless others and to further God's kingdom. When God sees that we have a right attitude toward money, He is able to entrust us with more.



Methods

What are some things that Jesus said about money?

What parables involve attitudes about money?

What do we learn about our values system from these parables and lessons?

What other things are there in Proverbs about money (wealth, riches, prosperity)?

Why is gambling wrong? (It thrives on the love of money, violates God's work ethic, and promotes the idea that it is good to gain wealth at the expense of others.)

Music and Christianity

Volume 6

Lesson 49



Bible References

Ephesians 5:19

Acts 24:14

Psalms 150

1 *"O sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.*

2 *"Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.*

3 *"For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods."*

6 *"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker."*

Psalms 96:1-4, 8-9

1 *"O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth.*

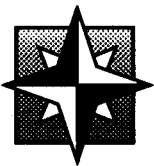
2 *"Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day.*

3 *"Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.*

4 *"For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods."*

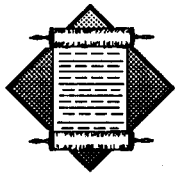
8 *"Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.*

9 *"O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth."*



Theme

Music is an important part of the life of the Christian, both as a ministry to believers and to God.



Scripture Reading

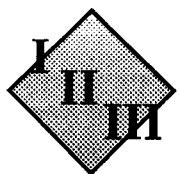
Psalms 95:1-3, 6



Memory Verse

Colossians 3:16

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."



Outline

I. The Importance of Music.

A. Music is universal.

1. Every nation and culture has its own unique musical expression.
2. Music has been expressed throughout all of the history of mankind.

B. Music is communication.

1. It is a universally-understood language.
2. Music can communicate either with or without words.
3. Music touches the mind, soul, and spirit.

II. The Power of Music.

A. The words of the music directly communicate a message to the mind of the listener.

1. The lyrics can be either positive or negative.
2. Children often learn stories, or even scripture, more readily through song, than by recitation.

B. The musical accompaniment communicates to the soul, or emotions.

1. This is why certain trumpet sounds rouse armies for the battle.
2. Other types of music stir up feelings of tenderness, romance, aggression, pageantry, etc.

C. The sources of music.

1. Godly music.
 - a. Appeals to the spirit of man and the Spirit of God.
 - b. Always glorifies and exalts God, rather than self.
2. Worldly music.
 - a. Appeals to the natural man.
 - b. Focused on earthly things.
 - c. Is not necessarily evil, but does not point toward God.
 - d. May actually point away from God and toward self, thereby becoming evil.
3. Satanic music.
 - a. Appeals to fleshly lusts.
 - b. Carries themes of rebellion, hatred, blasphemy, suicide, etc.
 - c. Is designed to draw away from God, or openly oppose all godliness.

- d. Satan was heaven's worship leader, before he rebelled against God. (Ezekiel 28:13)

- c. Two audiences: "Sing to yourselves," and "Sing to the Lord."

D. Biblical kinds of music.

1. Psalms (*psalmos* -- "sung to the harp") -- a sacred ode accompanied by musical instruments.
2. Hymns (*hymnos* -- from two words: "celebrate" and "from yourselves") -- a song from man, celebrating his relationship to God.
3. Spiritual songs (*pneumatikos* -- "non-carnal, supernatural") -- music prompted or given by the Holy Spirit.

III. The Purpose of Music.

A. Biblically, music is designed:

1. To minister to God.
2. To minister to God's people.

B. Colossians 3:16.

1. *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom...."*
 - a. Good music should be full of the Word.
 - b. God is glorified, and His people are edified.
2. *"...teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...."*
 - a. We exhort and encourage one another with godly music.
 - b. We can teach the Word by use of music.
3. *"...singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."*
 - a. Singing and music are expressions of worship to the Lord.
 - b. God Himself sings. (Zephaniah 3:17)



Spiritual Truths

- Music is a natural part of heaven, and a normal part of the church.
- Music can be uplifting, soothing, edifying, rebellious, sensual, or carnal.
- There are three sources of music: God, man, and Satan.
- The largest book in the Bible is the song book (Psalms).
- Music, like art, both reflects and affects the attitudes of the heart.
- Our enemy, Satan, is a musician; and he loves to use sensual music to stir up wrong thoughts and desires in people.
- Music is a great tool for expressing praise and worship.
- When you love the Lord, you will be most attracted to music that exalts the Lord.



Lesson Material

A wise man once said, "Show me the kind of music you listen to, and I will

know what kind of person you are." Music is the language of the soul. We relate best to the music that reflects the way we are feeling. Music is a wonderful vehicle for praising and worshipping God. David used the time he had in the field to develop musical skills and to grow very close to God. He was one of the greatest musicians who ever lived. He not only wrote hundreds of powerful songs, but he even invented a number of instruments. Under his leadership, the nation of Israel developed a strong and beautiful music ministry. He had many of the Levites give their entire lives to the ministry of music. His chief musicians were named Asaph, Heman, Jeduthan, and Chenaniah. These great men also taught their children to be musicians.

When the ark of God was in the tabernacle in Zion (a holy hill in Jerusalem), large orchestras played before the presence of the Lord in shifts; and the music went on day and night. There were also many singers and dancers who would minister along with the skilled and anointed musicians. Music was an important part of Israel's national life. Under King David, God established the basic principles of musical praise and worship.

We note that the New Testament does not speak much about instrumental music. This is because the New Testament deals primarily with those things that have superseded the Old Covenant. God had made it very clear what type of worship and music pleases Him in the Psalms; and nothing needed to be corrected in the New Testament. God still loves to be worshipped with music; and music still can mightily bless God's people.

Music is a powerful force for good or evil, in relating to the human soul. Good

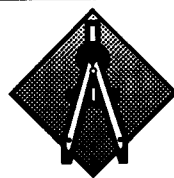
music can lift the spirit of man and be a great vehicle for biblical and positive lyrics. Wrong music is also powerful. Sensual music can stir up the flesh; and it thrives in an evil environment. Like art, music can be perverted for wrong purposes. It is said that the music idols known as the "Beatles" in the 1960's said, "We can get people to believe anything we say, when we put it in a song." They were literally worshipped by throngs of people; and they had a spiritual hold on them. Sensual music has been proven to act as an addictive drug, dulling the spirit and opening up the mind to suggestions.

While good music lifts the spirit toward God and opens the mind to God's Word, so wrong music draws people to the musician. It is possible to use music as a vehicle to exalt the singer and create power over people. The goal of an anointed musician or singer is to draw attention to a godly message, thus causing people to be drawn to Jesus. When we exalt the singer and draw people to self, we are moving in the same direction that caused the fall of Lucifer ages ago. Lucifer ("Light-bearer") was the worshipping archangel of heaven; but he turned his focus onto himself. He became proud, apparently of his musical beauty, and he was cast out of God's presence. It is always a temptation for a musician to become proud of his musical ability, and to allow people to exalt him, instead of God.

The Bible, both Old and New Testaments, admonishes believers to minister to one another, and to the Lord, in music, singing, and the playing of instruments. Note that the evil spirit that troubled Saul departed, when David ministered to the Lord in song. (1 Samuel 16:23) Under the leadership of Jehoshaphat, God directed that the singers precede the armies of Israel; and the Lord defeated their enemies

as the singers ministered to the Lord, without the help of the armies of Israel. (2 Chronicles 20:21-24) Often, anointed music preceded a prophetic word; and the prophets would call for a musician to play, before the prophetic word would come to them. (For example, see the account of Elisha in 2 Kings 3:15.) In Ephesians 5:19, we are told to be continually filled with the Spirit by *"speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."*

There is a great need for anointed and skilled musicians and singers in the service of the Lord. Like David, we should seek to become "cunning in playing" (1 Samuel 16:18); and we should gain as much skill as possible. (Psalms 33:3) We should learn to play good music "as unto the Lord;" and then always guard against a spirit of pride as musicians. Be careful that you do not worship the singer, but worship only the Lord. Music is a tremendous vehicle of expression. May our music always be a source of glory and honor to the Lord.



Methods

Discussion Questions:

Is it possible to become addicted to sensual music?

How has music been perverted in our culture?

What kind of music most readily causes you to want to worship God and think about spiritual things?

What kinds of lyrics usually go with sensual music?

Can man produce secular, non-spiritual music that is pleasant, but not edifying or damaging to the spirit? (Yes.)

Why is music called "the universal language?"

How many of you are learning to play an instrument?

Goals:

To encourage discernment in choosing edifying music and godly musicians to listen to.

To understand that music is part of the spiritual warfare we face today.

To teach and encourage worship, both privately and corporately.

Turning Hearts of Fathers

Volume 6

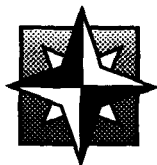
Lesson 50



Bible References

Malachi 4

Psalms 128



Theme

When we fully understand the Lordship of Jesus Christ and God's design for authority, we will be more responsive to and grateful for our parents.



Scripture Reading

Malachi 4:1-6

1 "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn like an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

2 "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

3 "And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts.

4 "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.

5 "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

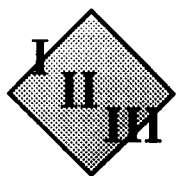
6 "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."



Memory Verse

Luke 1:17

"And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."



Outline

I. Malachi.

A. The last prophet of the Old Testament.

1. Prophesied to Judah, after the death of Nehemiah.
2. The people had returned from the Babylonian captivity.
3. Ezra had helped rebuild the temple, which Nehemiah had destroyed.
4. Nehemiah had led the people in rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem.
5. Now there was peace again; but the people began to drift away from God in their hearts.
 - a. They soon forgot what they had learned in captivity.
 - b. Prosperity tends to make us content and lazy.

B. Malachi's message.

1. "Fear the Lord, and turn back to Him with all your hearts."
2. "A son honors his father. Where is My honor?" (Malachi 1:6)
3. God hated Esau, because he did not appreciate what God had given him as his birthright. (Malachi 1:3)
4. The Jews did not keep their covenants, including their marriage vows. (Malachi 2)
5. God is a consuming fire; and He is to be feared with awe and reverence. (Malachi 3)
6. When you do not tithe your income, you are robbing God. (Malachi 3:8-10)

7. When you fear the Lord, you will communicate better with each other. (Malachi 3:16)
8. The fear of the Lord brings healing and blessing. (Malachi 4:2)
9. "I will send Elijah." (Malachi 4:5)

C. The last prophet.

1. After Malachi, there were 400 years of prophetic silence.
2. The next prophet was John the Baptist, who was a contemporary of Jesus.

II. Elijah.

A. Forerunner of the coming of the Lord.

1. Jesus said of John, "This is Elijah." (Matthew 11:14)
2. The angel told Zechariah, "John will go in the spirit and power of Elijah." (Luke 1:17)

B. Elijah and John the Baptist.

1. "Elijah" means "God is the Lord."
2. John's message was "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." (Matthew 3:2)
3. He proclaimed that God was the sovereign Master of the universe, Who should be feared and obeyed.
4. He proclaimed to Herod that he was living in adultery; and Herod had him executed. (Matthew 14:3-10)

C. Most Bible scholars believe that Elijah himself will return to the earth as a prophet, before Jesus comes to rule for 1,000 years.

1. He will be one of the two witnesses. (Revelation 11:3)
2. The other witness could possibly be Enoch, because he was the only

other man who went to heaven without dying. (Genesis 5:24)

3. Some suggest that it might be Moses, because Elijah and Moses would represent the Law and the Prophets; and they are the ones who appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration together. (Matthew 17:3)

D. There is a message today, in the spirit of Elijah, turning the hearts of fathers to children.

1. Some notable Christian leaders are teaching the fear of the Lord and building the family.
2. All who preach the fear of the Lord by the Holy Spirit anointing are part of the voice of Elijah.

III. Turning Hearts.

A. The condition of the world's families.

1. Divorce is prevalent, world-wide.
2. Children are living in single-parent families.
3. Many children are cast off, with no family at all.
4. Children are born as the result of relationships outside of marriage.
5. The family unit is broken up, even though it is considered "redefined."
 - a. Result: children tend to rebel against parents and other authorities.
 - b. Each becomes a law to himself, because there are no absolutes in morality or law.
 - c. The family becomes redefined as any group of people who live together.
 - d. People focus on peers, rather than on authority figures.
5. The hearts of children are turned away from their fathers; and the

hearts of fathers away from their children.

