

VOLUME THREE

The
Disciple's
Way

40 BIBLE LESSONS FOR YOUTH

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Volume 3

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How to Prepare a Lesson

The Start of the Year

At the start of this year of teaching, take about two hours to put all of the things that you would normally use at the youth meeting in one packet or box. This will cut down on time each week that might otherwise be spent looking for the various items, since you will know where they are.

Keep a record of addresses, birthdays, and contact details of all the students in your class.

Briefly read through the whole book of lessons to get an idea of the various monthly emphases. This will give you an overview and a sense of direction. You will know how many lessons there are on each topic and not get ahead of yourself in the teaching.

The Two Hours Each Week

30 minutes **Read through the lesson and get introduced to it.**

A full week before you teach the lesson, spend time getting acquainted with it. Pray for God to give you wisdom and insights into the best way of presenting the material to your class.

10 minutes **Record your thoughts and ideas throughout the week.**

Keep a small lesson notebook or paper with you. As an idea comes to you, write it onto this paper so you will remember it later.

20 minutes **Read the Bible passage 3 or 4 times during the week.**

Allow God's Word to change you as you think on it and read it. This reading will allow the truth that you want to teach your class to impact *your* life first.

50 minutes **Bring your lesson together.**

Get everything that you will need from your resource packet. Read through your notes and organize the lesson into a format that suits you and that you will be able to follow and understand the best.

10 minutes **The last minute check-up.**

This is the last thing that you do before you go to teach your lesson. Make sure that you have your Bible, your lesson, and any other materials you need. Review your outline or notes in your leader's guide one last time. Finally, take a minute or two to commit this lesson to the Lord and ask Him to use you. You have probably already prayed this several times during your devotions, but acknowledge your dependence upon Him once more.

HOW TO PRESENT A LESSON

There are two qualities necessary to be a teacher of youth: You must love God and love young people. The most important thing you need to do is to help the youth in your class experience the love of God. You can do this by living out your personal relationship with Jesus in front of them and by teaching them to have their own personal relationship with God.

Youth should be actively involved in learning by sharing experiences and feelings, discovering truth, and choosing something they can do each week in response to the information learned in the lesson.

Your lesson time should be carefully planned and organized to put into practice your preparation and thought. We would like to suggest the following basic outline for your lesson time. Times given are based on an hour class. Numbers in parentheses are for 45 minute classes.

1. Arrive at least ten minutes before class to prepare your teaching area and set out any lesson materials that you may need.
2. Use the first **5 minutes** to greet your students as they arrive. Start with prayer (this is a good opportunity to allow the youths to learn to pray aloud in a group). Give them a chance to discuss the news and events of the past week. Pay attention and you will learn much about your young people. Take attendance and receive the offering. Follow-up on any assignment from last week and review last week's lesson.
3. The next **15 (10) minutes** should be used to introduce the lesson, starting with the LIFE section to get the youths' attention and turn the focus onto the subject for the week.
4. The next **20 (15) minutes** should be spent on the TRUTH section. Remember not to PREACH or READ to them. Present the lesson in your own words.
5. The next **15 (10) minutes** should focus on ACTION. Help the youth discover how the truths learned in the lesson apply to their everyday lives.
6. During the last **5 minutes**, close with prayer and clean up the class area before going on to church.

Review the success of the lesson as soon as you can. Spend a few minutes making a note to yourself of what worked and what didn't for future reference. Also note any important things that you learned about any of your students during the class. Always be aware of what your students are saying during the time that they are with you. You can learn much about them and their home situation in casual conversation. And remember teaching is all about building strong relationships with God and other Christian peers.

PREPARING THE TEACHER

There are few things in life as disappointing as discovering that someone we trust is a fake. Some televangelists have left trails of devastated followers who placed their trust in people they thought were authentic and genuine, only to discover many of their spiritual heroes were fakes. The common result is for the disappointed, deceived, and betrayed believers to lose hope, not just in the leader, but in all that the leader was supposed to represent.

