

The Complete School of the Bible Manual

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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 As a Worker In the School of the Bible..... | 17 |
| Section 2: Personnel Job Descriptions..... | 19 |
| Using the Personnel Job Descriptions..... | 21 |
| School of the Bible Flowchart..... | 23 |
| Junior High 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 Eighth Grade Students..... | 61 |
| Children of the '90's..... | 67 |
| Why Do We Lose So Many of Our Children?..... | 71 |
| Do Not Send Them Away..... | 79 |
| Why Unsaved People Do Not Come to Church..... | 83 |
| The Importance of Repentance..... | 87 |
| Section 4: Sensational Sunday School Sessions | 93 |
| The Importance of Scheduling Your Class..... | 95 |
| Class Schedule | 97 |
| Preparation for Class | 99 |
| Singing with Joy..... | 101 |
| Offering and Prayer..... | 103 |
| Teaching with Purpose..... | 105 |
| Story-telling to Touch Hearts..... | 107 |
| Scripture Memorization..... | 109 |
| Catechism in Doctrine | 111 |
| Section 5: Life-related Stories..... | 113 |
| Using Life-related Stories..... | 115 |
| The Story of John Armstrong | 117 |
| The Story of M.D. Beall..... | 119 |
| The Story of "Come Thou Fount" | 121 |
| The Story of Bill Gothard's Teaching Ministry | 123 |
| Healed in Honduras..... | 125 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| The Story of Ann Hutchinson..... | 127 |
| If I Should Die Before I Wake | 129 |
| The Story of Tony Kawalsingh..... | 131 |
| The Story of the Latter Rain Revival | 133 |
| The Story of “Let the Lower Lights Be Burning” | 135 |
| The Story of Anna Lock..... | 137 |
| The Story of Aimee Semple McPherson | 139 |
| The After-School Motorcycle Ride..... | 141 |
| The Story of Saint Patrick..... | 143 |
| The Story of C. T. Studd in Africa | 145 |
| The Childhood of Maria Woodworth-Etter..... | 147 |
| Maria Woodworth-Etter: Altar Calls..... | 149 |
| Section 6: Promotions..... | 151 |
| The Importance of Promotions | 153 |
| Link Up with Jesus | 155 |
| Fuel the Flame..... | 177 |
| Fall Fun Festival | 195 |
| Unlock the Treasure..... | 209 |
| Section 7: Catechism in Doctrine..... | 221 |
| Introduction to Catechism in Doctrine..... | 223 |
| What Are the Greek Words for “Love”?..... | 225 |
| What Is Reconciliation?..... | 227 |
| How Could a Brazen Serpent Be a Type of Christ? | 229 |
| What Is the Difference Between a Religious Rite and a Sacrament?..... | 231 |
| What Is the Doctrine of Eternal Judgment?..... | 233 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| What Is the Bema Throne? | 235 |
| What Is the "Great White Throne Judgment"?..... | 237 |
| Does God Predestine Some People To Be Saved and Others To Be Lost?..... | 239 |
| What Do the Words "Lasciviousness" and "Concupiscence" Mean? | 241 |
| What Is Witchcraft? | 243 |
| What Is the Difference Between Inspiration and Illumination?..... | 245 |
| What Did the Apostle Paul Mean by the "Letter of the Law"?..... | 247 |
| What Is the Difference Between Conformation and Transformation?..... | 249 |
| What Are the Works of the Flesh?..... | 251 |
| What Is the Fruit of the Spirit?..... | 253 |
| What Is the Manifestation of the Spirit?..... | 255 |
| What Are the Grace Gifts of the Spirit?..... | 257 |
| What Are the "Last Days"? | 259 |
| What Is the Significance of the Seven Churches in the Book of Revelation?.... | 261 |
| What Is the Great Tribulation?..... | 263 |
| Section 8: Lessons | 265 |
| Lesson 1: If Any Man Thirst..... | 267 |
| Every member of the human race, regardless of his race, religion, temperament, or philosophy, needs to be born again and make a covenant with God through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. | |
| Lesson 2: Transformed..... | 273 |
| Christianity is not just a religion we conform to as converts, but a relationship with God based on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in the new birth. | |
| Lesson 3: Boaz and Ruth | 279 |
| The Story of Ruth and Boaz is a biblical allegory relating to our redemption by Jesus Christ. It is also a beautiful example of a godly courtship, which results in much happier marriages. | |
| Lesson 4: Healed Waters..... | 287 |
| The key to a whole, healthy life on earth is a solid, loving covenant with God. | |

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Lesson 5: David's Success | 293 |
| God is not impressed with our appearance or natural abilities, but He is impressed with faith and character. | |
| Lesson 6: Jeremiah the Prophet | 299 |
| Sin ultimately results in bondage for individuals and for nations. | |
| Lesson 7: Houses, Fields, and Vineyards | 305 |
| God is a holy and just God, Who should be feared. | |
| Lesson 8: David's Prayer | 311 |
| The key to being a fruitful and joyful human being is a living, ongoing relationship with God that is energized by a faithful prayer life. | |
| Lesson 9: David and Bathsheba..... | 317 |
| There are always consequences to sin, even if they are not immediate. You will reap what you sow. | |
| Lesson 10: Amnon and Absalom | 323 |
| It is very important to have clear and honest communication with our fathers, and to deal with interpersonal conflicts before they become more serious. | |
| Lesson 11: The Precious Word of God..... | 329 |
| The Bible is the unique expression of God to redeemed humanity, and is a powerful guide for our lives. The Bible centers on, and points to, Jesus Christ. | |
| Lesson 12: Spoils of War..... | 335 |
| The Bible warns us to beware of people who would seek to manipulate us, in order to snare and use us for their own advantage. Legitimate Christian leaders will seek to lead us to Jesus and make us His disciples. | |
| Lesson 13: Foundations of Life..... | 341 |
| Our ability to withstand the storms of life is directly dependent upon the foundation on which our life is built. | |
| Lesson 14: Foundation Stones..... | 347 |
| In order to have a fruitful, joyful life, you need to build your life on a solid, spiritual foundation. | |
| Lesson 15: Esther | 355 |
| When God's people cry out to Him with a need, God is able to raise up the right person at the right time to meet that need. | |
| Lesson 16: Overcoming Temptation..... | 361 |
| All of us are tempted to lower our standards and violate our conscience. | |

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Lesson 17: The Spirit World..... | 369 |
| The spiritual world in creation is just as real as the physical world. | |
| Lesson 18: Spiritual Perception..... | 375 |
| Sin causes men to be spiritually blind and easily deceived, but the Holy Spirit is able to guide us into all truth, including supernatural things. | |
| Lesson 19: What Will Happen in the Tribulation?..... | 381 |
| God has a plan to rid the world of evil and injustice. | |
| Lesson 20: Ezekiel the Prophet..... | 389 |
| Be faithful where God puts you -- whether it is in the palace like Daniel, or with the common people, like Ezekiel. | |
| Lesson 21: A Good Education..... | 395 |
| All of our life's experience and environment contribute to our education, which shapes our values and attitudes, as well as our abilities. | |
| Lesson 22: Thanks!..... | 403 |
| The closer we get to God, the less grumpy and the more grateful we will tend to be. | |
| Lesson 23: The Problem of Mediocrity | 409 |
| God has not called us to be half-hearted or mediocre. | |
| Lesson 24: The Gospel of Isaiah | 415 |
| Isaiah and John the Baptist helped to prepare the way for the Messiah, Jesus Christ, Who was God's greatest love gift to the world. | |
| Lesson 25: Christmas..... | 421 |
| Christmas is a time to celebrate God's Love Gift to the world with praise, worship, sharing, and the giving of our hearts and lives to Jesus. | |
| Lesson 26: I Was a Teenage Worshipper | 427 |
| If we are going to grow as spiritually healthy people, we must make praise and worship to God a regular part of our lives. | |
| Lesson 27: The Ark of the Covenant..... | 433 |
| The emphasis of the Bible is not on the house Jesus is building for us, but is on the house we are building for God to dwell in. | |
| Lesson 28: A Positive Self-Image..... | 439 |
| The biblical key to dealing with low self-esteem is not to develop high self-esteem, but to pursue humility and godly self-acceptance. | |

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Lesson 29: Spirit, Soul and Body..... | 447 |
| It is important for Christians to understand the difference between their soul and their spirit, and to know how they operate. | |
| Lesson 30: Keys to Prosperity | 455 |
| God intends His people to have a prosperous and abundant life. | |
| Lesson 31: Hope..... | 461 |
| Hope is a positive character quality, and is essential for emotional and spiritual health. | |
| Lesson 32: God, Our Tour Guide | 467 |
| God promises to lead us through life using many methods and leading us through many paths, some not easily traveled. | |
| Lesson 33: The Great Commandment..... | 473 |
| The purpose of the human race on planet earth is not the pursuit of our pleasure or success. | |
| Lesson 34: The Royal Law | 479 |
| The most important rule in life is that we develop a sincere love for God. | |
| Lesson 35: Mission..... | 485 |
| Every Spirit-filled Christian is, in a sense, a missionary, because God has a purpose for his life on earth, and he is a citizen of heaven, here on assignment. | |
| Lesson 36: The Lure of the Cults..... | 491 |
| Satan not only tries to lure people away from God with forms of evil, but he also tries to lure people with forms of religion, to deceive them into thinking that they are saved, when they are not. | |
| Lesson 37: I Will Arise..... | 497 |
| There are many lessons to be learned from the familiar story of the prodigal son. | |
| Lesson 38: Holy Spirit Manifestations | 503 |
| Our Supernatural God works through and for us, so that we may live and walk by the power of His grace, rather than by human effort. | |
| Lesson 39: Training Disciples | 511 |
| In preparing for His death, Jesus used an illustrated sermon to teach His disciples to love one another. | |
| Lesson 40: The Selfless Prayer of Jesus | 517 |
| Jesus came to earth to give His life for the sins of the whole world, in order to redeem from sin all those who would believe on Him. | |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Lesson 41: The Ascension of Christ | 523 |
| This same Jesus, Who came to earth as the Lamb of God, will come again to the earth just as He ascended into heaven, almost 2,000 years ago. | |
| Lesson 42: The Church at Ephesus | 529 |
| God deserves, desires, and demands to be the first love of our life. | |
| Lesson 43: Smyrna | 535 |
| Suffering is not a sign that God has rejected you. | |
| Lesson 44: Pergamos | 541 |
| There is great pressure for Christian young people to blend in with the world. | |
| Lesson 45: Women in Christianity | 547 |
| While other religions demean women as second-class citizens, Christianity honors women as equally important as men, and able to be used of God in ministry. | |
| Lesson 46: Thyatira | 553 |
| It is important to recognize that life is always diminished and damaged, when we move away from God and from God's will. | |
| Lesson 47: Sardis | 559 |
| The church and religion cannot get us into heaven. Repentance and faith in Jesus Christ is the key. | |
| Lesson 48: Philadelphia | 565 |
| Revival comes when Christians get serious about prayer and seek God with all their hearts. | |
| Lesson 49: Laodicea | 571 |
| Jesus Christ is very displeased with believers who are mediocre and spiritually lukewarm, because they are a poor witness to the world of difference He can make in a life. | |
| Lesson 50: Fathers | 577 |
| God is our Heavenly Father. | |
| Lesson 51: What Will Happen After the Church Age? | 583 |
| God is the God of history -- past, present, and future. | |

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.

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)

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?

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 wither thou goest." (Ecclesiastes 9:10)*

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

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? _____

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Signature_____ Date:_____

My Goals As a Worker In the School of the Bible

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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.

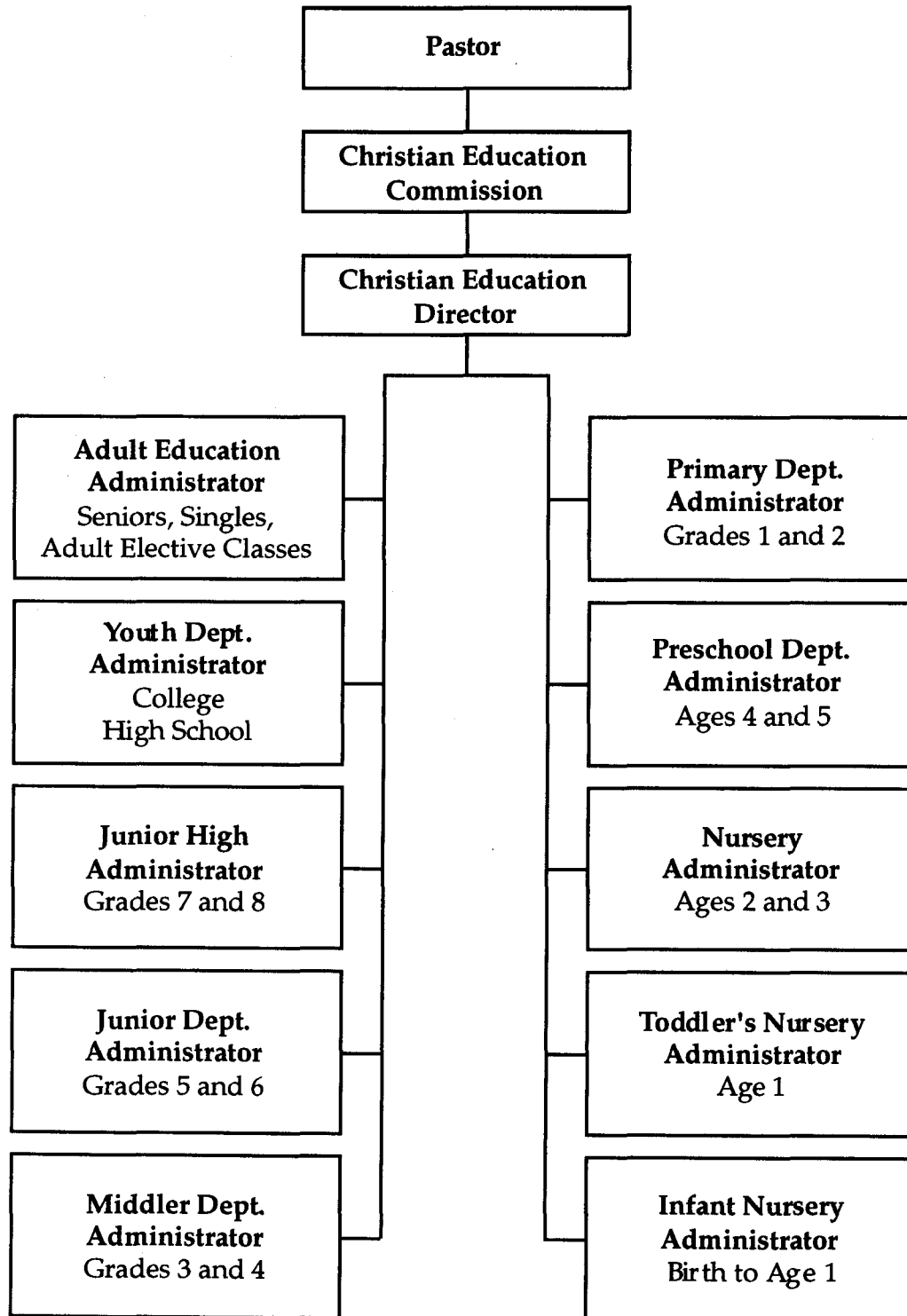
The job descriptions in this section define the responsibilities of the members of an effective ministry team. Sometimes, it may be necessary for a few people to fulfill several responsibilities in the class. However, as the class grows, these responsibilities can be delegated to new leaders as they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

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

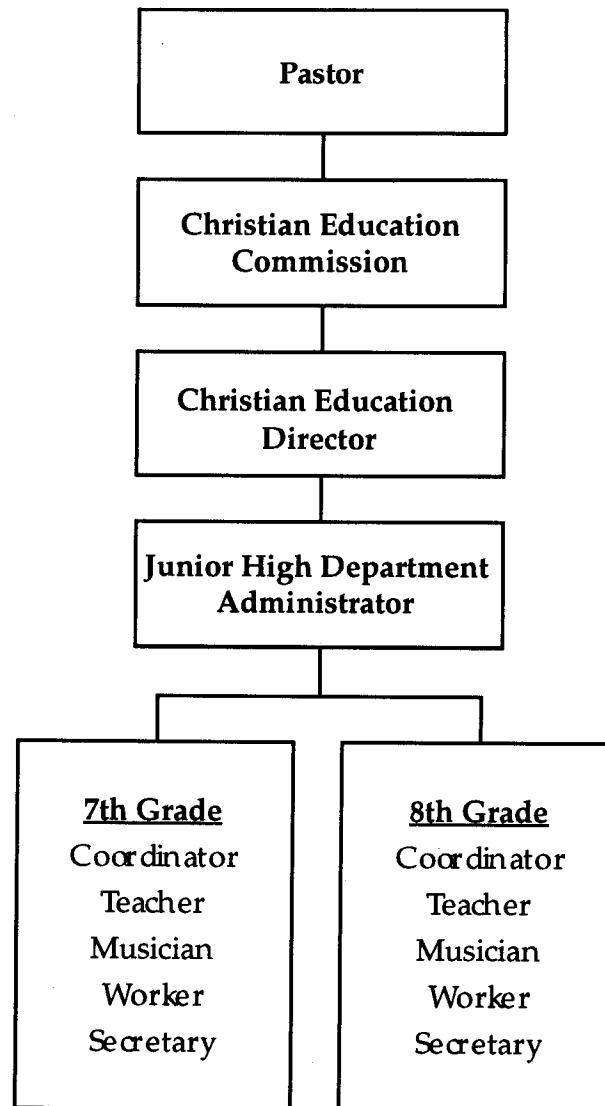
Confusion reigns when there is more than one person thinking they are in charge. The larger the body, the more responsibility needs to be delegated, and the more authority needs to be established on multiple levels. Everyone needs to know to whom they answer, and who has the responsibility to make the 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 High 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 Eighth Grade Students

Physical Development

1. The growth rate of eighth graders is rapid. Boys may grow as much as six inches in height in a year.
2. Girls mature earlier than boys, both physically and emotionally. This results in times of embarrassment and awkwardness in their responses to one another.
3. They are going through puberty; the time their bodies make the transition from childhood to adulthood. This can have a traumatic effect on them emotionally, especially in a culture that flaunts sensuality and promotes a preoccupation with sex. They are extremely self-conscious, and they need to be challenged to focus on 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)

5. They are quick to become frustrated or dissatisfied with their physical appearance, because the world stimulates a focus on outward appearance and relates acceptance and acceptability to physical beauty. Teach them godly self-acceptance. Teach them to focus on inward character, not just outward beauty. It may be good to teach them to take care of their bodies, but not to the point of preoccupation with self.

"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning.... but let it be the hidden man of the heart...even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." (1 Peter 3:3-4)

Intellectual Development

1. Eighth graders have a keen mind, and 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 to 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 can daydream easily, so you are challenged to gain and hold their attention. Just because their eyes are pointed toward you does not mean their brains are anywhere in the same room, or planet. While imagination is healthy, fantasy can be extremely dangerous. When influenced with the secular "power" fantasies that are popular in the world, a fantasy dream world can contribute to depression, confusion, rebellion, mental suicide (drugs), moral suicide (promiscuity), and physical self-destruction.
- Understand the difference between fantasy and vision. **Vision** relates to hope and faith. Without a (spiritual) vision people perish -- become wild and undisciplined. Children need to be stimulated toward a healthy

imagination. To "pretend" and play is a major part of their development. They are able to begin to understand that there is a supernatural realm in God's creation, and that angels and demons are real.

Fantasy is a satanic counterfeit to vision. Fantasy focuses on inaccessible and impossible dreams which exalt the dreamer and feed the selfish ego tendencies of the sin nature. There is much emphasis on "power" and self-glory. Today, there is an avalanche of fantasy material ready to pour into the minds of children through television, humanistic books, and movies. The characters seem "good" and "so cute;" but, the message is demonic. Fantasy opens the mind to the occult, and often leads to confusion, rebellion, depression, and suicide.

Social Development

1. This is a time for intense peer pressure toward conformity. Seventh graders have been involved in peer group training for years; and they are, therefore, naturally identifying more and more with their 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 will have a great fear of being different. There is a great focus on fads and temporal values.
2. If they are self-centered in their thinking, they will tend to be peer-centered in their quest for self-esteem. They need to develop a healthy sense of self-acceptance, by drawing their identity from their relationship to God and to their families.
3. Girls are very conscious of boys, and the boys are beginning to notice. The boys are dropping out of the "girl-hater, confirmed bachelor" clubs, and are grudgingly admitting, after awhile, that girls are "OK, sometimes." There will be great social pressure to get caught up in the dating game. This sets them up for devastating blows to their self-esteem, because they have a focus on being liked and accepted, instead of a focus on being a friend and a servant to others. The wisdom of scripture can prevent this. Young men are told to *"treat the younger women as sisters."* In other words, be a friend; and have fun in a group, without a selfish focus on possessing anyone.
4. Eighth graders will have a tendency to transfer their loyalties to their peer group, or to carnal "heroes," and away from parents and godly role models. As teachers, we want to reinforce the God-ordained bond of family, and help to "turn the hearts ofchildren to their fathers." Focus on Christian biographies, and teach them to look at the character and influence of their entertainment "heroes," and not just at their beauty, wealth, and rhythm.
5. They will tend to "follow the crowd" and to form cliques. It is healthy to form close friendships with a few people and to have a "best friend," but only if those relationships

influence the members positively toward God. A group with a sensual or rebellious focus will be devastating.

"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."
(Proverbs 13:20)

Spiritual Development

1. The eighth grade is a critical time for young people to establish themselves 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. Some of our most common mistakes with Junior High youth:
 - a. We try too hard to keep them with entertainment, and fail to adequately stimulate their spirits.
 - b. We fail to use or stimulate their ability to function in the spiritual realm.
 - c. We allow them to delight themselves and love (worship) secular heroes, hoping that they will choose for themselves the right examples.

- d. We tend to allow too much exposure to evil. The Bible teaches us to do as much good and as little evil as possible.

"For my people...are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." (Jeremiah 4:22)

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
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!

Eighth Grade Sunday School Class Schedule

- 8:35 a.m. Team Prayer, Greet Students, Fellowship.
- 9:05 a.m. Song Service.
- 9:20 a.m. Offering.
Announcements, Birthdays, Promotions.
- 9:25 a.m. Bible Lesson.
- 9:40 a.m. Catechism in Doctrine.
- 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 John Armstrong

John Armstrong was an ordinary man who lived in Indianapolis, Indiana. He lived with his wife, who was a nurse. Mr. Armstrong was not a Christian. He smoked cigarettes and drank, as did most of his friends. When he was sixty-five years old, he was diagnosed by two Indianapolis doctors with cancer of the rectum. They told him that there was no hope for him. As the dreaded disease progressed, it eventually ate away the left side of his hip, and a hole developed through his body. The discharge from his intestines would ooze into this hole in his hip, and his wife had to use her hand to scoop out the material and try to keep him clean. The odor from the awful disease was overpowering, and his pain was unbearable. They used three quarts of warm water each day to try to clean him out to prevent the spread of infection and decay. He had no appetite, and had not known a night's sleep for many months. He lived in constant pain. The cancer spread through his body, eating through the skin in several places.

Because of his age and overall poor health, the hospital would not even try to operate on him or treat him, except for a few pain pills each day. The doctors sent him home to die, and he was limited to the care of his faithful wife. He used an inflatable rubber ring for sitting, because his rectum was so sensitive that he couldn't bear to sit normally.

On January 9, 1912, the Armstrongs decided to go to church. They had heard about an evangelist named Marie

Woodworth-Etter, who had great faith for healing the sick, and who moved in the anointing of the Holy Spirit. They did not know much about the Bible; but they knew that he was dying, and this was their only hope left.

When the altar call was given, John went forward and knelt. The people laid hands on him and prayed for God to heal him. They tried not to notice the strong odors emitting from his pain-racked body. They rebuked the foul disease in Jesus' name. As they prayed, something like plaster seemed to drop on his back. After fifteen minutes at the altar, all the pain and soreness left his body. The skin healed over, and he felt like a new man. He was instantly free from the habits of smoking and drinking; and he was also gloriously saved. The rheumatism in his right arm and shoulder was also healed, and he jumped over the altar, taking off his coat and putting it on again. He had not been able to use his arm for some time, and he was thrilled to do such a simple task.

Immediately, Mr. Armstrong's appetite returned. Three years later, he and his wife testified that he had gained twenty pounds, and that he had not had a pain since his healing. He was working twelve hours a day, six days a week, with the joy of the Lord filling his heart. This was one of thousands of miraculous healings recorded from the meetings of Marie Woodworth-Etter, one of the greatest Pentecostal evangelists in America at the turn of the twentieth century.

The Story of M.D. Beall

Myrtle Manville was born in Lake Lyndon, Michigan in 1894 to a strong Catholic family. She was the fourth of six children. She attended the Catholic school, and was thoroughly taught that the Catholic church was the only way to heaven. She had little knowledge of the Bible, but was trained in Catholic tradition and philosophy.

After a year of college, studying to be a teacher, she went to Hubbel and worked for five years as a store clerk. Her brother then got her a job at a factory in Hamtramck, where Harry Lee Beall was a supervisor. While visiting friends, she casually picked up a Bible on the coffee table and read from Ruth. She felt that God was impressing her to marry Harry, even though he was a Methodist, rather than a Catholic. Harry and Myrtle were married, and had a daughter and two sons: Patricia, James Lee, and Harry.

Myrtle Beall knew her children should learn about God, so she faithfully took them to the Methodist Sunday School every week, while she sat in the vestibule and waited for them. In discussing their lessons, she would sometimes say, "Now I am a Catholic, and I do not believe this; but you should."

While the pastor was away at a minister's conference, the people began discussing his weak points, and talked of voting him out. They had seen several come and go, and had never found one to keep them satisfied for more than a few years. As the people were talking, Mrs. Beall was praying, and God gave her a word for the church. He said that they should not seek a pastor, but seek Him!

She shared that word from the Lord with the people, and was herself converted in the same service in 1927. She was thrilled. As a Catholic, she thought she would go to hell for marrying a Methodist. She rushed home to inform her husband that she was not going to hell after all.

One day, Mrs. Beall was praying. It was a cold Michigan day, so she had the gas stove on. As she knelt by the stove in fervent prayer, the Holy Ghost flooded her soul and something amazing happened. She began to speak in a new language. She had never heard of the baptism in the Holy Ghost; but she later found that the same thing happened in the early church, and was part of God's plan and promise to His people who would receive the gift. Later, people would ask her to tell them how to get what she had. She replied, "It is the baptism in the Holy Ghost. Here is what you do. Light the oven, stick your head in, pray, and God will move on you." She later learned that Jesus can baptize a believer anywhere!

Now that she was a "Pentecostal," she was no longer welcome to teach in the Methodist church. She went on to start a Sunday School for the neighborhood children, and then founded the Bethesda Missionary Temple, which for many years has been one of the greatest spiritual churches in America. Mrs. Beall became one of the greatest preachers and pastors in the nation's history, because she continued to pray and hear from God. Her sons James Lee and Harry Beall continue to lead this great congregation today in Sterling Heights, Michigan, where it is now called the Bethesda Christian Church.

The Story of "Come Thou Fount"

George Whitefield was called "the silver-tongued evangelist" by thousands of people in England and the United States. He was perhaps the greatest preacher of the eighteenth century, who, along with John and Charles Wesley, won many thousands of people to the Lord, and saw great revivals in many cities of both nations.

One day, while the great Whitefield was preaching in England in an open air meeting, a young man came, as many did, out of curiosity. He later wrote, "I confess it was to spy the nakedness of the land I came -- to pity the folly of the preacher, the infatuation of the hearers, and to abhor the doctrine. I went pitying the poor deluded Methodists, but came way envying their happiness."

The young man was Robert Robinson (b. 1735); and he became a Christian. He wrote a number of songs, but his most famous one reflected his personal testimony. It was titled "Desiring to Praise Worthily." We know it as "Come Thou Fount."

"Come thou fount of every blessing
Tune my heart to sing thy grace.
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some celestial measure,
Sung by ransomed hosts above;
Oh, the vast, the boundless treasure

Of my Lord's unchanging love.

Here I raise my Ebenezer;

Hither by thy help I'm come.

And I hope, by thy good pleasure,

Safely to arrive at home.

Jesus sought me when a stranger,

Wandering from the fold of God.

He, to save my soul from danger,

Interposed his precious blood.

Oh, to grace how great a debtor,

Daily I'm constrained to be;

Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,

Bind my wandering soul to thee.

Prone to wander, Lord I feel it;

Prone to leave the God I love.

Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it,

Seal it from thy courts above."

Some years later, a stagecoach was traveling across the English landscape. It had only two passengers, who were strangers to each other -- a lady and a man. The woman was reading and pondering a little book, which she referred to often.

The man spent his time vacantly looking out over the landscape as they jostled along in the coach.

After a while, she turned to him and said, "May I ask your opinion of this hymn? Do you know it? It has been a great source of comfort for me, and has given me much pleasure." When he saw the hymn, the man turned pale, and sought to avoid conversation. As she pressed him for a reply, he burst into tears. "Madam, I am the poor, unhappy man who wrote that hymn many years ago. I

would give a thousands worlds if I could enjoy the feelings I had back then." Sadly, this gifted man with a great singing voice had enjoyed the pleasures of success and popularity, but had, like Demas, turned from God to seek the pleasures of the world. The man who was "prone to wander," had indeed wandered from the fold of God, and had sought instead his own pursuits. He ended in misery and despair, because he did not do what he himself had encouraged so many others to do through his great song.

The Story of Bill Gothard's Teaching Ministry

Bill Gothard is today a highly respected Christian leader whose ministry focuses on basic Biblical principles, particularly relating to the family and other interpersonal relationships. He describes his ministry as "teaching parents to get along with their children, and teaching children to respond to their parents."

As a teenager, his life was greatly influenced by the strong convictions of his godly father, who was always eager to witness for the Lord as a hard-working Christian businessman. Bill became a soul-winner; and he learned to work with pastors, so that he could hold people's interest with "chalk talks." Groups began to invite him to speak, because they saw the wisdom in the simple Bible truths he was teaching, and the change that God's Word was making in many families.

Eventually, as his youth work continued to expand, Bill came to the conclusion that to really be effective in the long term in building up young people for the Lord, he had to reach the parents. His goal was to teach young people to understand their parents, and teach the parents to understand their children. He realized that there had been serious breakdowns in communication, and that there was very little in our education to teach us the basic principles that make life successful.

He developed a seminar based on principles of successful life and relationships, especially in the family. He began to show young people that their parents could be their best friends and counselors, and to show the parents how to relate to their children as they began to understand them through God's Word.

Bill never advertised his ministry; but as more and more people heard of this exciting teaching and the strong families it was producing, he was invited to more churches. Then groups of churches in cities would invite him to speak for a week at a time, and the Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts was developed.

Bill has given his life to the Word of God and prayer, having remained single to pursue his passion for souls and for strong Christian families. He loves churches and pastors, and always encourages people to be faithful to support their pastor. If someone sends their tithe to IBYC, they will find it returned with the admonition to give it to the local church where it belongs. If you have a conviction, be sure it will be tested. One day, a check came in the mail for \$100,000. The money seemed like an answer to prayer, until they read the letter with it. The man said that Bill had blessed his life, and that he needed to catch up on some back tithes. Bill sent him the check back, telling him that it was his conviction that the tithe belongs to the local church -- the "storehouse" -- and should not go to a para-church ministry. Later, they received another letter from the man. He had given the money to his local pastor, and was so blessed by the Lord that he wanted to send an offering to Bill's ministry. This time it was not a tithe -- it was a check for \$200,000.

Today, the organization is called the "Institute in Basic Life Principles," and it is influencing the nation with practical insights from God's Word that strengthen the family and the local church with God's wisdom.

Healed in Honduras

In 1973, evangelist Euley Hudson was preaching in Honduras, a nation of mostly poor people in Central America. He was having some wonderful experiences in the city (even with hecklers throwing fireworks into the church), as well as good spiritual results. One of the men there arranged for a special service where his brother lived, in the country.

It was indeed in the country. The mission was in the mountains, several miles away. They were able to ride in a four-wheel drive Jeep part of the way, and then had to go on horseback. Several natives loaned the ministry party their horses, and a large number of the people walked along the rough trails with them.

It was a harrowing experience. Brother Hudson's heart beat rapidly as he saw the horse stepping along the trail only inches from cliffs which dropped off hundreds of feet. It was literally breathtaking scenery from that vantage point. The party followed the mountain trails and crossed streams into the night.

Finally, they came to a river with a fairly strong current. The other horsemen made it across, but the preacher's horse seemed terrified. It would not go into the deep water. Then, a little old lady, who was holding her hand to her side, came up and spoke to the horse in Spanish, and he went on across. The other people swam

the river, holding a set of dry clothing over their heads as they went.

At the little mission, the meeting room was so crowded that the people had to stand shoulder to shoulder. The evangelist preached through an interpreter, and people responded for salvation and healing. One of the people who came forward for healing was the sweet little lady who had helped the horse cross the river. When she had been prayed for, she lifted both hands and began to shout and praise the Lord. For several years, she had suffered severe pain, and had spent most of her time with one hand holding her side. Now, she was instantly healed, after all that suffering.

At midnight, they began the long trip back to town. This time, Brother Hudson's horse had almost no trouble getting across the river. When they arrived at the Jeep, the evangelist wanted to thank the owner of the horse for loaning it to him. He was humbled and embarrassed to find that the little lady who had walked the whole distance was the owner. He asked, "Why did you give me your horse while you walked, when you were so sick, and I was strong and healthy?" She replied, "I knew you were a man of God, and that I should bless you. Besides, I knew God would heal me, and I would be happy to walk back."

The Story of Ann Hutchinson

The story of the Puritans is an important part of American history. Both the Pilgrims and the Puritans were Christian groups who came from England and Europe to escape religious persecution from the established church, which strongly opposed the practice of New Testament Christianity and exercised oppressive control over the lives of the people. The early towns in the colonies were built around the church, which was the center of the culture.

In 1636, Mrs. Ann Hutchinson arrived in Boston with her husband. She had heard the preaching of Pastor John Cotton, and she immediately joined his church in America. Pastor Cotton was delighted with these new members. Ann Hutchinson had a sharp mind and a wonderful personality. She also encouraged the pastor, and loved to talk to him about the Word.

In fact, she just loved to discuss the pastor's wonderful sermons each week, and began to meet with a few other women after the service for that purpose. Her commentary was interesting and inspiring, and soon her home meeting became quite large, and included people from other congregations as well.

Gradually, Mrs. Hutchinson began to include some of her own ideas into her discussions. She began to teach that since salvation was by faith alone, then works cannot be an evidence of salvation. Sanctification had nothing to do with redemption. It sounded so full of grace; but she was drawing people to herself, and basking in the limelight of popularity.

Her teaching began to become more bizarre, until she was renouncing all of the pastors (except Pastor Cotton), because she had decided that they were not truly saved. She said that she had special revelation from the Lord, and had no need to submit to preachers who were beneath her spiritually. She was God's chosen vessel of truth, and her intelligence and personality were God's tools to enlighten others. She had fallen into pride, but she did not know it.

When the pastors finally agreed to try her for heresy, she was very angry. She pronounced a curse on all of them, promising that God would ruin them all for attacking her. She insisted that she knew she was right, because of the special revelation she had directly from God. The court was forced to banish her from Massachusetts. She went to Rhode Island, which was led by another self-righteous maverick who had been disfellowshipped because of his pride: Roger Williams.

History shows that God did not curse Boston for rejecting the proud ministry of Ann Hutchinson. In fact, the record shows that Mrs. Hutchinson's husband died the following year, and the baby she was carrying was born horribly deformed. The child died at birth. Her primary supporter, Mary Dyer, also had a baby who died at birth. Her baby had horns, claws, and scales, and emitted such a horrible odor that the women in the birthing room vomited and had to leave. We note that these were lovely ladies, but the Bible says that *"...rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft,...."* (I Samuel 15:23)

While these things do not always indicate the judgment of God, it is

significant that the curse she put on the church did come upon her. The remainder of Ann Hutchinson's family

moved to a remote New England colony, where Mrs. Hutchinson was the first victim of an Indian uprising in 1643.

If I Should Die Before I Wake

It is very important for us as Christians to stay sensitive to the Holy Spirit, because we may be led to share the gospel with someone who is living the last day of his life, and will never have another opportunity to get right with God.

Euley Hudson is a former car salesman who became a full time soul winner. One day the Holy Spirit prompted him to pull into a gas station, even though his tank was full. He went into the garage, where a man was working under a car on a hoist. Mr. Hudson introduced himself to the stranger, and the said flatly, "Are you saved?" He was not; but he was the backslidden son of a Southern pastor, and he knew he was going to hell. He lifted his hands and asked God to save him. The obedient believer went on his way, rejoicing that a name had been added to God's book of life. When the hourly news came on the radio, he heard the report that a mechanic at a service station had just been killed when a transmission fell on him. It was the man Hudson had just prayed with.

Later, while hurrying to the airport, he felt led to speak to another car salesman at a dealership. He began to talk to him, but the man put him off. "I will talk to you about it when you get back from Europe." A few days later, Mr. Hudson called his wife from Europe. She said, "By the way, do you know (the car salesman)? He just dropped dead yesterday."

One day, he again felt led to go to a business place and introduce himself to the manager. As they spoke, the manager's friend came in very depressed.

He said, "There is a preacher here. Talk to him." The man's name was Mr. Perky. He was rich. He enjoyed the "good life" with fancy cars, boats, and women, but he was very unhappy. The preacher prayed with him, but he did not respond.

Mr. Perky was hired by the U.S. government to be an advisor in Vietnam. From there, he wrote a letter to Mr. Hudson. He said, "Dear Reverend. I am here in Vietnam as an advisor. I live in a nice place. I have a Vietnamese woman and much alcohol and tobacco, and I am unhappy. Please tell me how to be saved." The preacher wrote back with step-by-step instructions. The man wrote back, "I have done as you said. I no longer drink or smoke or curse. I do not live with that woman, and I am happy. I am saved. I read my Bible and pray each day. I will be returning soon. I will bring my mother to your church when I get back."

Three days later, the preacher saw a large heading in the Sunday paper, which read, "Perky Dies a Mysterious Death in Vietnam." He immediately went to the home of the man's mother. She lived in a luxurious home, but she was on the floor, crying. Mr. Hudson tried to cheer her up. She said, "Oh, I cannot. My son just died, lost. He was a terrible sinner." Mr. Hudson then read the letter he had just received from her son. As she heard the news, her face lit up, and she began to rejoice and praise the Lord. Her son was not burning in hell as she had thought, but was in the presence of Jesus, because one Christian obeyed the Holy Spirit and went to visit a stranger.

The Story of Tony Kawalsingh

Trinidad is an Island in the Caribbean located just seven miles from the tip of Venezuela, South America. It was named by Christopher Columbus, who saw three peaks and named the island for the Trinity (in Spanish). It was settled by the English, who brought in slaves and workers from India and Africa. The white ruling class was overthrown in the 1950's, and today, the island has its own government, although somewhat socialistic. The weather is always beautiful. Generally, the people are either very poor or very rich. The vast majority, of course, live in poverty. The Indians brought their Hindu religion and the Africans brought the Moslem sect; and these two religions dominate the culture of Trinidad and Tobago.

Tony was a young Hindu who lived in a small village called Prince's Town. He was born into the warrior caste, signified by the "singh" in the name; and his family was raising him up to be a Hindu priest. As a boy, he was forced to be with his grandmother as she faithfully prayed two hours every morning to her false gods. He had been literally dedicated to Satan through the deceptive religion that promised eternal life through reincarnation. Many of the "gods" they worship are actually demon spirits, although they are represented by colorful and bizarre statues of wood or concrete.

As a young man, Tony went out of curiosity to a large gathering where a man named T. L. Osborn was preaching about

Jesus Christ. He had never heard the gospel before; but as he listened, the Holy Spirit moved on his heart, and he repented and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. He had already antagonized his family by marrying a Moslem girl; and now he was to be baptized a Christian. This meant that he was rejecting Hinduism and the priesthood, and his family turned bitterly against him.

Young Tony began to study the Bible and was hungry to learn all he could about Jesus Christ. Although living in poverty, he sacrificed and gave as much time as possible to attend Bible school in a nearby city. The Lord put a call on his heart to preach the gospel, and he began to preach wherever and whenever he could. God confirmed his ministry with supernatural signs and miracles, and he started a church in his home town. Later, with the help of a few churches in America, the congregation built a church building; and they continue to worship there, near the busy outdoor market place.

Today, Tony is the bishop of several Christian churches in Trinidad, and is a highly respected Christian leader whose counsel is even sought by government leaders. Although he has had invitations to move to North America to pastor (as so many Trinidadians do to escape the oppressive poverty and socialistic government), he has dedicated himself to his own people and is doing an effective work as a native pastor and Christian leader.

The Story of the Latter Rain Revival

In 1948, a great revival began at the Sharon Orphanage and Bible School in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada, which led later into the great Charismatic Renewal of the 1960s and '70s in North America. Several Christian leaders had joined together under the leadership of George and Ernie Hawtin to begin the "Global Missions" training center. In February, after seasons of prayer and fasting, the Holy Spirit fell in much the same manner as the great Azusa Street Revival of 1906, which had led to the development of many Pentecostal churches and organizations in America. There were 42 people in the group.

According to Ern Hawtin, as they met for Bible study, the Spirit of God fell on them. "Some students were under the power of God on the floor; others were kneeling in adoration and worship before the Lord. The anointing deepened until the awe of God was upon everyone." The Lord began to lead one of the teachers to go to one of the students and prophesy about his future ministry. As he hesitated, one of the women present went to the same individual and spoke precisely the same message that had been impressed on his heart. He realized that it was supernatural prophecy, and not just his own imagination.

During the course of the revival there, the Holy Spirit gave prophecies to many people about the events that were to come to pass, both in the lives of individuals and in the church world. Such outstanding future leaders as Violet Kitley and Edie Iverson were among the students in that meeting.

There were also miracles of physical healings. A few of the students decided that they should lay hands on the sick, so they went to the local hospital and asked if they had anyone who was really sick. They were told that there was a man dying of cancer, so they went to pray for him. The man was indeed in the last stages of cancer. The disease had eaten away part of his face, and he was little more than skin and bones. They prayed the prayer of faith, and the man sat up. He said, "I am hungry. I want some eggs." He hadn't eaten in days, so the nurses were reluctant to give him such food. But he ate. In fact, he ate two full meals, and was soon out of the hospital.

As a result of the move of God, meetings and conferences were conducted regularly at Sharon, and the Hawtins began to publish The Sharon Star. The meetings were characterized by the laying on of hands with prophecy, worship which seemed to be joined by "the angelic choir," fasting and prayer, miracles, and other gifts of the Spirit. The emphasis of the teaching was on the restoration of the fivefold ministry (Ephesians 4:11), spiritual gifts, and body ministry in general.

A pastor in Vancouver, British Columbia named Reg Lazell invited the Hawtin brothers to come there to minister at the great Glad Tidings Temple, and the revival came there in a similar fashion. Another pastor who had been seeking God for revival was Myrtle Beall of Detroit. She drove her car to Vancouver (a very long trip to the west coast) and went back to her church to spark the same kind of powerful move of the Spirit which continues to affect thousands of people

today. The Lord told Mrs. Beall to "build an armory" -- a church building to seat 3,000 people. She did, and God moved

gloriously with a revival of daily meetings which lasted three exciting years.

The Story of "Let the Lower Lights Be Burning"

Lake Erie is one of the five Great Lakes in the northern part of the United States. Lake Erie is located to the north of Ohio, and to the east of Michigan. During the nineteenth century, many people used sailing vessels for travel, as well as for shipping merchandise to and from Canada.

On the northern coast of Ohio there was an excellent and commonly used harbor. When ships could navigate through the narrow opening, they found an inlet that was well-protected from the large waves that could generate off of Lake Erie by a north wind. The dangerous part was navigating through the passage. To guide ship captains at night, the Lorraine Lighthouse was constructed. If the weather became rough, they could see from great distances the location of the safe harbor.

But there was still a need for protection against the rocks of the shore, so a series of lanterns were placed along both sides, so that the pilot could avoid a fatal collision. A man was hired to make the rounds each evening to fill and light the oil-fueled lanterns along the shore.

One cold and unpleasant evening in 1869, the lamplighter decided to skip the job. He reasoned that he had been faithfully making the rounds night after night for many months, and nothing had happened. No storm was expected, and no one would know if he skipped one night. He went on to bed.

That night, a violent storm moved across Lake Erie. A ship was near the safe harbor, and sailed in the mounting gale toward the lighthouse. But as the pilot

and captain searched for the lights, they saw none. Desperately, they tried to aim the ship to the opening of the harbor, but without the shore lights, they were helpless. The ship crashed on the rocks, and many of the crew and passengers died. It was ruled to be the fault of the lazy light keeper.

Soon after the incident was reported in the newspapers, evangelist D. L. Moody heard about it, and preached a sermon from Ezekiel 33. His associate, Philip P. Bliss, with the image of the ship in the stormy sea in his mind, wrote a song about it, comparing Christians to light-keepers along the shore, helping to guide lost souls away from the destruction of sin. Jesus is the great Light of the world and the "Lighthouse" of the analogy; but we are also called "the light of the world." (Matthew 5:14-16) As lights, our godly lives help guide lost souls through the dark night of sin, and the raging storm of life's problems and adversities. We are lights shining through the darkness, but we must let our light shine. If we are lazy in our spiritual walk, others may fail to come into the safety of God's salvation, and lose their lives forever.

This is the basis of Philip Bliss' song, "Let the Lower Lights be Burning."

"Brightly beams our Father's mercy

From His lighthouse evermore.

But to us, He gives the keeping

Of the lights along the shore.

Let the lower lights be burning.

Send a gleam across the waves.

Some poor fainting, struggling seaman

You may rescue, you may save.

Dark the night of sin has settled

Loud the angry billows roar;

Eager eyes are watching, longing

For the lights along the shore.

Trim your feeble lamp, my brother;

Some poor sailor tempest tossed

Trying now to make the harbor

In the darkness may be lost."

The Story of Anna Lock

Anna Lock was born in a coal mining town in southern Illinois. She grew up under a drunken, abusive father, and a weary, overworked mother. At 14, Anna ran away from home to work in another town. At 16, she was the mother of a baby girl, and she settled into an unhappy marriage.

When baby Jean was 3, Anna left her to find a better life. A well-dressed woman offered her some kind of job in Chicago. They were met there by a black limousine, which took her to the heart of the city. Her new job was to entertain nightclub customers. She found herself in the bitter world of hard drinking, drugs, and prostitution. At night, she would cry herself to sleep thinking about her beloved baby girl.

Twenty-six years later, Anna Lock was a derelict on the streets of San Francisco. She was taken many times to General Hospital to be treated for drug overdoses. She also found herself in court on numerous occasions.

One day, Major Annie Eastwood of the Salvation Army found Anna in a drugged stupor, lying in the street. She took her to the Army headquarters there, where they had to restrain her with a straitjacket. Major Eastwood took Anna's face in her hands and said, "I see something in you that God can use. I see something better than this in your face." Anna never forgot those words.

Anna finally revealed the name of her daughter in Illinois, whom she had neither seen nor heard from for many years. Jean was contacted and asked what should be done with her mother. She

sent money, and Anna was put on the train for Illinois, still bound in a straitjacket. When the train arrived, Anna was carried off by the porter, and given to Jean. She now had a family to care for her, after all those years.

One day, an aunt, who had been praying for Anna for 40 years, invited her to attend a gospel service. Anna went to the altar with tears streaming down her face. She surrendered her life to Christ, and she was completely changed by the grace of God. She even married a respectable man in the community. Jean then asked her mother to take care of her 9-month old baby girl. She became a loving and kind "mom" to her little granddaughter.

Anna then felt God speaking to her about ministry, so she rented a building and began to preach. She eventually traveled throughout the United States and Canada, and saw hundreds of lives changed as she shared her testimony. Anna had spent 26 years of her life in the dark world of drugs and prostitution. She then spent 20 joyful years in the bright world of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

While Anna was conducting meetings in San Francisco, the pastor invited Major Eastwood to sit on the platform with her as she shared her testimony. They had a delightful reunion. While conducting a revival meeting, she died in Macon, Georgia, on November 23, 1951. Her granddaughter, Jane Shoults, is a pastor's wife and the women's ministries director of the Northern Missouri district of the Assemblies of God.

by Jane Shoults
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The Story of Aimee Semple McPherson

Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy was born on a small farm in Ontario, Canada. Her father was a Methodist organist and music director, while her mother was active in the Salvation Army. Aimee's father taught her to play the piano and organ as a youngster. She was a bright and active child, and an excellent student at school.

Aimee was raised with the Bible and had been taught wisdom and character; but she was confused by the teaching of evolution in the public school, even back at the turn of the century. How could God be the Creator, if everything just evolved over a long period of time? Her faith in God was shaken for some time, because she could not reconcile in her mind these conflicting issues.

As a teenager, she attended some meetings, conducted by a young Pentecostal evangelist named James Semple. She placed her faith in Jesus as her Creator and Lord; and she also received the baptism in the Holy Ghost, and began to speak in tongues. She later fell in love with the preacher, and they were married.

Both James and Aimee felt a call to ministry, and they made plans to be missionaries to China. They first went to London, Ontario, and pioneered a church there. Then they moved to Chicago, Illinois, and became involved in evangelistic travels. In 1910, they left Chicago and sailed to Hong Kong. Within weeks of their arrival there, James contracted malaria, and died. Aimee was alone, broke, eight months pregnant, half a world away from home, and still a teenager.

That fall, after her daughter Roberta was born, she went back to New York to live with her mother. She got a job taking tickets at a theater. While there, she met Harold Stewart McPherson, and married him in 1911. McPherson was not a preacher, but a businessman. They moved to Chicago, and Aimee became very active in church work again. They did some moving around, and had a son, who later became the leader of the Foursquare Gospel Church.

The McPhersons had an unhappy marriage, which was compounded by the separate schedules they kept. Harold spent time in cities preparing for her meetings, and she did the evangelistic work. They were divorced in 1921.

Aimee McPherson was a fascinating person. She was a great success in the ministry, in a time when neither women preachers nor Pentecostals were widely accepted -- and she was very much both. In 1922, she developed the concept of relating the vision of Ezekiel to a fourfold picture of Christ. (Ezekiel 1:4-28) She said that the face of the man represented Jesus as the Savior; the lion represented Him as the Baptizer in the Holy Ghost; the ox as the Healer; and the eagle as the soon-coming King. This was the doctrinal basis for the Foursquare Gospel Church, which is a major Pentecostal denomination today, with over one million members.

Aimee McPherson ministered salvation and divine healing to thousands of people in her crusades. She built Angelus Temple in Los Angeles in 1921, which could seat 5,300 people. It was filled four times every Sunday for twenty years. Pastor Aimee wrote dramas, skits,

illustrated sermons, and anything else that would dramatize the gospel. In one service, she drove onto the platform on a motorcycle, dressed as a policeman. Her sermon was entitled, "Stop! You are Going to Hell!" She was the first woman to preach on the radio, and hers was the first

church to own a radio station. Aimee McPherson was a dynamo for God, and a great example of what one woman can do by the anointing of the Holy Ghost. She died in 1944, and her son Rolf became the leader of the Foursquare denomination for the next 44 years.

The After-School Motorcycle Ride

Several years ago there was a young teen-age boy who attended a public high school. It was spring, and the classmates would often spend some time after school at one another's homes. One morning his mother told him, "Jimmy, I have something I need you to do right after school today, so come straight home." He said, "OK, Mom," and went off to school.

After school one of his classmates was on his motorcycle and said, "Hop on, Jimmy, and come over to my place to shoot some baskets." As soon as he was on the motorcycle, he remembered his mother's request, and he hopped off. Immediately another boy took his place on the motorcycle, and it sped off.

When Jimmy got home, he was upset. His mother had made him come home

and miss a fun time with his friend, and now she was not even there. She must have forgotten. Finally, she came in and said, "I am sorry I am late, but I stopped to help with a terrible accident. Two of your classmates were on a motorcycle, and a drunk driver hit them head on. The boy driving the motorcycle is in intensive care with severe injuries; and the boy on the back had gone almost fifty feet through the air and was killed instantly."

Jimmy was stunned for a moment, and then said, "Mom, I was almost the one on the back of that motorcycle. It was only two or three seconds from the time I got off until the other boy jumped on to take my place. If I had not remembered to come straight home after school, I would be dead now."

The Story of Saint Patrick

Many people in the world celebrate St. Patrick's day on March 17th, having no idea who the man really was. They wear green, and many drink green beer while singing Irish tunes, in honor of someone they only relate to as a name. Actually, Patrick was not Irish; he was not born on March 17th; he was never made a saint by the church; and he never drove the snakes out of Ireland. He also was not a Roman Catholic.

Patrick was born in 389 A.D. on the west coast of Britain. After centuries of severe persecution, the Edict of Toleration had been given, and Christianity was spreading widely. The Roman Empire was weakening, and Barbarians were sweeping through many lands. Patrick was the son of a Roman magistrate who was also a clergyman in the English church. He was a rebellious and willful youth who lived for pleasure.

When the Roman general was called back to defend Rome, Britain was exposed to the Picts and Vandals, and other dangerous groups. It was also vulnerable to the evil Druids from Hybernia (now Ireland), who offered human sacrifices to their demonic gods. Young Patrick and a few friends were playing by the shore. They looked down the beach and saw some rough-looking men, and they ran for safety. But they were captured when they ran into the rest of the group of pirates, who took them and several hundred other young captives to Ireland. Patrick was sold into slavery as the property of a Druid chieftain, who made him feed swine for six long and miserable years.

As a slave in the darkness of his distress, Patrick recalled the teaching of his

Christian father. He began to pray and to cry out to God. In a dream, a voice spoke to him, "Lo, thy ship awaits thee." He escaped, and traveled two hundred miles on foot through the woods to the sea, where he saw a ship anchored. It had a cargo of Irish wolfhounds. When Patrick asked for passage, he was curtly refused. Then, for some reason, the captain changed his mind, and he was invited on board. He sailed to Gaul, and then back to England.

For years, Patrick planned his revenge on the Druids. He planned to bring to them the light of the gospel. After 20 years, he had another vision. He saw a chorus of people, saying "We beseech thee, holy youth, that you would come among us once more." Having been trained and ordained in the ministry, he went back to the dark forests to preach the Gospel to the Druids. There, he preached the simple gospel of Jesus Christ. He never mentioned church tradition. He simply preached the good news of eternal salvation through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He crossed Ireland many times, preaching everywhere he went. He baptized 120,000 people personally. (Note that the whole population of the island was only 300,000.) He established over 300 churches. It was not until 1167 A. D. that the forces from the Roman Catholic church came to subdue the Irish church, many centuries after Patrick established an evangelical church movement there.

It was this Christian church that prevented the barbarian hordes from conquering Ireland. This was the legacy of Saint Patrick. His favorite Scripture text

was *"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* (Philippians 1:21) To properly celebrate Saint Patrick's day, we should

rather celebrate the gospel, and boldly preach salvation wherever we can.

The Story of C. T. Studd in Africa

C. T. Studd was the top Cricket player in England in the 1880s. He was a tall, handsome young man who was idolized by every boy in England, and admired by everyone. His wealthy father saw to it that the Studd boys had everything they could wish for.

But Mr. Studd was saved in a D. L. Moody meeting in London, and Charles (C. T.) finally followed his father's example six years later. He, too, was converted in a Moody revival service. Charles soon decided to give up his life of pleasure and fame, and become a missionary. He persuaded seven of his old college buddies to go with him, and they became known as the Cambridge Seven.

While studying in China, Charles learned of his father's death. He had inherited a large sum of money. But he had just read what Jesus had said to another rich young man, *"...Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor,...."* (Mark 10:21) Charles decided that this was for him. He quickly contacted his lawyer, and sent money to D. L. Moody, who used it to start the Moody Bible Institute. He also gave to George Müller for his orphanages, and to other ministries. In fact, C. T. Studd gave away his entire fortune, while he happily went on serving Jesus in China.

Just before their wedding in 1888, C. T. and his bride, Priscilla decided to give the rest of their money to the Salvation Army, which was the organization to which she belonged. She simply said, "Well, then, we will start clear with the Lord at our wedding." They went on serving the Lord faithfully.

Charles traveled to the United States, where he influenced many college students to pursue the ministry. In 1900, he became a pastor in India, where the climate was much warmer than China. Again, God blessed his faithful efforts with success in soul-winning.

At the age of 50, Studd felt the call to Africa. It was there that he would see his greatest work accomplished. He had no money, but God provided his fare. He endured great hardships, even living with cannibals, but God sustained him. One day, he was very sick. Remembering the passage in James 5 about anointing with oil, he asked a native to pray for him. They drained an oil lamp on him as he knelt, and he was miraculously healed.

Shortly after this incident, Studd began to pray for a dentist to take care of his teeth. He was advised to go to England, but he said, "If God wants me to have new teeth, He will send a dentist." Later, when his daughter and her husband were coming on a boat up the river to see him, they met a fellow Englishman. When asked why he was coming to the heart of Africa, he said, "I am a dentist. I am going to make a set of teeth for C. T. Studd."

C. T. Studd is remembered as the founder of Worldwide Evangelization Crusade, which has been used of God to win thousands of souls to the kingdom of God. In 1931, in the heart of Africa, surrounded by many native Christians he had won to Jesus, C. T. Studd died victoriously.

The Childhood of Maria Woodworth-Etter

One of the great healing evangelists in America was the fourth daughter of Samuel and Matilda Underwood, born in 1844 in New Lisbon, Ohio. Maria's father was a strong, handsome man; but, he was addicted to alcohol. He was considered a fine fellow, but when he was in town, his friends could easily persuade him to drink. He would spend his entire pay at the bar, and leave little for his poor wife and eight children.

The life of a drunkard's daughter was terrifying and difficult. Worse than the poverty and shame was the fear of the man that should have been her protector. Under the influence of drink, he was mean and utterly selfish. By God's grace and the persistent prayers of his wife, Maria's father was finally saved. After finally becoming the good man and provider his family needed, he suffered from sunstroke while working in the field, and he died, leaving his sickly wife to support her large brood of youngsters. Maria and her older sisters, along with mother, were forced to seek employment outside the home in order to bring in a meager income to support them. She longed for an education, but was able only to read and study on her own. She spent as much time as she could memorizing the Bible, but was not born again until the age of thirteen.

She became a faithful church attendant, going as often as possible to God's house. She felt God's call to win lost souls, although it was difficult for a girl to imagine preaching the gospel, because that was a "man's job" in those days. Women could be missionaries, but not real preachers. It just was not done.

A few years later, young Maria married Mr. Woodworth. The set out to establish a home in the country, and worked hard to get ahead. But hardships came on every side, and life was difficult. The hardest part of her life as a young mother was to see the loss of most of her beloved children. The Woodworths had six children, but only their oldest daughter survived to adulthood. As their first little boy was dying, he said, "Mama, do not weep for me; I am going to a better world." The next year, baby Freddy died. Their daughter, Georgie, was born again at the age of seven, at about the same time. This was a great blessing to Maria. However, Georgie became very sick, and suffered with a serious illness for eight months. She loved to talk and sing about Jesus, and was completely focused on heaven and eternal things. This eight-year-old girl knew she was dying, but she was not bitter. Through her suffering, she remained radiant with the joy of the Lord, and full of compassion for others. She said, "Mama, if you could go with me I would be so happy. I hate to leave you; but say you will meet me in heaven. I shall be looking for you." Georgie talked about dying, and set her house in order. She gave away all of her earthly possessions, selected her burial robe, and requested that they leave room for her mother to be buried at her side. She was heard frequently to say:

"I am coming Lord,

Coming now to Thee;

Wash me, cleanse me in the blood

Which flowed on Calvary."

Through her sufferings, Georgie continued to invite people to come to her beloved Jesus, so they could meet her in heaven. As she lay dying, she talked on and on about heaven and the joy of the Lord. Her face shone with the glory of God, and she said, "O mama, I see Jesus and the angels. I see my little brothers; they have come for me."

Instead of being bitter, Mrs. Woodworth decided that she had just that many more reasons to be sure to make it to heaven. She eventually gave her life to preaching the gospel; and God used her to bring many souls into His kingdom.

Maria Woodworth-Etter: Altar Calls

Maria Woodworth-Etter was a feisty little lady who was born in Ohio in 1844. She was the daughter of a drunken father, and suffered many hardships as a child. But she gave her heart fully to the Lord, and God continued to develop her love and faith to prepare her for the ministry.

As the wife of Mr. Woodworth, she bore six children, but saw only one of them grow to adulthood. Through the deaths of her children, she drew even closer to God, and more and more determined to meet her children in heaven. Instead of becoming bitter toward God, she became full of love and compassion for souls.

Maria knew that most people would accept only men in the pulpit, and so she resisted God's call. But God continued to deal with her, and she was faithful to share what the Lord gave her to speak. She began by preaching in the churches in her home area, to people who knew her and her husband. God moved with power as she ministered, and confirmed the call with many amazing conversions.

When she was in her late thirties, she did much evangelistic work in Allen County, Indiana, in the many small towns around Fort Wayne. She went to a Methodist Episcopal Church in Monroeville, for example, which had been spiritually dead for years. No one had been saved in the church for some time; and everyone predicted that she would surely fail to see revival there. The church had an old mourner's bench, but it had not been used in ten years or so. But she had them dust it off and put it in the front, and people began to crowd around it,

weeping over their sins and crying out to God for forgiveness.

The church was so dry and formal that Maria saw a need for a special manifestation of God's power. She prayed for God to do something special. On the third day, an old woman fell to the floor, cold and stiff. She seemed dead, but she still had a pulse. She lay there the rest of the day, and people looked with amazement, afraid to touch her. The next day, six other people fell over. One young woman was overpowered by the presence of God, and she was "frozen" with a glorious smile on her face. The people carried some of them home. Later, they all recovered quite nicely.

But one older man refused to respond to the Holy Spirit's convicting power, even though Mrs. Etter preached that death was near for someone. He left the church, cursing, and was run over by a train.

Some time later, during a revival in Syracuse, Indiana, the spirit of conviction again fell on the people. Sinners fell to the floor like dead people, and others cried out for God's mercy. Maria felt strongly that the "death angel" was near. With tears streaming down her cheeks, she pleaded with the people, warning that some would meet death very soon. She was especially drawn to a young lady and her boyfriend who were not saved. God was dealing with them; but the girl explained that there was a big dance in a few days, and she did not want to miss it. She assured the preacher that she would give her heart to the Lord after that.

After the service, the young couple stopped by the lake for a little ice-skating. The ice broke through, and they went to the bottom and were drowned. They went

into eternity without salvation, because they wanted time for just a little more carnal pleasure, before surrendering their lives to Jesus Christ.

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.

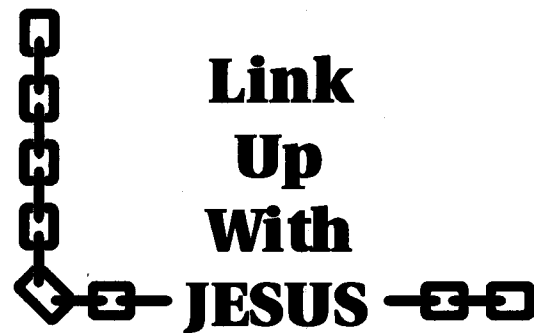
Our promotions are designed to motivate our young people to attend both church and the School of the Bible on a regular basis; to bring their Bibles with them; to bring their tithes and offerings faithfully; to bring their friends to Sunday School on a regular basis; to learn the importance of giving 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.

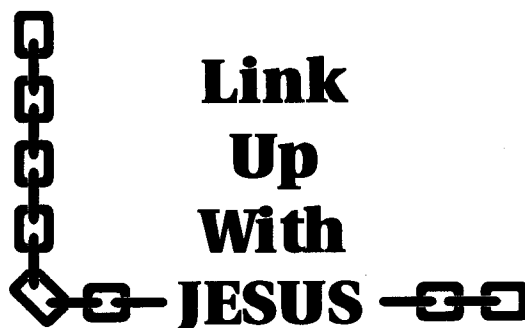
When a student brings his or her Bible, record the date in the appropriate section of the Point Chart, complete the information on the "Brought a Bible" link, and add it to the chain.

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

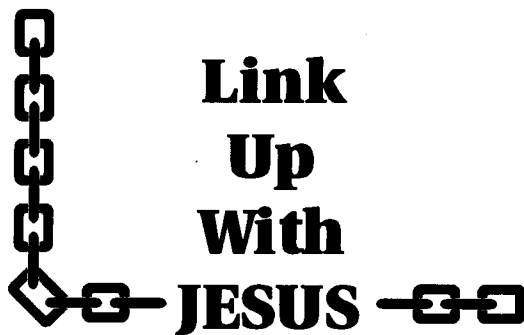
"... Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Matt. 25:40

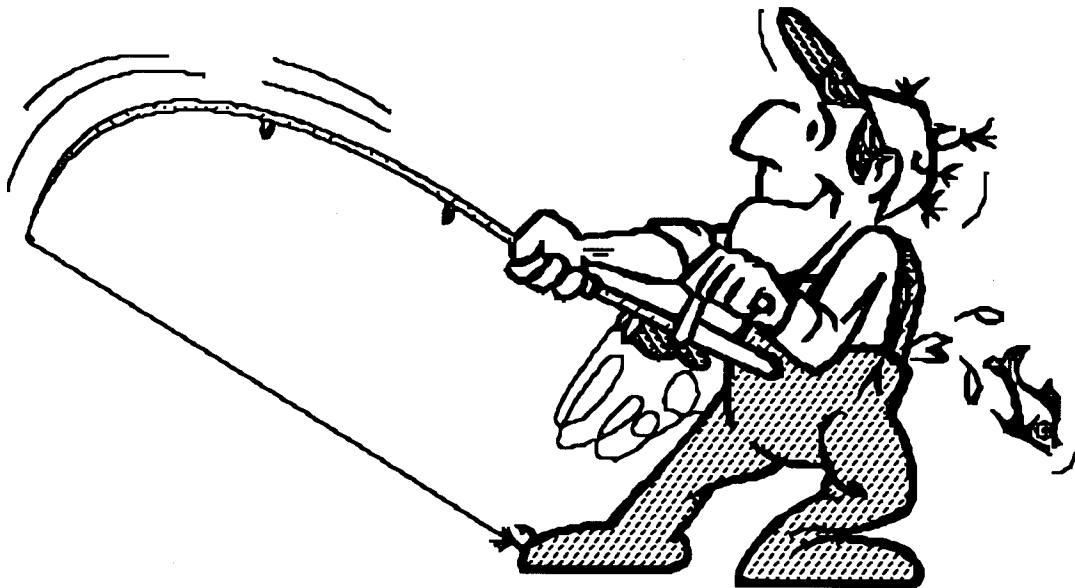
We can fulfill the command of our Lord by ministering to those who are in need.



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.



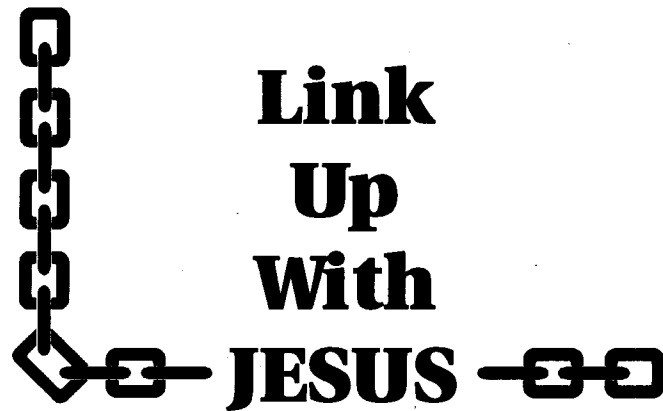
You can't catch fish unless you have the right bait



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.

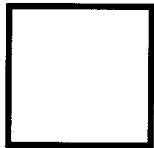
**Link
Up
With
JESUS**

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".

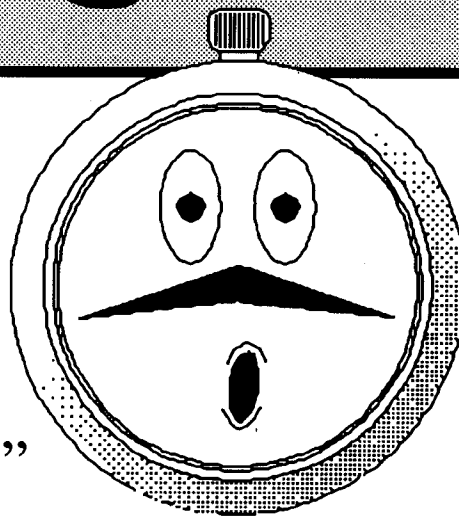


**Time is
getting short**

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.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
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Attendance

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

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|

Brought the Bible

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

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|

Brought a Friend

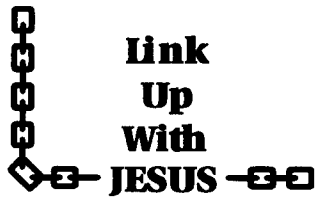
Record the name(s) of the friends, below. Award 6 links.

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|

Qualified for Bonus Points?

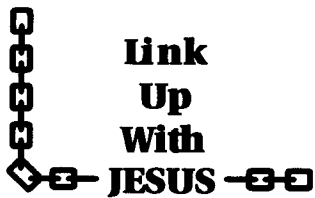
Award 5 links.

☐

**Brought a Visitor**

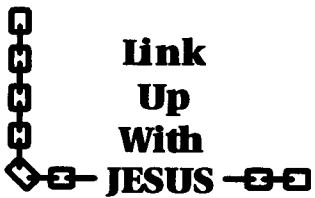
Name _____

Date _____

**Brought a Visitor**

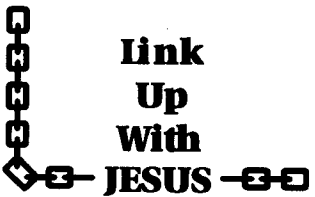
Name _____

Date _____

**Brought a Visitor**

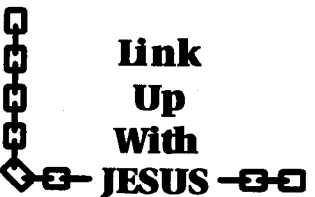
Name _____

Date _____

**Brought a Visitor**

Name _____

Date _____

**Brought a Visitor**

Name _____

Date _____

**Brought a Visitor**

Name _____

Date _____



Link
Up
With

JESUS

Verse: _____

Name _____

Date _____



Link
Up
With

JESUS

Verse: _____

Name _____

Date _____



Link
Up
With

JESUS

Verse: _____

Name _____

Date _____



Link
Up
With

JESUS

Verse: _____

Name _____

Date _____



Link
Up
With

JESUS

Verse: _____

Name _____

Date _____



Link
Up
With

JESUS

Verse: _____

Name _____

Date _____



**Link
Up
With**

JESUS

Attendance

Name _____

Date _____



**Link
Up
With**

JESUS

Attendance

Name _____

Date _____



**Link
Up
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JESUS

Attendance

Name _____

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**Link
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**Link
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JESUS

Attendance

Name _____

Date _____



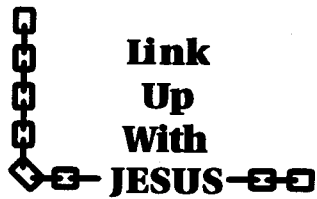
**Link
Up
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JESUS

Attendance

Name _____

Date _____



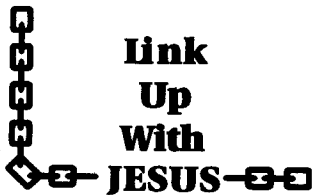
**Link
Up
With**

JESUS

Brought a Bible

Name _____

Date _____



**Link
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JESUS

Brought a Bible

Name _____

Date _____



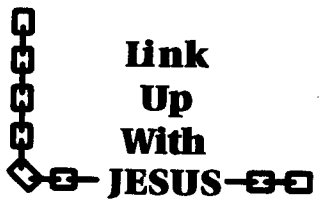
**Link
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With**

JESUS

Brought a Bible

Name _____

Date _____



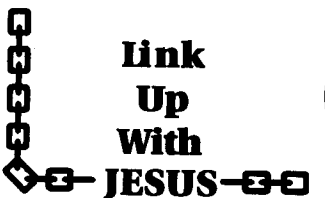
**Link
Up
With**

JESUS

Brought a Bible

Name _____

Date _____



**Link
Up
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JESUS

Brought a Bible

Name _____

Date _____



**Link
Up
With**

JESUS

Brought a Bible

Name _____

Date _____

Fuel the 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



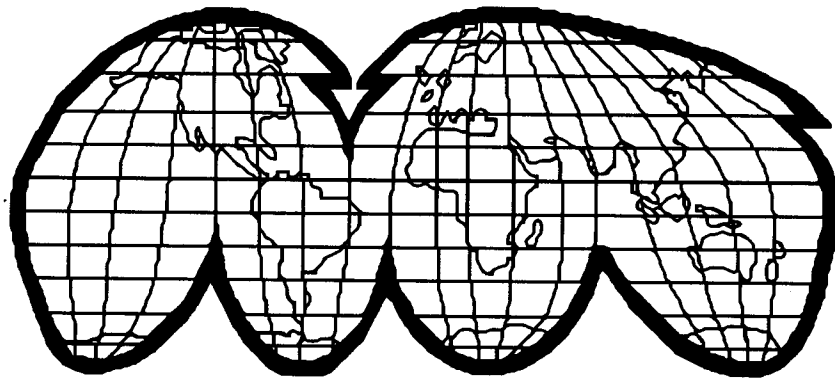
Anyone in the world who needs to know Jesus as their Savior.

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.

| | | |
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| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

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**

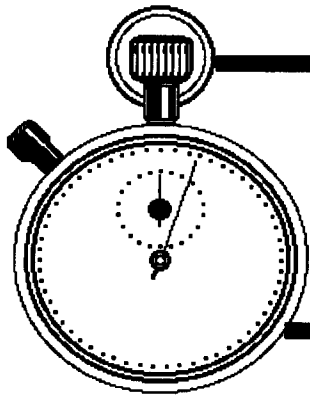
**Students Earning
120 Total
Points Receive:**

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

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

Invite a Friend Today and Help Us Fuel the Flame!

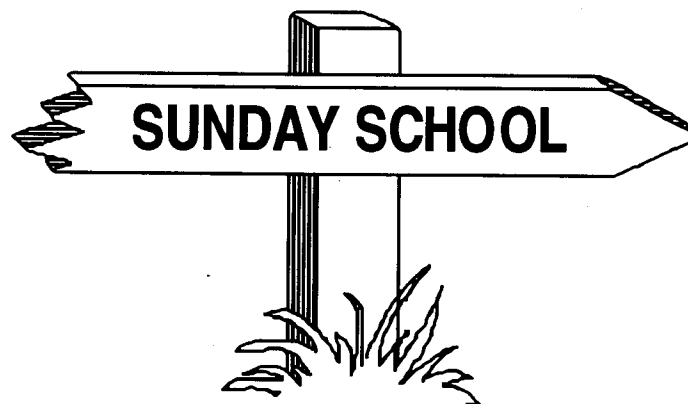
Fuel the Flame



**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 |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------------|
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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

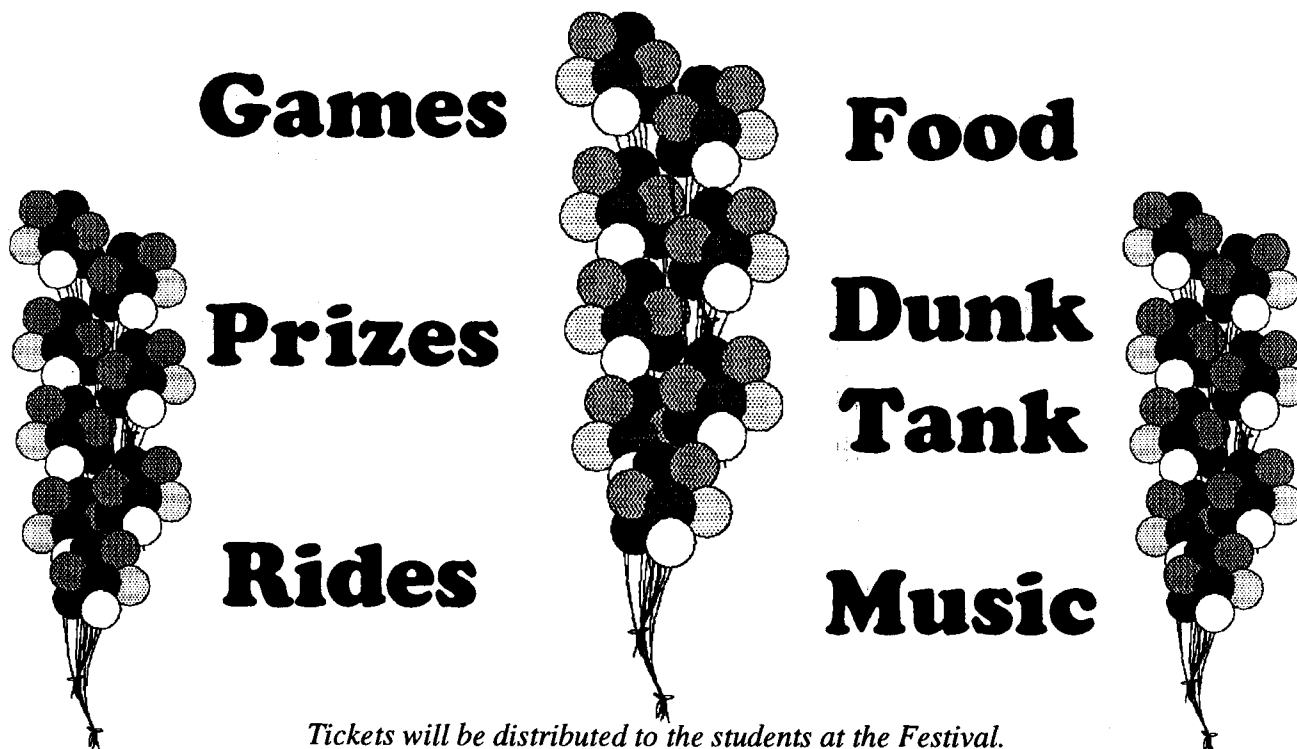
Contest begins: _____

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.)