B. The message of the Bible.

1. Jesus Christ is Lord, and the Focus and Center of life.
2. We will give an account to Him, Who owns everything.
3. "...*Children are an heritage (assignment) of the Lord:....* (Psalms 127:3)
4. Babies are a gift from God.
5. Life is sacred (belonging to God).
6. Our goal is not pleasure, but to raise up a godly seed.
7. God gave us to our parents; and we must honor and obey them. (Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1)
8. Parents are our spiritual covering. To rebel against them opens our hearts and minds to demonic influence. (1 Samuel 15:23)

IV. The Fear of the Lord.

A. Definition.

1. The realization that everything belongs to God, and that we will give an account to Him for everything we do in life.
2. The understanding that we were created by a personal Lord God, and designed to give Him honor and pleasure. (Revelation 4:11)
3. The sense that the center of life is not self, but Jesus.
4. A sense of awe, wonder, and absolute respect for God.
5. The awareness that God sees everything that we do and say.
6. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. (Proverbs 8:13)
7. It is the beginning of wisdom (seeing life from God's point of

view). (Psalms 111:10)

B. Benefits of the fear of the Lord.

1. Riches, honor, and life. (Proverbs 22:4)
2. The Lord is with those who fear Him. (Psalms 25:14)
3. God will supply their needs. (Psalms 34:9)
4. A fountain of life. (Proverbs 14:27)
5. Motivates us to avoid evil. (Proverbs 16:6)
6. And many more listed in Psalms and Proverbs.

C. Message of the church.

1. Some need to hear the message of God's love.
2. But in Malachi's time, Judah had received God's mercy and kindness; and they were living in peace and prosperity.
 - a. They needed to fear the Lord.
 - b. *"And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear,...."* (Jude 22-23)
3. Depending on their background and need, some people need to hear about God's love and mercy; but many, especially those who have grown up around church, will only turn to God by learning the fear of the Lord.

- When you realize that God gave you your family as a training ground, you will put far greater value on your family relationships.
- God is raising up prophetic voices in our day in the spirit and power of Elijah, to declare the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and to prepare the church for His coming.
- The world emphasizes peer group relationships; but God places the greatest value on relationships involving authority and submission, particularly parent-child relationships.
- Our natural father is our first picture of our Heavenly Father, God.
- A father is called to be a protector. If your protector has been so deceived by sin that he abused you, then he has violated a sacred trust; and he will be dealt with by God. You must forgive him, and let God be your Protector and Father.
- People who are raised up in a loving church atmosphere tend to need a stronger emphasis on the fear of the Lord, because they are tempted to take God for granted and take their birthright lightly.
- If we do not have an abiding sense of the fear of the Lord, we will be strongly attracted to evil; and it will destroy us.



Spiritual Truths

- The natural man focuses attention onto himself, and away from God.



Lesson Material

Israel had suffered for seventy long years, after the land was conquered and destroyed by Babylon. Many of the people were tortured and killed, while others were taken hundreds of miles to the east to serve as slaves, including our hero, Daniel. Later, the empire was itself conquered by the Medes and Persians. After Daniel's death, Esther was used to preserve the Jewish people from mass annihilation. Then Cyrus, the Persian king, allowed the people to return to their home in Judah, where they built the temple, and then the wall around Jerusalem.

After the death of Nehemiah, things settled back to normal. The people became content; and they forgot all of the suffering that their sin had caused. In their time of blessing and prosperity, they became spiritually lukewarm. They began to focus on themselves; and many stayed home to "do their own thing" on the sabbaths. In their ease, they drifted away from God, in their hearts.

Then God raised up a final prophetic voice: a God-fearing man named Malachi. He gave the message of the fear of the Lord. Generally, the leaders and the people thought that they were spiritually in good shape. They were going to "church" and offering sacrifices; and they considered themselves to be God's special people. They encouraged each other with the assurance of their salvation; but, they were spiritually dull. They were self-centered, and they had many failed marriages. Basically, marriage failures are caused by sin. When we genuinely love God, we are

able to love each other; but sin makes us selfish and insensitive, causing homes to break up.

Malachi preached a hard message; but it was the only one the Old Testament church needed. There is a time to preach a message of grace and mercy; and there is a time to preach the fear of the Lord. We need the balance of scripture and the wisdom of God, in order to know which message is needed for the group that we are relating to at the moment. Jesus preached far more about hell than about heaven. Note that when Jesus was relating to the "unchurched," or to the heathens, He focused on the love message. But when He preached to those who had been raised up in "church," (the Jewish leaders) He was usually very hard. He preached a strong message about the fear of the Lord, because that is what they needed. They had heard many messages about assurance and blessing and prosperity; but they did not fear the Lord, and so they were full of hidden, spiritual sins. They were spiritually dead, and they did not know it. (Matthew 23:27) The people that Jude was referring to, ("Some people need to be saved by fear") were generally those who were familiar with religion or Christianity, but who were not living for God.

Tithing promotes the fear of the Lord, because it is an ongoing reminder that all that we own belongs to God. When we establish the discipline of tithing, we are reminded that we have a Christian world view, and that we will give an account to the Lord for our use of all that He has given to us. This causes us to be wiser in the handling of money; and we will tend to prosper more. When we fear the Lord, we are continually aware of His presence. When you fear the Lord, you are actually released from the fear of man and the fear of death. (Matthew 10:28) The Bible

promotes the fear of the Lord as an amazingly positive part of wisdom. (Psalms 111:10)

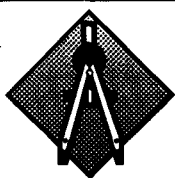
How does the message of the fear of the Lord (the "Elijah principle") have the effect of turning the hearts of fathers and children to one another? It puts life in perspective. We see that we are created, designed, and loved by an eternal God, Who has an eternal purpose for our life. We realize that God sets us in families (Psalms 68:6), so that we can be nurtured and trained for a successful life. Satan loves to get people suspicious and resentful of authority figures on any level. If people are suspicious of the pastor, they will not receive the Word of God; and then they are more easily deceived and manipulated. If he can get children to distrust and disrespect parents, they also will be easily deceived.

The secular view of life promotes an anti-family atmosphere. Satan knows that if he can destroy the family, he can destroy the nation. Paul spoke of a social progression in 1 Timothy 4:1. *"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."* The first step to destruction is to depart from faith, or take God out of your thinking. Focus the people's attention on themselves and things. Take God out of schools, television, books, and government. Make man a law to himself. Take prayer and the Bible out of schools, and even out of Christmas, and you will cause people to be open to seducing spirits, including spirits of lasciviousness and sexual immorality. When the fathers get caught up in pleasure, they begin to worship entertainment, pornography, sports, and other forms of pleasure, which become idols of the heart. One result of this

increase in selfish gratification is a decrease in their love for their wives and children. The fathers want to relate to "the boys," or to peers; and they do not want to spend time with the people that they are responsible to (employer, parent, leader), or the people they are responsible for (wife and children). Sin is centered in selfish behavior; and it produces a peer-dominated people, who avoid responsibility.

The message of the Lordship of Jesus Christ puts God and the Bible at the center of social attention, and dictates absolutes in morality. The fear of the Lord reminds us that we have responsibilities, and that the most important people in our lives are related to authority and accountability. Fathers who fear the Lord have a great love for their children, because they see their children as their assignment from the Lord, and the one treasure that they can give to God for eternity. Children will respect and honor their parents, because they realize that God gave parents wisdom, in order to guide their lives and protect their best interests.

It is vital that the church be tuned to the voice of Elijah, because only the fear of the Lord will restore our fragmented homes. If this does not happen, there are natural consequences. The family will be weak; and the whole society will suffer the "curses" of divorce, incest, abuse, homosexuality, rebellion, hatred, and other social ills, because the people do not fear God.



Methods

It is important to understand the background of your students, if you are going to effectively teach about fathers and sonship. Ideally, fathers give us a good picture of our Heavenly Father, because of their role as provider, protector, and loving leader of the home. But, because of the increasing godlessness of our cultures, more and more fathers have failed their children. Some have so violated their consciences that in their selfish lust, they have sexually or physically abused the very children whom they have been assigned to protect. In this case, the children need to learn to look to God with trust to take the place of their father, rather than see God in the light of their fathers' sins.

Some of the children have been the victims of broken homes; and a day honoring fathers can be especially difficult for them. Be sensitive to that problem, and let them know that God did not cause

their home to be broken. Satan did; and he is their enemy. Remember that Jesus Himself was *"...despised and rejected of men,..."* (Isaiah 53:3) and that *"...his own received him not...."* (John 1:11) And yet, Jesus lived an exceptionally successful life. Each of us must choose whether to become bitter or better, as a result of our circumstances in life. The same Holy Spirit Who enabled Jesus to live His life fully committed to the Father is also dwelling in us. (Romans 8:9)

If your group was brought up in the church, but has a hard time worshipping freely or praying effectively, it is likely that they are somewhat like the people of Judah in Malachi's day. They have heard many lessons on love and assurance, and about how special they are; but they may not have much understanding about the fear of the Lord. They may have been raised up on heaven and happiness, with little focus on hell or holiness. Be aware of the need for balance. Remember that Jesus, when ministering to the "churched" people of His day, was very strong on the fear of the Lord, because He knew that this was what they needed, in order to bring them to repentance and humility before their holy God.

The Great Commission

Volume 6

Lesson 51



Bible References

Mark 16

Matthew 28

James 1

15 *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*

16 *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

17 *"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;*

18 *"They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."*

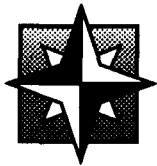
Matthew 28:19-20

19 *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

20 *"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."*

James 1:27

27 *"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*



Theme

God is raising up a Spirit-filled church that will reach out to the people of the world with the message of His redeeming love.



Scripture Reading

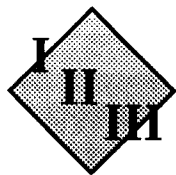
Mark 16:15-18



Memory Verse

Matthew 28:19

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"



Outline

I. Pure Religion.

A. Implies that there is some that is not pure.

1. "Pure" means "not mixed with something else."
2. Christianity is life in Jesus, for Jesus, and through the power of Jesus.
3. Humanism is life for self.
4. Some people want to go to heaven, but do not want to live a holy life.
5. To "be your own person" is the humanist view of life.

B. Pure religion involves giving and caring.

1. Visit the fatherless and widows in their need.
2. Reach out to people who need provision and protection.
3. Live and love, like Jesus did.
4. We are justified by works, as well as by faith.
 - a. James 2:24.

b. We are "made just" as we walk in faith, obedience, and moral purity.

C. Pure religion involves a pure lifestyle.

1. "...Keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27)
2. We are to influence the unsaved, without being influenced by them.
3. We are not to learn the way of the heathen. (Jeremiah 10:2)
4. Be separate from the world. (2 Corinthians 6:17)

II. Go Ye Into the World.

A. We are not called to bring the world into the church.

1. We are called to be a people totally committed to God.
2. We should go to the lost outside the church, as witnesses and evangelists.
3. The purpose of the church is not to make Christ acceptable to man, but to make men acceptable to Christ.
4. We cannot win the world by being like the world.
5. We can never outdo the world in carnal entertainment.

B. *"Let your light so shine before men (the world) that they may see your good works,...."* (Matthew 5:16)

1. They will not be won by seeing our fun.
2. They will be convicted, when they see our good works.

C. The world will be convinced that Jesus is from God when they see the Christians in the church loving each other.

1. John 13:35: Love between believers -- the proof that we are His disciples.
2. John 17:21: Unity among believers -- the proof that the Father has sent the Savior.

III. The Master Plan of Evangelism.

A. Jesus did not go for the attendance.

1. He often avoided the crowds.
2. He sought for a small group of committed, dedicated believers, called "disciples" -- "disciplined ones."
3. He concentrated His efforts on training a few anointed leaders.

B. Rejected by the world.

1. The world (*kosmos*) of secular people will reject those who live holy lives, because they do not want to be convicted of their sins.
2. If you shine with the love of Jesus, you will be rejected, persecuted, and criticized by those who do not fear God. (John 15:18)
3. Everyone who is truly godly will suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:12)
4. Jesus said, "...I send you forth as lambs among wolves." (Luke 10:3)
5. If we look, act, and smell like the world, we will never win the world to a holy God.