As someone who leads youth, you have a heavy responsibility. Not only do you have the difficult task of trying to help youths have a personal relationship with God, but you have the equally difficult task of living a life of integrity before your students. Remember that people learn more about Christ by watching your life, both in and out of class, than by anything you say, no matter how great your words may be.

Young people are very perceptive people. They quickly notice when our lives don't match our words. If we are saying one thing on Sunday and then do the opposite during the week, our students will tend to do what we have done, rather than what we have said. Furthermore, as far as they are concerned, what you have to say is no longer valid because you have not backed up your words with your actions.

Jesus calls us to be His followers. That means we are to be more than simply people who do all the right things. Instead, we are to be a people who show love and mercy in all areas of our lives. We are to have a moment-by-moment relationship with Jesus so real and vital that without it we would cease to have a reason for living. This is authentic Christianity. If you haven't already begun, won't you begin today?

Do you believe that youth can make valuable contributions to the Body of Christ? Do you allow your youth to minister to one another in your class? Do you give them significant roles? Have you ever let them lead sections of the Sunday School lesson, with your training and help? You may have objections: "I tried that once and it didn't work." "It takes too much time to train them to do it." "I'll only have to come behind them and do it right." Those are great excuses, but that's all they are--excuses.

Now is the perfect time for your youth to train for leadership. Expand your role as a teacher to include more than just giving information. Develop students into mature disciples of Jesus Christ who are capable of discipling others. All of your students have a God-given ability to minister to others. All they have to do is recognize it, develop it, and use it.

Pray that God will show them what their abilities are. Then pray *with* them for a way to sharpen that skill and for a place to put it to use. Encourage each student to begin exploring their abilities by getting involved in different ministries in your church.

Challenge them to see a need and then do something about it, even if that means starting a new ministry in your church.

Let your students know you believe they have a valuable contribution to make. Keep telling them until they believe it. Model this process in your own life. Take a risk and develop abilities that you have allowed to be dormant in yourself. Talk with your students about your struggles and fears of using untried skills and abilities.

Walk through this process with them, encouraging them and letting them encourage you. Help your students find mentors who will help them develop the needed skills in their areas of interest. Many retired individuals would be more than willing to share their knowledge and wisdom with a youth.

SEVEN KEYS FOR TEACHING YOUTH

Key #1: Teachers (not printed materials) are at the heart of effective Christian teaching and learning.

Teaching youth lessons is essentially an interpersonal activity. It is an encounter between God, students, and teachers - and a good teacher is at the heart of that encounter. As the teacher, you are more than a mouthpiece for giving out important information. You have the opportunity to participate with the students in an encounter with the Living Truth in Jesus Christ.

Key #2: The Holy Spirit is the ultimate teacher

As important as you the teacher are, you are not beyond making mistakes. Thankfully, you are always team-teaching with the Holy Spirit, who is already preparing the hearts and minds of your students to receive and apply the lesson. There will most likely be times when nothing goes right, yet one of the students remembers that lesson as being the turning point in his or her decision to follow Jesus. What happened? The Holy Spirit was teaching in spite of you. He is also teaching through you - but it is always the Holy Spirit who ultimately teaches.

Key #3: The life of the teacher is as important as his or her words.

What you the teacher say is vitally important. Truth and wisdom are worth proclaiming well. However, it is when your words and actions fit together in a life of integrity that the student really internalizes the truth of the words you've taught. Your goal must be to have a relationship with your students where they can observe and experience the consistency between your life and the truth you teach.

Key #4: Good preparation is a must!

Even if you've been teaching for many years, you can't be effective without preparing each lesson with care. Effective preparation insures direction, discipline, and destination. Every lesson has a central theme or message - a direction. Unless you make that central

theme a part of your thoughts and meditations, you can get wrapped up in other things and forget that you've gathered to teach significant truth, not simply to have a good time.