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:

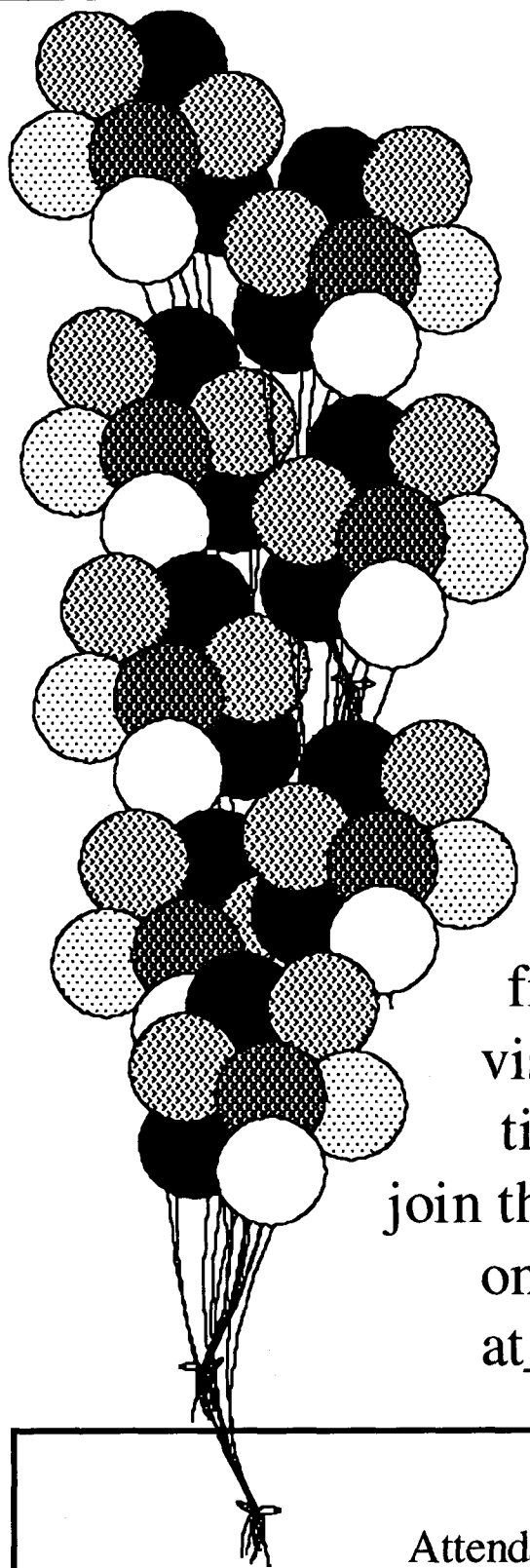
Time:

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**

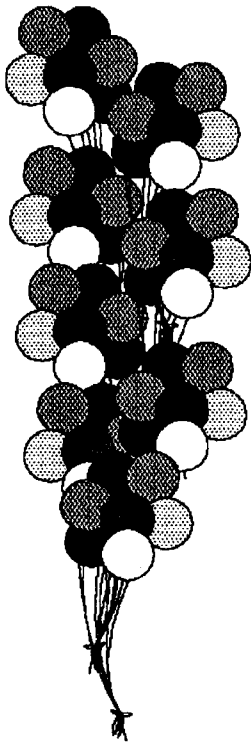


Only Weeks to go in the Fall Fun Festival Contest

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.



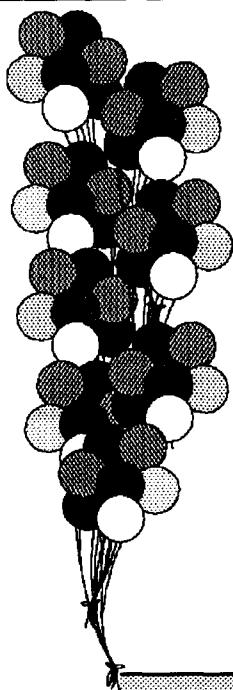
Fall Fun Festival Ticket Certificate

(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).

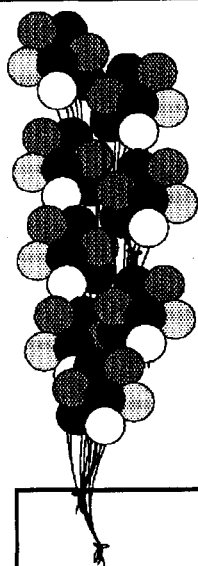


Weekly Point Chart: Week # _____

Date _____

Class _____

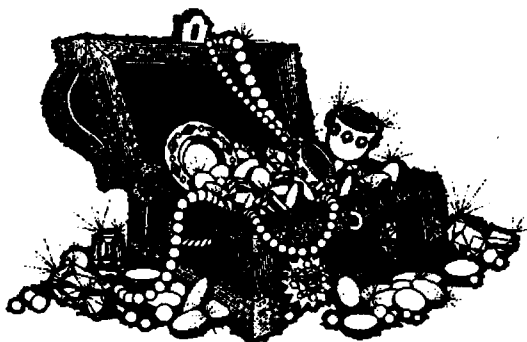
[illegible]



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:

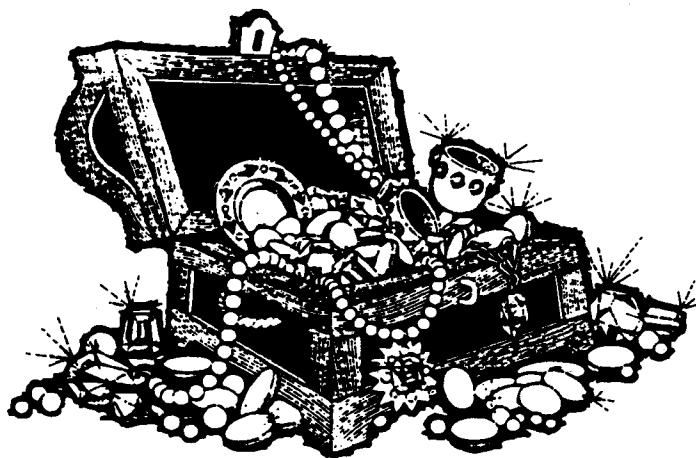
Each Secretary will have a Weekly Point Chart on which to record the points each student earns. A supply of coins will also be distributed to every class. Additional coins will be available in the Audio-Visual Room. Every time students

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.

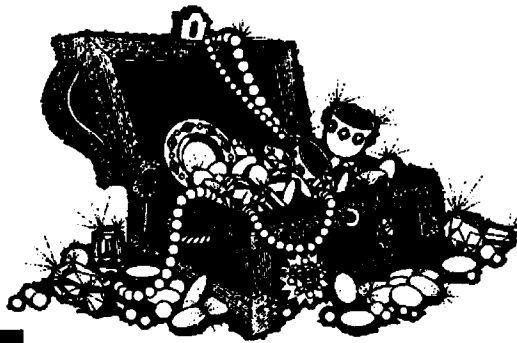
The student in each class, who earns the most points over 200, will win a special prize and will be given a key which may open the Treasure Chest.

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

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

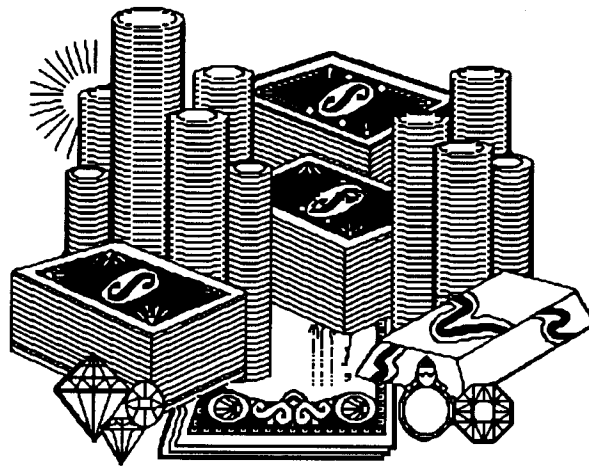
Invite Your Friends to Sunday School!

Unlock The



Treasure

What Treasure is Inside the Chest?

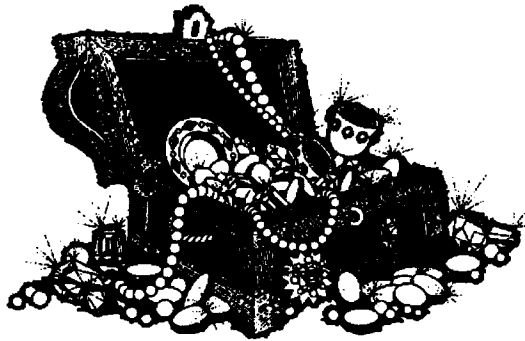


God says that He is worth more than Silver or Gold, and we are to treasure Him above all earthly riches!

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.



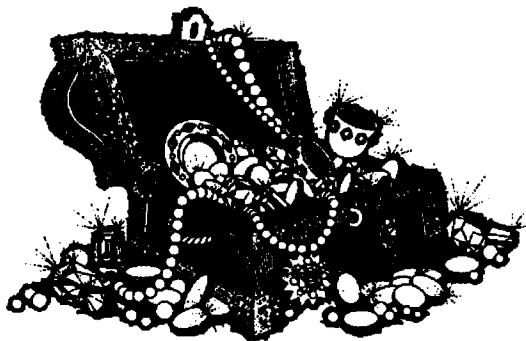
Weekly Point Chart



Treasure

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Unlock The



Re-Cap Sheet

Treasure

Class:

| Name | Wk #1 | Wk #2 | Wk #3 | Wk #4 | Wk #5 | Wk #6 | Misc. | TOTAL |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
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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.

What Are the Greek Words for "Love", and What Do They Mean?

"Eros" means "physical attraction"; "phileo" means "friendship";
and "agape" means "unselfish, covenant love".

*"Though I speak with the tongues
of men and of angels, and have not
charity, I am become as sounding
brass, or a tinkling cymbal." (1
Corinthians 13:1)*

The English language has only one word for "love;" and "love" has many meanings for different people in our culture. The Greek is much more exact. In fact, many Christian historians believe that God allowed Alexander the Great to conquer the known world so that Greek would be the prevailing language in the time that the New Testament would be written. The three principal Greek words for "love" relate directly to the three parts of man: **body, soul, and spirit.**

"Eros" is the root for our word "erotic." Obviously, it relates to physical attraction or infatuation. It is a very weak kind of love and cannot be the basis for a very fulfilling, sustained relationship. It is based on the desire for pleasure; or on pride in appearance; and it seeks selfish goals.

"Phileo" means "brotherly love." It refers to an emotional bond of friendship between people. We develop friendships based on common values, circumstances, or goals. The family is the first unit for establishing friendships. It is normal and

right for siblings to be friends. In fact, parents can and should be friends to their children, as well as authority figures. The Bible teaches that young men should treat young ladies as "sisters" and be friends, not as romantic quests like our western culture promotes. It is also important for Christians to develop friendships with other believers. This is one of the values of a large local church. We learn to defend one another and to protect our relationships, by going quickly to one another when we have interpersonal conflicts.

"Agape" is the word for godly, selfless love. In the King James Version, it is translated "charity." It is a love based on giving, rather than what we can get out of each other. It is a response to God's love for us, and not just to the person's attributes or benefits to us. Love is a fruit of the Spirit living in us; and, therefore, it is not diminished by the worthiness of the person who is receiving the love. *"Charity never faileth."* (1 Corinthians 13:8) Basically, love is the unselfish response of those people who fully receive God's love -- they naturally begin to care about the needs of others instead of self. *"God so loved the world that he gave...."* (John 3:16); and that is also our natural response when we love.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)

There are other Greek words for "love", but these three relate to the basic parts of man. Notice that "eros" is a function of the flesh, or physical part of

man. "Phileo" is soul love. It is the response of emotion, intellect, and personality one to another. "Agape" is a function of the spirit. It is only by God's Spirit dwelling in us that our spirit can respond to others with genuine agape love.

What Is Reconciliation?

Reconciliation is the restoration of a friendship or covenant relationship, which had been broken by one or both parties in the past.

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:18)

It is very important for us, as believers, to understand the dynamic of sin and of God's holiness. Since God is perfectly holy and perfectly just in all of His dealings with man, He cannot arbitrarily overlook sin. God is so holy that any sin is intolerable in His presence.

"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity...." (Habakkuk 1:13)

Sin is defiant disobedience and self-determination. It puts us in direct conflict with God's eternal purpose to have a people who live for Him instead of for themselves. The Kingdom centers around the King. Sin causes us to center our lives around self. As long as self is lord in our lives, we cannot respond to God as Lord. Jesus said, *"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself..."* -- not allow self to remain on the throne of his life. (Luke 9:23)

Sin is an expression of self-assertiveness. It is the opposite of righteousness, or "right standing with God." When Adam and Eve disobeyed

God, they were establishing their own lordship. By doing so, they broke fellowship with God.

All of us were born with that same self-willed sin nature; and we declared our independence from God's authority over our lives when we willfully violated our conscience. Through willful disobedience, we were alienated from God's presence. All of us are sinners, both by birth and by choice. We deserve everlasting separation from God.

There are only two places we know of in the universe where unsaved people can dwell eternally. They are called "hell" and "the lake of fire." They were created as places of torment for the devil and his angels; and the lake of fire will also contain those of the human race who are not part of God's covenant family by grace when they finish this life.

As self-willed sinners, we have lived apart from God's good presence. He is not one to forsake His children. However, we forsake Him in the same way the "prodigal son" left his father in the parable in Luke 16. This son demonstrated a temporal values system. He wanted immediate gratification, so he left his father to enjoy the world. When he suffered, he was brought to repentance.

Repentance means to "turn around." The prodigal son left the pig pen and went to seek his father. He had spent his inheritance; but, he was reconciled to his father. The relationship was restored. Now he was willing to let his father make the major decisions; and he was content to be a servant. He realized that his father loved him and that his father's will for him was the best.

We were all alienated -- separated -- from God. We were not a member of

God's family. But, through His death on the cross, Jesus Christ provided a way for us to be pardoned legally and to be redeemed to a sweet and eternal relationship with God. Our goal as faithful soul winners is to lead people to a relationship with God by helping them to see the seriousness of sin, as well as the love of the Father, whom they have rejected through sin. We encourage them to repent and give themselves to God.

How Could a Brazen Serpent Be a Type of Christ in the Bible?

The serpent was the creature, cursed because of sin;
and Jesus became a curse for us when He hung on the cross.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up...." (John 3:14)

Everyone knows that the serpent was the beautiful creature the devil used to beguile Eve into sinning against the Lord; and, from that point on, all snakes were cursed and made to crawl on their bellies. We understand the name, "that old serpent," as one of the names of Satan, who is eternally cursed for his rebellion. But, did you know that the serpent is also a type -- picture -- of Christ?

In Numbers 21:5-9, there is the account of the brazen (bronze) serpent. The people of Israel had become discouraged by the way in the wilderness. They were complaining and gossiping about Moses, the man God had appointed to be their leader. God sent a hoard of poisonous snakes to kill the people. At the same time, He ordered Moses to make a snake out of bronze (brass) and lift it up on a pole before the people. God instructed Moses to tell the people that whoever would look up at the bronze serpent would live; and many obeyed the Word of the Lord to Moses. They may have been bitten; but, all it took to survive was an act of obedience to the Word of the Lord.

Many of the people died, because their entire focus was on the problem. When the ground is crawling with snakes, it is hard to look in another direction. That takes faith and obedience. Sin always brings death. The only way to be saved is to look up to Jesus and believe He will save us by grace. We cannot prevent the consequences any other way.

Bronze ("brass" in the King James Version) is a biblical type of judgment. The serpent speaks of the curse. We need to realize that God is holy; and sin is very serious. When Jesus was made "...to be sin for us,..." (2 Corinthians 5:21) and took upon Himself the sins of the whole world, He was like the brass serpent.

*"For it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."
(Galatians 3:13)*

Jesus became cursed for us, so that we might inherit the blessing of eternal life. He became sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ. He suffered, so that we might be healed. The Roman method of execution by crucifixion was not only extremely painful, but it was also very shameful. As we reflect on the cross, we see the immense seriousness of sin in the eyes of God.

But Jesus "...endured the cross, despising the shame," (Hebrews 12:2) or counted it as trivial, compared to the joy of bringing many sons to glory. He understood that the pain and the curse were all necessary to satisfy the demands of God's holiness and eternal justice in relation to man's sin. He knew that many would respond to the greatest expression

of love and compassion the world had ever seen and would embrace Him gladly as Lord of their lives.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."
(John 12:32)

Hallelujah!

What Is the Difference Between a Religious Rite and a Sacrament?

A religious rite is only an outward show, based on tradition. A sacrament involves both a spiritual meaning and a spiritual work in the life of the believer.

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6)

Religion is man's attempt to know or understand God. True Christianity is a living relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible is the revelation of God to man. Every religion has certain rites or rituals that will involve some kind of effort or sacrifice. Unless the practices are based on the revealed Word of God, they will not be pleasing to God. God alone initiates His covenants; and He sets forth those things that are pleasing to Him.

There is nothing that a man can do of his own invention which can please God. God is impressed only with faith and the obedience that results.

Religious rites are based on traditions. Jesus said,

"...in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandments of God,

ye hold the traditions of men...."
(Mark 7:7-8)

God spoke to Israel through His prophet, Isaiah, and told them that He was sick of their rituals. He wanted them to repent of their sins and serve Him in truth. (Isaiah 1:10-20)

Religious rites can be impressive to people and have an emotional effect on the participants. But, spiritual sacraments have eternal value and spiritual benefits. In Christian baptism, for instance, the Bible speaks of an inner washing, (Acts 22:16) a burial with Christ, and rising to walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)

Healing and communion with God are involved in the partaking of the Lord's table. There is spiritual identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Partaking unworthily, or with wrong motives, can have serious negative effects on a person. (1 Corinthians 11:27-30) In the breaking of bread, we are affirming our covenant with the Lord and with His body, the church; healing offenses; and examining ourselves. As we take the cup, we are showing the Lord's death until He comes.

The sacrament of marriage is also a spiritual union, and not just a legal one.

Marriage is sacred in God's eyes, and it should also be in ours.

The sacraments were designed by God, the designer and initiator of the Covenant we have through the blood of Jesus. God has a perfect and eternal purpose in

everything He does. We probably do not understand fully every part of the sacraments. But, God knows our hearts; and He is pleased as we respond honestly to that which He directs us to do as His children and as His church.

What Is the Doctrine of Eternal Judgment?

Jesus Christ is the one who judges all men.

When He pronounces final judgment on a person, the verdict will be permanent.

God "... hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained...." (Acts 17:31)

Every member of the human race will stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and will be evaluated, or judged, and will be given rewards or punishments which will continue forever. In this short life on earth, everything is temporary. The primary purpose of this physical life is to prepare us for eternity. God is seeking worshippers (John 4:24) and is building His church, which is the holy company of believers from all the ages, who are the born-again overcomers.

The word "judge" in the Greek is "krino," which means "to decide." Judging makes subjective conclusions about the intent and integrity of a person, as well as about his external actions. When you make a judgment, you categorize the person according to what you perceive his motives to be. You may know that a person has made an incorrect statement based on the facts. But, do you know it was intentional? To say, "That was a false statement; let us check out the facts," would be an example of **discerning**. To say, "That person is a liar," is a **judgment**. We can see actions, but we do not see motives.

"Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)

Jesus Christ commands us not to judge. (Matthew 7:1) We may see and should respond to some actions; but, we must always be aware that we cannot see the heart. When we judge one another, we cut off relationships and damage the unity that God has designed for His children.

We are told to restore someone who is overtaken in a fault (Galatians 6:1) or to go privately to a believer who misses the mark. (Matthew 18:15) However, we cannot be restored to a person whom we have judged. The moment we believe that a person does not love us, or is insincere, we preclude restoration, because we will not receive his apology or his effort to restore.

It is human nature to judge others and excuse ourselves. The Bible teaches us to reverse that. We should be patient with one another and give others the benefit of the doubt. But, if we are wise, we will "judge ourselves." That is to say, "I was really selfish and unkind to say that. I should apologize."

"But let a man examine himself,...for if we would judge

ourselves, we should not be judged." (1 Corinthians 11:28,31)

When we are judged by the Lord, we will be judged righteously. He knows exactly what we have done in this life; and He sees our motives. He knows the potential He gave us; and He will expect more from those who had more opportunities and blessings in this life.

(Luke 12:48) The only way to live wisely and well is with the awareness of accountability: that is, the reality that we belong to God and will have to give an account to Him.

"...It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this, the judgment."
(Hebrews 9:27)

What Is the Bema Throne?

The Bema Throne, or Judgment Seat of Christ, is the place where all believers will be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ, according to their works here on earth.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10)

The Greek word "**bema**" (pronounced bay-ma) means "a step, a rostrum, tribunal, or judgment seat." The judgment seat of Christ is the throne in heaven, where He will sit in judgment over all the believers from all the ages. All those who are evaluated there will be redeemed by His blood. They will not be cast into hell; but, they will receive various rewards or reprimands for their works and choices on earth.

The fact that we will be judged at the Bema Throne will be proof that our names are written in the "Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 3:5), and that our names will not be blotted out. All those whose names are not found in the book of life will be judged after the millennium at the "Great White Throne Judgment." (Revelation 20:11-15)

After the rapture of the church, at the end of the church age, the believers will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We believe that the stage is being set and that this will happen very soon. It is important for believers to have this sense

of urgency about the coming of the Lord and to be prepared. When a person loses the vision for the coming of the Lord, he may tend to become carnal and selfish. (Matthew 24:45-51)

At the judgment, Jesus Christ will cause all of us to give an account of our lives. He will know exactly what He called and equipped us to do and the number of opportunities we had in life.

"Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required;...." (Luke 12:48)

The Lord will demand more of a five-talent man than He will of a one-talent man. God will "...render to every man according to his deeds:...." (Romans 2:6)

The Bema Throne will be a time for rewards, when the Lord shall assign to some the responsibility to rule over five or ten cities. It will also be a time of sorrow and regret, when we see what we could have done and where we fell short of God's highest will. How will the Christians feel who had turned against one another, or split apart in jealousy or bitterness, when they are judged for the ways they treated one another?

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;...

*Knowing...the terror of the Lord,
we persuade men;..."* (2
Corinthians 5:10-11)

Many Bible teachers believe that the tears which God will wipe from our eyes will be the tears shed at the Bema judgment. (Revelation 21:4)

There are many things in life that are "unfair." Some people seem to get great rewards for little effort, and others do what is right and suffer. In the end, Jesus will be the righteous judge, and will make it right. In fact, to judge is to make things right; to settle the score. The proud will be brought down, and the humble will be exalted. *"Judge me, O LORD, for I have walked in mine integrity."* (Psalms 26:1)

What Is the "Great White Throne Judgment"?

The Great White Throne Judgment refers to the great judgment of all of the unbelievers of the human race. It will take place, after the Millennium, at the resurrection of the wicked dead.

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them." (Revelation 20:11)

When a believer dies, his spirit leaves his body and goes to heaven to be in the presence of God. He is conscious and, very possibly, is aware of the events on the earth. At the time of the First Resurrection, the "dead in Christ" will come with the Lord and be restored to their physical bodies. Their bodies will be miraculously rebuilt and glorified. That is, they will become bodies of "flesh and bone," immortal and incorruptible, like that of Christ's when He was resurrected from the dead. *"We shall be like him;..."* (1 John 3:2)

The unbelievers, or all those who are not born again when they die, leave their bodies in the grave and go to Sheol, or Hades, a place of fire and torment for spirits. Apparently, this place is located within the earth. We know it to be a literal place of darkness and intense heat. The righteous saints will be resurrected at the close of the church age and before the Millennial reign of Christ on the earth.

After that time of one thousand years of peace on the earth, there will be another

great resurrection, followed by another great judgment. The same judge, the Lord Jesus Christ, will preside over both judgments. However, this will be the resurrection of the wicked dead. Their spirits will be taken out of Sheol-Hades; and they will stand before the throne. The record of all their deeds and the Book of Life will be opened. The people will be judged according to their deeds. The main factor in determining their eternal fate will be whether they did repent and believe. If they did not, their names will not be in the Lamb's Book of Life.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.... And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:12-15)

Those who choose not to live for God, will never live with God in all eternity. They will be cast into a place of "outer darkness" and torment, where they will

have all of eternity to regret their selfish, wasted lives, and their rejection of the grace of God. All those judged at the Great White Throne will be cast into the lake of fire with Satan and his angels.

"I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as

snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool. ...A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: a thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened."
(Daniel 7:9-10)

Does God Predestine Some People To Be Saved and Others To Be Eternally Lost?

The Bible teaches that God's predestination is based on His foreknowledge, and that anyone can be saved if they will respond to the Holy Spirit and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Romans 8:29)

Predestination is a wonderful truth that can easily be taken out of context and out of balance. Some teach a fatalistic approach to predestination. Their concept is, "Since God is sovereign, He must choose those He wants to save and leave the rest to go to hell. We really do not have anything to do with it. God knows what is going to happen, because He has made all the decisions ahead of time."

The Bible teaches that God's foreknowledge is not based on His foreordination. Rather, His predestined plan is based on His foreknowledge. Otherwise, the verse would say, "Whom He did predestinate, He also knew ahead of time."

God knows everything that has ever happened and everything that ever will happen. He knows what choices and responses we will make; and He has a perfect plan for each of our lives. Predestination simply means a plan for the future. God has in mind a destination for us and He plans ahead. When we

disobey Him, we damage God's best for our lives and can fall short of what He wanted us to do or have in this life.

God is sovereign. He is so sovereign that He can let us make choices and still be God. If we are not free moral agents, then there is no great blessing in the fact that we respond to Him in faith and love. The fact that we chose to love God in the midst of a wicked world makes our lives pleasing to God. If we had no choice, we would just be responding like a machine.

We know that God does not choose arbitrarily who will be saved or lost, because He is just. He does not select anyone to go to hell.

"The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

He wants everyone to be saved. God knows that, when given a choice, most people will love themselves and will not really want to surrender their lives to Him. Everyone wants to go to heaven; but, God wants a people who believe His Word and will love Him more than they love the world.

Why did God choose Abraham to be His friend? Abraham believed and responded to God. God chose David, because David had a heart to love God. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, because he was the only man on earth in his day who believed and obeyed God.

From the foundation of the world, God knew who would have a heart to seek and honor Him with their lives; and He chose them for Himself. If God arbitrarily chose

some to succeed in life and others to fail, He would not be a just God. He does give to some more opportunities in life; but He also holds them more accountable. (Luke 12:48)

Predestination is the principle that God has a wonderful purpose, plan, and destination for your life. It is not an excuse to do whatever you want and to think that you do not have any responsibility in life.

What Do the Words "Lasciviousness" and "Concupiscence" Mean?

Lasciviousness is the practice of stirring up sensual desires which cannot be rightly satisfied. Concupiscence is an abnormally strong appetite for sensuality.

"But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence...."
(Romans 7:8)

The direct relationship between lasciviousness and concupiscence is a vivid illustration of the principle of guarding the heart. The more we are exposed to evil, the more we are drawn to it.

Notice the extremes of evil constantly portrayed by the entertainment world today, with a constant emphasis on fornication, violence, and witchcraft. Have you noticed there is rarely a reference to extremes of righteousness? Many ungodly people deal with their guilt by focusing on great evil, and convincing themselves that they "are not so bad." Also, there are forces which desire to destroy strong, free nations by encouraging young people to become morally and mentally weakened by obsessions with pleasure.

Lasciviousness involves the deliberate stimulation of wrong sexual desires, such as pornography, lewd dress, and secular dancing. God created sex to be a delightful and beautiful expression of covenant love between a man and his wife. It is designed to be an intimate and private blessing. But, sin has corrupted this gift and made it a

recreational, spectator sport; and it has brought about the demeaning of both women and men through carnal exploitation of this natural human drive.

One lie of humanistic education is that "we need sex education to satisfy the curiosity of young people." This is extreme stupidity, because you cannot satisfy with sensual material; you can only stimulate. The more you have, the more you want. Pornography is addictive.

"Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied." (Proverbs 27:20)

When any young person is exposed to lasciviousness through pornography, sensual music, and television, he develops an inordinately strong sexual appetite -- an addiction to sensual material. This condition is called "**concupiscence**." To expand on what Paul was saying in Romans 7, "The practice of sin in my life developed into the state of concupiscence. This brought the bondage of a controlling addiction that kept me from enjoying life." To put it another way: "the wages of lasciviousness are concupiscence."

Lasciviousness is a moral trap; and concupiscence will destroy your soul. Job said,

"I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" (Job 31:1)

You cannot play games with your sex drive and not damage your soul, any more that you can put fire inside your shirt and not be burned. (Proverbs 6:27)

Today, there are many young people who have lost most of their potential for

God and for a happy marriage, because of concupiscence. No wonder Paul said to *"flee fornication."* (1 Corinthians 6:18) It is one of the *"works of the flesh"* listed in Galatians 5:19. We should treat the younger women as sisters, *"...with all purity...."* (1 Timothy 5:2), and not involve ourselves in practices or situations which will vex our souls and spirits.

What Is Witchcraft?

Witchcraft is a work of the flesh, whereby those who do not turn to God as their source enter into all manner of deception and occult practices.

"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft...." (1 Samuel 15:23)

The Greek word for "witchcraft" is "pharmakeía." It literally means "medication." It is our root word for "pharmacy"; and it relates to the use of drugs and alcohol, as well as to sorcery and magic.

The key word that ties these things together is the word "**deception**." Satan's realm is called the kingdom of darkness; and it thrives only through lies and partial truths. The basic purpose of drugs is deception. This has been used in beneficial ways by medical doctors to assist the body's healing processes. If the body is in intense pain, drugs can be administered to weaken or eliminate that sensation, so the person can get some needed rest.

The basic purpose of alcoholic drinking and illegal drugs is the same. The drunkard or addict gains the false impression of well-being, happiness, or even temporary euphoria. But, of course, it does not last, because it is a deception. He is not happy. For a time, he only thinks he is.

The classic application of "witchcraft" today relates to the practice of turning to the flesh for power or direction in life. Witchcraft involves astrology, fortune-

telling, psychic phenomenon, hypnosis, transcendental meditation, magic, and demon-possession. It may involve Satan worship; but, usually, it does not. In fact, most witches do not even believe in a real devil. They believe in an impersonal "force"; and they think that their powers come from "within". In fact, if there is any psychic power, it comes from a demon spirit. It is all an elaborate and deadly game of deception.

"The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ,... should shine unto them." (2 Corinthians 4:4)

People are deceived into thinking that their lives are directed by the stars instead of by God.

Satan seeks to imitate God. He loves to get people involved in the supernatural. But, the purpose is always destruction. Today, our culture is being flooded with a promotion for witchcraft through cartoons, movies, the advertisement industry, books, video games, and the public schools. Witchcraft draws its source from the principalities of darkness. It is unwittingly a subject of Satan's kingdom.

We can get an idea of God's impression of witchcraft when we read that He commanded the Israelites to execute all witches. (Exodus 22:18) As Christians, we must be sure never to involve ourselves in any activities which are related to witchcraft, such as the reading of horoscopes, the watching of television or movies in which witchcraft is portrayed in a positive way, or the reading of witchcraft-related literature.

We must also avoid a fascination with "extra-sensory perception" or any supernatural activity that is not specifically shown in the Word of God to be godly. We

must always seek discernment from the Word of God, for

"...Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." (2 Corinthians 11:14)

The terrifying message Samuel gave to Saul in 1 Samuel 15:23 should make us very serious about our response to authority today. Rebellion is the rejection of authority -- the desire to "be your own person." Samuel said that, when you come out from under God's authority, you forfeit His protection. You are then subject to the dominion of the kingdom of darkness and to all kinds of deception.

What Is the Difference Between Inspiration and Illumination?

Inspiration is the work of the Holy Spirit to impart a divine, perfect word to His anointed writer. Illumination is the work of the same Spirit to make the truth of the Bible clear to the reader.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16)

The word inspiration literally means, "to breathe in". It refers to the fact that the Spirit of God breathed into the holy men of God who penned the scriptures. According to Bible scholars, God gave to at least 40 different writers, by a special anointing, a supernatural gift to speak as His instrument and to communicate the message of the gospel to God's people. We are not sure of the exact number of writers, because the writers of some of the books of the Bible and some of the Psalms are not clearly specified.

God is the author of the Bible.

"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter 1:21)

This is how God gave us His anointed message over a period of 1600 years, from Moses to John. Even so, the writers were not mindless robots taking dictation, just as those who prophesy today are not given

every word to say. When God gives inspiration, He breathes His Spirit into a yielded, holy human vessel, and gives wisdom, knowledge, and spiritual insights that cannot be received by natural means.

God used the various personalities and experiences of the writers to add fullness to the writings; and the whole collection of 66 books in the Bible holds together as a cohesive unit, affirming one divine author. We do not claim to have the same level of inspiration the writers of scripture had, for the canon of God's Word is complete. All other inspiration must be subject to the proven Word.

When we receive spiritual illumination, the Holy Spirit opens our understanding to truth that has always been; but, we need His anointing to perceive it. To "illuminate" simply means "to turn on the light". Every believer must receive illumination concerning Jesus in order to exercise faith for salvation. As we open our minds to God in prayer and Bible reading, God continues to shine in our hearts. (2 Corinthians 4:4) This illumination relates to the work of the Holy Spirit as our teacher; affirms the words of the preacher; and brings us to more and more truths, as we open the

Word of God with an honest heart of a learner.

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance..." (John 14:26)

It would be a tragic mistake to believe that, since we have the Holy Spirit, we no

longer need pastors and teachers, because Jesus continues to raise them up to instruct us in righteousness. If we were to fail to accept God's messengers, we would miss a great deal of what God is saying to the church today. The Spirit works through His servants, and then confirms their message to our hearts by bearing witness. We often respond to anointed word with "amen," as an indication of that witness in our spirit.

What Did the Apostle Paul Mean by the "Letter of the Law"?

The "letter of the law" refers to the practice of interpreting and using the wording in laws and ordinances to force people to focus on the rules themselves, rather than to perceive the intent, or "spirit", of the law.

God "...also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." (2 Corinthians 3:6)

The Pharisees, a religious sect, had great difficulty receiving Jesus. They were very zealous about the law; and they were also very morally upright, strictly carrying out the details of the law in their daily living. Their problem was that they focused on law and works so much, that they missed God's plan for relationship with mankind.

The Pharisees used the "letter of the law" to burden people with rules; and then they condemned the people when they could not follow all of the rules perfectly. Jesus indicted them when He said,

"...they bind heavy burdens...and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." (Matthew 23:4)

God had commanded men to rest on the Sabbath. To impress this commandment upon the people, the Pharisees developed over 400 rules, defining in great

detail that which constituted "work" in their eyes. Because of these rules, they placed a yoke of bondage upon everyone. Jesus upset their program by "working" on the Sabbath. He recognized a higher principle: that people needed healing on the Sabbath, too. He said, *"The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath."* (Mark 2:27)

The letter of the law bound men with hundreds of restrictions. The spirit of the law was to set aside a day unto God for rest and for worship.

God told Israel,

"The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment:..." (Deuteronomy 22:5)

For centuries, men have defined what clothing style "pertains" to whom and have vigorously condemned women for wearing any kind of slacks, or pants, even if they are feminine in design. But, the intent of the law was simply to eliminate the practice of "cross-dressing" -- the practice of some men to masquerade as women, or women as men.

Homosexuality is an abomination to God -- not Levi's jeans. Those who use this verse to condemn women in slacks should look at verse 8, which commands a home-builder to have a railing around his roof so his guests would not fall off. The letter of the law says, "every roof must have a guardrail around it." The spirit of the law is, "take precautions to prevent injuries."

Peter told women that they should be more concerned about their inward character than their outward appearance. He said,

"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;...." (1 Peter 3:3)

Those who follow the letter and teach that this is a command against wearing gold or plaited hair must realize, then, that it is also a command to be a nudist!

Paul said that *"the law is good, if a man use it lawfully,...."* (1 Timothy 1:8) God is love; and He made laws for the benefit of people. The basis of all of God's law is love.

"Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:10)

If some leaders are oppressive with laws and are "legalistic", they need to get to know God better. They need to see the spirit of the law, which is based on God's love.

What Is the Difference Between Conformation and Transformation?

To conform is to adapt to an image or expected behavior pattern. To be transformed is to be changed on the inside by a creative work.

"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." (Romans 12:2)

Man-made religion involves manipulating people with a creed or behavior pattern, usually for the benefit and enrichment of the leader. You can become a good Moslem or Jehovah's Witness by learning their doctrines and conforming to their codes of behavior.

However, you cannot become a Christian by converting to the Christian religion. To be a child of God, you must be born again. (John 3:3) This new birth is a miracle. A hog can be trained to be a pet hog; but, he can never become a human being. That would require a miracle. (Note: a pet hog could imitate some people fairly accurately, but it would still be merely conforming.) Satan does not care if people conform to a religion, as long as they are not transformed by God's grace.

The world has an image of self-sufficient rebellion and self-indulgent willfulness. The spirit of the world is carnal. It resists the image of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the ultimate servant, who lived

His life entirely for the benefit and honor of the Father and for others.

Another way of translating the statement of Romans 12:2 regarding conformity is, "Do not let the world system force you into its mold." To **conform** is to blend in with the crowd -- to be like everyone else. A conformist will always be concerned that "everyone else is doing it." He will be a habitual follower and will gravitate toward the "...broad road that leadeth to destruction." (Matthew 7:13) He will be led by popular consensus and will be "...tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine...." (Ephesians 4:14)

Another similar word here is "**reformed**". God **formed** man in His character image; but, sin marred that image and created a relational conflict. Some people try to reestablish that moral image by doing good deeds. They try to form the original good image, or to "re-form" themselves; but, they can never do it without God's supernatural grace.

The Spirit of God is at work in the lives of every believer to **conform** us to the image of Jesus Christ, working in our yielded, submitted hearts. (Romans 8:29) However, the Word of God states that our minds need to be **transformed**. We are

transformed by the renewing -- not the removing -- of our minds.

Our thinking patterns are changed as we live for eternity, instead of for the moment; and for God, instead of for ourselves. That is, as born-again people, the more we yield our lives and minds to God's Spirit, the more He will change us *"into the same image from glory to glory,..."* (2 Corinthians 3:18) by the power of His virtue.

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

You can conform to a church and become religious; but, it will not get you into heaven. You can reform to a degree and conquer some of your destructive habits. It may lengthen and improve your life; but, you can never do enough good deeds to merit heaven. Every human being on earth needs to be transformed by God's grace. He needs a Savior to set him free from his sins; and the only one who can do that is Jesus Christ, who said, *"Ye must be born again."* (John 3:7)

What Are the Works of the Flesh?

The works of the flesh are the actions and attitudes which naturally flow out of a life that is motivated by a self-centered, carnal mentality.

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and the like;..."
(Galatians 5:19-21)

When a man is **carnal**, that is, when he has a self-centered world view, he will be led by his appetites and impulses and will choose immediate gratification over ultimate good. When he allows his flesh to dominate his decisions and lifestyle, his spirit becomes insensitive and weak.

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Romans 8:5-6)

The Apostle Paul mentioned a number of responses to life that demonstrate the spiritual dullness in an individual. They are called the "**works of the flesh**." It is interesting to note that they are not the "works of the devil." Christians are notorious for saying "the devil made me do it." That leads to incomplete repentance. These are the things people do

as a result of their failure to seek wisdom and to keep their bodies under subjection. (1 Corinthians 9:27)

Adultery is breaking a marriage vow of fidelity. Covenant love can be maintained only by walking in the power of the grace of God. Genuine love is an evidence of the indwelling presence of God. (1 John 4:8-9)

Fornication is an act of sexual immorality. Lust is a satanic perversion of love which always seeks self-gratification at the expense of others. Love gives at the expense of self. (John 3:16)

Uncleanness may be a morally unclean act, or the chronic neglect of physical cleanliness. God's grace motivates us to keep ourselves clean.

Lasciviousness is the practice of stirring up lustful thoughts. It leads to moral bondage and selfishness.

When a man's life is fleshly, he will always practice some form of **idolatry**, because he will focus his affection and adoration on things or vain, self-gratifying images.

Witchcraft is rebellion and it involves wrongful drug use and other forms of self-deception. Flesh rejects God's authority, and has no defense against the influences of the occult.

Hatred is the result of blaming others in bitterness for the negatives in our life, and is the mental counterpart to murder.

Variance means quarreling or contention, and shows a lack of meekness.

Strife implies that people in their contentions will form factions, or angry cliques against one another.

Carnal people are prone to be led by fads. This tendency is called **emulations**.

Wrath is a selfish, passionate anger.

Sedition is a disloyal spirit that causes discord and division. It is the betrayal of a trust, particularly the trust of a leader.

Heresy means "to make a choice." It relates to the practice of turning from truth to a lie, or of joining a divisive group.

Envy is a corrupting ill-will against others because of their position or achievement in life.

Murder is the result of the overflow of hatred in the heart.

Drunkenness is the use of alcohol as an escape from responsibility. It is a fleshly opposite to repentance.

"And such like" means that there are many works of the flesh. This list gives a general idea of that which is generated by carnal, unrepentant human nature.

What Is the Fruit of the Spirit?

The fruit of the Spirit is the character of Jesus Christ produced in the believer by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23)

It is interesting to note that the Apostle Paul lists the "works" of the flesh and then the "fruit" of the Spirit -- not the "works" of the Spirit. The implication here is that these character qualities flow out of those who are full of the Holy Ghost. These qualities do not require specific thought or unusual effort on our part. A peach tree does not struggle to produce peaches. If it is a healthy, mature tree, it will naturally produce fruit in its season.

The Holy Spirit cultivates the character of Jesus in our lives. Fruit must be cultivated. The peach tree will draw water and minerals through its root system and carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The sunlight will shine on the green leaves. The result is that the sweetness in the tree will flow into the buds and develop into fruit. All fruit contains seeds. The ultimate purpose of fruit is to produce more plants.

Jesus said,

"I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much

fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." (John 15:5)

We are like branches of the tree. We draw our spiritual life and vitality from the source -- Jesus. We are grafted into Him. As we abide in Him, His Spirit flows through us. His attitudes and qualities flow into our life and lifestyle. His love flows through our hearts; and reproductive fruit develops, which will cause others to be drawn to Christ and be born again.

It has been said that the fruit of the Spirit is **love** and that all the other qualities listed are expressions of that. Love is certainly the first and most essential fruit of the Spirit. Sin causes us to be selfish. The primary evidence that we have been genuinely born of the Spirit is that our focus is changed from self-seeking to love. **Love** is the opposite of selfishness. Therefore, love is an evidence and the result of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Joy is a positive response in our spirit to the presence of God; whereas, happiness is an emotion of the soul. Doing the will of God results in joy.

Peace is a quiet sense of serenity that comes from an assured hope that God loves us and can handle any problem. Peace is not the absence of storms. It is a

response to the abiding presence of Jesus; therefore, it is not limited to emotional feeling or human understanding.

Longsuffering means patience which is born of hope.

Gentleness means mildness. Is the ability to treat others with courtesy and consideration, rather than with harshness or rudeness.

Goodness is benevolence -- always seeking that which will benefit others.

Faith is a positive focus on God and His purposes. It is honest, simple, spiritual trust.

Meekness is controlled strength. It is the ability to yield our rights in deference to another.

Temperance means self-control. When the Holy Spirit is in our lives, we do not have to let our appetites control our lives. We have the freedom to do what the Spirit is leading us to do, rather than to be forced to obey what the world or our flesh is demanding.

This is the kind of character that comes from abiding in Jesus. If we find that we do not have joy and freedom flowing in our hearts, we should seek God and surrender to Him. Rather than attempting to "turn over a new leaf," we must remember that we are "branches," ever abiding in Jesus.

What Is the Manifestation of the Spirit?

The manifestation of the Spirit is that which is given by the Holy Spirit through the spirituals; that is, the word of wisdom; the word of knowledge; faith; gifts of healing; the working of miracles; prophecy; discerning of spirits; various kinds of tongues; and interpretation of tongues.

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given, by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge; ...faith; ...the gifts of healing; ...the working of miracles; ...prophecy; ...discerning of spirits; ...divers kinds of tongues; ...the interpretation of tongues." (1 Corinthians 12:7-10)

In this chapter, the Apostle Paul is teaching about the way the Holy Spirit works through different people in different ways to bless and edify -- build up -- everyone in the church. He reminds us that there are different gifts, different administrations, and different operations of the Holy Spirit. At that point he defines nine **spirituals**, or the **manifestation** of the Holy Spirit. To **manifest** means to reveal, to express, or to exhibit. Christians often refer to the spirituals as the "gifts" of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is resident in every born-again believer. When Christians receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, as believers did in the New Testament accounts, they will be enabled to speak in tongues, because the Holy Spirit will give them the utterance. Tongues is both a

manifestation of the Spirit and the initial physical evidence of the supernatural baptism into the Spirit.

Any Spirit-baptized believer can be used by the Holy Spirit in the spirituals for the benefit of the whole group.

"The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." (1 Corinthians 12:7)

Everyone will receive the benefit of the gift. All of these gifts are supernatural, and they have nothing to do with our intellect or personality. If we are sensitive and obedient, the Holy Spirit can work through us, just as He did when we received the baptism in the Holy Ghost.

If someone receives a **word of wisdom**, he is getting an insight from God that did not come from his own understanding. Wisdom involves direction from God. Generally, it will be for the benefit of another person or, perhaps, the whole church.

A **word of knowledge** is the impartation of specific information from God. Knowledge is the practical application of wisdom. The person who receives a word of knowledge does not

receive a great deal of wisdom or knowledge; he receives only a small portion of that which is resident in God's limitless resources.

The Holy Spirit may impart **gifts of healings** to the sick through the faith of others. Note that there is more than one gift of healing, just as there are different kinds of tongues.

The gift of **faith** is supernaturally imparted to a believer by the Holy Spirit for a specific need or situation.

The Holy Spirit may be manifested through the working of **miracles**. The purpose of miracles is to confirm the Word of God and the work of God.

Prophecy is speaking for God. It is "forth-telling" a message from God as the Holy Spirit directs, rather than foretelling the future.

Discerning of spirits is not the ability or the right to "judge a person's spirit." It is the awareness, given by the Spirit, of the spiritual source of a problem. It is good to discern whether a physical problem is

organic or demonic, because you need to know whether to lay hands on the sick or cast out a devil. In the Bible, some people were blind, and others had a blind spirit. Jesus never laid hands on a person to cast out a spirit; He cast out the demon by His spoken command.

Divers (different, or various) **tongues** is an ability to speak in a foreign language as the Spirit gives utterance. These languages may be human or angelic. (1 Corinthians 13:1) There are different tongues for private and public use. (See 1 Corinthians Chapter 14)

Interpretation of tongues is the supernatural ability, through the Holy Spirit, to interpret -- translate -- a public message in tongues given for the benefit of the church.

It is wonderful to know that God has not left us to our own resources to try to build His church or minister to His people. We should seek to be sensitive and obedient to the Holy Ghost, so that we can be used as a vessel of His ministry to the church.

What Are the Grace Gifts of the Spirit?

Several spiritual gifts are listed in Romans 12, with the indication that every believer has received special grace to serve the Lord in one of these areas.

"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy ...or ministry ...or teaching ...or exhortation ...or giving ...or ruling ... or mercy..." (Romans 12:5-8)

The Greek word for "grace" is "charis". It is the root for the word "gift" or "charisma". It relates to the fact that, as born-again believers, we are saved and equipped by God's enabling power working through us, and not by our own ability. "Grace" is what God does for and through us, as opposed to works. "Works" are what we do in response to faith.

Peter indicated that every believer has received a particular spiritual gift, or an ability from the Lord, to be used for the blessing and service of others.

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Peter 4:10)

"Manifold" means that there are different kinds of grace gifts. The word "steward" reminds us that, when God gives a gift, it is always for us to use in serving others. It is not for our own

benefit. Stewardship also implies accountability to God.

Every Christian is to develop all of these positive qualities. Each Christian has a gift which will allow him to excel in one area. The only one who is strong in all of these areas is Jesus. He is the ideal example for everyone.

Some believers are gifted in the area of **prophecy**, or declaring truth. They have a zeal for righteousness and want everyone to repent and receive the message of salvation. They tend to be very open, honest, and straightforward. Peter was a "prophecy-motivated" Christian.

A **ministry**-motivated Christian has a real gift in the area of serving. He is sensitive to practical physical needs of others. This is similar to the "gift of helps" mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12.

A **teacher** has a strong desire to communicate truth. He is studious, and he will check out "chapter and verse" before accepting any new teaching. Luke was a teacher, and gave detailed, accurate accounts.

An **exhorter** is an encourager. He is gifted with practical insights and will help others mature and succeed in the Lord. The Apostle Paul is an example.

A **giver** is one who is gifted in the area of finance. He has a special ability to earn and accumulate money, with his purpose being to give as much as possible to the work of the Lord. He especially loves to give to projects which do not receive mass promotion and loves it even more when God prompts him to meet specific needs.

A **ruler** is one who is gifted in the area of organization. He has an ability to plan

ahead and to conserve time by keeping things in order. He delegates duties to others skillfully.

A **mercy-motivated** Christian is most sensitive to the emotional needs of people. He is a good balance to the prophet. John was mercy-motivated, and worked well with Peter.

What Are the "Last Days"?

The "last days", referred to in the Bible, are the years preceding the return of Christ to the earth to judge mankind and to establish His sovereign rule over the world.

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." (2 Timothy 3:1)

In understanding and identifying God's calendar of events in human history, it is important to see that God follows consistent patterns in dealing with individuals, nations, and world events. In creation, God established the seven-day week, with the seventh day reserved for a time of rest.

Almost 6,000 years have passed since the fall of man. Most Christian leaders believe that the seventh millennium will be the time when Jesus rules on the earth, and all of creation will be at rest. During that time, Satan will be chained in a bottomless pit, and there will be great peace on the earth.

It is interesting to note that, at the end of two millennia, Abraham offered his son, Isaac, on the mountain. At the end of the fourth "day" -- four millennia -- on the human calendar, God offered His Son, Jesus, as the sin offering for the human race. It is possible that the "last days" of God's calendar could mean the "church age" of 2,000 years -- the time between the crucifixion and the second coming of Jesus Christ. The Apostle John said,

"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last times." (1 John 2:18)

The primary discourse in scripture on the last days is in Matthew 24, where Jesus taught His disciples about the signs of the end times. He described a world with much darkness, deception, false cults, wars, rumors of wars, distress of nations with perplexities, earthquakes, fears, etc. Paul said that

"...men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy...." (2 Timothy 3:2)

In general, the Bible indicates that the last days preceding the "day of the Lord" will be characterized by an increase in satanic activity; wickedness among men; and international problems. Much of this will set the stage for the Great Tribulation and the rise of the Antichrist.

The amazing thing is that the Bible predicts a great Pentecostal revival at the same time. Joel said,

"It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...." (Joel 2:28)

Amos indicated that there would be a restoration of praise and worship as in the days of David (Amos 9:11). Peter spoke of a restitution of all things spoken of by the prophets, before Jesus would return. (Acts 3:21) While the forces of darkness are preparing the world for Antichrist, the Spirit of God is preparing the Bride for Christ.

Jesus said that no man would know the day or the hour of His return, although men have tried repeatedly to predict it.

But, Jesus did say that we can know the season; and, from all that He and the prophets in the Bible have indicated, we are certainly living in those "last days". If nothing else, we are assured that we are closer to the day of the Lord than any of our predecessors. We should be watching, and

"...Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,...and so much the more, as we see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:25)

Maranatha! (Our Lord returns!) *"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."* (Revelation 22:20)

What Is the Dispensational Significance of the Seven Churches in the Book of Revelation?

The seven churches, mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3, parallel the historic progression of the church throughout the church age.

"The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." (Revelation 1:20)

When John was exiled to Patmos for preaching the gospel, Jesus gave to him a great revelation of Himself and a prophetic glimpse into the end times. He actually dictated seven letters, to be delivered to the pastors of seven major churches in Asia Minor. Most Bible historians believe that the churches selected and the order given are not accidental.

Over the last 1900 years since the revelation was given, the general history of the church world has followed the pattern in the same order. It should be noted that this does not mean that every church in each historic period matched the description or deserved the indictment given. However, a large percentage of churches did, and so the order given became a general overview.

The letters were written to the "angelos" of the churches. "Angelos" means "messenger", and refers to the

senior pastor of each church. In those days, the Christians were united. Generally, there was one church in each city.

From about 70 A.D. to 170 A.D., the church in **Ephesus** was similar in condition to the apostolic church. After the church was established by the apostles in a Pentecostal revival, there was a gradual spiritual decline. The people were still working hard; but, they had left their first love. Their work continued while their worship diminished.

Smyrna was the suffering church. Many Christians suffered severe persecution, particularly during the period of time from 170 A.D. to about 313 A.D. Smyrna was a faithful and zealous congregation; and it was the only church to receive praise and commendations from the Lord. Historically, the church has always been the purest and strongest under persecution. However, during times of prolonged prosperity, it has been weak and lethargic.

Pergamos means "marriage, tower". From 313 A.D. to 606 A.D., the church began to mix with the world. It became politically strong, but spiritually weak. The state and the church intermingled; both were morally polluted.

Thyatira was indicted for allowing the harlot Jezebel to corrupt people's morals. Jezebel was a picture of a corrupt church government, which ruled by bribery and treachery. The Dark Ages were dark, because of the spiritual blindness of the people and the leaders. A Christian, named Thomas Aquinas, visited the Pope, who showed him the church's vast wealth and said, "As you can see, we can no longer say, 'silver and gold have I none.'" Thomas replied, "Neither can you say, 'In the name of Jesus, rise up and walk.'"

Sardis was a picture of the reformation begun by Martin Luther. From 1516 A.D. to about 1750 A.D., the "remnant" people of God rose up to restore salvation by grace.

Philadelphia -- "city of brotherly love" -- reflected the great revival in the church from 1750 A.D. to 1900 A.D.

Laodicea was a picture of the last days church: the church in financial prosperity, but spiritual lukewarmness.

What Is the Great Tribulation?

The great tribulation will be a time of intense and widespread suffering on earth. It will be the final period of history before the millennial reign of Christ on the earth.

"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Matthew 24:21)

One of the great benefits of reading the Bible is that we learn the fear of the Lord; and we realize that God is a righteous and faithful judge of mankind. We see that God not only judges us as individuals, but He also judges cities, nations, and generations. Much of the book of Revelation deals with the seven years immediately preceding the Millennium, when Jesus Christ will establish His rule on the earth. There will be a time of God's judgment on the nations of the earth, when vast numbers of people will die.

Jesus said,

"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;...." (Matthew 24:37-38)

Jesus also mentioned the historical account of Lot during the judgment of

Sodom and Gomorrah. These accounts remind us of the "salt principle". Jesus said that the believers are the "...salt of the earth." (Matthew 5:13) Salt is a preservative. God told Abraham that, if there were as few as ten righteous people in the city of Sodom, He would spare the whole city from destruction. There were many homosexuals in Sodom, and various other forms of moral perversion. Such sin brings destruction. When it was determined that Lot was the only just man in the city, God removed him and his family and executed the people of the city with fiery destruction. When the whole world was wicked in Noah's day, and men were given over to evil continually, God commanded Noah's family to enter the ark; and all the wicked people perished in the flood.

Many Christians believe that, before the great tribulation, the Lord will come for His elect saints who are on the earth. This view is consistent with the concept that the presence of the godly in the earth holds back the wrath of God on the rest of the world.

"...only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way." (2 Thessalonians 2:7)

"Letteth," means "to hold down, or keep".

Then there will follow awesome destruction and widespread death and suffering. At the end, the devil will assemble a large army, which will be destroyed at the great Battle of Armageddon. After this, the Lord Jesus Christ will come again to the earth to rule for 1,000 years.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days... shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of

heaven with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:29-30)

"Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints." (Jude 14) We do not know the details or exactly how and when all of this will occur, but we do know that God will judge the earth by fire -- tribulation -- and that it be well with those who are abiding in His love at the time.

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world,...." (Revelation 3:10)

Section 8

Lessons

If Any Man Thirst

Volume 8

Lesson 1



Bible References

John 7

John 4

Isaiah 12

Psalms 42

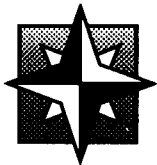
37 *"In the last day, that great {day} of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*

38 *"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

39 *"(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet {given}; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)*

40 *"Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.*

41 *"Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? "*



Theme

Every member of the human race, regardless of his race, religion, temperament, or philosophy, needs to be born again and make a covenant with God through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.



Memory Verse

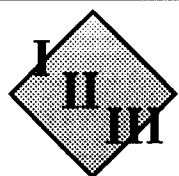
Isaiah 12:3-4

"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted."



Scripture Reading

John 7:37-41



Outline

I. Thirst.

A. Thirst -- a strong sense of urgency to fill a personal need.

1. Physical -- the way the body signals a need for water.
2. Spiritual -- the heart's cry for God. (Psalms 42:1)

B. Basic human needs.

1. To be loved.
2. To belong.
3. To be happy.
4. Purpose: to feel needed and useful.
5. Security and safety.
6. Peace.
7. Hope: something to look forward to.

C. Thirst: the cry of the spirit for satisfaction, fulfillment, purpose, love.

II. If Any Man.

A. Religion -- man's search for God and truth.

1. Many flavors and styles.
2. Great variety of religions, with every conceivable twist.
3. Thousands of false religions, but only one true religion.

B. Jesus is the answer.

1. Man was created with a basic need for God.

2. The only way for man to come to God is through the Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 4:12)
3. We all have a void in our heart that only Jesus can fill.
 - a. We try to fill our hearts with the garbage of sin, but it does not satisfy.
 - b. "Deceitfulness of sin" -- it claims to satisfy the heart, but never does.

C. All that is in the world. (1 John 2:16)

1. Lust of the flesh (pleasure).
2. Lust of the eye (possessions).
3. Pride of life (pride).
4. Three types of temptation and sin.
5. All illusions -- they do not satisfy for long.
6. "...Pleasures of sin for a season;...." (Hebrews 11:25)

D. Any man.

1. "Yuppies" need Jesus, because money does not satisfy; and we cannot keep it beyond this short life.
2. East Indians need it, because their three million "gods" are impostors.
 - a. Their gods are demon spirits, or lifeless statues.
 - b. Hindus will not be reincarnated.
 - c. "...It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this, the judgment;...." (Hebrews 9:27)
3. Moslems need Jesus.
 - a. Mohammed did not rise from the dead, as promised.
 - b. Jesus did, and He is God the Son.
 - c. Allah is not God.
 - d. They have a false hope in a false god.
 - e. Moslems can go to heaven only if they are born again, and become Christians.

4. Mormons need Jesus.
 - a. They follow a false prophet named Joseph Smith, who was inspired by demons.
 - b. They worship a false god, who they think is a deified Adam.
 - c. They can be saved only by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and not by works.
5. Africans need Jesus.
 - a. God created and loves all races of people.
 - b. We must be born again.
6. The Chinese people need Jesus.
 - a. There is a great revival in China.
 - b. Millions of Chinese people are being saved and filled with the Holy Ghost.

III. Come Unto Me.

A. The Great Day of the Feast.

1. Feast of Tabernacles.
 - a. Commemorated the wilderness wanderings under Moses, 1500 years earlier.
 - b. God gave them this feast to remind them of where they had come from, and of His plan to dwell among them forever.
2. The "great day" of the feast was the day of Atonement, when the blood of the lamb was offered on the mercy seat in the tabernacle to cover the sins of the people.

B. Jesus.

1. Saw all the people who were lost and confused.
2. They were looking to religious forms, but had lost the meaning and spiritual relationship with God.
3. The heart of Jesus burst with compassion and love, and He cried,

"If anyone is thirsty, come to me and drink!"

C. The Truth, the Life, the Way.

1. Many people look to religion, sacrifices, good works, or the church to get to God.
2. The only way to God is Jesus Christ.
3. The purpose of every true preacher and true Christian church is to draw people to Jesus, and to God.

D. Drink.

1. Water is a type of spiritual life.
2. The body cannot live more than a few days without taking in water.
3. Our spirit cannot live without taking in the Holy Spirit.
 - a. Most people on earth are physically alive, but spiritually dead.
 - b. Spiritually blind, deaf, insensitive, unaware of angels, spiritual warfare, God's presence, God's voice.
4. Jesus had told the Samaritan woman at the well about "living water."
5. Drink -- receive from God.
 - a. We do not achieve salvation, we receive it.
 - b. Truth does not come by introspection, calculation, and meditation, but by receiving revelation from God by the Word and by the Spirit.

IV. Rivers of Living Water.

A. Out of his belly.

1. Innermost being -- spiritual man.
2. Not "into" ("bless me, bless me, give me"), but "out of."

3. Many people are drawn to religion for what they can get out of it.
- B. Evidence of genuine salvation -- giving out.
1. Love is functional altruism (unselfish focus in life).
 2. Love is the great evidence that we are really saved.
 - a. 1 John 4:7-8.
 - b. John 13:35.
 3. Spiritual gifts are all designed to help us give to others.
 4. A selfish, sinful lifestyle is evidence that we are not really born again.
 5. When the Holy Spirit is abiding in the life, fruit follows.
 6. Christianity is expressed by giving, and not by getting.
 - a. James 1:27.
 - b. Romans 12:10.
 - c. Matthew 10:8.

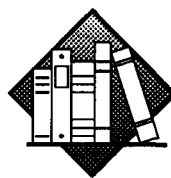
only way to God, the only One who gives life more abundantly.

- Physical death is separation from the body; but spiritual death is separation from God. Most people living today are spiritually dead.
- When we see ourselves as alive to God spiritually, we will be less sensitive to, and controlled by, the things of the flesh.
- Water is a type of spiritual life; and we need a daily intake of fresh anointing from the Holy Spirit to be spiritually healthy.
- The evidence that we are drinking at the springs of living water is that life and joy and blessings will flow out of our heart, and not just into our life.



Spiritual Truths

- The Hebrew people in Jesus' time continued the feasts long after they had forgotten their meaning and purpose.
- You cannot fill a spiritual hunger with physical things.
- All human beings need Jesus as their Savior and Lord, although most are finding false substitutes in things or religion.
- The Bible and true religion point to Jesus, who is the Source of all truth, the



Lesson Material

The humanism religion which has gained such prominence in our world often scoffs at Christianity for being "intolerant" and "narrow-minded." First of all, Christianity is intolerant. There are no other true religions. It does matter what you believe. You can sincerely believe a lie and be damned. Humanists believe that "it does not matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere." They believe this, because they do not believe in a holy God. If there is no God, then the Bible is not true, and we will not have to answer to God as our Judge for eternity.

But God is God; and He told us in His Word that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man comes to the Father but by Him. (John 14:6) Jesus is narrow-minded. He said, "...*strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*" (Matthew 7:14) "Strait" means "compressed (made narrow) by obstacles about." It is not easy to walk the path of life. Most people go the wide, easy way to hell. There are many wrong ways in life, but only one Way to life. There are many opinions about truth, but only God's opinion counts.

By the way, all religions are narrow -- even humanism. Secular humanism teaches that everyone should choose his religious beliefs according to his own heart and mind, and not be influenced by Christian education. Humanism is particularly intolerant of Christianity, because the Bible commands us to attack deception and error, and to fervently seek to win the lost. Christianity is not a passive religion, but a militant one. But our weapons are not carnal. (2 Corinthians 10:4) That is, we do not go about killing people by the millions, as the Moslems and Communists do to advance their cause. We seek to pull down strongholds of the mind; and our goal is to see everyone we can won to our loving God. We battle spiritual enemies with prayer, and conquer with love.

An important part of the Christian philosophy of life is the belief that everyone on earth is born in sin and destined for hell. We believe that God "...*commandeth all men every where to repent,*" (Acts 17:30) and, without the new birth, all are lost to an eternal hell. Millions of people believe in the doctrine of reincarnation; but God does not, so it will not happen.

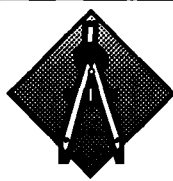
It does matter what you believe. You may sincerely believe you can fly, but if you jump off a tall building, you will discover an abrupt conclusion -- because the law of gravity is true, whether you believe it or not. You may sincerely believe that you can live a selfish life of sin and rebellion and get away with it, but God will not lower His standards on the day of judgment because you were deceived. God is not mocked. Whatever you sow, you will reap. (Galatians 6:9)

No matter who you are, you need to be born again. No matter what the basic human need you feel, the answer is Jesus. God put in our hearts a basic need for Himself. The very word "human" means "in God's image," and implies that we are never complete in life without His presence and power. We think of sin as natural, but it is not, really. Your body was designed to worship and serve God, and to communicate His glory. Your body was not designed for fornication, but for holiness. When we violate that design, we diminish our potential in life and our joy. The human spirit wallowing in sin is like an eagle trying to swim with the sharks. It is not his element. He was created to fly, and he is at his best soaring in the clear sky.

Man is at his best at worship. He is only fully satisfied when he is walking with the Lord. "*I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*" (Psalms 17:15) We were created to live and love like Jesus. The power of temptation is the promise to satisfy. It is the illusion that you will find fulfillment and happiness, if you indulge yourself in something that you know in your spirit is wrong and destructive. Years ago, a tobacco company advertised, "Smoke our brand of cigarettes. They satisfy." One Christian observed, "That is ridiculous. If they satisfied, there would

only be one in a package." A man asked John D. Rockefeller, one of the world's richest men of his day, "How much money does it take to satisfy a man?" He replied, "Just a little more." He had discovered that he was not satisfied with his vast fortune, and was still looking for gold at the end of the rainbow. Like that elusive rainbow's end, which cannot be found, so is the satisfaction at the end of a sinful life. It is not there.

Ask anyone the question, "What are the most important things in your life?" and most will include some variation of "love, happiness, or peace." Note that these are the first three fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. When Adam and Eve were walking with God, they had it all. They were happy, fulfilled, secure, and had no problems. When they sinned, they lost it all. Sin brought death, fear, torment, and spiritual death. Satan had promised pleasure, increase, and fulfillment, but he lied. Sin is deceptive. Sin always destroys.



Methods

This lesson is about the foundation of salvation. The Bible says to "*examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith;....*" (2 Corinthians 13:5) We must not judge others, but we should judge ourselves. "Am I drinking at springs of living water? Is the joy of the Lord flowing out of my life to benefit others, or am I like the rest of the crowd -- selfish, and preoccupied with having a good time and being popular? Have I really repented of my sins, and believed God for full salvation? Is Jesus Christ the Lord of my life?"

Discuss famous people who did not or do not show evidence that they are living for the Lord. Do they seem to be satisfied with their lives?

There are many poor people who are very content and radiantly happy, while others are miserable. So also are the rich. If money is not a major factor in real personal satisfaction, what is?

Transformed

Volume 8

Lesson 2

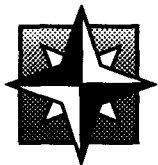


Bible References

Romans 12

2 Corinthians 5

1 John 3



Theme

Christianity is not just a religion we conform to as converts, but a relationship with God based on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in the new birth.



Scripture Reading

2 Corinthians 5:12-21

12 *"For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat*

to {answer} them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

13 *"For whether we be beside ourselves, {it is} to God: or whether we be sober, {it is} for your cause.*

14 *"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:*

15 *"And {that} he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*

16 *"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we {him} no more.*

17 *"Therefore if any man {be} in Christ, {he is} a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

18 *"And all things {are} of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;*

19 *"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*

20 *"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech {you} by*

us: we pray (you) in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

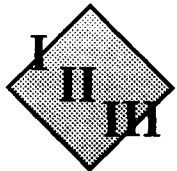
21 *"For he hath made him (to be) sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."*



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. Conformed.

A. *"...Be not conformed to this world...."*

1. "Do not let the secular influences in society shape your life into its mold."
2. Conform -- to assume the shape, appearance, or flavor of something.

3. There is strong peer pressure to be like "everyone else."

B. Emulations.

1. Called a "work of the flesh" in Galatians 5:20.
2. As opposed to the "fruit of the Spirit" in the same chapter.
3. Emulations -- copying the manner and style of others; given to fads; to strive to be equal, striving to be the same.
4. Christians motivation: to be like Jesus.
 - a. What is pleasing to God?
 - b. What would Jesus do?

C. World.

1. *Kosmos* -- the order of things in the natural world of men.
2. The anti-God establishment.
3. The crowd traveling the "broad way" to hell.

II. Transformed.

A. Changed by a creative power.

1. To become a new creation in Christ.
2. To be changed in substance and character -- not just a show.
3. To become a new kind of person.
4. Romans 6.
 - a. You were the servants of sin.
 - b. Now you are free from sin, and servants of God.
 - c. Water baptism is a testimony that you are "dead" to sin and alive to God.
 - d. Rise to walk in newness of life.

B. A new lifestyle, because you have a new life source.

III. Mixture or Compound?

A. Mixture.

1. Two or more substances mixed together.
 - a. Salt water -- salt mixed with water.
 - b. Mud -- dirt mixed with water.
2. Mixtures can be separated easily, and the basic elements retain their character.
3. We are commanded not to mix with the world.
4. Purity -- no mixture.
 - a. Water mixed with sediment or toxins is polluted, or impure.
 - b. Pure heart -- dedicated to only one purpose.
 - c. David: *"One thing I desire, and one thing will I seek after...."* (Psalms 27)
 - d. Jesus: *"I only do one thing; whatever pleases my Father."*
 - e. The purest water is the part of the stream closest to the source.

B. Compound.

1. Two or more elements joined to form one new substance that is distinct in character from its ingredients.
2. Hydrogen and oxygen.
 - a. Two gasses: when combined, they are extremely flammable (even explosive).
 - b. When joined in the compound H₂O, they become water (not flammable).
3. Sodium and chloride.
 - a. Two poisons.
 - b. When joined in a compound: table salt (NaCl).



Spiritual Truths

- One evidence of a lack of spiritual maturity is the tendency to be easily led to emulations, or fads, because this is a work of the flesh, and not the Spirit.
- Christianity is not a religious creed based on conforming to rules, but a new life in Christ, based on a transformation.
- You can wash a hog and put a ribbon in its tail, but it is still a hog.
- It is sad that many people try to live a Christian life through fleshly effort and religious conformation; but, they are not born again.
- God does not call us saved sinners, but redeemed, transformed saints.
- God is not only able to teach us to stop sinning; but He is also able to take the "want to" out of our hearts, as we seek Him.
- We are not to mix with the world; but we are to be joined to Christ in spirit.
- We are to be in the world, but not of the world.



Lesson Material

It is sad, but many people in churches today are trying to mix Christianity into their lifestyles, but have not been genuinely born again. It is entirely possible to be a good church member, but never have a transforming change of heart. Some people go to church and give and try to live a good life, because they do not want to go to hell; but, unless there is a supernatural birth, it will do them no good. Jesus said, *"...except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."* (John 3:5) Unless there is a supernatural birth, there will not be a genuine relationship with God. The Bible indicates that there are many who think they are saved and going to heaven who will, in the end, hear those horrifying words, *"I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* (Matthew 7:23) Our eternal destiny is not based on religious conformation, but on the transformation of the new birth.

You can train a chicken all you want, but it will never soar like an eagle, unless it was born an eagle. You can conform to religious systems and become a good Hindu or Mormon or Moslem, but you can never become a Christian until you are born of the Spirit of God. The new birth is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, and is freely given to "whosoever will" repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

We were all "in Adam" when he sinned, because we became his "seed," or descendants, by birth. We can be "in Christ" only when we are born again, and

that requires a supernatural birth. It is not just a matter of mentally believing in Jesus, but a spiritual act of taking hold of the promises of God by faith.

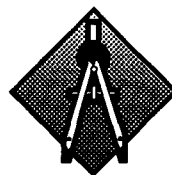
Some people try to "accept Jesus into their lives" without surrendering to Him as Lord. In other words, they have their life centered around self, and the many things they live for, including sports, work, food, friends, money, entertainment, etc. They try to accept Jesus into their life; and life becomes sports, work, food, friends, money, entertainment, and church. They graciously allow Jesus to be a part of their life, usually on Sunday mornings, thank you very much. But the Bible says that God is the One Who accepts us when we are born again. He does not become a part of our world -- we become a part of His. He is at the center, and we focus our lives around Him. He enables us to live like He wants, because He gives us grace, not only to do right, but to be righteous. In Christianity, it is a matter of being, which produces the doing. In religion, we do works to become something. That is what conforming is all about.

The world of religion says, "conform to our rules and lifestyle, and you can be one of us." Since we all have a need and desire to belong, we are tempted to emulate the crowd. We want to be accepted and loved. When we look to people for acceptance, we want to conform. But Jesus came to earth with a different values system. He only wanted to please the Father, so He did what the Father wanted, regardless of the crowd's opinion. Those who loved the Father loved Him. Those who did not, rejected Him. He realized that pleasing the Father was the more important part of life, because the world is temporary, but God is forever.

God wants a people who are pure. That is, their values are focused on eternal goals. They are righteous in deed, because they are pure in heart. The ability of a man to focus his affection on God affects the rest of his relationships. A man who is morally pure will be able to love one woman for life: his wife. He will be content with one sexual partner for life. But a man who is mixed with the world, whose heart is centered in himself, will have a hard time being true to his relationships. If he cannot really give himself to God in a covenant, how can he be pure in other aspects? He will be continually drawn into wrong relationships and wrong experiences.

God wants a people who will not just include Him into their lifestyles, but who will center their lives around Him. This can only happen as a result of a spiritual transformation. Because of our sin nature, we are prone to selfish and short-sighted behavior. We sin because we are, by nature, sinners. Romans 6 tells us that what we do reflects what we are. When we are saved and baptized, we "rise to walk in newness of life." Now, it is important that we exercise our faith, and that we "reckon ourselves dead to sin," and that we "yield our members as servants to righteousness;" but, ultimately, the Christian lifestyle is a product of the new birth, not the source of it. We are not saved by works, but we are saved "*...unto good works,....*" (Ephesians 2:8-10) Being good does not save you; but being saved does make you good. If you have the same heart and the same rotten, selfish desires, then that is an indication that what you have may be a religious conformation, and not a spiritual transformation. Do not judge one another, but judge yourself, and seek God. If all you have is religion, you will constantly struggle with the lifestyle, because your heart is not really changed.

When there is a true conversion based on honest repentance and heartfelt faith, there is fruit. You are not perfect, and you still deal with the human nature and temptations; but you are not consistently overcome by evil, because the Holy Spirit lives in you. The reason we have the Bible verses about the great internal change in the new birth is to give us guidelines to evaluate what has really happened to us, and what we still need to do to prepare for eternity. God does not condemn us; but He does convict us of sin, and He commands all men everywhere to repent. (Acts 17:30)



Methods

Perhaps the greatest danger in sharing the gospel of grace is that some will try to accept Jesus as one other aspect of their life, as a means of staying out of hell. Christianity becomes a religious "fire insurance," with no real change in the spirit. John chapter three is a great study in the importance of letting our lifestyle and heart inclinations be a guide in evaluating the reality of our spiritual conversion. God does not accept the idea that we include Him into our life. He is God, and will be Lord. Emphasize the difference between conformation and transformation; and pray that the Holy Spirit speaks into the hearts of those who do not really know God, but think they know about Him.

It is kind and compassionate to give people the assurance of their salvation; but is it really to their benefit if they have not really given their hearts to Jesus Christ? Are we doing anyone a favor when we comfort them, while the Holy Spirit may

be trying to bring them to conviction over their sin?

Pray for wisdom; and remember that the new birth is not something we sell or talk people into -- it is a supernatural

transformation that only God can perform. All we can do is lead people to make that confession of repentance and faith, and show the love and joy of God in our own lives.

Boaz and Ruth

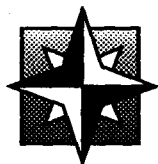
Volume 8

Lesson 3



Bible Reference

The Book of Ruth



Theme

The Story of Ruth and Boaz is a biblical allegory relating to our redemption by Jesus Christ. It is also a beautiful example of a godly courtship, which results in much happier marriages.



Scripture Reading

Ruth 3:1-11

1 "Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?

2 "And now {is} not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold,

he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor.

3 "Wash thy self therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: {but} make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking.

4 "And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.

5 "And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do.

6 "And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her.

7 "And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down.

8 "And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet.

9 "And he said, Who {art} thou? And she answered, I {am} Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou {art} a near kinsman.

10 "And he said, Blessed {be} thou of the LORD, my daughter: {for} thou hast showed more kindness in the latter end

than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.

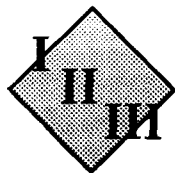
11 "And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou {art} a virtuous woman."



Memory Verse

1 Peter 1:18-19

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, {as} silver and gold, from your vain conversation {received} by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:"



Outline

I. Historical Background.

A Ruth: both a historical event and an allegory.

1. History -- How a Moabite woman became part of the Messianic line.
2. Allegory -- "The kinsman redeemer."

B. The time.

1. During the end of the time of the judges.
2. Before Saul became king.

C. The place.

1. Bethlehem, near Jerusalem in Judah.
2. Moab -- a heathen nation to the southeast of the Dead Sea.

D. Moabites.

1. Descended from Lot and his daughter.
2. A product of incest.
3. Enemies of Israel.
4. Served the god Chemosh.
 - a. Worshipped with evil practices.
 - b. Human sacrifices.

II. The Story.

A. Elimelech ("God is King").

1. Wife: Naomi ("pleasant one").
2. Sons: Mahlon and Chilion ("Puny" and "Sickly").

B. Famine in the land.

1. When things do not go well, people like to move.
2. Many people leave good churches during times of adversity, when they ought to stay faithful.
3. Started by complaining.
4. They left Judah for the "world."
5. Sin promises to meet needs; but in the end, it produces loss, hurt, and death.

C. Death in Moab.

1. Sons married heathen girls in Moab.
 - a. Orpah.
 - b. Ruth ("Friend").
2. All the men died in Moab (sin).

D. Ruth and Naomi.

1. Naomi, called "Mara" ("Bitter").
2. They left their inheritance, and it was their own fault.
3. Ruth left Moab to go with Naomi.

E. Ruth and Boaz.

1. Ruth got food by gleaning the leftover grain from the fields of Boaz.
2. Boaz, a relative of Naomi, was able to purchase her lost inheritance.
3. He also gained Ruth in the process of redemption.
4. The redeemer was responsible to raise up children for the dead man.

III. The Allegory.

- A. Moab -- looking to sin (the world) as our source.
- B. Elimelech -- type of Adam, who lost his spiritual inheritance.
- C. Naomi -- a type of Israel, the nation who was God's bride, but turned away.
- D. Ruth -- the redeemed church.
 1. Gentiles who turned to the God of Israel.
 2. Covenant bride of Christ.
- E. Boaz -- Jesus, our kinsman redeemer.

1. Jesus became a near kinsman through the incarnation.
2. He had the right to restore our inheritance.
 - a. Revelation 5.
 - b. Eternal life.
 - c. Dominion.
 - d. Joy.
 - e. Sonship in God's kingdom.

IV. Redemption.

A. Part of salvation.

B. Redeemed.

1. To buy back that which was lost.
2. The price -- the precious blood.

C. Who is redeemed?

1. Sinners who repent and believe.
2. "Whosoever will."



Spiritual Truths

- The principle of redemption means that Jesus Christ not only created us, but He purchased back the inheritance of eternal life which was lost because of sin.
- Ruth and Boaz were real, historical people who became the great-grandparents of David, the king of Israel.
- The story of Ruth and Boaz is a clear biblical type of the story of redemption;

and it relates to Christ, our kinsman redeemer.