IV. Lifestyle Evangelism.

A. Another correct translation: "As ye are going in the world, preach the gospel."

1. As a part of your everyday life, declare the good news of God's salvation
2. God loves you, and has a wonderful plan for your life

3. We are all sinners, and destined for an eternal hell
4. But Jesus paid the price for our sins, so that *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us {our} sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9)

B. To be effective witnesses, we need to be:

1. Pure in our lifestyle.
 - a. Sin destroys our joy and our ability to lead people to spiritual freedom.
 - b. Godly actions and a pure lifestyle are evidence that Jesus has made us free from the dominion of sin. (1 John 3:9-10)
2. Sincere in our motives. (1 Corinthians 13)
3. Full of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:8)
4. Full of the Word of God.
 - a. 2 Timothy 3:16.
 - b. Matthew 4:4.
 - c. 1 Timothy 4:15-16.
5. Tenacious in faith. (1 Timothy 1:19)
6. In possession of a good conscience. (1 Timothy 1:19)
7. Full of the joy of the Lord.
 - a. Nehemiah 8:10.
 - b. Acts 8:8.
 - c. Acts 15:3.



Spiritual Truths

- True Christianity is a lifestyle born out of a relationship, and not just an expectation born out of an experience.
- We will never win the world by being like the world, but only by being like

Jesus, which will make us live much differently from the world.

- Seafood from the ocean does not taste salty, even though it comes from salt water; and so, we can live in the world and not become worldly.
- Worldliness destroys the joy of believers and damages their testimony to the unsaved.
- Our good works glorify Jesus and draw unbelievers to Him.
- A pure Christian lifestyle will cause some unsaved people to reject you and your message, and others to respect you and your God.
- Lukewarm believers are ineffective for the kingdom of God; and they are not a good testimony before the world.



Lesson Material

The question of influence is of vital importance in God's handbook on life, called the Bible. We will be influenced by the people we spend our time with. *"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise..."* (Proverbs 13:20), because people who are wise see God in every situation, and they live for eternity. They have a Christian world view of life; and they are not easily distracted by Satan's lies and temptations.

We need to understand that in this life, we are both people of influence and people who are influenced by others. In western cultures, we tend to gauge success in the

ministry by the same standards that the world measures success: by numbers of people and dollars involved. "Was it fruitful?" "Yes, we had a great crowd." Jesus did not measure success that way. He looked for a few people in whom He could wisely invest Himself, and who would become dedicated toward influencing others. (2 Timothy 2:2)

It is a temptation to try to appeal to crowds by telling them what they want to hear. "Come to Jesus, and get blessed, healed, and prospered." "Come to church, and have a good time." But historically, the only churches that were pure and pleasing to God seemed to be those which suffered persecution -- those which promoted holiness and total dedication to God. In our eagerness to win the world to Jesus, we are tempted to make salvation a painless addition to our self-centered lives, making the gospel more appealing to carnal people.

Genuine salvation must involve repentance. The Holy Spirit convicts men of sin. (John 16:8) That is, He brings conviction to the heart -- a grief over the fact that we have been wicked, and have fallen so short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23) Before anyone is truly saved, he must come to God as a sinner, realizing that he deserves to burn in hell forever, because he is a rebel against a mighty and a holy God. "Repentance" means "turning around:" -- turning from being my own person to being a new creature in Christ, for whom *"...old things are passed away...."* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

The joy of the Lord does not come only because we realize that we do not have to go to hell. Real joy comes when you surrender your heart and life to Jesus Christ, and allow Him to live in you and through you. The true joy of the Lord is

not just a release from the fear of the consequences of sin, but a freedom from the dominion of sin, and a delight in God's presence and God's Word.

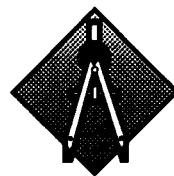
God did not call the church to bring the world into the church. He called the church to be a holy, committed people, who realize that they belong to God. The word for "church" in the Greek means "the called out ones." God called us to be in the world, but not of the world. (John 15:19) That means that we should seek to be an influence toward the unsaved people around us, without becoming influenced by them.

It is good to bring unsaved people to church, as long as we can be sure they will not only hear the gospel, but see it in the lives of the people in the church. We must practice the gospel that we preach, or the unsaved will not see the difference that Christ can really make in the life. Nothing is more dynamic than a group of believers that is fired up and sold out for God.

God did not tell us to bring the world in, so much as He told us to go out to the world. As believers, we need to see the church services as refueling stations, where we get inspired, encouraged, and instructed by the Word. Then we go into the world, whether to school, or in the business place, and live as lights in a dark place. God did not intend for people to be won by seeing our programs, so much as by seeing our good works. It is our love, our kind deeds, and our caring for one another that will be a testimony that Jesus is the Answer.

The story is told about a young man, who was a good ball player. His older brother invited him to play on his church team, on the condition that he come to

some of the church meetings. This young man was not a believer; and he was very unhappy and lonely. One day, in deep depression, he decided to take his own life. But first, he went to a meeting at the little country church. There, after the meeting, he saw a man go to another Christian and ask his forgiveness. The men embraced one another with tears; and that young man saw that Christianity was real. He gave his heart to the Lord that night; and he is living for God to this day. He now has a quick and ready smile, because Jesus lives in his heart.



Methods

Discussion:

What is the difference between the joy of the Lord, and the joy of the world?

Have you ever personally led someone to Jesus Christ?

Have you ever had an unsaved person come to you and say, "I do not know what it is about you, but there is something different; and I want what you have?"

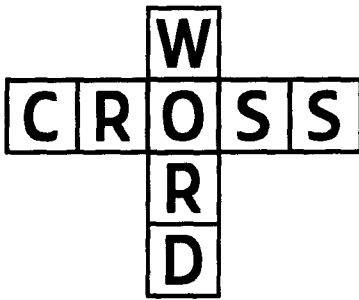
Have you ever prayed for more than an hour at a time?

Can you think of people in your everyday life that you could tell about Jesus?

If you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Section 9

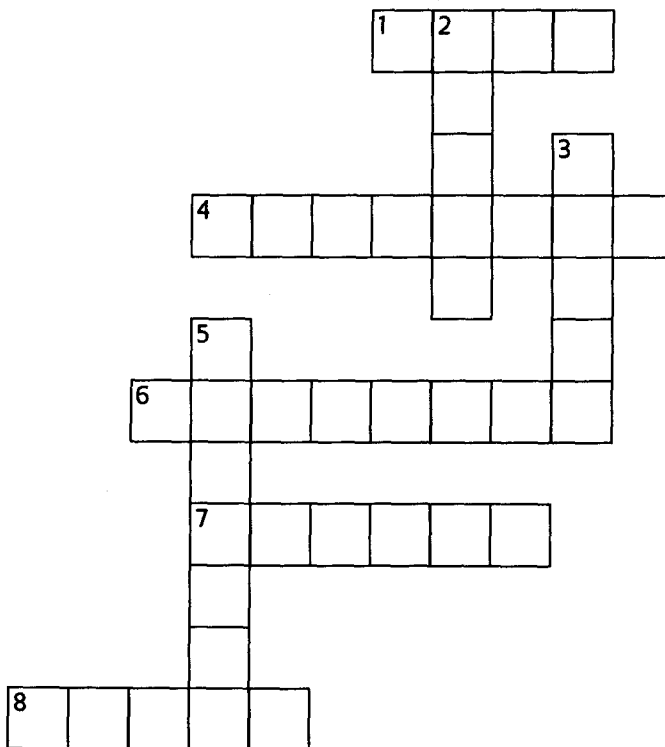
Activity Pages



Crossword Puzzle

The Great Commision

Using the clues below, solve this Crossword Puzzle!



ACROSS

1. The daughters of Israel were to ____ over Saul. (2 Samuel 1:24)
4. The son of Saul. (2 Samuel 1:17)
6. Saul had been ____ with oil. (2 Samuel 1:21)
7. "The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the ____ fallen!" (2 Samuel 1:19)
8. Bless them that ____ you. (Matthew 5:44)

DOWN

2. The sword of Saul did not return _____. (2 Samuel 1:22)
3. Who lamented over the death of Saul and Jonathan? (2 Samuel 1:17)
5. "...Love your ____, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." (Matthew 5:44)



Word Search

Why Art Thou Cast Down?

Find the hidden words in the puzzle below.
Circle the words when you find them.

T	E	L	N	M	Y	T	Q	K	T	E	E
G	E	Q	O	T	O	D	R	R	C	C	N
C	O	A	M	R	U	F	A	N	I	F	F
U	W	C	R	U	D	H	A	O	L	O	B
S	M	H	A	S	L	N	V	Q	Q	Z	Z
F	R	U	Y	T	E	T	W	X	D	O	K
S	R	Z	Q	T	E	B	I	A	G	S	H
O	Q	C	N	S	G	U	R	T	T	A	B
N	U	U	I	P	L	U	K	O	U	E	B
G	O	A	O	Q	H	R	L	W	O	D	R
C	R	G	F	J	A	S	O	U	L	K	E
P	R	E	M	E	M	B	E	R	A	L	S

BROOKS
COURTENESE
HART
LORD

MULTITUDE
PRAISE
REMEMBER
SONG

SOUL
TEARS
VOICE
WATER



Mystery Word

Killing Giants

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	----

Fill in the missing letters in each of the words below.
To discover the Mystery Word, write the letters in the numbered boxes
below in the box with the same number above.

David went down, and his 6 _____ 11
went with him. (2 Samuel 21:15)

One of the giants' sons had a huge 1 _____ .
(2 Samuel 21:16)

David's men did not want him to go out with them to
_____ 7 _____ 10 . (2 Samuel 21:17)

_____ 4 2 _____ was the son of Jaareoregim.
(2 Samuel 21:19)

Goliath was a _____ 5 _____ 8 _____ . (2 Samuel 21:19)

One of the giants had six _____ 3 9 _____ and six
toes. (2 Samuel 21:20)

Scrambled Words

This Untoward Generation

Unscramble the words below and write the correct word in each blank.

1. TEPERN

4. LOSSU

2. EVICERE

5. CRADOC

3. MOPSIRE

6. TOYEDERDS

1. We must _____ and be baptized. (Acts 2:38)

2. We will _____ the gift of the Holy Ghost.
(Acts 2:38)

3. The _____ is unto you. (Acts 2:39)

4. There were added about 3,000 _____. (Acts 2:41)

5. They continued daily in one _____. (Acts 2:46)

6. A companion of fools shall be _____.
(Proverbs 13:20)

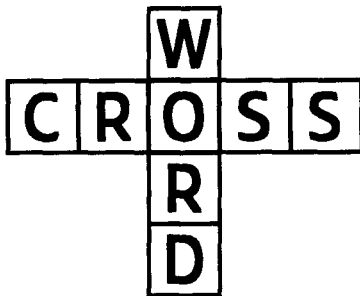
Solve the Code

Sincerity

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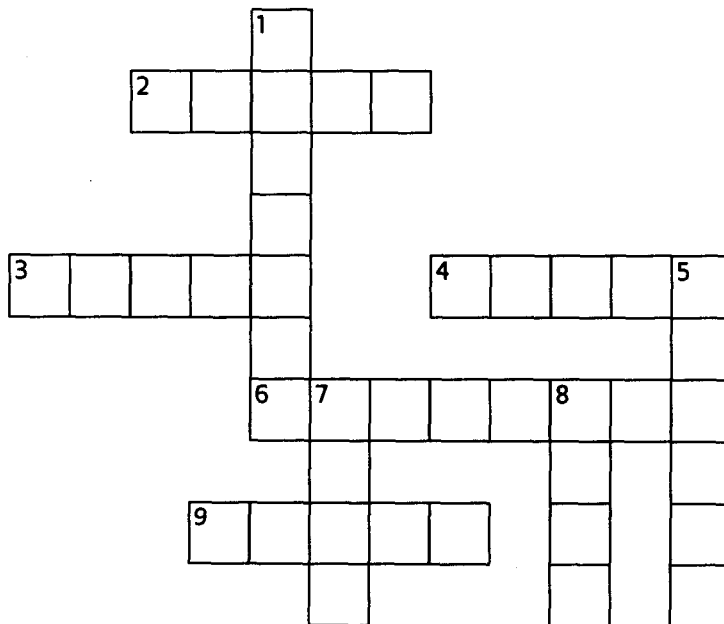
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z



Crossword Puzzle

Three Deadly Sins

Using the clues below, solve this Crossword Puzzle!



ACROSS

2. The ___ of life is not of the Father.
(1 John 2:16)
3. Love not the _____. (1 John 2:15)
4. The lust of the ___ is of the world.
(1 John 2:16)
6. The works of the flesh are ____.
(Galatians 5:19)
9. The tenth work of the flesh is ____.
(Galatians 5:20)

DOWN

1. Those who do such things will not inherit
the ___ of God. (Galatians 5:21)
5. The seventh work of the flesh is ____.
(Galatians 5:20)
7. The world is passing _____. (1 John 2:17)
8. The lust of the ___ is of the world.
(1 John 2:16)



Word Search

Solomon's Success Secret

Find the hidden words in the puzzle below.
Circle the words when you find them.