Discipline is not about keeping order, but about keeping everyone focused on the central theme or message. When you are not prepared, the activities will be incomplete, the transitions between ideas and activities will be awkward, and the supplies inadequate. You will likely lose the class to the leadership of someone else, who may not take the class where it needs to go.

Usually, the application of truth comes near the end of the lesson. This is the destination. It isn't enough to talk about the truth; we have to put it into practice (1 John 3:18). Yet, if you're unprepared to pace the lesson, you may not get to the crucial task of application at all. Too often, the most important part of the lesson never gets taught! Why? You run out of time. Good preparation is the remedy.

Key #5: Content alone is not usually enough to attract and maintain interest in the lesson.

If your class is like most youth classes, the majority of your students don't come to class mainly because of the truth that you'll be teaching them. Many will come because they enjoy being with their friends. A few come because their parents insist on it. Some come because they want the attention; some are hungering for an encouraging word; others come because it's the safest place they know. There are as many different reasons for being there as there are youth in your class. Your responsibility is to help create the kind of physical, emotional, and spiritual climate where they feel safe, accepted, valued, and challenged. That kind of environment doesn't happen by accident. It takes intentional effort.

Key #6: A significant, consistent biblical focus is a must for true spiritual growth.

The Bible must be the central text for all Christian education, especially your youth lessons. Your primary responsibility as a teacher is to encourage serious consideration of God's truth revealed in Scripture. Whatever you do, you cannot bypass the Bible if you expect your students to mature spiritually.

Key #7: Spiritual growth is more a matter of transformation than information.

Just because someone knows something doesn't mean that he or she will do it. Spiritual growth is more than just knowing about truth - it is knowing the One who is Truth and being transformed by that experience. That is what Jesus' death and resurrection is all about. He died and was raised so that sins can be forgiven and cleansed; so that broken relationships can be healed; so that deadly habits can give way to spiritual disciplines; so that chaotic circumstances can find divine peace; so that spiritually dead people can live again. You must believe and pray that every one of your students can be transformed in this way. When that happens, real teaching has taken place!

(Taken from "Seven Convictions for Teaching Youth", written by Dr. Ed Robinson.)

HOLINESS

Christians are to be holy, just as God is holy (1 Peter 1:14-16). Peter's reference to the Old Testament command (Leviticus 20:7) reminds us of God's continual call to His people. God chose us to exhibit in our lives the type of holiness that reflects His holy character.

God demonstrated His great love for us by sending His Son to provide a way for people to come into holy relationship with Him (Ephesians 1:4-5). That life of holiness starts with salvation and progresses on to sanctification.

Paul's earnest plea for the Christians at Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24) was that *God* would entirely sanctify them. Paul knew that while there is a human element, in that one must yield oneself up to God (cf. 4:4), the primary thing is the power of God that enables this to be done. This was more than just initial holiness (conversion); it was a deep cleansing of the heart from the nature of sin that separated us from God and kept us from having the type of relationship He desired with us. Paul prayed that God would sanctify them "through and through"--in other words, that they would be complete. This sanctification is not just a temporary thing nor does it only apply to a part of us. Paul understood that this sanctification involves the whole person and will carry them through the final coming of Christ. God not only calls them to sanctification (holiness), but He provides for what they need to have that type of relationship with Him.

A perfect example of a prayer for sanctification to God is in Psalm 51:9-12. It was written by King David after he committed adultery with Bathsheba and then had her husband killed (see 2 Samuel 11-12). David repented with a deep realization of his need for God's holiness. His plea was that God would create a new heart within Him, one that was free from the sins and the stain of sin that was currently present, thus restoring his relationship to God and its accompanying joy.

Second by second the world walks deeper and deeper into sin. Actions once unthinkable are now seen by many as natural tendencies that no one could or should resist. They are told in formal and informal settings that all lifestyle choices are of the same moral value and that no one lifestyle is better than any of the others.