- God's laws concerning Israel and their responsibilities illustrate eternal spiritual principles relating to God's ways and His church.
- God established the principle of a kinsman redeemer in order to prevent a few individuals from amassing vast hoards of wealth, leaving out many other families.
- Naomi is a type of the believer who left the presence of God and the service of God, with a resulting loss of joy.
- Elimelech left his place of inheritance in God and lost his life in Moab, a type of sin.
- Ruth took the initiative to ask Boaz to redeem her, because we as believers must ask the Lord Jesus Christ to redeem us.
- We are redeemed from our sinful lifestyle by the precious blood of Christ.



Lesson Material

Most people who attend church or Sunday School for very long are familiar with the story of Ruth. It is an important story, and merits in Scripture an entire small book of the Bible. God considers it important, because it is one of the most accurate allegories concerning Christ and the redemption of His church.

The historical background of the book of Ruth is also significant. Moab was a nation that was east of the Dead Sea in what is now the nation of Jordan. The people of Moab were descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew, by an incestuous relationship with his daughter. Lot had two sons by his two daughters, and their names were Moab and Ammon.

When Israel came to take their possessions in the land of Canaan, they tried to pass through the land of Moab; but, they were rejected. The Moabites were perhaps jealous; or for whatever reason, they were angry with the Israelites. They feared them. King Balak at that time had hired Balaam to curse the Israelites. In fact, he was the one who was taught to "cast a stumbling block," or to lure them away from the cloud of God's presence with immorality, so that they could then be defeated. In fact, many of them lost their lives because of that.

The nation of Moab was a constant source of problems to the Israelites, even though they were also Semites and they spoke the same language. But they were bitter enemies of Israel. Much later, there was a king named Eglon, who the Bible says was enormously fat. He created a lot of problems. He conquered the nation of Israel and ruled over them for about eighteen years. Finally, a man named Ehud assassinated him, and then led the Israelites in a great battle; and they conquered the Moabites.

After the Moabites had been conquered, Elimelech and his family came on the scene. When things became difficult in the area of Judah because of a famine, Elimelech decided to move his family to Moab, thinking things would be better there. It is a classic situation of someone who, when things get hard, runs from the

problem. It happens often. "Well, the church seems kind of dry. I will move on somewhere else. I will find one that does not have any problems."

The grass always looks greener on the other side. Because of perspective, when you look down you see all the bare spots. But when you look across, you tend to see only the green. So we are constantly pulling up stakes looking for something new. Now, occasionally God may be leading in a new direction, just like He led Abraham to leave his family to go out and take another possession. But we can see in this case that God did not bless the move. God did not tell him to leave town.

When there was a famine, some people pulled up stakes and looked elsewhere. Generally, they got into trouble when they reacted to a problem, by running away from it. There is a difference. When you are doing it in obedience to God, God blesses. If you are doing it because it seems the natural, reasonable thing to do, it generally does not prosper. Elimelech left his place of inheritance to go into a foreign land -- a land that worshipped idols, a land known for its wickedness. Moab was a land that served the god Chemosh, who was worshipped with human sacrifices. In fact, the people of Moab often took infants and laid them in the arms of a great metal image. When the babies rolled off, they fell into a great fire, and were burned to death. There were also extreme forms of sexual immorality.

It is interesting to note also that, even though David was descended from a Moabite woman, he still waged war on Moab and brought them under tribute. They were a people given over to wickedness. In the midst of that nation, we had these characters in the story. Ruth married one of the sons of Elimelech and

Naomi. A woman named Orpah married the other.

Again we come to a familiar part of the story. Elimelech and the two sons died, leaving three widows: Naomi, the widow of Elimelech, and Ruth and Orpah, the widows of Mahlon and Chilion. Now they are in a dilemma. Because of the famine and the hard place they had gone through, Elimelech had forfeited his inheritance. To leave Judah was a type or a picture of those who turn back to the world to look to meet their needs. Sin always promises to satisfy, but it never does. Instead of satisfying, it brings death. That was the situation which we see clearly illustrated in these men. They left their inheritance, and the end result was death. Sin is not satisfying. It destroys. It diminishes, and it brings death.

Naomi realized that she had to go back to her homeland. She understood now that Moab, the place of sin and disobedience, could not meet her needs. Her only hope was to go back to Judah. She encouraged the two young women to stay with their kinfolk in Moab. Orpah did so, but Ruth said, "I am going with you. Your God shall be my God. Your people shall be my people." Apparently, even though Naomi had lost her joy, Ruth somehow recognized that the God of Naomi was the true God. In spite of Naomi's emotional problem, who said, "Do not call me 'Naomi' ('Pleasant One') anymore. Call me 'Mara' ('Bitter')," Ruth recognized that her God was true.

When Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem, they realized they had a problem. Naomi had lost the inheritance of her husband, and they had to struggle to survive. Ruth did as many of the poor people did at that time. She practiced gleaning in the fields. God had established a law in Israel that reapers were required

to leave certain patches of grain for the poor. And so Ruth was able to glean enough grain to feed her and her mother-in-law. Boaz, the owner of some of the fields, was a wealthy and highly respected man of integrity. He noticed her, not simply because of her physical beauty, but he also noticed her character qualities. He focused on those. He was impressed with her diligence, her gentle spirit, and her good attitude. He was drawn primarily to her character.

So Boaz blessed her by leaving extra grain for her to glean. Ultimately, it was Naomi who encouraged Ruth to appeal to Boaz as the near kinsman. God had established the responsibility of redemption to go to the nearest possible kinsman. In the law God gave to Moses, this principle of kinsman redeemer had been already established, and was practiced in Israel. God established that law to prevent the accumulation of great wealth by a few individuals.

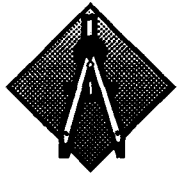
But keeping the wealth and the land dispersed among the people to a reasonable degree still allowed those who were more diligent and faithful to accumulate more than those who did not work hard. God never established the principle of socialism, in which everyone shares equally, even though they do not work. God provided the principle that if you do not work, you should not eat. But within that system, God allows for some to achieve, to excel and to accumulate. God blesses those. In fact, He confirms His covenant with the ability to gain wealth.

Boaz was a faithful man; and he was a successful man. Naomi encouraged Ruth to appeal to him as the one who had the right, the first choice in redeeming the land from whomever had taken it over. Of

course, land was usually forfeited as a result of debt or severe loss as a payment.

In chapter three, we see the appeal of Ruth to Boaz as he is sleeping out in the fields. She took his blanket, uncovered his feet, and appealed to him to be her covering. There was nothing suggesting or improper in this action. It was simply a symbolic act of appeal, acknowledging that he should be her covering. The symbolism of covering relates to authority and protection. She was looking for someone to be her spiritual and her literal covering.

He responded, and went through all of the steps to redeem Ruth. He appealed to one who was a nearer kinsman who had rejected the offer, because to redeem an inheritance meant that he would take on the responsibility to raise up children for the deceased. Since Naomi was too old, Ruth became the bride, just as the church will become the bride of Christ. The symbolism becomes very clear. We lost our spiritual inheritance through the fall of man in the garden. Our inheritance was eternal life. God created us to be His children, to live with Him forever -- to have dominion. All of this was lost because of sin. When we come to Jesus Christ, we ask Him to forgive us, to cleanse us, and to be Lord. "Lord" means "owner." We ask Him to be our covering, our owner, our Master. We receive Him not only as our Redeemer (Savior), but also as our Lord and Master. We recognize Him as the Lord Jesus Christ; and we become a part of the bride of Christ, who will live with Him and reign with Him forever.



Methods

Contrast the courtship emphasis of today's young people with that of Boaz and Ruth.

Focus on her character vs. focus on her physical beauty.

See the needs of the other vs. see what the other might do for me.

Seeking to serve vs. seeking pleasure.

Relating to her authority vs. avoiding her authority figure.

Seeking a relationship vs. seeking an experience.

Soul to soul vs. body to body.

Covenant, then union vs. union, then a weaker covenant.

Discussion:

How do we see an image of Jesus Christ in Boaz?

How is the nation of Israel like Naomi?

How are some believers like Naomi?

How is Ruth such a precise prophetic picture of the Bride of Christ, the church?

Are you committed to maintaining moral purity until marriage?

What are some of the consequences of fornication?

Healed Waters

Volume 8

Lesson 4



Bible References

2 Kings 2

1 Corinthians 11

Matthew 5:13

men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send.

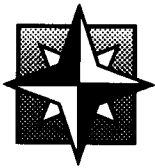
17 "And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not.

18 "And when they came again to him, (for he tarried at Jericho,) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not?

19 "And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city {is} pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water {is} nought, and the ground barren.

20 "And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought {it} to him.

21 "And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren {land}."



Theme

The key to a whole, healthy life on earth is a solid, loving covenant with God.



Scripture Reading

2 Kings 2:16-21

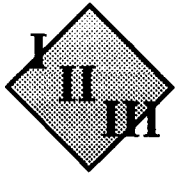
16 "And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong



Memory Verse

Isaiah 12:2-3

"Behold, God {is} my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH {is} my strength and {my} song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."



Outline

I. Elisha Receives Elijah's Mantle.

- A. Symbol of his spiritual anointing.
- B. Elijah the prophet had been taken up to heaven in a whirlwind.
- C. Elisha's cry.
 - 1. "My Father, My Father!"
 - a. Elisha had asked for a double portion of his spirit.
 - b. The double portion is the inheritance of the firstborn son.
 - c. He did not ask for his boat or VCR.
 - d. The Bible records 16 miracles of Elisha's, and 8 of Elijah's.
 - 2. "The chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!"
 - a. A prophetic declaration that the real power of Israel is in God, and not in military might.

- b. Israel had seen this verified many times against impossible odds.

B. The search for Elijah.

- 1. The "sons of the prophets," (young men training for the ministry) wanted to find Elijah.
- 2. They did not have the faith to believe that Elijah had really gone to heaven.
- 3. They did not find him in three days of searching.

II. Jericho.

A. The situation is pleasant.

- 1. No adversity or problems.
- 2. Time of ease and relative prosperity.
- 3. No enemies or battles.

B. The water is naught (bad).

- 1. Water is a symbol in Scripture of spiritual life.
- 2. John 7:37 -- "rivers of living water."

C. Elisha healed the waters with a new cruse of salt.

III. Salt.

A. A symbol of covenant love.

- 1. Numbers 18:19:
 - a. "...it is a covenant of salt for ever before the LORD unto thee and to thy seed with thee."
 - b. Symbolizing a very durable relationship.
- 2. Leviticus 2:13: "...the salt of the covenant of thy God...."

3. God gave David the kingdom by a covenant of salt. (2 Chronicles 13:5)

B. Salt is:

1. A preservative.
 - a. It preserves food from spoiling.
 - b. The righteous are the preservative of a nation.
 - c. Sodom would have been spared from judgment, if there had been ten righteous people in the city.
 - d. *"Ye are the salt of the earth:...."* (Matthew 5:13)
2. A flavoring.
 - a. *"...Sweet savour of Christ,...."* (2 Corinthians 2:15)
 - b. The more we are like Jesus, the more pleasing we are to God.
 - c. "Lukewarm" believers leave a bad taste in God's mouth. (Revelation 3:16)
3. Salt is essential in the human body.
 - a. We were created to be God's children.
 - b. We can only relate to God in a covenant, initiated by a supernatural new birth.
4. Salt is a compound.
 - a. Formed by the chemical bonding of two poisons: sodium and chloride.
 - b. It becomes a whole, new substance, with completely different characteristics.
 - c. It is transformed from death to life.
 - d. 2 Corinthians 5:17.

IV. The Lord's Table.

A. A covenant.

1. Not a contract.
2. A covenant is much stronger, and more binding.
3. A contract says, "I will, if you will."
4. A covenant says, "I will."
5. A covenant is the giving of oneself to another, without reservation.
6. Marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman for life. (Ephesians 5)
7. Christianity is a similar covenant between God and each believer.

B. Historically, the breaking of bread has long been a symbol of a covenant.

1. Melchisedec broke bread with Abraham, and they also took wine together.
2. Salt is one of the ingredients in bread.
3. Leaven is a type of sin, because it is a fermentation which causes the dough to puff up.

C. Jesus expressed His covenant with the disciples and with the Church by the bread and the wine.

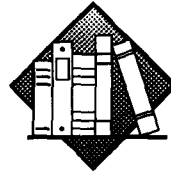
1. 1 Corinthians 11.
2. The bread symbolized His body, broken for them.
 - a. Healing.
 - b. Isaiah 53:5.
3. The cup was the New Covenant in His blood.
 - a. The wine was a symbol of His blood.
 - b. The wine did not actually become blood.
4. Jesus told us to "show the Lord's death" until He comes again.

5. We express our covenant with God, and with one another, by the regular breaking of bread.



Spiritual Truths

- The root cause of all the world's ills was the breaking of the covenant between God and man and God was not the One who broke it.
- The new birth (regeneration) involves a restoration to the state of covenant with God; and it is expressed in water baptism and in the breaking of bread.
- Salt is a symbol of a lasting covenant.
- The Christians in any culture are the preservatives of the nation, which prevent its destruction.
- The presence of so many Christians in the world today keep the forces of hell from a one-world socialist and anti-Christ government.
- A contract says, "I will, if you will;" while a covenant says, "I will."
- Christianity is a covenant of love between God and the believer, similar to the covenant of marriage between a man and his wife.
- God does not break covenants, although sometimes people do.



Lesson Material

Water is an essential for life. We cannot survive very long without it. When the water supply of a city is tainted, water becomes the central need of everyone. Crops, livestock, and work depend on water. Water is a symbol of life in the Bible. When Elisha came to Jericho, the people were mourning over a serious water problem. There was water, but it was poisoned. People were dying.

Elisha made a strange request. He asked for a new cruse of salt, which he poured into the waters, proclaiming that they were now healed. Now, we realize that salt is a very useful substance, but we know you do not neutralize poison by dumping salt in it. Elisha was using salt -- a type of covenant, reminding the world that to heal bitter, defiled lives, we need a covenant of salt with God. It did not matter in the natural what he put in the waters, because God did a miracle for him; and he had faith to believe for it.

The basic problem in the human race is that we as a people have broken covenant with God. Before man sinned in rebellion, life was perfect. There were no problems. The weather was perfect. Adam and Eve had never experienced an unhappy moment. Then they became tempted by pride, and they disobeyed God's command. They broke their covenant with God, and the result was death for the whole human race.

Sin is the basic cause for all the bitterness of life in our world. We were not designed to be proud, self-indulgent creatures. We were designed to walk with

God in the cool of the evening -- to be worshippers, enjoying sweet fellowship with Him forever. Sin destroyed all that. But Jesus Christ, through His death on the cross, made a way for us to be restored. He paid the awful price to purchase us back for God, because the just penalty for sin was satisfied. We appropriate that blood by repenting from sin, and by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, not only as our Savior and Redeemer, but as the Lord (owner) of our life.

Several times, God mentioned salt in relation to covenant. It symbolizes several things. First of all, salt is a preservative. It has a unique ability to guard against corruption and decay. Salt is added to most of our foods, partly to flavor it, and partly to preserve it. Salt has been very valuable throughout history. Sometimes, ancient Roman soldiers were paid with salt, and it even has been exchanged ounce for ounce for gold.

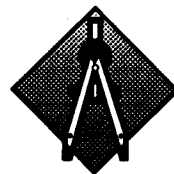
Jesus told us as believers that we are the "salt of the earth." The corporate body of believers holds back the judgment of God on this wicked planet; but, that will not always be the case. We believe that the believers will one day be taken out (raptured, to meet the Lord in the air); and then great judgment will come on the earth, as the anti-Christ forces take charge and the vials of God's wrath are poured out on the nations.

But Jesus said, *"...if the salt has lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."* (Matthew 5:13) We understand that the "savour" of the salt is the presence of Jesus in our lives. (2 Corinthians 2:15) When we become carnal and neglect our spiritual life, we lose our "saltiness." We become more like the world around us. We begin

to act and seem just like the crowd, and people cannot tell a difference any more. If we are not like Jesus, then we are "good for nothing." What will happen? We will be "cast out, and trodden under foot of man."

Jesus taught us a marvelous way to express both our covenant with God and with one another in the local church. He broke bread with His disciples, speaking to them about being "one bread." (1 Corinthians 10:17) He told them that the bread was the symbol of His body, which was broken for them. We realize that we could never be restored to a covenant with God without the sacrifice of His life on the cross, because the seriousness of sin demands the death penalty. Most people will pay that penalty for eternity in a real, tormenting lake of fire. But for those who believe and receive it, the price for salvation has been paid.

We celebrate that salvation every time we break bread and take the communion cup of the Lord's table. We are not drinking blood or eating flesh -- we are partaking of symbols of that blood, and recognizing that we are part of His body. We remember the great price which purchased our redemption; and we focus our minds again on the spiritual, which is the most important aspect of our lives.



Methods

Take some plain salt, or some rock salt, and talk about the properties of salt as an object lesson. Emphasize that salt is the combination of sodium and chloride; and

that by the transformation of a chemical reaction, a whole new substance is formed. For people to join a church and get religious is like trying to sprinkle a little sodium and a little chloride on your steak. It must have a transformation to become a whole new substance. We must be born again, and become "in Christ", so that we can become a "new creation." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Reinforce the symbolism in the bread and the cup; and show that it relates not only to our covenant with God in the spirit, but also to our covenant with our fellow-believers in practical terms.

What does it mean to be "one bread" with the body of Christ?

How does that affect us when we have misunderstandings, or disagreements?

Are we on the same team?

Do we have an obligation to forgive one another, and to resolve differences before we split apart?

Should forgiving one another be a part of the communion process?

David's Success

Volume 8

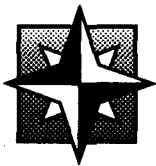
Lesson 5



Bible References

1 Samuel 16:1-23

Psalms 27



Theme

God is not impressed with our appearance or natural abilities, but He is impressed with faith and character.



Scripture Reading

1 Samuel 16:1-18

1 *"And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite:*

for I have provided me a king among his sons.

2 *"And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear {it}, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD.*

3 *"And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me {him} whom I name unto thee.*

4 *"And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably?*

5 *"And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.*

6 *"And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed {is} before him.*

7 *"But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for {the LORD seeth} not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.*

8 *"Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.*

9 "Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.

10 "Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these.

11 "And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all {thy} children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.

12 "And he sent, and brought him in. Now he {was} ruddy, {and} withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this {is} he.

13 "Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

14 "But the spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.

15 "And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee.

16 "Let our lord now command thy servants, {which are} before thee, to seek out a man, {who is} a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.

17 "And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring {him} to me.

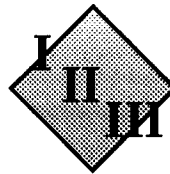
18 "Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, {that is} cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD {is} with him."



Memory Verse

1 Peter 5:5-6

"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all {of you} be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:"



Outline

I. The Need for a New King.

A. King Saul had become proud and vain, and had tragically lost God's anointing as the king of Israel.

1. God created mankind perfect; but man had the choice to turn away.
2. The greatest danger in success and wealth is that we become proud and

self-centered, and turn away from God.

3. When we are in need, we are naturally more inclined to spend time in intense prayer.
- B. Saul was still strong and smart, but he had lost his humility and his heart for God.
1. Samuel warned him that "rebellion is like witchcraft."
 2. Authority is protection. If we rebel against God's authority, we lose the protection of His grace.
 3. We then become vulnerable to the attacks and control of the powers of darkness.
 4. Rebellion is like witchcraft, because it places us under Satan's authority.
- C. God sent the prophet Samuel to Bethlehem, to anoint a new king, while Saul was still on the throne.
1. Instead of repenting, Saul tried to protect his "ministry" by destroying David.
 2. He had lost God's anointing, but not his office.
 3. David respected the office, and trusted God to deal with Saul.

II. The Selection of the New King.

- A. God told Samuel that the new king would be a son of Jesse, but did not tell him which one.
- B. Jesse presented his first seven sons.
1. He had forgotten about David, because he had sent him to the fields.
 2. David was given the place of a servant instead of a son.

3. How do you handle rejection?
 - a. Like David did.
 - b. Psalms 27:10.

C. David would not have been elected by the people, but he was God's choice.

D. David had a heart for God; and God loved him.

III. The Qualities of the New King.

- A. David had been observed by a servant of King Saul's. He had a good reputation in the land.
- B. The servant listed David's qualities. (from verse 18)
1. Clever musician.
 - a. Creative.
 - b. David had actually invented new instruments in his career as a musician.
 - c. Music is one of the best tools in spiritual warfare and spiritual life.
 - d. Music is a great vehicle for praise, worship, prophecy, and ministry.
 - e. Many of the greatest prophets of God were musicians.
 - f. If you have the opportunity to develop ministry skills to use for God, do it.
 2. A mighty, valiant man.
 - a. He practiced diligently with the sling, a popular weapon in those days.
 - b. He was also a good athlete, because he worked hard.
 3. A man of war.
 - a. Courage comes from having the fear of the Lord, and faith.

- b. He was not afraid of a battle, because he knew the Lord.
- 4. Prudent in matters.
 - a. The boy had good sense.
 - b. He had understanding and wisdom.
- 5. Good-looking, neat appearance.
 - a. *A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance:....*" (Proverbs 15:13)
 - b. He took care of his body, because he respected God as the Owner.
- 6. "The Lord is with him."
 - a. This is the most important quality of David.
 - b. He was walking in God's grace.
 - c. Acts 4:13.
 - d. One teenager + God = a majority.

- Even if we are assigned a job we do not like, we should be faithful, and use our time to develop wisdom and skills.
- People will notice when we have a good attitude and have learned to do something well.
- Music is an excellent vehicle for praise, worship, prophecy, and other kinds of ministry. If you have the opportunity and the ability to develop musical skills, do it.
- A person's attitudes, joy, and spiritual health can affect his or her physical attractiveness.



Spiritual Truths

- God works through leaders that He appoints and anoints.
- We cannot tell what is in a person's heart by their appearance or actions. Only God can see what is in their heart.
- To judge means to make conclusions about a person's motives and heart based on what you see on the outside; and only God can do that accurately.
- We can teach, evaluate, or correct a person's behavior; but we should never assume we know exactly what is in their heart.
- When people let us down, we do not need to get bitter. We can learn to turn to God, because He never fails.



Lesson Material

God works through various leaders to train and direct us in our lives. He uses parents, teachers, pastors, government leaders, and others. God allowed Israel to have a king; and He gave them the kind of tall, handsome, and brilliant man they wanted, when He gave them Saul. But Saul became proud and carnal, after he received such power and wealth; and his heart turned away from God.

What a tragedy for Saul. What a lesson for us! Our society tends to base our worth on wealth and beauty. When we say, "How much is he worth?," we answer in monetary terms. This shows a false values system which is based on money, instead of eternity. Saul had it all. He was smart, tall, good-looking, and nice. He was just the kind of man everyone would vote for.

He was just the kind of guy most teenagers dream about being.

So he was a sharp fellow. What happened? He became famous, successful, powerful, and extremely rich. Then he became proud, selfish, and arrogant. He still had the office of king, but he lost God's grace in his life. God resists the proud. He knows them "afar off." But God gives grace (spiritual strength and favor) to the humble. Why?

God's purpose in the earth is to have a people for Himself. He is the God of the whole universe, and not Santa Claus. He does not exist to be our helper. We exist to be His servants and His children. When people go their own selfish way and do their own thing, they work against the plan of God for eternity. God is God; and when we serve Him, we have dominion. But taking possession of life sets self on God's throne, and God cannot honor that. God can only honor those who honor Him. The key question is that of ownership. As long as I am doing my own thing, I cannot receive the grace that God's servants receive.

God sent his prophet Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint David, a teenager who had a genuine love for God. David had the wisdom to seek God with all his heart, and he had a strong sense of personal integrity and good character. David was not tall. But he had a big heart.

David, one of seven sons, was sent out to tend sheep. This was a most undesired and menial task; and rich men would never send a son to be a shepherd. This was only done by slaves or hired servants. But David was faithful, and guarded the sheep with his life. Out in the lonely pasture, he prayed, sang to the Lord, and

practiced his music. He also invented new instruments, and wrote songs to God.

God used this anointing to teach Samuel a great lesson. Man sees the outward appearance, but only God looks at the heart. We must never judge, because when we judge, we take on the right to see motives. God chose a young man who had been overlooked by his peers. Instead of becoming bitter and angry, David turned to the Lord to fill that need in his life.

When King Saul was tormented by demon spirits, he wanted an anointed musician to play for him. He knew that evil spirits hate to hang around when God is worshipped in the spirit. On the recommendation of his servant, he hired David to come to the palace and be his music minister.

All of us want to be accepted by our peers. We would like to be popular. But the mistake many teenagers make is that they are so focused on being liked by people that they neglect their relationship with God. Even worse, some will do things that they know are displeasing to God in order to "fit in" with an ungodly crowd. This is tragically foolish. Generally, the "friends" who try to get you to reject your moral standards do not care about you. They will use you to ease their own conscience, by getting you to be like them.

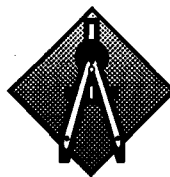
Jesus said, *"...Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* (Matthew 6:33) What things? The things in life you need, such as joy, and acceptance, and a sense of place in life. David sought God, rather than popularity, in life. What was the result? People were drawn to this young man, because of the good qualities God gave to him. Because

David put God first, he became extremely popular, as well as rich and successful.

Note that the girl who keeps herself "untouched by human hands" morally, and who honors God in the way she respects her body, will tend to be the most desirable of all. Purity has a way of reflecting joy on the face. The girl who seeks attention by giving her body away in fornication or demeaning dress tends to develop a hard, surly countenance; and she is less attractive, regardless of how fine her physical features may be.

David was called "a man after God's own heart." What made him so special? If we can learn the secret of his success, we can have the same kind of results; because his success was not based on what he inherited, but on what he did in life with the opportunities he had. The primary key to David's success in life is that he loved God with all his heart, and he made it his life's ambition to please God, rather than men. When he did, he was given favor with men, and everything else he could have wanted was added to him. He had enemies and battles throughout life, but these were all designed to train him and build his character for eternity.

David was a mighty and valiant man -- a man of war. David had courage. He also had good sense. He was not silly or foolish. He made good use of his time, and did not waste words in idle talk. He had a good appearance. He kept himself neat, even though he worked hard for a living. The most important quality of David was that God was with him. Others could see the peace and joy on his countenance that came as the result of God's presence in his life. Can others see Jesus in your life?



Methods

Bring a "teen" doll, and have the girls share how they feel about this focus on physical perfection. Do they feel that there is too much emphasis on physical features?

Does Hollywood focus too much on physical beauty and ability? Is there a subtle association with beauty and character? Show them that physical beauty does not necessarily bring happiness in life.

Contrast this with the emphasis God's Word places on developing inner character. Teach them to observe and compliment others on positive character traits. Set the example by learning to praise children on a higher level than, "You have lovely hair," or "What beautiful eyes you have."

Flattery involves a focus on unchangeable features for which they have no control. Legitimate praise points out positive achievement or accomplishment. To have a neat and modest appearance takes effort, and could be praised and encouraged. But to praise someone for being tall is flattery. How does the boy feel who is very short?

Discuss the difference between flattery and praise.

Jeremiah the Prophet

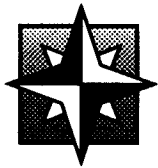
Volume 8

Lesson 6



Bible References

Jeremiah and Lamentations
(Overview)



Theme

Sin ultimately results in bondage for individuals and for nations; but God is our source of hope.



Scripture Reading

Jeremiah 1:1-10

1 *"The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that {were} in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin:*

2 *"To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king*

of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

3 *"It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.*

4 *"Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,*

5 *"Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, {and} I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.*

6 *"Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I {am} a child.*

7 *"But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I {am} a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.*

8 *"Be not afraid of their faces: for I {am} with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.*

9 *"Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.*

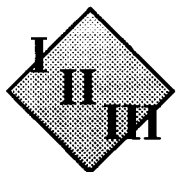
10 *"See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant."*



Memory Verse

Lamentations 3:22-23

"{It is of} the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. {They are} new every morning: great {is} thy faithfulness."



Outline

I. Jeremiah the Prophet.

A. A member of the priestly line.

1. Name means "The Lord will rise."
2. He prophesied just before and during the fall and destruction of Judah by Babylon.
3. He knew it was coming, but most preachers did not.
4. He is known as "the weeping prophet."

B. Called to be a prophet.

1. Called from conception. (1:5)
2. God planned his life when he was in the womb.

C. "But I am just a child!"

1. God said, "I will send you."
2. "I will be with you."
3. "Do not be afraid of the people."

D. Jeremiah was called to:

1. Root out.
2. Pull down.
3. Destroy.
4. Throw down.
5. Build.
6. Plant. (Before people can get saved, they have to realize the awfulness of sin, and recognize that they are lost and in need of a Savior.)

II. The Times of Jeremiah.

A. Divided kingdom.

1. After Solomon's reign, Israel was divided into two kingdoms.
2. Israel, to the North:
 - a. Served idols.
 - b. Had all wicked kings.
 - c. Was conquered and destroyed by Assyria in 722 B.C.
3. Nation of Judah:
 - a. Continued under the dynasty of King David.
 - b. Worshipped God; but many people brought in idols, too.
 - c. Was spared from Assyrian captivity, because the nation prayed and fasted with the prophet Isaiah and King Hezekiah.
 - d. Had some good, and some very wicked kings.
 - e. Was finally conquered by Babylon in 586 B.C.

B. Jeremiah's time.

1. Jeremiah prophesied before and during the fall and captivity of Jerusalem.
2. When Nebuchadnezzar had conquered the land, his officers

allowed Jeremiah to stay, if he desired.

3. They knew that he had told the people not to resist them.
4. Jeremiah stayed; and when a remnant decided to move to Egypt, he warned them not to go.
 - a. But he went along with them.
 - b. He was killed in Egypt.

III. The Message of Jeremiah.

A. The "prosperity" preachers in Judah were wrong.

1. Most prophets were predicting that God would defend Judah from Babylon.
 - a. They would not go into captivity.
 - b. Had not God sent an angel many years earlier to kill 185,000 Assyrian soldiers to defend Jerusalem?
 - c. "Just have faith, and think positively."
2. *"For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when {there is} no peace."*
 - a. Jeremiah 8:11.
 - b. It was not faith -- it was presumption, because it was not a word from God.

B. God would allow Judah and Jerusalem to be conquered.

1. Because the people had turned their hearts away from God.
2. They were carnal, and had neglected God's Word for 490 years.
 - a. They had not kept the Sabbaths or the feasts of God.
 - b. They would be defeated, and would go into captivity as a

nation for 70 years.

C. Do not resist the Babylonians.

1. You cannot win.
2. God raised up Nebuchadnezzar as His "rod" to chasten His chosen people.
3. Many who resist and rebel will die.

D. God will restore us to the land.

1. After we spend time in captivity and learn our lesson about serving idols.
2. After this captivity, the Hebrews never again worshipped idols.

IV. The Lamentations of Jeremiah.

A. "Lamentations."

1. Written by Jeremiah to the Jews in Babylonian captivity.
2. Written in 586 B.C.

B. The message.

1. It is a time for weeping and sorrow.
2. But God is merciful.
3. There is still a remnant.
4. God will restore Judah.



Spiritual Truths

- God is our loving Heavenly Father who loves to prosper and protect us; but He also disciplines us, when our hearts become cold toward Him.

- People who live in times of ease and prosperity have a hard time believing that times will get rough for them.
- It is possible to so over-emphasize the love and grace message, that the church loses the sense of the fear of the Lord.
- Jeremiah did not have a "successful" ministry by the world's standards, because he did not persuade the people, or gain national favor.
- Jeremiah was successful in God's eyes, because he was faithful to say what God was saying.
- God knew that the only way the Jews could be made to give up the world's idols was to suffer in painful bondage for a while.
- God uses the wicked as His "rod" to chasten His people; and then He judges those nations for the cruel way they treated others.
- God will chasten every Christian who becomes spiritually cold; but His purpose is to restore them to Himself, rather than destroy them.



Lesson Material

Jeremiah was a wonderful man of God who has been respected and admired by Christians throughout history. But during his lifetime, he was scorned, rejected, ridiculed, and sometimes imprisoned for telling the truth. He was not popular with the people; but in the end he was

vindicated, because everything he prophesied came to pass. Jeremiah suffered in this life, but he has all of eternity to rejoice and enjoy the rewards of being faithful to God.

Jeremiah was encouraged often by the Lord. He did not seek the ministry of a prophet. He was called. There is a great difference between being called and being driven. Some people are driven by an ambition to succeed. Some may have "success" in the ministry, in the natural. They may achieve fame, popularity, or wealth. But that does not mean that God is pleased with them. God will judge each of us according to our faithfulness to Him. In eternity, the greatest rewards will go to those who served most faithfully, and not necessarily to those who achieved the most fame. In balance, we should note that it is not wrong to gain fame or wealth. It is just that these things will not affect our eternal reward -- but our heart and our obedience will.

The difference in the life of Jeremiah was the anointing of God. He was not just preaching sermons. He had a specific word from God for the people of his time. While other prophets were putting their finger to the wind and speaking what the people wanted to hear, Jeremiah was listening to God, and speaking as God's voice. His message was hard to take, and the people usually flocked to hear those who were speaking the "positive" message. Eventually, they were proven wrong. God did not deliver Judah from the armies of Babylon. In fact, God had specifically raised them up to be His "rod" to spank His chosen people. Our natural fathers may be reluctant to discipline, but our Heavenly Father is not. He is firm, and He knows what it takes to bring a nation to repentance. God deals the same

way with individuals as He does with nations.

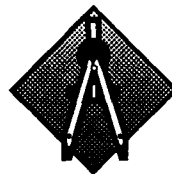
The Northern kingdom of Israel had adopted idolatry as their official state religion, and had never served the true God. There was always a remnant of godly people, but the majority was wicked and rebellious. God sent them many prophets and allowed them many years to repent, but they never did. Finally, God used the Assyrians to conquer and destroy them. But He spared Judah, which was headquartered in Jerusalem and had stayed under the kingly dynasty of David. Judah fasted and prayed, and God delivered them from the Assyrians in 722 B.C.

But after another century of spiritual ups and downs, later generations became even more lax in their worship, and more and more involved in idolatry. Idolatry was popular, because the people were in control. People indulged in their lustful sins, and excused their wickedness under the guise of "religious liberty." But God is not mocked. He will not be part of a man-made religion. If we are to serve the true God, then He will be God, and He will be Lord. It may be "fun" to serve idols, but it always ends in death.

God had to deal with Israel. The only cure for idolatry was destruction and captivity. Jeremiah said, "It is coming." The other preachers said, "No, God is so good, He will not let us suffer. God will protect us. Praise the Lord." But there is a time for weeping, and a time for repenting. Even at the last moment, if the people would have humbled their hearts and turned to God with repenting and fasting, God could have stopped the invasion. But they were so busy giving people the assurance of their "salvation" that they had no fear of the Lord, and no

fear of Babylon. They "healed the hurt slightly." It was like a person with a disease being administered pain-killing drugs. Drugs work basically to deceive the body, telling it that it does not have pain. Used wisely, they can ease pain, in order to give the body a chance to mend. But drugs do not heal; and sometimes people cover the pain without dealing with the cause, and die as a result. Pain is not bad itself. Pain is a signal from the body that something is wrong, and needs care. If we do not deal with the problem, it may become worse, or even terminal.

This is like our conscience. That is a function of our spirit, telling us that something is wrong spiritually. The secular world deals with sin by deception, or "healing the hurt slightly." "It is OK to be a homosexual, or an alcoholic, or a sexually active person. You cannot help it. Everybody does it." But God's Spirit deals with our sin, because He knows that it will destroy us eventually, and damage those around us. God says, "Turn from your wicked ways, and seek life." Listen to your conscience, and repent of your sins. You do not have to be a slave to sin. You can be free; and by grace you can live a life that is pleasing to God.



Methods

Review a time-line chart of the history of Israel, so that the students have an idea of the historical setting of the prophet Jeremiah.

Discussion:

Do you think there are any similarities between the nation of Judah in Jeremiah's time, and your home country in your time?

Is God going to judge nations in our time?

If there is a real revival among the Christians in a nation, will God protect and preserve that nation from an untimely death? (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Houses, Fields, and Vineyards

Volume 8

Lesson 7

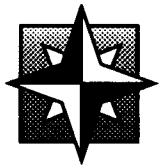


Bible References

Jeremiah 32

2 Corinthians 4

Joel 2



Theme

God is a holy and just God, Who should be feared; but He is also the God of mercy and restoration, Who should be loved and adored.



Scripture Reading

Jeremiah 32:6-17

6 "And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

7 "Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that {is} in Anathoth: for the right of redemption {is} thine to buy {it}.

8 "So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that {is} in Anathoth, which {is} in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance {is} thine, and the redemption {is} thine; buy {it} for thyself. Then I knew that this {was} the word of the LORD.

9 :And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that {was} in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, {even} seventeen shekels of silver.

10 "And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed {it}, and took witnesses, and weighed {him} the money in the balances.

11 "So I took the evidence of the purchase, {both} that which was sealed {according} to the law and custom, and that which was open:

12 "And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of

Hanameel mine uncle's {son}, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison.

13 "And I charged Baruch before them, saying,

14 "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days.

15 "For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.

16 "Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the LORD, saying,

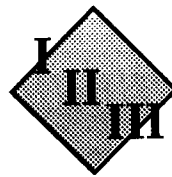
17 "Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, {and} there is nothing too hard for thee."



Memory Verse

Joel 2:23

"Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first {month}."



Outline

I. Jeremiah's Prophetic Purchase.

A. Redeem the land of Hanameel.

1. Right of the kinsman redeemer (see the book of Ruth).
2. Buy it for yourself.

B. But Jeremiah knew that the Babylonians were about to conquer and destroy the nation.

1. Land would be "worthless" in a few days.
2. Landowners were usually the first people killed.

C. Hope for the future restoration.

1. God wanted Jeremiah to buy it for future generations.
2. This was his sign that "after many years" the land would be restored to the Jews.

D. Baruch.

1. Jeremiah's secretary.
2. Also his servant.

E. Seal the evidences of the purchased possession in a clay jar, and bury it for the future.

1. Later generations would need the contract.
2. As God's redeemed (purchased possession) people, we are:
 - a. "...Sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,..." (Ephesians 1:13-14)

- b. *"Which is the earnest (down payment to show good faith) of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession,...."*
- 3. *"...We have this treasure (Jesus) in earthen (clay) vessels,...."* (2 Corinthians 4:7)

II. Houses.

- A. "Houses will be possessed again in this land."
- B. "House" refers prophetically to our body, as well as our family.
 - 1. Peter called his body a "tabernacle" to live in.
 - 2. Jesus spoke of a demon living in a man, as in his "house." (Luke 11)
 - 3. Paul referred to the body as the "temple of the Holy Ghost."
- C. What does it mean to "possess your vessel?" (1 Thessalonians 4:4)
 - 1. To have control over your own appetites. (1 Corinthians 9:27)
 - 2. Self-discipline. (Galatians 5:23)
 - 3. Overcoming the temptation of sexual sin. (1 Corinthians 6:15-20)
- D. A man who cannot control his own spirit (attitudes) is like a city that is broken down, and without walls. (Proverbs 25:28)
- E. *"In your patience possess ye your souls."* (Luke 21:19)

III. Fields.

- A. Fields will be possessed again.
- B. *"The field is the world;...."* (Matthew 13:38)
 - 1. Overcoming the influences of sin in school, on the job, or in a secular society.
 - 2. We do not have to be influenced and controlled by the secular world around us.
 - a. Romans 12:2.
 - b. We are to be in, but not of, the world.
 - c. Do not be overcome by evil. (Romans 12:21)
- C. *"...Ye shall be witnesses...."* (Acts 1:8)
 - 1. Win the lost to Jesus.
 - 2. Be an influence to the unsaved, without being influenced by them. (Psalms 1)

IV. Vineyards.

- A. Will be possessed again in the land.
- B. Vineyards: a symbol of the church.
 - 1. Vine: source of wine (joy).
 - 2. There is a "blessing in the cluster." (Isaiah 65:8)
 - a. Inherent blessing in fellowship and unity with fellow believers.
 - b. Joy in relationships based on Jesus.



Spiritual Truths

- Born-again believers are God's purchased possessions, and have the seal of the Holy Spirit of promise.
- The baptism in the Holy Ghost is a taste and down payment of heaven.
- The sorrow of repentance results in the joy of redemption and restoration.
- The result of chastening is wisdom and character.
- Before we can take dominion of the world around us, we must learn to take dominion over our own carnal impulses.
- Self-control is an evidence of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.
- God has called His people to be an influence on the people around them for good, while keeping themselves from being defiled by them.
- God has designed the local church to be a source of great joy and encouragement to every believer.



Lesson Material

Sometimes we as children do not really appreciate the love that it takes for a father to administer chastening to his children.

We know that God is our loving Heavenly Father; but we do not often emphasize the fact that He will use a hard rod on those He loves, in order to deter them from a self-destructive path. God will allow, and even cause us pain, in order to keep us from the eternal agony of hell. The Psalmist said, *"Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now have I kept thy word."* (Psalms 119:67) *"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes."* (Psalms 119:71) The clincher is verse 75: *"...Thou in faithfulness hath afflicted me."* When David committed adultery, God dealt with His beloved servant severely. David said, *"Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice."* (Psalms 51:8)

We do not often realize that it is the mercy of God to bring judgment on His people. But in the days of Jeremiah, the people of Judah were constantly attracted to the world (idols), and kept falling into spiritual lethargy and into sin. God knew that only by severe chastening would the people learn a lesson, and repent of their idolatry. It took the destruction of Jerusalem and 70 years of harsh captivity, but the people of God never served idols again. It took pain to keep them from serious disobedience.

That is why Jeremiah was called to "root out, and to pull down, and to destroy." You might say he had a "negative" ministry. He certainly had a negative word: "We are going to be defeated and go into captivity. Some of our finest children, like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah will be taken as slaves to Babylon and live the rest of their lives as eunuchs. The temple will be destroyed, and the walls broken down. But, God will restore a remnant after the great captivity. God, in His love and

mercy, will heal the bones that He has broken. Babylon is God's rod, to administer a national spanking that will turn the hearts of the people to repentance and righteousness."

If God had left them alone, they would never have repented, because that is the way of human nature. When things in life go our way, we tend to get spoiled. What a sad day it was for the northern kingdom of Israel, when God stopped dealing with their sin, and left them alone. The prophetic name for the Northern kingdom was "Ephraim." God had said, "*Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.*" (Hosea 4:17) These are among the saddest words in the Bible. Woe to the one whom God leaves alone with his idols. The next time God chastens you or brings conviction on your heart for sin, be glad He loves you enough to spank you.

God did not forsake Judah, even though many of their kings were evil, and many of the people preferred idols and fornication. God used His rod on them, and then promised restoration.

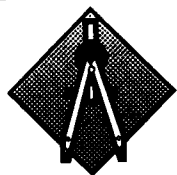
God used Jeremiah's cousin Hanameel to set up an illustrated sermon about restoration. Hanameel had somehow lost his family plot of land, and he appealed to Jeremiah to be the kinsman redeemer. God had provided the law that the nearest kinsman had the first right to buy back lost property, so that the land could stay with the same families, as long as Israel was in the land. Otherwise, a few would eventually end up with all the property.

The truth to understand here is that Jeremiah had been prophesying captivity and destruction for Judah. It would be 70 years before even a remnant would return to start the long rebuilding process. Jeremiah knew that it was most dangerous

for property owners in a time of conquest, because they were killed first. But God wanted Jeremiah to buy the property as a testimony that restoration was coming.

The receipt and deed were put in a clay jar and sealed tightly, so that later generations could find them preserved, and claim their inheritance. This is a clear Bible symbol of the Christian believer. We are compared to "clay vessels;" and we have the Holy Spirit as the title deed to our inheritance with God, and also as the One who "seals" us. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is a great testimony of the hope we have in eternity; and the joy of the Spirit is a precursor of heaven.

Houses, fields, and vineyards will be possessed again. God made man for dominion. That is, when we are under the authority of God in this life, we tend to gain dominion over our own soul, our circumstances, and over spiritual enemies. This story is a great picture of the blessing of spiritual restoration. Under sin, we lose control. We are slaves to appetites, habits, and impulses of the flesh. But in Christ, we are made free indeed. We become servants to righteousness, and we walk in the liberty of the grace of God. In the Bible, the "house" speaks of our physical body and personal life; the "field" is the world (our circumstances in the natural realm); and the "vineyard" is the local church where we are fed, encouraged, and blessed. As God restores us spiritually, He establishes our feet on solid ground, and gives us the power to do right and to deal with adversities in life. God is a wonderful God; and He can give His children grace to be overcomers -- "more than conquerors through Christ."



Methods

Object Lesson

Find some kind of clay pot, or porcelain vessel, with a lid. Put some dirt in it to

represent sin, and then pour it out for the class. Put in a paper to symbolize a deed to the inheritance the human race lost in the fall of man; and talk about being sealed with the Holy Spirit. Relate some of the verses that speak of the fact that we are "earthen vessels."

What else did Jeremiah say about clay vessels? (Jeremiah 18)

David's Prayer

Volume 8

Lesson 8

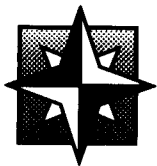


Bible References

Psalms 143

Psalms 101

Psalms 121



Theme

The key to being a fruitful and joyful human being is a living, ongoing relationship with God that is energized by a faithful prayer life.



Scripture Reading

Psalms 143:1-12

1 *"Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, (and) in thy righteousness.*

2 *"And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.*

3 *"For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead.*

4 *"Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate.*

5 *"I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands.*

6 *"I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul (thirsteth) after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.*

7 *"Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.*

8 *"Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.*

9 *"Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me.*

10 "Teach me to do thy will; for thou {art} my God: thy spirit {is} good; lead me into the land of uprightness.

11 "Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.

12 "And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I {am} thy servant."



Memory Verse

Psalms 143:8

"Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee."



Lesson Material

I. David.

A. A man after God's own heart.

1. Neglected, abused, betrayed, rejected by some.
2. Loved, respected, honored by many others.
3. Human, fallible -- sometimes failed.

B. Key to his success.

1. His focus in life was on God, and not on himself.
2. He looked to God when he had a need.
3. He cultivated a grateful spirit.

II. The Enemy of My Soul.

A. Satan, our adversary.

B. Attacking the soul.

1. Mind, will, and emotion.
2. If the enemy can get our mind away from God, or our emotions down, he can keep us from spiritual victory.

C. How Satan attacks the soul.

1. Discouragement.
2. Condemnation.
3. Bitterness.
4. Envy and covetousness.

D. The enemy loves to get us focused on self, so that we lose sight of God by faith.

III. The Stages of Self-Focus.

A. Self-sensitivity.

1. Excessive attention to the needs and wants of self.
2. Quick to be offended or hurt by lack of attention or kindness from others.
3. More interested in my rights than in my responsibilities.
4. Preoccupied with what I want, rather than with what I should do.

B. Self-assertiveness.

1. Getting my way.
2. Demanding my rights.
3. The emphasis of Jesus was on becoming what we should be, and not on getting what we want.

C. Self-centeredness.

1. Egotism.
2. High self-esteem.
3. Values based on money, possessions, and position.
4. Responding to people according to what they do to or for me.

D. Self-destruction.

1. When your life revolves around yourself, it will cause you to be jealous, angry, offensive, hurtful.
2. People tend to back away from a self-focused person.
3. An idol of the heart will eventually destroy the life.

IV. The Prayer of David.

A. Five steps up to God.

1. Remember.
 - a. Remind yourself of what God has done.
 - b. Lift up your vision.
2. Meditate on God's works.
 - a. Key to humility: "God has done...."
 - b. "Make known His deeds among the people."
3. Muse on the works of God's hands.
4. "I stretch forth my hands unto thee."
5. "My soul thirsts for thee."

B. Six wise requests.

1. Hear me.
 - a. Do not hide your face from me.
 - b. God, I need you.
2. Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness.
 - a. I know it is there.
 - b. But when my soul is anguished, I cannot hear.
3. Cause me to know the way to go.
4. Deliver me.
 - a. I know I am in bondage when I sin, and not free.
 - b. Set me free.
5. Teach me.
 - a. To do your will.
 - b. I know I should do good, but I need instruction in righteousness.
6. Lead me.
 - a. In the paths of uprightness.
 - b. Christianity is a lifestyle, and not just an experience.



Spiritual Truths

- David was a great man, because he learned to look to God as his source in life.
- God allows Satan to attack us, because we need the motivation to draw near to God in prayer and humility.
- Humility is a right perception of our absolute need for God and His strength.
- Sin causes us to focus in on ourselves, and leads to our destruction.
- David began many Psalms with discouragement, and then was lifted up

when he turned his thoughts toward God.

- It is better to muse on God's works than to muse on the works of people.
- People always fail; and so those who look to people as their ultimate source in life will always become bitter.
- Christianity is a lifestyle (path), and not just an experience.



Lesson Material

David was one of the most important people in the history of the human race. He was a very successful man in his life, and has been loved by the millions of people who have been influenced by his life and by his songs. When we get a clear picture of his lifestyle, we learn how to be successful in life. No one is really successful in this earthly life if he neglects God, or fails to prepare for eternity.

We see the soul of David expressed in so many of the Psalms. He was a man who experienced every negative emotion we could face. He had been rejected by his peers, unjustly hated and persecuted by his father-in-law, and hunted by his own people. He had lost his wife, and had seen the tragic death of several of his sons. He experienced discouragement, depression, loneliness, fear, worry, and every kind of anxiety. He committed some major sins, including adultery and murder, in his life. He was not the picture of perfection, and he did not have an easy life.

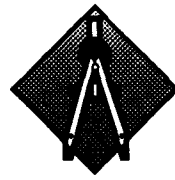
The reason he was so special was that David never lost sight of his need for God. The danger in being attacked or tempted by the devil is that we are tempted to get our eyes on the problem, or focus on our own hurts and disappointments. Whenever we get our eyes on ourselves, we are in danger. We become proud. Pride is not just an inflated self-opinion. Pride is an undue focus on self. We can get so focused on self that we see God as just a part of our lives, rather than the correct perception that we are a part of His life and plan.

We can get so focused on self that we see others, and even God, only in terms of what they can or did do for us. Love turns that around. Love and maturity look at others in terms of what we can do for them. That was the lifestyle of Jesus, Who was always giving and caring. His life message was "*...It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" (Acts 20:35) That is the Christian ethic. But sin causes us to focus on people, and on self. The basis of all sin is selfishness.

When David was attacked, he wisely turned his thoughts toward God. We can see this pattern in many of the Psalms. He begins by acknowledging his situation and his emotional state. Then he starts singing about Who God is, and about what God has done; and he builds up his own faith by ministering to himself under the anointing. By the time he has finished his song, he is seeing the bigger picture. He still sees the problem, or the enemy; but he also sees God, Who has never lost a battle, and Who has never failed. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word -- we see this principle over and over again in the Bible. It is always well with them who seek and obey the Lord, even though they go through rough times when they do not understand the reason.

If David had kept singing about his problems, or about himself, he would have ended in despair. The basis of the human problem in the earth is the fact that we are so prone to selfishness. The more we look at people and things, the less we tend to look at God. God is perfect and good; but our enemy can keep us from God, if he can keep us focused on ourselves. A self-focus results in selfish behavior, which is so damaging to relationships. David faced overwhelming emotional problems. No matter what size your problem is, God is bigger. The key is your faith. As you look up and remember what God has done, your faith increases.

David meditated on God's works. Meditation is one of the secrets of David's success in life. But David did not practice Transcendental Meditation. He did not clear his mind. This is dangerous. Satan loves to come into an empty mind and heart. This kind of self-centered meditation is dangerous. David meditated on God. He did not empty his mind -- he filled it with the Word of God and with positive thoughts about God's greatness. Memorize the scriptures that are most helpful to you in your situation, and then meditate on what you have learned. Personalize the verses, and visualize yourself doing what they say. Do you see yourself winning souls to God, or winning a great spiritual battle? Remember that Satan loves to get people to fantasize about self-centered dreams. This fantasy world can be very destructive to your emotions and mind. The more you center your thoughts on God and godliness, the more emotionally healthy you will tend to be.



Methods

Discuss the relationship between our heart and our thought life.

What kinds of things do you think about, when you have the time and opportunity to daydream?

How many of you are daydreaming right now, and do not have the foggiest notion what we are talking about?

If all of your thoughts from the past 24 hours were projected on a screen for the class to see, how many of you would like to do a little editing first?

What kind of people would we be, if we included God into at least 50% of our thought life?

Do you personalize and visualize what you read in scripture?

When life is distressing and people let you down, do you tend to focus on yourself, people, or on God?

Discuss the statement: David was a great man, because he learned early in life to meditate on God and His Word, and to look to God as his source of joy and power.

David and Bathsheba

Volume 8

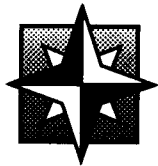
Lesson 9



Bible References

2 Samuel 11-12

Psalms 51



Theme

There are always consequences to sin, even if they are not immediate. You will reap what you sow.



Scripture Reading

2 Samuel 12:1-10

1 *"And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.*

2 *"The rich {man} had exceeding many flocks and herds:*

3 *"But the poor {man} had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.*

4 *"And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.*

5 *"And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, {As} the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this {thing} shall surely die:*

6 *"And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.*

7 *"And Nathan said to David, Thou {art} the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;*

8 *"And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if {that had been} too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.*

9 *"Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife (to be) thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.*

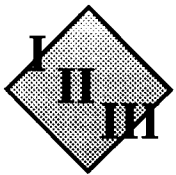
10 *"Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife."*



Memory Verse

Psalms 51:10-12

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me (with thy) free spirit."



Outline

I. The Sins of King David.

A. Idleness.

1. "When kings go to war."
2. We need battles and conflicts, lest we become idle and subject to extra temptations.

3. David was at the palace, instead of at war.

B. Adultery.

1. David saw a beautiful woman bathing from his palace roof, and lusted after her beauty.
2. David had several wives of his own.
3. He called her to the palace, even though he knew she was the wife of one of his army officers.
4. She became pregnant; and her husband was out with the army.

C. Murder.

1. David sought to cover up his sin by telling Uriah to go home.
2. Uriah was so committed to his king that he refused to go home, as long as the army was at war.
3. David ordered General Joab to see that Uriah was killed in battle.
4. David was directly responsible for the death of a faithful man.
5. When Uriah was killed, David took Bathsheba, his wife, as one of his.

II. Nathan the Prophet.

A. One year later.

1. Consequences for sins are not always immediate.
2. God waited.

B. Nathan the prophet came to David.

1. The story of the rich man and the poor man.
2. David was very angry when he saw his own sin in the light of this perspective.
3. Then it hit home when Nathan said, "You are the man."

III. Conviction.

A. Definition:

1. When the Holy Spirit quickens the conscience, so that we feel regret and remorse for sin.
2. The painful awareness in our spirit that we have sinned against God.

B. Psalms 51.

1. Written by David in response to this incident.
2. The great chapter on repentance in the Bible.
3. David realized that he had sinned against God.
4. He finally realized that he had drifted away from God, and had not been aware of it.
5. It is possible to disobey and grow cold spiritually, without realizing it.

C. Condemnation.

1. Satan's accusations that "you are no good, and you are hopeless."
2. Condemnation tears down, while conviction leads to repentance.
3. Romans 8:1.
4. John 3:17.

IV. The Consequences.

A. The son of David and Bathsheba died.

1. That which is born of sin cannot prosper.
2. Even though David repented, there were still consequences for his actions.
3. You can cut your finger off and repent about it; but you will still live with the consequences.

4. There is a difference between forgiveness and pardon.
5. Pardon eliminates the consequences.

B. God in His mercy blessed David, because he had an honest, tender heart.

1. Bathsheba gave him another son who lived.
2. His name was Solomon.
3. God is very gracious.



Spiritual Truths

- Sexual sins always damage the spirit and soul of a person. There are always consequences.
- Job was wise to make a covenant with his eyes not to look with lust on a woman.
- The best deterrent against temptation is to be busy serving God and helping other people.
- We need both the battle and the struggle in life to make us strong, and to keep us from evil.
- Sexual immorality will always hurt those who have been good to us, and are the most loyal.
- God does not always pay on Friday.
- God is not mocked. If you sow to the flesh, you will reap damage.
- The Holy Spirit brings conviction, but never condemnation. Satan hates it

when we feel conviction for sin; but he loves to condemn us.



Lesson Material

The Bible gives us a picture of people and life -- warts and all. David is such a good example to the Christian, because he was a real person with serious problems. We are encouraged to see that the secret of David's success in life was not that he was perfect. He was far from it. David's secret was his attitude, and his heart of love toward God. He was not free from error; but when he did make a mistake, he admitted it.

This is in contrast to King Saul, who, when confronted, usually tried to justify himself by blaming the people, or by pointing out his good works. This is not wise. When God deals with you about sin, the worst thing you can do is try to justify yourself. God knows your heart and your need. The wisest response is to do what David did. He admitted his guilt, and sought forgiveness.

David had endured many problems in his life. When he was persecuted, hunted, rejected, mistreated, and betrayed by people, he took it well. He kept his focus on God, and encouraged himself in the Lord. His lowest times came when life was the easiest. The battles were won, and he was safely in his palace, letting the army do the fighting. But, actually, he was not nearly as safe in the palace as he would have been on the battlefield, because when God gives you a task to do, He will give you the grace and protection to do it. The

external enemies had failed to conquer David in the past; but now he had to deal with an internal enemy -- the flesh.

Basically, we have three enemies: the world system, our own fleshly lusts, and the devil. In this case, the world had tried and failed for years to destroy this godly man, as had the devil. But his own flesh was his greatest enemy, and it almost did him in. He did fail, because he allowed himself time off from the battle; and in his leisure, he was led astray by lust. David had no excuse, because he had several beautiful wives and many concubines. But lust is not rational. People who follow their appetites and lusts will do things that they know will bring destruction. David was not safe in the place of leisure. It was spiritually dangerous for him, because he got his focus off of God and off of his responsibility. Instead of protecting his people, he used them for his own pleasure. He was in the place of authority; and God dealt with him severely for his selfish act. Notice that God did not go to Bathsheba with the prophetic word. He went to David.

When David committed adultery, he violated the covenant of one of his most faithful and loyal mighty men: Uriah the Hittite. When we sin, we usually harm the people who are the closest to us. We all affect the lives of those around us. The more responsibility and trust you have relating to other people, the more serious a sin becomes, because it affects more people. That is why the Bible speaks about the great seriousness of a little sin for someone who has a reputation for wisdom. (Ecclesiastes 10:1) James indicated that leaders will be judged more seriously by the Lord, because their actions affect more people. (James 3:1)

Later, David and Bathsheba's son Solomon, who was possibly thinking about the story of his parent's immoral act, said, "*But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.*" (Proverbs 6:32) The soul is the mind, will, and emotion. It will do you psychological and emotional harm to involve yourself in sexual activity outside of your covenant marriage. If you understood the consequences of pre-marital sex, you would not do it. It seems pleasant and pleasurable, but it damages you for life. A wise young person will keep his/her virginity until marriage, and be committed to one sexual partner for life.

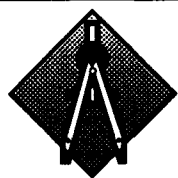
When David committed adultery, he tried to cover his sin. But Uriah was too faithful to take a vacation from the war, and David felt forced to have him killed. At that moment, David valued his reputation as more important than the life of Uriah. How many unmarried girls have faced the same situation? They find it so convenient to have the baby killed by abortion, rather than to face the public shame of motherhood by fornication. What a selfish attitude. David was found out in the end. He would have been far better off to confess his sin early and face the embarrassment. As it turned out, he became guilty of murder as well as adultery, and the whole world found out about it. One sin tends to lead to another. The sooner you repent, the better you will be. "*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper:....*" (Proverbs 28:13)

Notice the patience of God. After the baby was born, after a full year, God spoke to Nathan the prophet, and sent him to David with the allegory of the rich man and the poor man's lamb. In the light of that story, David became angry. He saw the terrible injustice of it immediately. The

poor man had only one lamb, while the rich man had all he could ever want. What wickedness to rob from the poor. When Nathan said, "Thou art the man," David knew immediately what he was talking about. He had almost forgotten the incident, but now conviction came, and he repented in humility and tears. This shows the character of David. He admitted when he was wrong. He wrote Psalms 51 as a result, and now we have this sublime Psalm of repentance as a great example to follow.

The words of the prophet, "*Thou art the man,*" express an excellent picture of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. He works to "*...reprove the world of sin....*" (John 16:8) He quickens our conscience, so we are prompted to repent and make things right. Of course, it is always better not to sin in the first place. But if we do, we have the Holy Spirit as a reminder to confess and forsake the sin; and we have Jesus Christ as our "advocate," or lawyer, to plead our cause before the Father. (1 John 2:1) Sin always diminishes and harms; but God is so good. He is able to forgive and to restore.

After David repented, the son born out of this sin became sick. David fasted and wept before God, but the baby died. God had to show him that, even though he was forgiven, God cannot bless what we do in rebellion against His plan. There are consequences to sin. David did not lose his salvation, but he did lose his joy, and he lost his son. It always pays to obey.



Methods

This is an excellent historical evidence that sexual immorality damages everyone involved, and that it is always best to keep physical intimacy within the safe and joyful boundaries of marriage. Today, our culture avoids words like "adultery" and "fornication." People "have affairs," and are "sexually active." It is important that we use biblical terms when speaking of these very real issues, because they are not just social issues -- they are spiritual and moral issues. Fornication is a sin against God, and a sin against your own body.

When God said "Do not do it," He was not withholding some delight from us, to show us who is the boss. God knows the way He created us, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. He knows the damage we do to ourselves and to our future when we lower our moral standards. In fact, one of the reasons so many marriages fail today is that so many damage the spirit of marriage

by pre-marital intimacy. They show that they do not value sex as a covenant act, and that they do not honor one another. The greatest gift you can give to a spouse is an undefiled body. Let us promote abstinence, in a day when it is mocked and ridiculed by the world. When we obey God's moral laws, we establish the foundation for the happiest possible life. God says "No" because He loves us, and wants the very best for us. Encourage students to make a vow of chastity before marriage, and to avoid the dangers and pressures of recreational single dating. There is indeed safety in numbers, especially in Christian groups.

Define and expand on the differences between conviction and condemnation. Conviction is good and healthy, because it leads us to repent from sin, and to avoid destructive actions later. Conviction is motivated by love. Condemnation is motivated by hatred, and comes from the devil. Condemnation diminishes and destroys hope, and attacks the person; while conviction attacks the wrong action. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

Amnon and Absalom

Volume 8

Lesson 10



Bible Reference

2 Samuel 13-15



Theme

It is very important to have clear and honest communication with our fathers, and to deal with interpersonal conflicts before they become more serious.



Scripture Reading

2 Samuel 15:1-6

1 "And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

2 "And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was {so}, that when any man that had a controversy

came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city {art} thou? And he said, Thy servant {is} of one of the tribes of Israel.

3 "And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters {are} good and right; but {there is} no man {deputed} of the king to hear thee.

4 "Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!

5 "And it was {so}, that when any man came nigh {to him} to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him.

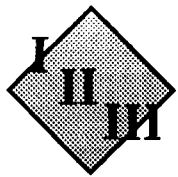
6 "And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel."



Memory Verse

Proverbs 13:24

"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."



Outline

I. Amnon and Tamar.

A. David had several wives and many beautiful children.

1. His sons were very handsome.
2. Absalom was especially good-looking, with exceptionally long, thick hair.

B. Tamar was Absalom's beautiful sister.

1. She was a half-sister of Amnon.
2. Amnon was desperately in love with Tamar.

C. Rape.

1. Amnon pretended to be sick, and requested that Tamar be sent to take care of him.
2. He ordered everyone else out of the room, so he could be alone with her.
3. Amnon raped Tamar in his room, and then hated her.
4. Even when both parties consent, fornication is not an expression of love, because love involves respect.
 - a. Love waits until marriage.
 - b. Lust cannot wait to get gratification from the other.
 - c. It is always wise and safe to avoid being alone with a member of the opposite sex, if only for the sake of appearance.
 - d. We should "flee youthful lusts." (2 Timothy 2:22)

5. Tamar's life was shattered. She could never have the honor of being a pure, virgin bride.
6. Incest is a particularly serious sin, and is condemned in scripture.

II. Amnon and Absalom.

A. Absalom hated Amnon for what he did to his sister.

1. Their father David failed to discipline Amnon.
2. David was a great worshipper and king, but a weak father.
3. David was too gentle with his sons.
4. David refused to talk about it.

B. After two years, Absalom had his wicked brother killed by his servants.

1. If we do not resolve our conflicts, they become more serious.
2. Hatred is like murder, because it cuts a person off from being reconciled.

C. David did not talk to Absalom, either.

1. David refused to deal with Absalom's sin.
2. Because he would not talk about it, Absalom became more and more bitter, and he became determined to destroy his father.

III. Absalom and King David.

A. For years, Absalom sought to turn the hearts of the people away from his father.

1. The result of a bitter and rebellious heart.
2. David had given him great wealth, but he did not give him his time.

3. Absalom grew up with a father who was too busy for him.
4. David was rich and successful, but failed often as a father.

B. Absalom became a politician.

1. He greeted people at the city gate for years.
2. He campaigned for the leadership position.
3. He betrayed his father, and broke his heart.
4. When Absalom declared himself king, the people supported him.
5. David fled into the wilderness, rather than fight against his beloved son.

IV. The End Result.

A. Absalom was eventually killed by General Joab and some of his men.

1. His long, thick hair became entangled in the crooked branches of a tree as he was riding his mule.
2. David's men found him hanging there, and ran him through the heart with some long, sharp wooden poles.
3. David had begged them not to kill Absalom, but they had seen him do too much evil.
4. Joab was usually quick to assassinate people.

B. Absalom sowed disloyalty and treachery, and he reaped what he had sowed.



Spiritual Truths

- If we are going to have strong families, we need to maintain honest, frequent communication.
- Fathers who discipline their children with the rod are motivated by love.
- David refused to talk with his sons about the hard issues; and he lost them to sin.
- When someone wrongs your friend, turn to the proper authorities to deal with them. Vengeance belongs to God, and He can take care of it.
- It is neither healthy nor proper for young ladies to spend time alone and unsupervised with young men. There is indeed safety in numbers.
- For a girl or a boy to lose her or his virginity before marriage is a personal tragedy; and it is damaging both emotionally and spiritually.
- God designed us to function best in life with the understanding that physical intimacy is an expression of the marriage covenant.
- Genuine love can always wait to give; but lust cannot wait to take.



Lesson Material

The story of David's sons is a tragedy, similar to the sad case of the sons of other great men of God who were not strong as fathers, such as Aaron, Samuel, Gideon, Solomon, and others. David was very rich and successful in life, and was a spiritual man; but, he failed to discipline his boys.

David had beautiful children. Absalom and his sister Tamar were famous for their physical beauty. But beauty does not equal happiness. In fact, many of the most beautiful people in the world are dissatisfied with their features and unhappy with their lives. Contentment does not come from being rich or beautiful. Contentment is learned, and comes from knowing who you are in God.

So here is great soap opera material -- lifestyles of the rich and famous. The beautiful people take center stage. The children of the popular and wealthy king are seen as selfish and viciously ambitious. Somehow Dad had failed to cultivate in their hearts a taste for the things of God. They were not worshippers. Perhaps they dropped out of church. Was Dad doing them a favor by being so lenient? Look at the results.

Amnon was rich, young, and good-looking. He could have chosen just about any girl in the kingdom, and he could have had a beautiful wife and a good life. But Amnon was selfish, and he lusted after his half-sister, Tamar. He knew it was wrong to commit incest. God had specifically called it an abomination. So in his wicked heart, he desired her all the more. Sometimes we are more attracted to

some lustful activity because it is "forbidden fruit," and, therefore, more exciting. *"Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell."* (Proverbs 9:17-18)

Amnon was rich, selfish, and spoiled. His "friend" suggested the ploy of feigning sickness to get an excuse to be alone with Tamar, so he could seduce her. He did get her alone. Poor Tamar did not see the trap coming. She was in a dangerous position, alone with a lustful young man. It is not wise for even a Christian young man and young woman to spend time together alone, isolated from other people. One of the enemies of our soul is our own flesh, which is powerfully attracted to physical intimacy. In marriage, it is normal and healthy to be alone and intimate with one's mate. But outside of marriage, it is deadly and destructive.

God designed the sexual union to be an expression of the marriage covenant. In that context, it strengthens the friendship and spiritual bond. When young people lower their moral standards and use one another for physical gratification before marriage, it produces guilt, insecurity, fear, and various other emotional as well as physical consequences. As Matthew 5-7 is the "Sermon on the Mount", so Proverbs 5-7 may be called the "Sermon in the Pits." If you want to understand the real effects of physical intimacy outside of marriage, study this section carefully. Make a covenant with God and with your parents that you will be a virgin when you get married; and you will enjoy a greater freedom and power in your teen years, as well as a much happier marriage.

When Tamar refused to allow Amnon to defile her moral purity, he raped her.

Afterward, he hated her. Fornication is not an act of love, but an act of lust and selfishness. True love can wait. True love respects the other person, and seeks to bless and build him or her up spiritually and emotionally. Amnon never did love Tamar, and his reaction to her afterwards proved what was in his heart all along. Amnon was a real creep.

When Absalom heard what had happened to his sister, he was furious. His anger was compounded, when he learned that Dad did not do anything about it. There were no consequences against Amnon. He had ruined poor Tamar's life, and he was not being punished. David should have dealt with Amnon, for his own good. Absalom was also wrong to fume in anger and bitterness for two years without saying anything to his half-brother. Finally, Absalom had a party, and ordered his men to kill Amnon. Frankly, he deserved it. But by taking vengeance, Absalom ruined his own life, because he was now a murderer.

There is another consequence of bitterness that most people do not realize. You tend to become like the person you do not forgive. Bitterness creates an emotional focus on a person, and causes you to emulate their attitudes. We all tend to become like whatever we focus on. People who focus on God tend to be more godly. That is why Satan loves to promote entertainment and education which leave God out of everything. Absalom had a strong focus on Amnon, and he became more like him. Absalom's life was later marked by sexual perversion, selfishness, and hatred. It does not pay to be bitter.

Again, David failed to deal with the sin of his son. He was strong in dealing with the sins of other people, but he literally let his son get away with murder. He refused

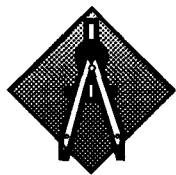
to talk to Absalom. He should have -- Absalom needed his dad. He needed to know he was loved. He needed to repent of his evil deed. But David did not know how to talk to his own son. He was a great communicator; but with his beloved boy, he was tongue-tied. He gave him lots of money, but he did not give him what he needed.

Eventually, Absalom devised a plan to overthrow his father. Out of hatred and bitterness, he subtly entered politics, and spent his time at the city gate kissing everyone and winning the hearts of the people. This was not motivated just out of ambition, because he probably could have had the throne just by asking Dad for it. He was motivated by bitterness. What a sad thing to see this beautiful young man dominated by an angry, bitter spirit. His life, too, was ruined.

Amazingly, Absalom did succeed in winning the hearts of many of the people away from his father, even though David was a great and popular king. People are fickle; and it is usually easy to get them to be disloyal to the leader, because they are naturally envious of those with money or power. The Bible teaches us to be especially careful not to speak negatively about leaders in the church, and to avoid believing every accusation against them that floats around, because the devil loves to sow discord among people and attack leadership. Instead of whispering suspicious things about preachers, we should pray for them, and bless them every time we can.

When Absalom took the throne, David fled the city with some loyal people. David had always known that his office had been given by God, and that God could restore it. He refused to fight against Absalom, because he loved him. Of course, it was

not long before Absalom reaped what he had sowed. He was riding along on his mule through a dense forest, when his long, thick hair became entangled in an overhanging branch; and the mule went out from under him. He was hanging there when Joab, David's general, came along with some soldiers. Even though David had begged his men not to kill Absalom, this was too much for Joab. He had assassinated several men before, and this was too perfect. They had some "darts," or sharpened sticks; and Absalom was a target. Absalom met his end, and went down in history as a self-centered loser.



Methods

There is strong pressure on young people today to adopt loose moral standards. Sensual material is everywhere, and the prevalent deception is that they can play fast and loose with their bodies without consequences. Whenever possible, we need to promote and encourage sexual abstinence before marriage, and not just because it is morally right. We must deliver the message that there are lifelong consequences -- not only the dangers of disease and pregnancy, but

also the emotional and spiritual damage it does to both parties involved. God says "No" out of love, because He knows exactly how He made us.

The wisest thing a teenager can do is to make a vow before God that he will not defile himself by fornication, and that he will agree with his parents to avoid emotionally dangerous situations in his social life. There is safety in numbers.

Another point to emphasize is the value of clear communication with fathers. Many fathers today are like David. They love their children from a distance. They want to help them and to show them love, but they do not know what to say -- so they just give them money. Encourage your father to open up and talk with you. Let him be your best friend. Honor your parents as much as you can, and do your part to open up the lines of communication.

Encourage your students to talk frankly with their parents about sex, dating, and other relational matters. Girls should be especially encouraged to seek their father's protection from fellows with wrong motives, and should trust their father's judgment. If there is no father to turn to, she should confide in a godly grandfather or pastor. All young people need to have the moral protection of God and adult leadership, in order to avoid the trap of moral failure that can damage them spiritually and emotionally for life.

The Precious Word of God

Volume 8

Lesson 11



Bible References

2 Peter 1

Hebrews 4-5

Psalms 19

Psalms 119

16 *"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*

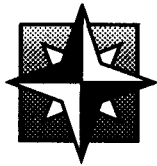
17 *"For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

18 *"And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.*

19 *"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:*

20 *"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.*

21 *"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake {as they were} moved by the Holy Ghost."*



Theme

The Bible is the unique expression of God to redeemed humanity, and is a powerful guide for our lives. The Bible centers on, and points to, Jesus Christ.



Scripture Reading

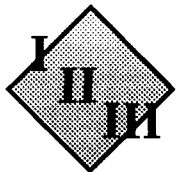
2 Peter 1:16-21



Memory Verse

Hebrews 4:12

"For the word of God {is} quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and {is} a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."



Outline

I. Three Types of Inspiration.

A. Inspired into.

1. Creation -- Genesis 1.
2. God gave Moses divinely imparted knowledge.

B. Dictated to.

1. Ten Commandments.
2. Jesus dictated seven letters to John on the Isle of Patmos. (Revelation 2-3)

C. Administered by.

1. Genealogies.
2. 1 Chronicles 1-9.
3. Historical information that God wanted included in the canon of scripture.

D. Inspiration.

1. Greek: *Theopneustos*.
2. Means "God-breathed."
3. The Holy Spirit is the inspiration for the divine revelation.
4. "...Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter 1:21)

II. The Bible is a Divine - Human Book.

A. Jesus: Divine-Human.

1. The Bible is the literary expression of Jesus and of God's plan of redemption for mankind.
2. God breathed by His Spirit on the writers, but did not bypass their intelligence or personality.
3. Similar to speaking in tongues: the Holy Spirit gives the utterance, but we speak the language.

B. Personalities of the writers.

1. Matthew presented Jesus as King.
2. Mark writes about Jesus with excitement.
 - a. Mark was the youngest of the writers.
 - b. He saw Jesus as the Son of Man.
3. Luke talks of Jesus through a medical perspective.
 - a. The longest and most detailed gospel.
 - b. The most scholarly.
4. John was a close friend of Jesus; and he talks of Jesus' Godly attributes.
 - a. John was "mercy-motivated."
 - b. He had a different perspective than the other writers.

III. The Bible.

A. A history of the books.

1. Old Testament written in Hebrew.
2. New Testament written in Greek.
3. 66 Books in the Bible - 39 in Old, 27 in New.
4. 40 Writers.
5. Old Testament written over a period of 1000 years: 1400 - 400 B.C.
6. New Testament written over a period of 50 years: 55 - 95 A.D.
7. Oldest books in the Old Testament -- Job, Deuteronomy.
8. Oldest books in the New Testament -- Galatians, James.
9. Last book of the Bible to be written: The Revelation.

B. Other facts.

1. The largest book: Psalms.
2. The longest chapter: Psalms 119.
3. The smallest and middle chapter of the Bible: Psalms 117.
4. Longest verse: Esther 8:9.

C. Which translation is perfect?

1. Only the original manuscripts were given by God and are perfect.
2. All translations have weaknesses and errors, partly because of the differences in languages.
3. The King James is a good translation.
 - a. Most English-speaking Christians have one.
 - b. It is an honest translation.
 - c. However, it was finished in England in 1611.
 - d. The language has changed much since then.
 - e. More current translations are easier to understand.

D. Paraphrased.

1. The "Living Bible" is a paraphrase, and not a translation.
2. It is taken from the King James Version, and not the original text.
3. It would tend to be somewhat less accurate than translations, but does bring out some things very well.

IV. No Original Manuscripts.

A. Manuscripts were handwritten.

1. We have only copies of copies, etc.
2. If God had preserved the original letters, some people would be worshipping them today.
3. However, scholars and scribes have carefully preserved and copied the scriptures since they were first given.

B. Dead Sea Scrolls.

1. Discovered in 1947.
2. A young boy named Mohammed threw a rock into a cave, and heard something crash.
 - a. He looked in, and found some ancient clay pots.
 - b. They contained old parchments.
 - c. Most of Isaiah, and parts of every other book of the Bible, except Esther.
3. Dated back hundreds of years earlier than any former manuscripts discovered.
4. They completely agreed doctrinally with all past manuscripts.

C. Massoretes.

1. One group of scribes who were very meticulous in reproducing

thousands of copies of the scriptures by hand.

2. If they found one error, they would destroy the entire manuscript.
3. Manuscripts were written on expensive parchments, made from animal skins or other exotic materials.
4. Books were very rare and very expensive.

D. Bible manuscripts.

1. The word "manuscript" means "hand" and "writing."
2. From the days of Moses until 1456 A.D., all copies of books were transcribed by hand.
3. Gutenberg invented the printing press with movable type.
4. The first book printed was the Bible.
5. Over 5,000 manuscripts exist.



Spiritual Truths

- The Bible is not a history or science book. But the history and science recorded in the Bible is accurate.
- Jesus was very God, but He was also very man.
- The Bible was divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit, using the personalities of human writers.
- Not one discrepancy in all of the discovered manuscripts adversely affects a single doctrine of our Christian faith.

- When science disagrees with the Bible, science will eventually prove itself wrong.
- God completed the canon of revealed scripture with the book of Revelation. Men seek to add to the Bible, but this is not of God.
- The Holy Spirit gives understanding and illumination to us as we study the scripture with an honest heart; but, He is not giving extra-biblical revelation.
- Though Satan and the world have sought desperately to destroy the Bible, it has stood the test of time through the ages.