S	M	P	T	G	D	U	A	S	K	N	F
L	Q	H	N	U	G	A	M	E	O	Z	A
T	J	R	K	N	E	A	C	M	D	P	T
W	G	N	I	G	E	I	O	U	D	T	H
A	S	K	D	R	F	L	I	J	B	E	E
Z	P	U	D	I	O	H	B	V	U	C	R
X	J	P	R	S	T	K	G	L	O	P	B
J	O	C	E	D	H	R	F	X	C	E	N
E	A	L	O	A	A	E	U	Q	X	O	E
S	H	O	G	Q	R	V	A	T	H	P	O
G	V	E	E	M	R	E	I	R	H	L	H
Y	F	V	L	W	A	A	D	D	T	E	L

APPEARED
ASK
DAVID
DREAM

FATHER
HEART
JUDGE
KING

PEOPLE
SACRIFICE
SOLOMON
TRUTH



Mystery Word

Solomon Built a Temple

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Fill in the missing letters in each of the words below.
To discover the Mystery Word, write the letters in the numbered boxes
below in the box with the same number above.

The king ³ his face and blessed the
congregation. (2 Chronicles 6:3)

" ⁴ be the Lord God of Israel."
(2 Chronicles 6:4)

Solomon was set on the ¹ of Israel.
(2 Chronicles 6:10)

The ² of the Lord was kept
inside the ark. (2 Chronicles 6:11)

We have been built ⁵ as the
habitation of God. (Ephesians 2:22)

Scrambled Words

Solomon Dedicates the Temple

Unscramble the words below and write the correct word in each blank.

1. OVISTANAL

4. CRYME

2. DUMCONES

5. TEDDICEDA

3. DIFELL

6. PEHSE

1. The priests were to be clothed with

_____ . (2 Chronicles 6:41)

2. Fire from heaven _____ the sacrifices.
(2 Chronicles 7:1)

3. The glory of the Lord _____ the house.
(2 Chronicles 7:1)

4. The Lord's _____ endures forever.
(2 Chronicles 7:3)

5. They _____ the house of God.
(2 Chronicles 7:5)

6. Solomon offered 120,000 _____. (2 Chronicles 7:5)

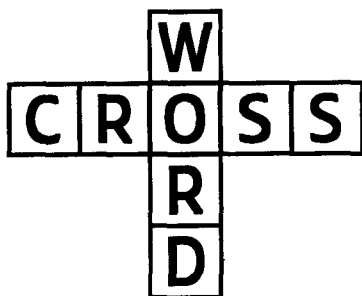
Solve the Code

Fire Out of Heaven

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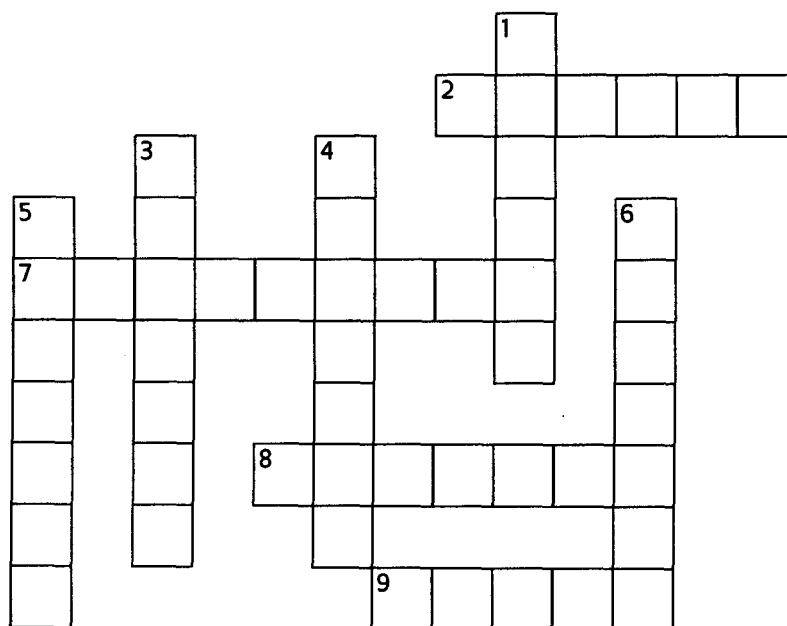
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z



Crossword Puzzle

Loving God's Word

Using the clues below, solve this Crossword Puzzle!



ACROSS

2. He will bring forth fruit in his _____.
(Psalms 1:3)
7. Sinners will not stand in the congregation
of the _____. (Psalms 1:5)
8. His _____ is in the law of the Lord.
(Psalms 1:2)
9. Blessed is the man who does not _____ in
the way of sinners. (Psalms 1:1)

DOWN

1. The way of the ungodly will _____.
(Psalms 1:6)
3. The _____ are like chaff which the wind
drives away. (Psalms 1:4)
4. _____ is the man who does not walk in the
counsel of the ungodly. (Psalms 1:1)
5. Whatever the godly man does will _____.
(Psalms 1:3)
6. He shall be like a tree _____ by rivers of
water. (Psalms 1:3)



Word Search

The Discouraged Prophet

Find the hidden words in the puzzle below.
Circle the words when you find them.



AHAB
ANGEL
BAAL
CAKE

COVENANT
ELIJAH
HOSTS
JEZEBEL

JUNIPER
PROPHETS
TREE
WILDERNESS



Mystery Word

Naboth's Vineyard

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Fill in the missing letters in each of the words below.
To discover the Mystery Word, write the letters in the numbered boxes
below in the box with the same number above.

Naboth's vineyard was near the _____¹_____.
(1 Kings 21:1)

Ahab wanted to make it a garden of _____⁴_____.
(1 Kings 21:2)

Jezebel promised to get the _____³_____.
for Naboth. (1 Kings 21:7)

The evil men _____⁵_____ against
Naboth. (1 Kings 21:13)

They killed Naboth with _____²_____.
(1 Kings 21:13)

Scrambled Words

Micaiah, the Prophet

Unscramble the words below and write the correct word in each blank.

1. **SHOPTREP**

4. **DREPSHEH**

2. **LABTET**

5. **RODW**

3. **AHAMICI**

6. **NILGY**

1. The king of Israel gathered the _____ together. (1 Kings 22:6)

2. He did not know whether to go to _____. (1 Kings 22:6)

3. They sent for _____. (1 Kings 22:9)

4. Israel was like sheep without a _____. (1 Kings 22:17)

5. The prophet spoke the _____ of the Lord. (1 Kings 22:19)

6. A _____ spirit deceived the people. (1 Kings 22:22)

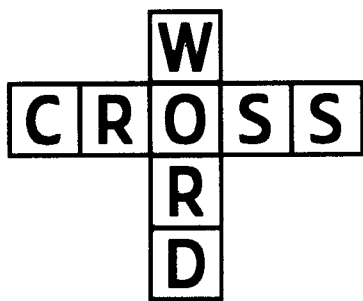
Solve the Code

Elijah's Rapture

Use the code at the bottom of the page to solve this message.



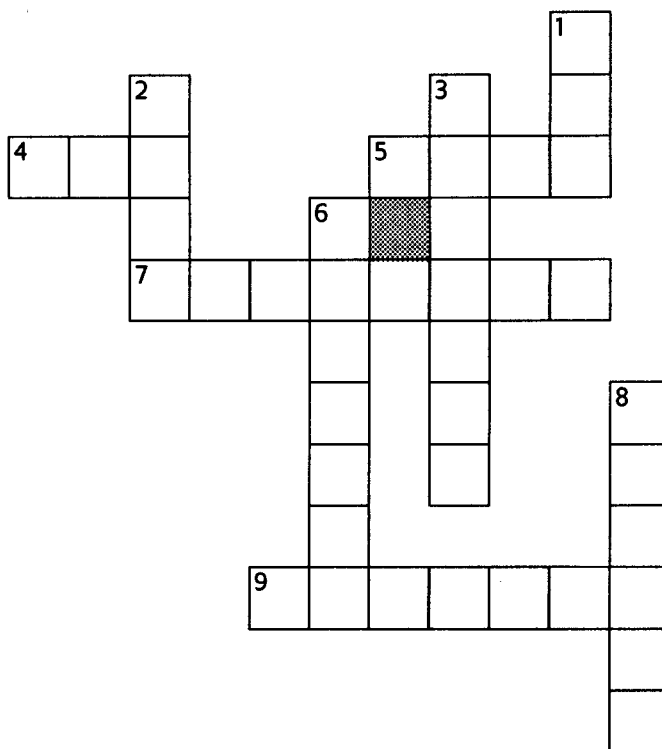
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z



Crossword Puzzle

The Widow's Oil

Using the clues below, solve this Crossword Puzzle!



ACROSS

4. The number of sons the widow had.
(2 Kings 4:1)
5. The widow poured until all of the vessels
were _____. (2 Kings 4:6)
7. We are to _____ the words of the Lord Jesus.
(Acts 20:35)
9. Elisha told the woman to borrow many
_____. (2 Kings 4:3)

DOWN

1. The widow only had one pot of _____ in the
house. (2 Kings 4:2)
2. The widow was told to _____ into all of the
empty vessels. (2 Kings 4:4)
3. The widow's _____ feared the Lord.
(2 Kings 4:1)
6. It is more blessed to give than to _____.
(Acts 20:35)
8. The name of the prophet to whom the
widow cried. (2 Kings 4:1)



Word Search

The Spirit World

Find the hidden words in the puzzle below.
Circle the words when you find them.



COMMAND
MIRACLES
PHILIP
POWER

PREACHED
SALVATION
SAMARIA
SIGNS

SIMON
SORCERY
SPIRITS
UNCLEAN



Mystery Word

The Shunemmite Woman

1	2	3	4	5	6
---	---	---	---	---	---

Fill in the missing letters in each of the words below.
To discover the Mystery Word, write the letters in the numbered boxes
below in the box with the same number above.

The woman always gave ____ ____ ² ____ ____ to Elisha.
(2 Kings 4:8)

She knew that Elisha was a ³ ____ ____ ____ man of God.
(2 Kings 4:9)

She made a ____ ____ ⁴ ____ ____ ____ in her house for him.
(2 Kings 4:10)

Elisha promised her a son, "according to the time of
____ ⁶ ____ ____ ." (2 Kings 4:16)

Elisha's servant was ____ ____ ____ ⁵ ____ . (2 Kings 4:12)

We can receive a ____ ____ ¹ ____ ____ ____ ____ man's
reward by receiving Him. (Matthew 10:41)

Scrambled Words

Supernatural Sight

Unscramble the words below and write the correct word in each blank.

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1. ASIRY | 4. SCAMPDOSE |
| 2. SALEHI | 5. SHESOR |
| 3. HITROCAS | 6. NIBSLEND |

1. The heart of the king of _____ was troubled.
(2 Kings 6:11)
2. His secrets were being revealed to the prophet
_____. (2 Kings 6:12)
3. He sent for Elisha with horses and _____.
(2 Kings 6:14)
4. The host of the Syrians _____ the
city. (2 Kings 6:15)
5. The Lord sent _____ and chariots of fire.
(2 Kings 6:17)
6. The Syrian armies were smitten with
_____. (2 Kings 6:18)

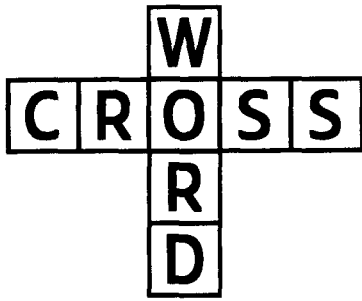
Solve the Code

Four Lepers of Samaria

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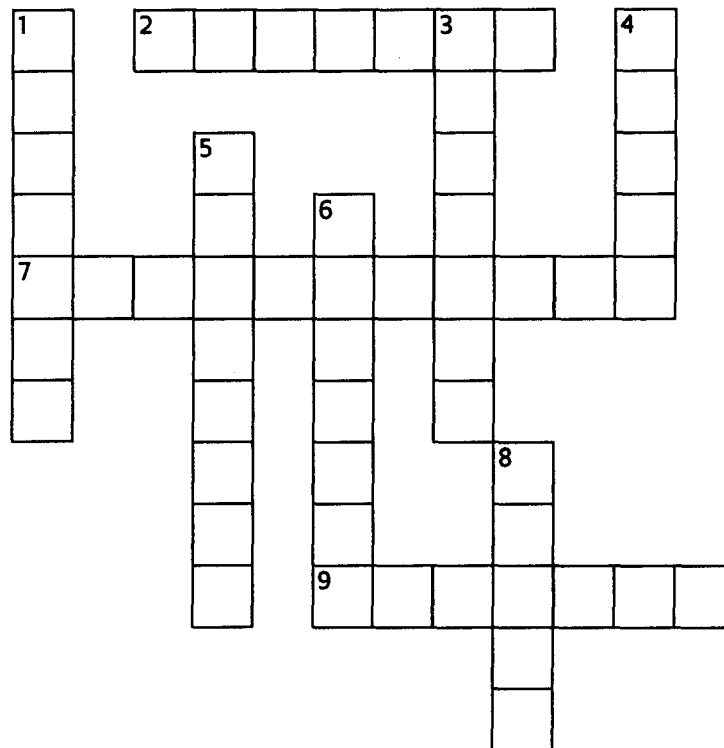
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z



Crossword Puzzle

King Asa

Using the clues below, solve this Crossword Puzzle!