God's plan of holiness is the only lifestyle option for a Christian who wants to serve God. Choosing to live holy lives is our only hope for purposeful living, loving families, careers that invest in people's lives, and ministries that bring others to Christ. Holiness is not a quality people can have in themselves, but it is made possible by virtue of their relationship to the holy God. God himself has given us the responsibility of seeking holiness. And He has provided the only way to make holiness a reality in our lives - a relationship with Him.

As you explain the concept of holiness, don't fall prey to thinking of holiness as an "it." Holiness is not a static thing. When you become holy, you don't automatically look

like all the other holy people in the world. Holiness is a dynamic relationship with the God of holy love. Holiness is not a one-time experience at an altar of prayer but an ongoing relationship that works in real life situations. What may have begun with a moment of realization and a crisis experience doesn't stop there, no more than a marriage stops at the close of a wedding ceremony.

Holiness happens each day in the way we love God and, because of our love for Him, the way we love each other. Every thought and action is generated by a heart of love. If that sounds impossible to you, think about the results if we assume that such a calling is not possible: we have limited the power and love of God. God won't ask us to do or be something that isn't possible. A God of love would not do such a thing. If He has called us to a holy life (and He has), then He will provide the means of answering that call (1 Thessalonians 5:22-24).

It is quite true to say "I can't live a holy life"; but you can decide to let Jesus make you holy. "I can't do away with my past"; but you can decide to let Jesus do away with it.

--Oswald Chambers

THEME 1: TAKE TIME TO PRAY

Lesson 1

Do We Need to Pray?

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Learn to pray
- Will want to develop a habit of continual prayer

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 6:5-15

MEMORY VERSE

Luke 11:1

"Lord, teach us to pray..."

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Hindrances To Prayer (Matthew 6:5-8):

1. Praying without really meaning what we say (Matt 6:5). If we act as if we are really praying, but are only pretending, we are hypocrites. God sees the heart and He knows if we are really praying.
2. Praying so that others will see us pray (Matt 6:5). It is good to stand and pray in church; but if the intention is only to impress others so that they will think we are holy, the prayer becomes worthless.
3. Praying so that others will see us (Matt 6:5). The street means any place outside the church. For example, some people pray before they eat or when their families can see them, but they do not pray in private. When we pray just so others will see us, our prayers are worth nothing.
4. Unnecessarily repeating any part of prayer (Matt 6:7) when we don't really mean it, like the name of God or Jesus

INTRODUCTION

An educated man once said, "The best that a man can do for another is to teach him how to think". But the Christian says, "The best thing a Christian can do for another Christian is to teach him to pray". It is not easy to pray every day. But once we develop the habit of praying daily, we will see and appreciate the results.

The disciples realized their need to pray and asked Jesus to teach them to pray. He taught them

the Lord's prayer.

The church needs people who pray. We will never really know God if we do not speak to Him regularly. God does not pour out His blessings on those who come to Him only when they feel like it. Constant communion with God is the secret to really knowing Him.

We must have a regular place of prayer. The habit of prayer will make us a better person.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

John the Baptist and other religious leaders taught their followers to pray; for that reason the disciples of Jesus wanted to learn to pray. They asked Him: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1b).

Why is it necessary to pray?

Prayer is very important. We should pray every day and about everything. Many people think that we can only pray when we are at church or at home, but we can pray at anytime, anywhere, even when we are busy doing other things.

How should we pray? (Matthew 6:5-6)

Jesus taught us how to pray. He said that we must not pray to impress others, but rather we should pray to God in a private place. His example of prayer shows that our prayers should be in simple ordinary words, precise and direct like a child speaking to his father. We need to trust God just as a child trusts his father. We should pray to the Father in the name of Jesus.

How should we end our prayers? (Matthew 6:13; John 14:13a)

The Lord's Prayer traditionally ends like this: "For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, amen." (v.13). This part is actually not found in any of the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament so it is no longer included in the newer translations of the Bible. But the words are beautiful and it's a good way to end a prayer.