Lesson Material

Over a century ago, a famed French atheist named Voltaire publicly proclaimed that within a few decades, the Bible would be a forgotten relic of literature, but his humanistic philosophies would dominate the world. Today, Voltaire is dead, and almost forgotten. Yet in that very room, thousands of Bibles were printed for years, and it remains the all-time best-selling book in history, topping the chart each year. History also records that Voltaire, on his deathbed, screamed in terror and shouted for water to cool his burning, tormented feet.

George Washington, the father of the United States, once said, "It is impossible to rightly govern in the affairs of men without God and the Bible." The Constitution of the United States and the

early legal system was founded on the principles of the Bible. Nearly all of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were Bible-believing Christians; and many of them also wrote Christian literature for the American Bible and Tract Society.

The Bible is an amazing book. It is not just an historical account of Israel and Jesus. The Bible is the verbal expression of Jesus Christ. The purpose of the Bible is not historical or scientific, although the facts in the Bible are accurate. The purpose of the Bible is to declare God's plan of redemption for lost humanity. It is written to believers, and cannot be understood by the carnal mind. It is written to believers, and cannot be understood by the carnal mind. Jesus said, *"...The words I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."* (John 6:63) There is a difference between our spirit and our mind. Our spirit is the God-conscious part of our being, which is quickened by the new birth. Until we are born again, we are spiritually blind. The Bible seems like a dead book, because we cannot relate to it. Through the years, carnal men have studied the Bible and have developed many kinds of cults, because their perverse minds are unable to rightly understand the Bible. They see a harsh, legalistic God, and they cannot grasp revelations about the Trinity. The carnal mind rejects the idea of hell, and other truths of scripture.

The Bible is not a history book, but its history is accurate. Many times historians have tried to fault the Bible's accuracy, pointing out names of people who had no other mention in history. But by and by, an archaeologist would discover some tablets or ruins which mentioned the person by name, or gave some tangible verification to the reality that the Bible is indeed about real people and real events.

Science works the same way. For years, scientists would point to scriptures that they considered foolish. It was actually once the accepted opinion of scientists that the earth was flat. But Christopher Columbus, a Christian, was convinced that the earth was round, because Isaiah spoke of "the circle of the earth" in Isaiah 40. He thought he could reach India by sailing west. He was right, in a round-about way.

Science scoffed at the idea that the rabbit chewed its cud. They considered it to be the ignorance of Moses to list the rabbit with the cow. But recently, it was discovered that rabbits expel some waste pellets, and some grass pellets, which it chews later. Science was wrong, and the Bible was right. The Bible also speaks about the curse of the snake, being forced to eat the dust of the earth. Until recently, it was considered just folklore. But, now we know that the snake does indeed ingest some dust when it flicks out its tongue to sense what is in its path. Over and over again, the Bible proves true.

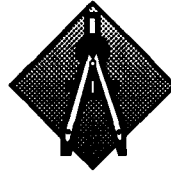
The Bible is not man's attempt to discover God. The Bible is God's revelation of His plan to mankind. It is the story of Redemption, covering the essential events from the fall of man to the lineage and coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the central person of history. Even today, our calendars date all historical events in their chronology relative to the brief 33-year life of Jesus Christ on the earth. Everything is either before Christ (B.C.), or Anno Domino (A. D. -- Latin for "the year of our Lord").

The Bible is *Theopneustos* (God-breathed). The Word of God came not in ancient times because of the will of men, but *"...holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."* (2 Peter 1:21) Sometimes God dictated directly to a

human writer; but, usually, God allowed for the personality of the writer to be reflected in the writing. God loves to train and use His people for His purposes. He does not want to destroy or remove our personality. Indeed, the Holy Spirit enhances and fulfills the human soul like nothing else. God spoke through at least 40 different writers over a period of about 1600 years to give us a book that holds together as one divine masterpiece. God gave a perfect, reliable, and powerful revelation to His people, and preserved it in miraculous ways through the centuries.

The Bible centers in the Person of Jesus Christ, and speaks to the spirits of believers. When we love God, we have a natural desire to hear His Word. Revelation came to God's prophets, and God gave through them the Word that we must heed today. Today, we do not receive extra-biblical revelation; but we do receive illumination by the Holy Spirit to receive and respond to the Word. God is not adding more to the canon of scripture, but He is anointing His people to gain new insights and understanding of the Word of

God. God is speaking through His Word; and as His children, we delight to read it daily, and to hear it preached often.



Methods

Our purpose in focusing on one lesson each year on the Bible as a whole is to encourage and inspire students to be daily students of the Word themselves. There is only so much information you can relate in a Sunday School or a weekly Bible class. But if you can stimulate others to dig into the Word themselves, you will be an effective Bible teacher. The one with all the answers is not nearly as effective as the one who can excite others about the Word. Your goal should be to challenge and inspire your class to make a commitment to read the Bible at least five minutes a day, and to make it a habit to memorize and meditate on the Word.

Spoils of War

Volume 8

Lesson 12

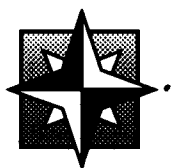


Bible References

Colossians 2

2 Peter 2

Matthew 24



Theme

The Bible warns us to beware of people who would seek to manipulate us, in order to snare and use us for their own advantage. Legitimate Christian leaders will seek to lead us to Jesus and make us His disciples.



Scripture Reading

Colossians 2:1-10

1 "For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and {for} them at Laodicea, and {for} as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

2 "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

3 "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

4 "And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

5 "For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

6 "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, {so} walk ye in him:

7 "Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

8 "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

9 "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

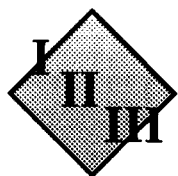
10 "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:"



Memory Verse

Colossians 2:8

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."



Outline

I. Paul's Ministry Of Letters.

A. Paul the apostle.

1. He was a builder and church planter.
2. Because of the fear and envy of the Jewish leaders, Paul was often put in prison.
3. So he had to conduct some of his ministry by correspondence.
4. God used that to benefit us today.

B. Focus of the epistles (apostolic letters).

1. Correcting error and encouraging unity among the Christians.
2. Pride and selfish ambition was the motive of some who sought to influence the church.

3. Paul battled:

- a. Legalism.
- b. Immorality.
- c. Occult influences.
- d. Ignorance.

II. The Church in Colosse.

A. Let no man beguile you. (2:4)

1. Beguile: "To deceive by false reason."
 - a. Eve was beguiled by Satan in the garden.
 - b. Satan presented half-truths, in order to lead her to a false conclusion.
 - c. Satan can quote scripture, but it is always out of context.
 - d. Adam was not deceived. He sinned willfully.
2. The angel theory.
 - a. Some people are taught to pray to angels.
 - b. We should never pray to angels or to dead saints.
 - c. Jesus taught us to pray only to the Father, in His name.

B. We preach Christ. (1:28)

1. Warning every man.
2. Teaching every man in all wisdom.

C. Order and steadfastness. (2:5-7)

1. The church was in order, because they were planted and established by the Lord. (Isaiah 61:3)
2. Jesus is the Head of the church. (1:18)
3. The people were diligent and steady, because they were built up by good Bible teaching.

III. Beware Of Men.

A. Jesus said, "I give you power over demons and disease, and even death."

1. But He did not give us power over people.
2. God allows people to make their own choices.
3. We can influence or teach, but we cannot make the decisions for them.
4. Every person is a free moral agent.

B. False prophets and false teachers. (2 Peter 2)

1. Shall bring in damnable heresies.
 - a. Privily (not in an open or honest manner).
 - b. Focused more on themselves than on the Lord.
2. Some of their motives.
 - a. To use people (make merchandise of you).
 - b. Eyes full of adultery. (vs. 14)
 - c. They hate to be ruled or led. (vs. 10)
 - d. They are self-willed.
 - e. Proud.
 - f. Lovers of money. (vs. 15)
 - g. Slaves of corruption. (vs. 19)

IV. Beware Lest Any Man Spoil You.

A. Spoil.

1. As in "spoils of war."
 - a. To take as a prize for selfish use.
 - b. *"In the multitude of people [is] the king's honour:...."* (Proverbs 14:28)
2. *"Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."*
 - a. Acts 20:30.

b. Paul's warning to the elders of the church of Ephesus.

3. Jesus plants every believer in a local church. (Psalms 68:6)
4. Leaders who draw people out of the church in which God planted them are "spoiling" the people.
5. They are "drawing disciples to themselves," rather than to Jesus.
6. They are called "wolves."

B. Through philosophy.

1. Man's ideas.
2. Earthly wisdom.
 - a. Does not descend from God. (James 3:15)
 - b. Earthly (secular, non-spiritual).
 - c. Sensual (focused on flesh).
 - d. Devilish (occultish overtones).

C. Vain deceit.

1. Appealing to ego -- personal vanity.
2. Deceptive.

D. After the traditions of men.

1. Structuring the church to please people, rather than God.
2. False religion is always man-centered.
3. Jesus warned the Pharisees that they were rejecting God's commandments in favor of their own traditions. (Mark 7:9)

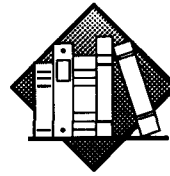
E. The "rudiments" of the world.

1. "Elements," or "patterns."
2. Molded by the world. (Romans 12:2)
3. Some worldly rudiments.
 - a. Rebellion against authority.
 - b. Pride.
 - c. Dishonesty.
 - d. Focus on pleasure.



Spiritual Truths

- Jesus said that we as believers had authority over sickness, demons, and many other things -- but to beware of people.
- God teaches us not to put our confidence in flesh, even our own; but we can trust Him to work through people to bless us.
- Everyone in Christian ministry has to guard his motives, so that he keeps a servant's heart and does not use people for his own gain and glory.
- False teachers tend to focus on themselves and people, and appeal to the selfishness and wrong motives in the hearts of their followers.
- People with a pure heart are not deceived by false teachers, because spiritual deception is a matter of the heart, rather than the intellect.
- If you are in a good Bible preaching church, sooner or later, someone will try to lure you out of it, in order to build his own "ministry."
- A distinctive of false religions is that they tend to reject the deity of Jesus Christ, our eternal Judge, and the reality of an eternal hell.
- We are in a spiritual warfare. If Satan cannot conquer us with overt sin, he will try to capture us with covert religion.



Lesson Material

Much of the New Testament is comprised of the epistles. These were letters written by recognized apostles of the early church. The office of an apostle was a position of great responsibility and honor. It was the highest position of ministry in the church. The apostles were church planters and overseers of leaders. They were the pastors' pastors. Contrary to what some people believe today, the office of apostle was never limited to the original twelve. In fact, the New Testament names about twenty-six apostles. A prominent apostle was Paul, who was born Saul of Tarsus. He was in a unique position to be used by the Lord. His father was a Roman citizen, so he was in a position of favor with the government. His mother was a Jewess; and he became a fervent member of the sect of the Pharisees. He was also perhaps the most brilliant mind in his generation.

After he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul's life and heart were changed dramatically, and he became completely sold out to the work of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is a prominent apostle for two reasons. First, because Dr. Luke, the historian, accompanied him during much of his ministry. Therefore, his exploits received good "press coverage" in the book of Acts. Secondly, because of his great zeal and his tremendous ability, he was rightly perceived to be a great threat to the established Jewish leadership. As a result, he spent a lot of time in jail. Since his travels were restricted, he carried on his ministry by dictating letters to individual ministers or to churches.

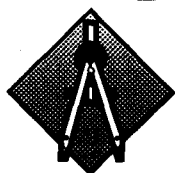
Sometimes Paul would receive reports about specific problems or questions in the church. He also received some of his information directly from the Holy Spirit. This is called the "word of knowledge." When Paul wrote to the Christians in the city of Colosse, he was speaking with the affection and familiarity of a spiritual father. He encouraged them in the fact that they had a good solid church structure, and that the people were sincere and honest believers. But he also knew that Satan has a way of subtly bringing in false teachers, in order to create division in the church. Perhaps more than anything else, the devil hates unity in the church. Jesus had said "...Upon this rock (the revelation that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18) A local church that is in one accord has the power to break down Satanic strongholds in the community. On the other hand, a church that is fragmented into a number of small, squabbling groups in any city does not have much impact on the secular or the satanic elements in the city. A prime evidence of a legitimate Christian revival is the prevailing love and unity among the people. Christianity is characterized by forgiveness, restoration, and a common heart to glorify God, rather than man. Jesus prayed "...that they all may be one...that the world may believe that thou has sent me." (John 17:21) Satan is threatened when the church is in one accord. That is also why God hates "...he that soweth discord among brethren." (Proverbs 6:19)

The specific problem in Colosse was the introduction of some false concepts, which would ultimately lead people away from personal and intimate relationship with God. Anytime you get people praying to the angels, or to dead saints, or to Mary,

you keep them from praying to the Father. Also, anytime a man can draw people to himself instead of to Jesus, the unity of the church is diminished. Now, we recognize ultimately, that we cannot draw anyone to Jesus without some kind of personal trust involved. Paul himself said, "*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*" (1 Corinthians 11:1) While a true pastor always recognizes that the sheep belong to Jesus, there is an awareness that he is called to disciple them himself. A key distinction is motive. False teachers and shepherds are focused on themselves. They tend to take, without giving back. They manipulate, rather than lead. Sooner or later, they get involved in financial or moral failures, and deviate from pure biblical doctrine.

All of us should be careful to determine just exactly where God plants us. Every believer needs to be planted in a local church. God puts us in a relationship in a local church with imperfect people where we learn to forgive, to appeal to authority, and to restore. Ephesians 4:3 indicates that we have to work at keeping the unity of the faith. As we pursue our Christian walk together with our brothers and sisters, we will all be tempted to give up on someone, or even on the whole bunch. This is where Satan comes in. He always has a way of bringing in or raising up someone with an ego, who wants to be a leader. Usually this leader will be "just one of the people" who "shares your concerns about the pastor." He is not a "wolf in shepherd's clothing" -- he is in "sheep's clothing." He may not even be trying to start his own church. He may simply seek to validate his own rebellion against the pastor, by getting as many people as possible to agree with him. But whenever someone is turning hearts away from God's appointed leader, he is "spoiling" the people.

Know where God has planted you, and determine to speak positively about God's anointed. Work at keeping unity in the church, and resist the temptation to be critical and negative. Beware lest any man spoil you through carnal gossip or persuasive talk. Stay where God put you, unless you have a clear and confirmed word from Him that He is moving you to another city. Be very cautious about letting someone convince you to switch to another church in town, because this is harmful to the witness of the Christian work in any community, and also harmful to your own spiritual growth. Be led by the Spirit, and you will find that He is primarily concerned with forgiveness and restoration.



Methods

Our purpose in this lesson is to promote unity in the body of Christ, and to equip young Christians with wisdom and caution against one of Satan's spiritual "devices."

Do you know what "spoil" means here? It does not have anything to do with getting everything you want. It means to become manipulated, so that you become someone's personal conquest in their strife in the church.

We want to teach wisdom, which is seeing everything from God's point of view.

Notice that in the early church, there was only one Christian church in each town. Many of them had thousands of members and had to work in many groups through homes, but they were "one church."

How much influence would the Christian community have, if all those who preach salvation through the blood of Christ were one?

How much influence would we have, if even all the Pentecostal churches in a city were to merge into one strong congregation?

Is the witness of the church strengthened or weakened, when the people move from one church to another in a city, because of personal conflicts?

Foundations of Life

Volume 8

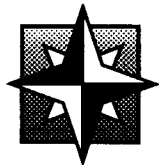
Lesson 13



Bible References

Hebrews 6

1 Corinthians 3



Theme

Our ability to withstand the storms of life is directly dependent upon the foundation on which our life is built.



Scripture Reading

Matthew 7:21-29

21 "Not every one 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.

22 "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?

23 "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

24 "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

25 "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

26 "And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

27 "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

28 "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:

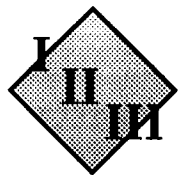
29 "For he taught them as {one} having authority, and not as the scribes."



Memory Verse

Ephesians 2:19-20

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner {stone};"



Outline

I. Building on the Rock.

A. Matthew 7:24-27.

B. Building on sand.

1. Frequency of truth.
2. All cults include some truth.
3. They have some correct ideas, but fail to see Jesus is Lord, the Son of God, the only Savior.

C. Building on rock.

1. Dig down to bedrock.
2. Dig past religion.
3. Stand on the revelation that Jesus is the Christ. (Matthew 16:16-18)
4. Faith plus obedience is the key to building on truth.
 - a. People in cults do not want to obey God's revealed law; and they believe in lies.

b. A man's morality will dictate his theology.

D. Jesus is the Rock on which we build our lives.

1. He is also the Chief Cornerstone of the foundation.
2. 1 Peter 2:6.

II. The Need for a Foundation.

A. People without a strong foundation fall when the storm comes.

B. Lives built on "sand" look the same as those who are built on the Rock.

1. Many church people sound and act just like born-again believers.
2. They praise God, and go to church.
3. You cannot tell the difference between real Christians and phony ones by appearance.
4. Generally, the phony Christians do not realize that they do not have the genuine article.
5. They tend to think they are saved, but they are deceived.

C. Storms.

1. Winds -- symbol of false doctrines. (Ephesians 4:14)
2. Rains -- symbol of life's problems. (Also used sometimes as a symbol of spiritual blessings.)
3. Floods -- adversity, enemies, difficult situations.

D. You can stand the storm when you have a legitimate, living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Foundation.

A. Built on the Rock, Jesus Christ.

B. The foundation stones of true religion.

1. Repentance.
2. Faith.
3. Baptisms.
4. Laying on of hands.
5. Resurrection.
6. Eternal judgments.

C. Hebrews 6:1-2.

1. If you build a good foundation on the solid Rock, you can withstand the storms of life.
 - a. Peace in the storm.
 - b. Joy in adversity.
 - c. "More than conquerors."
2. "Go on to maturity."
 - a. Make sure you have a sure foundation.
 - b. Then "grow in grace." (2 Peter 3:18)
 - c. Do not keep getting saved over and over again.
 - d. But make sure you are really saved by grace through faith.

D. Evidences of genuine salvation.

1. Love for God and for God's people. (1 John 4:7-8)
2. Peace and joy. (Galatians 5:22, John 14:27)
3. Desire for the Word of God. (Psalms 119)
4. Changed lifestyle. (2 Corinthians 5:17)
5. Understanding of the things of the Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:14-16)
6. Righteousness. (1 John 3:7)
7. Moral Freedom. (John 8:32; 1 John 3:8-10)



Spiritual Truths

- People who are falling apart in life should check the spiritual foundation of their lives.
- People who have Bibles which are falling apart usually have lives which are not.
- Jesus indicated that it is necessary both to hear and to do the will of God, in order to have a solid foundation in life that will stand the test.
- You will be tested by the storms of life, whether you are ready for them or not.
- The rain falls on the just and the unjust alike; but the difference is the way they respond to it.
- Faith is not just believing with your mind, but it involves receiving with your spirit, and responding with your heart.
- Many people actively involved in churches and even in the ministry do not have a valid, biblical foundation for their lives.
- You can only see the difference between religious people and genuinely saved people by the way they handle adversities.
- Truth is not just a set of ideas -- truth is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ revealed and expressed in and through believers.



Lesson Material

When we study the teachings of Jesus, we have to realize that there were and are many people who think they are going to heaven, but are not. He warned of deception in the end times. People who are deceived think they are all right with God. In Matthew 7, Jesus spoke of people who will be very surprised when they stand before the Lord on the day of their judgment. They will be religious people who had not really served the Lord in sincerity and truth. They followed the Christian religion, and named the name of Christ, but they had no real relationship with God.

Jesus spoke of tares, which were weeds that resembled wheat, but had no real grain of nourishment in them. They produced no food. They just existed, and had no value. Tares look like wheat. People who are like that look like born-again Christians, and they think they are.

Jesus spoke about spiritual foundations. First of all, we need to be sure we are building our lives on the Rock, Jesus Christ, and not on the sand of religious thought. Christians do not just teach the words of Jesus. We are "...the ministers of God,...." (2 Corinthians 6:4) Christians are to give people Jesus Himself. We do not just know about Jesus -- we are to know Him intimately and personally. Of those who talked about God but did not really serve Him, Jesus will say, "Depart from me, you that work iniquity. I never knew you." (Matthew 7:23) They had two problems. First, they did wrong things. Now, we are not saved

by works, but we are saved "unto good works." (Ephesians 2:8-10) John taught that if we keep living sinful lives with no victory over sin, then we must not have had a genuine spiritual conversion. Jesus identified those who were not in covenant with God by their evil actions and selfish attitudes. *"Even a child is known by his doings,...."* (Proverbs 20:11)

The second problem is that they had no personal, intimate relationship with God. "I never knew you." Adam knew Eve, and she conceived. It is not that God did not know who they were. God knows everything. But there was no personal relationship. They had religion, but they did not have the Spirit of God in their lives. It is not a matter of knowledge, but a matter of intimacy. They did many good works, but they did not build their lives on the Spirit.

Who are the people whose lives are built on Jesus? He said, *"...Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:"* (Matthew 7:24) It is not enough to hear the gospel. In order to be right with God, we have to respond with faith and obedience. (John 15:14) Obedience to God does not earn salvation, but it is an evidence of salvation.

It is very possible to look and act like a Spirit-filled Christian, without having a valid relationship with God. These are people who build on the sand. Sand is composed of the same basic material as rock, but it is broken into fragments. All cults include some biblical truth, but fail to understand and relate to The Truth, which is Jesus Christ. (John 14:6) Some people hear some truths, and build their spiritual lives on that. They want to go to heaven, so they get involved with Christian

religion; and they think they have faith, because they believe in Jesus with their minds, and hope to see heaven. But true faith digs through the sand, and gets down to bedrock. It is founded on a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, Who not only forgives our sins, but cleanses us. People who have a sure foundation not only believe teachings about Jesus; they know Him as Savior and Lord of their lives. No wonder Paul said, *"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith;...."* (2 Corinthians 13:5)

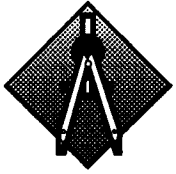
You really know you have a living faith when the storms of life come. People who build on religious ideas do not have the grace of God in their lives to stay strong. Their peace is dependent upon the circumstances. When things go wrong in life, they are shaken, because they do not have power to overcome, or the faith to look ahead and trust God through it all. The winds of false doctrine come, and they are tossed around by them, running from one fad to another. The rain of adversity hits them, and they have no spiritual covering for protection. The flood of problems overwhelm them, because they are not abiding in the Ark of safety, Jesus Christ. If you are tested in life, and cannot handle it, you would be wise to check your spiritual foundation.

The ultimate foundation for life is Jesus. He is the Rock. All cults build on some person's interpretation of the Bible, and have a religious and philosophical base. But all cults reject the Jesus that is revealed in the Bible. They reject the fact that He is God, the Son. They almost always reject the doctrine of the Trinity, because it is not something that the natural mind can conceive or comprehend. They have fragments of truth (sand), but do not get to the source of truth. They are *"ever learning, and never*

able to come to the knowledge of the truth." (2 Timothy 3:7)

How do we lay a biblical spiritual foundation? We hear the Word of God, and we do what Jesus said. The Apostle Paul listed the basics of our foundation as six "foundation stones" of true faith. These will be explained in more detail in the next lesson. For now, let us understand that in order to have a valid relationship with God, we must have more than a head knowledge about Jesus, or do more than agree that Jesus is the Son of God. True faith is not a function of the mind. True faith takes a hold of the reality of Jesus Christ, and places complete confidence in Him. True faith causes us to do what He said, because we know that we are living for eternity. Unbelief expresses itself in a temporal values system, because we are not so sure that God is not withholding good from us in life; so we grab for all we can get in this world system. Sin is most attractive to those who are not looking at God or eternity.

The Bible teaches that to be in the family of God for eternity, we must be "in Christ." If we are in Christ, we are a new creation. We have a new lifestyle, because we have a new life source. Our focus has changed from being self-centered to being Christ-centered. This is the basis of the Christian world view. The secular world view sees man as self-existent, and therefore not accountable to God. Self is the center of existence, and everything else exists to gratify self. This is the basis for all the evil in the world. A Christian world view sees man as created, and therefore accountable to God. This view promotes the fear of the Lord, and is the basis for right thinking and holy living. It is also the basis for the most joyful life a human being can live.



Methods

The purpose of this lesson is to encourage young people to do what the Bible teaches: to examine their spiritual foundation. Sometimes in our compassion and zeal, we are busy giving assurance of salvation to people who possibly did not have a true, supernatural new birth. The great benefit of trials and hardships in life is that we are given opportunities to see if what we have is really God's grace, or just religious persuasion. People who are constantly overcome by the world or the flesh may struggle to be righteous; but that is

legalism, and it does not produce victory. The best thing to do is to check the foundation -- especially repentance and faith. We do not judge one another, but we are told in the Bible to judge ourselves. Nothing is more important than knowing for sure that you know Jesus. So many people know about Him and pursue the Christian faith, but do not realize that they have not laid a biblical foundation.

Review the scriptural evidences of salvation, and encourage each student to check himself out in the mirror of God's Word, without pointing fingers and judging one another.

"Do you know Jesus? Is He your best friend? Is He living in your heart? Is He the Master and Lord of your life, or are you your own person?"

Foundation Stones

Volume 8

Lesson 14



Bible References

Hebrews 6

Matthew 7

Hebrews 10, 11

10 "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

11 "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

13 "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

14 "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

15 "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

16 "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and {that} the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

17 "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which {temple} ye are."



Theme

In order to have a fruitful, joyful life, you need to build your life on a solid, spiritual foundation.



Scripture Reading

1 Corinthians 3:9-17

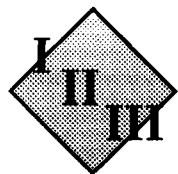
9 "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, {ye are} God's building.



Memory Verse

Hebrews 6:1-2

"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment."



Outline

I. Repentance.

A. This is a necessary prerequisite to the New Birth.

1. The first word of the gospel is "repent."
2. Some people, in their zeal to convert souls, preach a salvation without repentance.
 - a. But God does not save "good" people.
 - b. He only saves lost people.

B. "Repentance" means "to turn around."

1. To see sin as wrong and destructive.
2. To confess and forsake sin.
3. To turn from a self-oriented life to a Christ-centered life.

4. To turn from living for self to living for Jesus. (Luke 9:24, John 12:25, Matthew 10:39)
5. To confess and renounce sin, and embrace Christ as Savior and Lord.

C. When the people in Jerusalem asked Peter what to do, he said, *"Repent, and be baptized, every one of you...."* (Acts 2:38)

II. Faith.

A. To believe and trust with the heart.

1. A solid conviction, and a decision.
2. To turn the focus of life toward God and His purposes.

B. A function of the spirit of man.

1. Not just believing with the mind.
2. Believing on the Lord from the heart.

C. *"...Faith is the substance of things hoped for...."* (Hebrews 11:1)

1. Believing and receiving God's promises.
2. Believing the Word of God in preference to what we see or feel.

D. Faith is not just mental or emotional -- it is spiritual.

E. It is impossible to please God without faith. (Hebrews 11:6)

III. Baptisms.

A. Water baptism.

1. Identifying with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

2. God does a spiritual work in our hearts when we submit to baptism.
3. We rise to walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)
4. Greek word *baptizo* means "to submerge, to completely immerse, to bury in water."
5. Water baptism is the sign of the New Testament covenant, as circumcision was under the old covenant.

B. Holy Spirit baptism.

1. Jesus Himself baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit.
2. We need to believe and receive.
3. The initial evidence is speaking in tongues.
 - a. A language you did not learn, and do not understand with your mind.
 - b. As the Spirit gives the utterance. (Acts 2:4)
 - c. Your spirit prays, and not your mind.
 - d. Speaking in tongues builds you up spiritually. (1 Corinthians 14:4)
4. Every believer should receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, especially in these perilous end times. (Acts 1:8)

IV. The Laying on of Hands.

- A. Receiving imparted blessing from church leadership.
- B. Be identified with the local church.
- C. Submitted to apostolic authority.
 1. Beware of the "leader" who is not related or submitted to any

recognized body of Christian leaders.

2. He is probably a "wolf in sheep's clothing."

D. What can be imparted by the laying on of hands?

1. Healing. (James 5)
2. The baptism in the Holy Spirit.
3. Spiritual ministries and gifts.
 - a. Romans 1:11.
 - b. 1 Timothy 4:14.

V. The Resurrection from the Dead.

A. We are partakers of Christ's resurrection life.

1. We are spiritually alive.
2. Healed and strengthened. (Romans 8:11)
3. Romans 6:23.
4. Eternal life begins at the new birth, and not at death.

B. We shall arise.

1. "...In my flesh shall I see God:" (Job 19:26)
2. 1 Corinthians 15.

VI. Eternal Judgments.

A. We are judged at the time of salvation.

1. We judge ourselves to be guilty of sin, and in need of a Savior.
2. Repentance means pleading "guilty" before God.
3. We are pardoned and forgiven on the basis of Christ's work on the cross.

4. Those who justify themselves (plead "not guilty") will be condemned.

B. We continue to judge ourselves.

1. When we take communion. (1 Corinthians 11:28)
2. Do not judge one another; but, judge yourselves.
3. To "judge" means to "decide."
4. To call someone a liar, or insincere, is judging.
5. When we judge, we look at the motive (heart).
6. God is the One who sees the heart.

C. We live life, knowing we shall be judged by Jesus Christ.

1. Judgment seat of Christ.
 - a. Before the Millennium.
 - b. Varying rewards for works.
2. Great White Throne Judgment.
 - a. After the Millennium.
 - b. Revelation 20:11-15.
 - c. All of unsaved humanity will be judged and sentenced to the lake of fire.

VII. Building Materials.

A. Spiritual.

1. Gold (symbol of the glory of God).
2. Silver (symbol of redemption and grace).
3. Precious stones (jewels -- symbol of righteous humanity, reflecting the light of Jesus Christ in many ways).

B. Fleshly.

1. Wood (symbol of humanity).
2. Hay (symbol of fleshly glory, man's wisdom).

3. Stubble (symbol of carnality, folly).



Spiritual Truths

- God uses natural things to illustrate spiritual truths.
- To have real biblical understanding, you need to have an understanding of analogies.
- Gold, silver, and precious stones are symbols representing spiritual principles and values that are eternal.
- Wood, hay, and stubble are symbols of humanity and carnality, and remind us of the temporary and weak nature of the flesh.
- Repentance is more than feeling sorry for sin, or a desire to go to heaven. Repentance means turning from a self-focused life to a Christ-centered life.
- Faith involves not only belief, but trust and hope.
- In order to have a solid spiritual foundation, we need a scriptural burial in water (water baptism), and also should seek to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.
- It is important to be identified and related to an established body of believers with apostolic authority. God did not commission us to be "lone rangers."

- Eternal life does not begin when we die. It begins when we are genuinely born again by the Holy Ghost.
- If we make a habit of judging ourselves instead of each other, we will have a much more solid foundation as Christians.
- After we have laid a sure, biblical foundation, we should go on to maturity as believers, and not keep "getting saved" over and over again.



Lesson Material

A century ago, William Booth, the godly founder of the Salvation Army, said, "I fear the day will come when men will preach heaven without hell, a crown without a cross, and salvation without repentance." That day is come. Repentance is the first word of the gospel. God's purpose in the earth is to have a people for Himself. God is not looking for people who are willing to go to heaven. Everyone wants to go to heaven. But not everyone wants to make Jesus Christ the Lord of their life. Most want to be their own person. If you are your own person, then you are not His, and you have not really repented.

Repentance does not just mean that you are sorry for your sin. Many people are sorry they were caught, and many people are sorry that they are destined to go to hell. They will be concerned with the consequences of sin, but do not want to quit sinning. Real repentance not only involves sins and consequences, but

involves a turning from self as lord to Christ as Lord. Repentance says, "I have sinned. I have made a mess of my life, and I want to make Jesus Lord. I do not want God to be my copilot: I want Him to take the wheel and rule over me." Repentance does involve a godly sorrow for sin, but it goes beyond that. Repentance says, "I will live for God instead of for myself, for the rest of my life."

When we repent, we ask God to forgive our sins. Since Jesus paid the penalty for our sins on the cross, God is legally able to grant a full pardon, and to adopt us into His family forever. (1 John 1:9) We confess that we are sinners, and we ask forgiveness. Then, it is up to us to receive that forgiveness by exercising the faith God gave us. Faith is the function of our spirit, which takes a hold of the promises of God and receives the grace to be made spiritually whole. In fact, the word "saved" does not just mean "ticket to heaven." It means to be made whole, complete, and spiritually alive. It is the same Greek word for "healed." When God saves us, it is not just from the consequences of sin. He saves us from sin.

After we have repented and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, we want to serve Him and live for Him. We want to obey His Word. We need to affirm this new spiritual relationship by submitting to water baptism. "Baptism" literally means "burial," and is a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord. By being buried as a believer in the waters of baptism, we enter into the sign of the spiritual covenant we have with God, and testify that we are in fact children of God. We renounce our old lifestyle, and rise to walk in newness of life.

We also are encouraged to receive the baptism in the Holy Ghost. Jesus Christ

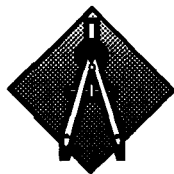
Himself desires to immerse every believer into the element of the Holy Spirit. It is a spiritual work of grace, and is accompanied by supernatural evidence -- the glossolalia. That means speaking in a heavenly language that you do not understand with your mind. You speak by the Spirit. This is a wonderful evidence that you are really baptized in the Holy Ghost, because the tongue is the most unruly member of the body. (James 3:8) If the Holy Ghost can rule your tongue, you know He can control the rest. What a delight, to allow the Holy Spirit to flow through your spirit and your body, by yielding yourself to His direction and presence.

The next foundation stone is often overlooked or misunderstood, but it is important to a solid Christian life. It is the laying on of hands. Hands convey many things. We are all affected and influenced by others. We need to be identified and related to the local church, and be confirmed by God-ordained leadership. As a foundational principle, the laying on of hands refers to being recognized by and related to the leadership of a local, biblical church. Laying on of hands is also seen in imparting of spiritual gifts and healing.

Resurrection from the dead is a foundation. We know we have passed from death unto life. We are not just following the letter of the law, but we are alive through the Spirit of God. This spiritual life affects our body, soul, and spirit. We have life in us, because of Jesus Christ. Eternal judgment means that, as a foundation in our lives, we came to God as our eternal Judge, and pleaded "guilty" of sin. We judged ourselves, asked for mercy, and received a legal pardon from the Sovereign God of the universe. If we are wise, we will continue to judge ourselves. That is, we will examine our

own motives, and be quick to ask the Lord for forgiveness when we sin.

When we know we have laid a proper spiritual foundation, and when we see a dramatic difference in the way we react or respond to the difficult situations in life, then we need to go on to maturity. We must *"...grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...."* (2 Peter 3:18) We should be careful to build with the things of the Spirit (gold, silver, precious stones), and not build with the things of the flesh (wood, hay, stubble). Many people build their lives and ministries on personality, money, intellect, or politics. But these things will be burned up in the fire of God's judgment. It is better to build on the anointing, humility, godliness, the fruit of the Spirit, and the Word of God.



Methods

The focus of this lesson is the six foundation stones mentioned in the book of Hebrews. Make sure every student understands them. You may need to take two, or even three weeks to develop them fully. This study is a brief overview, but there are many more scriptures available on them. It is tragic to see people trying to live a victorious Christian life without a solid spiritual foundation. Many teenagers wash out during the high school years, because they have only a superficial understanding of the Bible, and cannot build on a complete foundation. Do not be afraid to ask the group to deal with these serious questions:

Did you really repent and turn from sin?

Did you really believe on the Word with all your heart?

Were you buried in the waters of baptism for the remission of sins?

Did you receive the baptism in the Holy Ghost, with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues?

Do you continue to build up your spirit by praying in tongues?

Are you solidly identified with and submitted to the leadership of the local church?

Is God's resurrection life flowing through your spirit?

Do you examine yourself spiritually to see whether you are living by faith, or by your own wisdom?

Esther

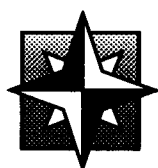
Volume 8

Lesson 15



Bible Reference

The Book of Esther



Theme

When God's people cry out to Him with a need, God is able to raise up the right person at the right time to meet that need. The story of Queen Esther is a study in character and wisdom, as well as a prophetic allegory about the redeemed church.



Scripture Reading

Esther 2:1-7, 17

1 *"After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.*

2 *"Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king:*

3 *"And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given {them}:*

4 *"And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so.*

5 *"{Now} in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name {was} Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite;*

6 *"Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.*

7 *"And he brought up Hadassah, that {is}, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid {was} fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter."*

17 *"And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown*

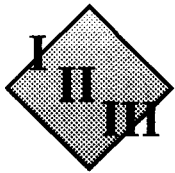
upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti."



Memory Verse

Hebrews 4:16

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."



Outline

I. History.

A. The Persian Empire.

1. They conquered Babylon during the latter part of Daniel's life.
2. They were in an alliance with the Medes.
3. The Medo-Persian Empire was the one which conquered the invincible Belshazzar, interrupting his great feast with the writing on the wall.
4. The story of Esther came after the time of Daniel.
5. It involves the Jews who were still in Persia, after some had returned to Jerusalem.

B. King Artaxerxes (Ahasuerus).

1. Famous for his harshness.

2. He ordered the deaths of many people.
3. He was not a nice, gentle man.
4. He had absolute power of his empire, and was greatly feared.

C. This is now Iraq and Iran.

1. The empire extended from India to northern Africa.
2. 127 provinces, or nations, were under his rule.

II. The Characters.

A. Queen Vashti.

1. She refused to put her beauty on display to satisfy the king.
2. She was removed from the throne.
3. A search was conducted to find the most beautiful and desirable woman for the king to wed.
4. This could be compared to a fairy tale, except for the minor detail that this king was an unkind man.

B. Esther.

1. The beautiful heroine.
2. She was a Jew, reared by her older cousin, Mordecai.
3. Her physical beauty was a gift from God, necessary to fulfill her calling.
4. She also had courage, wisdom, and a submissive spirit.

C. Mordecai.

1. The godly father-figure for Esther.
2. He was her primary influence.

D. Haman.

1. The villain.

2. Motivated by greed, covetousness, and pride.
3. Like Satan, he sought to kill, steal, and destroy.

III. The Allegory.

A. A natural story which illustrates a higher spiritual principle.

B. Vashti.

1. A symbol of the rejected priesthood.
2. She refused to be on display.
 - a. God wants His people to be on display.
 - b. To be seen by the world in the beauty of holiness.
 - c. *"Let your light so shine before men,...."* (Matthew 5:16)
3. She had her own feast.
 - a. She "did her own thing."
 - b. Like a church that is run by a board or by a man, and not by God.
 - c. Some churches have their own services, and do not seem to need God.
 - d. Church politics instead of the anointing.

C. Esther.

1. A prophetic type of the New Testament church.
2. "Beautiful."
 - a. *"...Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness:...."* (Psalms 96:9)
 - b. Her beauty was the combination of the gift of good features, and the diligent care of her body.
 - c. Righteousness is imputed to us by God's grace, and not by our works.

- d. Our works express and fulfill righteousness and true holiness.
3. She was a virgin.
 - a. Morally pure.
 - b. Undeified by the world.
 - c. James 1:27.
 - d. Virginity is a prophetic symbol of righteousness.
4. Trained by Mordecai.
 - a. Under apostolic authority.
 - b. Submitted, compliant, not self-willed.
5. Courageous.
 - a. More concerned with God's plan than for self-advancement and safety.
 - b. *"...Perfect love casteth out fear:...."* (1 John 4:18)

D. Haman.

1. Type of Satan.
2. The adversary, destroyer.
3. Always seeking his own ego-satisfaction.
4. He hates the righteous.

E. Mordecai.

1. Picture of the Holy Spirit.
2. Also a godly father-figure.

IV. The Power of Appeal.

A. Esther.

1. Submitted to authority.
2. Submitted to Mordecai, and also to the king.

B. Preparation of the heart.

1. Oil: symbol of the anointing of the Spirit.

2. Myrrh: symbol of the godly character and beauty that comes from suffering.
 - a. A bitter plant.
 - b. Main ingredient for the most exotic perfumes.
 - c. Made perfect through sufferings. (See Hebrews 2:10.)
 3. Washing.
 - a. "...Washing of water by the word." (Ephesians 5:26)
 - b. Cleansed by the blood of the Lamb.
 4. Prepared to become the bride, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.
- C. How to appeal to authority when a wrong decision is made.
1. Show honor and humility.
 - a. Do not ridicule or complain.
 - b. Give all due respect.
 2. Show deference.
 - a. Do not demand your rights, but be a servant (meekness).
 - b. Demonstrate a desire to do what is best for the one in authority.
 3. Be kind and patient.
 4. Appeal to authority without force or demand.
 5. Finally, be willing to suffer for doing right, if the authority refuses to honor your scriptural appeal.
- Esther and Daniel illustrate the truth that you can be faithful and get along well, even if your employer or authority is not a Christian.
 - No matter how bad your situation, you can be comforted to know that your boss or other authority is not as wicked as Ahasuerus.
 - The person who submits to authority ultimately gains more freedom and blessing than the one who asserts his rights, or rebels.
 - The power to influence is just as great as the power to rule.
 - We should not be ashamed to be put on display for God as the light of the world.
 - Spiritual beauty is the result of imparted grace plus faithful obedience.
 - We do have a subtle enemy who seeks to destroy us.



Spiritual Truths

- The book of Esther, while not mentioning God by name, is a powerful prophetic allegory about Christ and His church.



Lesson Material

In this lesson, we are not just rehearsing the details of the physical story of Esther. Hopefully by now your class is familiar with this classic. But we do want to take time to bring out spiritual principles relating to the allegory.

To be sure, the story of Esther is a true, historical event. These are real characters in a real empire. But, as we have seen over and over in our Old Testament studies, the physical illustrates the spiritual. We

can glean many exciting truths, if we look beyond the surface. A superficial glance at Esther seems to suggest that beauty and virtue go together, but that is not necessarily the case. But we see that her beauty was a gift from God, which was enhanced by an inner joy and a good conscience.

There are people today in our society who are tremendously beautiful. They work diligently to maintain a good appearance, but so many have a harsh countenance. The spirit and attitudes of people contribute even more to their attractiveness to others. Indeed, there have been some who were not blessed with striking physical features, who radiate the joy of the Lord in such a way that they are strongly attractive to others, who barely notice their imperfect features. We cannot do much about our unchangeable physical features; but we can draw near to God and seek wisdom, so that we cultivate the joy of the Lord.

We know that the church is the bride of Christ. Many times, the stories in the Bible about brides are allegorical of the church. Note that women like Jezebel and Athaliah are not pictured as brides, so much as old wives. Old wives symbolize those who could have been brides, but they have lost their joy and sweetness, and have become assertive and manipulative. Paul warned us against believing in "old wife's fables." The bride is one who adores her husband, and delights in his presence. Her love radiates in beauty, and her freedom from wrinkles or blemishes symbolizes a pure church that is full of the joy of the Lord, reflecting freedom from moral defilement.

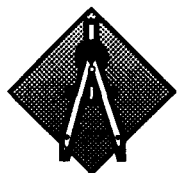
Esther was a virgin, under apostolic authority. Paul told the Christians that he wanted to present them "...as a chaste

virgin to Christ...." (2 Corinthians 11:2) He recognized that Christ would have a perfect, holy bride, composed of the overcoming, holy saints of God from the masses of men and women who have lived on earth during the 6,000 years of human history. God does not require a large bride for Christ; but He is looking for a pure, virgin bride for the Lamb.

Vashti was a beautiful bride, but she refused to put herself on display. Again, on the surface, she seems virtuous. But as a symbol of the church, she was wrong. A wife's beauty is a reflection of her husband's quality and care. A bitter, sullen, unkempt wife is a shame to her husband; but a beautiful bride is his glory. We are called to be a holy people, to shine as lights of the world. God wants His church on display, to let the world see that God is a good God. Unfortunately, many Christians are like Vashti. Not only do we refuse to let our light shine, but we are off having our own feast. God did not intend for the church to carry on with business as usual. We are not to do our own thing. The purpose of the church is to gather in His name, to do what He desires. We are to be dependent upon the Holy Spirit, and eager to await His commands. One discouraged pastor made the statement, "If God died, our church would not notice it for six months." We should not have our own feasts. We should gather in His name, to do as He pleases. Our worship should not be dictated by a committee or by a vote, but by the direction of the Holy Ghost.

The practical lesson of the book of Esther is the principle of appeal to authority. This is the opposite of assertiveness. Esther was utterly submitted to Mordecai and to God. When the king was tricked into signing the decree to destroy her people, Esther knew that she must risk her life to save them. But she went first with prayer and

fasting, knowing that it would take the hand of God to accomplish the task. She wisely prepared feasts for the king, and waited until the right time to make her appeal. In the end, she conquered the enemy through the power of gentle submission, and through an obvious servant's heart. Esther's life was well-lived, as ours can be -- if we follow her wise example.



Methods

Make sure your students are familiar with the basic story of Esther. Preferably, they should read it at home during the preceding week with their families, or at least on their own. Most of them know the mechanics of the story.

Now, start the class by asking if anyone in the class can see the spiritual allegories in the book. Can we relate to analogies? Can we see the higher spiritual truths illustrated in the physical events? This kind of study makes the Bible come alive, and is the difference between a mediocre teacher and a great one. Inspire them to see the rich texture of insight in every book of the Bible. Encourage them to dig deeply into the sweet Word of God. Inspire them to be lifelong students of the Word, and eternal worshippers. Do not just inform -- inspire.

Do you know what a "Vashti" kind of church is like?

Do you see the similarity between a bride and the worshipping church?

How do we make an appeal, when our authority is wrong?

Overcoming Temptation

Volume 8

Lesson 16

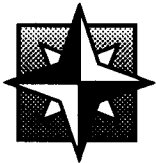


Bible References

Romans 6-7

1 Peter 5

Proverbs 7



Theme

All of us are tempted to lower our standards and violate our conscience; but we can be overcomers in this life, if we focus on God and apply biblical principles relating to moral freedom.



Scripture Reading

Romans 6:11-19

11 *"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

12 *"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*

13 *"Neither yield ye your members {as} instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members {as} instruments of righteousness unto God.*

14 *"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

15 *"What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.*

16 *"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*

17 *"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*

18 *"Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*

19 *"I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants*

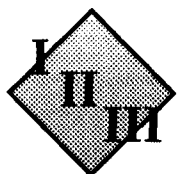
to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness."



Memory Verse

James 4:7-8

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse {your} hands, {ye} sinners; and purify {your} hearts, {ye} double minded."



Outline

I. What is Temptation?

A. We all experience trials and temptations in life.

1. Trials: situations designed by God to make us stronger, as we yield to the Holy Spirit and overcome the adversity.
2. Temptations: designed by the devil to draw us away from God, so he can defeat us.

B. 1 John 2:16.

1. "...all that is in the world,...."
2. All the world can offer.

3. Illusion, deception.
4. Sin never fully satisfies; but Jesus does.

II. The Three Kinds of Temptation.

A. The lust of the flesh.

1. Desire for physical gratification, pleasure.
2. Focus on feelings, sensations.
3. Some people's god is their belly. (Philippians 3:19)
4. "Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;...." (2 Timothy 3:4)
5. "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man:...." (Proverbs 21:17)
6. Jesus was tempted by Satan to turn stones into bread to satisfy his hunger.

B. The lust of the eye.

1. The desire for wealth and possessions.
2. "...The love of money is the root of all evil:...." (1 Timothy 6:10)
3. Desire for things is never satisfied. (Proverbs 27:20)
4. Covetousness is a sin.
5. Jesus was tempted by the lust of the eye by Satan, who offered Him the kingdoms of the world, if He would just worship him.

C. The pride of life.

1. The need to feel more important than others.
2. The illusion of fame and popularity.
3. Many have compromised their morals or violated their conscience to achieve fame and honor, especially as entertainers.
4. Jesus was tempted by pride to jump off the temple peak; but He refused.

III. The Benefits of Overcoming Temptation.

A. *"...More than conquerors through him that loved us."* (Romans 8:37)

1. Through Christ.
2. We not only avoid losing --
3. But we also gain spiritually and personally, each time we overcome.
4. We always become weaker and diminished as a person when we yield to the devil, who wants to destroy us completely.

B. See temptation as a battle.

1. Sin is not a treat, or a blessing.
2. It is only pleasant for the moment.
3. Sin has pleasure "for a season."
(Hebrews 11:25)
4. Sin is a means toward our destruction, not fulfillment.

C. *"...Him that overcometh...."*

1. Revelation Chapters 2 and 3.
2. Blessings to the overcomers listed in each of the seven letters to the churches in Asia Minor (Turkey).

IV. Keys to Overcoming Temptation.

A. Realize that it is a spiritual battle.

1. Recognize that your enemy, Satan, wants to diminish and destroy your joy and your testimony.
2. Do not resist temptation -- resist the devil. (1 Peter 5:8-9)
 - a. When we resist temptation, we focus on it, and we are drawn to it.
 - b. When we resist the devil, we see it as a battle.

B. Keep your focus on God.

1. We overcome by faith in God.
2. When we focus on God, we see the bigger picture: the eternal consequences.
3. We realize that God will hold us accountable for what we do.
4. *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked:...."* (Galatians 6:7)
5. The fear of the Lord causes us to depart from evil. (Proverbs 16:6)

C. Call sin by its proper names:

1. When Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph, he said, "How can I do this great wickedness?"
2. The world does not like to use words like:
 - a. Adultery.
 - b. Sodomy.
 - c. Drunkenness.
 - d. Fornication.
 - e. Gluttony.
3. Carnal people like to substitute non-moral terms, such as:
 - a. An "affair."
 - b. Homosexuality, or "gay."
 - c. Alcoholism.
 - d. Sexually active.
 - e. Healthy appetite.
4. Call sin "sin."

D. Put all of the Bible into your mind and heart that you can.

1. *"Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."* (Psalms 119:11)
2. Psalms 1.
3. Joshua 1:8.
4. 1 Timothy 4:15-16.

E. Be accountable to someone in spiritual authority.

1. If you have a weakness, confide in someone, and commit to being accountable.
2. *"Confess your faults (weak areas you are most likely to be tempted in) one to another, and pray one for another,...."* (James 5:16)

F. Be submitted to God and to godly leadership.

1. Hebrews 13:17.
2. James 4:7.

G. Reckon yourself as dead to sin, but alive to God. (Romans 6)

1. Think of yourself as dead to sin.
2. Keep focused on the positives about life, and not on the negatives.
3. Yield your body as an instrument of righteousness.
 - a. Just like you did before, with sin.
 - b. You thought about it first, and visualized yourself doing it.
 - c. Now see yourself doing exploits for God.
 - d. Have you ever dreamed about winning someone to God?

H. Practice praising God and cultivating an attitude of gratitude.

I. Keep occupied with doing right and productive things.



Spiritual Truths

- The grace of God gives us the desire and the power to overcome temptations in life.
- God will not allow Satan to tempt us beyond that which He provides the grace to overcome.
- All of us are tempted to sin, and to hinder our potential for God in life.
- A great recurring message in the Bible is that we can overcome temptation by grace through faith.
- The fear of the Lord is a healthy, beneficial response to reality; and it is our best deterrent against the desire to do evil.
- You cannot overcome temptation by resisting temptation, but you can by resisting the devil.
- The world likes to promote evil by assigning non-moral terms to various types of sin.
- The more you expose your mind to secular images and ideas, the less likely you are to walk in the fear of the Lord, and in victory over sin.
- What you do in life is largely determined by what you choose to fill your mind and heart with.



Lesson Material

Life is full of choices. As Christians, we still make hundreds of value judgments every day. The Bible is full of directions which help to guide us in making right moral choices in our lives, producing the happiest and most fruitful lives possible. Ultimately, the basic question of life is the question of authority. When Adam and Eve fully recognized God's ownership of everything, they had peace and harmony. There were no conflicts at all, until they were tempted by Satan to establish ownership of their lives. They were tempted by the tasty fruit (the lust of the flesh); by the idea that they could become their own person and take possession of life (the lust of the eye); and by the concept that they would become as gods, knowing good and evil (the pride of life). A spiritual temptation is any trick of the enemy to lure us away from God's rightful place of Lordship in our lives. If he can get us away from God, then he can steal, kill, and destroy.

The basis of temptation is deception. There is always the illusion that it will fulfill a need in the life, and that the consequences will not be too bad. There is always that subconscious hope that we will get away with it. Of course, it is a false hope. Sin always has consequences, and we will always regret it sooner or later, or both. Satan always hides the price tag. The more temporal our focus and vision in life, the more easily we are overcome by temptation.

The question arises: "Since God is so good, and hell is so horrible, then how

does Satan get anyone to disobey God and risk their eternal soul?" The answer is simple: deception. Satan not only hides the price tag -- he exaggerates the benefits, and he paints sin up to look attractive. He is the master of advertising. He not only covers over sin to make it look innocent, but he even makes it look good.

One major tool of the enemy is the use and perversion of words. A classic example is the word "homosexual." This is a non-moral term used to distinguish a class of people. But homosexuality is not a type of person, but a type of sin. The Bible uses terms such as "sodomites, abusers of themselves with mankind, effeminate, those who are burned in their lust one toward another," and so on. In fact, Satan not only uses non-moral terms for sin -- he also attaches positive connotations to it. He has attached the word "gay" to the sodomite community to make it sound good. Joseph overcame the temptation to commit adultery with Potiphar's wife by calling it "great wickedness." Use biblical terms, because that will help you see God's perspective.

We are tempted by the world in our day, because there is such a focus culturally on extremes of wickedness. People are attracted to this on television, partly because they see themselves as good by comparison. But the more we expose our minds to extremes of evil, the more evil we become. We justify ourselves by comparing ourselves with the extremely evil; but comparison with people leads either to pride or to discouragement. We should judge ourselves by the Word of God. If anything, compare yourself to Jesus. The more you focus on Him, the more likely you are to become like Him.

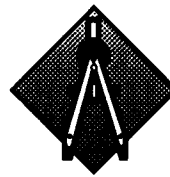
Satan's agenda in the earth is to do all he can to motivate people, especially

Christians, to make choices that will damage the spirit and lure them away from God's holy presence. All sin is destructive. Sin destroys relationships, influence, joy, bodies, and lives. God hates sin so much because He loves us; and He sees what sin eventually does to us. One of the major evidences of true spiritual revival is a hatred for sin. Let us be careful that we do not expose ourselves to violent, sensual, or occult images through television, radio, and rock music. Let us fill our minds with good things, and be attracted to Jesus.

God is so good, that the only way Satan can defeat us is to lure us away from God's presence by the temptation to sin against God. God is holy, and cannot look upon sin. We need to read the Bible every day, and to build up our spirit with the Word, prayer, and Christian fellowship. When we are mighty in spirit, we focus on living for eternity, instead of for the moment.

Solomon understood the importance of having long-term goals, or vision. Proverbs 29:18 says, *"Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."* The word "perish" means "to cast off restraint; to run wild." People who do not have a vision for eternity have the hardest time resisting temptation, because they do not immediately perceive the value of godliness. Those who live for the moment tend to lack discipline, because they do not see the end results. The more you see life from the standpoint of eternity, the wiser you are. The fool lives for the moment. His god is his belly. His highest goal is to have a good time -- to feel good. What a shame. He will waste the precious years of his life, and spend an eternity in misery and regret.

Jesus reminded people of hell and judgment. This is healthy for us. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It is also the best deterrent against the temptation to sin. We need to realize that there are consequences to sin. Paul said to the Christians in Galatia, *"...He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption;..."* (Galatians 6:8) God will not be mocked. If you live for yourself, you will do yourself damage. If you live for God, you will reap benefits in this life, and also for eternity. Build a solid focus on God, and be careful not to let the world around you fill your mind with evil.



Methods

Understand the basic structure of this lesson, and establish each principle in the minds of your students.

1. The purpose of temptation is to lure us away from God.
2. The nature and consequence of sin.
3. The importance of the fear of the Lord.
4. How to overcome temptation, by resisting the devil.

Go through carefully the list of biblical principles related to overcoming temptation. Find some more key verses and principles in the Bible. There are many. This is an important study.

It has been suggested that we have the hardest time memorizing scripture verses

that deal directly with the sin we have the most trouble overcoming. Encourage each student to silently acknowledge the area of their greatest temptation, and then memorize three verses from the Bible that deal with it.

Practice accountability. Have you ever really put James 5:16 into practical use in

your own life? Do you have a godly friend or authority figure who can be trusted to know your most sensitive spiritual weakness?

Go through the verses in Revelation 2 and 3 which begin with *"To him that overcometh...."*

The Spirit World

Volume 8

Lesson 17



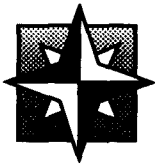
Bible References

Job 1

Romans 8

Jude

Revelation 4-5



Theme

The spiritual world in creation is just as real as the physical world. In fact, it is more important, because physical things eventually pass away, but spiritual beings do not.



Scripture Reading

2 Corinthians 5:1-11

1 "For we know that if our earthly house of {this} tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

3 "If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

4 "For we that are in {this} tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

5 "Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing {is} God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

6 "Therefore {we are} always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

7 "(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

8 "We are confident, {I say}, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

9 "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things {done} in {his}

body, according to that he hath done, whether {it be} good or bad.

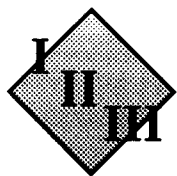
11 "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."



Memory Verse

2 Corinthians 4:17-18

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding {and} eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen {are} temporal; but the things which are not seen {are} eternal."



Outline

I. God is Spirit.

A. God has no physical body.

1. No physical limitations.
2. No beginning or end.
3. He is present everywhere.
4. He has no time restrictions, and is in the past and future.

B. We can only relate to God with our spirit.

1. John 4:24.
2. John 3:3-8.

C. The Holy Spirit came first in the Creation.

1. Even if the "Big Bang" theory is correct (the idea that the universe came about when the original "ball of stuff" exploded billions of years ago):
 - a. Who lit the fuse?
 - b. Where did the "ball of stuff" come from?
2. Matter has a beginning.
 - a. Matter changes.
 - b. Second law of thermodynamics: matter breaks down.
 - (1.) Order to disorder.
 - (2.) Given enough time, a car will become a pile of dust.
 - c. Evolution says, given enough time, a pile of dust will evolve into a car.
 - d. Given enough time, a room full of monkeys with typewriters will eventually write a great novel (infinity).
3. What makes some hydrocarbon compounds in creation alive?
4. It is the Spirit that gives life.
5. The Spirit precedes and supersedes matter.
6. The "supernatural" means beyond and above the physical realm
 - a. The "natural" man is the man who is spiritually dead
 - b. He has no concept nor ability to relate to the supernatural in this life.
 - c. He is limited to what he can see and feel.
 - d. 1 Corinthians 2:14.

- D. God has infinite intelligence, and a perfect personality.
1. God loves, cares, knows, hates, etc.
 2. God is not the impersonal "supreme mind," as the Christian Scientists claim. He is a loving Father.
 3. God is not a deified man, as the Mormons claim.
 - a. God has no body, because He is infinite Spirit.
 - b. *"God is not a man, that He should lie;...."* (Numbers 23:19)
 - c. References in scripture to God's hand, feet, arms, etc. are anthropomorphisms (expressing an image in human terms to make it relate to human minds).

II. Spirit World.

- A. Any being with intelligence, personality and power, but no physical body, is a spirit.
1. God created spirit beings before He created the physical world.
 2. Angels.
 3. Pre-adamic race.
 - a. Possibly the origin of the demons we have today.
 - b. The demons cannot procreate.
 - c. God did not say, "I am having a rotten day. I think I will cook up a batch of demons this afternoon."
 - d. God created every angel and every being good, but with the power to choose.
 - e. "Free moral agents."
 4. Every human being on earth is a spirit with a body.
 - a. As opposed to Flipper, Fido, and Fifi (animals), who have only bodies.

- b. But they have no spirit.

- B. Spirits do not cease to exist. They either are in harmony with God, or they are in rebellion against God.

1. God has provided a plan for the redemption and restoration of man.
2. There is no such plan for angels.
3. Angels desire to "look into" the message of man's redemption; but it is revealed to us. (1 Peter 1:12)

III. The Myths of Halloween.

- A. Satan loves to deceive minds with distortions and perversions.
- B. The occult world is full of false information about the spirit world.
- C. Traditions came from the ancient Druid priests of England and Scotland, dating back before Christ.
1. The god Samhain, the god of the dead (actually a demon spirit, or the devil himself).
 - a. All "gods" are either the invention of the mind of man --
 - b. Or they are demon spirits deceiving men.
 - c. There are millions of false gods, but only one true God.
 2. Spirits of the dead supposedly roamed the earth on that night, demanding food and threatening the people.
 3. Jack-o-lantern: symbol of a damned soul.
 4. Everything is interpreted as involving the ghosts of dead people.
 5. God does not allow the spirits of the dead to roam on earth, even on Halloween.

D. The dead.

1. The souls of the dead "in Christ" go to heaven to be "present with the Lord."
2. Only the body "sleeps."
3. The souls of those who die in sin go to hell.
4. Hell is a real place of torment and darkness inside the earth.
5. The damned souls in hell cannot leave, or communicate with the living. (Luke 16)

E. What if supernatural events occur that we cannot explain?

1. Demon spirits are real, and there are millions of them.
2. Satan is real, and has power.
3. Demons can convey information, imitate the dead, and possess people who are not under the blood of Christ.

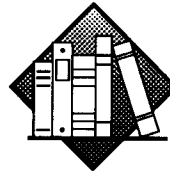


Spiritual Truths

- The spiritual world both precedes and supersedes the physical world in the reality of God's universe.
- God created a host of spirit beings before He formed the earth.
- The things of the spirit world cannot be understood or perceived or defined by the natural man; but that does not mean that they are not real.
- The humanist likes to think that truth is limited to what he can see; but just

because you do not believe or understand something does not make it false. Truth is true, regardless of what we think.

- The earth was round, even when the world's scientists believed it was flat.
- Halloween is a pagan holiday based on demonic myths and traditions, and should have no attraction for genuine Christians.
- "Trick or treat" is actually a form of extortion.
- Satan loves to promote myths about death and the spirit world as "entertainment," so that we do not fear God or see the importance of spiritual things.



Lesson Material

The Bible makes no effort to explain, prove, or even define God. God is. He is the self-existent, everlasting, and infinite "I Am." In the beginning, God.

The mind of sinful man has always had a hard time dealing with the reality of a just and holy God. Since sin came upon the human race, man has been easily deceived into all kinds of false ideas about God and the spiritual world. Sin makes us blind to spiritual things, because it is only with our spirit that we can at all relate to the spiritual realities.

The secular world seeks to attract both our attentions and our affections, so that

we do not get hungry for God. We have three spiritual enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. The "world" (*kosmos*), is the secular world system, which exalts man and seeks a humanistic unity and peace. The "flesh" refers to our own fallen nature, and our natural appetites and desires. The devil is Satan. He is a spiritual being -- a fallen angel who seeks to "kill, steal, and destroy." (John 10:10) He was created a beautiful archangel, named Lucifer ("Light-bearer"); but he became proud of his beauty and sought to be exalted as God. (Isaiah 14) He has a host of helpers, called demons, who are also spirits. They are possibly the spirits of a race of beings who inhabited the earth long before the creation of the human race, which began with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Our purpose in life is primarily spiritual, because this life is a preparation for eternity. Our struggles in life are primarily spiritual, because *"...we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."* (Ephesians 6:12) Our most important goals in life should be spiritual, because the spiritual is forever.

One of the problems of the "secularization of society" is the spiritual void that it causes. Young people who are not exposed to the move and power of God's Spirit seem to be more attracted to the occult. That is the progression suggested in 1 Timothy 4. Some would depart from faith; then, give heed to seducing spirits; and finally, become influenced by doctrines of devils. Again, God created us a spiritual, not just physical beings. When we focus our whole life on the temporal, and lose our faith in God,

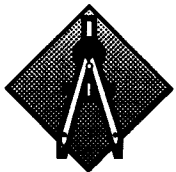
we create an empty life. Some will tend to be drawn to the occult because of that void.

It is essential that we satisfy our spiritual needs God's way. We need daily exposure to the Bible, and prayer, and worship, just like our bodies need air, food, and water. God designed man for Himself, and He created man with a spiritual need. Is it any wonder that young people who are educated in a system which systematically removes God from thought are the same ones who flock to the theaters to see movies about witchcraft, demons, and death? Are we surprised that so many of the rock music groups are sodomites who draw their inspiration from seances, and who openly promote rebellion, sodomy, perversions, and death?

Rebellion is not a natural "stage," but a reaction to an empty life, and a lack of hope. Young people do not have to get involved in drugs and fornication to "find themselves." They are as capable of experiencing a Holy Ghost revival and a supernatural anointing as any adult -- perhaps more so, because they are not as hardened in their ways. Many of the great revivals in the past two centuries either began with or were dominated by young people seeking earnestly after God. Do not think that kids have to be carnal, unspiritual deadheads. They can put the adults to shame when it comes to zeal for God, if they are properly and sufficiently challenged. When you get a group of teens who are hungry for God, they can have a powerful influence on those around them, because there are many who realize that their life is going nowhere without God.

One important thing to realize is that moral purity is not the result of talking about sex, or even abstinence. It comes from having the Holy Spirit inside, and

from a focus on God. When you are spiritually minded and spiritually active, you will not be fornicating or giving your body away. Get full of the Holy Ghost, and you will naturally have the fear of the Lord to keep you from evil. Get excited about Jesus, and no one will have to tell you not to do drugs. Get into edifying, godly music, and no one will need to pull you away from sensual music, because it will not be attractive to you, when you love Jesus. Emphasize the positive, and get teenagers prayed up and fired up spiritually; and there will be no desire to flock to occult movies.



Methods

Encourage the students to understand the history of Halloween, as the one pagan holiday that the Christians have never really been able to turn to any positive purpose. It is based on the occult, which is

centered on lies and distortions about the spirit world.

Encourage faith in God, Who is in full control of the universe, including the spirit world.

Warn of the dangers of dabbling in the occult, which is the perversion of spiritual activity. It is dangerous to play with Ouija boards, Tarot cards, astrology, fortune-tellers, drugs, and other things which thrive on deception and darkness.

Reinforce the reality of the spirit world, and the importance of having a spiritual "covering" by becoming a child of God and submitting to His will.

Discussion:

What is wrong with the tradition of "Trick or Treat?"

Why should we avoid the traditions of disguises and costumes, that seem so harmless?

How can we demonstrate the spirit of giving, instead of the selfish activities that are promoted today?

Spiritual Perception

Volume 8

Lesson 18

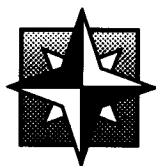


Bible References

1 Corinthians 2, 12

2 Corinthians 4

Luke 15



Theme

Sin causes men to be spiritually blind and easily deceived, but the Holy Spirit is able to guide us into all truth, including supernatural things.



Scripture Reading

1 Corinthians 2:7-16

7 *"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, {even} the hidden {wisdom},*

which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

8 *"Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known {it}, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

9 *"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

10 *"But God hath revealed {them} unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*

11 *"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.*

12 *"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*

13 *"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

14 *"But 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.*

15 *"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.*

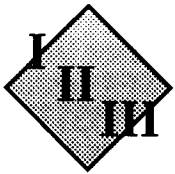
16 "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."



Memory Verse

1 Corinthians 2:14-15

"But 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. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man."



Outline

I. Secular.

- A. A way of looking at life and creation as if there was no God.
- B. Everything spiritual is explained in terms of the physical and finite.
 - 1. Demon possession is called:
 - a. Multiple personalities.
 - b. Channeling.
 - c. Psychic phenomena.
 - d. Astral projection.
 - e. Extra-sensory perception (satanic counterfeits for the manifestation gifts of the Spirit).

- 2. But this is a deception.
 - a. Humans do not have supernatural powers in their own minds.
 - b. The supernatural power comes either by submitting to God and allowing the Holy Spirit to work through you to help others (1 Corinthians 12) --
 - c. Or by opening your spirit to the satanic world and being used by the devil and his demons to hurt others, and yourself.
 - d. "Channeling" is actually demon possession.
 - e. "Psychic power" comes by yielding to a familiar spirit.

C. Humanism.

- 1. Promotes the doctrine of evolution, because it is a way of explaining a creation without acknowledging a Creator.
- 2. If you recognize a Creator, then you have to acknowledge that you are accountable to Him.
- 3. Why does the fool say in his heart, "there is no God?"
 - a. Because they are corrupt, and have done abominable works.
 - b. Psalms 14.
- 4. People who are in rebellion against God must deal with guilt.
 - a. Either by repenting and asking for forgiveness;
 - b. Or by rationalizing away the fear of the Lord with a secular mind set;
 - c. Or by drowning out guilt with pleasure, drugs, or alcohol.
 - d. Drugs deceive the mind, and dull the spirit.
 - e. Many people have opened up their spirit to demons with drugs, alcohol, or rebellion. (1 Samuel 15:23)

- f. Demons love to persuade people to commit suicide, because their joy is to destroy, or kill.
- g. They will often seek out young Christians who have potential for God, and attack them.
- h. Abide in Christ, and you will not have to fear. (1 John 5:18)

D. Satan's goal.

- 1. To get us so caught up with the natural world and physical things, that we do not seek after God in the spirit.
- 2. To captivate both our attention and our affections with a temporal values system.
- 3. To motivate people to see life only through natural eyes, and eliminate faith and wisdom.
 - a. Faith is a focus on God and His purposes.
 - b. Wisdom is seeing life from God's perspective.

II. Spiritual Sight.

- A. Elisha's servant saw a host of Syrian soldiers coming to capture them. (2 Kings 6)
 - 1. Elisha was not threatened, because he saw the spiritual side.
 - 2. "God, open his eyes."
 - 3. "Oh. I see. I was frightened, because I only saw the physical."
 - 4. "...Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

B. Vision.

- 1. People who are not born again cannot see the kingdom (spiritual reality). (John 3:3)

- 2. Unsaved people cannot perceive spiritual things, because they are spiritually blind. (1 Corinthians 2:14)
- 3. Sin destroys our spiritual life and vision.
- 4. Without holiness, no man will see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:14)

C. Values.

- 1. When we are spiritually blind, we will focus on temporal things.
- 2. We prefer sin's pleasure for a season.
- 3. When we have spiritual sight, we set our sights on spiritual things.
 - a. Eternal values.
 - b. Set affections on higher things. (Colossians 3:1-3)

D. Wisdom.

- 1. It is not common sense.
- 2. It is seeing things from the perspective of eternity.
- 3. The natural man sees only the physical side of things.
 - a. Talking about spiritual things to a natural man is like trying to describe color to a blind man.
 - b. He is blind to it.
- 4. The spiritual man sees both the natural and the spiritual.
 - a. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
 - b. "...He that is spiritual judgeth all things,...." (1 Corinthians 2:15)



Spiritual Truths

- Spiritual values are more important than temporal values, because the things of the spirit are eternal.
- Sin has caused the human race to be naturally blind and easily deceived in matters of the spiritual realm.
- Ultimately, the primary reason scientists believe the doctrine of evolution is because they want to, because it cannot be proven.
- The Christians have a more scientific version of creation, because we know the only Eye-witness.
- Wisdom takes into account the spiritual as well as the natural perception. That is the reason that people who are not born-again Christians can have no real wisdom.
- The reality of the spirit world is not diminished by the fact that carnal men have no spiritual perception, any more than the sky would be less blue because a blind man cannot see it.
- Every atheist changes his mind the moment he dies; but then it is too late for him.
- One reason to gather in church and worship God is to help stimulate a focus on spiritual and eternal values.
- The Bible was not written to the carnal mind, but to the spirit; so it will tend to seem dry and meaningless to people who have no spiritual sight.



Lesson Material

The story of Elisha and his servant is a classic illustration of an important truth. Man is naturally spiritually blind, because of sin. But those who know God can develop their spiritual sensitivity, as they mature in their Christian walk -- and that is our goal. We want to build faith, which is a focus on God and His purposes, and also a sense of trust and confidence. They go together. The more you see God and know Him, the more you realize that you can rely on Him and trust His Word explicitly.

This account is a humorous one. When King Ben-hadad hears that the Israelites had a prophet who could hear everything he even whispered in his bedroom, he said, "All right, let us sneak up on him with a big army and capture him!" What a brilliant man of strategy. From the perspective of history, we can see what the servant saw -- and we can also see what Elisha saw. The servant saw only people and their weapons. We can relate to that, because we see natural things with our natural eyes. But Elisha was so spiritually strong that he could see things in the spiritual realm. "God, open his eyes." The mighty host of angelic warriors was there all the time. He just did not see.

Usually, God allows us to go through life without actually seeing the spiritual beings that influence us along the way. But that makes them no less real. It is with faith that we see and understand spiritual things. We cannot see the spiritual beings; but we know that they are there.

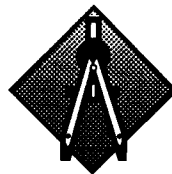
The purpose of Satan is to get people so caught up with a focus on the physical and natural aspects of life that they do not pursue God, and therefore neglect the spiritual aspect of their being. We naturally get so busy with the details of everyday life that we lose sight of eternity. That is why the Bible and church are so important. We need to remind one another and ourselves that spiritual things are of the highest priority, and that our spiritual life is forever, while the physical is temporary. You should take good care of your body, because you express yourself and the Lord through it; but your body is not nearly as important as your spirit. The development of your character is far more important than the development of your body; and gaining God's approval is vastly more valuable than accumulating wealth or human popularity.

When we build up our spirit with prayer, Bible reading, worship, and Christian fellowship, we reinforce our values system and focus our attention on God. We cultivate spiritual relationships with God and with godly people that will last forever, and we "lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven" that will never decay or be lost.

God has placed us all in a time-space world as a preparation for eternity. He has also designed this human life on earth as a place of testing, proving, and development. Life is full of choices. We can spend it on ourselves, and try to do our own thing, with a focus to indulge ourselves. Or, we can invest our lives in activities and relationships that will produce infinite rewards, because the spirit and soul are forever.

We need to see life as a combination of the spiritual and the physical, with the spiritual as the most important. The fact is,

that the way we are now, it is a lot easier to be preoccupied with the natural things. When my body goes without food, I receive strong signals from my brain, demanding nourishment. But when I neglect to feed my spirit, the signals actually get weaker. We can become spiritually dried out, or even comatose, without realizing it. A sad reality in the Bible is that people who were spiritually dead did not even know it. If you find that you do not have any desire for the Bible or spiritually edifying activities, then you have cause for alarm. Repent, and turn to God with all your heart. Nothing on earth is as important as your eternal soul.



Methods

Your goal is not merely to inform your students about the story of Elisha, or about the theology of the spirit world. Your task is actually to inspire and train your students to be more spiritually minded for the rest of their lives. Train them to see the spiritual aspects of things, which is the essence of wisdom.

Consider, for example, situations with people. We all tend to react to bullies, or to obnoxious people. But can we learn to recognize symptoms of spiritual bondage, or a need for love. Many problem students at school go home to families with drunken or absent fathers, or to serious abuse. When we look with wisdom at problem people, we can see needs and have more compassion.

What about philosophies and philosophers? What spiritual conflicts did

Karl Marx or Neitche have, which caused them to develop their theories? What was the moral problem with Plato, or Mary Baker Eddy (founder of Christian Science)?

If you are going through a conflict with your parents, it usually helps to find out what spiritual dangers they may be seeing which prompts them to be restrictive (which seems repressive, while it is usually protective).

Wisdom asks questions that our natural minds ignore.

"What about 1,000 years from now?"

"What is happening in the spiritual realm here?"

"Is the origin of this problem demonic, or organic, or just relational and emotional?"

What Will Happen in the Tribulation?

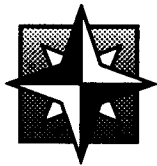
Volume 8

Lesson 19



Bible References

Revelation 6-19



Theme

God has a plan to rid the world of evil and injustice. Although we need to do all we can to be salt and light, the ultimate answer is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.



Scripture Reading

Revelation 5:8

8 "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four {and} twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every

one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints."

Revelation 6:2, 8

2 "And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer."

8 "And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth."

Revelation 9:15

15 "And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men."

Revelation 7:4, 9, 14

4 "And I heard the number of them which were sealed: {and there were} sealed an hundred {and} forty {and} four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel."

9 "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and

before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;"

14 "And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Revelation 11:3

3 "And I will give {power} unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred {and} threescore days, clothed in sackcloth."

Revelation 12:9

9 "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

Revelation 16:14-16, 19

14 "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, {which} go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

15 "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed {is} he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

16 "And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon."

19 "And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath."

Revelation 19:11, 15

11 "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him {was} called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war."

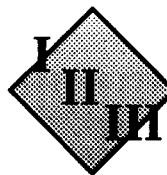
15 "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."



Memory Verse

Revelation 16:15-16

"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed {is} he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon."



Outline

Ten Things That Will Happen in the Tribulation

I. The Saints in the Church Age Who Overcome Will Be in Heaven. (Rev 5:8)

- A. Many scholars believe that the rapture will happen just before the tribulation begins.
- B. Only those who are overcomers and live for Jesus will go in that rapture and miss the tribulation.

II. The Antichrist Will Make a Peace Treaty With Israel for Seven Years. (Rev 6:2)

- A. The Antichrist is called the man of sin or perdition.
- B. The Antichrist is Satan's man. He is Satan's ultimate attempt to rebel against God and to take control of God's creation.
- C. He will appear to the world to be a man of peace in the political sense.
- D. The Antichrist will control his kingdom with deception, Satan worship, Antichrist worship, economic bondage, political coalitions, and hateful persecution of God's people.

III. Over Half of the World's Population Will Die From War, Famine, Disease, Earthquakes, Hailfire Storms, and Demonic Attacks. (Rev 6:8; 9:15)

- A. These seven years will be filled with a series of wars, and with plagues such as the world has never seen.

- B. God will use these efforts to attempt to bring people to repentance, but they will not. (Rev 6:16; 9:20; 16:11)

IV. 144,000 Israelites Will Receive Christ. (Rev 7:4)

- A. They will witness for Christ.
- B. They will be resurrected. (Rev 14: 1-3)
- C. They will be the firstfruits of Israel.

V. People From Every Nation, Tribe, and Tongue Will Receive Christ As Savior. (Rev 7:9, 14)

- A. People will be saved during the tribulation.
- B. It will be harder to accept and to stand for Him than it is now.
- C. This is not the church, because they do not reign; but, they serve God.

VI. Two Witnesses Will Preach Christ in the City of Jerusalem. (Rev 11:3)

- A. These men prophesy in Jerusalem for 3-1/2 years.
- B. They have the power to call fire down from heaven.
- C. There are two views as to their identity:
 - 1. Elijah and Enoch (because neither man ever died).
 - 2. Elijah and Moses (because Michael fought with the devil for the body of Moses).