ACROSS

2. The Lord is looking for those whose heart is _____. (2 Chronicles 16:9)
7. There were great vexations upon the _____ of the countries. (2 Chronicles 15:5)
9. When they were in _____, Israel turned to God. (2 Chronicles 15:4)

DOWN

1. The Spirit of God came upon _____. (2 Chronicles 15:1)

DOWN (continued)

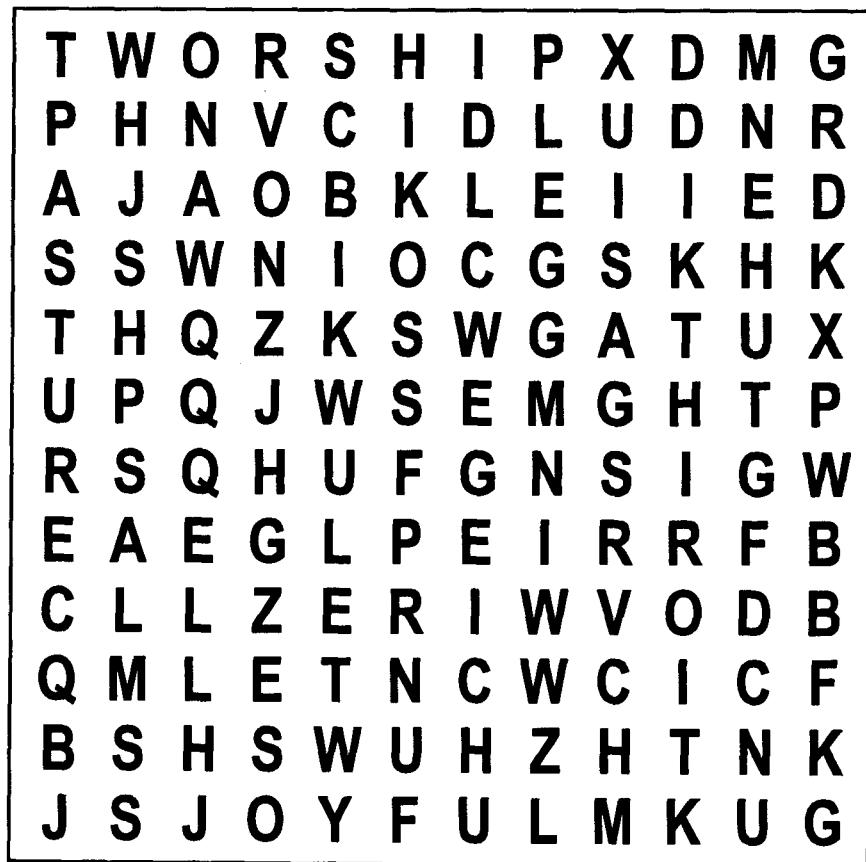
3. When Asa heard the prophecy, he took _____. (2 Chronicles 15:8)
4. Asa got rid of all of the _____ in the land. (2 Chronicles 15:8)
5. Israel had no _____ priest for a long time. (2 Chronicles 15:3)
6. Israel had been _____ the true God for a long season. (2 Chronicles 15:3)
8. If you seek the Lord, He will be _____ of you. (2 Chronicles 15:2)



Word Search

An Attitude of Gratitude

Find the hidden words in the puzzle below.
Circle the words when you find them.



BOW
JOYFUL
MAKER
NOISE

PASTURE
PSALMS
ROCK
SHEEP

SING
STRENGTH
THANKSGIVING
WORSHIP



Mystery Word

Jephthah

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Fill in the missing letters in each of the words below.
To discover the Mystery Word, write the letters in the numbered boxes
below in the box with the same number above.

Jephthah was a mighty man of _____ ³ _____ .
(Judges 11:1)

Jephthah's father was ⁴ _____ . (Judges 11:1)

Jephthah _____ ⁷ _____ from his brethren. (Judges 11:3)

He decided to make war with the children of
² _____ . (Judges 11:30)

He smote them with a very great
_____ ⁵ _____ ⁸ _____ . (Judges 11:33)

His only child came to meet him with
⁶ _____ and
¹ _____ . (Judges 11:34)

Scrambled Words

Moses Wrote of Me

Unscramble the words below and write the correct word in each blank.

1. SPITCRUSER

4. SMESO

2. FISTTEY

5. TREELAN

3. MENA

6. VELIBEE

1. We must search the _____ .
(John 5:39)

2. "They _____ of Me." (John 5:39)

3. Jesus came in His Father's _____. (John 5:43)

4. The Jews should have believed _____. (John 5:46)

5. We can find _____ life in God's Word.
(John 5:39)

6. They did not _____ the words of Jesus.
(John 5:47)

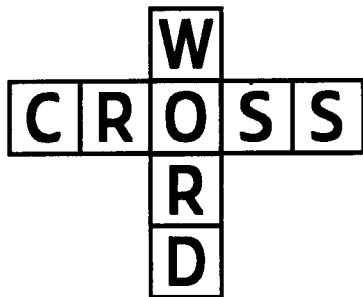
Solve the Code

The Magnificat

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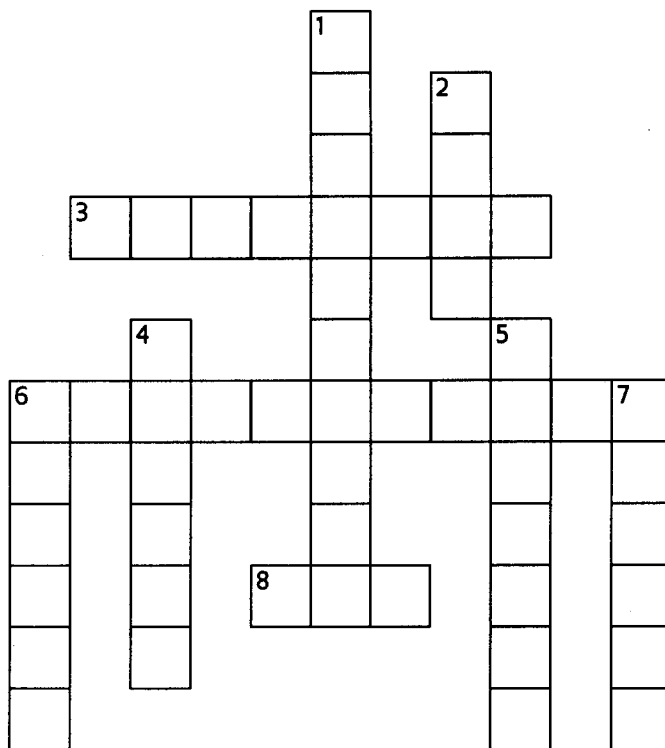
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z



Crossword Puzzle

The Importance of Prayer

Using the clues below, solve this Crossword Puzzle!



ACROSS

3. "___ be thy name." (Matthew 6:9)
6. Do not use vain ___ when you pray. (Matthew 6:7)
8. Your Father knows what you need before you ___. (Matthew 6:8)

DOWN

1. Do not be as the ___. (Matthew 6:5)
2. Those who pray only to be ___ already have their reward. (Matthew 6:5)
4. "Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee ___." (Matthew 6:6)
5. We must ___ the trespasses of others. (Matthew 6:14)
6. If we do our alms before men, we have no ___ from God. (Matthew 6:1)
7. Pray to God in ___. (Matthew 6:6)



Word Search

Learning From Past Mistakes

Find the hidden words in the puzzle below.
Circle the words when you find them.

T	F	W	A	H	E	Z	E	K	I	A	H
H	E	R	E	P	R	O	A	C	H	H	D
K	E	M	E	N	Z	V	O	V	T	E	S
I	T	A	P	N	I	V	S	R	Y	R	A
N	B	R	V	L	E	P	A	A	E	T	S
G	F	U	E	E	E	E	R	G	H	N	S
D	M	O	F	A	N	P	N	U	Y	K	Y
O	G	G	R	R	S	E	J	M	B	P	R
M	N	Y	Z	G	S	U	W	U	T	D	I
S	X	Z	N	S	R	D	R	D	D	C	A
N	C	I	E	M	O	Q	M	E	R	A	G
Q	K	M	R	V	F	D	Q	V	S	P	H

ASSYRIA
EARTH
HEAVEN
HEZEKIAH

JUDAH
KING
KINGDOMS
MESSENGERS

PRAYED
REPROACH
TEMPLE
TREASURES



Mystery Word

Final Exam

1	2	3	4	5	6
---	---	---	---	---	---

Fill in the missing letters in each of the words below.
To discover the Mystery Word, write the letters in the numbered boxes
below in the box with the same number above.

Jesus told this story to illustrate the

____ ⁵ ____ of heaven. (Matthew 25:14)

A man called in his ____ ¹ ____ and gave
them his goods. (Matthew 25:14)

The man with five talents ____ ² ____ five more.
(Matthew 25:20)

His master said, " ____ ⁴ ____ done, good and faithful
servant." (Matthew 25:21)

The servant had been ____ ⁶ ____ over a
few things. (Matthew 25:21)

He was made ____ ³ ____ over many things.
(Matthew 25:21)

Scrambled Words

Daniel: A Genuine Hero

Unscramble the words below and write the correct word in each blank.

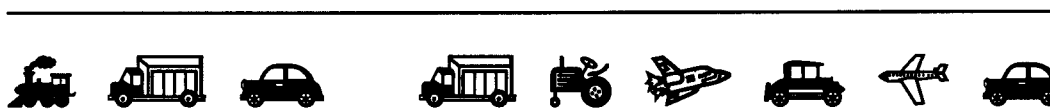
- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. NABOBLY | 4. FEEDIL |
| 2. SCHEDALAN | 5. TRIPSI |
| 3. VISPNOORI | 6. CLENTEXEL |

1. Nebuchadnezzar was the king of _____.
(Daniel 1:1)
2. Daniel was to be taught in the ways of the
_____. (Daniel 1:4)
3. He was given a daily _____ of the
king's meat. (Daniel 1:5)
4. Daniel purposed that he would not _____ him-
self. (Daniel 1:8)
5. Daniel had an excellent _____. (Daniel 5:12)
6. We should approve things that are
_____. (Philippians 1:10)

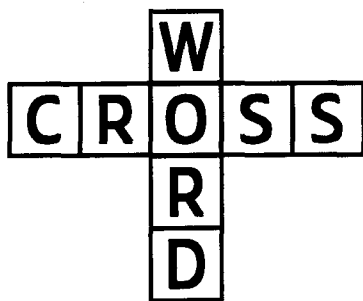
Solve the Code

God the Most High Rules

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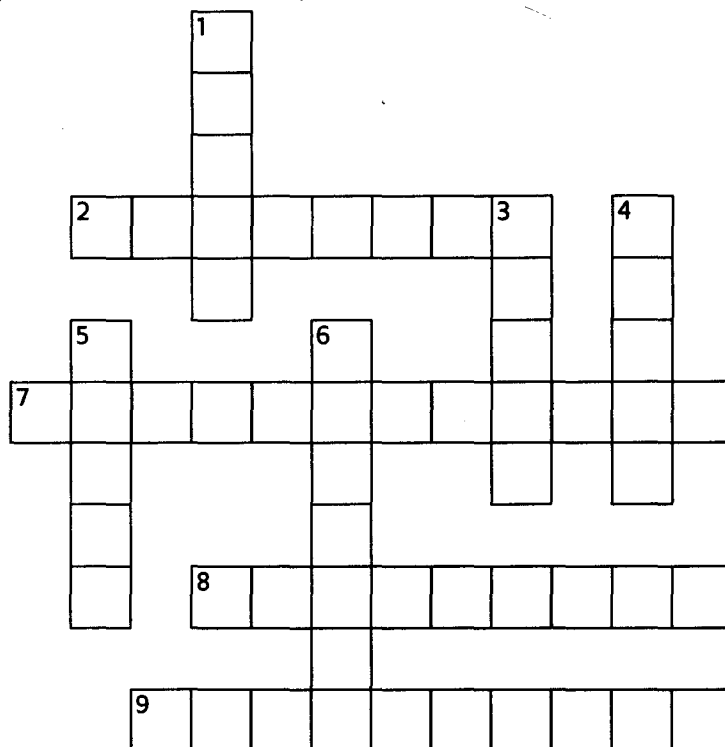
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N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z



Crossword Puzzle

Supernatural Salvation

Using the clues below, solve this Crossword Puzzle!



ACROSS

2. "Thou shalt have ____ in heaven."
(Luke 18:22)
7. The ruler knew the ____ but did not know
how to receive eternal life. (Luke 18:20)
8. When Jesus told the ruler to sell all he
owned, he became _____. (Luke 18:23)
9. Jesus wanted the ruler to ____ his goods to
the poor. (Luke 18:22)

DOWN

1. A certain ____ came to Jesus to ask Him a
question. (Luke 18:18)
3. It is hard for those who love riches to ____
the kingdom of God. (Luke 18:24)
4. Confess with your ____ the Lord Jesus.
(Romans 10:9)
5. The ruler had kept all of the law from his
____ up. (Luke 18:21)
6. The ruler wanted to know how to ____
eternal life. (Luke 18:18)



Word Search

The Doctrine of Salvation

Find the hidden words in the puzzle below.
Circle the words when you find them.

A	G	P	J	U	S	T	I	F	I	E	D
T	T	L	E	Q	S	R	L	W	M	H	H
O	J	R	O	A	X	K	N	L	V	T	D
N	P	M	I	R	C	H	E	S	I	E	P
E	A	M	T	B	Y	E	D	A	L	Z	S
M	T	A	Q	A	U	S	F	I	L	A	I
E	I	Z	P	N	E	L	C	S	F	Y	N
N	E	C	I	P	E	N	A	T	A	I	N
T	N	S	O	C	O	F	J	T	L	E	E
Z	C	H	A	C	R	S	E	L	I	V	R
R	E	R	E	C	P	Z	T	T	L	O	S
Q	G	R	R	E	J	O	I	C	E	D	N

ATONEMENT
FAITH
GLORY
GRACE

HOPE
JUSTIFIED
PATIENCE
PEACE

RECONCILED
REJOICE
SINNERS
TRIBULATION



Mystery Word

The Power of the Tongue

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Fill in the missing letters in each of the words below.
To discover the Mystery Word, write the letters in the numbered boxes
below in the box with the same number above.

We put bits in the ² of horses, to make
them obey. (James 3:3)

The tongue is full of ⁴ poison.
(James 3:8)

Men are made ³ the similitude of God.
(James 3:9)

The tongue is a ¹ of iniquity. (James 3:6)

We can ⁵ or curse with our tongue.
(James 3:9)

Scrambled Words

Sanctified

Unscramble the words below and write the correct word in each blank.

1. GITHS

4. TARAL

2. TAFYNICS

5. STEPTURM

3. HWART

6. GINVIL

1. Hezekiah did right in the _____ of the Lord.
(2 Chronicles 29:2)

2. He told the Levites to _____ themselves.
(2 Chronicles 29:5)

3. The _____ of the Lord was upon Judah and
Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 29:8)

4. They offered an offering upon the _____.
(2 Chronicles 29:27)

5. The song of the Lord began with the
_____. (2 Chronicles 29:27)

6. Our bodies are a _____ sacrifice.
(Romans 12:1)

Solve the Code

The Church at Antioch

Use the code at the bottom of the page to solve this message.

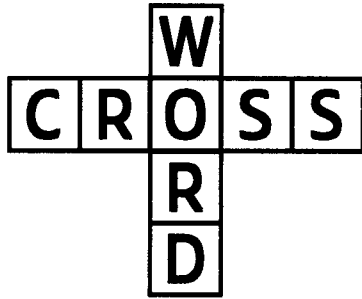








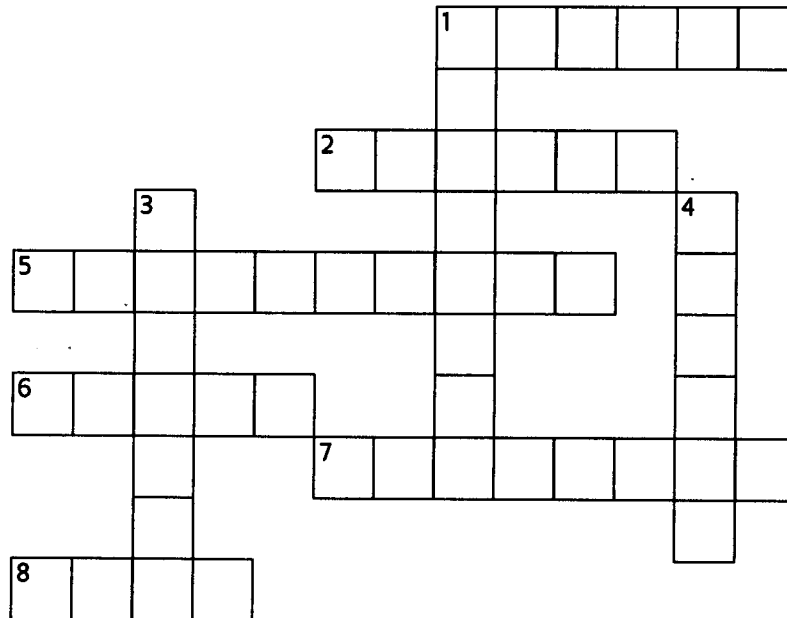
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
key	vacuum	microwave	teapot	teapot	sofa	church	lamp	microwave	suitcase	key	glass	television
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
microwave	washing machine	microwave	basket	microwave	vacuum	vacuum	typewriter	laptop	microwave	teapot	teapot	teapot



Crossword Puzzle

Missionaries on Cyprus

Using the clues below, solve this Crossword Puzzle!



ACROSS

1. ___ was also called Niger. (Acts 13:1)
2. From Seleucia, they sailed to _____. (Acts 13:4)
5. Saul and his companions ___ to the Lord and fasted. (Acts 13:2)
6. Elymas was made ___ by the hand of the Lord. (Acts 13:11)
7. At Salamis, Paul and the others ___ the Word in the synagogues. (Acts 13:5)
8. He helped Paul in Salamis. (Acts 13:5)

DOWN

1. The Holy Ghost said, "___ me Barnabas and Saul..." (Acts 13:2)
3. There were certain prophets and teachers at the church at _____. (Acts 13:1)
4. After they fasted and ___ they laid hands on Barnabas and Saul. (Acts 13:3)



Word Search

The First Missionary Journey

Find the hidden words in the puzzle below.
Circle the words when you find them.

T	A	P	O	S	T	L	E	S	D	H	S
E	S	G	E	N	T	I	L	E	S	R	E
S	I	T	L	X	B	C	M	O	E	D	X
T	C	S	O	P	D	D	M	L	U	Y	B
I	O	U	Y	N	D	W	U	T	S	U	R
M	N	W	X	N	E	R	I	B	G	J	E
O	I	P	F	Z	A	T	B	P	M	V	T
N	U	X	F	Y	L	G	P	Q	J	Z	H
Y	M	K	T	U	W	I	O	E	U	X	R
P	P	I	M	W	D	X	E	G	V	K	E
O	C	I	A	U	W	J	I	V	U	I	N
D	R	B	E	L	I	E	V	E	D	E	L

APOSTLES
BELIEVED
BRETHREN
CITY

EVIL
GENTILES
ICONIUM
MULTITUDE

RULERS
STONE
SYNAGOGUE
TESTIMONY



Mystery Word

Jupiter and Mercury

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Fill in the missing letters in each of the words below.
To discover the Mystery Word, write the letters in the numbered boxes
below in the box with the same number above.

Paul and Barnabas were in the city of ⁷ .
(Acts 14:8)

A crippled man had just miraculously ² .
(Acts 14:10)

The people thought that Paul and Barnabas were
 ¹ . (Acts 14:11)

The pagan priest wanted to do
 ⁶ with the people.
(Acts 14:13)

Paul and Barnabas told them to turn to the
 ⁵ ³ . (Acts 14:15)

Some of the Jews ⁴ Paul out of the city, to stone
him. (Acts 14:19)

Scrambled Words

The Law of Moses

Unscramble the words below and write the correct word in each blank.

1. MUSICDRICEC

4. SLIDCIPES

2. SLOPTASE

5. CAREG

3. RICESOND

6. NEDUR

1. Some men were telling the believers that they had to be _____ . (Acts 15:1)

2. Paul and Barnabas went to ask the _____ and elders. (Acts 15:2)

3. They came together to _____ the matter. (Acts 15:6)

4. They decided not to put a yoke on the neck of the _____ . (Acts 15:10)

5. We are saved through the _____ of our Lord, Jesus Christ. (Acts 15:11)

6. We are not _____ the law. (Romans 6:14)

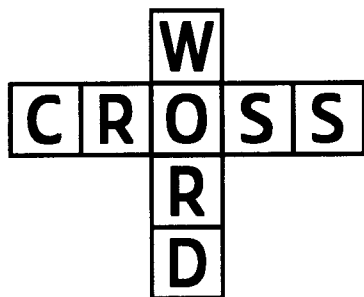
Solve the Code

Jesus Before Pilate

Use the code at the bottom of the page to solve this message.



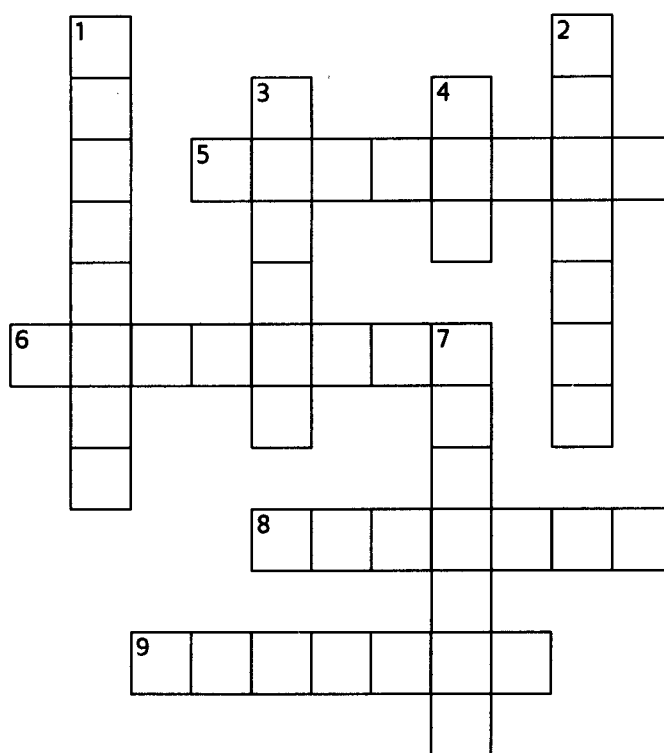
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z



Crossword Puzzle

The Crucifixion

Using the clues below, solve this Crossword Puzzle!



ACROSS

5. My God, why have you ____ me?
(Psalms 22:1)
6. "They part my ____ among them."
(Psalms 22:18)
8. Let the Lord ____ him. (Psalms 22:8)
9. Jesus was ____ for our transgressions.
(Isaiah 53:5)

DOWN

1. "I am a ____ of men." (Psalms 22:6)
2. "They ____ my hands and my feet."
(Psalms 22:16)
3. "I am ____ out like water." (Psalms 22:14)
4. "My heart is like ____." (Psalms 22:14)
7. With his ____ we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5)



Word Search

The Road to Emmaus

Find the hidden words in the puzzle below.
Circle the words when you find them.

A	J	Z	V	A	N	I	S	H	E	D	S
S	N	E	E	S	Z	Q	G	W	E	U	S
E	P	G	R	Y	U	A	O	V	S	S	V
P	R	V	E	U	E	V	N	E	E	J	S
U	I	R	I	L	S	S	J	R	F	A	T
L	E	I	T	H	S	A	U	X	N	K	R
C	S	Y	I	I	S	T	L	L	O	L	A
H	T	C	W	U	P	W	A	E	W	L	N
R	S	O	A	I	D	J	X	L	M	A	G
E	P	M	R	W	D	G	D	J	I	Y	E
X	M	C	C	B	D	V	Y	M	M	V	R
E	S	N	C	C	L	E	O	P	A	S	E

ALIVE
ANGELS
CLEOPAS
EMMAUS

EYES
JERUSALEM
JESUS
PRIESTS

SCRIPTURES
SEPULCHRE
STRANGER
VANISHED



Mystery Word

Paul in Thessalonica and Berea

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Fill in the missing letters in each of the words below.
To discover the Mystery Word, write the letters in the numbered boxes
below in the box with the same number above.