VII. Satan and His Armies Will Be Cast Out of Heaven. (Rev 12:9)

- A. Satan cannot defeat God.
- B. The devil and his angels can only be in one place at a time.
- C. Satan now has access to God's throne, to accuse the saints.
- D. Satan can only be defeated by the blood of the Lamb, the word of our testimony, and total dedication to Jesus Christ.

VIII. The Nations of the Antichrist Kingdom Will Unite to Destroy the Nation of Israel. (Rev 16:14-16)

- A. By demonic deception, Satan will draw these nations into a war to annihilate Israel.
- B. They will gather at Armageddon.
- C. Israel will be totally out-numbered.
- D. This will be the largest and most devastating war in the history of mankind.

IX. Babylon's (Or the World's) Religious and Economic Systems Will be Destroyed. (Rev 16:19)

- A. Babylon is the cradle of civilization, and represents man's attempt to live without God.
- B. All of the commercial, political, and religious infrastructure of this system will collapse in one day.

X. The Lord Jesus Christ Will Return to Deliver Israel From the Antichrist.

- A. Israel is still God's people.
- B. Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
- C. The Lord will personally defeat Satan, his angels, his demons, the Antichrist nations, and every evil thing that opposes God's will.



Spiritual Truths

- God never breaks a promise.
- God is full of mercy, and seeks to restore those who have fallen.
- God is just, and must punish sin.
- Satan, a real being, wants to take God's place in creation.
- Satan desires to take God's place in our hearts. He attempts this through deception.
- God, in his justice, is permitting Satan to operate; but God only allows him to do what serves God's purpose to deal with His creation.
- Love not the world nor the things that are in the world, for all that is in the world will pass away.
- The Lord will return and reign victorious over all the nations of the earth.

- The Lord could come at anytime. We need to be ready.



Lesson Material

The tribulation, also called Jacob's Trouble, refers to the future time when God will again deal with the nation of Israel as His people. Since that nation rejected Jesus as their King, God set them aside and now calls all to salvation through Jesus Christ in the church. But the church age will end, and God will deal with His people Israel to bring them back to Himself. What will happen in those seven years? Revelation 6-19 describes those events to us.

There are several views concerning the resurrection of saints, the tribulation, the Millennium, and the sequence of events associated with the second coming of the Lord. Those views will be discussed in other lessons. For the purpose of our discussion, we have adopted the Pre-Tribulation view.

Some believe that these promises and predictions are being and have been fulfilled in the church. We recommend that the promises made to Israel be seen as being fulfilled in Israel, because this was the view of the apostles (Romans 11:25-29) and of the early church fathers. The singular and consistent interpretation of the scripture affords stability. Otherwise, a person is open to make any passage of the Bible say whatever they want it to say.

The church age began on the day of Pentecost, when the apostles and disciples

received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:1-4) This arrival of the Spirit of God was unique, because, for the first time, people were indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit was poured out on "all flesh" -- every age, sex, ethnic group, and language.

God divided the world at the tower of Babel through the division of languages; because man wanted to create a "New World Order" without God. On the day of Pentecost, God established His order of unity -- not based on human design and effort, but on His plan and by His Spirit. The evidence of that new order, called the church, was that they all did speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The church consists of those who have made Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior. You cannot join the church, but you must be born into it. The church age is temporary, and the church saints are a heavenly people. Those who are alive in the days of the tribulation and overcome the temptation to not walk in faith will be spared the horrible days of the tribulation, by resurrection.

In the same way that Noah was spared the death and destruction of the flood because he walked in faith, so also God will take to heaven those who overcome. (Rev 3:12) The church is not appointed to wrath -- and the tribulation times are days of wrath. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)

Satan's final attempt to dethrone God will be the Antichrist. God knows all, and He will use the Antichrist to deal with His people, Israel. (Deuteronomy 13:3 -- "*Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*")

There are many antichrists that are already in the world today. (1 John 2:18) The Bible says that we can know that spirit by certain earmarks. First, the spirit will deny Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Second, that spirit will resist spiritual authority. Third, that spirit will be independent in nature. Fourth, that spirit will encourage that people yield to carnal appetites. Fifth, that spirit will promote divisiveness in the body of Christ. (See 1 John 2:18-4:6)

God limits Satan in his activities and the time that he can work. In this age, God permits Satan to accuse the brethren. The devil does this before God in heaven, and also on earth, in the hearts of people. The accuser attempts to divide brethren, by accusing believers to one another with slander and lies. This is the spirit of the devil.

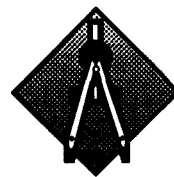
However, God does have Satan on a leash. 3-1/2 years into the tribulation, the devil and his angels will be kicked out of heaven. In that hour, Satan will not be allowed to accuse saints before the Father anymore. When he sees that he is banished from heaven like a man, Satan will unleash his fury on the earth.

When the Lord returns, He will banish Satan, demon power, fallen angels, and all rebels from the earth. Jesus will then rule the earth with a rod of iron. Efforts at social reform and legislated righteousness will continue to fail as long as the devil is able to deceive the hearts of men, because man is sinful in nature. The only way that we can change the social orders and evils of this world is to give Jesus Christ control of our lives. When He takes control, things will change.

Until the Lord comes, darkness will increase. Christians are in a spiritual battle.

To win this battle, a child of God has to put on the full armor of God daily and stand in the strength of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:10-20) A human being is no match for the devil and his demons. People can only stand in victory through the power of the Holy Spirit, fellowship of believers, the Word of God, intercessory prayer for one another and the gospel, and the blood of the Lamb.

The Lord will come and it could be any day. Are we ready for the Lord to come today?



Methods

Discuss the reality of the second coming with your students. It could happen today. If the church were resurrected, those who do not live for the Lord will be left behind.

Line the group up two by two. Now number them 1, 2, 1, 2 etc. Now have all the 2's step back and announce that they must go through the tribulation. Ask the students to discuss how that makes them feel.

Judgment and hell are real. The Bible says that Today is the day of salvation. When that time comes, those who are not ready will be left behind.

Now ask all the students to separate by having all the 1's go to the right side of the room and the 2's to the left side of the room. Now announce that half of all of the 2's have less than seven years to live.

Discuss with the students that will happen in the tribulation.

Emphasize that a person must come to Christ to be saved. If there is anyone in the group who has not yet committed their life to Christ, they can do that now. Ask them to raise their hand for prayer and lead them in the sinner's prayer.

Ask those who are Christians if the rapture happened today, are they ready to go? Have they compromised their lives? Do they need to repent and be cleansed?

Be sure to underscore that God does not want to hurt them, but He does want to deal with those things that can endanger their eternal well-being. Allow these students to raise their hands for prayer, and lead them in a prayer of commitment.

Remember to assure them that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9) Jesus is our Advocate, defending us with His blood when the devil accuses us. If we confess our sin, He forgives us.

Ezekiel the Prophet

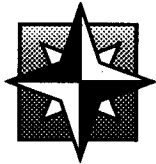
Volume 8

Lesson 20



Bible References

Ezekiel 1, 2, 33



Theme

Be faithful where God puts you -- whether it is in the palace like Daniel, or with the common people, like Ezekiel.



Scripture Reading

Ezekiel 33:25-33

25 "Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land?

26 "Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his

neighbour's wife: and shall ye possess the land?

27 "Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; {As} I live, surely they that {are} in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that {is} in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that {be} in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence.

28 "For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through.

29 "Then shall they know that I {am} the LORD, when I have laid the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed.

30 "Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD.

31 "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee {as} my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, {but} their heart goeth after their covetousness.

32 "And, lo, thou {art} unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument:

for they hear thy words, but they do them not.

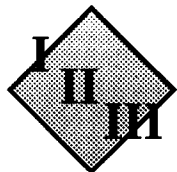
33 "And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them."



Memory Verse

1 Timothy 4:12

"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."



Outline

I. The Prophet Ezekiel.

A. A priest of Judah.

1. The son of a priest, of the tribe of Levi.
2. Ezekiel was faithful to God.
3. He was possibly a student or friend of Jeremiah.

B. Taken captive by Babylon.

1. In 597 B.C.
2. Daniel had already been taken captive there by Nebuchadnezzar, and was famous and powerful.

3. Daniel was taken nine years before Ezekiel.

II. God's Prophetic Team.

A. Jeremiah had warned Judah that the captivity was coming.

1. His ministry was to warn the people, and try to get them to repent.
2. They did not repent, and so God allowed Babylon to conquer them.
3. Babylon was God's "rod," or "sword" to discipline His people.
4. Some people were killed; but the best and brightest were taken to Babylon as captives.
5. Babylon was in what is now Iraq, in the Middle East.
6. Babylon became a powerful, rich world empire under King Nebuchadnezzar.
7. Jeremiah remained in Jerusalem most of his life.
8. His message: God will use Babylon to humble His people, but He will restore later.

B. Daniel.

1. Taken captive, and made a servant in the palace.
2. He lived a long, fruitful life in Babylon.
3. He had an excellent spirit.
4. His message: "God will restore."

C. Ezekiel.

1. Taken captive after Daniel, but stayed with the people.
2. Ezekiel had a wife.
3. He was likely a friend of Daniel's.
4. Ezekiel had a house on the river Chebar.

III. The Ministry of Ezekiel.

A. Message: God is right and just in allowing the captivity.

1. "Ezekiel" means: "God will strengthen."
2. God used captivity to show Judah that He was the sovereign God, and that their idolatry was not pleasing to Him.

B. Spiritual adultery.

1. God gave Ezekiel prophetic words about Jerusalem to show that the nation was like an ungrateful, adulterous wife to the Lord.
2. Chapter 16 -- like a forsaken baby that God had washed and blessed, who became a harlot with the world.

C. God will further judge Judah.

1. Ezekiel prophesied that Jerusalem would be completely destroyed, and the people scattered.
2. Many prophets were claiming that this would not happen.
3. The day that Jerusalem came under siege, Ezekiel's wife died.
4. God ordered him not to speak, until the news came back to Babylon that the city was destroyed.
5. He did not talk for three years.
3. Eleven years after Ezekiel was taken to Babylon, Jerusalem was destroyed.

D. "They will hear thy words, but will not do them."

1. Ezekiel was a musician and singer, as well as a preacher.

2. He used illustrated sermons and object lessons to show the Hebrews what God was doing.
3. They liked his sermons, but they generally failed to heed his warnings.

E. Outline of Ezekiel.

1. Visions of heavenly and spiritual glory. (Chapters 1-7)
2. Visions concerning Jerusalem, and the loss of glory. (Chapters 8-32)
 - a. God using Babylon to bring the people to repentance.
 - b. God judging other nations for their wickedness.
3. Visions of restored glory in the church. (Chapters 33-48)

IV. God is Just.

A. Some of the people were born in captivity, and were bitter at God.

1. "This is our parent's fault."
2. "We should not suffer for their sins."
3. "How could this be just -- because we were born in captivity?"

B. Ezekiel 18.

1. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."
2. But God said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."
3. We are affected in our situation in life, but we will ultimately be judged for our own sins.
4. We are affected by the sins of parents and other people; but if we respond to God with humility and faith, we can become even stronger and wiser through the adversity.

5. We will not go to heaven because of our parent's faith; but we will not go to hell because of their sins, either.
6. We do influence and affect the lives of other people; and so we should be careful to live right and obey God in life.
7. God is absolutely just.



Spiritual Truths

- God can use you wherever He puts you -- whether in the palace among the rich and famous, or in the slave camp with the down-and-out.
- Ezekiel had a hard life, suffering rejection, captivity, and loss; but he remained faithful to God as a prophet, and will be honored and rewarded forever.
- God does not promise us an easy life, but He does promise to give us enough grace to endure and to overcome.
- If you know you are pleasing to God, then you can endure any amount of rejection by people.
- Ezekiel found that, generally, people accepted him as a preacher and musician, but rejected his message.
- Your circumstances in life will be affected by other people; but you can keep a right attitude, if you keep your eyes on God.

- In eternity, you will be judged by what you did in this life, considering all the opportunities and abilities you were given by God.
- Life is not always fair, but God is always just and right.



Lesson Material

Life is not fair. That is a basic principle that no government or society can change. Some people are born into hardship, while others seem to have it easy. Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Daniel were three of the greatest prophets who ever lived. They were all faithful to God, when most of the prophets and preachers were carnal and wrong. Other preachers were telling people what they wanted to hear; but these three heard from God and often rebuked the carnal prophets, who were claiming to hear from God, but were not. Today, most of their names are forgotten; but history honors these three as great men of God, and heaven knows them well.

Jeremiah was the oldest prophet, and was undoubtedly an influence on Daniel and Ezekiel. He had been saying for years that God was going to judge Jerusalem and allow them to be conquered and judged, but the people and the government leaders refused to listen. They were like "prosperity preachers" -- prophesying only deliverance and victory. They got the crowds and the big offerings, but they were wrong. God is just, and He will bring down the proud, just as surely as He will raise up the humble in heart.

Daniel suffered greatly at the hands of the Babylonians. He probably saw his parents executed by the vicious Chaldean soldiers, and was taken far from his homeland as a teenager. He was made a slave in the palace, about 700 miles from the home he would never see again. Daniel could have become very bitter; and he would have, if he had focused on what other people had done to him. But he kept his focus on God, and he understood God's purposes. He had a good attitude. In fact, he was known as a man with an "excellent spirit."

We wonder how Ezekiel felt about all of this. There was Daniel, living in luxurious wealth and honor in the palace. He could have everything he would want. If Ezekiel had been carnal, he could have also become bitter. There he was, living in poverty as a virtual slave. He was exiled from home, with no hope of ever returning. Daniel was famous and rich, while he was an obscure "nobody." People did not listen to him, anyway.

Most of us could become bitter, if we spent our time counting our problems instead of our blessings. Ezekiel did not dwell on the negatives. He was content knowing that he was pleasing to God. He may have even thought, "Poor Daniel. He is there stuck in that palace with all those ungodly people, a virtual slave, with no sweet little wife, and no hope of having kids. God has been good to me." Ezekiel learned to be faithful with what he had, and to be content. His main concern was to hear from God, and to be faithful to tell the people what God had said.

God often told His prophets that they would suffer much rejection in their ministry. He had told Ananias to tell Paul that he would suffer greatly for the sake of the gospel. The text that this writer has

chosen is an unusual one for an overview of such a large book, but it has personal significance. We catch a glimpse of the serious nature of the prophetic message, followed by a personal word to the messenger. This undoubtedly helped him later on to cope with the frustration a teacher gets when his hearers casually pass off the grave message as just another voice in the wind. Ezekiel learned early not to take it personally. He already knew that the message would go largely unheeded. Ezekiel was called "Son of man" more than ninety times by the Lord. This identifies him with Jesus, who preferred that title. It refers to the fact that he was rejected by people in general.

Even though the exiles in Babylon had suffered great loss, they still did not really get it. They still thought of themselves as God's chosen people, and they expected everything to go well for them. God was trying to show them that there are consequences to sin. God is a loving and firm Father, Who knows when and how to discipline His children. God actually raised up the powerful Babylonian empire as His "rod" to spank His own people. But they tended to be blindly optimistic, and still did not take their sin too seriously.

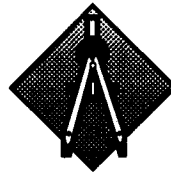
One thing that our culture does today is to trivialize sin. Sin is glamorized, gilded, and glorified in every communication media available. Sin is promoted as normal, and even healthy. Forms of moral perversion are encouraged as "alternate lifestyles;" and marriage and the church are treated as unimportant, or unnecessary. If we are going to see a real spiritual awakening, there must come an honest hatred for sin. Sin is always destructive. Sin always diminishes people's potential in life and, ultimately, their joy. When God allowed the people of Judah to suffer at the hands of men, He

was showing them that we will reap what we sow. Seventy-one times, God said, "And ye shall know that I am the LORD."

As the children grew up in Babylon, they increasingly became resentful of the fact that they were suffering in captivity, even though they were too young to really deserve the defeat in Judah. Why did they suffer for their parent's sin? They began to repeat the proverb about the sour grapes. This is still an expression used today, when referring to someone who bitterly blames his problems on other people. It is true that we are affected by the actions of others; but we also know that God is just. Life is not fair, because different people have different circumstances and levels of opportunity. But, *"...unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."* (Luke 12:48) That is how life can be "unfair," and yet, ultimately, God will be just. So many people try to make the playing field of life even by promoting "fairness" laws, and end up creating more and more injustice. Socialism is a philosophy of government that seeks to distribute wealth evenly to make life "fair," and it has always failed miserably. It just spreads the misery around. Fairness says that we should all have what we need; but justice says that the ones who work harder should receive the greater reward. Make no mistake about it. God is not a socialist. Our eternal reward is based on what we did with what we had to work with in this one life.

Ezekiel's message was clear. We will not be judged for other people's actions. We will be judged for what we did, and for the attitudes we maintained in life. Look

at the eternal perspective. Focus on doing God's will in life. Live for eternity instead of for the moment, and do not get caught in the trap of comparing yourself with other people. You will become either proud or bitter -- and maybe both.



Methods[®]

You may wish to refer to the theme of the classic story of "The Prince and the Pauper," which is about a prince who had the opportunity to trade places with a peasant boy who looked like him. Whatever our circumstances in life, our character is shaped more by our responses to situations than by the situations themselves. Some people have had many natural "advantages" in life, but are very unhappy. They may have been born into wealth, or even into the homes of great preachers, and yet have had many moral failures and miserable lives. Others have been raised by heathen or even abusive parents, and yet they have a positive attitude, and live very joyful, productive lives. The thing that really matters is our response to God. If we focus on God and His purposes, we can become positive, productive people with perfect peace. (Isaiah 26:3)

Contrast the lives and circumstances of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Then draw comparisons about them as faithful men of God.

A Good Education

Volume 8

Lesson 21

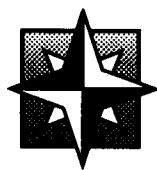


Bible References

Psalms 119

Psalms 1

Joshua 1



Theme

All of our life's experience and environment contribute to our education, which shapes our values and attitudes, as well as our abilities.



Scripture Reading

2 Peter 1:1-10

1 *"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the*

righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

2 *"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,*

3 *"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that {pertain} unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:*

4 *"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

5 *"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;*

6 *"And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;*

7 *"And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.*

8 *"For if these things be in you, and abound, they make {you that ye shall} neither {be} barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

9 *"But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.*

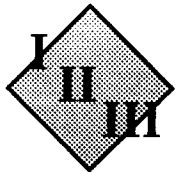
10 *"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:"*



Memory Verse

Psalms 119:66

"Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments."



Outline

I. Be Careful What You Hear.

A. Your life will be influenced and shaped by the people you listen to.

1. Blessed is the man who delights in God's Word, and is not influenced by ungodly, scornful people. (Psalms 1)
2. *"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise:...."* (Proverbs 13:20)

B. Be careful.

1. *"...Take heed what ye hear:...."* (Mark 4:24)
2. *"The words of the wise are as goads,...."* (Ecclesiastes 12:11)

3. Be careful about going beyond words given by one shepherd, because there is no end of making books. (vs. 12, paraphrased)

II. God's Principles of Education.

A. God's primary school: the home.

1. Not the state.
2. Deuteronomy 6.
3. God designed the family to be the foundation of your training for life.
4. We should be focused on fathers, rather than peers.

B. A good education.

1. Preparation for eternity, and not just for vocation.
2. Learn to be a good citizen of heaven.
 - a. Christ-centered.
 - b. Clean.
 - c. Worshipper.
3. It is impossible to have a good education without God and the Bible.
 - a. If you remove God's absolutes from society, you will reap a great increase in crime, immorality, and suicide.
 - b. Only by the fear of the Lord do men depart from evil. (Proverbs 16:6)
 - c. Every effective legal system is based on the absolutes of God's Word.
4. America's people in previous centuries were far more literate, when all education centered on the Bible, and was conducted by the family and the church.
5. Knowledge without character development creates pride and rebellion. (1 Corinthians 8:1)

6. Knowledge without love is worthless. (1 Corinthians 13)

III. The Order of a Good Education.

A. Faith. (Romans 10:9)

1. Education establishes a spiritual values system.
2. Satan seeks to subvert our faith, by establishing a perverted values system which rejects absolutes.
 - a. When we remove the absolutes such as creation and judgment, we create a self-centered, pleasure-motivated society.
 - b. Secular values produce an aimless, mindless generation, which ends in moral, economic, social, and spiritual bondage.
3. The foundation for a healthy life.
 - a. Repent, and be born again.
 - b. Put your faith in God, rather than in yourself and mankind.
 - c. You cannot prepare for eternity or live a good life, unless you establish your life on the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. If your life is not God-directed, then you are not a good person. (Psalms 37:23)

B. Virtue. (2 Peter 1:5))

1. Good character.
2. Godly moral values produce a good, unselfish life.
3. Virtue is the positive influence that flows from a life that is surrendered to God's will and purposes.
4. Education must encourage godly character.

C. Knowledge.

1. Information.
2. This is the world's first priority.
3. Knowledge based on the absolutes of God's Word is positive and useful.
4. Knowledge should not be an end in itself.
5. It is possible to have much information, but not know the Truth, which is Jesus. (2 Timothy 3:7)

D. Then add:

1. Self-control.
 - a. Temperance.
 - b. Galatians 5:23.
2. Patience.
 - a. Tribulation works patience.
 - b. The ability to endure suffering and setbacks, because you have hope.
3. Godliness.
 - a. Through suffering, God develops in us the character image of Jesus Christ.
 - b. Responding to life with an unselfish heart and a clear mind.
4. Brotherly kindness.
5. Charity (love).

IV. The Cure for Myopia.

A. If you have these qualities:

1. You will be fruitful in life.
2. You will be fulfilled.

B. He that lacks these qualities:

1. Is near-sighted.
2. People who do not have mature, godly character focus their lives on temporal values.

3. They live for the present, and for the immediate future.
- C. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.
1. Some suggest that we do not have to do anything to assure our election.
 2. If you do these things, you will never fall.
 3. So, if you do not do these things...?

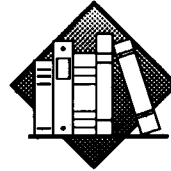
through which you gain information and influence.

- It is a great national tragedy in any society when men separate formal education from God and the Bible.



Spiritual Truths

- God created us, and knows just what kind of education we need.
- God never gave the responsibility of educating children to civil government.
- The first thing we need to learn in life is to acknowledge God in every aspect of life, and establish a relationship with Him based on faith.
- Knowledge without character development produces pride and rebellion.
- The primary purpose of education is to shape our values system, and then, secondarily, to inform.
- Education is not just to teach us to make a living, but to teach us to live.
- Your education involves your school, your home, your church, your friends, and every other aspect of your life



Lesson Material

Once a teacher in a secular public school asked her young students the question, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" The pupils responded with the usual answers -- a doctor, a fireman, a nurse -- until one boy responded, "I want to be a good man with a good conscience." The teacher was angry, because she considered his reply to be a smart-mouthed answer; and so she disciplined him. When he told his parents, they went to the teacher and explained that they had taught him the difference between what you do and what you become. They were Christians, and they taught the boy not to establish his identity solely on the basis of how he made his living. They said, "You should have asked, 'What do you want to do as a vocation,' not 'What do you want to be?'" He had answered the question correctly.

What do you want to be? What are you as a person? Upon what do you base your identity as an individual? Peter taught that the first priority of life is to establish who you are in relation to your God, and where you are going when you die. What is the foundation of your life? Are you building on the secular (Godless) philosophies of man, or on faith in God? When faced with moral choices each day, do you base your

decisions on what God wants, or on what is socially acceptable or politically correct?

You cannot separate education from values. All of education has a religious basis, because every subject has a religious base. Mathematics is based on absolutes. When you study math, you learn that 2+2 always equals 4. Parallel lines never meet. The universe is based on absolute laws of creation that never vary. Our purpose is not to shape the laws of the universe, but to discover and understand them. The first and most important law of the universe is that there is an omnipotent, omniscient and loving God who is the Creator and Judge of everyone He has created. *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."* (Proverbs 1:7)

The study of history affects your values. The values promoted are determined by the way it is written, and what events and characters are included or omitted. Jesus Christ is the central figure of history, and the Bible is the most influential book in history. But revisionist historians who do not know God will omit every reference to Christ and to His influence on the lives of men. In fact, every civilization has risen or fallen according to its responses to God and His revealed Word. But if we remove Christ from history, we are left with a meaningless cycle of events that have no rhythm or rhyme. Jesus is the key ingredient. History is His story, plain and simple.

Every aspect of our training for life comes down to our values system. What is the basis for right and wrong? How do we make good choices in life? The purpose of education is not just to teach us to make a living, but to teach us to live. If you do not relate yourself to the One who gave you life, then how can you effectively respond to life at all? The most effective basic

principle of good values is the awareness that we are accountable to the One who gave us life, and that He is holy.

What is your values system based on? A values system is simply the set of priorities on which you base your decisions in life. For example, if you have a temporal values system, you will tend to focus your energies on those things that will produce the most immediate gratification. The more temporal your values are, the less disciplined you will be. A person with a temporal values system will tend, given the opportunity, to sit down and watch television and eat junk food, rather than practice the piano or mow the lawn. We make hundreds of choices each day, and our choices are based on our values system.

The younger we are, the more our choices are made for us. Parents tell us to make our bed, to clean up after ourselves, to go to school, etc. It is always easier to make good choices for someone else, because the wrong thing is almost always easier for ourselves. The older we get, the more responsible we are for making our choices. As we mature, we should gain a greater perspective on life. We make choices based on long-range values. Wisdom is the ability to see from the eternal point of view, and to make choices based on that which will be good a million years from now.

The Apostle Peter gave mankind God's priority list for education. Remember that Peter was himself called "unlearned and ignorant" by the religious leaders of his day. (Acts 4:13) Actually, Peter was far better educated than the men with the theology degrees, because, while they had learned about God from books, Peter had "been with Jesus." Peter had learned about God from God. He had a three and one-

half year degree in "Jesusology." He learned from hands-on practical experience; and he became one of the greatest leaders the world has ever known. Peter was well qualified to talk about education, because he had learned from the greatest Master Teacher of all time.

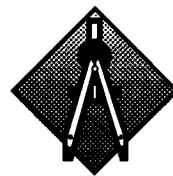
The most important part of education is faith. You have to establish what you believe in. Out of that philosophical base comes every other aspect of your training. Before you know the what and why of life, you have to know the "Who" of life. Jesus said, *"...I am the way, the truth, and the life:...."* (John 14:6) That is fundamental. *"The just, (those who live good and right lives) shall live by faith."* (Romans 1:17)

Once we have established our basic faith system, then we are to focus on character qualities. Add to your faith virtue. God wants to build us into the same image (of Christ), from "glory to glory." (2 Corinthians 3:18) Virtue is the influence of our lives that results from the relationship we have with God. When our hearts are established by a living faith in Jesus Christ, our lives will tend to reflect that by imitating His character qualities. We become like whatever or whoever we focus our attention on in life.

Then we add to our virtue knowledge. How is it that Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and all the other Bible colleges in America which began in the nation's early history have become known for their heathen philosophies, and their blatant rejection of the Bible they were founded on? Generally, it is because they shifted the focus from faith to knowledge. Knowledge without faith puffs up the ego, and creates rebellion and pride. Secularization of education is tragic, because it leads to error and confusion.

The purpose of a good teacher is to inspire, and not just to inform. A good teacher will also acknowledge that education is the sum of our preparation in life. Formal school should not be exalted above the family, but should be subjected to it. The best education centers in a godly home, with an adult-centered atmosphere and a Christ-centered focus. We should be careful to minimize the input we get from godless sources, and to emphasize wisdom and character.

It is these character qualities, rather than knowledge or money, that produce a fruitful and fulfilling life. If we lack these things -- if we do not get a good balanced education -- we will tend to be myopic (near-sighted) in life. We will tend to grab for the immediate gratification, and neglect the more important things. We will make the "soft" choices in life, and fail to diligently make our calling and election sure. If we give ourselves to doing the eternal things, we will never fall.



Methods

Compare the overall educational approach of your community with this priority list.

What are the primary influences on your students' lives at this point?

Do you know how to define the difference between Christian and temporal values?

What is a secular education, and why is it so dangerous?

How does our system of beliefs affect the way we make choices?

What is the most important single goal of your life?

What is the second most important value in your life?

What is number three?

Motivate your students to establish pleasing God as the number one value in life.

Thanks!

Volume 8

Lesson 22



Bible References

Psalms 100

Leviticus 22-23

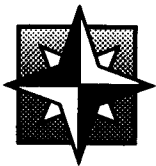
2 Timothy 3

blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3 *"Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,*

4 *"Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;*

5 *"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*



Theme

The closer we get to God, the less grumpy and the more grateful we will tend to be.



Memory Verse

Psalms 136:1

"O give thanks unto the LORD; for {he is} good: for his mercy {endureth} for ever."

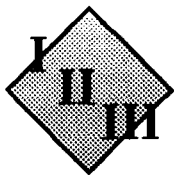


Scripture Reading

2 Timothy 3:1-5

1 *"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*

2 *"For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud,*



Outline

I. The Sacrifice of Thanksgiving.

A. Leviticus 22:29.

1. *"And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the LORD, offer it at your own will."*
 - a. This was not required, as a sin offering.
 - b. God wanted the people to offer it out of a grateful spirit.
2. The people of Israel were encouraged to give an offering just to express thanks to the Lord.

B. Other offerings.

1. Peace offering.
2. Meal (or meat) offering.
3. Sin offering.
4. Burnt offering.
 - a. This was an offering of complete consecration.
 - b. The entire animal was burned.

II. The Difference Between Thanksgiving and Praise.

A. Praise is a focus on the greatness of God.

1. Bragging on God.
2. Exalting His name.
3. "Magnify the Lord with me!"
4. Praise builds faith for believing God to do great things.

B. Thanksgiving is expressing gratitude and appreciation for what He has already done.

1. Thanksgiving builds faith by remembering past blessings.
2. Thanksgiving blesses the heart of God.

III. Thanksgiving and Prayer.

A. Philippians 4:6.

1. Prayer.
2. Supplication.
3. With thanksgiving.

B. Elements of effective prayer.

1. Praise.
2. Worship.
3. Thanksgiving.
4. Petition.
5. Intercession.
6. Communion.
7. Hearing with faith.

IV. Grateful or Grumpy?

A. Sin causes us to focus on what we want, rather than on what we have received.

1. The purpose of advertising.
 - a. To motivate people to desire and buy more than they need or can afford.
 - b. To create covetousness (stimulate the "lust of the eye").
2. The more dominated we are by sin, the less content and thankful we tend to be.
3. The "me generation" is simply a rejection of the teaching of Jesus, who said, *"...It is more blessed to*

give than to receive." (Acts 20:35)

B. Love.

1. Born-again people are more "others-centered," because they are Christ-centered.
2. Love is functional unselfishness; and it causes us to focus on the larger picture.
3. When we love, we see God as the center of our world; and we are more thankful to God and to the people He has used to bless us.

C. We cultivate an attitude of gratitude through:

1. Habitual praise (magnifying God). (Psalms 119:164)
2. Habitual thanksgiving (thanking God and people on a regular basis).
3. Focusing on living life for God, and keeping our eyes away from much television and other worldly preoccupation.
4. Practicing the art of being content with what we have.
5. Making goals based on what we want to become for God, rather than what we want from God.

- God is a loving Heavenly Father, Who greatly loves to be appreciated.
- If you see life as centered around yourself, you will never get enough stuff to really satisfy you.
- Sin causes us to focus on what we want, rather than enjoy what we have received.
- A real "thinker" will tend to be a regular "thanker."
- It is easy to become a habitual complainer; but it takes a deliberate effort to become a habitual giver of thanks.
- Grateful people tend to focus on what they want to become for God, rather than what they want to get from God.



Spiritual Truths

- Even when you feel like complaining, learn to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving.
- We should always approach God with praise and thanksgiving, before we make any petition.



Lesson Material

God is a wonderful God, and life His way is good. We live in such a sin-dominated world that it is easy to get distracted from that. Since God is Spirit, and we live in a time-space, material world, the natural tendency of man is to drift from a focus on God. When we get our attention concentrated on self and things, we become spiritually dull.

Jesus said that in the last days, there would be much spiritual deception. That is the only way Satan can get anywhere with people. When people see God for what and Who He is, and when they see sin for what it really does, there is no contest. You

have to be a fool to reject God and serve Satan. Ah, but so many are, because they are deceived.

What happens as a result of spiritual deception? Spiritually blind people see life on the level of a dog. Whatever feels good, do it. Morality is boring. Virginity is "Victorian." We become self-centered, because the purpose of life is not to please God, but to please self. Does not what Jesus said about the last days agree perfectly with Paul's prophecies about them? Notice his letter to Timothy, his spiritual "son."

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful unholy...." (2 Timothy 3:1-2)

There are other characteristics mentioned, but we can see that they all tie together. They all flow out of a carnal world view. If we do not love God, we will tend to be lovers of self. If we cannot give ourselves in covenant with God, we will have trouble relating to other people. If we see the purpose of life as the pursuit of a good time, then we will tend to expect others to please and gratify us. When people are good to us, we expect it, so what is the big deal? So our parents sacrifice for us. Is that not what parents do?

But if someone violates our "rights" (and we do have lots of rights), we become sullen or angry. Sin turns us inward on ourselves, and makes us ungrateful. It all flows out of the same mind set. The more we reject God and His life principles, the more focused we will be on our own rights. The more we focus on rights, the less we appreciate what others do for us, and the more upset we are when life does not go our way.

Of course, being a Christian does not automatically make us grateful. We still have to work at it. But it is an important first step. As we mature, we see life in a larger perspective, and will tend to be more grateful. Notice that we say "mature" -- not "older." Some people stay selfish and unthankful all their lives, because they never grow up. Gratitude is a sure sign of maturity and increased wisdom.

We can help ourselves cultivate a happy, grateful attitude by practicing thanksgiving. Make it a habit to say positive things about what other people do, and look for excuses to thank them. The Psalmist had a habit of praising God. At least seven times every day, he would make it a point to praise the Lord. It is good to praise other people, too, for their character and for their good deeds. (Flattery focuses on things that they did not really control, such as their physical features.)

God knew that the people of Israel would have a tendency to forget Him, and be attracted to the carnal world around them. So He instructed them about the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and set many dates in their calendar to lay the work aside and seek Him. They were encouraged to give different kinds of offerings, and even to make sacrifices. Now, something is not a sacrifice if it does not cost you anything. We could say that a sacrifice of thanksgiving is that which is offered when your flesh would like to complain. Remember that complaining is an evidence of a focus on rights. Paul said, "Do all things without arguing or complaining." (Philippians 2:14, paraphrased) In simple, laymen's terms, that means, "Do not complain or argue." Instead, give thanks.

We are instructed in the Bible not only to give thanks in all things (1 Thessalonians 5:18), but to give thanks for all things. (Ephesians 5:20) Not only should we "Praise the Lord anyhow," but we should be thankful for everything God does, even when we do not immediately see the benefit. That is where faith takes hold. When you do not understand what God is doing, and you thank Him because you trust Him regardless of the situation, then you know that you have a love relationship with God, and not just a religious persuasion.



Methods

At Thanksgiving time, remember to focus on all the blessings and benefits God

has provided for you in your life. Focus on the good qualities of your parents and family, and thank God for each member, even though they may not all be perfect. Thank God for being God. Are you not glad that Lucifer did not make it to the top job?

Find opportunities to give thanks, both to God and to others.

Make it a point to agree with your whole family that you will go three whole days without complaining or arguing.

Challenge each other to go for one month without watching any television commercials. See if you feel any differently about your purchasing goals and impulse spending. Do you have less desire for high-fat, high-calorie fast food? Did you spend more time reading? Is your brain stronger? Are you more thankful?

The Problem of Mediocrity

Volume 8

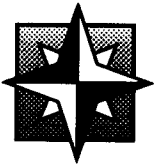
Lesson 23



Bible References

2 Kings 13

Philippians 1



Theme

God has not called us to be half-hearted or mediocre. He has called us to pursue excellence, and to be the very best we can be by His grace.



Scripture Reading

2 Kings 13:14-19, 22-25

14 "Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the

king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.

15 "And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows.

16 "And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand {upon it}: and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands.

17 "And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened {it}. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the LORD'S deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed {them}.

18 "And he said, Take the arrows. And he took {them}. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed.

19 "And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed {it}: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria {but} thrice."

22 "But Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz.

23 *"And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet."*

24 *"So Hazael king of Syria died; and Benhadad his son reigned in his stead."*

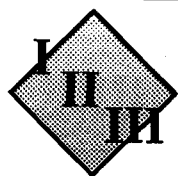
25 *"And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Benhadad the son of Hazael the cities, which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel."*



Memory Verse

Ecclesiastes 9:10

"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."



Outline

I. King Joash.

A. Elisha the prophet was dying.

1. Joash, King of Judah, needed a word from God.

2. He needed help against Syria, a mortal enemy of Judah.

B. King Joash said:

1. "My father, my father...."
 - a. The same thing Elisha said, when Elijah went up to heaven.
 - b. Acknowledging the seniority of the prophet.
 - c. Acknowledging a relationship.
2. "The chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof."
 - a. God is our strength as a nation.
 - b. Not our military might.
 - c. The man of God is more important to national security than the military leaders.

C. Elisha told the king to shoot an arrow.

1. Then he said, "Deliverance from Syria."
2. "You will defeat the Syrians."

D. "Smite the arrows on the ground."

1. Joash hit the ground three times, and quit.
2. "You should have been more zealous."
3. "You will defeat the Syrians only three times."

E. The king's half-hearted effort resulted in a half-way victory.

II. Men of Excellence.

A. Daniel.

1. Known for his "excellent spirit."
2. Daniel 11:32 -- "...The people that do know their God shall be strong, and

do exploits."

B. David.

1. *"He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms."* (Psalms 18:34)
2. David danced before the Lord with all his might. (2 Samuel 6:14)
3. *"...The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;...."* (Psalms 69:9)

C. Paul.

1. *"...Approve things that are excellent;...."* (Philippians 1:10)
2. Paul could not understand people like Demas or John Mark, who were half-hearted, or turned back.
3. *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God...."* (Philippians 3:14)
4. *"I can do all things through Christ...."* (Philippians 4:13)

D. Hebrews 11.

1. God's "hall of fame."
2. "By faith" -- Noah, Abraham, etc.
3. Abel offered an excellent sacrifice.
4. Enoch pleased God.

E. Phinehas. (Numbers 25)

1. Grandson of Aaron the priest.
2. Some of the Israelites were fornicating with heathen Midianites, and bowing to idols.
3. God commanded the Israelites to execute those who blasphemed.
4. One man openly brought a Midianite woman into his tent.
5. Phinehas went into the man's tent with a javelin.
6. He rammed the spear through the man's back, and into the woman's belly.

7. God was pleased with his zeal against sin; and He stopped the plague, which had killed 24,000 Israelites already.

III. God Calls Us to be Whole-Hearted People.

A. Jeremiah 29:13-14.

1. *"And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart,*
2. *And I will be found of you, saith the Lord: and I will turn away your captivity,...."*
3. Matthew 6:33.

B. *"And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."* (Deuteronomy 6:5)

C. Laodoea.

1. The "lukewarm" (mediocre) church.
2. God said, *"...I will spew you out of My mouth."* (Revelation 3:16)
 - a. The people were spiritually lazy, and indifferent.
 - b. Their testimony was, "We have no needs."
3. God said, "Be zealous, therefore, and repent."

D. We are called to be a *"...peculiar (distinct) people, zealous of good works."* (Titus 2:14)

E. *"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;"* (Colossians 3:23)

F. *"Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit;..."* (Romans 12:11)

IV. Zealous for the Things of God.

A. If we are zealous for sports and entertainment but not for God, we are idolaters.

B. The early church.

1. The people were daily in the temple. (Acts 2:46)
2. They sold their possessions, and shared. (vs. 45)
3. "...*They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship,....*" (vs. 42)



Spiritual Truths

- Sin is the greatest enemy of excellence in the human spirit, because it destroys our sense of purpose and destiny in life.
- Jesus never did anything half-heartedly for us.
- Ultimately, we are living this life for God in preparation of eternity; and so our focus should be to please Him.
- Without a vision, no one can stay disciplined for long in life.
- We are a people of diligence and zeal, because we know our God is faithful, and will give us eternal rewards if we do not give up and turn back.
- Hope keeps you steady and strong.

- The word "enthusiasm" should belong to Christians, because the word "enthuse" literally means, "of God."
- It is entirely proper to get excited and shout in church about the things of God. There is nothing on earth more worthy of our zeal than God.
- It is far better to have an excellent spirit and a good name, than to accumulate excellent possessions.



Lesson Material

The story of Joash and the dying prophet Elisha is particularly striking, in that the king was completely obedient to the man of God, but he was rebuked for his lack of intensity. He did the right thing, but not well enough. God was not pleased with his response, because it was half-hearted. If he had known that his handling of the arrows on the floor would directly effect the outcome of the war with Syria, surely he would have stomped them into the ground. But God responded to his heart, and the nation suffered, because one man was mediocre.

We are living in a day when it is easy to be mediocre, especially about the things of the spirit. We are living in the last times, which are prophetically typified in the letter to the church in Laodicea, in Revelation 3. That church was financially prosperous, and times were good. The people were very laid back and content with themselves. They did not even realize that they were so distasteful to God.

Proverbs 29:18 says that without a vision, people perish. The word "vision" refers to spiritual hope and goals. We have to have something to live for -- to look forward to. The word "perish" literally means, "to cast off restraint, to go wild, to be undisciplined." People with no vision tend to reject authority and become undisciplined. No wonder we have such a problem with teen rebellion in nations which remove the Bible from schools. If you take God and eternity out of your national thinking, you remove the reason to be disciplined. If the purpose of life is just to have a good time, then why excel? Why study? Why work hard at anything? Why, with electronics the way they are, you can be a rich, famous musician, without being very good. In fact, they even invented rap music, so people who cannot even carry a tune can be music stars.

But God is not a God of the mediocre. He is a God of excellence. We need a perspective on eternity, so we can have a vision for life. We need to realize that we belong to God, and that we will be held accountable to God for what we do in this life. Sloths and slugs are two creatures known for their slow pace in life. The terms "slothful" and "sluggard" are derived from these animals. Have you ever watched a sloth, or a slug? Ugh! What a life. And yet some people live their lives like that. People in a nation of prosperity and comfort are most likely to be half-hearted. If life is too easy, we are most tempted to be lazy. It is so much easier to turn on a television than it is to do homework or practice the piano.

Solomon said, *"I went by the field of the slothful, and lo,...it was all grown over with thorns,...."* (Proverbs 24:30-31) They have all kinds of excuses for not working. "It is too dangerous." "I might get hurt." (Proverbs 26:13) "It is too cold." (Proverbs

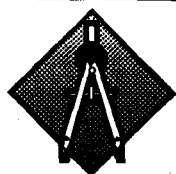
20:4) God says that the slothful think they are very wise, but in the end, they will not get their heart's desire. Remember that the book of Proverbs is speaking about general principles of life. They are not absolutes in terms of spiritual laws, because there are many factors involved in a person's success or failure in life. But generally, laziness tends toward poverty, and lessens a person's potential in life.

The focus of this lesson is that wisdom leads us to be people of intensity and zeal. When we have a vision for eternity, then we can relate to David, and Paul, and all those who considered the things of this life to be far less important than the things of God. There is a time for zeal and intensity in God. We need to stir up our spiritual vision, and exhort one another to be excellent. We need to see good spiritual role models, and get a focus on the Bible.

Jesus was talking about John the Baptist when He said, *"...The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."* (Matthew 11:12) What did He mean? "Violence" and "force" here are both forms of the same Greek word, *biazo*. It means "force, or energy; to press." He was saying that there is a place for intensity and force in the kingdom of God. There is a time for righteous anger. Jesus became angry when He saw the moneychangers in the temple, because He loved God, and He loved the people too much to see them caught up with merchandising, and missing the point of worship. It was not a selfish anger, but an unselfish, righteous anger. He used force to drive them out. He was zealous for the house of God, because He was a Man with a right vision and a devotion to holiness.

When you catch a vision for the eternal things of God, you will become self-disciplined. You will seek to do things

with excellence and zeal. You will want to give generously, play skillfully on an instrument, or do your job in the church with all your heart. Note that David, as a teenager, was famous for his musical skill, his intellectual ability, and his excellence as a fighter. He spent much of his time practicing and honing his skills. He became a great military leader, a great musician and composer, an excellent shepherd, and a mighty king. He seemed to do everything well, because he worked at it. He had a focus on God; and his excellent life was the result of his relationship with God. How much of his time do you think he spent being bitter because his peers rejected him, or sitting around playing video games? He spent his youth studying and developing the skills which benefited him throughout his very successful life.



Methods

Discussion:

What are your goals in life?

What are your spiritual goals for eternity?

What kind of occupation do you think God wants you to pursue in life?

Are you planning to find the will of God and prepare yourself for that, or do you want to decide what you want to do?

What do you want to be when you are an adult? (As opposed to what do you want to do?)

Do you have a skill that you could be considered excellent in doing?

Can you play at least one musical instrument?

Have you had an opportunity to learn a skill, and resisted it, because you did not want to make the sacrifice to become good?

If you were to stand before Jesus and be judged for your life right now, would He say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant?"

The Gospel of Isaiah

Volume 8

Lesson 24



Bible References

Isaiah 40

John 1



Theme

Isaiah and John the Baptist helped to prepare the way for the Messiah, Jesus Christ, Who was God's greatest love gift to the world.



Scripture Reading

Isaiah 40:1-11

1 "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

2 "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is

accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

3 "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

4 "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

5 "And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see {it} together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken {it}.

6 "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh {is} grass, and all the goodliness thereof {is} as the flower of the field:

7 "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people {is} grass.

8 "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

9 "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift {it} up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

10 "Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong {hand}, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward {is} with him, and his work before him.

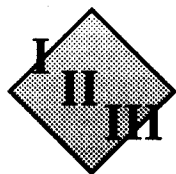
11 "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry {them} in his bosom, {and} shall gently lead those that are with young."



Memory Verse

Isaiah 50:4

"The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to {him that is} weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned."



Outline

I. The Prophet Isaiah.

A. A great man of God who lived in Jerusalem.

1. He prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.
2. His wife was a prophetess.
3. He was highly respected, because his prophecies came to pass.

4. He wore rough, dark clothing.
5. Isaiah was also a good musician.
6. Isaiah's son had the longest name in the Bible: "Mahershalalhashbaz."

B. Under Hezekiah.

1. Isaiah led the nation in repentance when Israel was conquered by Assyria.
2. God sent an angel to kill the Assyrian soldiers.

C. Amazing prophecies.

1. Isaiah pictured the life and death of Jesus, the Messiah, in great detail.
2. He was very accurate, although he prophesied these things 700 years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem.
3. Isaiah prophetically identified with the Lord, as David had done on occasion.
4. Isaiah prophesied about the Persian king Cyrus.
 - a. He would order the return of the exiles from Babylonian captivity.
 - b. This was centuries before Cyrus was even born.
 - c. It was before the nation of Persia had really developed.
 - d. Yet, he mentioned Cyrus by name.
 - e. The Jews used Isaiah's book to persuade Cyrus to let them go home.

D. Isaiah lived many years under several kings.

1. Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, was the most wicked king of Judah.
2. Most historians believe that Manasseh ordered Isaiah sawn asunder (cut up with a saw).

II. The Book of Isaiah.

A. A microcosm of the Bible.

1. 66 chapters.
2. The first 39 deal with judgment.
3. The final 27 deal with salvation, redemption, and restoration.

B. Salvation.

1. Isaiah's name means "the Salvation of the Lord."
2. God saved (delivered) Judah from Israel and Syria. (Chapter 7)
3. God saved Judah from Assyria. (Chapters 8, 37)
4. God, in Isaiah's time, saved Judah from Babylon. (39-48)

C. Spiritual salvation.

1. Prophecies relating to the Messiah, and eternal salvation through His death. (Isaiah 40-48)
2. The Savior. (Isaiah 49-57)
3. The Redeemed. (Isaiah 51-66)

III. Isaiah 40.

A. The beginning of the "New Testament" related section.

B. After the prophecy of captivity by Babylon.

1. Hezekiah had foolishly shown the Chaldeans all his treasure.
2. They went back to plan their conquest.

C. "Comfort ye my people."

1. After that pronouncement of impending captivity, they needed it.
2. Speaks of pardon from iniquity.

D. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

1. This was a prophecy about John the Baptist.
2. God raised him up to be a forerunner for the Messiah.

E. "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed."

1. God with us -- "Emmanuel."
2. Jesus expressed the character and love of God, the Father.

G. Grass.

1. A symbol throughout the Bible of carnal humanity.
2. Trees -- redeemed people.
3. Grass, or straw, is carnal humanity.
4. Grass withers and dies easily.
5. Man is fragile; and his glory is not to be compared to God's eternal glory.

H. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd."

1. Jesus is the Great Shepherd of the sheep.
2. "Peter, feed my sheep." (John 21:15-17)
3. *"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."* (John 10:14)



Spiritual Truths

- God is not limited by time, so He is able to tell very accurate things about the future to His prophets who hear His voice.

- Isaiah was so aware of the coming of the Messiah, that He is called the evangelistic prophet.
- Isaiah was a faithful servant of God, who was willing to do anything God told him to do.
- Isaiah even went naked for three years as an object lesson to show the shame and embarrassment Judah would endure because of their sin.
- The focus of the prophet Isaiah is salvation, as is the Bible.
- Isaiah was one of those "of whom the world was not worthy." (Hebrews 11:38)
- Man is like grass, and the glory of man is like the flower of grass.
- Salvation involves not only deliverance from destruction, but also deliverance from the power of sin.



Lesson Material

Isaiah was a great man who lived in Jerusalem for many years. Not much is known about his background or personal life, but he remains a hero to millions around the world who name the Name of Jesus. Isaiah gave us some of the most vivid word pictures of our Lord, hundreds of years before that great day in Bethlehem when our Savior was born.

The book of Isaiah is a fascinating parallel of the entire Bible. We can see similarities, both in the numbers of sections (66 chapters) and in the themes

(the first 39 deal with judgment, and the last 27 focus on salvation). Isaiah's very name means "salvation." "Salvation" means "to be delivered from destruction, or harm." You can be saved from drowning by a lifeguard. We are saved from the destruction of hell by the grace and mercy of God, when we are born again. We are also saved from a sinful lifestyle by the precious blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Isaiah saw national salvation several times. He saw that the idolatry and wickedness of Northern Israel resulted in their national destruction in 722 B.C. He also saw that Judah was spared, but only because of national humility and repentance before God. You see, although Judah did not adopt idolatry as their national religion as did Israel, they did bring many idols in over the years, and involved themselves in many wicked practices. Judah also failed to keep the feasts and Sabbaths for many years; and later, God raised up Babylon to bring them into a miserable captivity. After a crushing defeat and seventy years of captivity in Babylon, Judah learned to avoid idols. The Jews had many problems after that, but idolatry was not one of them.

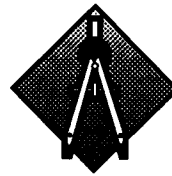
During the earlier years of Isaiah's ministry, he was under a basically good king named Uzziah. Uzziah was king for fifty-two years. When he was influenced by the prophet Zechariah, he kept his focus on God, and he sought after God. *"...As long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper."* (2 Chronicles 26:5) *"But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense."* (2 Chronicles 26:16) He did the same thing that King Saul had done. He became presumptuous, and

usurped the function of the priest. When he argued with Azariah the priest over it, leprosy suddenly came on him, and he died in exile as a leper. That year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah, the young prophet of God, saw a vision. He saw the Lord, *"...high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple."* (Isaiah 6:1) He saw the angels, who cried *"...holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."* (vs. 3) It was through that vision that Isaiah was given his commission to speak for God as a prophet.

Isaiah was a great writer, as well as a musician. Some of his prophecies are in verse in the original Hebrew language, and the overall collection of prophetic verse and prose comprise one of the high points of the world's literature.

But the greatest aspect of the book which makes it such a classic is the fact that, like the Bible as a whole, the theme is salvation. Isaiah kept his focus on God throughout his long life, and he saw through the timeless perspective of divine revelation a clear picture of the Beloved Messiah, Jesus Christ. He looked ahead, and saw a baby, lying in a manger. He said, *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."* (Isaiah 9:6) He identified with His sufferings. He knew he would be *"...despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:...."* (Isaiah 53:3) But most of all, Isaiah knew that this divine Son of God would bear the sins of the world, and bring salvation and healing to those who would believe on His name. He saw through the halls of time, and saw a bold, rough young man, clothed in camel's hair, eating locusts and wild honey, saying, "Prepare the way of

the Lord. Make His paths straight." He saw the Son of God teaching by the sea, healing the sick, and looking with firm determination to the cross, where He would bear the sins of many. Isaiah saw Jesus, and rejoiced to see His day. He continued to be faithful to God, even though the wicked Manasseh rose to power and threatened him with death. He stood for truth, and was granted in the end the highest honor that a wicked world can unwittingly bestow on a man: he was martyred for his faith in God. Blessed be the name of the Lord.



Methods

Challenge the students to look through Isaiah to find Messianic references. After someone reads one, note it on the chalkboard. See how many the class can find and read in a designated amount of time.

Emphasize the parallels between the book of Isaiah and the Bible as a whole. Award a nice prize to the first one to read through Isaiah or memorize a good passage from it.

Make sure sees that the natural types (being saved from natural death or slavery) are symbols of eternal, spiritual salvation (being saved from spiritual death, and the bondage to sin).

Encourage your class to see Christmas as a time to worship Jesus, and to give our hearts to Him who gave His life freely as a ransom for us.

Christmas

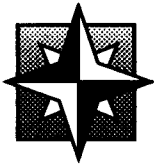
Volume 8

Lesson 25



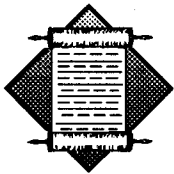
Bible Reference

Luke 2



Theme

Christmas is a time to celebrate God's Love Gift to the world with praise, worship, sharing, and the giving of our hearts and lives to Jesus.



Scripture Reading

Luke 2:4-14

4 "And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

5 "To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

6 "And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7 "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 "And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 "And this {shall be} a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

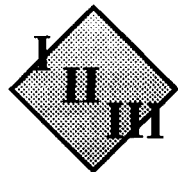
14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."



Memory Verse

Luke 2:10-11

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."



Outline

I. Basic Prophecies.

- A. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.
- B. He would be called a Nazarene.
- C. He would be of the tribe of Judah, and a descendant of David.
- D. Specific prophecies.
 - 1. More than 300 in the Old Testament.
 - 2. These were fulfilled in the life and death of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

II. The Story.

- A. God brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem.
 - 1. God used the Roman tax system.
 - 2. They were required to go to their hometown.
 - 3. The Jews were under the rule of the Roman Empire, which had conquered them.
- B. Why a stable?
 - 1. Jesus came to be the sacrificial Lamb of God.
 - 2. His life was that of a servant. (Philippians 2)
 - 3. He came in humility, as a man.
 - 4. Jesus identified with the human race by being born as a baby.
 - a. "Incarnation" means to "become human."
 - b. Jesus is our "kinsman redeemer." (See the book of Ruth.)
 - c. To do so, He had to be both God and a man.
 - d. He suffered, so that He could identify with man's sufferings. (Hebrews 4:15)
- C. Why Bethlehem?
 - 1. A humble, small town.
 - 2. "Bethlehem" means "house of bread."
 - 3. Jesus said, "I am that bread of life." (John 6:48)
 - 4. Bethlehem was the "city of David."

III. Worship.

A. Shepherds.

1. Received an angelic message.
2. The heavenly host confirmed it to the shepherds.
 - a. Shepherding was a humble profession.
 - b. Jesus identified with shepherds.
 - c. His people are like "sheep."
3. Jesus is:
 - a. The Great Shepherd.
 - b. The Chief Shepherd.
 - c. The Good Shepherd.

B. Wise men from the East.

1. We do not know how many.
2. They saw the incarnation confirmed in the stars.
3. *"...The heavens declare the glory of God;...."* (Psalms 19:1)

IV. Jesus Grew.

A. He increased in wisdom.

1. Intellectual and academic development.
2. Wisdom is seeing life from God's point of view.
3. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
4. Carnal minds cannot have wisdom.

B. And stature.

1. Jesus grew physically.
2. He grew tall, strong, and healthy.

C. And in favor with God.

1. Spiritual development.
2. God was pleased with Jesus.

3. He was unselfish, and sought to please God and His parents.

D. And man.

1. Social development.
2. People liked Him.
3. He was friendly and pleasant.
4. Even little children loved to be around Him.
5. He must have smiled a lot.



Spiritual Truths

- The story of the incarnation is the greatest love story in the history of the world.
- God loved us and sent His Son to die for us, even when we were yet sinners.
- God confirmed the birth of the Messiah of the world to the shepherds, by letting them see a host of angels, praising God.
- God confirmed the message to wise men from the east through the stars.
- Only through the exercise of stubborn will can man study the universe and creation and come to the conclusion that there is no God.
- One with a sinful heart can look at the world and see only confusion, because he is looking at the world through sin-colored glasses.
- God used a wicked Roman government several times to bring

about the exact events in the life of the Messiah, just as prophesied.

- Jesus came to earth as a servant, a shepherd, and a Lamb, to fulfill God's perfect plan for the human race.



Lesson Material

Whenever man invents a religion, he pictures his supreme deity as regal and bigger than life, because man is bent toward ego expression. But Jesus Christ, Who is God the Son and equal with God the Father, became a servant. He "made Himself of no reputation." (Philippians 2:7) He came to a humble town, and was born to a simple young girl by a supernatural conception of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was, then, the incarnate Son of God. But, in His earthly ministry, Jesus loved to call Himself "the Son of Man." He identified with the human race, so that He could become our "kinsman redeemer," as pictured in the Book of Ruth.

The incarnation is history's greatest love story. God became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus is the Light of the world. He was and is the greatest revelation of God to mankind. Never before had men had the opportunity to see the character and wisdom of God so clearly manifested. Never before had God made Himself so vulnerable.

God confirmed this central story of human history to simple shepherds who were living out in the fields. God opened their spiritual eyes, and they saw a large number of angels praising God. Now,

angels are around all the time, but we rarely see them or even realize they are there. But God can give spiritual illumination when He chooses.

There is no sure biblical evidence that the angels sang at any time, but they were certainly saying something we can sing: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men." This was not a guarantee of world peace, but rather the confirmation of the Prince of Peace coming to earth. Regardless of the social climate, you can have peace in your heart and life when Jesus is the resident president. Not all men have good will toward each other; but God certainly extended good will toward men.

God revealed the incarnation to shepherds through the angels; and He revealed it later to a group of wise men from the east, who were observers of the stars. Now, the stars have been around a long time, and so have the constellations. Originally, the constellations were seen as prophetic in nature, pointing to Christ. They are even mentioned in Job, which is the oldest book in the Bible. The original astronomers were honest men who sought God. But for thousands of years, the Zodiac and astrology (perversions of astronomy) have been associated with witchcraft, and have become vehicles of idolatry and unbelief. Rather than see the stars as pointing to God, the astrologers see the stars as a substitute for God.

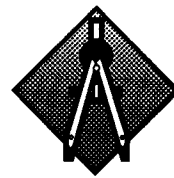
Carnal people imagine that their lives are affected and even controlled by the stars and planets. Astrologers manipulate the lives of multitudes of gullible people with their broad and inaccurate predictions. They publish wildly inaccurate claims each year. When the year reveals that they were seldom correct, the people, amazingly, flock to buy more

of their predictions. We need to understand that our lives are not controlled by the stars, but by the One who made the stars and set them in place. The design of the stars point to the Designer. Wise men saw that the stars were signs; and they followed the signs to Jesus. Today, wise men still see creation as a sign of a Creator, and let the signs point to the reality of God.

Most religions invented by men see the arrival of their deities in grand, majestic shows of force. But Jesus came in humility, to become the "Son of Man." He came, not to demand, but to give. He gave of Himself everywhere He went, with compassion and kindness. He made the ultimate sacrifice, primarily out of love and obedience to the Father. Jesus was the most humble of men, because He related so closely with His Heavenly Father. He came as a servant, and encouraged His followers to have a servant's heart as well.

Even the first man, Adam came as a full-grown adult. But Christ, the "Second Adam," came as a baby in a manger, to be the Lamb of God. We see Him so identify with the human race that He grew from infancy to an adult in a normal fashion. Jesus did not perform a single miracle or start His ministry on earth until He was fully thirty years old -- and then only for a few years. Jesus grew intellectually, physically, spiritually, and socially. He was a balanced, well-rounded individual, with a "normal" life. Through it all, Jesus never sinned. We tend to think of sin as "normal," because we are all born in sin, and it is so common. But Jesus came to live as human, but not carnal. He was human, because He had a human mother.

But Jesus did not inherit the sin nature from His Father, because His Father was God. When we are born, we inherit our blood type from our father, and not our mother. The life is in the blood. Jesus had unique blood -- the only blood worthy to redeem all of lost humanity. Jesus was human, but not carnal. He kept up His prayer life and stayed close to the Father, so that in all that happened, though He was tempted, He never disobeyed once. He was obedient unto death. What a Man!



Methods

Make sure everyone in the class understands and relates to the classic Christmas story.

How could Jesus be very man and very God at the same time?

Why did Jesus not have a sin nature?

What would have happened to the world if Jesus had sinned, or had given up?

What does it mean to have a servant's heart?

What is meekness? (Giving up personal rights with grace and humility.)

Is meekness like weakness?

Is it a strength to be "strong-willed?"

I Was a Teenage Worshipper

Volume 8

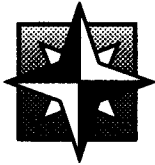
Lesson 26



Bible References

Psalms 96, 27, 150

Revelation 4-5



Theme

If we are going to grow as spiritually healthy people, we must make praise and worship to God a regular part of our lives.



Scripture Reading

Revelation 5:9-14

9 "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain,

and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

10 "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

11 "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

12 "Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

13 "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, {be} unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

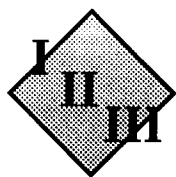
14 "And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four {and} twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever."



Memory Verse

John 4:23-24

"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God {is} a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship {him} in spirit and in truth."



Outline

I. The Power of Praise.

A. Praise in song draws our attention to God.

1. Praise creates an atmosphere for God to dwell in. (Psalms 22:3)
2. Praise to God builds our faith, by reminding us of His power and glory.

B. God loves the praises of pure people.

1. Praise is comely for the upright. (Psalms 147:1)
2. The largest book in the Bible is the Praise Songbook.
3. Psalms is also the central book of the Bible. (The middle chapter of the Bible is Psalms 117. It is also the smallest.)

C. We were created to praise and bless the Lord. (Isaiah 43:21)

D. Biblically, praise is active, and not passive. (Psalms 150)

1. There are 52 references to praise in the dance in the Bible.
2. David danced before the Lord with all his might.
3. There are many references to dancing before the Lord as a deliberate act of worship.
4. Modest, anointed dancing involves interpretive, expressive movement to give glory to God.
5. Carnal dance draws attention to the body (of the dancer), and focuses on the movement of hips, not hands.
6. Modesty in dress and mannerism always draws attention to the countenance.

E. Hebrew words that are translated "praise" in the Bible.

1. **Shachah** -- "To bow down; to do homage; to prostrate oneself (to have the arrogance knocked out of you)." (Psalms 5:7, 22:27, 29:2, 97:5)
2. **Barak** -- "To kneel down, expecting a blessing from God; to bless God as an act of adoration." (Psalms 95:6, 1 Chronicles 29:20, Nehemiah 9:5)
3. **Zamar** -- "To sing praise; to make music with instruments." (Psalms 33:2, 57:7, 71:13, 71:22)
4. **Halal** -- "To celebrate; to be clamorously foolish, to be vigorously joyful, to boast." (Psalms 35:18, 69:30, 34, 104:35, 106:1, 113:1)
5. **Tehillah** -- "To sing, to laud (to sing one's halals)." (Psalms 22:3, 33:1, 34:1, 2 Chronicles 20:22; Isaiah 42:10, 12)

6. **Shabach** -- "To address in a loud tone; to triumph; to glory." (Psalms 63:3-4, 106:47, 117:1)
7. **Ruah** -- "To shout." (Psalms 35:27; Isaiah 12:6)
8. **Yada** -- "To confess sin; to acknowledge God's character; to make a declaration of worship; to throw out one's hands." (Psalms 28:2, 63:4; Nehemiah 8:6)
9. **Todah** -- "To extend hands of thanksgiving and acceptance; to offer a sacrifice of praise." (Psalms 50:14, 2 Chronicles 29:31; Jeremiah 30:19)

II. The Purpose of Worship.

- A. While praise is boasting about God, worship is ministering to God in the spirit, with your spirit.
- B. Worship: Greek *proskúnio* -- "to kiss toward."
- C. John 4:23-24: Worship in spirit and in truth.
 1. In spirit -- by the anointing, with grace in your hearts; with your spirit, as opposed to only your soul (mind, will, emotion).
 2. In truth -- according to the Word of God, and not according to traditions or feeling; a biblical pattern.
 3. Jeremiah 33:11.
 - a. Worship -- the voice of the bride.
 - b. Praise -- the voice of joy and gladness.
 - c. Prophecy and anointed preaching -- the voice of the bridegroom.
- D. John 12:1-8 -- Mary's worship with the costly ointment.

E. Worship -- the activity of heaven.

1. Revelation 4-5.
2. Revelation 19:6.

III. What Hinders Worship?

A. Pride.

1. Focus on self.
2. Inability to acknowledge that we need God.

B. Fear of man.

1. It brings a snare.
2. Fear of people hinders our fear of God.
3. "I cannot praise and worship God, because I am afraid that some 'cool' person might think I am odd."
4. The fact is, there may not be much difference between "cool" and "fool," if it results in an inability to worship God.

C. Sin in the life.

1. Sin separates us from God, because God is holy.
2. Sin causes us to be selfish and insensitive in our spirit, and unable to freely worship.
3. All sin brings bondage.
 - a. You cannot lift your hands, if you are bound with chains of sin.
 - b. Sin makes us very self-conscious, and less God-conscious.



Spiritual Truths

- Praise to God is very beneficial, because it keeps our focus on God, and stimulates our faith.
- One of the best habits you can develop in life is the habit of praising God in and for all things.
- We praise God primarily with our soul and our body; but we can only worship God with our spirit.
- God does not seek to be worshipped (as in forms and rituals); but He seeks worshippers (relationship with people who love Him).
- The most common vehicle to express spiritual praise and worship is music.
- Dance is an expression of praise and worship. The world has perverted the dance by using sensual music to exalt the flesh and to draw praise to the musician, rather than to God.
- Modesty always draws attention to the countenance.
- God's illustration of spiritual worship is the physical intimacy a man and his wife can have in a pure, Christian marriage.
- Singing with grace to the Lord means to sing with spiritual anointing to God, rather than directing all our music to people.



Lesson Material

When Jesus approached the woman at the well in Samaria, He knew she was searching in life. She was a lonely, rejected woman who had tried and failed to have a happy life. She was a despised woman among a despised people. Jesus deliberately came to her and engaged her in a discussion about living water. When she realized that He was a prophet of God, she immediately brought up the subject of worship.

Jesus gave to her a powerful principle about God. To this one "unimportant" person, the Lord of the universe gave some of the great secrets of life. As most of us do, she was looking for the right "organization" and style of worship. Jesus let her know that God is a Spirit, and that true worship meant relationship, or spiritual intimacy with God. God is not looking for a big crowd of people who are willing to go to heaven. Everyone wants to make heaven their home, but not everyone wants to repent of their sins and serve God. We want to be "our own person."

We are all three parts -- body, soul, and spirit. Our body is sense-conscious; our soul is self-conscious; and our spirit is God-conscious. People who focus their lives on the physical are sensual. They are called "carnal," "natural" men, or even "dogs." A dog is ruled by his appetites, and so are some people. Paul said that "their god is their belly." (Philippians 3:19) People whose lives center in the intellectual or the emotional realm are "soulish." They go by feeling, or by their

logic. People whose lives are focused on God and on eternal values are called "spiritual."

When we are born again, we are born "of the Spirit." God's Holy Spirit moves in our lives, and our spirit comes alive. We are able to see that life consists of more than temporal values, and that we are designed by God for eternity. We realize that we have a spiritual God, and an eternal home, and spiritual enemies. We realize that the most important and enduring aspects of life are the things that we do not see with the natural eye.

A strong evidence that you are physically alive is that you are breathing. The body requires a continual flow of fresh oxygen. If the body is dead, there is no need for respiration. Similarly, one strong evidence that you are spiritually alive is praise and worship. Sin makes us too self-centered and self-conscious to be responsive to God. But when we are spiritually alive, we are sensitive in our conscience to sin; and we are also sensitive to spiritual things. When we praise and worship God, we not only demonstrate that we are spiritually alive, but we also build our spiritual strength.

We need to understand the difference between praise and worship. Praise is bragging on God. There are times when it is appropriate to praise people, as a means of encouragement. But there is never an appropriate time to worship anyone other than God. Today, many entertainers are worshipped, and even called "idols;" but this is an abomination to God. Our modern western culture has largely replaced Christianity with the worship of money and pleasure, and we exalt entertainers instead of God. As Christians, we need to be careful to keep our adoration where it belongs. If we can get

more excited and enthused about a ball game or an amusement park than we can about praising God, we are in spiritual trouble. The very word "enthuse" means "of God;" and God deserves that we reserve our highest praise and our deepest emotion for Him.

The Hebrews in the days of king David understood praise. In every culture, the language tends to express the values of the society. Desert nomads will have about 25 different words for "camel;" and Eskimos have more than 30 words for "snow." Today, in America, the two things that we have the most synonyms for are: 1.) "drunkenness," and 2.) "sex." Pleasure is now the largest industry in the nation. Does this indicate something about our national religious condition?

Praise expresses admiration and appreciation for God. Praise is good, and it helps us develop a grateful heart, as well as faith. Worship, on the other hand, is ministering to God with our spirit. It is intimacy with the Father, our Creator. Only those who have the Holy Spirit living in them can worship God. Worship is joining our spirit in communion with God's Spirit. Just as a pure marriage union requires the "forsaking of all others," so true worship requires that we belong exclusively to God. Our music should always center on Him, Who is worthy of all praise. Our greatest delight should be in Him. If we have a love for God's Word, for His people, and for corporate worship, then we have further indication that the Holy Spirit is living in us.

Satan has many counterfeits, to confuse us and to draw our hearts away from God. Not everything that claims to be Christian is so, either in doctrine or in music. Jesus said, "Be careful that you do not become deceived." (Matthew 24:4, paraphrased)

Try the spirit of the music, and the message of the musician. Some music can stimulate the flesh and the soul, but will damage your spirit. Does the music you listen to cause you to want to think about God, and read the Bible more? Or does it just make you feel good? Is your music addictive, or is it edifying? Does your music exalt the singer, or Jesus? "*O sing unto the LORD a new song :....*" (Psalms 96:1)



Methods

Goals

To define and understand the difference between praise and worship.

To discern the difference between sensual and spiritual music.

To recognize and war against the things that keep young people from worshipping God with freedom and joy.

Discussion

Personal evaluation (not to be answered publicly):

Am I as zealous for God as I am for sports or music?

Do I personally enjoy God's presence, or just the music and things associated with church?

Can I freely enter into uninhibited praise and worship, without worrying about what my peers will think I look like?

When we praise the Lord, do I think about God, or about what I sound and look like to others?

Is there sin in my life that keeps me from being a worshipper?

Does not God deserve my highest praise and sincere worship?

Am I able to relate to God and worship Him in private, or can I feel something only in church?

Do I really love God?

The Ark of the Covenant

Volume 8

Lesson 27

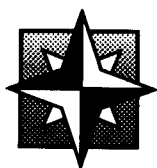


Bible References

1 Chronicles 13

Exodus 25

Ephesians 2



Theme

The emphasis of the Bible is not on the house Jesus is building for us, but is on the house we are building for God to dwell in. The ark of the covenant is a particularly beautiful picture of God's plan for His people.



Scripture Reading

Exodus 25:1-2, 8, 10-14, 16-18, 20, 22

1 *"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,*

2 *"Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering."*

8 *"And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them."*

10 *"And they shall make an ark {of} shittim wood: two cubits and a half {shall be} the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof.*

11 *"And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about.*

12 *"And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put {them} in the four corners thereof; and two rings {shall be} in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it.*

13 *"And thou shalt make staves {of} shittim wood, and overlay them with gold.*

14 *"And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them."*

16 *"And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee.*

17 "And thou shalt make a mercy seat {of} pure gold: two cubits and a half {shall be} the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof.

18 "And thou shalt make two cherubims {of} gold, {of} beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat."

20 "And the cherubims shall stretch forth {their} wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces {shall look} one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be."

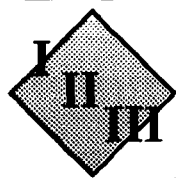
22 "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which {are} upon the ark of the testimony, of all {things} which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel."



Memory Verse

Deuteronomy 7:9

"Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he {is} God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;"



Outline

I. What Was the Ark?

A. Commission of the ark.

1. God is everywhere; but, He specifically dwells in His covenant people.
 - a. A corporate expression of the temple of God.
 - b. Ephesians 2:22; Psalms 22:3.
2. The "Shekinah Glory" of God.

B. Construction of the ark.

1. To be built by the anointed master craftsman, Bezaleel.
2. Shittim wood.
 - a. Gnarled, twisted wood from the acacia tree.
 - b. Why not cedar or oak? Would they not be better suited for the most important piece of furniture on earth?
 - c. God takes our warped humanity, and, with the hand of the Master Carpenter (Jesus), creates a "vessel unto honor."
3. Covered inside and out with gold.
 - a. Gold -- a type of the glory of God.
 - b. All you can see is His glory, when we are covered.
4. Two cherubims: Overshadowed by angels.

C. Contents of the ark.

1. The 3 items in the ark illustrate the way God designed the spirit of man.
 - a. Tables of the law -- conscience.
 - b. Aaron's rod that budded -- intuition.
 - c. Golden pot of manna -- communion.
2. *"The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord,...."* (Proverbs 20:27)

II. Ark of the Covenant.

A. God used the ark to symbolize His covenant with Israel.

1. The old covenant, based on faith and obedience to God.
2. Sins were atoned for (covered) by the blood of the sacrificial lambs.

B. Covenant.

1. A binding agreement, joining two parties together.
2. Christianity is a covenant, initiated by God.
 - a. Offered to all the descendents of Adam.
 - b. "Whosoever will" may come to God on the basis of the blood of Jesus, the "Lamb of God."
3. The blood of the lamb was offered by the high priest once a year to cover the sins of the people.
4. Jesus offered His own blood on the mercy seat of heaven.
 - a. He is our High Priest forever.
 - b. He is also the Lamb of God that was slain, and is alive forevermore.



Spiritual Truths

- God is the God of covenant, Who will never be the one to initiate the breaking of a covenant.
- A covenant is more than a contract. It involves two parties who give themselves to each other without reservation, with the vow never to violate that trust.
- The ark of the covenant is the heart of the old covenant, which is God's vivid illustration of the new covenant.
- The ark is a picture of God's glory on sanctified humanity -- this treasure in an earthen vessel.
- Wood is a type of humanity; and gold is a type of God's glory.
- The Bible is full of seemingly mundane and boring details which become living truths, when we see them through the New Testament perspective.
- The house that we are building for God to dwell in is vastly more detailed in the Bible than the house He is building for us to dwell in.
- God has always been a God of mercy and truth. He never changes.



Lesson Material

What is this? A lesson for teenagers about a wooden box? The secular world has done some strange things with its occult version of the legend of the lost ark. Actually, it is an interesting story, and a fascinating picture of God's plan for man.

God does nothing by accident. Every word in the Bible has a purpose. The Word of God is full of rich insights. We must look closely, and we must be led by the Spirit of Truth to find them. The Psalmist said, *"I will rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil."* (Psalms 119:162) Now, "spoil" does not mean rotten bananas, but "spoils of war" -- the treasures of defeated enemies. This was the "thrill of victory." The Psalmist had great delight in the Word of God. It can be a great adventure to dig into the Word. Sometimes Sunday School teachers work so hard to make the Bible simple and easy to understand, that they leave the impression that there is not much to it. How many people today who were exposed to simplistic and uninspired teaching as children are saying "I know all about God and the Bible" -- when they actually are extremely ignorant. They just heard the same few stories over and over, and did not get much "meat" from the Word.

Let us look at something that the Holy Spirit emphasizes in the scriptures, and find out why. The ark of the covenant was not only a symbol of God's abiding presence, but it was also a place where God actually dwelled in a specific, manifest presence. The ark was a picture of

sanctified man. The ark of the covenant was kept in the holy of holies, an inner room of the tabernacle, or tent of meeting. The tent had several thick layers, with different kinds of material, so that the only light in the room was the glory of God. The power of God was so strong that if the high priest entered without being properly cleansed and prepared, he would drop dead. The high priest entered once a year to offer the atoning blood of the sacrificial lamb, to cover the sins of all the people who were in covenant with God. This was later fulfilled when Jesus approached the "mercy seat" of heaven, and as our High Priest, offered up His own blood to atone for the sins of all the people -- not for a year, but for eternity.

The ark was made out of acacia wood, from the shittim tree. Now carpenters do not like this kind of wood for building anything. It was gnarled, twisted wood; and it required a master craftsman to make it straight and useful. But for a picture of us, nothing could be more perfect. Sin has left all of us crooked, and useless. We were hopelessly twisted and perverted by sin. But Jesus is the Master Craftsman, Who can take a life and make it whole, clean, and straight. He can smooth the rough edges, and make us "fit for the Master's use." There are many references in the Bible to show that trees are a type of humanity. Can you name one?

Gold is consistently a type of the glory of God in scripture. The Hebrew word for "glory" means "weighty, important, valuable." Gold has always been precious; and purified gold has great beauty. The ark was completely covered over with gold. When we are in covenant relationship with God, we are covered by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. As we abide in Him, His glory is seen in our lives. God does not redeem us to live in our crooked

state of sin. He calls us to holiness. He redeemed us from sin, and not just from its consequences. He is able to live in us and through us, and to make us clean and pure.

There were three items later placed in the ark of the covenant: the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets with the Ten Commandments. It is interesting that these three things just happen to illustrate the three parts of our spirit. While our soul is mind, will, and emotion, our spirit is our intuition, communion, and conscience.