Paul taught the people on three ⁴ _____
days. (Acts 17:2)

He reasoned with them out of the
_____ ⁹ _____ ³ _____. (Acts 17:2)

Some of the people _____ ⁵ _____.
(Acts 17:4)

Some unbelievers gathered together a great
_____ ¹ _____ ¹⁰ _____. (Acts 17:5)

The brethren sent Paul and Silas away by ⁷ ² _____.
(Acts 17:10)

The Bereans received the _____ ⁶ _____ and
_____ ⁸ _____ the scriptures. (Acts 17:11)

Scrambled Words

Paul in Athens

Unscramble the words below and write the correct word in each blank.

1. LAYOTRID

4. GIBEN

2. RUTSIPOUTISSE

5. ENTEPR

3. PELTSEM

6. RYGOL

1. The city of Athens was given to _____ .
(Acts 17:16)

2. Paul called the people "too _____ ." (Acts 17:22)

3. God does not dwell in _____ made with hands. (Acts 17:24)

4. In Him we live, and move, and have our _____.
(Acts 17:28)

5. God commands all men to _____. (Acts 17:30)

6. Let not the wise man _____ in his wisdom.
(Jeremiah 9:23)

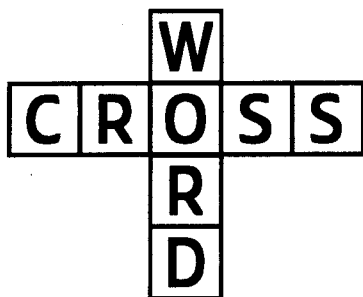
Solve the Code

Rizpah: A Faithful Mother

Use the code at the bottom of the page to solve this message.



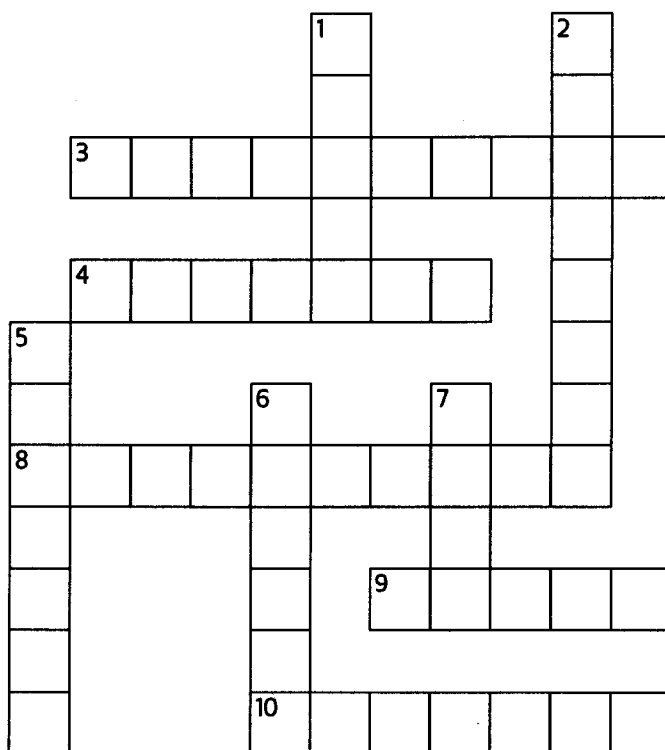
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z



Crossword Puzzle

The Ephesian Believers

Using the clues below, solve this Crossword Puzzle!



ACROSS

3. John's baptism was the baptism of _____. (Acts 19:4)
4. Paul came to the city of _____. (Acts 19:1)
8. The people also _____ when the Holy Ghost came upon them. (Acts 19:6)
9. When they _____ this, they were baptized in Jesus' name. (Acts 19:5)
10. People spoke with _____ when the Holy Ghost came upon them. (Acts 19:6)

DOWN

1. Paul laid his _____ on the people. (Acts 19:6)
2. "Have ye _____ the Holy Ghost?" (Acts 19:2)
5. The believers only knew of John's _____. (Acts 19:3)
6. They needed to believe on _____ Jesus. (Acts 19:4)
7. Jesus baptizes with the Holy Ghost and with _____. (Matthew 3:11)



Word Search

Friendship

Find the hidden words in the puzzle below.
Circle the words when you find them.

T	L	I	M	Z	C	L	O	S	E	R	D
O	B	I	F	G	T	F	X	P	Z	N	B
G	R	S	F	R	T	C	E	Q	A	E	R
E	O	K	G	T	I	Y	R	T	N	M	O
T	K	E	N	W	W	E	S	O	T	K	T
H	E	G	V	X	Q	H	N	D	S	Z	H
E	N	A	V	H	T	R	T	D	D	H	E
R	S	O	O	I	E	M	K	W	L	I	R
I	I	Y	W	T	D	I	G	Y	O	Y	K
F	Z	T	T	X	I	L	W	O	D	P	F
K	B	E	F	E	L	L	O	W	B	Y	J
K	B	F	R	I	E	N	D	S	W	Q	P

BETTER
BROKEN
BROTHER
CLOSER

FELLOW
FRIENDLY
FRIENDS
LIFT

ONE
TOGETHER
TWO
WITHSTAND



Mystery Word

Money Matters

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Fill in the missing letters in each of the words below.
To discover the Mystery Word, write the letters in the numbered boxes
below in the box with the same number above.

If any man ⁴ _____ otherwise, do not listen to him.
(1 Timothy 6:3)

Such a man is proud, _____ ⁶ _____ ³ _____ nothing.
(1 Timothy 6:4)

_____ ² _____ with contentment is great
gain. (1 Timothy 6:6)

Those who want to be _____ ¹ _____ fall into a
_____ ⁵ _____. (1 Timothy 6:9)

We must _____ ⁷ _____ the good fight of faith.
(1 Timothy 6:12)

Scrambled Words

Music and Christianity

Unscramble the words below and write the correct word in each blank.

1. **OSEIN**

4. **ERKAM**

2. **CENERESP**

5. **TIVONASAL**

3. **POWRIHS**

6. **YEBATU**

1. Make a joyful _____ to the rock of our salvation.
(Psalms 95:1)

2. Come before His _____ with thanksgiving. (Psalms 95:2)

3. Let us _____ and bow down. (Psalms 95:6)

4. The Lord is our _____. (Psalms 95:6)

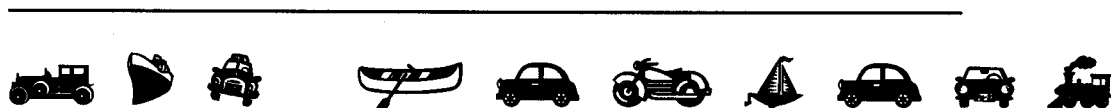
5. Show forth His _____. (Psalms 96:2)

6. Worship the Lord in the _____ of holiness.
(Psalms 96:9)

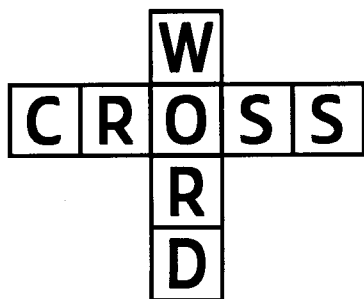
Solve the Code

Turning Hearts of Fathers

Use the code at the bottom of the page to solve this message.



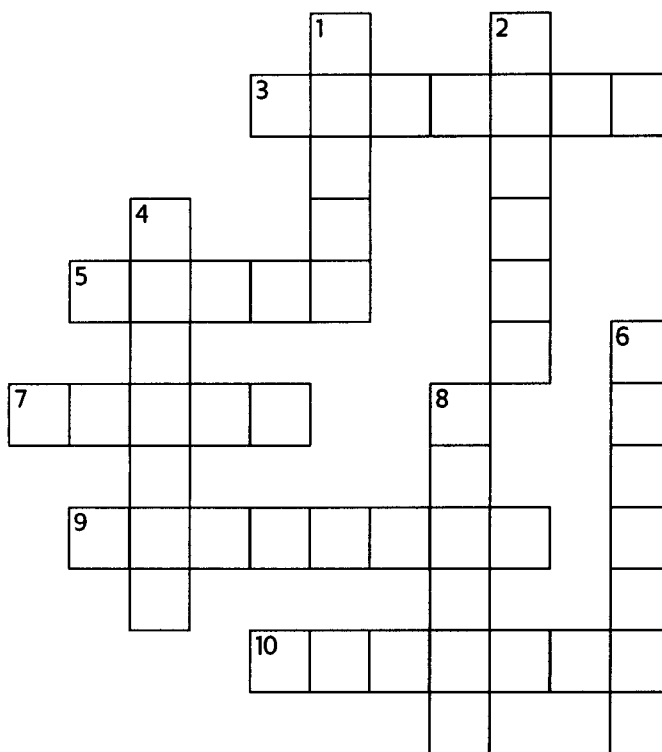
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z



Crossword Puzzle

The Great Commission

Using the clues below, solve this Crossword Puzzle!



ACROSS

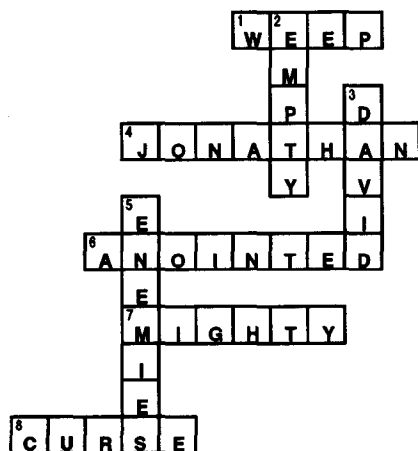
3. We are to teach all _____. (Matthew 28:19)
5. Go into all the _____. (Mark 16:15)
7. These _____ shall follow them that believe. (Mark 16:17)
9. They will take up _____. (Mark 16:18)
10. Teach them to _____ the things that the Lord has commanded. (Matthew 28:20)

DOWN

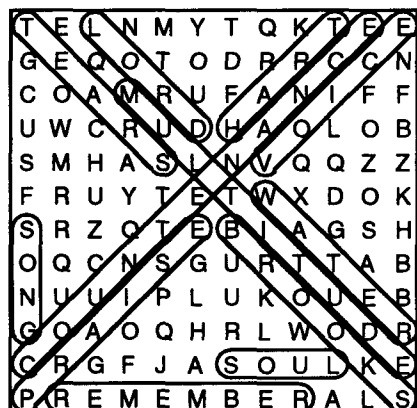
1. He that believes will be _____. (Mark 16:16)
2. Preach the _____ to every creature. (Mark 16:15)
4. They will speak with new _____. (Mark 16:17)
6. The sick will _____. (Mark 16:18)
8. Baptize them in the name of the _____ and Son and Holy Ghost. (Matthew 28:19)

Activity Sheet Answer Key for Volume 6

Lesson 1



Lesson 2



Lesson 3

Mystery Word = Philistines

1. Spear
- 2,4. Elhanan
- 3,9. Fingers
- 5,8. Gittite
- 6,11. Servants
- 7,10. Battle

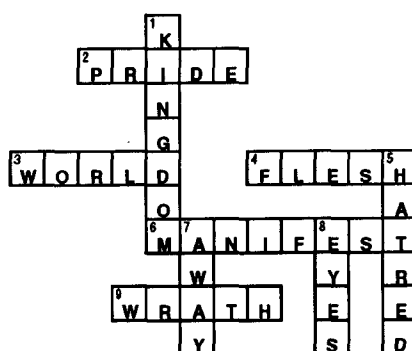
Lesson 4

1. Repent
2. Receive
3. Promise
4. Souls
5. Accord
6. Destroyed

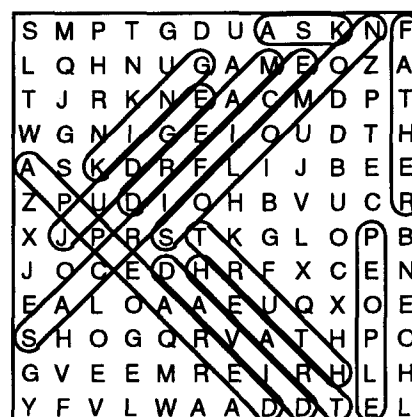
Lesson 5

Make up your mind today to serve God.