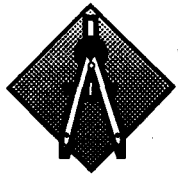
"Intuition" means "inner teacher." Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as the One who would *"...guide you into all truth:...."* (John 16:13) This does not mean that we should not listen to anointed teachers, because Jesus Himself calls men to teach the Word. But it does mean that when the Holy Spirit is in us, we will "bear witness" to truth, and have an instinct that warns us away from false prophets and teachers. As His sheep, we know His voice. (John 10:4)

Communion is the faculty of man to relate to and commune with God. We can only worship God in Spirit and in truth. (John 4:23) We do not worship God with our soul. It is the faculty of the spirit of man that is called the "candle of the Lord." (Proverbs 20:27) This spiritual ability to know and relate to God is illustrated by the golden pot of manna, because bread is the symbol of fellowship and communion. Manna was a kind of bread that was provided by God in a supernatural way, reminding us that Jesus Christ is now "the Bread of life." (John 6:35)

Conscience is also like an inner teacher. Our conscience is a sensitivity to wrongdoing. It is like the sense of pain to the

body. Our skin is full of nerve fibers, which are sensitive to different kinds of sensations. In fact, there are seven kinds of nerves, making us sensitive to heat, pressure, etc. When the hand touches a hot stove, the nerves tell the brain, which send a signal to the muscles of the arm: "Get off of there, quickly!" Our conscience warns us of the spiritual dangers of sin. If we continue to violate our conscience, it can eventually become *"...seared with a hot iron."* (1 Timothy 4:2) Just as nerve endings can become insensitive, the conscience can become deadened. This condition of an insensitive conscience is called being "reprobate." Do you wonder how some people can do extremely evil deeds? This helps to explain it, along with the understanding of demon possession.

The ark was the most important piece of furniture in history. As you can see, it was not full of angry, claustrophobic demons (as in the secular movies); but it was full of reminders of God's grace. Is the ark buried somewhere? Probably not. God has been very gracious to make sure that many of these types were destroyed, because people have such a tendency to worship the symbol, instead of God. What if God had not buried Moses in a secret grave? There would be great temples and shrines to the holy bones today. God allowed the Babylonians and other nations who conquered Israel to destroy the ark and other symbols; so we are again encouraged to seek God and worship Him in spirit and in truth. Only religious fanatics go in search of the Holy Grail. But wise men search for God, and find Him through Jesus Christ.



Methods

Try to find a model or at least a picture of the ark of the covenant.

Bring a model or diagram of the tabernacle of Moses.

Stress the importance of types and shadows in the Bible, and the danger of

focusing on the vessel, instead of the treasure.

Discussion:

What other spiritual truths can you see in the tabernacle?

God gave specific instructions in great detail about the building of the ark.

Does this say something about the way we should build our lives by His plan?

A Positive Self-Image

Volume 8

Lesson 28



Bible References

Psalms 139

1 Samuel 9

2 Timothy 3

1 Chronicles 4

Romans 6, 8

Ephesians 1

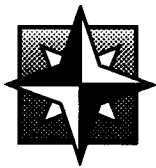


Scripture Reading

1 Chronicles 4:9-10

9 *"And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow.*

10 *"And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep {me} from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested."*



Theme

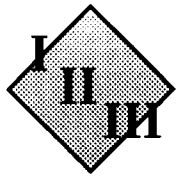
The biblical key to dealing with low self-esteem is not to develop high self-esteem, but to pursue humility and godly self-acceptance.



Memory Verse

Philippians 2:3-4

"{Let} nothing {be done} through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."



Outline

I. Low Self-Worth.

A. A common problem with teenagers today.

1. Poor self-image -- "I do not feel good about myself."
2. "I am not as good as other people."
3. "I do not think anyone loves me, including God."
4. "I am not valuable, and my life is not a good one."

B. Causes:

1. Weak families.
2. Lack of parental praise and encouragement.
3. Physical, emotional and sexual abuse.
4. Guilt.
5. Bitterness.
6. Humanistic education.
 - a. Evolution ("life just happens").
 - b. "We are just another species of mammals."
 - c. "There are no absolutes in life."
7. The world's value system.
 - a. Focus on temporal values.
 - b. Establishment of personal worth by our wealth or beauty.
 - c. In America, the phrase "How much is he worth?" is followed by a dollar amount.
 - d. Our culture worships money.

C. Root cause: Sin.

1. The quality of life that gives us intrinsic worth is the presence of God.
2. In Christ, we have:
 - a. Purpose.
 - b. Hope.
 - c. Vision.
 - d. Function.
 - e. Dominion.
3. Sin separates us from God.
4. Because of sin, we have:
 - a. Eternal consequences.
 - b. Broken relationships.
 - c. Loss of purpose, hope, love.
 - d. Separation from God.

II. Jabez.

A. Name meant "Sorrow," or "Sad-Sack."

1. So named, because his mother felt bad.
2. His name had nothing to do with his character, nor his lot in life.

B. But Jabez was more honorable (important, successful, esteemed by God) than his brethren.

1. He turned to God, instead of people, to lift his spirit ("bless me, indeed").
2. He sought for more of God ("enlarge my coast").
3. He asked for God's help ("that your hand will be with me").
4. He asked God to keep him from becoming bitter ("keep the evil from getting to me, so it will not grieve me, and I develop a bad attitude").

C. Jabez stood out in history as a successful man, because he looked to God as his source, and did not become bitter when life was not fair.

III. Self-Esteem, or Self-Acceptance?

A. World's solution to low self-esteem.

1. Build self-esteem (pride) by:
 - a. Positive confessions.
 - b. Bragging on yourself.
 - c. Being more assertive.
2. But when you build your self-image with pride, you are building with wood, hay, and stubble. (1 Corinthians 3:12)
3. *"...God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace (supernatural help and strength) to the humble."* (1 Peter 5:5)
4. Self-esteem makes you feel better about yourself; but it prevents you from receiving God's grace.
 - a. God knows the proud *"...afar off."* (Psalms 138:6)
 - b. Pride is an undue focus on self -- comparing self with other people.
 - c. Pride is the great sin that caused the fall of Lucifer.
 - d. God hates a proud look. (Proverbs 6:16-17)

B. God's surprising answer to the problem of low self-esteem: Humility.

1. Humble yourself, and God will exalt you. (1 Peter 5:6)
2. Cast your cares on God; and look to Him as your source in life. (1 Peter 5:7)
3. Become content with what you have from God, and with who you are in God. (Hebrews 13:5)

C. Godly self-acceptance.

1. Not a focus on self, but a focus on God, and what He has done in and for me.

a. *"...He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."* (1 Corinthians 1:31)

b. God is good; and I am loved by Him.

2. I am what I am by the grace of God. (1 Corinthians 15:10)
3. I am accepted (by God) in the "Beloved." (Ephesians 1:6)
4. God created and designed me; and He has a wonderful plan for my life.
5. Every good thing in me is because of God's love.
6. I accept the things I cannot change; and I believe God has a purpose for them, even though I do not understand them all. (Romans 8:28)
7. I do not understand why people have treated me this way, but I trust God.
8. Even if God kills me, I will still trust Him. (Job 13:15)

IV. How to Overcome a Negative Self-Image.

A. Repent of your sins.

1. The secular approach would be to justify yourself, by saying, "I am OK. I cannot help it. I am a victim, etc."
2. In repentance, we take responsibility for our actions, and plead guilty before God's throne of justice.

B. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive God's forgiveness.

1. 1 John 1:9.
2. God does not forgive anyone's sins, unless they confess them, and ask for forgiveness.
3. God can and will forgive you, because the penalty for sin was paid by His Son.

C. Forgive people who have sinned against you.

1. If you have been abused, tell your parent or a person in authority, so that the abuser can get help and be stopped.
2. But you can still forgive him in your heart.
3. Realize, if you are a victim, that abusers are victims of sin. Pray for them.

D. Dedicate your life to Jesus Christ.

1. Decide to serve Him with your whole heart.
2. Dedicate your body to Him. (Romans 12:1-2)
3. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ. (Romans 8:1)

E. Reckon (think of) yourself as dead to sin, and alive to God. (Romans 6)

F. Focus on the fact that God created and designed you; and seek to know His purpose for your life.

1. Give yourself to learning, growing and preparing for service.
2. Look for ways to help other people in life.

G. Cultivate an intimate relationship with God.

1. Prayer.
2. Daily Bible reading.
3. Worship.
4. Christian fellowship.
5. Commitment to a local church.

H. Let your sense of self-worth be tied to your relationship with God, and not to other people's opinions or actions.

1. "...If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)
2. "...This I know; for God is for me." (Psalms 56:9)



Spiritual Truths

- Self-esteem training is a carnal approach to treating a symptom instead of the root of the problem of low self-worth; and it is basically not biblical.
- You cannot gain true honor by building yourself up, especially if you compare yourself with other people.
- The way to honor is humility, not pride.
- The root cause of low self-esteem is sin, either in our own lives, or in the lives of people who affect us.
- The keys to a positive self-image are humility, repentance, faith, forgiveness, and dedication to God.
- Some people are more honorable in the sight of God than others, because of their responses toward Him in life.
- God is no respecter of persons. If He valued or rewarded everyone equally, He would be showing partiality to those who were not faithful, diligent, or ethical.
- Your worth is not determined by what you have or by what you look like; but it is affected by how you give, and how you respond to God in life.



Lesson Material

Words are important. The way we use and define words can greatly affect our influence on people. As Christians, we should be careful to avoid picking up non-biblical words to use in our work to help people. Our tendency is to deal with symptoms, rather than find biblical root causes. For instance, if a person goes to a psychologist complaining that he feels people take advantage of him, the natural reaction would be to advise him to "stop letting people push you around. Be more assertive." But this is not biblical. We are called to be a servant. If he has a problem, it is not because he was serving, but because he has a problem with unforgiveness, or a selfish attitude. His complaint is probably a "smoke screen."

The question of low self-esteem is also one which leads to dealing with symptoms. Esteem relates to a values assessment. In Western nations today, there is a problem with poor self-image, because of the breakdown of the family. Many parents today fail to give their children enough praise and emotional support. In fact, some even physically or sexually abuse their children. This is devastating to a child, who tends to grow up feeling devalued. The home should be the safest place on earth emotionally; but sin has brought the problems of bickering parents, divorce, abuse and drunkenness, and has generally turned the hearts of the fathers from the children. Then these same children go to a school which teaches the religion of secular humanism and the doctrine of evolution. This also contributes to a negative self-image,

because we are portrayed as merely evolved mammals, with no real destiny or hope. To take God out of education is to pervert life as it was designed, and damages the potential of the human spirit.

We should note also that Eastern cultures tend to produce a poor self-image. Hinduism is based on the false notion of reincarnation -- that life is an endless cycle of different incarnations. Cows are more important than people; and if you do not like your life, just wait around and die, and hope for a better round next time. Buddhism focuses on ancestor worship. You are always inferior to your elders, and have an endless list of people to bow down to. Christians respect their elders -- but we do not worship them.

So, we have a worldwide problem with poor self-image. We do not feel good about ourselves, and do not enjoy life very much. On the surface, it seems simple: counter low self-esteem with high self-esteem. Tell people how unique and special they are, and build up their egos. But we should be careful about how we use our words. Remember that self-esteem really means pride; and we recognize that word immediately as a sin which God condemns strongly. The basic point is that we should be careful that we do not, with sincere intentions, lead people to focus on themselves, because that is at the heart of the sin problem. Positive confessions about yourself can make you feel good; but this can lead into the dangerous realm of selfish introspection, rather than faith, which is a focus on God.

Self-esteem says, "I am valuable. I have potential. I am lovable. I am good." Godly self-acceptance says, "I have been created by God. I have purpose, because God has a good plan for me. I am loved, because God loves me. I have hope, because I belong to

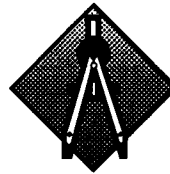
Him, and He is able to keep me from falling." Do you see the difference? The self-esteem movement deals with symptoms; but self-acceptance focuses on God, and is part of a real solution, because it relates to the real root problem -- sin.

The secular world has a tendency to avoid guilt and personal responsibility. We want to tell a person that his problems were caused by other people. We want to excuse our sins and justify our "mistakes." But God's Word teaches us clearly that the way to deal with guilt is to accept responsibility, and ask forgiveness. God does not save good people -- only sinners. As long as your feeling good about yourself, you cannot get right with God. So what if you feel good about yourself, if God does not receive or respect you?

What is wrong with godly sorrow? Why are we so careful to avoid making people feel guilty? Why do we tell a drunkard that "he has the disease of alcoholism?" Does that mean he is a victim, and did not choose to drink? Where is "alcoholism" in the Bible? Some prominent preachers are so focused on positive confession, that they say that the real problem in life is low self-esteem, and that God just wants us to feel good about ourselves. This is dangerous thinking. The problem in life is sin, and godly sorrow is good, because it leads us to repentance. (2 Corinthians 7:8-10) The mission of the church is not to get people to feel good, but to get people saved; and how can people really repent of their sins, if they are just feeling good about themselves?

Jabez is a good biblical illustration of people who were abused or rejected in life. He was given a label (name) which was negative. Negative names can hurt. Note that he was given this disadvantage in life because of the way his mother felt. It was

not his fault. Life was unfair; but what was he going to do about it? Instead of becoming bitter and excusing himself from achievement in life because he was a victim, Jabez turned to God as his source. He asked God to help him, and to be with him. His prayer, "...Keep me from evil,..." (1 Chronicles 4:10) was not really asking God, "Please do not let anything bad happen to me;" but rather, it meant "God, do not let problems in my life get to me and control my spirit. Help me to stay sweet, even if some things in life are bitter." God honored Jabez, and called him "...more honorable than his brethren:...." (1 Chronicles 4:9) His self-worth came when he looked to God, instead of to people or himself, as his source. This is faith. This is wisdom.



Methods

Discussion:

Talk about your culture. Are there things that come to mind that are prevalent, which tend to cause people to feel poorly about themselves?

Do you feel good about yourself?

Do you often wish you were someone else?

What kinds of people does the secular world focus on?

How can humility actually make us feel better about ourselves, than pride can?

What is the difference between self-esteem and self-acceptance?

God is no respecter of persons. Does that mean that he values and rewards everyone equally? No, because He is perfectly just. Those who obey are rewarded; and those who rebel suffer consequences.

Review the biblical ways to build a positive self-image, and compare them with the world's ways.

Spirit, Soul and Body

Volume 8

Lesson 29

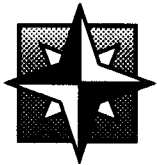


Bible References

Psalms 42

Hebrews 12

John 4



Theme

It is important for Christians to understand the difference between their soul and their spirit, and to know how they operate.



Scripture Reading

Romans 8:1-10

1 "{There is} therefore now no condemnation to them which are in

Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

2 "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

3 "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

5 "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

6 "For to be carnally minded {is} death; but to be spiritually minded {is} life and peace.

7 "Because the carnal mind {is} enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

8 "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

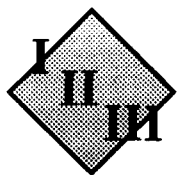
10 "And if Christ {be} in you, the body {is} dead because of sin; but the Spirit {is} life because of righteousness."



Memory Verse

Hebrews 4:12

"For the word of God {is} quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and {is} a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."



Outline

I. Spirit, Soul and Body.

A. 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

B. The spirit.

1. The God-conscious part of our being.
 - a. Conscience.
 - b. Intuition (inner teacher).
 - c. Communion (ability to commune with God's spirit).
2. Soul -- the self-conscious part of man.
 - a. Mind.
 - b. Will.
 - c. Emotion.
3. Body -- the sense-conscious part of man.
 - a. Senses.
 - b. Appetites.
 - c. Lusts.

C. In God's image.

1. "Human" means "in God's image."
2. "Let us make man in our image,...." (Genesis 1:26)
3. God is three Persons, yet one God.
 - a. Father.
 - b. Son.
 - c. Holy Ghost.

II. The Spirit.

A. God is Spirit.

1. Spirits are eternal.
2. God has no beginning or ending.
3. Spiritual beings such as angels were created; and they had a beginning, but have no ending.
4. Man was created as spirit; and he also has a beginning, but no ending.
5. Eternal life is defined as eternal relationship with God, and not merely existence.

B. Spirit precedes matter.

1. Material things were created by God.
2. All physical things are created and formed by God.
3. God took physical, inorganic matter, and breathed His life into it to form man.
4. All other creatures on earth were simply created, and were not given the breath of spiritual life by God.
5. Among all physical creatures, only man has an eternal or living soul and a spirit.

C. "The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD,...." (Proverbs 20:27)

III. The Soul.

A. The soul is the self conscious part of man.

1. Personality.
2. Three parts to the soul:
 - a. Mind.
 - b. Will.
 - c. Emotion.
3. Psalms 103:1-- *"Bless the LORD, O my soul:...."*
4. Psalms 42:5 -- *"Why art thou cast down, O my soul?...."*

B. The mind.

1. The intellectual faculty of man.
2. We should discipline our mind, in order to keep our thoughts on those things which are good and pure. (Philippians 4:8)
3. Isaiah 26:3 -- *"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee:...."*

C. The will.

1. The capacity of man to choose to obey or to disobey.
2. God created man a free moral agent.
3. The will is illustrated in the Bible as our "reins."

D. Emotion.

1. Feelings are a part of the soul aspect of man.
2. Our emotions are greatly affected by what we know, by what we think, and by our physical well-being.
3. Our emotions are also affected by our responses in the spirit.
 - a. David spoke to his soul in Psalms 103:1.
 - b. See also Psalms 42:5.

IV. What Is a Spiritual Person?

A. A natural man.

1. A natural man is one who is not born again.
2. His spirit is dead, or dormant.
3. He cannot relate to spiritual things, because he is spiritually blind. (1 Corinthians 2:14)
4. His "god" is his belly.
5. His focus is on fleshly things.

B. The carnal man.

1. A carnal person is one whose life is dominated by the soul.
2. Some people are ruled by their emotion.
3. Some people live only by and for the intellect. (1 Corinthians 1:22)
 - a. The Greeks sought after wisdom.
 - b. They thought, "If I cannot understand it, then it must not be true."
 - c. They worshipped their own intellect.

C. The spiritual man.

1. One whose life is dominated by his spiritual nature.
2. One who is led by the Spirit of God, and not just by what he feels or thinks.
3. His affections are on eternal things. (Colossians 3:1-3)
4. He loves the things of God more than the things of this natural life.
5. His hopes and his vision are based on the things of God, and not on the things of man.
6. One who is joined to God in a covenant. (1 Corinthians 6:17)
7. One who lives to please God, rather than self.

8. One who rules over his flesh, and is not controlled by fleshly appetites.
(Galatians 5:16, 17)

- We feed our spirit with the Word of God, just as we feed our bodies natural food.



Spiritual Truths

- All physical matter had a beginning point and was created by God, Who is a Spirit.
- The spirit world is just as real as the physical world; but those who are not born again simply cannot relate to it.
- Our spirit is the God-conscious part of our being, including conscience, communion and intuition.
- Our soul is our self-conscious being, including our mind, will, and emotion.
- Our body is our sense-conscious part, which includes our senses, appetites and lusts.
- God created man to be predominantly spiritual, and to see his body as being a temple for the Spirit of God.
- Sin destroys the spiritual life and vitality, and causes the flesh to dominate over the soul.
- If we build up our spirit in God, we will automatically bring the flesh under subjection.
- If we center our lives around the flesh, we will naturally diminish and weaken our spirit.



Lesson Material

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had been created perfect. There was no sin. There was only joy, peace, and harmony. Man had perfect dominion over the earth and over himself. His soul was in absolute harmony with God, and his body was perfect, with nothing to cause decay or death. He could have lived forever in that state; but sin came because of Satan, who beguiled Eve, leading Adam to sin against God. Sin is rebellion which takes possession of the life, establishing a wrong kind of ownership.

God rightly owns us; but when we sin, we seek to become "our own person." When Adam and Eve sinned, they damaged their spiritual perception. Before they sinned, they saw one another through spiritual eyes. They saw one another clothed with the glory of God. But sin brought the knowledge of good and evil, and it diminished their spiritual potential in life. They saw their nakedness, and they were ashamed. They saw one another through fleshly, sinful eyes; and it changed the course of history. Sin brought spiritual separation from God, which is spiritual death. It also established physical death as a principle and a part of the human condition from that point onward. God created man a little lower than the angels, but much higher than the created animals. Angels are spiritual beings that

do not have a body. Animals are physical beings that do not have a spirit.

God created man in his own image. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are three; yet they are one God. God the Father is Spirit. The Holy Spirit is also a Spirit. Jesus Christ, the fullness of the Godhead bodily, became flesh and dwelt among us. He is the only member of the Holy Trinity that has a physical body; and yet they are so interrelated and of one substance that they are rightly spoken of as one God. There is one God. We are not gods and we never will be gods, but there is a little bit of a picture of God in the way God designed us. God designed us with a spirit, soul, and body. It is the spirit that gives life to the body. Scientists know that the body is chemically composed of the same basic elements as inert (inorganic) matter. The difference is that God took the dust of the ground and breathed life into it.

The very word "spirit" means "breath," and it is the essence of life. That is the reason that some things in creation have life. They grow, they deteriorate, and they die. Non-living objects remain inorganic. No matter what the cartoon movie says, the wooden puppet can never become a boy, even if he wishes upon a star.

The basis of inorganic life is the Spirit of God. Man has never succeeded in creating life out of inorganic matter. It takes life to produce life. Which came first, the chicken or the egg? The chicken had to come first. You cannot have an egg without a chicken. Where did the chicken come from? God created it -- God made it. John 1:3 tells us that everything that is created was made by Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:17 tells us that He is before all things, and by Him all things exist. In other words, everything holds together by

Him. Why do atoms and molecules hold together, if their particles are spinning around with mostly empty space between them? It is the Spirit that gives life; and it is the Spirit that holds this universe together.

God is a great and awesome Creator; but it is only with our spirit that we can know and relate to God. As Christians, it is important for us to understand the difference between our spirit and our soul, because many times we confuse the two. Many people go through life being led by their feelings, or dominated by their intellect. They will rationalize and reason things away. In fact, Paul says that the Greeks, by wisdom, knew not God. In other words, they focused so much on the intellectual that they said, "If I cannot understand it with my mind, I will reject it." They were trying to reduce God to the level of a man. In fact, Greek mythology is based on that very concept. Men said, "Let us make God in our own image." So they tried to reduce God down to a level that men could relate to. But God will not be brought down to our level. God is holy. God is perfect and infinite.

God gives us a little glimpse of His greatness. We have a vague picture of Him in the revelation of his Word; but we cannot fully comprehend God, because our minds are too finite -- they are too limited. We receive by revelation the truth of the Trinity. We have received by revelation the fact that God is eternal and infinite and everlasting, but we cannot fully comprehend any of these truths. We simply say with our spirit, "Lord, I believe." Ultimately, faith is not a function of the soul. Faith is not simply believing a truth. Faith is not just a function of the emotion where we say, "I accept Jesus." Faith is a function of our **spirit**, whereby we take hold of the truths of God and

apply them to our lives. We do not simply believe **in** Jesus with our soul; but we believe **on** the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is a function of our spirit.

Our conscience, first of all, comes alive. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. The Holy Spirit of God touches the conscience of man, which is the capacity to realize that we are sinners. Until we know by the Spirit that we are sinners, we cannot come to God to receive His grace and salvation. The conviction comes; the Holy Spirit makes it alive to us; and we realize that we have sinned against God. When we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with our heart, and confess Him with our mouth, then we believe unto repentance and unto salvation. Our spirit is made alive at the moment of the new birth -- regeneration. We become alive in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

When we are born again, we began to see the things of the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says that the natural man, or the man who is not born again, does not understand the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned. Jesus said in John 3:3 *"...Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* The Bible also says that without holiness, no man will see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:14) We cannot see God with our intellect, with our mind, or with our natural eyes. We can only see the things of the spirit with our spirit, when we are born again. When our spirit is made alive by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and by the transforming power of God, then we begin to perceive the things of God. The Holy Spirit works with our spirit in the realm of intuition (inner teacher).

We also have a sense of communion with God through our regenerated spirit. We cannot worship God with our intellect or emotion, although we can praise the Lord. David said, *"Bless the LORD, O my soul:...."* (Psalms 103:1) In fact, the Bible commands all flesh to praise the Lord. Praise is bragging on God and talking about what He has done. But worship is the function of our spirit, which communes with God and relates to Him in a joining of Spirit to spirit. Only when we are born again of the Spirit can we worship God with our spirit.

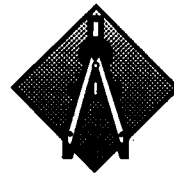
It is important to understand that God speaks to our spirit. Jesus said, *"...The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."* (John 6:63) Peter said that *"...holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."* (2 Peter 1:21) The Bible was not written to the intellect. The Bible was written to the spirit of man. Therefore, those who are not born again cannot really receive the truth of the Word of God, because the Bible is not quickened to their hearts. Many people have studied the Bible for years, or even a lifetime, and have come to the conclusion that the Bible is a dead book of facts, myths, and genealogies. It is only when we are born again that the Holy Spirit can serve as the inner Teacher to work in our spirits to know, understand, and to relate to Jesus Christ.

The purpose of the Word of God is not to give us an intellectual basis for explaining or defining God. The purpose of the Bible is to give us a spiritual basis for knowing and relating to God. Peter said that we should *"...grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...."* (2 Peter 3:18) That is not knowledge about Jesus, but knowing Him -- the knowledge of Jesus. That is our purpose -- to relate to God in our spirit. It

is with the spirit that we respond in faith, for faith is a fruit of the Spirit. It is a gift of the Spirit, and it is a function of our spirit. By faith, we take hold of the Word and God's promises.

But the soul cannot do that. The soul has limited access to truth. With our mind we can relate to and understand some of the things of the spirit; but, ultimately, it has to come by revelation to the spirit. First the spirit, and then the mind, is quickened; and we are renewed in the way that we think about things. And then, the emotional response follows. It is important to understand the difference between our soul and our spirit. Many people go through life led by their emotions or dominated by their intellect, and they miss God. The spiritual man is

one who knows God in a covenant, spiritual relationship. He has a relationship with God, and he is a worshipper. A spiritual man is one who seeks to please God instead of himself, because the spiritual man is living for eternity, and not just for the moment.



Methods

Make a chart of things that relate to the body, soul and spirit; and see if you and your students can detect why they function differently.

| Spirit | Soul | Body |
|------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| God-conscious | Self-conscious | Sense-conscious |
| Intuition | Mind | Senses |
| Conscience | Will | Appetites |
| Communion | Emotion | Lusts |
| <i>Agapao</i> | <i>Phileo</i> | <i>Eros</i> |
| Giving | Sharing | Taking |
| Responsibilities | Rights | Desires |
| Joy | Happiness | Pleasure |
| Covenant | Friendship | Physical Attraction |
| Wisdom | Knowledge | Cunning |

Keys to Prosperity

Volume 8

Lesson 30

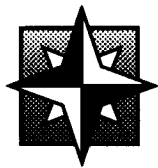


Bible References

Psalms 1

Joshua 1

Proverbs 3



Theme

God intends His people to have a prosperous and abundant life. There are many keys in scripture that lead to prosperity and blessing; and wise is the young person who applies them early.



Scripture Reading

2 Chronicles 26:1-5, 16

1 "Then all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who {was} sixteen years old, and

made him king in the room of his father Amaziah.

2 "He built Eloth, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers.

3 "Sixteen years old {was} Uzziah when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also {was} Jecoliah of Jerusalem.

4 "And he did {that which was} right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did.

5 "And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper."

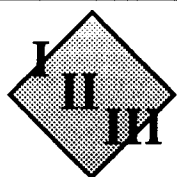
16 "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to {his} destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense."



Memory Verse

3 John 2

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."



Outline

I. Uzziah.

- A. King of Judah during the divided kingdom.
 - 1. Descended from David.
 - 2. Became king at the age of 16.
 - 3. Reigned in Jerusalem 52 years.
 - 4. The year he died, Isaiah saw a vision of God's holiness and glory.
- B. He prospered, as long as he sought God.
- C. When he became proud and rebellious, God smote him with leprosy.
 - 1. Leprosy is a type of sin.
 - 2. He was "cut off" from the house of the Lord (separated from God's people).
 - 3. Ended his life in shame, misery, and pain.

II. Prosperity.

- A. Hebrew words.
 - 1. "To push forward, to break out, to go over."
 - 2. "To be tranquil, secure, successful."
- B. Greek: "to succeed in reaching."
- C. Prosperity.
 - 1. "To flourish, to thrive, to become successful at achieving worthwhile goals."

- 2. "Increase, blessing -- spiritually, emotionally, financially, socially, etc."

III. Why God Prospers People.

- A. Because He loves us.
 - 1. God loves to bless those who seek Him.
 - 2. He is more concerned with our spiritual maturity than our immediate comfort.
 - 3. God may withhold riches to build our character or teach us contentment.
- B. To confirm His covenant. (Deuteronomy 8:18)
- C. To teach us to be givers. (Acts 20:35)
 - 1. God gives some an abundance.
 - 2. There are always people in need.
- D. Prosperity is often the result of diligent labor.

IV. Scriptural Keys to Prosperity.

- A. Be a tither.
 - 1. Malachi 3.
 - 2. Tithing establishes God's ownership of all our money.
 - 3. Makes us wise and careful in the use of money.
- B. Be a giver.
 - 1. Proverbs 11:24-25.
 - 2. Luke 6:38.
 - 3. Proverbs 22:9.
- C. Be a hard worker.
 - 1. Proverbs 13:4-7, 11.

2. Proverbs 14:23.
3. Proverbs 6:6-11.
- D. Be honest with God, and with yourself.
(Proverbs 3:3-4)
- E. Do not drink alcohol or use drugs.
1. Proverbs 23:21.
2. Proverbs 23:29-35.
- F. Do not try "get rich quick" schemes.
1. Proverbs 21:5.
2. Proverbs 13:11.
- G. Humility and the fear of the Lord.
1. Keeps us focused on God as our source.
2. Proverbs 22:4.
3. Isaiah 26:3.
- H. Do not fornicate. (Proverbs 6:26-32)
- I. Do not love pleasure more than God.
1. Proverbs 21:17.
2. 2 Timothy 3:4.
- J. Save part of your income. (Proverbs 21:20)
- K. Base your life and your life goals on scripture.
1. Joshua 1:8.
2. Psalms 1:2-3.
- L. Memorize and meditate on God's Word.
1. Psalms 1.
2. Psalms 119.
- M. Seek God with all your heart.
1. 2 Chronicles 26:5.
2. Matthew 6:33.
- N. Obey God's commands. (2 Chronicles 24:20)
- O. Do not put your trust in riches.
(Proverbs 11:28)
- P. Believe God to speak to you through His prophets. (2 Chronicles 20:20)
- Q. Do not take advantage of poor people, or donate to the rich. (Proverbs 22:16)
- R. Seek wisdom.
1. Proverbs 3:16.
2. Proverbs 8:18.
- S. Get wise counsel and correction from parents and leaders. (Proverbs 13:18)
- T. See money as your servant, and not your master.
1. 1 Timothy 6:9-10.
2. The desire to be rich can be a snare to your soul.
3. Work for God, and not just for money.



Spiritual Truths

- God has given an abundance of guidelines on prosperity, because He loves to confirm His covenant with faithful children as a witness to the world.
- It is possible to be a tither and giver and still not prosper, if you violate other principles that contribute to prosperity.

- As in all of life, there are many factors that contribute to financial success or failure, and we generally do not see them all. This is the reason we sometimes whine that "life is not fair."
- Uzziah is an example of a man who was ruined by success, because he got his focus off of God and took himself too seriously.
- The problem with having a lot of money is that we are tempted to think we are more important than others; and that attitude destroys our servant's heart.
- God never assesses our personal worth according to what we have, but according to our heart.
- God tends to give His children as much comfort and prosperity as they can handle. It is hard to keep a right attitude when you are rich, but it is not impossible.
- "Rich" is not an amount of money, but a heart attitude.



Lesson Material

Jesus said, "...It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." (Matthew 19:24) Many people try to rationalize that He must have been speaking of the "Needle's Eye," a small gate into a walled city designed to prevent invaders from riding into the city. The camels had to be unloaded, and then crawl

through on their knees. We do not like to think that he was talking about an actual needle, because that would require a miracle. We would like to think that rich people can get into heaven, because most of us really want to be rich, even though we know it is only temporary.

But Jesus may well have meant what He said, literally -- the eye of a needle. The people there knew what He meant, because they gasped with astonishment, and said, "...Who then can be saved?" (Matthew 19:25) We need to understand what He was saying. The kingdom Jesus referred to many times relates to "the King's domain." In any kingdom, everything actually belongs to the king, and everyone else is a "steward" -- a servant who takes care of part of the king's property. Jesus said, "...The kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21) When you are a servant of the King who owns it all, you are functioning in the "kingdom." "Rich" is not an amount, but an attitude. When a man owns things, he is rich. As long as we love and trust in our money, we are idolaters, because in this life we are stewards. It all belongs to God. At the end of this life, we will give an account of how we handled our life, and how we handled blessings and opportunities; and then we will be given "true riches," or eternal rewards. Even then, everything we will have dominion over will still belong to the King.

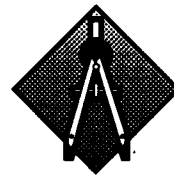
We note that many of the people who greatly loved God were financially blessed in their life. We see this testimony throughout the Old Testament. Some who sought God with all their hearts would be the equivalent of billionaires today. But, for perspective, we also note that some very faithful servants of God suffered throughout their lives, and were tortured and martyred at the end. The most

important thing is our eternal reward. However, along the way, there are many principles in life that tend toward prosperity and financial blessing. As we apply principles of wisdom in life, we will tend to be more prosperous.

It is a mistake to think that financial prosperity or natural success is proof of God's favor. Paul warned Timothy of people who would profess that "...gain is godliness:...." (1 Timothy 6:5) In fact, he said to stay away from those kind of people. Many wicked people prosper, and many godly people suffer. But it is true that many factors contribute to prosperity, regardless of the times. The more we apply wisdom, the more we will tend to do better in the natural. We note that God wants us to "...prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." (3 John 2) That is the key. God is more interested in character development than our comfort. If God sees that we can maintain a humble attitude and a loving heart of a worshipper, He loves to give blessings. God is a faithful father, Who is willing to allow or even inflict some discomfort, in order to deter us from self-destructive activities, such as sin.

Prosperity in life means much more than financial wealth. God looks at the total quality of life, and loves to bless us. When we sin, there are always consequences. But when God blesses you, it is a pure blessing, because "*The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.*" (Proverbs 10:22) God loves to see His children flourish in this life as well as the next; but the most important aspect in life is the next, since it lasts forever. "*For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*" (Mark 8:36)

Notice that the secular world links prosperity to money; but God links it to our relationship with Him. As long as Uzziah sought the Lord, the Lord made him prosper. As long as he had his priorities right, he was blessed. But when he became rich and successful, he became proud and arrogant. He was not destroyed by success, but by his attitude toward money. Perhaps that is why the writer said, "...Give me neither poverty nor riches...." (Proverbs 30:8) Either one can cause us to miss out spiritually, if we handle it wrong.



Methods

Note the contrast between the things that God says relating attitudes and activities that bring prosperity, and what the world thinks.

Note also the difference in the world's value system and God's. The world establishes our "worth" according to what we possess; but God establishes our relative worth according to what we are in our hearts, and according to what we give.

In the world, success is measured by how many people work for you. But Jesus said that success in God's eyes is measured by how well you serve others.

Try to find other principles in Proverbs that are factors in financial success or failure.

Why does God emphasize our attitudes toward wealth?

Hope

Volume 8

Lesson 31



Bible References

1 Corinthians 13:13

Hebrews 6

1 John 3

1 Corinthians 15

have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

11 *"And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:*

12 *"That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

13 *"For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself,*

14 *"Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.*

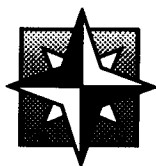
15 *"And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.*

16 *"For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation {is} to them an end of all strife.*

17 *"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed {it} by an oath:*

18 *"That by two immutable things, in which {it was} impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:*

19 *"Which {hope} we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;*



Theme

Hope is a positive character quality, and is essential for emotional and spiritual health.



Scripture Reading

Hebrews 6:10-20

10 *"For God {is} not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye*

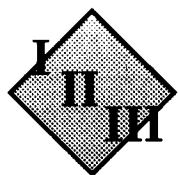
20 "Whither the forerunner is for us entered, {even} Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."



Memory Verse

Job 23:10

"But he knoweth the way that I take: {when} he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."



Outline

I. What is Hope?

A. Hope is not:

1. Wishful thinking.
2. Fantasy.
 - a. Fantasy is actually dangerous, because it focuses away from reality, leading to illusion, the occult, and deception.
 - b. There is a difference between a healthy imagination and fantasy, which is unreal and destructive.
3. Possibility thinking.
 - a. Humanists say, "What the mind can conceive, the mind can achieve."
 - b. This is not biblical. This is a trust and focus on man, which the Bible condemns.

4. Blind optimism.
 - a. The story is told of the optimist who fell off the roof of a skyscraper.
 - b. As he passed by a window on the eighth floor, someone heard him say:
 - c. "So far, so good!"

B. Hope is:

1. A positive expectation for good. (Job 23:10)
2. Verb: "To anticipate with pleasure."
3. Hebrew: "To hide for refuge; confidence, boldness."
4. Hope is a prerequisite to faith.
 - a. Hebrews 11:1.
 - b. "...Faith is the substance of things hoped for,...."

II. You Must Have Hope.

A. The first job of a Christian counselor is to establish that there is hope.

B. A primary factor in divorce is the loss of hope.

1. One decides that their partner will never change.
2. People give up on each other, when they lose hope.

C. Without hope, people give up.

1. Men's hearts will fail for fear. (Luke 21:26)
2. This does not mean heart attacks, but rather, losing heart -- giving up.
 - a. People are not failures because they fail.
 - b. People are failures because they quit.
 - c. Galatians 6:9.

- D. Hope kept Joseph from despair through 13 years of rejection and suffering. (Psalms 105:19)
- E. The four lepers of Samaria (2 Kings 7) did not have faith, but they had hope.
- F. Hope deferred (disappointment) makes the heart sick. (Proverbs 13:12)

III. What Hope Does for the Human Spirit.

- A. Hope is the anchor of the soul.
 - 1. Hebrews 6:19.
 - 2. Hope keeps you emotionally steady.
 - 3. Hope keeps you focused on the future, and not on your present situation.
 - 4. Hope makes you stable and settled.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 13:13.
 - b. These things "abide," -- are lasting qualities which produce stability.
 - c. 1 Corinthians 15:58.
 - d. Since we have the hope of resurrection, we can be steadfast.
- B. Hope makes you pure.
 - 1. 1 John 3:3.
 - a. *"...Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."*
 - b. Hope of the resurrection -- of being like Jesus. (v. 1-3)
 - 2. Titus 2:12-13.
- C. Hope gives you courage.
 - 1. Joshua 1:9.
 - 2. Psalms 31:24.
- D. Hope makes you kind. (Matthew 24:42-51)

- E. Hope makes you unashamed. (Romans 5:5)
- F. Hope keeps you from despair when someone dies. (1 Thessalonians 4:13)

IV. How to Build Hope.

- A. See God as your source, rather than man.
 - 1. Jeremiah 17:5-8.
 - 2. Psalms 121.
 - 3. 1 Peter 1:21.
- B. Decide to have hope.
 - 1. Psalms 42:5,11.
 - 2. I will not be ruled by my feelings, but by my spirit.
- C. Endure the tough times. (Romans 5:5)
 - 1. Tribulation works patience.
 - 2. Patience works hope.
 - 3. Job had patience, because he had hope.
 - 4. 1 Thessalonians 1:3.
- D. Lift up your vision.
 - 1. Focus on God and His Word.
 - 2. The Bible is full of hope.
- E. Decide that problems are opportunities in disguise.
 - 1. Hosea 2:15.
 - 2. Valley of Achor (trouble) for a door of hope.
- F. Focus on the goal. (Philippians 3:13-14)



Spiritual Truths

- Hope is an essential character quality for emotional and spiritual well-being.
- Hope is a basic, human need.
- People who strengthen their focus on God and eternity with prayer and Bible reading tend to be strong in hope.
- There is nothing wrong with being a hope addict.
- Hope is a positive expectation for good.
- You cannot be patient if you do not have hope.
- The hope of the resurrection and of heaven causes us to purify our lives, because we know it shall be well with the righteous.
- The greatest enemy of hope is a temporal values system.



Lesson Material

The old song says, "You gotta have high hopes...." But hope based on self is not the kind of hope that makes us overcomers. Biblical hope is based on the promises of God, and depends on His grace for the outcome. People whose hope is based on humanistic "possibility thinking" can achieve a measure of temporal success,

but it is not the same as the hope of the Christian. Our hope is based on the fact that our God has never lied, and has never failed. We can put our confidence in Him, and not be ashamed.

The Psalmist said that the Word of the Lord tried Joseph. He was rejected, sold into slavery in Egypt, falsely accused of a crime, and cast into a prison with no chance for parole. He was in a humanly impossible situation. He could have become bitter. But for thirteen years, he had only one thing to hold onto, and that was the Word of God, Who had said that he would be honored by his family. The only reason for hope was that Word, which he chose to believe. His hope was realized because he had faith.

Hope is a positive expectation for good. Faith is taking hold of that hope and believing with trust in God that the hope is sure. Faith then, is the "...*substance* (more than assurance) of things hoped for,...." (Hebrews 11:1) In order to live a fruitful, disciplined life, we must have hope, and our hope needs to be founded on eternal values. Hope in the promises of Jesus is the "...*anchor of the soul,....*" (Hebrews 6:19) Now, the soul is our mind, will, and emotion. So hope keeps you emotionally steady, even when life is stormy. People do not give up in despair, just because their life was rough. None of us have it as rough as Joseph or Daniel, who were hauled off to foreign lands as slaves of cruel tyrants. But their hope was in God, and not in their circumstances. They were living for eternity, so they could endure the affliction of the moment. They knew that they had an eternal destiny, so they were not shaken up by physical setbacks.

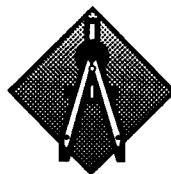
We know that faith and hope and love all work together. Faith works by love, and

faith takes hold of hope. Hope keeps us going in the right path. Hope makes us endure affliction, and stay the course. You must have a goal. Everyone has to have something to look forward to. The best goals in life are those based on God's promises and God's purposes. Selfish goals tend to be short-sighted; but God's purposes are eternal. Hope based on self or people is weak, because people tend to be human -- and humans fail. Hope in Jesus is like an emotional anchor which keeps us steady, because He never fails. That is the kind of hope that does not fail.

We build up our hope by giving attention to the Bible, and by prayer. The closer we get to God, the better our perspective on life. We see this physical life as preparation for eternity. With that kind of wisdom, we can endure setbacks. We do not have to fear. Fear is the result of a temporal focus, and is based on ownership. When our hopes are based on things we can lose, we set ourselves up for fear. Fear causes people to lose heart. Sometimes we will not even try, because we are afraid of failure. But people with hope know that, even if they do fail, they can get up and try again. 2 Corinthians 4 is the classic "down but not out" mentality, that characterizes a winner like Paul.

Thomas Edison was a famous American inventor. He is best known for the invention of the incandescent light bulb. In his experiments, he tried over 900 times to produce a bulb which could

produce light without quickly burning up. Someone asked him, "Mr. Edison, are not you discouraged that you have failed nine hundred times?" He replied, "I have not failed nine hundred times. I have discovered nine hundred things that do not work." He went on to find just the right materials and design. But, according to his words, "Genius is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration." *"And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (if we do not give up)."* (Galatians 6:9)



Methods

Discussion:

What is the difference between hope and faith?

What do you put your hope in?

How can we become people of hope?

What do people who lack hope tend to do in relationships?

What do people who lack hope tend to do in moral choices?

Why is alcohol an attraction for people who lack a spiritual hope?

God, Our Tour Guide

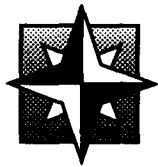
Volume 8

Lesson 32



Bible Reference

Psalms 23



Theme

God promises to lead us through life using many methods and leading us through many paths, some not easily traveled. He only asks of us a willing spirit and a desire for His will.



Scripture Reading

Psalms 23:1-6

1 *"A Psalms of David. The LORD {is} my shepherd; I shall not want.*

2 *"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.*

3 *"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

4 *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou (art) with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

5 *"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.*

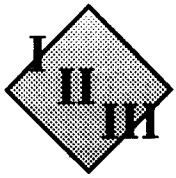
6 *"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."*



Memory Verse

Psalms 23:3

"He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."



Outline

I. We Need a Guide.

- A. Trip/map.
- B. Career/training.
- C. Tour/guide.
- D. Guidance: God's promise. (Isaiah 58:10,11)
- E. Requirement: A willing spirit/desire for God's will.

II. Guidance Methods Used By God.

- A. His Word: *"All scripture is given by... God,...."* (2 Timothy 3:16)
- B. Parents: *"Children obey...live long on the earth."* (Ephesians 6:1,3)
- C. Government/authorities: Given by God. (Romans 13:1,2)
- D. Holy Spirit.
 - 1. *"...He will guide you into all truth:...."* (John 16:13)
 - 2. *"And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting...."* (Acts 11:12)
 - 3. Walk in the Spirit/be led by the Spirit. (Galatians 5:16, 25)
 - 4. Those led by the Spirit of God are the "sons of God." (Romans 8:14)
- E. Wise counselors: *"...Walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,...."* (Psalms 1:1)

- F. Experience: *"...we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen,...."* (John 3:11)

III. The Paths God Leads Us Through.

- A. Pleasant paths: *"...Green pastures...still waters."* (Psalms 23:2)
- B. Uncertain paths: *"I will bring the blind...; ...lead them in paths that they have not known:...."* (Isaiah 42:16)
 - 1. Battles of Israel when outnumbered (peers). (Psalms 23:4)
 - 2. Moses against Pharaoh (authority God chose).
- C. Paths of decision.
 - 1. Choices (activities, curriculum, higher education, career, friends, ministry).
 - 2. Listen to God and His Word: *"Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me;...."* (Isaiah 30:1)
 - 3. Choose wise counsel.
 - 4. Weigh pros and cons.
 - 5. Make forward steps (through open doors): *"...This is the way, walk ye in it,...."* (Isaiah 30:21)
- D. Paths among counterfeits.
 - 1. Sex versus love.
 - 2. Drugs versus peace.
 - 3. Self-indulgence versus Spirit-filling.
 - 4. Happiness versus joy.
 - 5. Humanism ("rights and liberties") versus God's authority.

E. Paths unending.

1. Nowhere out of God's hand.
(Psalms 139:9-10)
2. Unto death. (Psalms 48:14)



Spiritual Truths

- God promises to lead us through life.
- He requires a willing spirit and a desire for His will.
- God's Word has all the maps and directions we need.
- Sensitivity to God's Spirit will allow Him to lead us.
- God will use people in our lives to instruct and influence us.
- God will take us down diverse roads, as He leads us.
- When God gives choices, seek His counsel to make the decision.
- Every path may not be as it appears. It may be disguised.
- There is nowhere we can go that is out of God's reach.



Lesson Material

We all use guides of different types throughout our lifetime. We use instructions, directions, rulers, and all kinds of instruments of guidance to help us get to where we want to be or what we want to see. TV Guide? Yes, that is the idea, I guess. When we go on a family vacation, how does Dad decide what road to get on and what route to take? Does he just start driving and say, "When something looks familiar, we will stop?" Of course not! He gets out the map, does he not? If he had to remember all of the roads from your house to the place you are going in a different state, you would most certainly get lost somewhere along the way. You probably say he may get you lost even with a map!

How about planning a career: Who wants to think about that? Well, if you want to be a particular type of professional when you get out of school, you will need training. Someone who has learned that trade or skill will have to give you instruction or guidance. Careers do not just happen. They take lots of planning.

Have you ever been on a guided tour? No, not the river boat tour at Disneyland. I mean a real tour, with a guide that has had extensive training for the places he is taking you. The guide has been on this tour many, many times before, and knows the trip well. Without the guide's knowledge, you would not enjoy the trip, and might even be in danger. A cave tour can be a wonderful experience, but cave "spelunking" can be very dangerous, without a highly-trained guide.

God promises in His Word to be our Guide throughout life. He says He will guide you continually, satisfy your desire in "drought", and give you strength and freshness. (Isaiah 58:10,11) Of course, God requires us to seek His will, in order for Him to lead us. You might say that the requirement for this course is a willing spirit. There are many methods God will use and various paths that He will lead you down as your "tour guide."

The first and most obvious method God uses to lead us is His Word. The scripture is God-given, and among many things, is good for instruction in life. It is a supernatural looking-glass into our lives and the circumstances of life. Not only is it a good book of history, but it shows us how people and nations have lived. Also its principles, if obeyed, have a supernatural (beyond natural understanding) ability to guide us through any situation.

Another method of guidance God uses in our lives is quite effective, but it would seem to be the least likely method to which we would surrender. You guessed it -- authority. No one likes to be told what to do. That is a human quirk that we are born with, and most of us will battle with it all of our lives. However, God has chosen many people to be involved in our lives that have both the experience and wisdom that He wants us to take advantage of. By the time we get to middle school age, we have had so many people telling us what we must do, that we are tired of listening. We have a way of not hearing what is being told to us very clearly. What we do not realize is that God has purposefully placed us under the authority of the family and city and nation that He chose for us.

God chooses the human instruments that have authority over us. We did not choose our parents, teachers, principle, pastors, or even older brothers or sisters. (Yuk!) He did! What we also do not realize is that God will use them in our lives according to his promise, in spite of themselves. They may not even realize that God is using them, but He is. They are ministers of God to us for good. (Romans 13:1-7) That is a hard pill to take, but it is absolutely critical to receiving God's guidance. Obeying our parents actually gives God the ability to give us a long and happy life. Do you remember those threats on your very life? It is a wonder we made it through childhood; but God promised to bring us through. Listening to and obeying our parents is training for being able to hear God's voice and obeying Him. Our parents are not always going to be around to help us and take care of us.

God has placed within each of us a spirit. Our spirit, when made alive by His Holy Spirit, can hear God speak to us, when all other means of guidance may be silent. He says if we walk in the Spirit we will be led by the Spirit. That means if we listen and obey, we will continue to be able to hear Him very clearly and respond to Him easily. It takes practice, but it becomes easier the more we hear and respond. Most of us have so many other voices and outside interference, that we do not even hear Him trying to lead us in the path He wants us to follow, in order to keep us out of danger. The mature Christian who has learned to know and obey God's written Word, and accept leadership given by God, can also enjoy hearing His voice, saying "...*This is the way, walk ye in it,....*" (Isaiah 30:21)

Sometimes we also can learn from people to whom God has given experience in similar situations to ours. Anyone can

give us an opinion or advise. We can read the advice columns in the paper, listen to the talk shows, watch the soap operas, or just let anyone tell us which way to go; and we will find that they all have different opinions. However, God has proven Himself to many people that know His ways and have been led by His hand.

There are many wise and spiritual counselors God has placed at our disposal. Ask Him to lead you to one. Once God has given you a direction to go, remember it. You may cross this path again. It will be easier the second time. The map will be clearer each time you pass that way. We are talking about experience. Walking in the paths God leads you in will make you a better traveler; and you will become able to help guide others, also.

There are many paths God will chose to lead us on as our Guide. Unfortunately, as it may seem to us, every path may not be what we expect. We all like pleasant experiences; and God ultimately wants us to be happy. He promises that one of the paths He will guide us through is pleasant experiences. Green pastures and clear waters are what we all enjoy. We need times of refreshing, and God promises those to us. We need friends and loved ones, vacations and fun. We need quiet times to recharge our batteries. In His eternal kingdom, that is what we will know and enjoy. Until then, there are other paths that God will lead us down, as He guides us through life.

Sometimes the road we are traveling on will become foggy and unclear. It may appear as though you may have been down this path before, but you are uncertain. The rules may not seem exactly clear. Moses knew about authority; but God was telling him to speak to Pharaoh and tell him to let God's people go. He

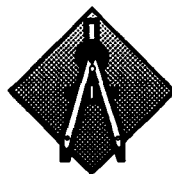
heard God's voice, but Pharaoh did not seem to have heard it. Sometimes God may be speaking to us, but those around us and even authorities over us may not understand. We must be patient and wait for God to move, if we feel that we have heard His voice. He is able to part the water if necessary; and He can make the path clear, where there was no path, in our natural eyes.

There are times we will come to a fork in the road. Both paths look good, and it appears that it is only a matter of choice. As you are becoming an adult, you will be given more and more choices of importance in your life, whether you want them or not. Now you may be deciding on what to wear; what boy or girlfriend you like; what party to go to; what TV program to watch. Soon you will be deciding on what classes to take; what career you should plan for; what friends to chose; whom you will marry; how many children you should have; what kind of insurance; how to deal with the eroding environment and chaotic global issues. It seems as though "Why do I have to decide?" Your new freedom may soon become a burden. The fork in the road may have two signs. It may say "College" on one side, and "Trade Opportunity" on the other. The number one question is "What does God's Word say?" First, obey His Word. Next, get wise counsel. Someone has probably gone down this path before. Pray and ask God's divine wisdom. Weigh the pros and cons. Make a list of the possible advantages and disadvantages. Start making forward steps; pray; and expect God to give you doors of opportunity. Prayerfully walk through the one He opens clearly. Roads are not always clearly marked. The path is not always what it first appears to be. Usually, we are tricked because we have not been sensitive to God's leading. We may have let

disobedience slip in, and find that our navigation skills are rusty.

Satan's road is full of counterfeits. We do not see all of the pits and stumbling blocks. Satan likes to substitute the fake for the genuine: Acceptance versus friendship; Sex versus love; Drugs versus peace; Self-indulgence versus Spirit-filling; Happiness versus joy. Humanism (rights and liberties) versus God's authority. Satan is a master of deception. Staying sensitive to God's voice, and obedience to what you hear, will keep your navigation skills sharp.

Wherever we walk, we can be assured that, as a child of God, He is right beside us. If we walk down the wrong path, He did not say that He would leave us. Quite the contrary. We can go nowhere out of God's hands. (Psalms 139:7-10) In fact, once God is our Guide, He will be with us until death. *"For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death."* (Psalms 48:14)



Methods

Use the blackboard to draw different types of paths; and illustrate with symbols and pictures corresponding to "road conditions." The idea with this lesson is that God is not going to violate our will in telling us which path to choose; but He wants to give us guidance in leading us in His will. The key word is "lead" -- not "push" or "pull." You might even use a student to demonstrate by leading him around the classroom blindfolded, pointing out obstacles and speaking to him in his ear as he walks. Other children may be trying to talk him into another way; and others may be just talking and making noise, in order to distract.

The Great Commandment

Volume 8

Lesson 33



Bible References

Matthew 22

Mark 12

Exodus 20

John 17

34 "But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.

35 "Then one of them, {which was} a lawyer, asked {him a question}, tempting him, and saying,

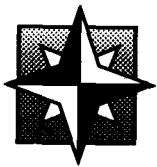
36 "Master, which {is} the great commandment in the law?

37 "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 "This is the first and great commandment.

39 "And the second {is} like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

40 "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."



Theme

The purpose of the human race on planet earth is not the pursuit of our pleasure or success. It is to respond and relate to God, Who designed and created us, and has a plan for each of our lives.



Memory Verse

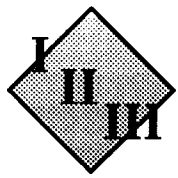
Deuteronomy 6:4-5

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God {is} one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."



Scripture Reading

Matthew 22:34-40



Outline

I. Law.

A. Principles which govern the affairs of societies.

B. God's laws.

1. God created man, and gave him basic rules to live by.
2. *"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul:...."* (Psalms 19: 7)
3. God's commands always make life better, when we obey them.
4. Sin never improves the quality of life -- it always damages, diminishes, and destroys.
 - a. Sin is the transgression of the law of God.
 - b. Sin goes in the opposite direction of God's purposes.

C. The law of God is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

1. When we are bound by sin, we are unable to keep God's moral laws.
2. Our nature is to be selfish, and to yield to desires that will destroy our potential in life.
3. God's laws (commandments, statutes, ordinances) reveal God's right standards, and show us our need for God's grace.
4. When we confess our sins, He forgives us of what we have done, and also enables us by grace to live right. (1 John 1:9)

D. Universal laws.

1. A principle that always works the same way.
2. The law of gravity: things fall down, whether you believe it or not.
3. The law of sin and death: sin always leads to destruction and death, whether you believe it or not.
4. Jumping out of tall buildings and sinning against God always hurt you, regardless of what you might be thinking.

II. The Great Law.

A. A lawyer asked: "What is the most important, weighty law in the universe?"

1. Jesus did not say, "Laws are not important anymore, since I am here."
2. Jesus did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it by grace.
3. Jesus did not come to make us lawless, so that we could do as we please; but to make us righteous, so that we could do as God pleases.

B. God's purpose in the earth.

1. God created man for Himself. (Isaiah 43:21)
2. God is love, and desires personal, intimate relationship.
3. God's laws reflect his priorities.
4. The most important thing in life is to know God in a loving relationship of trust and obedience.
5. All other acts of goodness and righteousness flow out of the basic law of love.
6. Love is the motivation for living a godly life.

7. Sin is rooted in selfishness, and causes us to react to God's right standards of ethics.

C. Love is the fulfilling of the law.
(Romans 13:10)

1. Sin causes us to steal from others; but love gives to others, instead.
2. Sin causes people to lie in order to protect self; but love wants others to know truth.
3. Sin covets what others have; but love delights to see others blessed.
4. Sin seeks to gratify self with sexual pleasure before marriage; but love respects the other person too much to use him or her for selfish gain.

III. How Do We Love God?

A. With all your heart.

1. Greek *kardia* -- the center of our life, the seat of the affections.
2. Keep your heart, because everything in life tends to flow out of it.
3. God wants us to delight ourselves in Him, not just to be religious. (Psalms 37:4)
4. Love (*agape*) means to give yourself to someone else with commitment as well as affection.
5. We do not have saving faith with our minds; we must believe with our heart. (Romans 10:10)

B. With all your soul.

1. The soul is the mind, will, and emotion.
2. Personality: the self-conscious part of man.
3. Carnal churches lure and keep people with entertainment and things.

- a. Loud music.
- b. Parties and fun.
- c. Humor.

4. These can have their place; but, do we love and enjoy God's presence, or just the things that are associated with church?
5. Can I enjoy being alone with God?
6. Does my soul enjoy the Lord?
7. "*Bless the LORD, O my soul:....*" (Psalms 103:1)

C. With all your mind.

1. Center of our thoughts.
2. Love God by keeping our minds focused on Him.
 - a. Isaiah 26:3.
 - b. Philippians 4:8.

D. With all your strength.

1. Not a passive, mediocre religion.
2. "*Serve the Lord with gladness:....*" (Psalms 100:2)
3. David danced before the Lord with all his might. (2 Samuel 6:14)
4. Doing exploits for God. (Daniel 11:32)
5. A soldier of Jesus Christ. (2 Timothy 2)
6. Zeal and enthusiasm.
 - a. John 2:17.
 - b. "Enthused" literally means "full of God."



Spiritual Truths

- The purpose of life is not our happiness, but God's pleasure. Our

personal happiness is a byproduct of pleasing God in life.

- With God, there are some things that are more important than others. Relationship is more important than service, and obedience is more important than sacrifice.
- Some people love the things that relate to God and religion, without really loving God Himself.
- Ultimately, our ability to maintain good interpersonal relationships reflects our ability to relate to God with a right spirit.
- If we love God, we will love people.
- If we love Jesus, we will keep His commandments.
- Jesus did not come to make us lawless, so that we could do as we please, but to make us righteous, so that we could do as God pleases.
- To love someone is to seek the highest good for his life, even if it means personal sacrifice.



Lesson Material

A lawyer came to Jesus with a serious question about the law. Remember that in that day, a lawyer was probably an expert in Jewish religious law. He was probably a Pharisee who helped people focus on the many statutes and ordinances that had their origin in the old covenant law of Moses. God had given Moses the law to

give the people instruction in life, because they needed help in knowing right from wrong. People had interpersonal conflicts, so they needed guidelines.

The Pharisees had at least two problems with the law. First of all, they got their focus on law instead of relationship, and they missed God's purpose in life. They were so busy trying to live up to the law with their own natural efforts, that they developed the idea that the law was a way to make them good enough for heaven. That was never God's intention. God had instituted the Passover to show that life was given to those who responded with faith to the sacrifice ordained by God. This was a figure of the perfect sin offering, Jesus Christ Himself.

Secondly, the people of Israel, in their zeal to focus on the laws of God, got carried away and added to it many details, making it impossible to fully carry out. For instance, the Sabbath law was designed to give people a day off from work and to keep their priorities straight, so they could live more effectively. But the Hebrews got carried away to the point that in the days of Jesus, the Sabbath was a great burden on the people, because they had so many regulations and restrictions on the people about what they could not do. Instead of a day of rest, it became a real burden and source of contention. The people would beat each other over the head with law. Paul said, *"...the law is good, if a man use it lawfully."* (1 Timothy 1:8) The Pharisees used the law to burden the people, and to control them.

The lawyer had a legitimate question. "What is the most important law, in your opinion?" It is interesting that Jesus did not say, "Well, the law is not important now that I am here." He also did not say that they were all equal. He did have a

ready answer. Jesus said that the most important law was the command to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. This actually came from Deuteronomy 6, and not from the Ten Commandments. "Deuteronomy" means "second law," and is largely a recapitulation of the highlights of the first four books of the Pentateuch. In this section, Moses is really compressing the Ten Commandments into two basic ones: the first four relate to loving God supremely; and the other six relate to loving people.

We often think of love as an emotion, but that is misleading. Love is not just a function of the soul (mind, will, emotion), but also of the spirit. What we know in the world as love is not real love, because true love has its origin only in God. (1 John 4:7-8) As sinners, the closest thing we have is affection, or lust, or infatuation. We say, "I love her, because she makes me feel so good." But genuine love is not based on what I get, or on how I feel. Love is based on giving. God so loved, that He gave. (John 3:16) God Who is love, supremely desires to be loved. God is not looking for a people who will follow the rules of conduct so they will not go to hell; He is looking for worshippers, who will worship (love) Him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:23-24)

God has never changed. He has always been a God of grace and love. He rebuked Israel in the old testament for getting caught up in their religious observances and neglecting personal relationship. In a sense, God said "I hate your religious ceremonies. Your meetings bother me, and I am sick of them." (See Isaiah 1:14.) God wanted their hearts. God is looking for a loving bride of a church, not a bunch of robots who are trying to earn religious brownie points.

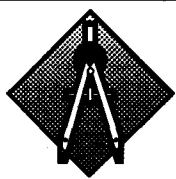
Love is giving and doing for others. God sees that the natural, sinful condition of man is selfishness. The focus of the secular mind is, "I want to be my own person." God wants a people who are forever His -- who seek to please Him, rather than themselves. It is easy to get caught up in religion that focuses on what God can do for us; but love seeks the good of the other. God knows our hearts. When He sees people who act religious because their motive is to get Him to do what they want, He is not impressed. All of us have a problem responding to a seemingly self-centered person who tries to use us. We all want to feel like we are loved. That is also true of God. He has infinite power to bless and heal us; but He does not want us to get so caught up in the blessings that we lose sight of Him.

The most important commandment is that we love God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength, because when we do, the other principles of ethics naturally and easily fall into place. When we genuinely love God, we will naturally reject idols, and will not use the name of the Lord in vain. We will naturally tithe, care about hurting people, and be faithful in marriage. Love for God keeps us focused on the right values in life, and makes us basically unselfish. While sin works against our spiritual walk with God, love keeps us moving toward Him. Love for God makes us able to live life the way it should be lived, largely because we are able to enjoy doing what is right. It is the key element to true religion, and the primary evidence that we have the real article.

When sin rules our hearts, we have a constant struggle with God's principles and standards. We are always drawn to evil; and evil always damages our lives and relationships. Sin never makes life better. No matter how attractive it seems,

sin always reduces the quality of life. Satan lures us with the promise that we need sin; but that is a lie. If God did not provide it, we do not need it.

Ultimately, we will never get to be good enough for God through the law. The law is a good teacher, because it shows us life as it should be lived. It teaches us that we desperately need God's grace to live an overcoming, joyful life. Grace is God's abiding presence and power in our lives, working through us as yielded vessels. We cannot live God's way without God's grace. To try to live God's way through fleshly effort is legalism. This is a basic, all-important principle of life. Do you love God? Are you motivated by what pleases God and promotes His kingdom, or are you trying to use God to promote your own well being? We are not to judge each other; but, we should judge ourselves. What is my motive? What is the basis of my values system in life? *"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."* (John 12:25)



Methods

There is such an emphasis today on people. In our zeal to attract people to church, we picture God as a Santa, Whose goal in life seems to be to give presents to

all who ask. But God's goal is personal relationship with people who will seek and love Him with their whole heart; and we should be encouraged to do so diligently. We are not called to sell the world on the idea of heaven; but we are called to motivate people to become disciples of Jesus Christ.

We tend to look down on Pharisees and lawyers, but this lawyer asked a good question. Many times the Pharisees particularly asked questions of Jesus to trick Him, or to make Him look foolish; but this man seemed to have a sincere question. In fact, Jesus commended him, and said, *"...Thou art not far from the kingdom of God...."* (Mark 12:34) He was on the right track.

The value of this question is this: the purpose of Christianity is not to find a way to get God to do what I want, but to discover and do the will of God. He is the center of it all. His will is the focus, and not our wishes. We are on the planet to give Him pleasure, and not the other way around. True religion focuses on God's purposes, and seeks to please Him. The man had a good question: "What does God really want from us?" God is not impressed with ceremonies or even sacrifices, unless they are the expressions of a heart of love for Him.

Note the men who are recognized in history as men who passionately loved God more than other people did. (Moses, Enoch, Abraham, Noah, David, etc.) What was the end result of their lives?

The Royal Law

Volume 8

Lesson 34

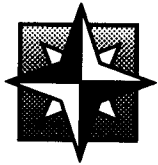


Bible References

Deuteronomy 6

James 2

John 13



Theme

The most important rule in life is that we develop a sincere love for God; and our love for God is manifested in our response to, and relationships with, other people.



Scripture Reading

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

1 *"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I*

am become {as} sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

2 *"And though I have {the gift of} prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*

3 *"And though I bestow all my goods to feed {the poor}, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

4 *"Charity suffereth long, {and} is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,*

5 *"Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;*

6 *"Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;*

7 *"Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

8 *"Charity never faileth: but whether {there be} prophecies, they shall fail; whether {there be} tongues, they shall cease; whether {there be} knowledge, it shall vanish away.*

9 *"For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.*

10 *"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*

11 *"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."*

12 *"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."*

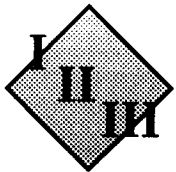
13 *"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these {is} charity."*



Memory Verse

John 13:34-35

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all {men} know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."



Outline

I. The Royal Law.

A. "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

1. Called the "royal law" in James 2:8.
2. The "Great Law" is "...Thou shalt

love the Lord Thy God...." (Matthew 22:36-37)

B. Love.

1. Love is an unselfish desire to bless and benefit another, even at your own expense.
2. If you love God, you will naturally express it by loving other people.
3. Love is not a warm feeling, but rather a spiritual commitment to the welfare of others.
4. The opposite of godly love is "sin."
5. Sin causes us to seek our own benefit at the expense of others.
 - a. All crime is an extreme form of sin -- rebellion against God.
 - b. Sin always hurts and destroys.
 - c. Love always builds up and blesses others. (1 Corinthians 8:1)

C. Thy neighbor.

1. Neighbor: someone with whom God has put me in contact.
2. Brother: someone with whom God has put me in covenant relationship.
3. Stranger: someone who is new, or different.
4. Enemy: someone who seeks to do me harm.

D. We are commanded to love all of these.

II. The Ten Commandments.

A. First four.

1. Exodus 20.
2. The first four basic commandments relate to our relationship with God.

B. The other six.

1. Relating to interpersonal relationships.
 2. If we love people, we will not even need to be told not to kill them.
 3. Nor steal their possessions, etc.
 4. That is why love is the "...fulfilling of the law."
 - a. Because "*Love worketh no ill to his neighbor:....*"
 - b. Romans 13:10.
 5. Law must be given for those who do not have love.
 - a. "Do not steal my car."
 - b. When someone loves, he will seek to give, and to bless you; and so you do not need to put law (restrictions, rules) on him.
 - c. You do not need to tell a giver not to steal.
- C. Law is the irreducible minimum in ethical behavior.
1. The law says, "Do not murder anyone;" but by grace, we learn that we do not have to even hate anyone.
 2. Law says, "Do not commit adultery;" but God's grace enables us to think pure thoughts and not even desire to do so.
2. None involve emotion.
 3. If we genuinely love, it is not a response to the beauty or worthiness of the one loved.
 4. Our ability to love is directly related to our relationship to God.
 5. The more we love God, the more we will love His people.
 6. 1 John 4:7-8.
- C. Selfishness (sin) is:
1. Impatient.
 2. Harsh, unkind.
 3. Envious of others.
 4. Focused on self.
 5. Puffed up with pride.
 6. Disruptive and abusive.
 7. Is self-seeking.
 8. Becomes provoked to anger easily.
 9. Thinks about mischief and violence often.
 10. Gets excited about lustful or evil movies or deeds.
 11. Does not enjoy the Bible, or good preaching.
 12. Cannot handle it, when life seems unfair.
 13. Is suspicious and skeptical of others.
 14. Has little hope.
 15. Gives up easily.

III. The Love Chapter.

- A. Love: Key to spiritual ministry.
1. 1 Corinthians 13.
 2. In between chapter 12 (spiritual manifestations) and chapter 14 (tongues, prophecy, and the order of a spiritual church meeting).
- B. Love defined.
1. All of its characteristics involve action, commitment and attitude.



Spiritual Truths

- The primary character evidence of genuine Christianity is an ability to love other people.
- Love is not a warm puppy or a nice feeling. Love is giving.

- If love was just an emotion that we could not control, then God could not rightly command us to do it.
- It is impossible to genuinely love God, and not love His children.
- Love is not so much a response to the "loveability" of the one loved, as it is the response to God's love for us.
- The heart of sin is self-centered motive and behavior. Sin is the opposite of love.
- The purpose of God's moral law is to put limits and restrictions on the behavior of self-centered people.
- The presence of godly love in the heart adds stability and strength to the life.



Lesson Material

It is important that we understand the distinctions between Christianity and religion in general. Religion is defined as man's attempt to explain and relate to God; while Christianity is God's revelation of Himself to man. When the mind of man invents a religion, it sees God in human or physical terms. The gods of the cults are angry, fickle, greedy, and basically selfish. This comes from the heart of man, who tends to see God in his own terms. "If I was God and had the power to control the universe, this is how I would run things." But there is a characteristic of God that men could not have invented, and that is love. This quality sets God apart from the gods of mythology, cults and false

religions, and distinguishes His people from the people of the world. "...*God is love.*" (1 John 4:8)

It is true that we tend to become like the god we serve, even if we do not realize we are idolizing something. Whatever you focus on will influence your character and values. Whatever you delight in, rely on, and pursue after more than anything else is your god. God's ultimate purpose is that His children become like Him. God is holy and just. God is perfectly good, patient, and kind. But a great part of the character of God is that He is love.

To really understand love, we need to understand sin. The character of sin is a selfish, inverted focus. When we are in sin, we see ourselves as the center of our world. We view other people as potential sources for our own gain, pleasure, or advancement. Sin causes us to love things and use people. That is why sin breaks down relationships. We constantly have a conflict of interest. "I am for me, and I think you should be, too. What is wrong with you? I demand that you love me." This selfish heart of man is at the core of family strife, division, wars, and every kind of interpersonal problems.

But Jesus came along and taught us about love. He said to deny self; and He said that the meek would inherit the earth. (Matthew 16:24; Matthew 5:5) Jesus taught that it is more blessed to give than to receive. (Acts 20:35) All of this relates to the Greek word *agape*, which means "selfless altruism," -- the "giving" kind of love. When we see life from a Christian world view, we see Jesus as the center of our world, and not ourselves. As we mature with a Christian world view, we are more and more given to seeking His glory, pleasure, and benefit. We see other believers as a part of the team, rather than

competitors. We see people as objects of God's love, rather than potential stumbling blocks to our own success or hindrances to our own happiness. Mature Christians focus on responsibilities instead of rights, because they are focused on Jesus instead of self.

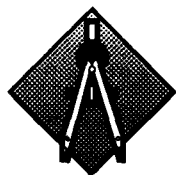
While world religions are generally defined in terms of creeds and ceremonies, Christianity is defined in terms of relationships. The great commandment of God is an expression of His underlying motive. God, Who is love, desires to be loved. It is not that we are to appease Him -- we are to delight in Him. He also commands us to love one another.

Again, that does not refer to emotions (although emotions do follow, because we are emotional creatures). Love involves the ability to make lasting covenant relationships, based on commitment. Love is "your benefit at my expense." Jesus came to earth to please the Father, and to bring healing and salvation to people. The interesting thing about this love is that it has a side benefit of joy. There is great satisfaction and fulfillment in helping and serving others. Jesus, Who never did anything for his own benefit, Who was a "...man of sorrows..." (Isaiah 53:3), is actually the happiest Person in the universe. (Hebrews 1:9)

The royal commandment is a natural extension of the great commandment. Our ability to love other people flows out of the sense of security and fulfillment that comes from knowing that we are loved by God. When that relationship is broken by sin, we tend to look at people as our source of emotional fulfillment. The more we look at people as our source, the more demanding we become, and the more we will tend to experience disappointment, bitterness, and anger. We could go into

detail discussing each of the characteristics of *agape* love, but it is more important to understand the basic principle which ties them all together. It is our world view, which means the point of reference from which we view life in general. When we have a Christian world view, we will tend to be patient and kind, because we see God working through people and we realize that He is not finished with them yet. We also look at people in terms of what we can do for them, rather than always in terms of what they can do for us. Obviously, relationships based on this kind of attitude will last. If the Christian community would learn to apply this basic commandment in their lives, we would not experience the traumas of division in the church and divorce in the home.

One further exhortation is that we encourage one another not to judge. When we talk about the commandment to love, listeners often begin to think about the ways other people should love them. They think "If only so and so were here to listen to this." Rather than think about the people who should be loving us, we should examine our own hearts, and look for ways to love them. The principle in Luke 6:38 applies to love. "*Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom....*" The more you come across as demanding to be loved, the more you will tend to repel it, because the focus of your motive is to receive. But love focuses on the need and desires of the other, instead of on your own needs. If you sow love, you will reap love. If you sow demands, you will tend to reap them. Love "*...seeketh not her own,....*" (1 Corinthians 13:5)



Methods

The heart of this lesson is our world view. Every student needs to understand that his value system is based on the way he looks at life. A Christian world view sees life as eternal and spiritual, while a secular world view sees only the physical and temporal. Most young people today are being taught (in schools and through every communication medium) a secular world view. They need to understand the

bias of those who teach them, and interpret what they hear in light of God's wisdom. Wisdom is seeing things from God's point of view. Not only do we see life as eternal, but we see that life is centered around Jesus and not ourselves. The purpose of life is to please and glorify Him. That is the basic purpose of life; and it spills out in our responses to life, and particularly to other people.

Contrast:

Love vs. selfishness.

The secular movie world's definition of love vs. God's definition of love.

Mission

Volume 8

Lesson 35



Bible References

Philippians 3

Acts 1

1 Corinthians 15

Mark 15

7 *"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.*

8 *"Yea doubtless, and I count all things {but} loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them {but} dung, that I may win Christ,*

9 *"And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:*

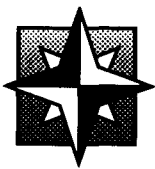
10 *"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;*

11 *"If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*

12 *"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.*

13 *"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,*

14 *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."*



Theme

Every Spirit-filled Christian is, in a sense, a missionary, because God has a purpose for his life on earth, and he is a citizen of heaven, here on assignment.



Scripture Reading

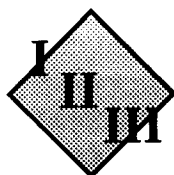
Philippians 3:7-14



Memory Verse

John 15:16

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and {that} your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."



Outline

I. What is a Missionary?

A. We often think only of "foreign missions."

1. One who travels to a foreign land to take the gospel to a different culture.
2. Those who leave their homelands for the sake of the ministry.

B. "Mission" simply means that we have a task, assignment, or job to do.

1. "Missionary" is not a Bible word.
2. The Bible does not distinguish between those who minister in their homeland and those who travel.
3. There are five specific apostolic offices listed in Ephesians 4:11:
 - a. Apostle.
 - b. Prophet.
 - c. Evangelist.

- d. Pastor.
- e. Teacher.
4. "Missionary" is not included.

C. Some foreign missionaries are evangelists.

1. They travel on soul-winning missions.
2. They often conduct mass meetings, and heal the sick.
3. Their focus is on soul-winning.

D. Some foreign missionaries are apostles.

1. They are church planters.
2. They train and oversee pastors.

E. Some are pastors.

1. They shepherd a local church in a foreign land.
2. They stay in one place, and focus on one city for years.

F. Some missionaries may function as prophets or teachers on the foreign field.

G. A "missionary" in the broad sense is anyone who has a calling from God to do a specific work for the Kingdom.

1. God designed each of us to do a work.
2. We need to have a sense of mission, or destiny.

II. The Apostle Paul.

A. The word "apostle" means, "one sent."

1. There are at least 20 apostles mentioned in the New Testament.
2. The office was not limited to the 12 who personally traveled with Jesus.

3. Paul knew Jesus by the Spirit, and had a strong personal relationship with Him.

B. The office of apostle.

1. A high office.
2. The apostles were often pastors to the pastors.
3. Paul was a pastor/father to Pastor Timothy, Titus, and many others.
4. Paul was a leader and church planter by virtue of his apostolic calling.
5. He had the authority to lead the churches, because he was sent directly from Jesus Christ, the Head of the church.

C. "I press toward the mark for the prize."

1. Paul was personally disciplined, because he had a calling and a vision. (Proverbs 29:18)
2. Paul was not driven by ambition, but rather called by God.
3. Paul kept his focus on the Lord, and never let the world sway his determination.
 - a. When cautioned about the danger of going to Jerusalem, Paul said, "...None of these things move me,...." (Acts 20:24)
 - b. "I only do one thing." (See Philippians 3:13)

III. A Missionary Heart.

A. I am on a mission in life.

1. I am not here by accident.
2. I am called of God to do something.
3. I will prepare myself for the task God wants me to do.

B. I have a sense of place.

1. I belong to the family of God, and I am planted in a local church.
2. There is a niche -- a place -- for me, in God's plan for my generation.

C. I have a sense of purpose.

1. "...Receive not the grace of God in vain." (2 Corinthians 6:1)
2. God always gives grace to enable us to do something for Him. (Romans 12, 1 Peter 4:10)
3. God never gives supernatural grace just to make us feel good.
4. We have a great commission from the Lord. (Matthew 28:19)

D. I have received power.

1. Acts 1:8
2. 2 Timothy 1:7
3. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Philippians 4:13)

IV. Soul-Winning.

A. God did not save me from sin, just so I could escape hell.

1. He saved me from sin, so that I could love and serve Him.
2. He called me out of the world, so that I could live for Jesus.

B. A mission in life.

1. Whether I go to foreign soil or not, as a genuine Christian, I am a missionary.
2. I am a "pilgrim and stranger" on earth.

3. I am an alien resident, a citizen of heaven.

C. He that wins souls is wise.

1. Proverbs 11:30.
2. James 5:20.

D. Basic principles of soul-winning.

1. Remember that the new birth is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. Pray for the person.
 - b. Go in obedience, and in the power of God's anointing.
2. Know the Bible.
 - a. Memorize verses that apply particularly to salvation.
 - b. Carry a Bible, whenever possible.
3. If possible, witness to people as part of a team.
 - a. Jesus sent out His men in pairs.
 - b. "Two-on-one" evangelism.
 - c. Create an atmosphere of faith.
 - d. Work together.
4. Go in love.
 - a. Not just to earn spiritual "brownie points."
 - b. Have a passion for souls who are lost.
 - c. They will go to hell forever, unless someone leads them to Jesus.
5. Give your testimony.
 - a. A man with a testimony is never at the mercy of a man with an argument.
 - b. Cults have arguments, but not supernatural power or peace.
6. Be concerned and compassionate.
7. Gently let your friend know that we are all sinners, and can never be good enough for God.
 - a. Lead him to repentance and confession before God.

- b. Encourage him to put his life in the hands of God, by faith.

8. Encourage him to make the Bible and prayer a daily part of his life, and to be planted in a local church to be discipled.

9. Jesus called us to "make disciples" -- not just converts.



Spiritual Truths

- We honor those who serve as foreign missionaries; but we should all have the heart and vision of those who are on a mission for God in this life.
- God gives many different kinds of callings and offices; and we should each seek to know what our calling is.
- Some aspects of the ministry are given to every believer, such as worship, love, body ministry, and soul-winning.
- It is good to know, not only who you are in God, but where you belong in the economy of God.
- God sets us in families, so we can be loved, discipled, trained, and protected.
- We cannot maintain a disciplined life, if we do not have a strong sense of purpose and destiny.
- I need to know who I am, Who I belong to, what I am to do, and where I am going.
- Satan would love for each of us to think that we are on this planet by

accident, and that we are not really very important, anyway.



Lesson Material

The doctrine of evolution is a religious faith based on a heart rejection of God. It is dangerous, because it leads subtly to the conclusion that "life just happens." The more we focus on the facts of creation and judgment, the more we reaffirm a sense of place and a sense of destiny. The more we read and understand the Bible, the more we realize our own sense of mission in life. We see that all of history revolves around the underlying spiritual circumstances in the universe, and that everything centers in God. Ultimately, we realize that God is the sovereign Lord of all, and that He did not put us here by accident.

When we remove God and the Bible from our thinking, we remove the basic motivation for achievement. Educators today are wringing their hands, fretting over the marked decline in academic achievement, moral purity, and vision of our young people, since they removed God and the Bible out of our schools. For those of us who know the Lord, it is absurdly obvious. You cannot expect vision and discipline from those whose focus is solely on temporal values. We have spent several generations telling kids they are animals -- and we get upset when they act like it.

It is only by the fear of the Lord that anyone departs from evil. We are always drawn to selfish, evil, and sensual things,

when we lose our sense of eternal destiny. The purpose of the scripture is not to give people the idea that they can live like the world and still get to heaven. The purpose of scripture is to lead believers into a disciplined, productive life on earth, in light of the hope of heaven. God's grace is not the message of the freedom to sin, but the glorious message that we can have freedom from sin.

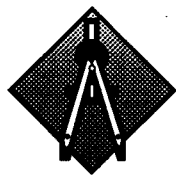
All believers are given a work to do by the Lord. All of us are told in the Bible to do certain, basic things as the general ministry of believers. But we also know that each believer is uniquely called to do a special task. Romans 12 speaks about grace and gifts. We need to understand that God's grace and gifts are always given to be used for others. God is not like Santa Claus. God never gives anyone a gift, just so he can feel gifted. All spiritual gifts are given to be given away. *"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."* (1 Peter 4:10) We have all received spiritual abilities. Whatever we receive in this way, we should use to serve other people. We are not the possessors of spiritual gifts, but rather, we are stewards of grace. A steward is a servant who takes care of something that belongs to someone else. God gives us supernatural grace to help other people.

You are on a mission in life. You may choose to waste that life on pleasure or other self-centered pursuits. You may squander the resources of time, talent, and opportunities in a careless ego-trip, but you are foolish if you do. God has given you one life, and you will give an account to Him for what you have done with it. God will not force you to serve Him or to live for Him; but He will eternally reward those who do, and eternally punish those who do not. If you give your life to Jesus

in this life, you will keep life and joy forever. If you love your own life, and choose to be your own person, you will lose out eternally.

Satan works diligently in the earth to keep us from seeing our eternal purpose, and to hinder our spiritual vision. People with no vision will be selfish and undisciplined; and they are not a threat to his dark domain. He is, however, terrified by young people who are a dynamic part of God's overcoming church, because they will "spoil" his house of many deceived souls, and do him great damage.

The term "missionary" is not in the Bible. It came about as people were called to evangelistic or pastoral work in foreign fields, and they spoke of their mission. While it is not a Bible term, the concept is biblical. It is, however, good that we try to avoid too much separation in our thinking between foreign and domestic missions. We are called to be witnesses in our Jerusalem (home town), Judea (home nation), Samaria (other cultures), and the uttermost parts of the earth (unreached people groups around the world). We should each discover what God wants us to do, and find out where God wants us to go. Many will find that, like the early apostles, they will minister both in their local area, and in foreign countries. Wherever we go, we should be aware of our gifting and calling, always willing to minister to others, as good stewards of God's grace.



Methods

Discussion Questions:

What are the areas of ministry that are mandated for all believers to be involved in?

What are the spiritual offices and ministries that only certain individuals are called to do?

What is the difference between God's grace and God's gifts?

Have you ever won anyone to Jesus Christ?

What are the principles in effective soul-winning?

How important is it that we each feel a sense of purpose and destiny in life?

Group Activity

Role Play: Take the part of an unsaved member of a dry religious organization, or of a cult with which you are familiar. Have a volunteer take his Bible and try to lead you to the Lord. Discuss principles of soul-winning.

The Lure of the Cults

Volume 8

Lesson 36



Bible References

2 Peter 1-2

Matthew 24

1 John 4

Acts 8

16 *"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty."*

2 Peter 2:1-3, 17-19

1 *"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."*

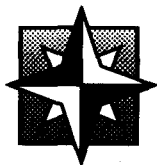
2 *"And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."*

3 *"And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."*

17 *"These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever."*

18 *"For when they speak great swelling {words} of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, {through much} wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error."*

19 *"While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."*



Theme

Satan not only tries to lure people away from God with forms of evil, but he also tries to lure people with forms of religion, to deceive them into thinking that they are saved, when they are not.



Scripture Reading

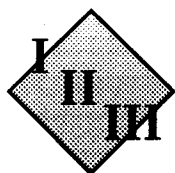
2 Peter 1:16



Memory Verse

1 John 4:1

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."



Outline

I. The Problem of Cults.

A. Cults.

1. There are about 5,000 cults (false religious systems), but only one true religion.
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. They include a vast variety of concepts about God and man.
3. All cults reject the deity of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Judge. (1 John 4:1-3)
4. All cults reject the biblical teaching of an eternal hell, because the natural mind does not want to believe in 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.

B. Non-Christian cults.

1. Islam.
 - a. Moslems.
 - b. They worship a false god named "Allah."
 - c. They hope that their dead prophet, Mohammed will rise from the dead.
2. Hinduism.
 - a. They have about three million "gods."
 - b. They worship demon spirits, which they think are gods.
 - c. Hindus teach reincarnation, instead of resurrection.
3. Scientology.
 - a. This religion was invented by a science fiction writer named L. Ron Hubbard.
 - b. His admitted motive was to make himself very rich.
 - c. "Dianetics" is an intelligent-sounding bit of "psycho-babble," which was the product of one man's imagination, combined with demonic inspiration.
4. New Age.
 - a. A mixture of Hinduism and secular humanism.
 - b. "Channeling" is actually becoming demon-possessed.
 - c. The New Age is really just old idolatry and witchcraft.

C. Pseudo-Christian cults.

1. False religions that call themselves Christian.
2. Mormonism:
 - a. Invented by Joseph Smith, an illiterate New York farmer's son, who had a vivid imagination.

- b. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.
- c. Headquartered in Utah.
- d. They believe that God is a glorified man (Adam), and that men can evolve into gods by being good Mormons.
- e. They believe that they are Christians, but embrace many doctrines that are non-biblical.
- f. Many of them are nice people who do not know they are lost.
- 3. Jehovah's Witnesses.
 - a. A religion invented by Charles Taze Russell.
 - b. A mixture of Old Testament law, works, and some Bible.
 - c. Russell also wanted to become rich and powerful; and he succeeded.
- 4. Christian Science.
 - a. Invented by a woman named Mary Baker Eddy.
 - b. Inspired by demonic hallucinations and strange dreams.
 - c. There is nothing Christian or scientific about it.
 - d. Some of their people are very intelligent, but are also very deceived.

II. The Spirit of the Cults.

A. What do you think of Jesus?

- 1. Jesus is not only the Son of God -- He is God the Son.
- 2. Jesus Christ is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father.
- 3. The test of every religion is its Christology.
- 4. 1 John 4:2.
- 5. Many cults believe in Jesus as a person, and even as a kind of savior; but, they all reject the idea

that He is God, the Lord and Creator.

- 6. Most cults believe that salvation must be at least partially earned.

B. Legitimate Christian churches are initiated and led by Jesus Christ.

- 1. The purpose of the church is to draw disciples to Jesus, and to glorify Him.
- 2. Cults are initiated in the mind of a person who is energized by Satan.
- 3. Cult leaders use religion to draw people to themselves and become rich.
 - a. They seek to "spoil" you through philosophy and vain deceit.
 - b. To "spoil" is to take possession of something you won through conflict, such as "spoils of war."
 - c. They will "...make merchandise of you." (2 Peter 2:3)

III. Protection Against Deception.

A. The warning of Jesus.

- 1. "...Take heed that no man deceive you." (Matthew 24:4)
- 2. "...Many shall come in my name, saying I am Christ (Christos, an anointed one from God), and shall deceive many." (v. 5)
- 3. At least 80% of people who are converted to cults come from legitimate Christian backgrounds.

B. Deception comes first in the heart.

- 1. People who have a moral twist are most vulnerable to deception.
- 2. "...With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;...." (Romans 10:10)

C. How to guard your heart from deception.

1. Be sure you are really born again by grace through faith. (Ephesians 2:8)
 - a. Repent of your sins before God.
 - b. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.
 - c. Be baptized as a believer; and renounce your old ways.
2. Seek after righteousness; and reckon yourself dead to sin.
 - a. Matthew 6:33.
 - b. Romans 6:11.
3. Yield your body as an instrument of righteousness.
 - a. Romans 6:12-19.
 - b. The "breastplate of righteousness" protects the heart. (Ephesians 6:14)
4. Read the Bible every day; and listen to anointed Bible teachers.
5. Be cautious about listening to many different teachers, other than those your pastor recommends. (Ecclesiastes 12:9-12)
6. Fellowship with people who love God. (Proverbs 13:20)
7. Be filled with the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18)
8. Walk right before God; and keep a good conscience.
 - a. Isaiah 35:8.
 - b. 1 Timothy 1:19.

of false cults deceiving so many victims today.

- A cult is a group of people who are gathered around someone's interpretation of the Bible, but who are deceived.
- Legitimate churches have many different styles and ideas about the Bible; but they all agree that salvation is by grace through faith in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Cults come about when a person with a moral twist and impure motives looks at life and the Bible through carnal eyes, and fails to come to the knowledge of the truth, which is Jesus.
- A pure heart is the greatest protection against the deception of false prophets and teachers.
- Pseudo-Christian cults are designed by Satan to look and sound like Christianity; but, they are counterfeit.
- The Bible records many cases of people who thought they were right with God, but were not. However, there is no record of anyone who was right with God and did not know it.
- The purpose of a cult is to bring glory, pleasure, and wealth to the cult leader.
- The purpose of the church is to bring glory, honor and pleasure to God.



Spiritual Truths

- If the Christians were doing the job of evangelism and body ministry, we would not have such a great abundance



Lesson Material

Jesus warned that in the last days there would be much deception in the world. He was speaking of our time, because this is one sign that is definitely being fulfilled. In a time of revival and evangelism, there is a great flood of deception, particularly in nations which were once strongly Christian, such as the United States. Some cults are based in eastern mysticism, and many are flourishing. They are the non-Christian cults. That is, they do not even try to look like Christians, although they will take some biblical truths to make themselves sound legitimate.

But the most dangerous cults are those who seek to use the name "Christian," and claim that "I am Christ." Now, while there are actually some people who claim to be an incarnation of Jesus Christ, most are easily recognized as deluded and are not taken too seriously. But the title "Christos" means, "anointed one;" and Jesus was referring to the fact that many would claim to be ordained and anointed by God to restore the "true church" to the world, and would deceive many. Perhaps the most spectacular of these is Joseph Smith, a man who lived on a farm near Palmyra, New York in the early 1800's. His family had the reputation for superstition and mysticism, and were given to vile habits and mean behavior. They gave themselves to digging for buried treasure. Young Joe was considered to be lazy and unproductive, but he had a vivid imagination. As he dug, he imagined all sorts of ancient civilizations and events that might have happened right there in those hills. As a young man, he claimed to

be visited by the angel "Moroni," and claimed to receive golden tablets, which contained stories about great civilizations which had existed in America, centuries before. It is interesting that the same stories he made up as a boy got into these "tablets," which no one can prove ever existed, except in his mind. He claimed that they used items and materials that had not even been invented at the time of the supposed writing, and spoke of many things which were not even introduced to the continent until 1492; and yet, all of this was to have taken place by the year 400. He persuaded a few men to publish his "Book of Mormon;" and he gained thousands of followers, great wealth, and many wives. Today, millions of nice people follow the teachings of Joseph Smith in the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," and are busily luring people out of Christian churches, because they look and sound like Christians.

But "...we have not followed cunningly devised fables,...." (2 Peter 1:16) We believe the Bible. God gave His Word, and the Bible has stood the test of time. Unlike the Book of Mormon, the Bible is being verified over and over again by archaeological finds in the Middle East; and the events prophesied in the Bible are still coming to pass, exactly as foretold. We have a "...more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed,...." (2 Peter 1:19) Joseph Smith's books are not so sure. They are full of errors and even contradictions, and have never been verified by archeology, anthropology, or historical fact.

Satan loves the cults. He encourages these leaders every way he can, and often inspires them. There are many people who are bitter at the church, or who do not really believe that their eternal salvation can depend on the finished work of Christ

on the cross. They are attracted by the appearance and the zeal of cult followers, many of whom are seeking to earn their salvation, or even their deity, by becoming "missionaries" for their religion. On the surface, pseudo-Christian cults look like the real thing. That is their purpose. A counterfeiter will always try to make his money look exactly like real money, but those who know real money are not deceived. The more you know Jesus, personally and intimately, the less likely you are to be deceived by a cult.

Isaiah spoke about the "...way of holiness;...the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." (Isaiah 35:8) In other words, if you are walking right, you will not be tricked into deception, even if you are not highly intelligent. There have been many cases of children, or of mentally slow people, who discerned error with their spirit, while others who were better educated were easily deceived. This is not to say that it is good to be ignorant. It only says that deception is more a matter of the heart than the head. It is good to be intelligent and educated; but a smart but impure person is more likely to be deceived than a person with a good conscience.

about specific cults. It might be good to list religious organizations according to three general categories:

Legitimate Christian Groups (Baptists, Charismatic, Pentecostal, Nazarene, Methodist, Brethren, Mennonite, etc.);

Pseudo-Christian Cults (Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, Seventh-Day Adventists, The Way, etc.);

And Non-Christian Cults (Spiritism, Zen Buddhism, Baha'i, Unity, Scientology, Unification Church, etc.).

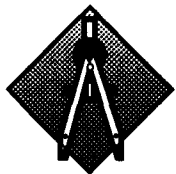
How did Peter know that he was not following a false cult, but that he knew true religion?

How did James define true religion? (James 1:27)

How do we know that we have a true faith, and a sure hope?

If these people are so zealous in promoting their false religion and praying to their false gods, how much more should we be zealous, when we know the true and living God?

How do we guard our hearts from deception?



Methods

Since this lesson is an overview, it would be difficult to go into much detail

I Will Arise

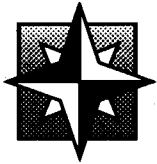
Volume 8

Lesson 37



Bible Reference

Luke 15



Theme

There are many lessons to be learned from the familiar story of the prodigal son. It is an allegory about a backslider, and much more.



Scripture Reading

Luke 15:11-31

11 *"And he said, A certain man had two sons:*

12 *"And the younger of them said to {his} father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth {to me}. And he divided unto them {his} living.*

13 *"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.*

14 *"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.*

15 *"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.*

16 *"And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.*

17 *"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!*

18 *"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,*

19 *"And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.*

20 *"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.*

21 *"And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.*

22 *"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put {it} on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on {his} feet:*

23 *"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill {it}; and let us eat, and be merry:*

24 *"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.*

25 *"Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.*

26 *"And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.*

27 *"And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.*

28 *"And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him.*

29 *"And he answering said to {his} father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:*

30 *"But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.*

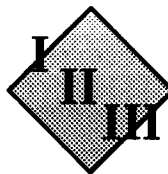
31 *"And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine."*



Memory Verse

Psalms 84:10

"For a day in thy courts {is} better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."



Outline

I. The Story.

A. A father had two sons.

1. Father: God.
2. Older brother: faithful believer.
3. Younger brother: a backslider.

B. Lessons learned.

1. God is our Heavenly Father, Who loves to forgive and restore relationships, when we repent.
2. Sin is attractive at first.
 - a. But the purpose of temptation is not to meet our needs.
 - b. It will destroy our potential in life.
 - c. It will enslave us.
3. It never pays in the long run to go into sin.
4. Sin always has consequences.

II. Two Prayers.

A. "Father, give me...."

1. "I want mine now."
2. Sin always demands for self.
 - a. Offers immediate gratification.
 - b. Temporal values: a focus on that which is pleasant for the moment.
3. Immature people pray selfishly.
 - a. "Give me, give me."
 - b. Proverbs 30:15.
 - c. Things never satisfy by themselves. (Proverbs 27:20)

B. "Father, make me...."

1. After suffering for awhile.
2. He now had a better perspective on life.
3. He realized where sin was taking him.
4. He was on a path that seemed so exciting, but the road led to death and shame.
5. "Father, change me...."
 - a. Make me a servant.
 - b. Use me to serve my brother.
 - c. Glorify Your name.

III. The Older Brother.

A. "Hey, Dad, I have been faithful, and you did not have party for me!"

1. "Son, it is right to rejoice."
 - a. "Your brother was lost, and now is found."
 - b. "Be glad for him."
2. Sometimes you can be faithful, but not feel appreciated.
3. People seem to glory in the person who has the exciting testimony about being a dope-head or hit man for years, and then coming to Jesus.

4. It seems like an advantage: all that excitement, and then to be the center of attention.

5. The way we sometimes look at this story, it would seem best to be the prodigal and then return.

6. No way.

B. What did the father say to the older (faithful) brother?

1. "Son, all I have is thine."
2. The prodigal had spent his inheritance, and there was none left for him.
3. He became the servant to the older brother.

C. Consequences of sin:

1. Though he was forgiven and restored, his inheritance was lost.
2. Sin diminishes your life, potential, and joy.
3. Some think that they will sin, and then they will ask forgiveness.
 - a. God is not mocked. (Galatians 6:7)
 - b. If you sow to the flesh, you will reap corruption (permanent damage in life -- consequences).
 - c. This was written to believers.

IV. I Will Arise and Go.

A. Arise.

1. Stop looking at what the world promised, and see what it did to you.
2. Lift your vision: look up -- reach up.
3. Being under Father:
 - a. Higher than being a "free spirit," and higher than drugs.
 - b. The Father will exalt those who humble themselves.

4. Being under God's authority is the highest position of man.
 - a. Man will rise high, when he is on his knees.
 - b. *"...Before honour is humility."* (Proverbs 15:33)

B. And Go.

1. Faith produces works.
2. *"...Go on unto perfection;...."* (Hebrews 6:1-2)
3. Run the race. (Hebrews 12:1)

- The prodigal son was forgiven and restored to his Father's house with great joy; but he did not receive any more inheritance.
- There are permanent losses and damages when a believer backslides. It is always better to stay faithful to God, than to turn away in rebellion and come back later.
- The highest and most noble life a human can live is not the life of prestige and wealth, but the life of a servant of God on his knees.



Spiritual Truths

- God is characterized by His Fatherly love; and He delights to forgive and restore those who repent.
- The prodigal is a classic example of the dangers of a temporal values system.
- He pretended to fill his stomach with corn husks, just as people in sin pretend to satisfy their soul with their habits.
- Repentance is not feeling sorry about the pig pen and the consequences of sin. Repentance is getting up and going back to Father's house to be a servant.
- "Father, give me mine" is the distinctive prayer of the immature believer.
- "Father, make me a servant" is the prayer of a wise Christian.



Lesson Material

The story of the prodigal son is a classic for Bible teachers, and is often used in evangelistic teaching. In earlier years, we delighted in this marvelous illustration of God's love and compassion. Now, as young teenagers, we need to look a little deeper, and glean wisdom from the deep truths that Jesus was really communicating. It is time to get beyond the "milk" (that which is easily comprehended and digested), and get to the "meat" (that which takes strength and effort to prepare and digest). (1 Corinthians 3:2)

The story of the prodigal son is not about God's response to unbelievers. This is about a son who gets his eyes set on temporal values, and falls in love with the world. This case has a happy ending, although there are other cases in Bible history that did not. Jesus is teaching believers that there are consequences to

sin, as well as the fact that our Heavenly Father loves us, and delights to see us restored.

While we are told in 2 Peter 3:9 that God is *"...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,"* we note that the father in the story, who represents God in the analogy, made no effort to go after the son. In fact, he gave the son his inheritance, even though he knew where it would lead. You may get frustrated as a teenager because your parents do not seem to want to give you more freedom and money. Look carefully at the situation. Look what happened when an immature young man received "freedom" from his father. He turned away from his father and gave himself to peers in the world, because they were young and attractive and "cool." If your parents gave you complete freedom, would you forsake their company and seek out peers to "hang out" with? Would you break their hearts, too? The fact is that this father loved his son, and wanted him around. It is very hard on a parent if they do not know where their children are, especially if they think they are with ungodly peers.

Freedom cannot be gained by whining pleas of "everyone else is doing it." The world focuses on rights; but wisdom focuses on responsibilities. The best way to earn freedom is by being responsible and faithful. The more you obey and serve and honor your parents, the more freedom they want to give you. The more you demand freedom, the less they can trust you with it. When you demonstrate wisdom and a right attitude, they realize that you can handle freedom, without squandering your spiritual legacy and winding up in the pig pen, eating corn husks.

You see, sin promises freedom, but it always leads to bondage. People who indulge in fornication, drugs, or alcohol think they are enjoying their freedom; but the end result is slavery. The prodigal only saw the attraction of the party; but the father saw where it would lead.

Many of us have a problem with this father. If he is such a loving father, then why did he let the boy lose his inheritance, and almost lose his life? Why did he not at least have a good, long talk with him, and warn him? He just handed over the money. Was he wrong? No, because this story is about God, Who loves us perfectly, but Who lets us make our choices in life. He does not want anyone to suffer or become lost; but, God made us free moral agents. If we do not ask for His advice, He will not force it on us. If we want to be our own person and do our own thing in life, He will let us.

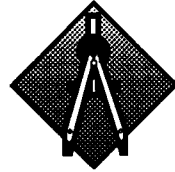
God receives satisfaction in knowing that there are some who will reject the world and sin because they honestly love Him. If He gave everyone charts and maps with graphic pictures of the pig pen, showing a corn husk supper every once in a while, we would all say, "No way. I am not going that way." But, because sin is attractive, and because we do not really see the consequences, there is real virtue in saying, "Father, I love you, and I choose to stay with you and serve you, rather than leave you for sin." God wants us to love Him; and if He made us serve Him with threats of hell, it would not be love.

If we are not careful, we miss the point entirely of the older brother in this story. As we depart from the narrative, we see the younger brother glowing in the joy of new shoes, a class ring, and scarfing down a great roast veal dinner, while the elder brother is sulking with a bad attitude. But

wait. There is more. What did the father say when the firstborn said, "You never had a party for me, and I have been faithful?" The father said, "All that I have is yours." In other words, while the younger brother was received and restored with great gladness, his inheritance was not restored. The older brother still had his inheritance. This may not be "fair;" but God is not fair -- He is just. Humanism says that the brothers should share the wealth. Remember that in the parable of the ten pounds (Luke 19:12-28), one servant came back with ten, and one came with one. What did the Master do? He took away the one pound, and gave it to the one with ten. This is repulsive to socialists, who love to take from the rich and give to the poor. But God is perfectly just; and God rewards faithfulness.

But the prodigal still had a happy ending. He was restored, and he learned a valuable lesson. He learned that it is better to be a servant in God's house than to be on top of the world, because sin always has consequences and leads to bondage. Being a servant in Father's house is a wonderful place to be. He had matured, and he had repented. He could have sat in the pig pen, bitter at the way the world had treated him and very sorry for what he had done; but it was not repentance, until he got up and went to his father, confessing that he had done wrong, and asking the father to make him a servant. We know he grew up, because his first prayer was, "Give me" (v.12); and then his prayer was "Father, make me a servant." (v.19) Repentance does not mean to feel sorry you were caught. "Repentance" means "to turn around." If you ask forgiveness, but continue on in your sin, are you

repenting? We all want to avoid the consequences of our sin; but we will not, unless we quit doing the things that bring us to the bondage of the pig pen.



Methods

Object Lesson

"The horseleech hath two daughters, crying, Give, give." (Proverbs 30:15a)

Have you ever heard of a "black hole" in space? Astronomers claim that there are such things. They tell us that there are places which have such a strong gravitational pull that planets and stars are sucked in with an irresistible force. The force is so strong that not even light can get out. How can they tell these things exist, if light cannot get out? How can you see a black hole in space? Well, if it is true, it makes a fine illustration of a selfish heart, because the person who is focused in on himself ends up empty. The one who always prays, "Father, give me mine" is headed for disappointment, heartache, and bondage. He has a temporal values system, and will never be satisfied.

The person whose prayer is, "Father, make me a servant. Change me..." will actually receive far more in the end. Jesus said that the meek (those who do not demand their rights) will inherit it all. (Matthew 5:5) Those who seek to give become the abundant receivers in the end.

Holy Spirit Manifestations

Volume 8

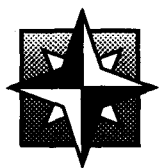
Lesson 38



Bible References

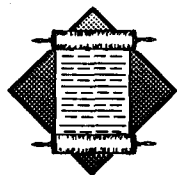
1 Corinthians 12

Romans 12



Theme

Our Supernatural God works through and for us, so that we may live and walk by the power of His grace, rather than by human effort.



Scripture Reading

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

1 *"Now concerning spiritual {gifts}, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.*

2 *"Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.*

3 *"Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and {that} no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*

4 *"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.*

5 *"And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.*

6 *"And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.*

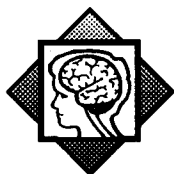
7 *"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*

8 *"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;*

9 *"To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;*

10 *"To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another {divers} kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:*

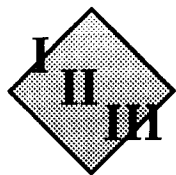
11 "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."



Memory Verse

1 Peter 4:10

"As every man hath received the gift, (even so) minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."



Outline

I. Spiritual Gifts.

A. Grace.

1. Greek "*charis*."
2. "That which is given or imparted by God apart from human effort or merit" (in the broad sense -- "gifting").
 - a. In the passive sense: "unmerited favor."
 - b. In the active sense: "divine impartation."
3. That which we could not earn or develop -- it is supernaturally imparted.
4. The supernatural power and ability of God working through human vessels.

- a. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)
- b. "...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)

B. Greek *charisma*.

1. Same root as "grace."
2. A more specific impartation from the Spirit.
3. Grace is more general in nature: "...Grace... hath appeared to all men,...." (Titus 2:11)

II. Grace Gifts.

A. Romans 12.

1. All believers have received grace for salvation.
2. Also grace for personal victory in this life.
3. Each has received a more particular spiritual ability in his life.
4. Each of us has received a gift of grace.

B. Seven gifts.

1. Prophecy.
2. Serving.
3. Teaching.
4. Exhorting.
5. Giving.
6. Organization.
7. Mercy.

C. Purpose of all spiritual gifts.

1. Not to make us feel gifted, but to equip us for service.

2. All biblical spiritual gifts are given for the benefit of other people, rather than the one receiving the gift.
3. We do not receive God's gifts as consumers, but as stewards.
 - a. A steward is one who handles the property of someone else.
 - b. We are not the possessors of gifts, but rather the stewards.
4. Stewards of the manifold grace of God.
 - a. Many-faceted.
 - b. Many kinds of grace (giftings) for many kinds of ministry.

III. Manifestation.

A. There are different:

1. Gifts (*charisma*). (1 Corinthians 12:4)
2. Administrations (*diakonea* -- ministries, ways of serving). (vs 5)
3. Operations (*energema* -- effects, workings). (v. 6)
4. Manifestations (*phanerosis*) of the Spirit. (v. 7)

B. The Spirit Himself is a gift.

1. Jesus baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit. (Luke 3:16)
 - a. "Covers over; immerses completely."
 - b. Initial evidence: speaking in tongues. (Acts 2:4)
2. God wants every believer to be filled with and baptized in the Spirit.

C. In what other ways is the indwelling Holy Spirit manifested through Christians?

1. Word of wisdom.

- a. A divinely imparted idea, given by the Spirit to help another person, or the body in general.
- b. A thought revealing God's point of view on a situation, which is exactly what is needed.
2. Word of knowledge.
 - a. Divinely imparted information that could not have been known through natural means.
 - b. A bit of knowledge given by the Spirit to help another person.
3. Faith.
 - a. A special ability to trust and receive from God.
 - b. A supernatural surge of faith for someone's need.
4. Gifts of healing.
 - a. Not "gift of healing."
 - b. Not the ability to heal, resident in the believer.
 - c. Gifts: the ability to impart to a sick person healing for his body.
 - d. Each time the Holy Spirit heals through a believer, it is the manifestation of a gift of healing.
 - e. God is able to heal the sick, and even raise the dead, just as He did in the Bible days.
5. Working of miracles.
 - a. Each miracle given through a believing, Spirit-filled Christian is a manifestation of the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Ghost.
 - b. A miracle is a supernatural act of God, working on behalf of people in ways that do not conform to the natural laws of creation.
 - c. Miracles may work contrary to natural laws, or accelerate natural laws (as in the instantaneous healing of a broken bone, etc.).

6. Prophecy.
 - a. Speaking for God as God's mouthpiece. (1 Peter 4:11)
 - b. Declaring a word given by the Holy Spirit for edification, exhortation, or comfort to the church. (1 Corinthians 14:3)
7. Discerning of spirits:
 - a. Recognizing, through the Spirit, the source of a conflict or problem as physical or spiritual.
 - b. The awareness of the presence or work of demon spirits.
 - c. In the Bible, some conditions such as blindness were dealt with differently, depending on the source of the problem.
 - d. Jesus healed those who were physically blind; but He cast out blind spirits.
 - e. If a person's problem is demonic, you should not lay hands on him for healing.
8. Different kinds of tongues.
 - a. Speaking in a language you did not learn.
 - b. Many have preached by the Holy Spirit to people of a foreign tongue, even though they themselves did not understand the language.
 - c. Public messages in tongues, to be interpreted for the edification of all.
 - d. Private prayer language in tongues (our spirit praying).
9. Interpretation of tongues.
 - a. Not a translation.
 - b. The supernatural ability to understand and speak the message that is given by the Holy Spirit through tongues.



Spiritual Truths

- Spiritual gifts are specific expressions of grace for a specific kind of ministry to others.
- God always gives spiritual gifts to be used for the benefit of others. We receive spiritual gifts as stewards, rather than consumers.
- When we are filled with the Holy Spirit and yielded to His control, He can manifest His power and wisdom through us as He directs, for the benefit of others.
- The Holy Spirit does not work through us to puff up our ego or to make us rich. He works to bless the body of Christ through us.
- God is not looking for people with bright ideas and talent to build His kingdom, but for people who are humble and yielded enough to let Him work through them.
- God is more impressed with faith and obedience than by our human ability or beauty.
- In modern cultures, we tend to think of grace and gifts in terms of what God does for us, rather than in terms of what God does through us -- and we miss the point.
- The nine manifestations of the Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12 are resident in the Holy Spirit; and He works through believers in these

manifestations according to His purposes.



Lesson Material

When the Apostle Paul was addressing the believers in Corinth, he said, "I would not want you to be ignorant about spiritual gifts." The word "gifts" was inserted by the King James translators, because there was no noun there, and that is what they assumed he was talking about in the passage. But it was really more general than that. The word used there was *pneumatikos*, which means "that which is non-carnal, or supernatural." Literally, "I want you to know about how things operate in the realm of the Spirit."

There is an awareness even among young people that there is more to life than just living, eating, and dying. We are created by God "a living soul," and have an inborn awareness of and need for spiritual things. One of the reasons we are so sure there is a God is that it is so universal among the peoples of the world to acknowledge and seek for a "god." When we try to remove the spiritual aspects of life from society, there is a void in people's lives; and they look for something else to fill it. When the United States took prayer and Bible reading out of its public schools in 1963, it opened them up to a flood of the occult. Today, it is considered quite acceptable to openly relate to witchcraft and demonic things, or even to bring in New Age "spirit guides" (demon spirits) to elementary classrooms -- but not the Bible. Some young people who are not exposed to the Holy Spirit will

indeed expose their hearts to unholy spirits through drugs, fantasy computer games, alcohol, Ouija boards, astrology, fortune-tellers, and so on. People who are involved in the real thing are not likely to be attracted to the counterfeit. The best deterrent against drugs and alcohol is to be filled with the Spirit and involved in a work for God. This is 100% successful as a drug prevention program. Only people whose lives are empty (or at least their heads) are attracted to the empty thrill of drugs.

We want to recognize the need in our young people to relate to the supernatural. God is a Spirit; and God works through believers in supernatural ways. God still does thrilling miracles. God can heal the sick and raise the dead -- and He does. The prayer of faith can still heal the sick; and all things are still possible to him that believes God for them. Jesus still fills believers with the Holy Spirit, and they still speak with tongues as the Spirit gives them utterance. We do not have to be content with a superficial religion that relies on advertising, gimmicks, and human effort. We can learn to walk and live by faith; and we can believe God to work supernaturally in our lives.

Today, many people focus on the gospel in a way that appeals to people as "consumers." We have been trained to think as consumers, and preachers too often appeal to people in terms of "Come to Jesus and get..." We have been raised on Santa Claus, and think that all there is to gifts is the lack of a price tag. But "spiritual gifts" refer not just to the fact that they are given apart from merit, but also refer to the fact that they are of supernatural origin, and not dependent on human ability. A "gift" is something that God gives me that is not a learned skill, but is divinely imparted. The difference

between God and Santa is that real supernatural gifts belong to God, and He will hold us accountable for what we do with them. We are always "stewards" of grace and gifts, and not owners. It is not just that I do not merit them with my works; it is that they are not ultimately my property, nor are they for my own personal benefit. All of God's gifts are given for the benefit of others. We become the vessels through which gifts are manifested, rather than the beneficiaries. Whenever God gives you something spiritual, it is for you to give away to others. It is never for you to sit on, and feel "gifted."

The Apostle Paul lists seven specific gifts in Romans 12. The grammatical construction of the context at least implies that every believer has one of these gifts in him, if he has received God's grace in his life. It is apparently not an enhanced personality trait, but a spiritual enablement. It is an expression of the *"...manifold (many-faceted) grace of God."* (1 Peter 4:10) We are like a diamond, which reflects the light in many directions, but it is still the same light. The body of Christ is like a prism, which reflects sunlight by bending the light rays that pass through it, revealing the rainbow of colors. Different colors of light have different wave lengths, so when light, which contains all the colors, passes through a glass prism or water droplets, the colors are separated, and we see the rainbow.

Jesus is the perfect Prophet, Servant, Teacher, Exhorter, and so on. As the Spirit imparts grace to different individuals, each one reflects a different strength of spirit that is inherent in Jesus. We become "little Christs," particularly when we exercise our unique spiritual gift. So, as Paul said, *"...having then gifts differing according to*

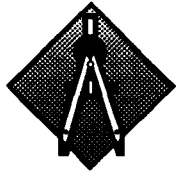
the grace that is given to us,..." (Romans 12:6), let us each function in our spiritual gift.

There are other spiritual gifts mentioned in the New Testament that function in much the same way. The Holy Spirit imparts a specific ability, or even a burst of faith or power to an individual, and he functions in this supernatural gift. God's gifts are not for getting, but for using. Ultimately, it is far more a case of Him using us, than of us using the gift. When the Holy Spirit is resident in the life of a yielded believer, He can impart the particular manifestation, or gift, as He sees fit, according to His purposes.

Whenever we operate in the realm of spiritual gifts, we are yielding by faith to the Holy Spirit, and we function as servants and vessels. We are not just using our "talents," which are the product of ability and training. We are being used by the Spirit, and He should get the glory. Also, the benefit goes to the body of Christ, or the person to whom the word or miracle is directed.

Gifts of healing are good examples. The Holy Spirit may give to a believer a gift of healing or the gift of faith, directing them to go to someone else, lay their hands on them, and impart a physical healing. The one who prays in faith and obeys gets the spiritual gift; but the benefit goes to the one who was sick, or injured. God's gifts are not for consumers, but for servants to give to others. All of God's gifts are spiritual in nature and altruistic in purpose. God's gifts are for giving away. We are so used to thinking of "gift" in terms of getting something for nothing, that it is hard for us to grasp the biblical concept. Jesus taught that *"...it is more blessed to give than to receive"* (Acts

20:35); and this principle applies in the area of spiritual gifts.



Methods

Compare the passages relating to spiritual gifts with the story of the pounds. How many times have we heard of someone who is "gifted," and then think of the skills they have labored for years to develop? A talent is also a gift, but one which we develop and refine in order to use. But spiritual gifts are resident in the Holy Spirit, and are always for giving away to others.

Paul said to *"...covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way."* (1 Corinthians 12:31) What is the "more excellent way?" (Hint: Read the next chapter.)

Be sure to identify this problem: People who have been reared in a "consumer-oriented" society cannot understand a "gift" being something that we receive, in order to give away. We tend to see spiritual things in terms of what we get, and of the lack of a price-tag. Notice that all of God's gifts are for us to receive, in order to give away; and that His grace is imparted to enable us to better serve others.

Encourage your students to think about spiritual gifts and manifestations, and to pray that God would use them. Instead of thinking only in terms of wanting to get healed, think about the joy and blessing of ministering healing to someone else. Think about yourself being used of God in the supernatural, and cultivate a taste for ministry to others. Communicate excitement about serving others, and about the things that are spiritual in nature.

Training Disciples

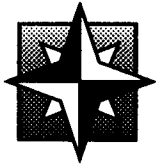
Volume 8

Lesson 39



Bible Reference

John 13



Theme

In preparing for His death, Jesus used an illustrated sermon to teach His disciples to love one another.



Scripture Reading

John 13:1-15

1 "Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

2 "And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's {son}, to betray him;

3 "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

4 "He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

5 "After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe {them} with the towel wherewith he was girded.

6 "Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

7 "Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

8 "Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

9 "Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also {my} hands and {my} head.

10 "Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash {his} feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

11 "For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

12 "So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

13 "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for {so} I am.

14 "If I then, {your} Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

15 "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."



Memory Verse

John 13:34

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."



Lesson Material

I. Jesus Builds the Church.

A. Matthew 16:18.

1. "...I will build my church...."
 - a. Jesus Christ is the only One Who can build a true Christian church.

- b. He is the Head of the church. (Colossians 1:18)
2. "...And the gates of hell will not prevail against it."
 - a. The true church takes the offensive against satanic strongholds.
 - b. True Christians have spiritual authority only when they are submitted to God.

B. Preparing leaders.

1. Jesus spent most of His efforts in His earthly ministry training leaders.
2. Jesus died to redeem the church; but He lived to train the church leaders.
3. He called them to labor alongside Him.
4. Pastors are called to feed the flock.
 - a. The sheep bear the lambs.
 - b. Evangelists are not only soul-winners, but are skilled in teaching others.

II. Ministries of the Church.

A. There are three basic aspects of the vision of a New Testament church.

1. Worship God.
2. Train and equip the saints "...for the work of the ministry,...." (Ephesians 4:12)
 - a. Body ministry.
 - b. Communion, fellowship, sharing.
 - c. Edify one another.
3. Evangelism.
 - a. "Go ye into all the world,...." (Mark 16:15) (The Great Commission.)
 - b. Missions.
 - c. Soul-winning.

B. Seen in the design of the Tabernacle.

1. Holy of Holies (worship).
2. Inner Court (fellowship, body ministry).
3. Outer Court (evangelism, salvation).

III. Communion of Saints.**A. God's purpose.**

1. To have a worshipping church.
 - a. Worship is one thing we will do forever.
 - b. God made us for Himself.
2. To have a loving church.
 - a. John 13:35.
 - b. Our love for one another is the "mark of excellence" in God's kingdom.
3. To have a soul-winning church.
 - a. The Great Commission.
 - b. God is not willing that any should perish (in hell).
 - c. God commands all men everywhere to repent.

B. The early church.

1. The people loved the Word, God's house, and each other. (Acts 2:42)
2. They shared their food and goods with other believers.
3. They were unselfish, and did not take advantage of each other. (Acts 4:32-34)

IV. Wash One Another's Feet.**A. Jesus set the example.**

1. He took off His robe.
 - a. Signifying humility, because the robe was a symbol of rank.

- b. He took the servant's position.
2. He washed their feet.
 - a. The purpose of all ministry is to serve others.
 - b. People who entertained often offered this service to guests who had walked long, dusty roads to get there.
 - c. But the owner always made a servant wash feet.
 - d. This was a job for only the lowliest slave.

B. A servant's spirit.

1. The desire to make someone else successful.
2. All of us should have a servant's heart.
3. The employees should work to make their employer successful.
 - a. In the world system, employees see the company as a tool for advancing their own careers.
 - b. People use people to advance their own position.
4. A godly employer will seek to make his employees successful.
 - a. We all need to feel loved.
 - b. Jesus gave Himself to His disciples; and they were faithfully devoted to Him.

C. Washing feet.

1. Symbolic of "refreshing the saints."
2. We fulfill this, when we speak words of encouragement and praise to weary Christians.
3. We bless one another in the name of the Lord.

D. Should we literally do a foot-washing?

1. While the scripture does not specifically command us to do so, a foot-washing ceremony can be a

source of great blessing to a body of believers.

2. When done in the spirit that Jesus taught, it can be a marvelous time of healing and fellowship.



Scripture Reading

- God designed His church with a three-fold ministry: worship, edification of the saints, and evangelism.
- The primary ministry of Jesus on earth was leadership training.
- The primary function of a pastor is the equipping of the saints.
- New Testament Christians are commanded to love, serve, bless, exhort, edify, and pray for one another.
- Foot-washing can be a beautiful time of healing and ministry.
- We fulfill the spirit of foot-washing when we encourage and bless one another.
- The church needs fewer finger-pointers, and more foot-washers.
- A servant's heart is one which seeks the success and blessing of others, rather than himself.



Lesson Material

What a powerful picture of humility and love. Jesus knows He is about to be crucified, yet He takes on the posture and attitude of a lowly servant, in order to refresh and teach His disciples at their last supper. They knew that the washing of feet was a common gesture of gracious hospitality by a host, for the roads were hot and dusty, and feet got tired and dirty. But this task was given only to the lowest of the servants, for it was personally demeaning to bow down and wash smelly feet. In posture and in gesture, you are indicating that the person you are ministering to is the greater.

The disciples were amazed, and Peter was incredulous. He wanted to honor and glorify Jesus, and this was certainly not the way to do it. It was a humiliation to his Lord, and he did not understand the bigger picture. Jesus had told them, *"...Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."* (Matthew 20:27) Now that Jesus was giving a living illustration of that, Peter had problems with Him. He was looking at the scene with one purpose in mind; but the Lord had a higher vision for this last supper. Jesus was giving them something that would stay in their minds for the rest of their lives -- giving them God's perspective on what a true leader should be.

A man's station and achievement in life was reflected by his clothing. To some extent, that is still true today. People of wealth tend to wear nicer clothes. Professional people wear more formal

attire, as a rule. We always make statements with the way we dress. When Jesus set aside His garments, He was making a statement about humility. He was being open and vulnerable. He was "taking on the form of a servant." (See Philippians 2:7) The servants were the ones who had little with which to cover themselves.

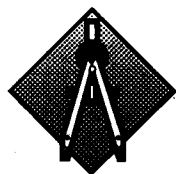
The disciples were amazed at this scene: the Son of God, kneeling humbly before them, washing their feet as would the lowest of slaves. Years later, the Apostle Paul would address his letters from "Paul, a *doulos* (bond-servant) of Jesus Christ." The leaders of the early church were very aware of the servant's attitude, which had been taught to them by their Lord and Master on that night.

One amazing truth that only later impressed their minds was the fact that Jesus washed the feet of Judas, while both of them knew full well what Judas was about to do. If we love, it is not because of the loveliness or "lovability" of the other people; but it is a response to the love God has put in our hearts. When we are genuinely forgiven by God, we can forgive anybody. When we know God loves us, we are free to give and share and love, even our enemies. Jesus washed the feet of Judas, because no matter what Judas would do, Jesus let him know He loved him.

We think, "How could anyone go out and betray someone as perfect and loving as Jesus?" Then, we realize that we are betraying Him when we choose to do wrong. We deny Him when we make our choices in life based on money or selfish motives. When Judas got his focus on money, he became blind to love, and he denied the Lord.

Jesus told us to "...wash one another's feet." (John 13:14) This command is not only fulfilled when we participate in a "foot-washing service," but also, in spirit, whenever we lay aside our pride and selfish pursuits to encourage and bless one another. Foot washing is a picture of personal ministry -- of refreshing the saints. We all get weary, and on the road of life we pick up the "dust" of secular influences. If we are not "washed" by the Word regularly, we can accumulate the bacteria of bitterness, and become stinky, bitter people. We all need to be blessed by other believers from time to time. We all need to be praised and rewarded when we do a job, and built up when we become weak.

Remember that God has not given any of us the "gift of criticism." He is never impressed with people who have a special ability to detect faults in others; but He is impressed by people who can restore those who have been exposed in a fault. We are not called to be a body of finger-pointers, but of foot-washers. When you get close enough to people that you can wash their feet, you get down to where the dirt is. You see the frailty, but you love and forgive and restore. Satan is the accuser, so whose team are we on when we accuse, criticize, and condemn? Who are we really glorifying when we expose a believer's weakness? God is love. God is a restorer. God is so good that He teaches us that love covers a "...multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8)



Methods

Plan a foot-washing service sometime, at least for your leadership team.

Work at cultivating a servant's heart. Have each student think of at least one individual who needs a spiritual refreshing. Purpose to find at least one way to encourage that person this week.

Put it into practice, and find out if it is really *"...more blessed to give than to receive."* (Acts 20:35)

What does it mean to have a "servant's heart?"

What would happen in our interpersonal relationships if we had a servant's heart, and were not all trying to be the most popular member of the group?

The Selfless Prayer of Jesus

Volume 8

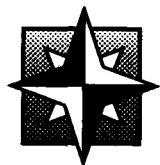
Lesson 40



Bible References

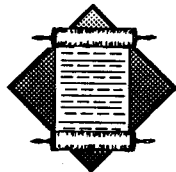
John 12

Psalms 22



Theme

Jesus came to earth to give His life for the sins of the whole world, in order to redeem from sin all those who would believe on Him.



Scripture Reading

John 12:23-32

23 "And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.

24 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

25 "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

26 "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will {my} Father honour.

27 "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.

28 "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, {saying}, I have both glorified {it}, and will glorify {it} again.

29 "The people therefore, that stood by, and heard {it}, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.

30 "Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.

31 *"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."*

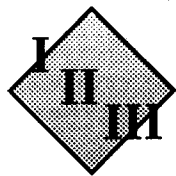
32 *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all {men} unto me."*



Memory Verse

John 12:24

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."



Outline

I. Jesus and His Disciples.

A. Jesus had been praised and well-received in Jerusalem, until the people realized that He was not going to set up an earthly kingdom for them.

B. Some Greeks in Jerusalem came to Philip.

1. "Sir, we would see Jesus."
2. In other words, "Mister, we would like to meet Jesus."
3. This is a great saying for any Christian to have on his bedroom wall:

- a. "The people want to see Jesus in you and in your message."
- b. "They do not just want a clever book report."

C. The reply of Jesus to Philip and Andrew gives the basis for the Easter message from Jesus' point of view.

D. Jesus knew that He was to die for us in a few days.

II. The Seed Principle.

A. A seed has to "die" before it can germinate and produce a great plant.

B. If a seed dies in fertile soil and is watered, it will become a full plant, producing many new plants and seeds.

1. It will produce fruit; and fruit contains seed -- the beginning of new life.
2. Jesus died, so that millions of people could live.

III. The Prayer of Jesus.

A. "What shall I say? Save me from this hour?"

1. This would be a common prayer in our day.
2. When problems come, many pray selfishly.
 - a. "God, solve my problems."
 - b. "Do not let people hurt me."

B. "No. My prayer is, 'Father, glorify Thy name.'"

1. Instead of seeking His own safety and blessing, Jesus was most concerned about the Father's will and purposes.

2. His goal in life was not to be blessed, but only to do the Father's will.
3. Jesus was the perfect servant; and He wants us to be just like Him.
4. God is pleased only when He sees Jesus in us, because in our sinful condition, we are grievous to a holy God.

IV. God Spoke.

A. God answered in an audible voice, but the people around did not hear clearly.

1. Some thought it was thunder.
2. Others thought an angel spoke.

B. Jesus spoke of two things happening.

1. The prince of this world (Satan) cast out.
 - a. Defeated at the cross.
 - b. Jesus would "bruise the serpent's head."
 - c. The serpent would "bruise His heel" (through the crucifixion). (Genesis 3:15)
2. "...If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me." (John 8:32)
 - a. He was speaking of being lifted up on a Roman cross to die.
 - b. In dying, He would reach mankind with God's redemption and grace.
 - c. He desires that all would come to Him; but most would not.



Spiritual Truths

- The world does not need more religion. The world needs Jesus.
- While Christianity is the most joyful and life-giving religion of all, the symbol of our faith is death (the cross), because the death of Christ is the necessary factor in our eternal life.
- We are not only to teach the words of Jesus, but we are also to live, so that Jesus can be seen in us.
- Jesus did not come to earth primarily to live as a good teacher, but to die as a perfect sacrifice.
- It is only through giving that we can really receive, and only through dying that we can really live.
- We cannot live for Jesus until we have died to self.
- There are two basic motives in praying: "Father, solve my problems and make my life better," or "Father, glorify your name through my life."
- Jesus always prayed the unselfish prayer; and He is the happiest Person in the universe.
- Jesus sought nothing for Himself; but in giving all, He gained the whole world.
- If your natural life on earth is your first love and chief focus, you will lose out, both in this life and in eternity.

- The seed principle is the amazing truth that if we die to self, as Jesus taught by example, we have the greatest potential for joy in life.



Lesson Material

While Jesus was in Jerusalem during that last week of Passover, some Greeks came to Philip and said, "...Sir, we would see Jesus." (John 12:21) What a powerful challenge for those of us who are His disciples and Bible teachers. Anyone can give a book report on the Bible; but do your students see Jesus in you? Is His love flowing out of your life? Is the power of the Holy Ghost in evidence as you minister by the Spirit? Can you say, "In the name of Jesus, rise up and walk?" Paul said, "We are not interested in the words of those who are puffed up. We are interested in the supernatural power in their lives." (1 Corinthians 4:19, Paraphrased)

When Philip and Andrew came to Jesus with this request from the Greeks, Jesus responded with a revelation concerning what was about to happen. He said, "The time has come for the Son of man to be **glorified**." That is an interesting word to use, considering that He was going to be betrayed, mocked, beaten, spit on, and executed in the most humiliating shame that evil men could devise.

But Jesus felt that His greatest honor was to be the sin offering. Through this shameful and painful death, He would satisfy the demands of a perfect and holy God, and purchase for God a great

company of believers, past and future, who would receive eternal life by faith and repentance from their sins. He would take on Himself the guilt and shame of the whole world, and make it possible for wicked, sinful men to become reconciled to a holy, righteous God. In laying down His life, He knew that He would be raised up in a glorified body -- a body that would never decay or diminish -- a body of flesh and bone. He would go to Paradise and lead out all of the souls of the believers who had died in faith since the world began; and He would ascend to heaven to be at the right hand of the Father forever.

Jesus Himself was the greatest illustration of the principle of the seed. He said that unless a seed falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone. If it dies, and is planted and watered, it can germinate, growing into a tree or some great plant, and reproduce itself thousands of times. If Jesus had come to seek to save Himself, He would never have been able to redeem a people for God. In dying, He gave; and in giving, He received.

Jesus said that the person who loves his life will lose it, but the man that hates his life in this world will keep it unto eternal life. People who love their lives focus on things and on themselves. They use others, and seek only their own happiness. Ironically, the harder you seek to make yourself happy, the more unfulfilled and frustrated you become. But those who repent from sin (selfishly using and hurting others for their own gain) and decide to live for God instead of for self find that they are the most blessed, happy people on earth; and they have the hope of an eternal heaven, besides.

The key to living for God is to die to self and have a servant's heart. A servant is one who is excited about the success of

another. Jesus was more excited about doing the will of His Father than He was about His own success. He never did anything for Himself. He felt that He belonged totally to God, and He acted accordingly. He took on the ...*"form of a servant,...."* (Philippians 2:7)

Jesus mentioned two ways of praying:

1. **"Father, save me from this hour."**

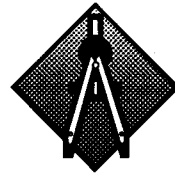
This could be called our classic human prayer. How often do we pray, "God, bless me and my friends. Solve my problems, and help me to be happy." The Greek language does not use punctuation like the English, so some translators had a hard time really getting the message here. There should be a question mark after the word "hour." It is more correct to read, "What shall I pray? Father, save me from this hour? No. I will pray, Father, glorify your name." That is the prayer of a servant.

2. **"Father, glorify your name."** ("God, do what will benefit you the most.")

This is a mature, unselfish way to pray. Ironically, the more we give ourselves to God and the more we live for others, the more joy and happiness we will have in our own lives. Jesus said, *"Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) are the meek (those who do not seek for their own rights): for they shall inherit the earth."* (Matthew 5:5) Those who lay down their lives (rights) will gain everything in the end; and those who live only for themselves (love their lives) will lose it all.

Jesus knew that to die on the cross would be the greatest act of unselfish love

the world had ever seen. He knew that He would please the Father by *"...bringing many sons unto glory,...."* (Hebrews 2:10) He knew that He would have great joy, every time a human being gave his life to God. He knew that the pain would be temporary, but the reward would be eternal.



Methods

Discussion:

Have you known of someone who was looking at your life to see Jesus?

How can we live so that Jesus can be seen in our lives more clearly?

What is the difference between a prayer of petition and a prayer of intercession? (Intercession is praying for the needs of others.)

Have you noticed in the Bible how amazingly unselfish Jesus was?

Have I spent most of my prayer time praying, "Father, please solve my problems. Do not let anybody hurt me?"

Am I learning to pray more for God's will to be done and for His name to be glorified in my life, my family, and my church?

What quality of Jesus do we see at Easter, that we can apply to our own lives?

The Ascension of Christ

Volume 8

Lesson 41

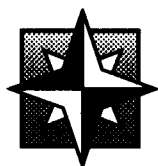


Bible References

Acts 1

1 Thessalonians 4

1 Corinthians 15



Theme

This same Jesus, Who came to earth as the Lamb of God, will come again to the earth just as He ascended into heaven, almost 2,000 years ago.



Scripture Reading

Acts 1:1-11

1 *"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,*

2 *"Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:*

3 *"To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:*

4 *"And, being assembled together with {them}, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, {saith he}, ye have heard of me.*

5 *"For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.*

6 *"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*

7 *"And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.*

8 *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

9 *"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.*

10 "And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

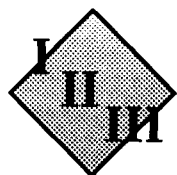
11 "Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."



Memory Verse

Acts 1:11

"Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."



Outline

I. Resurrection.

A. Firstfruits.

1. Jesus was the first to experience this kind of resurrection.
2. There had been other resurrections.
 - a. The Shunammite woman's son.
 - b. Jairus' daughter.
 - c. Lazarus.
3. But the others were restored to their mortal bodies, and died later.

4. Jesus was the first to be resurrected in an immortal body.
 - a. Glorified.
 - b. A body of "flesh and bone."
5. The glorified body.
 - a. The life of our body now is in the blood.
 - b. Blood requires oxygen.
 - c. Jesus had a glorified body with no blood.
 - d. The life of that body is in the Spirit.
 - e. Incorruptible. (1 Corinthians 15:42)

B. First the natural, and then the spiritual. (v. 44)

C. Immortal (cannot die).

II. Affirmation.

A. Jesus spent forty days appearing to His followers.

1. Forty is the biblical number of testing, or proving.
2. He gave many infallible proofs of His resurrection. (Acts 1:3)
3. Jesus continued to train and prepare His disciples for leadership.

B. Jesus forgave Peter and the disciples.

1. They had denied Him, when He went to the cross.
2. They did not understand what was happening.

C. Jesus gave them their commission.

1. Matthew 28:19-20.
2. Mark 16:15-18.

III. The Ascension.

A. Jesus told them to stay in Jerusalem.

1. About 500 disciples. (1 Corinthians 15:6)
2. He did not say for how long -- just "not many days."
3. After ten days, only 120 were still waiting. (Acts 1:15)
4. Those people meant business with God.
5. God often withholds the full revelation for a season, to allow the half-hearted to drop out.

B. How did Jesus ascend?

1. Many saw Him, when He went up to heaven.
2. He was taken up to the sky.
3. A cloud received Him out of their sight.

IV. The Second Coming.

A. The witnesses.

1. Two men stood by them in white.
 - a. Many people think they must have been angels.
 - b. The Bible does not say specifically that they were angels.
 - c. "Two men."
 - d. Two is the biblical number of true witness.
2. "Why stand here gazing into heaven?"
 - a. Makes perfect sense to some of us.
 - b. What would you have done?

B. Their message. (Acts 1:11)

1. "This same Jesus...."

2. "Shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven."

- a. Not secretly or quietly, as His first coming.
- b. Not witnessed by only a few.
- c. But openly.
- d. With many witnesses.

3. "...Every eye shall see him,...." (Revelation 1:7)

4. He will come "in the clouds." (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

V. The Rapture of the Saints.

A. The dead in Christ will rise first.

1. 1 Thessalonians 4:16.
2. 1 Corinthians 15:52.
3. All the saints who have died in faith and in covenant with God will come from heaven to receive their resurrected, glorified, immortal bodies from the grave.

B. We will be changed.

1. In a moment. (1 Corinthians 15:52)
2. We shall be like Him (in a glorified body of flesh and bone). (1 John 3:1-3)
3. Recognizable, but perfect.
4. Not old, or handicapped, or sickly. (Maybe not even bald!)

C. We will meet Him in the clouds.

1. We will rise to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thessalonians 4:17)
2. Raptured (caught up).

D. We do not know the day; but, we should live ready for His return.



Spiritual Truths

- The death of Christ would not be effective in bringing us eternal life, if it had not been for the resurrection.
- Jesus was the first to rise from the dead in an immortal body of flesh and bone.
- Jesus is alive; so we do not merely teach and believe the sayings of Jesus, but we walk with Him, and He lives in our hearts.
- Jesus Christ appeared in His resurrected body to many witnesses, to establish that we are not following hearsay evidence, but rather a confirmed, historical fact.
- Jesus waited to send the Holy Ghost to the church, so that the followers who did not really mean business would have time to drop out.
- Jesus Christ will return to earth, not like He came the first time, but like He left.
- Only the righteous saints will rise to meet the Lord when He comes again.
- Jesus is coming at a time when we do not really expect Him, "as a thief in the night" -- so be ready.



Lesson Material

Some well-meaning religious groups surround themselves with the image of Jesus Christ on the cross. While it is proper to commemorate the death of our Lord, it is not wise to limit our focus to that aspect of Jesus. It is true that He suffered and died; but it is also gloriously true that He is alive forevermore. The symbol of Christianity is not a crucifix with a dying Jesus on the cross; but rather, it is the empty cross and the empty tomb. He lives to make intercession for us. (Hebrews 7:25) He is our faithful High Priest. (Hebrews 4:15) We can go to Him and relate to Him. He is the Mediator between God and man. (1 Timothy 2:5) Jesus Christ is the risen Lord and the King of kings. He was, but is no more, the gentle, harmless babe in a manger. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Conquering Captain of the Lord's hosts.

Many of the world's religions center in the teachings of a dead guru, or messiah, or "god;" but our Savior is alive. He appeared to many people for forty days. The number 40 is used for testing and proving in the Bible many times. God rained judgment on the earth for 40 days. Moses was in the wilderness for 40 years, and then the whole nation was tested there another 40 years. Jesus fasted for 40 days, also in the wilderness. The twelve Israelite spies tested the land of Canaan for 40 days.

As Christians, we do not merely repeat the words of Jesus. We are the ministers of Christ. (1 Timothy 4:6) We lead people to Jesus Himself. We give to people out of

the anointing of God on our own lives. We impart the peace of God to one another. As we have received life and peace from our Lord, so we give what we have to others. We are not only growing in our knowledge about Christ, but we are to *"...grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ...."* (2 Peter 3:18) God wants us to receive His grace (supernatural enabling), and to become more intimate with Christ in our personal relationship with Him.

When Jesus was resurrected from the dead, He returned from the spirit world to His physical body. But when He did, it was changed dramatically. The features were basically the same, but the molecular structure, or at least the cellular structure, was different. Jesus now was transformed and glorified. He could walk through walls, and travel at the speed of thought. He not only traveled into the earth to the spirit world (Paradise), but He also went to heaven and back in one day. We do not know exactly where heaven is, because our telescopes cannot see it. We know that it is a big place. Heaven is possibly even a planet. The point is, that Jesus was no longer limited to *terra firma*, and had a glorious, immortal body.

The exciting truth is that the resurrection of Christ is the "firstfruits" of the resurrection of the church. We will not be resurrected like Lazarus, who died again, but *"...we shall be like him;...."* (1 John 3:2) What a glorious hope! We will not be reincarnated (put into a different body), as the Hindus believe. We will be resurrected, like Jesus was. For some of us, this may not be such hilarious news; but, remember, the body will be glorified, so maybe some features will get some improvement along the way. But you will still be the recognizable you, because we

will know, as we are known. (1Corinthians 13:2)

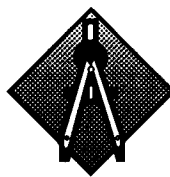
After Jesus affirmed His resurrection to many witnesses by many infallible proofs, He ascended to the Father, so that He could send the Holy Spirit to the church. He gave the people some final instructions, and then rose up in the air to be received in the clouds. This is far more dramatic than the method of His coming, which was quiet, humble, and known only by a few.

Two men stood by the crowd, and asked the people, "Why are you standing here, looking up to heaven?" What a question! What would you expect people to do, when they saw the Lord flying up to the sky like that? The natural mind would somehow expect to see Him falling back down, sooner or later. This was an awesome event!

Their message was short and sweet. *"This same Jesus... shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."* (Acts 1:11) Now, whether they were angels in the form of men, or prophets of God who were apparently strangers to the disciples, no one really knows. But their message was from God. "Why stand around? Get on with the business of doing what Jesus said to do, because He is going to return in a similar fashion." Jesus will come in the sight of many witnesses, and He will come in the clouds. But then, the dead saints will be reunited with their decayed bodies, which will be resurrected, transformed, and glorified; and the living saints will be changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." This is the beginning of the "first resurrection." (Revelation 20:5)

For two thousand years, Christians have lived with the hope that they would

be part of that company which would see the literal return of the Lord to the earth. Of course, up until now, none of them have. Many have died in faith, and they will be part of the "dead in Christ" who will rise first. But every passing year brings us closer to that hour; and it cannot be too much longer. Every once in a while, some people will get carried to excess and be persuaded to give all their goods to some "prophet" who claims to know the date -- so they might as well go to some remote place and wait it out. But that is never of God. For one thing, it is a scam used to bilk people out of their money. For another, no man knows the day or the hour. (Matthew 25:13) We are to live as if Jesus was coming at any moment; but we are also to occupy faithfully in this life, as if He was not coming for one hundred years. When He comes, He will come for a working church, which is seeking to "occupy" the land and be the salt and light of the earth. Maranatha! Even so, come Lord Jesus!



Methods

Discussion:

Do you really relate to Jesus Christ as a living, powerful Lord?

What do we mean when we sing, "I serve a risen Savior, He's in the world today?"

What is the difference between resurrection and reincarnation?

Who will be in the "first resurrection?"

What makes us so sure that we are living in the end times?

How does faith in the second coming affect our lifestyle?

The Church at Ephesus

Volume 8

Lesson 42



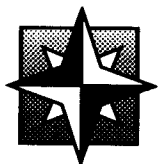
Bible References

Revelation 1-2

Ephesians 1-6

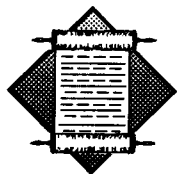
Acts 19-20

1 Thessalonians 1:3



Theme

God deserves, desires, and demands to be the first Love of our life.



Scripture Reading

Revelation 2:1-7

1 "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in' the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

2 "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

3 "And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

4 "Nevertheless I have {somewhat} against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

5 "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

6 "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

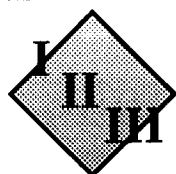
7 "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."



Memory Verse

Hebrews 10:38-39

"Now the just shall live by faith: but if (any man) draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."



Outline

I. The Seven Churches.

A. John had a revelation of Jesus.

1. He was exiled on the prison island of Patmos for preaching the gospel.
2. He was an old man.
3. All of the other original apostles had been killed for preaching Jesus.
4. He was projected by the Spirit to the "day of the Lord."
5. He received a great revelation of Jesus Christ.
6. The Revelation is full of prophetic language and images, which should not all be interpreted as physical events.

B. Jesus dictates seven personal letters to John.

1. To the "*angelos*" of the churches.
2. "*Angelos*" ("angel") means "messenger," and refers to the pastor of each church.
 - a. Jesus was not giving a message to a man, to give to an angel.
 - b. Angels are messengers to men.
 - c. Note that there was one messenger in each city church (one senior pastor of each flock).
 - d. The churches had not begun to split apart into little groups and squabble with each other, yet.
3. The seven churches were all in cities in Asia Minor.
4. The order of the churches and their characteristics seem to be prophetic of the church age (from the time of Christ to the second coming) of 2,000 years.

II. "I Know Thy Works."

A. "I know:

1. "Thy works;
2. "Labour;
3. "Patience."

B. But they were missing something.

1. To the Thessalonian church. (1 Thessalonians 1:3)
2. "I remember your:
 - a. "Work of faith;
 - b. "Labor of love;
 - c. "Patience of hope."
3. God not only sees our actions, but He also sees our motive (heart).
4. God not only judges us by what we do, but also by the reasons we do it.

5. What was missing?
 - a. Faith.
 - b. Hope.
 - c. Love.
 6. 1 Corinthians 13:13.
 - a. Now abides faith, hope and love.
 - b. Abides: These three qualities bring stability and strength to a life.
- C. The Ephesians were still pursuing spiritual things.
1. They had not given up.
 2. They did not quit on the church.
- D. Hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans.
1. *Nico* -- "rule."
 2. *Laiety* -- "people."
 3. Means either the "rule by the people" or "those who rule over the people."
 - a. Both are wrong.
 - b. A church should not be ruled by a board who controls the pastor.
 - c. Nor ruled by a pastor who controls the whole church.
 - d. The true church is ruled by Jesus, Who leads through the pastor, and confirms His Word by apostles and prophets.

III. "Thy First Love."

A. They had lost their intensity for God.

1. David said, "*Restore unto me the joy of your salvation,....*" (Psalms 51:12)
 - a. David had lost his joy, because he engaged in sexual sin.
 - b. Sinful pleasure is a great destroyer of joy.

2. Backslidden.
 - a. Not having left God (reprobate), but spiritually dull.
 - b. Drawn back to a focus on the cares of this life, which choke the Word.

B. First Love.

1. "...*No other gods before me.*" (Exodus 20:3)
2. Setting your affection on eternal things, rather than on worldly things. (Colossians 3:2)
3. We choose what we will delight in.
4. Delight yourself in the Lord. (Psalms 37:4)

C. "Remember from whence you are fallen."

1. "Or I will remove your candlestick out of its place."
2. Loss of stewardship (reward).
3. Loss of ministry.
4. Loss of our sense of place in God.
5. Loss of reward. (2 John 8)
6. Is it possible to so resist the Holy Spirit as a believer, that we lose our relationship with God and become spiritually reprobate?
 - a. 2 Peter 2:20-22.
 - b. 1 Timothy 4:1-2.
 - c. Jeremiah 23:33.
 - d. Ezekiel 33:13.
 - e. Romans 1:28.
 - f. God will never leave us; but, He never says that He will not allow us to choose to leave Him.
 - g. God is able to keep us from falling; but, He never said that He will not allow us to fall.
 - h. We are commanded to come to Jesus, and to abide in Jesus.

IV. "He That Hath an Ear."

A. Not everyone can hear in the spirit.

B. God's Spirit is speaking to the churches.

C. To him that overcomes:

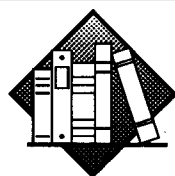
1. Not to all who start the race, but only to those who overcome.
2. Reward: Eat of the tree of life in heaven (Paradise of God).



Spiritual Truths

- God speaks to the church primarily through the pastor, who is a special gift to the body of Christ, and has a special place in the Lord's right hand.
- The primary function of a pastor is that of a messenger. His most important job is to hear clearly from God.
- God knows when we are going through the forms with a half-hearted religion.
- Faith, hope, and love are essential, if we are going to be consistent and fruitful as believers. These qualities add stability and strength to life.
- Faith is a focus on God; hope is a positive focus on the future; and love is an unselfish focus on others.
- God is the only legitimate Ruler of a Christian church; and He hates the works of the Nicolaitans.

- The Ephesians had grown mediocre in their love for God, but had not become spiritually reprobate.
- God is not merely interested in our works for Him; His purpose for us is loving, intimate relationship.



Lesson Material

Most of us are familiar with the basic story of John on the Isle of Patmos. He was an old apostle. All of the others had been martyred for the sake of their testimony. John was the only one who would die of old age. But he had been persecuted, and even boiled in oil. God had preserved him, in order to give the church one great message that would complete the canon of the holy scripture: the "Revelation." While exiled on the lonely island prison, John was given a powerful vision of Jesus, and prophetic images that relate to His ultimate victory in the earth. We are given a prophetic picture of the end times; but we need to realize that throughout the Bible God speaks in veiled images, so that we can receive the message with our spirit, even if we do not fully understand it with our minds. For ages, man has tried to take the spiritual message of prophecy and put it on charts, reducing it all to physical events and tangible realities. The Revelation is not written to the mind, but to the spirit. No one fully understands all the imagery, and only the presumptuous claim to have all the answers.

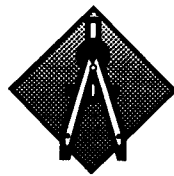
God did not say, "Blessed is he that understandeth this book;" but rather, "*Blessed is he that readeth,....*" (Revelation

1:3) We do not know how it will all be fulfilled; but we do know that Jesus is coming again in power, and that He will emerge the victorious Conqueror of all. Our minds cannot fit it all together; but our spirits rejoice in the truth, and say *"...Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."* (Revelation 22:20)

In this Revelation, John saw a vision of Jesus. Again, it was prophetic, and not literal. He is seen in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, which represent the churches of the earth. The stars in His right hand represent the pastors, and show that they have a special place in the Lord. Jesus then dictated seven short letters for John to take to the pastors of each of seven churches in Asia Minor. Historians have traced the history of the church down through the ages, and have noted amazing similarities between these churches and the progress of the church at large. Now, we realize that at any given time there are many kinds of churches. Today we have some that are like Ephesus, or Smyrna. But since about 1900, the prevailing characteristic of the church in the world has been most like the church described as Laodicea. We seem to be living in the last of the seven historical periods, the "Laodicean Age."

From about 70 to 170 A.D., the church was characteristically like this letter to the church in Ephesus. The church was really birthed and ignited on the day of Pentecost, and it experienced explosive growth for several decades. But after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., things began to "cool down" spiritually. The churches were still large and thriving, in spite of some persecution; but it was becoming more and more like "business as usual." There were many still doing the work of religion, but there was not as much love involved.

It becomes very significant when we compare Revelation 2:2 with 1 Thessalonians 1:3, especially when we tie in 1 Corinthians 13:13. They had the works, and even the patience, but not the faith, hope and love. While we are not to judge one another, we realize that God does. Judgment involves more than acknowledging appearances and performance. Judgment involves motives. Jesus said that many will come to Him in the day of judgment and say, *"...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?"* (Matthew 7:22) Jesus will say, *"...I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* (v.23) They will have the credentials and a record of service, but He will judge the heart. "Depart from me. We never had an intimate relationship. You did not do it with pure motives. I do not accept lip service. I want to be served out of love." Works are not pleasing to God, if they are not an expression of faith. Labor must be motivated by an unselfish heart of love; and patience is not a virtue, unless it is based on a sincere hope. *"...Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."* (1 Samuel 16:7)



Methods

Find a map with these seven prominent cities in Asia Minor, and become familiar with some facts about the cities. Also, make a chart of the seven "dispensations" that parallel the "church age" over the last 2,000 years.

Encourage each student to take this Word from God to heart, as if Jesus had written it to them. Does this church best describe where I am spiritually? Do any of these things apply to me? *"Examine yourselves,...."* (2 Corinthians 13:5)

How can we rekindle our first love?

Do you remember how you felt about God, when you were first saved?

How did you feel about God, when you received the baptism in the Holy Spirit?

What caused David to lose his first love, so that he needed to pray, *"...renew a right spirit within me"*? (Psalms 51:10) This Psalm is a great pattern for renewing our first love, by repentance and faith.

Smyrna

Volume 8

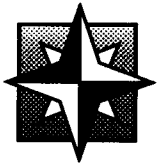
Lesson 43



Bible References

Revelation 2

1 Peter 4



Theme

Suffering is not a sign that God has rejected you. In fact, it is part of God's character development program for the people He is preparing to reign with Him for eternity.



Scripture Reading

Revelation 2:8-11

8 "And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

9 "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and {I know} the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but {are} the synagogue of Satan.

10 "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast {some} of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

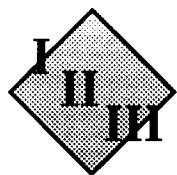
11 "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."



Memory Verse

1 Corinthians 4:17-18

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding {and} eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen {are} temporal; but the things which are not seen {are} eternal."



Outline

I. The Church in Smyrna.

A. The city.

1. Major commercial city.
 - a. Located on a large inlet on the west coast of Asia Minor.
 - b. Major hub of commerce.
2. Pagan city.
 - a. Large temple to Caesar Tiberius.
 - b. Many people worshipped Roman or Greek gods.
3. Strong Jewish population.
 - a. Great hatred for Christians.
 - b. Persecuted them more than the Romans did.

B. Christianity in Smyrna.

1. Large group of faithful believers.
2. Most persecuted of all the Christians in Asia Minor.
3. Much poverty and suffering among the Christians.
 - a. Many had lost jobs and businesses, because of their faith.
 - b. In their suffering, they relied on faith.

C. The letter from Jesus.

1. The only letter with no mention of fault or rebuke.
2. They had not accomplished great works; but, they stayed true to God and endured hardship.
3. "Smyrna" means "myrrh," which was a fragrant spice obtained from a thorny tree.

- a. Speaks of the beauty that comes out of suffering.
- b. "...Your sorrow will be turned into joy." (John 16:20)

D. Polycarp.

1. The *angelos* (senior leader, or bishop) of the church in Smyrna.
2. Had been a young disciple of John.
3. Arrested in 155 A.D. by jealous Jewish leaders.
4. He was ordered to renounce Christ; but he refused.
5. His reply: "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He has never done me wrong. Why should I deny my King now?"
6. He sang and praised God, while they tried to burn him at the stake.
 - a. The Jews could not stand it, so they stabbed him with a spear.
 - b. His blood put out the fire; and he kept singing.
 - c. Finally, Polycarp died, a rejoicing martyr for Jesus, his King.

II. The Persecuted Church.

A. Second historical period of the church age.

1. 170-313 A.D.
2. They had suffered persecution; but Jesus warned them that they would be put into prison and severely tried.
3. In their stand for Christ, many other martyrs followed Polycarp.

B. "Ten days."

1. "10" is a prophetic number.
2. Did not refer to ten literal days, but rather ten time periods.

3. During the reign of Emperor Diocletian, there were ten edicts issued against the Christians to try to destroy the faith.

C. 313 A.D.

1. Emperor Constantine saw a cloud shaped like a cross, and formally ended the persecution.
2. He declared Christianity to be the official state religion of the empire.
3. This led to the corruption of the church.

III. Christians and Suffering.

A. Perfecting the heart.

1. 1 Peter 4:12-13.
2. Do not think it strange when you have trials.
3. 1 Peter 5:10.
 - a. The God of all grace.
 - b. After that you have suffered for awhile.
 - c. Make you perfect.
 - d. Establish you.
 - e. Strengthen you.
 - f. Settle you.
4. Sorrow makes the heart better. (Ecclesiastes 7:3)
5. "...I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10)

B. Revealing the heart. (2 Corinthians 6:4)

1. When you crush a rose, you release the fragrance.
2. Ditto with a stink bug.
3. You reveal what is really there.

C. Enlarging the heart.

1. 2 Corinthians 6:4-11.