Lesson 6



Lesson 7



Lesson 8

Mystery Word = House

1. Throne
2. Covenant
3. Turned
4. Blessed
5. Together

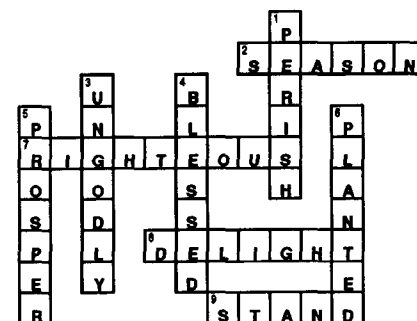
Lesson 9

1. Salvation
2. Consumed
3. Filled
4. Mercy
5. Dedicated
6. Sheep

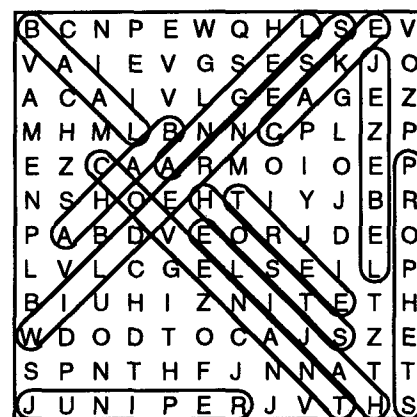
Lesson 10

Choose to follow God with all of your heart.

Lesson 11



Lesson 12



Lesson 13

Mystery Word = Covet

1. Palace
2. Stones
3. Vineyard
4. Herbs
5. Witnessed

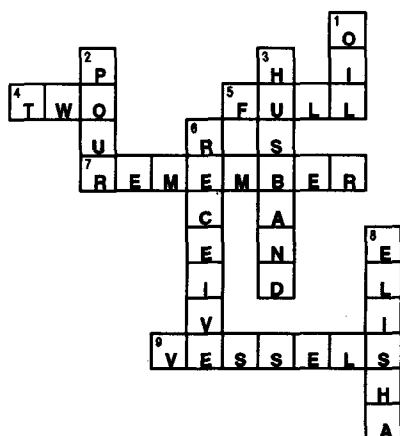
Lesson 14

1. Prophets
2. Battle
3. Micaiah
4. Shepherd
5. Word
6. Lying

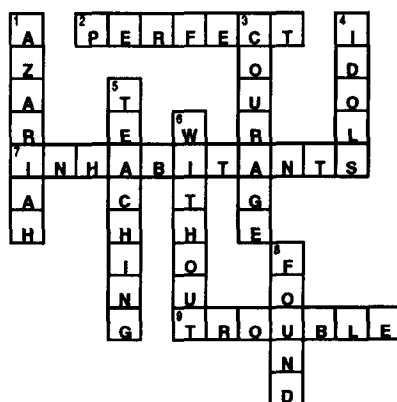
Lesson 15

We will be changed in the twinkling of an eye.

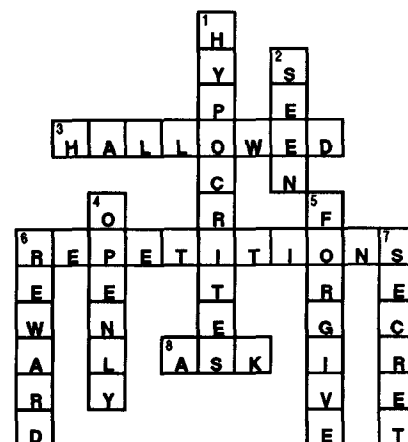
Lesson 16



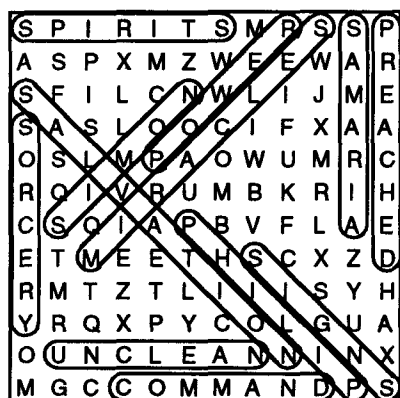
Lesson 21



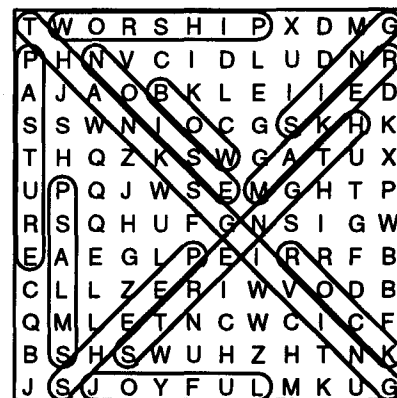
Lesson 26



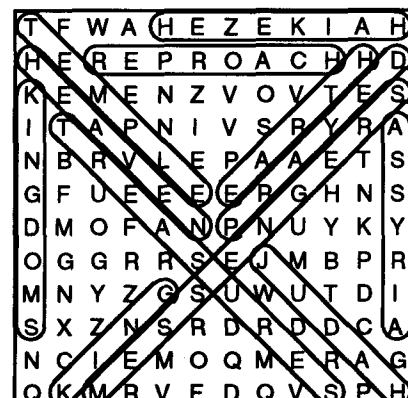
Lesson 17



Lesson 22



Lesson 27



Lesson 18

Mystery Word = Gehazi

1. Righteous
2. Bread
3. Holy
4. Chamber
5. Gehazi
6. Life

Lesson 19

1. Syria
2. Elisha
3. Chariots
4. Compassed
5. Horses
6. Blindness

Lesson 20

The wisdom of the world is foolishness to God.

Lesson 23

Mystery Word = Daughter

1. Dances
2. Ammon
3. Valour
4. Gilead
5. Slaughter
6. Timbrels
7. Fled
8. Slaughter

Lesson 24

1. Scriptures
2. Testify
3. Name
4. Moses
5. Eternal
6. Believe

Lesson 25

Jesus Christ is Immanuel which means God with us.

Lesson 28

Mystery Word = Talent

1. Servants
2. Gained
3. Ruler
4. Well
5. Kingdom
6. Faithful

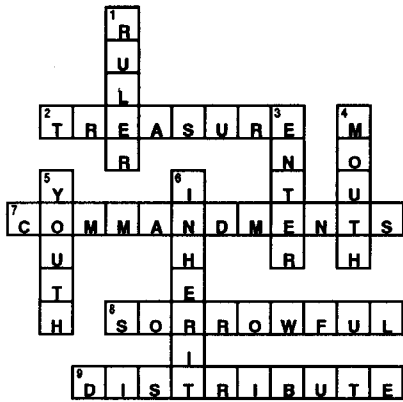
Lesson 29

1. Babylon
2. Chaldeans
3. Provision
4. Defile
5. Spirit
6. Excellent

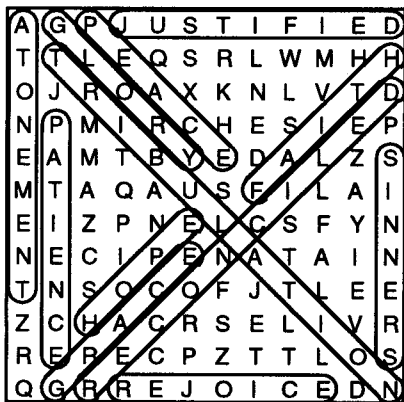
Lesson 30

God exalts the humble but abases the proud.

Lesson 31



Lesson 32



Lesson 33

Mystery Word = Words

1. World
2. Mouths
3. After
4. Deadly
5. Bless

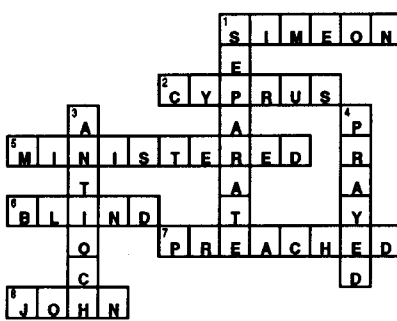
Lesson 34

1. Sight
2. Sanctify
3. Wrath
4. Altar
5. Trumpets
6. Living

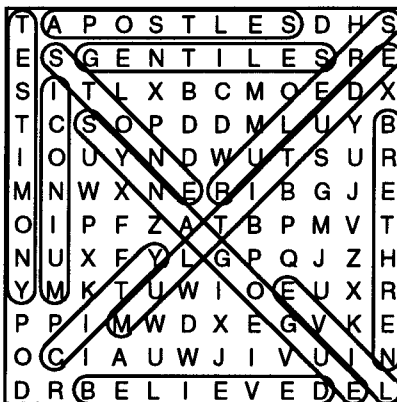
Lesson 35

Go into all the world and preach the gospel.

Lesson 36



Lesson 37



Lesson 38

Mystery Word = Glorify

1. Gods
2. Walked
3. God
4. Drew
5. Living
6. Sacrifice
7. Lystra

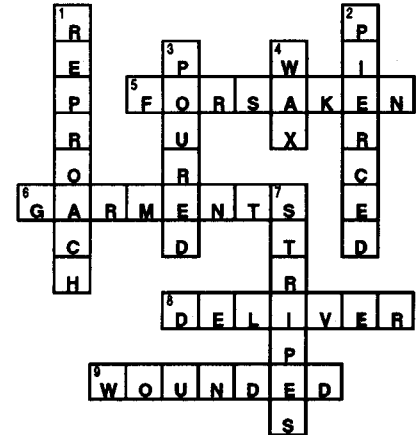
Lesson 39

1. Circumcised
2. Apostles
3. Consider
4. Disciples
5. Grace
6. Under

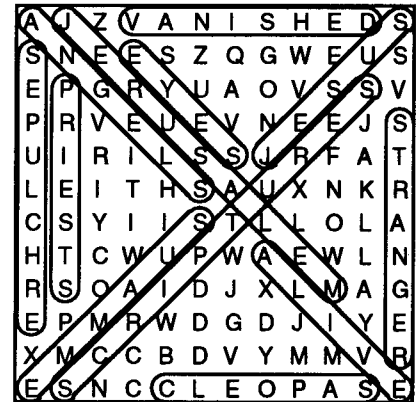
Lesson 40

Jesus died on the cross and then He rose again.

Lesson 41



Lesson 42



Lesson 43

Mystery Word = Missionary

- 1,10. Company
- 2,7. Night
- 3,9. Scriptures
4. Sabbath
5. Believed
6. Word
8. Searched

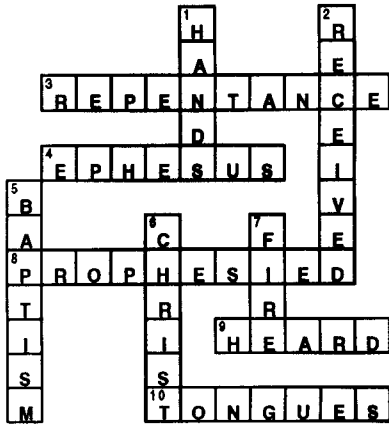
Lesson 44

1. Idolatry
2. Superstitious
3. Temples
4. Being
5. Repent
6. Glory

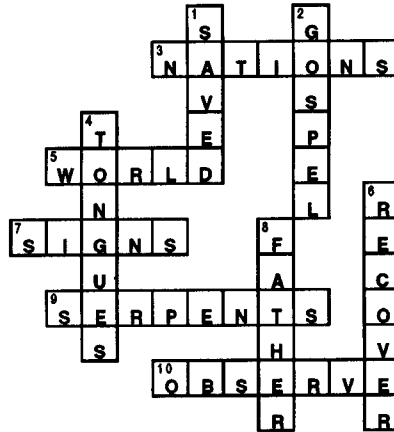
Lesson 45

A mother is a special love gift from God.

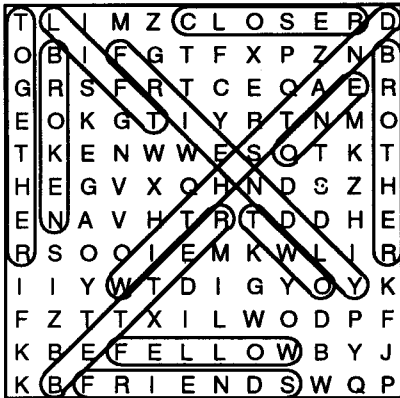
Lesson 46



Lesson 51



Lesson 47



Lesson 48

Mystery Word = Content

1. Rich
2. Godliness
3. Knowing
4. Teach
5. Snare
6. Fight

Lesson 49

1. Noise
2. Presence
3. Worship
4. Maker
5. Salvation
6. Beauty

Lesson 50

Show love and respect for your father.