2. Paul's suffering deepened his love for the people.

D. Suffering produces joy.

1. John 16:20-22.
 - a. As a woman in travail has great joy in giving birth.
 - b. So you will have joy, after the sorrow.
2. God turns mourning into dancing.
 - a. Psalms 30:11.
 - b. If there is no mourning, there will not be the rejoicing.

IV. Crisis.

- A. Chinese word for "crisis" means "danger with opportunity."

- B. "...Tribulation worketh patience;...." (Romans 5:3)

- C. Crisis leads to either disaster or greater blessing, depending on our response.

1. Joseph maintained his integrity during times of crisis.
 - a. His 13 years of suffering resulted in great honor and blessing.
 - b. He believed the Word of the Lord.
2. Moses faced the crisis of the Red Sea.
 - a. Result: death of the enemy.
 - b. Freedom from bondage.
3. The church needs problems, so the faithful ones can be revealed. (1 Corinthians 11:19)
4. David faced the crisis of Goliath, and won the blessing.

D. Crisis is not a time to give up; it is a time to look up.

1. If you give up in the day of crisis, your strength is small. (Proverbs 24:10)
2. Psalms 121.
3. In due season we will reap, if we do not give up. (Galatians 6:9)



Spiritual Truths

- Historically, the church has been its purest during times of persecution and hardship, and its most corrupt during times of prosperity.
- In times of persecution, it is pleasing to God if you persevere, even if you do not see great results.
- All those who are godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution in this life. (2 Timothy 3:12)
- You have not really done much for God, if you have never made the devil or religious people mad.
- God has not called us to glory by way of the featherbed, but by way of the cross.
- Nothing of significance in God's kingdom is birthed without travail and suffering.
- It is considered by true Christians to be a blessing to suffer for Jesus, and the highest honor to die for Him.

- Trials are situations designed by God to develop our character and help bring us to maturity.



Lesson Material

Jesus gave a message to John for each of the seven major churches in Asia Minor. These seven are given in order of their prophetic significance, because history has borne out the application to the development of the Christian world. It was birthed in zeal and power; but over the decades, it became like the church in Ephesus, with diminished fervency for God. Then the church went through a time of intense suffering, especially in Smyrna, where Christians were despised and rejected by men, and suffered prejudice, poverty, and even death. The Jewish leaders who had rejected Jesus Christ became even more intense in their hatred of Christians, even to the point that they violated their own Sabbath to gather firewood, so that they could burn Bishop Polycarp at the stake.

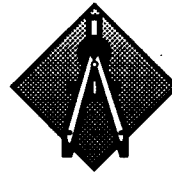
Polycarp had been a faithful servant of God for many years. As a young man, he served the great Apostle John himself. Perhaps John had known that Polycarp would be executed as one of the many martyrs for the Lord, during the persecution Jesus had told him about. When the old bishop was arrested, he was commanded to renounce Jesus Christ. He said, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and he has never done me wrong. How can I now deny my King, Who has saved me?" Polycarp sang and praised God, as his tormentors were feverishly

trying to fan the flames around him. They became so frustrated, that one of them ran a spear through his side. The blood ran down his side, and miraculously put out the fire. If these angry Jews had any spiritual sense, they would have realized the favor of God on this man. But they blindly carried on, and eventually the kind voice was silenced. But for Polycarp, and for thousands of other martyrs, this was a most glorious and honorable way to die. God reserves a special reward in eternity for those who give their lives for the sake of His kingdom.

Jesus certainly was pleased with the impoverished believers at Smyrna. He had no word of correction for them -- only commendation. More than any of the other churches, they could rejoice, in that they were partakers of Christ's suffering. Our culture would have us believe that the blessed people are those who have money and physical beauty. But Jesus said that the blessed people in life are the ones who are poor in spirit, who mourn, and who are persecuted for His name's sake. (Matthew 5) It is certainly a different values system; but that is how God looks at it.

Peter did make a distinction when he spoke about suffering, noting that some people suffer because of their own mistakes or bad attitudes. But if you do right and suffer for it, you are in a position to be very blessed of God. In the natural, we tend to see all suffering as bad, and all prosperity as good. But God looks at the end result to determine if it is bad or good. He seeks to develop our character; and He is more concerned with what we are learning than with how we are feeling.

God spoke to Hosea the prophet about dealing with wayward Israel. He said that He would bring great suffering on her, and allure her into the desert. *"And I will give her...the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there,...."* (Hosea 2:15) "Achor" means "trouble." God would use the suffering and adversity to draw the people to Himself -- He would use trouble as a "door of hope." We see adversity as all negative; but God sees it from the perspective of a Father Who inflicts pain, in order to teach a child wisdom.



Methods

Discussion:

We all know the obvious advantages of health and wealth. What are some possible advantages of suffering, or poverty?

Are there dangers or disadvantages to wealth and success?

Do you think Job enjoyed and appreciated his success more, after he went through his time of suffering? Why?

How much does the Bible deal with temporal wealth and prosperity, and how much does it deal with the issue of suffering?

Pergamos

Volume 8

Lesson 44

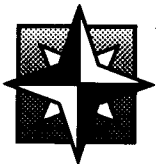


Bible References

Revelation 2

Deuteronomy 22

2 Corinthians 7



Theme

There is great pressure for Christian young people to blend in with the world; but we should guard our hearts, and seek after God together.



Scripture Reading

Revelation 2:12-14

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he

which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

13 "I know thy works and where thou dwellest, {even} where Satan's seat {is}: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas {was} my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

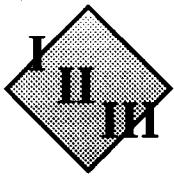
14 "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication."



Memory Verse

2 Corinthians 6:17-18

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean {thing}; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."



Outline

I. The City of Pergamos.

- A. Located in what is now Turkey.
 - 1. Great religious center.
 - 2. Had great temples to Zeus and other Greek gods, and also to the Roman Emperors.
- B. "Pergamos" means "marriage" plus "tower."
 - 1. Problem: mixing with the world.
 - 2. Christians influenced by heathens.
- C. Persecution of Christians.
 - 1. Antipas was the first martyr there.
 - 2. But the greatest threat was the influence of sensual practices and the lure of money, leading some to turn from God to serve idols.
- D. Where Satan's seat is.
 - 1. Reference to the pagan temples to idols.
 - 2. Stronghold of Satanic religions.
 - 3. Today, it is controlled by Moslems.
 - a. The world's most dangerous religion.
 - b. Nearly one billion people worship "Allah," and practice the religion of Islam.
 - c. It is the fastest growing religion in the world.
 - d. Many Christians today are being martyred by Moslems.

II. The Historical Period.

- A. 313-606 A.D.
- B. After the Emperor Constantine.
 - 1. He stopped the persecution of Christians.
 - 2. Made Christianity the state religion.
 - 3. The church became corrupt.
- C. A mixture.
 - 1. When the church was persecuted, only those who were sincere believers professed Christ.
 - 2. Now people joined the church for political or financial gain.
 - 3. The church began to be rich, but corrupt.
- D. This mixture with the heathen led to the spiritual downfall of the church, and to the Dark Ages.
 - 1. All societies rise and fall according to their response to God and His Word.
 - 2. The Bible was replaced with tradition.
 - 3. Spiritual anointing was replaced with politics.

III. Do not Mix.

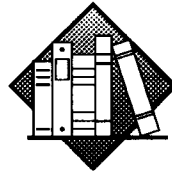
- A. Do not mix your seed.
 - 1. Deuteronomy 22:9.
 - 2. The seed is the pure Word of God.
 - 3. Do not mix the Word with traditions or culture, when you present the gospel.
 - 4. Do not mix the Word with carnal marketing methods or sensual music and entertainment.

5. Our job is not to make Jesus acceptable to men, but to make men acceptable to Jesus through repentance and the new birth.
- B. Do not plow with an ox and an ass together.
1. Deuteronomy 22:10.
 2. Do not be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever.
 3. Do not join yourself in a covenant or partnership with an unbeliever, because he has a different life goal.
 4. You must not have spiritual intimacy with a person who does not serve Jesus Christ.
 5. You do not win the world by being like the world.
- C. Do not mix garments.
1. Deuteronomy 22:11.
 2. Do not mix your identity.
 - a. If God made you male, then do not blaspheme God by trying to be feminine.
 - b. No effeminate (homosexual) can inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9; Romans 14:17)
 - c. Homosexuals are expressing bitter rebellion against God.
 - d. Homosexuality is not a class of people -- it is a type of sin.
 - e. It is an abomination to God.
 - f. "Homosexual" is actually a non-biblical term for "sodomite."
- IV. Balaam and Nicolaitans.
- A. Doctrine of Balaam.
1. Balaam taught King Balak to defeat Israel by luring them out from under God's protection (cloud) with sexual pleasures.
 2. The doctrine of Balaam is perhaps the teaching that we can appeal to the flesh in the church and focus on money, and still get by spiritually.
 3. "If it sells, and draws a crowd, it must be good."
 4. Some people were going to the heathen festivals and indulging in questionable entertainment, and being drawn back into sin.
 5. Sensual music and practices should not be brought into the church, even if they draw crowds of carnal young people.
 6. A small band of pure, committed young people will do more for God's kingdom than a large crowd of carnal, mediocre people.
- B. Doctrine of the Nicolaitans.
1. Perhaps a similar group, who encouraged immorality in the church.
 2. Another possibility:
 - a. "Nicolaitan" means "rule" plus "people."
 - b. It could have to do with the practice of a church ruled by the people, or by a man or group seeking to rule over the people.
 - c. Jesus is the only proper Head of the church.
 - d. He rules through pastors and apostolic leadership whom He appoints, and who submit to Him and to one another in the fear of the Lord.
 - e. Any church controlled by a group of people or by a man is dangerous.



Spiritual Truths

- Our bodies were designed for worship and holiness. Sin damages, diminishes, and destroys.
- When the devil found that he could not destroy the church by persecution, he sought to defile the church by infiltration.
- A church is corrupt when men control it. Jesus Christ is the only legitimate Head of any church.
- You will not effectively win the world to God's kingdom by using the world's methods. God does not want a bride who emulates the world -- and the world will not respect it.
- The test of a ministry or method is not the size of the audience it attracts, but the quality of life and character it inspires.
- The doctrine of Balaam includes the concept that money and popularity determine the direction of the ministry.
- The Greek word for "church" is *ecclesia*, which means "the called out ones." We are called to be separate and clean.
- Genuine Christians will tend to have an increasing influence on the people around them, while mediocre Christians will tend to be influenced by the world.



Lesson Material

Jesus wrote a clear message to the church in the city of Pergamos relating to name of the city and its basic spiritual problem. Like most churches, this one had its strengths and weaknesses. It is wise for every church to be honest about its shortcomings as well as its successes, and to seek God for development and help in those areas.

The key word in Pergamos was "mixture." The Christians were being influenced by the heathens, and were using carnal techniques in ministry and church government. If you get your focus off of God, you will tend to operate the church like a business, and learn techniques from the world. You will also evaluate your effectiveness by the world's measuring system of money and popularity, instead of looking to see if God is pleased. Note that some of the greatest prophets of history were "unsuccessful," if measured by the world's standards, such as Ezekiel and Jeremiah. Many of them were rejected, impoverished, tortured, and/or martyred. (Hebrews 11) But in eternity, the only really important question is, "Did I please God?"

After the Emperor Constantine declared Christianity a legal religion, the persecution stopped. The church became financially prosperous; the persecution almost completely stopped; and corrupt people with various motives flocked to the church. It was a mixture of religion and flesh; and the church became more and more dominated by politics, instead of the anointing. The "doctrine of Balaam"

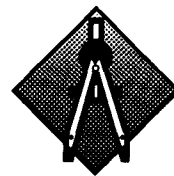
prevailed. Balaam had taught King Balak to lure the Israelites away from God's protection by sexual enticements. He found that he could not curse Israel as long as they were under the cloud, which represented God's authority and protection. His "curses" turned into blessings, just as *"...all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to {his} purpose."* (Romans 8:28) When you are under God's loving hand, even the evil that people do against you can turn into a blessing, if you keep your attitude right and your eyes on God. Do not get bitter. God is developing your character through it all.

The "doctrine of Balaam" also involves a focus on money. Balaam sought to use his anointing for financial gain. It is possible to merchandise a spiritual gift; and God will judge those who do. Now, the Bible clearly teaches that those who "labor in the word and doctrine" well should be paid well. (1 Timothy 5:17) What is the difference? The difference is motive. Those who love God and love God's people will tend to lead well, and should receive rewards for their faithfulness. Those who love money and use people and dabble in the doctrine of Balaam, will be judged by God accordingly. Those of us who teach need to be honest with ourselves and judge our own motives, while refusing to judge one another.

Historically, the church from 313 to 606 A.D. was in spiritual decline. With the ease of persecution and increased social acceptance and wealth, the church became a friend of the world. Note that when we mix with the world, we do not tend to influence the world, but rather, we become influenced by it. Why? It is like a disease. If you have a room full of children and one

has a virus, what happens? The sick child does not get well by being around the healthy ones; but the healthy ones pick up the virus. The Prophet Haggai said the same thing. If you mix the clean with the unclean, then the clean becomes defiled. (Haggai 2:13-14)

Many people try to win the world by being as attractive to the world as possible. They play music and dress themselves like the world, hoping to be an influence. But eventually they become more and more morally corrupt themselves, because they are being defiled in the mix. This idea is contrary to God's wisdom, and has caused many Christian young people to love the world and turn away from God. God tells us clearly to be separate from the world, and to join ourselves to godly people. We need to choose the purest people we know to be our influences in life. We are also told that "emulations" are works of the flesh. (Galatians 5:20) A modern word for "emulations" is "fads." It is dangerous to follow a fad, because it almost always involves deviations from modesty or family values. We are specifically commanded to avoid being like the world. Our goal is to be like Jesus, Who was perfectly submitted to His Father in everything.



Methods

Discussion:

Do the Christians in your city tend to be like the Pergamos church?

Would you say that you are influenced by unsaved people, such as classmates and entertainers, more than by Christian role models?

Do you feel that you need to look like the people in the secular world, in order to be accepted?

Do you really want to be accepted by people who reject Jesus Christ?

What steps are you taking to win your unsaved peers to the Lord?

Why is there so much pressure to follow fads?

Do you think that some of the people you know who need Jesus would be more likely to give their lives to Him, if you were full of the Holy Ghost and spiritual joy?

Women in Christianity

Volume 8

Lesson 45

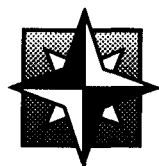


Bible References

The Book of Ruth

2 Kings 22

1 Corinthians 11



Theme

While other religions demean women as second-class citizens, Christianity honors women as equally important as men, and able to be used of God in ministry.



Scripture Reading

2 Kings 22:12-20

12 "And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and

Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying,

13 "Go ye, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great [is] the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.

14 "So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her.

15 "And she said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me,

16 "Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, [even] all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read:

17 "Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched.

18 "But to the king of Judah which sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall ye

say to him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, {As touching} the words which thou hast heard;

19 "Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard {thee}, saith the LORD.

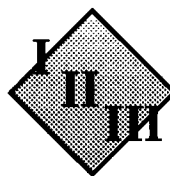
20 "Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again."



Memory Verse

Zephaniah 3:14

"Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem."



Outline

I. The Value of a Woman.

A. Biblical.

1. Created from man to be a helpmeet.
2. Different in function, but equal in value.
3. God used many women in the Bible to minister in many ways.
4. God sets roles for male and female.
5. Men should be masculine, and women should be feminine.

B. Cultural.

1. Jewish tradition (the Talmud) forbids women to minister the Word of God.
2. Moslems consider females to be second-class citizens.
3. Many oriental religions treat women as virtual slaves to men -- definitely inferior.

C. But Christianity, based on the Bible, honors women, and sees them as equal.

1. In Christ, "...there is neither male nor female:...." (Galatians 3:28)
2. Positionally equal before God.
3. Distinct roles in the home, but not inferior.

II. Headship.

A. The myth of absolute equality.

1. To be "equal" to does not mean to be "the same as."
2. Some women think they have to do men's jobs and be like men, in order to be equal.
3. Some seek liberation from men, often out of bitterness.
4. We do not seek to esteem ourselves, but should always esteem others better than ourselves.
5. Men are not to esteem themselves better than women. (Philippians 2:3)
6. We are each better equipped by God for our distinctive roles in the home; but we are not greater in value.

B. God designed the wife to be under the covering (headship) of the husband.

1. 1 Corinthians 11.
2. 1 Peter 3:1-6.
3. 1 Timothy 2:12.

C. Christian view of headship.

1. Not like the world's.
 - a. Where authority means superiority.
 - b. Where submission means servitude.
 - c. Dictator-slave mentality.
2. Like Christ. (Ephesians 5:25)
 - a. Jesus laid down His life (and personal rights) for the sake of the church.
 - b. Putting the needs and desires of those under His care before His own.
 - c. Shepherd-leader, not dictator-leader.

D. Role of a Christian "head."

1. Protector.
2. Leader by example.
3. Servant.
4. Encourager.
5. Provider.
6. God commanded the husband to love the wife (put her needs and desires first).

E. Role of a godly wife: influence.

1. In the home, God has set the wife to be a counselor, safeguard, and helper to her husband.
2. She is a balance and an encourager -- a necessary part of the team for home leadership.
3. *"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."* (Ephesians 5:21)
4. The power of influence is equal to the power of rule.
5. Esther used the power of influence as a wife to save a nation from death.
6. Wives should not usurp authority over the man (literally, their husband), but should let him be the leader at home. (1 Timothy 2:12)

III. Ministry.

A. God anoints and uses women to preach the gospel.

1. We should all be willing to serve in proclaiming the gospel.
2. *"...Your sons and daughters...shall prophesy,...."* (Joel 2:28)
3. Anna the prophetess was the first one to preach the birth of Christ. (Luke 2:38)
4. A woman was the first to testify of Christ in Samaria. (John 4:39)

5. The first messengers of the Resurrection were women. (Matthew 28:8-10)
6. Philip had four virgin daughters who prophesied the Word of the Lord. (Acts 21:8-9)

B. Great women of the Bible.

1. Miriam was called a "prophetess." (Exodus 15:20)
2. Deborah was a judge of Israel. (Judges 4:4)
 - a. She appointed the general of the army.
 - b. She had great authority in the nation.
3. Huldah the prophetess.
 - a. When the temple leaders were to seek a Word from God, they went to one who had great spiritual authority: a woman.
 - b. She spoke the Word of the Lord for King Josiah.
4. Esther.
5. Priscilla. (Acts 18)
 - a. A teaching team with her husband, Aquila.
 - b. A great woman of God.
6. Joanna and Susanna. (Luke 8:3)
 - a. Women who supported the earthy ministry of Jesus.
 - b. Women, in fact, were probably the primary supporters of His ministry.
 - c. Jesus commended women many times in His ministry.
7. Phoebe.
 - a. Romans 16:1,2.
 - b. Called a *diakonos* (deacon) of the church.



Spiritual Truths

- God does not exclude women from ministering, but many religious traditions do.
- Christianity honors and esteems the role of women, not only in the home, but in the overall purposes of God.
- In scripture, "headship" does not mean "superiority in value," or "dictatorship."
- Jesus was the great servant/leader; and He calls for husbands to lead their wives in the same way.
- When Josiah was king, the most respected prophet in the land was a woman.
- The power to influence is just as important as the power to rule.
- We should all esteem others better than ourselves.
- Our spiritual authority does not come from our gender, size, or intelligence; it comes from our obedience to the call of God.



Lesson Material

It is right and proper for the church to honor mothers, although the particular

observance of "Mothers' Day" is not of biblical origin, but cultural. While many cultures and religions in the world treat women as inferior to and less important than men, we have no such direction from God. It is true that various Christian groups exclude women from all ministry, and some have various customs which subjugate women to men excessively; but the pure teaching of God's Word, taken in context, is very pro-woman.

God has placed each of us on earth with different opportunities, functions, and potentials in life; and He will hold us each accountable for what we did with what we had. God designed the woman to be a "helpmeet" for man, but this in no way implies that the man is more important. But, overall, the role of the father in the home is designed by God to be that of the protector and provider, while the role of the mother is to be the supportive member, and the care-giver. While we all are commanded to love and honor others, husbands are particularly commanded to love their wives; and wives are commanded to submit to their husbands.

The word "submit" is a military term, which relates to being "on his side." It does not mean that the woman is to be a mindless slave, letting the man do whatever he wants. Indeed, foolish is the man who treats his wife like a servant. If he understood the Bible correctly, he would see himself as her servant, and seek to please and honor her. Of course, she in turn should seek his honor and success. In Christian covenant, we should always prefer one another, because there is more ultimate blessing in life through giving, than there is through seeking for self. (Acts 20:35)

But what about 1 Timothy 2? When we look at this chapter, it is easy to think that

Paul was against women. But we do not understand the culture of the times. In their Jewish culture, women were not trained academically like the men, and usually did not have the same knowledge of scripture. They were seated in the synagogue on one side, with the men sitting together on the other. The problem was that the women sometimes interrupted the meeting, by asking their husbands a question. The focus of this chapter was the church meetings; and Paul is talking to Pastor Timothy about order, and about his personal policy of not letting the women teach in his meetings. He was not prohibiting women from ministry, but from disrupting the meeting with talk. One of Paul's most effective ministry teams was the husband and wife team, Aquila and Priscilla.

The same principle applies to 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. "Speak" does not mean "minister." God promised that both the sons and daughters would prophesy. While there are gender distinctions in the role of headship in the home, "in Christ" there is neither male nor female. God has the authority, and He has often chosen to speak through women, as well as men. Since the man is generally called of God to be a provider and protector, it is natural for men to do most of the spiritual leading and providing in the church. But Christianity sees women as important and special, and does not muzzle women all of the time, as Moslems and Buddhists do.

God created man "...male and female created he them." (Genesis 1:27) Much of scripture communicates to men and women in general terms, as equals. The term "prophets" can also mean "prophets and prophetesses." In fact, our English language is similar, in the general understanding that male pronouns and references can be used of men and women.

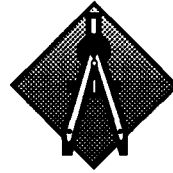
The terms "chairperson" and "chairwoman" are superfluous and silly, since a woman can be a chairman just as well as a man.

Instead of seeking to react to past religious prejudices against women, Christians should seek to understand and appreciate the value and role of women in the church. Since the Christian view of headship involves nurture, protection, and provision, the concept of a wife being subject to her husband is not at all negative. It should be a place of honor and influence. Of course, the husband needs to give due honor unto the wife as the "weaker vessel," because if a man does not honor his wife, his prayers are hindered. (1 Peter 3:7)

One problem is that men sometimes like to focus on the passages that "keep the women in line," while ignoring the ones that speak of the importance of men loving and honoring them. God does give the man the responsibility to guide and protect; but the woman has the greater power of influence. In fact, husbands are also commanded to submit to their wives. While Peter did mention that Sarah called her husband "Lord," the Bible also tells us that God himself told Abraham to listen to his wife, and submit to her, because she was right.

It is the mother who creates the atmosphere of the home. Her quiet spirit and gentle faith in God does more to set the tone for the home than any other factor. She orders the home, under the rule of the father. Of course, sin in anyone can damage the potential of a godly home;

but generally, the strongest influence on our attitudes and self-acceptance is our mother. It is most appropriate for Christians to honor and esteem mothers highly -- not just once a year, but every day.



Methods

Establish the difference between being equal in value and identical in function.

Review the great women of the Bible.

Notice that Jesus did have close friends and faithful supporters, who were women.

Emphasize the difference in the way most false religions treat women, and the way biblical Christianity treats them.

Show the difference between submission and subservience.

Distinguish between ministry in the church and authority in the church.

Explain the difference between speaking out in church and ministering in the church.

Encourage each student to write a letter of appreciation to his mother, including at least three specific areas of influence or example for which he is particularly grateful.

Thyatira

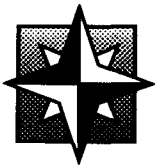
Volume 8

Lesson 46



Bible Reference

Revelation 2



Theme

It is important to recognize that life is always diminished and damaged, when we move away from God and from God's will.



Scripture Reading

Revelation 2:18-28

18 *"And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet {are} like fine brass;*

19 *"I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last {to be} more than the first.*

20 *"Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.*

21 *"And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.*

22 *"Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.*

23 *"And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.*

24 *"But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.*

25 *"But that which ye have {already} hold fast till I come.*

26 *"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:*

27 *"And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father."*

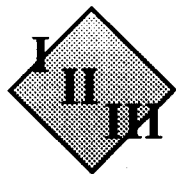
28 *"And I will give him the morning star."*



Memory Verse

2 Corinthians 5:10

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things {done} in {his} body, according to that he hath done, whether {it be} good or bad."



Outline

I. Jesus.

A. Key to Revelation.

1. It is a revelation of Jesus Christ.
2. We see prophetic images of our Lord.

B. Son of God.

1. Co-equal and co-eternal.
2. Alpha and Omega: The Beginning and the End.

C. Eyes like a flame of fire.

1. Refiner's fire. (Malachi 3:2-3)
2. "...Our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:29)
3. Eyes -- Omniscience.

D. Feet like fine brass.

1. Brass -- the Bible symbol of judgment.
2. The brazen altar -- place of judgment for sin.
3. He is Judge of all.

II. Jezebel.

A. A type of wicked, illegitimate authority.

B. Thyatira -- under corrupt church leadership.

1. The church failed to take a stand against sin.
2. Religious seduction.
3. 1 Corinthians 5.
 - a. Paul took a stand against an immoral man in the church.
 - b. "Do not have any fellowship with someone who is a fornicator or a drunkard and claims to be a Christian." (verse 11, paraphrased)

C. The Dark Ages.

1. Thyatira period in the church age: 606-1500 A.D.
2. Church leadership was very corrupt.
 - a. Top offices could be bought by the highest bidder.
 - b. Many of the most powerful leaders were extremely wicked.
3. The Roman Church.
 - a. Persecuted the genuine Christians.

- b. Many martyrs were killed by the established church.
- 4. The Crusades.
 - a. Many knights and citizens lost their lives in a vain attempt to take Jerusalem and the Holy Land back from the Turks.
 - b. The "Children's Crusade" was a tragedy.
 - c. 300,000 children marched; and nearly all died or were killed, without ever reaching Jerusalem.
 - d. The Crusades: an example of carnal people focusing on the physical and temporal aspects of religion, rather than relating to God with their spirit.

III. Judgment.

A. Revelation 2:23.

1. "...*The wages of sin is death;...*" (Romans 6:23)
2. He searches the "reins." (Revelation 2:23)
 - a. The will of man.
 - b. God knows what we do willfully, and judges us accordingly.
3. And the heart.
 - a. *Kardia* -- "center."
 - b. The heart is the center of our affections.
 - c. Faith is a function of the spirit and the heart. (Romans 10:9-10)

B. He will judge us according to our works.

1. Luke 12:48.
2. Jesus will evaluate every man according to what he has done in his life, and according to his motives.



Spiritual Truths

- Our God is a holy and perfectly just God, as well as a God of love.
- Jesus Christ will judge every human being with perfect justice, according to their works.
- There is nothing in the universe that God does not see or know about.
- The distinguishing and defining quality of every legitimate church is that Jesus Christ is the Head.
- The church always become corrupt when men take over the reins -- either as individuals, or as committees.
- The Dark Ages were dark, primarily because the official church became corrupt, politicized, and spiritually dead.
- The crusades illustrated the futility of trying to achieve spiritual goals through emotional and fleshly efforts.
- Our goal in life is not to try to do something nice for God, but rather, to find His will and do it His way.



Lesson Material

In our zeal to draw people to Jesus and build God's church, we as Bible teachers

have tended to portray Jesus only in terms of the Lamb of God. We love to emphasize the wonderful truth that God is love, and that His mercy endures forever. But we also understand that there is a balance in scripture. God is a holy God, Who cannot look upon sin. Our God is perfectly righteous, and is called "...a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:29)

The book of Revelation is a prophetic picture of Jesus. The reference to His feet of brass and His eyes of flaming fire is a reprise of the vision John relates in Chapter 1. It is not a physical description, but a symbolic vision with deep and profound meaning. He is no longer the helpless Baby in a manger. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is the Judge of the whole earth.

This letter to the church of Thyatira is a reminder of the importance of the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is not negative. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge. In fact, there are at least thirty wonderful benefits to the fear of the Lord listed in scripture. They are found mostly in the book of Proverbs. For instance, while the fear of man bring a snare, the fear of the Lord produces life, confidence, peace, and protection from the temptation to sin. "*By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.*" (Proverbs 16:6)

In the early church, which is pictured in the book of Acts, we see this balance. The church was full of great joy and spiritual power, but there also was a great sense of the fear of the Lord. You could say that was the "ministry" of Ananias and Sapphira in chapter 5. Then, over the centuries, the ministry of the apostles and prophets faded into the background. While there were always some anointed, praying believers who were full of the

Holy Ghost, the church world in general became lukewarm, and then spiritually cold. The religious world become more and more involved in politics, debates, and interpersonal strife, while doing less and less praying and seeking of God. The established church became rich and powerful; but the masses of people were oppressed and often persecuted.

The character of Jezebel is a prophetic type of corrupt church government. Hundreds of years before Christ, during the period of the kings of Israel, Jezebel was the heathen wife of Ahab, king of Judah. She was extremely wicked; and she became the archetype of carnal, illegitimate government. All true authority comes from God. (Romans 13:1) Authority which rises up from the people is always corrupt. In His letter to Thyatira, Jesus was not referring to a literal person, but to the spirit of government in the church. Jezebel was not a descendent of the royal line of David -- she was a heathen, who was brought in from the world by a political maneuver. She is the picture of a church ruled by politics, as opposed to ruled by the Spirit.

God chooses leaders on the basis of His sovereignty. He does not always choose a leader because he or she is the smartest or most popular with people. God may not even choose leaders because they are the most spiritual. Leadership responsibility is not a reward for good behavior, but rather, a responsibility for which God will hold us accountable. In a dynasty, a king was king because he was born to it. He may have been surrounded by people who were more capable and diligent, but he was the king. We each will answer to God for our faithfulness in the place we have. Our goal is not to become successful, but to be faithful. In eternity, a faithful janitor may have a position of authority over his

former boss or pastor, because he was more faithful in seeking and serving God. So, in this life, some enjoy their wealth and position, and may even misuse other people. But in eternity, God will make it all right.

Of course, if God calls you to preach, then be a preacher. If God directs you to a foreign mission, then you will have the best possible life in that place. The more you seek God's will in your life, the more grace you will tend to have. If you strive to become something you are not anointed by God to be, you will always struggle with it, because God gives us grace to do what He has called us to do. God will enable and equip you to do what He is calling you to do; but do not ask Him to bless your mess, if you are doing your own thing.

That is what church politics is all about. Instead of seeking God for His choices in leadership, we seek to please the people and get votes. We somehow think that spiritual authority comes from the people, and that the church should be democratic. No. If it is a legitimate, biblical church, Jesus is the Head. His vote is the only one that should count. The purpose of a church leadership council is not to rule the church, so much as it is to pray and give confirmation to the pastor of God's direction, and assist in implementing that direction.

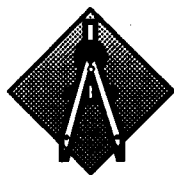
During the Dark Ages, the established church became extremely corrupt. Many officials were involved in sexual perversions of all kinds, and some even purchased the office of pope for the highest price. The established religious organization wielded great power over the people, and insisted that they not be allowed to read the Bible for themselves. They often promoted the idea that salvation was dependent upon the church,

and that excommunication meant damnation. Genuine Christians were seen as a threat to the vast and lucrative church "business," and they were sometimes martyred for their faith.

The Dark Ages were dark because of spiritual decline in the church. The religious situation was similar in the days of Jeremiah, who said, *"The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"* (Jeremiah 5:31) Instead of praying and seeking God's direction for the people, carnal rulers use the people to advance their own careers. They use business consultants instead of prayer warriors, and manipulate the people, instead of serve them. When the people failed to even look at the Bible, they missed out on many physical benefits. For instance, God knew all about bacteria and viruses, so He commanded Israel to obey such laws as, "Do not eat an animal that dies because of some sickness;" and "Bury human waste, and then wash your hands." Many of the laws are recognized today as necessary for the prevention of the spread of diseases. But the people did not know that. Human and animal waste was thrown out in the street; and people would handle diseased animals and people, and then prepare and eat food. No wonder millions died from "the black death" and other plagues. In fact, some Jews and Christians were killed by angry heathens, because the people noticed that those who obeyed God's laws of hygiene did not have the same high death rate. It was reasoned that they must have caused the curse, and so they were blamed.

The fact is, that when men reject God's right to rule over them, they become corrupt and abusive, and there are many consequences. What a blessing it is to have

parents who love God, and a pastor who prays and seeks God for a Word to feed the flock. We realize that Solomon was exactly right when he said, *"When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn."* (Proverbs 29:2)



Methods

Try to get a copy of "Foxe's Book of Martyrs;" and share some of the examples of persecution during the Dark Ages.

Discussion:

If you have heard or read lessons from a secular school concerning the Dark Ages, did you learn the reasons for those miseries, or just the superficial facts?

What would it be like to be a genuine believer in Jesus, during that time when Christians were persecuted by the established church?

Are you not thankful for sanitation?

What made the Dark Ages dark?

How does Jesus rule the church?

Sardis

Volume 8

Lesson 47



Bible Reference

Revelation 3



Theme

The church and religion cannot get us into heaven. Repentance and faith in Jesus Christ is the key.



Scripture Reading

Revelation 3:1-6

1 "And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

2 "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I

have not found thy works perfect before God.

3 "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

4 "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

5 "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

6 "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

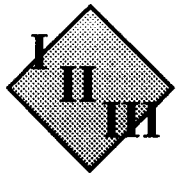


Memory Verse

2 Chronicles 7:14

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from

heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."



Outline

I. The Church in Sardis.

- A. Sardis -- an important city on a mountainside.
 - 1. Destroyed by an earthquake in 17 A.D.
 - 2. Emperor Tiberius helped to rebuild it.
 - 3. People worshipped the goddess Cybele.
 - a. Very wicked practices.
 - b. Temple prostitutes.
- B. There was a faithful remnant in Sardis, who sought God and walked by faith.

II. The Number Seven.

- A. Seven -- the prophetic number of completion and perfection.
 - 1. Seven days in God's week.
 - 2. Seven thousand years of human history.
 - 3. Seven trumpets in the tribulation.
 - 4. Seven vials of wrath.
- B. Seven spirits of God.
 - 1. Does not mean seven persons.
 - 2. Symbol of completeness in the Godhead.

C. Seven stars.

- 1. Represent messengers, or pastors.
- 2. Represent the pastors of these seven churches.
- 3. Represent all Christian churches.

III. "Hold Fast."

- A. Reputation.
 - 1. What people think we are.
 - 2. "Character" is what we actually are.
 - 3. Sardis had a great reputation, but it was a dead church.
 - a. No anointing.
 - b. No spiritual life in them.
- B. Be watchful.
 - 1. Strengthen what remains.
 - 2. Do not lose what you have. (2 John 8)
 - 3. Your works are not perfect (complete).
- C. Remember what you have heard.
 - 1. Hold fast -- retain what you know of God.
 - 2. Repent -- turn around.
 - 3. I will come to you as a thief.
- D. Remnant of the undefiled.
 - 1. A few who are worthy.
 - 2. They shall walk with God.

IV. The Reformation.

- A. Church age period relating to Sardis.
- B. Luther and the Reformation.
 - 1. A monk who realized that the Roman Catholic Church was full of

- unscriptural tradition and false doctrines.
 - 2. He discovered, in seeking God, that salvation was not through the church, but through Jesus Christ, by faith.
 - 3. He nailed his "Ninety-five Theses" to the door of the Whittenberg Chapel in 1519.
 - 4. Restoration of the doctrine of salvation by faith.
- C. The remnant of the righteous versus the harlot church.
- D. The Roman church had many Christians killed for their faith.
- Jesus built His church to be the agency of blessing, direction and teaching for our lives -- not to be a substitute for a personal relationship with God.
 - The Reformation was a great conflict between anointed spiritual leaders and the established church, much like the struggle between David and Saul.
 - Martin Luther is considered to be a hero of the faith, because he decided to believe the Bible, instead of religious traditions.
 - The color white is the biblical symbol of purity and holiness.



Spiritual Truths

- Church government that is corrupt and ruled by the hand of man will eventually be brought down and judged by God.
- When we honestly seek God out of a pure heart, we will find Him.
- When we honestly seek God out of a pure heart, we will find truth.
- The foundation of all truth is the Person of Jesus Christ; and He is revealed and seen in God's Word, the Bible.
- Sinful man is incapable of consistently living an honest and upright life. It is only when he repents and turns his focus on God that he can live right.



Lesson Material

These seven letters in the book of the Revelation do not reflect the opinions of John the apostle. They are simply letters dictated to him by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus is writing specifically to the pastors of seven churches in Asia minor, in what is now modern Turkey. In each of these letters, Jesus acknowledges Himself as the writer; and He relates some aspect of His Being which corresponds to the particular need of that church, and relates to the church age which it represents. Each letter also closes with a particular promise to "him that overcometh." Most of these letters have areas of indictment, as well as praise and encouragement. It is a good, balanced Word, and a good model for those who teach the Word. We recognize that it is not all things that people necessarily want to hear, but it is basically positive. All of the seven churches except

Smyrna had negatives that were addressed by Jesus; and yet, they all are full of hope, goodness, and blessing. Jesus speaks of Himself as "He that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars." Again, we get confused when we try to interpret the Revelation (or any other thing in scripture which is prophetic) as physical, or natural. The natural mind looks at that number, "seven," and immediately thinks of seven things.

Various theories have sprung out of that. Some say "God must not be a Trinity. There must be Seven in the Godhead;" or, "There are seven archangels in heaven." This is very doubtful, because the Bible speaks of three archangels: Michael, who is a warrior; Gabriel, who is a messenger; and Lucifer, who was a worshipping archangel. We do not have any reason to believe that there are any others. The number seven is prophetic, as it is throughout the book of Revelation. "Seven" speaks of "completion" and "fullness." This is most probably a reference to the fact that Jesus Christ is the fullness of the Godhead bodily. (Colossians 2:9) Spiritually, He is complete. The seven stars, while representing seven specific pastors, must be understood as representing the completeness of those who are in leadership ministry. They are pastors; and there are many thousands of them, even in our day. Jesus is pictured as having the pastors in His right hand -- in a special place of responsibility, authority and protection.

The church at Sardis was an influential church. As in many cities of that day, there was strong pagan influence; and the people had a tendency to be drawn to the practices of idolatry. The idol worshippers worshipped with all sorts of sensual and lewd behavior, which was appealing to the flesh of the people. Lewd behavior always

leads to the diminishing and the destruction of joy, and leads to death, as well. God has called His people to purity. The attraction of idolatry and of all pagan worship is always temporal and physical. Satan always presents his rewards first. The benefits come first, and then the consequences. God speaks truth, and God speaks of responsibility. The sacrifice comes first, and then the eternal reward. We are faithful; and then we enter into the joy of the Lord. Jesus recognized in Sardis that there was a tendency to go with the secular flow -- people were attracted to the world's system. People were also tempted to become spiritually complacent, or lukewarm. He encouraged them to be watchful, to be diligent, and to be strong in God. -- to strengthen what they had, and encourage the brethren who were still faithful to God, neither giving up nor fainting. Paul said to the Galatians, *"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."* (Galatians 6:9) Jesus reminded the church in Sardis that if they were not watchful (if they did not occupy until He came), He would come to them as a thief -- in other words, "I am going to come and hold you accountable, in a time and a way you are not expecting." Jesus is always looking for a people who will serve Him out of love. If we knew when the Lord would come, we would all have a massive prayer meeting and become very dedicated and spiritual in the last week or so; but we do not know -- we only know the season. We know that these are the end times; but we do not know exactly when He is coming again. So, it comes down to the fact that those who really love the Lord want to serve Him; but those who really do not have a heart for Him will eventually get caught up in the business of life, and miss out. God is not looking for a people who just want to "make it in." God is looking

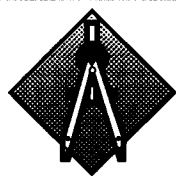
for a people who love Him, who will serve Him, and who trust His Word, and who believe Him. They believe that it pays to serve God, because they believe His promises.

The letter to Sardis seems historically to relate to a church period called the Reformation, which began with Martin Luther in the early part of the sixteenth century. Martin Luther was a monk who had a heart for God. He went through the rituals of the church and he conformed to the things in the church; but Martin Luther got into the Word, and he discovered something in the Word that became life to him. He sought God with an honest heart -- not just with religious observances, trying to appease God, but with a desire for truth. The Holy Spirit did a work in his heart. The Holy Spirit made it come alive to him as he read the words, *"...The just shall live by faith."* (Romans 1:17) Suddenly the revelation of God became illumination in his heart. Martin Luther recognized that they were being taught the traditions of men, and were not being taught to be born again by faith in Jesus Christ. He began to study diligently; and as he studied the Word of God, he listed 95 specific areas in which the established Roman Church had violated principles of scripture. As the Word came alive to him, he wrote them down.

In the year 1519, Martin Luther was already a prominent preacher, though a young man. He had earned a doctor's degree, and was highly skilled in preaching the Word of God. He decided to conduct a debate in the Cathedral at Whittenburg, where he was pastor. On October 31st, he nailed to the door his famous "Ninety-five Theses," establishing the 95 points on which he was willing to debate anyone regarding the scripture. One of the key factors involved in this was the

practice, at that time, of indulgences. The Pope had wanted to raise a large amount of money to build a new cathedral; and the church found that indulgences were a very popular means of raising a lot of money. An indulgence was the practice of literally selling people pardon for sin; and, of course, this is unscriptural. Martin Luther knew that; and so, there began a battle between Martin Luther and the established church. Finally, in 1520, he was excommunicated by the established church, and his works were publicly burned. But Luther, in retaliation, burned that edict of the Pope and other writings of the established church, and began to preach Jesus Christ openly and boldly.

Out of that came leaders, over the years, such as John Huss, John Wycliff, and others who boldly proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ. This was not without cost. The established church was rich and powerful, and controlled many of the nations. And so, many thousands of believers who decided to follow Jesus Christ and the Bible were put to death. Whole towns were massacred, because they believed the Bible, and they would not renounce their faith in Jesus Christ. But it was as "day of victory" ultimately for God's Word, because later, thanks to the Gutenberg press, Bibles began being printed and distributed. Common people could read the Word of God for themselves, and realize that religion was not going to get them to heaven. They needed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They had to repent of their sins. And so, we recognize the great Martin Luther as a leader -- the courageous reformer, who took God at His Word and said, *"The just shall live by faith."*



Methods

Our purpose as teachers is to help make the Bible come alive in the minds of our students. We need to recognize that Jesus Christ is speaking to our hearts through His Word. We do not simply want to inform; we want to inspire. Try to create a visualization of John on the Isle of Patmos receiving a letter from Jesus Christ Himself. Try to imagine this as a personal letter from the Lord to His people. And encourage your students to see that there is a deep reserve of truth and a wealth of insight in every chapter of the Word of God. Help them to personalize the Word and apply it to their own lives. And when they read these words: *"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain..."* (Revelation 3:2), help them to personalize that to their own hearts. A good teacher

will not simply inform to the level of his knowledge, but will inspire to the level of his zeal. And young people who are well taught will not only gain an appreciation for the depth of God's Word, but will be stirred with a desire to memorize and meditate on God's Word.

Another point to emphasize is the distinction between the prophetic and the literal. We have a tendency to try to interpret everything in the Bible with our natural minds. We try to visualize everything in terms of things we can see, or feel, or comprehend, rather than understanding that God gives prophetic images -- which are word pictures of spiritual truths. They are not meant to be fully understood by the mind. They are meant to be received by the spirit, in order to understand the message and the meaning behind them. There is a difference in prophetic language; and we need to understand that difference, if we are truly desiring to receive the message of God's Word.

Philadelphia

Volume 8

Lesson 48

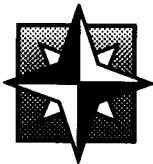


Bible References

Revelation 3

1 Corinthians 13

Philippians 2



Theme

Revival comes when Christians get serious about prayer and seek God with all their hearts.



Scripture Reading

Revelation 3:7-13

7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no

man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

8 "I know' thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

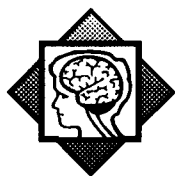
9 "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

10 "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

11 "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

12 "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, (which is) new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and (I will write upon him) my new name.

13 "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."



Memory Verse

Acts 4:31

"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness."



Lesson Material

I. A Letter from Jesus.

A. Jesus.

1. He is holy.
2. He is true.
 - a. John 14:6.
 - b. He is the Truth.
 - c. All truth centers in Jesus.
3. Key of David.
 - a. Isaiah 22:22.
 - b. Jesus was the King from the royal line of David.
 - c. He fulfilled God's covenant with David, who would always have a descendent on the throne, as God had promised.
4. He opens, and no man shuts.
 - a. Jesus is Lord.
 - b. Man can do only what He allows.
 - c. He is the Door. (John 10:7)

B. "I know your works."

1. You have some spiritual power.
2. You have a few names.
 - a. In a dead church, there were a few that were pure.
 - b. Remnant of the godly seed.

C. Synagogue of Satan.

1. False Christs.
2. Like phony Christians.
3. God sees pseudo-Christian cults as Satan-worshippers.
 - a. Cults, such as Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses, lead people away from a saving faith in Jesus.
 - b. They are enemies of God.

D. "To him that overcomes."

1. A promise to overcomers in each of the seven letters.
2. Not, "To him who starts out."

E. Promise. (vs. 10)

1. Because you kept My Word.
2. I will keep you from (could also mean "through") the hour of temptation (or tribulation).

II. The Great Awakening.

A. The Philadelphian era in the Church age.

1. 1740 to 1900 A.D.
2. A time of great revival.

B. England.

1. John and Charles Wesley.
2. Beginning of Methodist church.
3. Emphasis on holiness.

C. America.

1. George Whitfield -- great evangelist.
2. Jonathan Edwards -- great pastor.
3. David Brainerd -- great missionary to the Indians.
4. Many other great and anointed preachers of the gospel.
5. There were whole towns and cities which experienced great revival, great numbers of people saved, and many taverns shut down.

D. Wales.

1. Another powerful revival.
2. Whole towns were converted to Christ.
3. The power of God was sometimes overwhelming, even crossing over a county line.
4. Began with a small Friday night prayer meeting.

- Cults, such as the Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses, claim to be Christian, but are based on the ideas of men; and they are very dangerous.
- The promises in Revelation are to him who overcomes -- not to him who merely starts out.
- God is perfectly faithful; and He manifests His faithfulness to those who are faithful to Him.
- England, Wales, and the United States all experienced wonderful revival in the "Great Awakening" of the 18th century.
- Great revivals always begin with humility, prayer, and repentance.



Spiritual Truths

- Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of God's promise to David that he would have descendent on the throne forever.
- Jesus Christ is Lord and has all authority in heaven and on earth, although most people do not yet recognize it.
- Jesus Christ is the Door. When He saves you, no man can keep you out of heaven; and if He does not, no man can get you into heaven.



Lesson Material

The name "Philadelphia" means "City of Brotherly Love." After the reformation, which began with Martin Luther, the next great move of God was called the "Great Awakening." During the period from 1740 to 1900, there were many great revivals. It is interesting to note that some of the nations which experienced the greatest revivals are now spiritually cold.

During the great awakening, England was swept by great revival -- a powerful move of the Holy Spirit. Most of the people in England became faithful church-goers. Today, less than 5% of the English even attend church or claim Christianity. There is a national spirit of coldness and indifference toward the things of God.

They have lost the hand of blessing over their nation. America has also experienced a spiritual decline. During the Great Awakening, the focus of the nation was on God and the Bible. It was difficult to imagine any newspaper, or virtually anything in print, that was not saturated with biblical quotations and biblical principles, as well as a biblical perspective. The focus of the nation was on God. People wanted to repent; and they were open to the Word. And there were great men of faith, who became some of the greatest men of history.

Perhaps it began with John and Charles Wesley, two sons of a great woman named Suzannah Wesley. She had nineteen children, and home-schooled all of them. Mrs. Wesley faithfully taught them the fear of the Lord. John Wesley in particular was a devout student of the Word of God. In fact, he was a minister before he ever came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. He worked very hard to please God, and he was very religious; but he was not saved, until later in life. When he did become a born-again Christian, he was a dynamo for God. He was small in stature, but mighty in spirit. God used him greatly both in England and the United States to preach the gospel and lead thousands of people to Jesus Christ. Ultimately, several movements came out of the Wesley's work -- predominantly the Methodist church. They were given the name "Methodist," because they were known for their methodical ways and their consistency. They were mockingly called "Methodists," back in the days of seminary; but they wore that mocking as a badge of honor. And they recognized the truth of holiness. It is significant that in the Reformation, God first restored the doctrine of salvation by faith. Martin Luther taught us repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and he taught us

that salvation was not dependent upon the Church. The Great Awakening built on that foundation, but also added a strong emphasis on personal holiness.

The Wesleys, George Whitfield, and others who preached during the Great Awakening brought forth the truth of holiness. They went beyond what they had learned from Martin Luther, and discovered that God had called them not unto uncleanness, but unto holiness; and they promoted that teaching. They taught people that God is not only able to forgive us our sins, but He is also able to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9) God was restoring truth to His church. Although there was much opposition and much persecution by established religious orders, the fact remained that God was greatly moving.

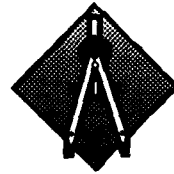
It is difficult today to find written material about the Great Welsh Revival. But in the 1800s, there were periods of very significant revival which began with a small prayer meeting. A few faithful people gathered in a little country church in Wales to pray on Friday nights. They prayed by the hour, and prayed faithfully. Nothing happened for years; but when revival came, it was like the floodgates of heaven opened. Church buildings suddenly were filled from morning until night. Meetings would last for many hours or even days, while believers would rejoice and testify, and sinners would repent. Taverns closed down throughout the nation. Stories were told of people who could feel the convicting power of God when stepping across county lines. The Spirit of God was moving mightily in the nation of Wales. Of course, it was up to succeeding generations to continue to pursue God; but they gradually became cold and indifferent. Sadly, this is usually the case. Each generation needs to repent

and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to experience revival.

Much the same thing happened in America. Whole cities turned to the Lord, and there were some towns where it was difficult to find much wickedness. The age of Philadelphia had come in many cities. More people began to love God with all their hearts; and, in turn, they loved one another. Humanists like to point to the Renaissance and to men like Leonardo Da Vinci as the sources of the innovation which led to the industrial revolution. But it is more accurate to recognize that the industrial revolution and prosperity came as a result of this spiritual awakening.

When people are full of the Holy Spirit, they tend to be more creative. They tend to be more industrious; and, of course, they tend to be more honest. There is a natural prosperity that results from spiritual revival. Some of the reasons are obvious. When there is spiritual revival, people are not stoned on drugs or alcohol. They are not stealing from one another. They are not destroying -- they are building up. Any good businessman will tell you that success is dependent upon a number of factors including diligence, a servant's heart, and honesty. Christianity, in its pure form, produces innovation, industriousness, and prosperity. America experienced great prosperity and great technological advances, as a direct result of the influence of the Great Awakening. It was a glorious revival. Although we are not living in that historical period, we recognize that we can experience the same power of God, if we will do what the people did then. Today, there is a great revival in many third-world nations, and in many persecuted countries, such as China, South America, and Africa. God is moving. We do not want to be left behind. In those nations which are blessed as a

result of those revivals, we need to wake up and realize that our national well-being is dependent upon our spiritual vitality. There will not be revival anywhere, unless there is repentance, faith, and prayer.



Methods

There is a difference between a revival and an evangelistic outreach. "Revival" does not mean getting a large number of unsaved people saved, although that usually happens. The word "revival" simply means to "restore to life that which was dead or dormant." Revival happens when Christians become stirred in their zeal and love for God. When they are restored spiritually, then they will naturally become more zealous in their worship and more faithful in their evangelism. When the world sees genuine Christianity at work, both in terms of spiritual power and in terms of loving relationships, they will be far more likely to be drawn to the gospel. The primary reason the church is so ineffective today in evangelism in many nations is that the world cannot see that much of a difference in us. Tragically, so many churches are trying to win the world by being like the world -- by being entertaining, clever, and fun. But real revival only comes when the church repents, fasts, and prays. When a church gets serious with God, repents of their sin, and becomes very much unlike the world, then the world will see a difference in their power, their lifestyle, and their love. A revived church is not a church splitting up into little groups, or squabbling over who has the power. A

revived church is one which forgives and loves, and demonstrates the principles of God in power and in relationships.

Try to study the biographies of some of the great heroes of the Great Awakening. There are many.

Why do you think we have so little information about them today?

Why have the biographies of great Christians seemed to have disappeared from public library shelves?

It is an interesting question.

Laodicea

Volume 8

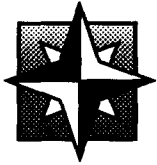
Lesson 49



Bible References

Revelation 3

Jeremiah 17



Theme

Jesus Christ is very displeased with believers who are mediocre and spiritually lukewarm, because they are a poor witness to the world of difference He can make in a life.



Scripture Reading

Revelation 3:14-22

14 "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

15 "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16 "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

17 "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

18 "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and {that} the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

19 "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

20 "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21 "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

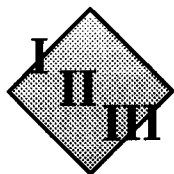
22 "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."



Memory Verse

1 Corinthians 15:58

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."



Outline

I. Jesus.

A. The Amen.

1. Confirmation of God: "So be it."
2. The great Revelation of the Father to men.

B. Faithful and true Witness.

C. Beginning of the creation of God.

1. Mistakenly interpreted by Jehovah's Witnesses to be a proof that Jesus was a creation of God, and not the Creator.
2. Charles Taze Russell, the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, was not a Greek scholar, although he claimed to be.
3. Interpretation of Verse 14 -- "Beginning" (*arche*, from which we get our word "architect") of the creation.

- a. Jesus is the Beginner, or the Architect of creation.
- b. He is the Alpha of all, the Originator and Designer of creation.
- c. Jesus is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father.
- d. He always was, and always will be.

II. Lukewarm.

A. "I know thy works."

1. Jesus always recognizes and evaluates our deeds in this life.
2. Works do not get us into heaven, but they:
 - a. Flow out of what we are in our hearts.
 - b. Affect our eternal reward.
3. We are saved "unto good works." (Ephesians 2:10)

B. "Thou art neither cold nor hot."

1. Cold -- spiritually dead, far from God.
2. Hot -- spiritually alive, fired up with zeal and joy.

C. "I would rather you were cold."

1. Because lukewarm Christians keep up their claims as children of God.
2. But they act like the world.
3. So the world does not see any reason to become converted.
4. God is unable to bless them much, because they are too spiritually dull to realize it comes from Him.
5. People who are spiritually dead usually realize it; but lukewarm people do not know they are in spiritual need.

D. "I will spew thee out of my mouth."

1. It is a frightening thing to think that we might be repulsive to God.
2. He is our only hope of eternal life.
3. A spiritually dangerous place.

III. "I Am Rich."**A. Spiritual delusion.**

1. You think you are spiritually rich.
2. You look at your ease and prosperity, and think you are in God's favor.
3. Danger of prosperity -- the illusion that you do not need to repent.
4. "I do not have any spiritual needs."
 - a. A dangerous condition.
 - b. When is the last time you requested prayer for your own spiritual needs?
 - c. Or do you always mention some other person's sickness, when it is time for prayer requests?
 - d. We ask for physical needs; but do you ever ask others to pray for your spiritual needs?

B. You do not even know that you are spiritually:

1. Wretched.
 - a. In need of repentance.
 - b. Laden with secret sins that you have not confessed and cannot overcome by yourself.
2. Miserable.
 - a. Putting on a happy, "spiritual" front.
 - b. Externally happy, but lacking the joy of the Lord.
 - c. Requiring entertainment to feel happy.
 - d. Demanding sympathy from others.

3. Poor.

- a. Not "poor in spirit" (humble).
- b. Spiritually poor -- lacking the necessities of spiritual life (dried up; lacking joy, zeal for God, desire for the Word of God; full of the world, selfishness, love of pleasure).

4. Blind.

- a. Unable to see the spiritual side of things.
- b. Easily deceived by temptation.
- c. Unaware of your spiritual condition.
- d. Able to focus only on people and events, without spiritual understanding.

5. Naked.

- a. Lacking a spiritual covering.
- b. Not ready to meet God (although you think you are).
- c. Need to be covered by the righteousness of Christ through repentance and faith.

C. "I counsel thee to buy from Me:

1. "Gold (the glory of God)."
2. "White raiment (righteousness -- Rev. 19:8)."
3. "Eye-salve (wisdom)."

D. "As many as I love:

1. "I rebuke (tell them they are wrong)."
2. "And chasten (spank)."
3. "Repent."

IV. "Behold."**A. "I stand at the door and knock."**

1. This is not a salvation verse.
2. It is written to the church.

3. Jesus is on the outside of the church, knocking.
4. If anyone in the church will open his heart, he will have fellowship with the Lord.

B. Jesus desires personal relationship, and not just religious service.

V. The End-Times Age.

A. Laodicea -- 1900 A.D. to the present day.

1. We are living at the end of the approximate 2,000 year period of history called the "church age."
2. Jesus will come at the end of the age, and reign on the earth for 1,000 years.

B. The lukewarm church.

1. Many established churches in the last days will be like Laodicea.
 - a. Prosperous.
 - b. Spiritually lukewarm.
2. Deceived into thinking they are spiritually healthy.

C. The church needs:

1. The glory of God (operation of the Spirit, power, anointing).
2. White raiment (holiness in the people -- imputed righteousness).



Spiritual Truths

- Jesus Christ is the Creator, the Designer and Architect of all creation in the universe.
- Jesus Christ is the fullness of the Godhead bodily. (Colossians 2:9)
- The kingdom of God is damaged more by mediocre Christians than by spiritually dead heathens, who openly fight against God.
- Christians who do not love each other tend to make the world say, "We do not need what you have."
- It is better to be cold than lukewarm, because then you are more likely to see that you need to repent and get right with God.
- We tend as humans to think that if we are prospering financially, then we are doing well spiritually; but we are wrong.
- The glory that comes in a life from being close to God is symbolized by gold; but the glory that comes from people or from yourself is fool's gold.
- Jesus did not say to the sinner, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." He said it to the Christians, with whom He desires to commune.



Lesson Material

What a contrast between the church in Laodicea and the church in Smyrna. The Smyrna Christians were financially poor, largely due to the persecution of the world. But Jesus said, "...*Thou art rich....*" (Revelation 2:9) In His eyes, the people in poverty were rich in faith, and He was pleased and impressed with that. Only faith can please God. God is not impressed with our gifts, or our credentials, or our beauty, because He is the source. He is impressed with faith, because that is something we can genuinely cultivate and offer back to Him.

The people in Smyrna were poor; but Jesus saw them as rich, because their eternal reward was so great. Jesus always sees with the perspective of eternity. He also sees the heart. The people of Laodicea were naturally rich, but lacked spiritual character and depth. They were poor in the things that really matter; and Jesus saw them as poor, although they were wealthy. Sometimes it is a curse to have life easy and to be rich, because it is harder to see your need. Humility is seeing your need for God; and it is the key to receiving more grace from Him.

We do not usually realize how damaging lukewarm believers are to the purposes of God. We usually picture Jesus as so patient and loving, that He is thrilled whenever we give Him a little attention. But this is not the Jesus of the Bible. He is not a babe in the manger, and He is not a wimp. He is preparing a glorious bride and a mighty army, and He is not even interested in half-hearted service. He is

only looking for true worshippers. He is building a glorious church, and not a compliant crowd.

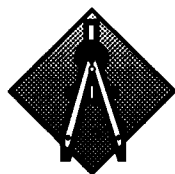
When the world sees a man like David, they realize that it pays to serve God. They see that the blessings came as a direct result of seeking after God, and that God is good. 2 Chronicles 16:9 says, "*...The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him....*" God is looking for people who have a desire for Him -- who have a perfect heart -- so that He can bless and honor them before the world, and show His goodness to all.

The nation of Israel always had this offer, but most of the time they blew it. Instead of seeking God with a whole heart like David, they usually got preoccupied with life and attracted to idolatry. When they did seek God, they tended to prosper; and then, the succeeding generations tended to use that prosperity to run after the world, forgetting God. The Great Awakening revival of the nineteenth century led to the industrial revolution and the prosperity of our day. Today, we still need to respond to the call of Jesus. Note that in the other churches, He is seen in the midst of the church. But with the Laodiceans, He is on the outside, looking in. He is knocking, because He does not want a people who serve Him because they are coerced. Jesus wants a people who will open their hearts to Him, and will desire a relationship with Him, like David did.

The age of Laodicea, the end-times church, is a time of great contrasts. While there is a great increase in evil, there is also an increase of spiritual revelation. In this century, we have seen a great Pentecostal revival. We see so much more

of the truth of God's Word that was veiled in earlier times. We realize that God is pouring out His Spirit on all flesh, and that He is restoring divine healing, biblical praise and worship, the ministry of apostles and prophets, and many other glorious truths that were suppressed before. In fact, Peter indicated that Jesus would come again, after the restoration of all things spoken of by the prophets. (Acts 3:21)

This time before the coming of the Lord is a time of restoration; but the relationship of the glory and the presence of the Lord is to those who will open their hearts to the Lord and let Him in. Those who will, find that they can have a personal and intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. But He is generally on the outside of the established church community, where politics and carnal activities abound. So, while the church in general is sitting back thinking all is spiritually well, Jesus is knocking, and communing in sweet fellowship with everyone who will open their hearts to Him.



Methods

Truths to communicate:

We are living in the end times.

More than ever, we need to be filled with the Holy Ghost, and worship God with our whole hearts.

We cannot measure our spiritual condition by our physical wealth or position in life.

Where are you, in the area of spiritual vitality?

Are you cold, and spiritually dead?

Are you "on fire" for God, and zealous for the things of the Spirit?

Are you "lukewarm?"

Now do you see why Jesus finds lukewarm believers so distasteful?

Fathers

Volume 8

Lesson 50



Bible References

1 Peter 5

1 Corinthians 4

2 "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight {thereof}, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

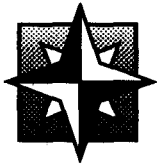
3 "Neither as being lords over {God's} heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

4 "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

5 "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all {of you} be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

6 "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

7 "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."



Theme

God is our Heavenly Father; and He uses natural and spiritual fathers in our lives to develop our character and prepare us to relate to and dwell with Him forever.



Scripture Reading

1 Peter 5:1-7

1 "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

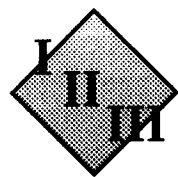


Memory Verse

1 Corinthians 4:15-16

"For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet {have ye} not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me."



Outline

I. Natural Fathers.

A. God designed the family to be the primary training institution for society.

1. God placed each of us in a family.
2. They are not all perfect, and not even all good; but God is able to use our family to teach us wisdom and character.

B. Fathers are:

1. Providers.
 - a. We get our first glimpse of God through our natural fathers.
 - b. Fathers are to be the providers for their families.
 - c. Fathers love to be appreciated and to feel needed.
2. Protectors.
 - a. As our Heavenly Father is our Great Protector.
 - b. Fathers are responsible to protect the safety of their children.
 - c. Also to protect their minds from wrong philosophies.
 - d. Fathers are responsible to protect their daughter's virtue, and should guard them from "creeps."
 - e. It is a great honor for a father to present a pure bride to a husband at her wedding.

3. Guides.

- a. Fathers should be the first ones their children go to for counsel.
- b. Learn wisdom from your father.

II. Spiritual Fathers.

A. Lead you to Christ.

1. Paul "birthed" the church in Corinth.
2. He led them to the new birth in Christ.
3. He "travailed" in prayer to bring them to spiritual life.
4. Soul-winning is not easy, just as delivering a baby is not easy for a mother.

B. Pastors.

1. Spiritual "father" in the church.
2. The pastor feeds the flock by laboring in the Word and doctrine.
3. A good pastor gives a well-balanced "diet" of Bible teaching.
4. He is a guide and a counselor.
5. He loves the people, and seeks their success and blessing.
6. He does not use the people to build his ego or his empire.
7. A godly pastor is a gift from Christ to the church. (Ephesians 4)

C. Elders.

1. Mature, anointed men in the church, who help the pastor care for the flock.
2. Anointed elders are men of integrity, maturity, and compassion, who help build up the people, and support the pastor.

III. Our Heavenly Father.

- A. God is the One who gave us life.
 - 1. He loves us.
 - 2. He knows exactly what is best for us.
- B. The perfect Father.
 - 1. Natural fathers all make mistakes.
 - 2. Even pastors do not always do right things.
 - 3. But God never fails.
- C. Example.
 - 1. Natural fathers are like God -- not in perfection, but in function.
 - 2. Guard, guide, and give with love.

IV. Submit to the Elder.

- A. Submit.
 - 1. To come under, to be on his side.
 - 2. To trust God to speak through him.
- B. God did not design us to be a peer-oriented people.
 - 1. If He did, we would be born in litters.
 - 2. We are usually born one at a time.
 - 3. We learn to relate and grow in a group dominated by adults.
 - 4. We learn to relate to people older and younger than we are.
 - 5. The older ones are better for sources of advice, because they know more, through experience.
- C. All of us should be "clothed with humility," and seek to honor those around us. (1 Peter 5:5)



Spiritual Truths

- God designed the family, and not the state, to be the primary educational institution.
- God gave fathers to be a visual example of Himself -- not in scope, but in function.
- We all need at least one godly man to look up to and trust in life.
- It is good to have a spiritual father -- one who provides a strong character image to look up to and emulate.
- A pastor in a church is similar in function to a father in the home. He is the leader, the provider, and the primary example of Christian lifestyle.
- Elders are mature, ethical men who help the pastor care for the flock, in a lesser but supportive capacity.



Lesson Material

God "...settleth the solitary in families:...." (Psalms 68:6) The family is God's idea. The family is under attack today by a society that is rapidly moving away from wisdom. There are those who seek to redefine the family as "a group of people who live together, and care about each other." This would include two sodomites who live together. They want to

be accepted in society as "a normal, alternate lifestyle." There are even books placed in public schools in America which actually promote this perverse lifestyle to children, such as "Daddy's Roommate," and other tidbits of anti-Christian sentiment. These are the "perilous times" Paul spoke about, when people would have "unnatural affections." (Romans 1:31)

The primary problem in the family today is sin. "...Men will be lovers of their own selves,...." (2 Timothy 3:2) When that happens, husbands and wives defend themselves and their rights from each other, instead of supporting and loving each other. The parents do not have time for the kids, and the kids do not want to be with the parents. When there is a spiritual revival, the hearts of fathers and children turn toward one another, and the family bonds are strengthened.

We live in a peer-dominated culture, because it is a sin-dominated culture. Sin causes us to focus on temporal pleasure, and on self. That is why so many men would like to be "out with the boys" in the evening, instead of with their wives. They do not want to focus on responsibility. If you have two parents who love each other and take the time to take you to church, you are very blessed. If you do not, then you need to honor your parents as much as you can, and also relate to some degree to a pastor, elder, or other godly person, who can provide some spiritual nurturing.

Timothy had a Christian mother and grandmother whose prayers greatly influenced his life; but his natural father was a heathen. When he was won to the Lord, he looked up to the Apostle Paul as his spiritual father. Timothy became a great man of God, partly because he had

such a hero for his mentor. Everyone needs a godly hero to look up to and follow.

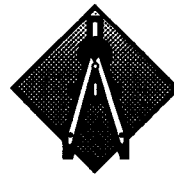
The healthiest way to have a good education is to be related to loving parents and other adults. They are your best counselors, and can actually be your best friends. The movement to ridicule and reject parents is not Christian at all. So many cartoons and programs today make fathers the butt of jokes. Fathers and Christians are constantly portrayed in a negative light. They are actually "discriminated against" as a group, because Satan hates the family, and he particularly hates fathers. Fathers have a great potential for good; but they are hindered by society, by women who cut them down, or by their own sins. Fathers need to be encouraged, loved, and respected.

If your father does not have daily devotions with you (or maybe even on his own), and if he is not a strong spiritual leader, it may be that he has been discouraged. Maybe he does not think anyone values his opinion. Maybe if you showed him some honor and asked him for counsel and spiritual leadership, he would respond. Some fathers have actually become Christians, when they realized that they were responsible to be the spiritual leaders and moral protectors of their homes; and they realized that they could not do that, without becoming Christians.

You cannot lead a father to the Lord by preaching to him, because you take the dominant role, and he would have to submit to you, in order to respond to God. But if you honor and submit to him, as unto Christ, he is likely to be drawn to the Lord. He may need to see that Jesus can make you a better son or daughter, through the way you honor and submit to

his leadership. Of course, you cannot directly disobey a command in scripture, even if your father commands it, because God is the higher authority (Romans 13:1); but you can appeal with respect, and honor with love. You would be surprised at how that can motivate a man to seek God for himself. Fathers naturally want to protect their children, both morally and spiritually. It is just that some do not know how.

God has a wonderful plan for the family unit He designed and blessed. The attack on the family unity is of the devil, and should be recognized as an attack on Christ Himself. Seek to build a strong relationship with your parents, as much as possible. Do not make the mistake of focusing your life on peers or on entertainers. Most of them fit the classic stereotype of "vain fellows," and are very poor role models. Fathers have a natural desire to be needed and leaned upon. Your father can be the best friend you ever had (well, maybe next to mother). Let him be used by God to give you wisdom and guidance; and let him help protect your moral virtue, because there are many in the world who want to destroy it for their own benefit. It always pays to live life God's way, and to relate most effectively with those God has brought into our lives for our good.



Methods

The ministry of "Elijah" mentioned in Malachi 4:6 is to "...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." This is the way God chose to end the Old Testament; and He did not give any more inspired revelation for 400 years after that. It is an important principle. When society focuses on humanism and not on creation and accountability, it literally brings an attack against the family. The more we can encourage young people to love, appreciate, and honor their parents, the more we can fulfill this prophetic vision. If the fathers and children are alienated from each other, the whole earth will feel the "curse" of rebellion and moral breakdown.

Discussion:

Can you name a cartoon series that portrays a father as a stupid but harmless buffoon?

Can you name one which portrays a wise, godly father?

Apply these same questions to television series.

Do movies deliberately portray the girl's father as the enemy of true love?

Are we being influenced to distrust our fathers by lying voices, who control the communication and entertainment media?

What Will Happen After the Church Age?

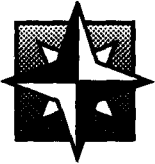
Volume 8

Lesson 51



Bible Reference

The Book of Revelation



Theme

God is the God of history -- past, present, and future. He knows and holds all of the history of the world in His hand. God has created an eternal plan for every believer.



Scripture Reading

Revelation 4:1-2; 4; 10-11

1 "After this I looked, and, behold, a door {was} opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard {was} as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said,

Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.

2 "And immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and {one} sat on the throne."

4 "And round about the throne {were} four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold."

10 "The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11 "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Revelation 5:1-10

1 "And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

2 "And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

3 "And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

4 "And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

5 "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

6 "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

7 "And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

8 "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four (and) twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

9 "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

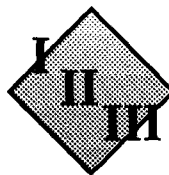
10 "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."



Memory Verse

Revelation 5:9

"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;"



Outline

I. A Door Standing Open in Heaven.

A. The key verse to the interpretation of the book of Revelation is found in chapter 1:19 -- "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter,"

B. According to Jesus, the book is divided into three sections:

1. "The things which thou hast seen." This refers to a vision of Jesus that John had in 1:11-20.
2. "The things which are." The church age is God's current program.
 - a. God has broken Israel off from His program; and He has grafted in the church, which is from every nation and ethnic group.

- b. This period can be seen in chapters 2-3, as has been already mentioned in previous lessons.
- 3. "*The things that shall be hereafter.*" The third division displays history after the church age.
 - a. At this time, God will bring Israel back into the focus of history and deal with them as a nation for 7 years. (Daniel 9:24-27)
 - b. The word "tribulation" refers to this seven years of trouble.
 - c. The trouble prepares the nation of Israel to repent and to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and King.
 - d. A description of these events can be read in chapters 6-19.

C. A chronology of events.

1. Death and resurrection of Christ.
2. Church age. (Revelation 2-3)
3. Church resurrected (raptured). (Revelation 4:1)
4. Seven-year tribulation. (Revelation 6-19)
5. Return of Christ. (Revelation 20)
6. Endless ages. (Revelation 21-22)

D. Please note that there are various views of interpretation. (We suggest the above view, because it is consistent with the whole body of scripture.)

E. The four basic interpretations:

1. Pre-tribulation rapture (above).
2. Mid-tribulation rapture, which suggests that the church goes 3-1/2 years into the tribulation, and then is raptured.
3. Post-tribulation rapture, which teaches that the church will live through all of the tribulation, and be raptured just prior to the return of Jesus Christ.

4. Amillennialist, which teaches that the church is the fulfillment of all prophets, and that Israel will never again have a place as God's elect in this world.

- a. This view, authored by St. Augustine of the Catholic church, sees the church so dominant in the world, that it brings the reign of Christ to earth.
- b. There are variations of this interpretation -- some do believe in the physical return of Christ, but not a millennial reign of Christ.

II. Twenty-four Elders.

A. These elders represent the church.

1. They sit on thrones around God's throne.
 - a. The church is to reign with Christ forever. (Matthew 19:28; 2 Timothy 2:12)
 - b. "Reign" -- *sumbasileuo* {soom-bas-il-yoo'o}; "to be co-regent" (figurative); "reign with."
2. They wear white robes, which indicate the righteousness of Christ by faith, and also indicate priesthood.
3. They have crowns, which are only promised to the overcomers of the church age.
4. The number "24".
 - a. Indicates the priesthood of the Old Testament, which had twenty-four courses for service in the temple.
 - b. Believers of the church age are called a royal priesthood. (1 Peter 2:9)
5. The elders are redeemed from every nation, tribe and tongue

(Revelation 5:9), which is the testimony of the saints from the church age.

6. The elders are redeemed men; therefore, they cannot be angels.

B. The elders worship God.

1. Heaven is filled with worship and praise.
2. Heaven continually praises God -- each time you see heaven in the Bible, it is filled with an atmosphere of praise.
3. Worship includes submission to the will of God; therefore, the elders fall down before the Lamb.
4. Heaven responds to worship.
5. God wants all of His creation to worship Him.
6. The elders worship God.
 - a. By falling down.
 - b. With music and prayers.
 - c. By casting their crowns before the throne.
 - d. With singing.
 - e. And by responding to others when they worship.

- C. God desires that all of His creatures worship Him.

III. The Lamb.

- A. *"...In the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain,...."*
(Revelation 5:6)
- B. Jesus is seen in heaven.
- C. He claims the book with the seven seals, which is the property deed to the earth.
- D. He alone is worthy to claim this deed, because He has prevailed (completely

obeyed the Father unto death on the cross, in order to redeem the world).

- E. The book contains the events of the tribulation on earth and God's plan to complete the redemption of the world.
- F. Jesus already paid for the world when He died on the cross; but, like many purchases, payment is made before possession is taken.
- G. Jesus will come again to claim the world for Himself.
- H. Jesus will come again to receive overcomers to Himself. If He came today, would you be ready?



Spiritual Truths

- God knows all things; and He has a plan for all the ages.
- God declares that we need to rightly divide the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)
- The best interpreter of scripture is scripture.
- God wants us to understand the Bible; and He does not put things in the Bible that cannot be understood.
- God's ultimate purpose for all of creation is that we serve Him.
- True worship is submission to the will of God.

- Only those who receive crowns for faithfulness will have something with which to worship God in heaven.
- The only good that is in our lives is the good that Jesus gives to us.
- Since saints are saved by the blood of Jesus and created by God, then God deserves all glory for any good thing that is accomplished in our lives.
- Only Jesus can save a person from sin and death.



Lesson Material

This passage is one of the highlights of scripture, because it declares the victory that we have in Jesus Christ. Here we can visualize God's plan and be reminded that as He sits on His throne in heaven -- He does have all things under control.

It is important to bear in mind that there are several interpretations of this passage. Those believers who hold other views than presented here are esteemed as brothers and sisters in Christ. It is possible for Christians to disagree, but to be agreeable. If others have another emphasis, we have no argument with them. However, we believe that the above is the best interpretation. We recommend that you discuss this with your pastor for further insight.

Someone has said that if you use the principle that a thousand years is as a day and a day as a thousand years with the Lord (2 Peter 3:8), that all of the years of

your life take place in less than two hours, from God's perspective. This illustrates that God can see the beginning from the end. The Lord is He Who is, Who was, and Who will be. From everlasting to everlasting, He is God. (Psalms 90:2)

That is why we know that God can plan and predict all of history. No man has the ability to predict accurately. Those that are mediums and predictors in the New Age movement, such as Jean Dixon, can only predict with 50% or less accuracy. That is only an educated guess. The devil and demon power can only guess regarding future; but God knows all things.

Therefore, the only safe guide for our lives is the Word of God, revealed by the Spirit of God. His plan is to give us abundant life. (John 10:10) He has the best and most fulfilling plan for us. When we walk with the Lord in simple faith, we can rest in the fact that all things will work together for good. (Romans 8:28)

Heaven is a real place. It is described in detail throughout the scriptures. God uses heaven as His headquarters to govern both the seen and unseen universe. In these chapters, we can see that heaven is filled with worship activity, legal activity, and ruling activity. Heaven will move to earth at the end of the millennial reign of Christ. Some believe that heaven was originally on earth, but that as a result of Satan's rebellion, the earth lost its place in God's economy. If this is true, then the Bible is the story of the redemption of the earth back to its rightful place.

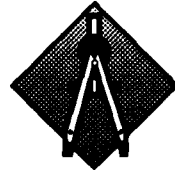
Therefore, the seven-sealed book that Jesus claims is extremely significant, because it not only declares the redemption of our souls, but that of the earth to its original place and purpose in God.

These passages remind us of the awesome reality of eternity and of our responsibility to eternal things. First, God eternally sits upon His throne, which means that all of creation must give God an account. Since He created all things, He owns all things.

Secondly, only those who receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior can be saved. No one was found in heaven, on earth, or under the earth that was worthy to open the seven-sealed book. No one can stand before the Father to be saved by works. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: {it is} the gift of God:"* (Ephesians 2:8)

Thirdly, worship will be our eternal activity. Only those who overcome will

have the means to honor and worship God for all of eternity. And God wants to glorify Himself in your life on this earth, too.



Methods

Use a time line to illustrate the plan of God for the ages. Discuss the reality of eternal life. Ask the students how they would respond, if the Lord would return today. Challenge the students to commit themselves to live for eternal things, rather than temporal things.