This prayer does not end "in the name of Jesus" because Jesus prayed it. But He did tell us to ask in His name: "And I will do whatever you ask in my name," (John 14:13a).

When we say "Amen" we are saying "so be it".

When should we pray?

We should pray continually to our Heavenly Father. Christians should pray when they get up and when they go to bed; at mealtimes; when we are feeling sad, discouraged, tempted or lonely; and any other time when we feel the need to talk to God.

APPLICATION

Answer these questions, evaluate your prayers according to the answers and list ways in which you can improve them:

How do the hypocrites pray?

How do the pagans pray?

How should Christians pray?

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Memorize the Lord's Prayer. If you already know it, prayerfully meditate on it to understand every part of it as much as possible. Make it your own.

Using the above list, decide what you will do this week to improve your prayers.

THEME 1: TAKE TIME TO PRAY

LESSON 2

Genuine Prayer

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Learn that we have a great source of power in prayer.
- Discover the secret of real prayer.
- Be encouraged to pray with honesty and faith.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 18:1-14

OTHER REFERENCES

I Samuel 2:2-10

MEMORY VERSE

Job 16:17b

"... my prayer is pure."

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes we do not feel like praying. What are some reasons that we sometimes feel that way? Discuss this question with the class.

Some people say that God answers in the following ways: "Yes", "No", "Wait" or he "just gives you peace". Discuss.

When the disciples were with Jesus, they saw Him pray. They saw Him climb mountains to find a quiet place to pray. They knew he spent whole nights praying to His Father. They saw Him in prayer in the midst of the biggest challenges of His life. They also saw all He did after He had been praying.

Jesus had already taught them to pray. But, it is not enough to repeat the Lord's Prayer by heart. In Luke, Jesus tells the disciples two parables to teach them some key things about prayer.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

The secret of prayer is given only to the one who prays. The best way to learn to pray is to begin praying. Any person can change the course of nature or of history through the power of prayer.

Such great possibilities should encourage us to begin to pray. Many try to find specific instructions to teach them to pray. Others repeat certain prayers over and over. But the secret of

prayer is in the faith of the honest people. These people do not look different on the outside, but they are growing spiritually and they have great influence on the lives of the people for whom they pray. James 5:17-18 tells us that the ministry of powerful prayer is available to anyone. So, how should we pray?

We must pray with persistence (Luke 18:1-8)

What does this mean? It means to pray ceaselessly and without giving up. We have to keep praying, like the widow of the parable, to receive an answer from God. The answer to prayer does not always come immediately. Many times it takes months and years to be answered! Sometimes we get tired of waiting. We think that God will not answer our prayers. But we must have courage. The Lord hears our prayer. Perhaps He is testing us to see if we will keep praying or if we will give up. We must continue to pray until He answers us.

We must pray with faith

A woman heard in a sermon at church that if we have faith, we can move a mountain. There was a mountain near her house which prevented her from seeing the sea. She decided to pray during the night. The next day, early in the morning, she went to her window. She saw that the mountain was still there. She said, "I knew very well that the mountain would not move from that spot over there!"

The same thing happens to us when we ask something of the Lord "already knowing" that He will not answer our prayer! This is praying without faith. When we pray, we must trust God with everything. We must trust that He is able to supply our needs according to His will. Only the prayer of faith will find a reply as in the case of the Pharisee and the tax collector.

We must pray with honesty (Luke 18:9-14)

Hypocrites are people who want other people to think they are something that they are not. Of the two men who prayed in the temple, which one was the hypocrite? When we stand before God, in prayer, He can see the most hidden part of our hearts and lives. If we pretend to be what we are not, God knows immediately. He knows everything. He does not allow Himself to be deceived. The tax collector was an honest man. Jesus told this parable to show us that God knows when we pray with honesty or when we are pretending, trying to deceive those who are watching us.

APPLICATION

Evaluate your prayers:

- ✓ How important is prayer in your life?
- ✓ What are some conditions you must meet so that your prayers will be acceptable to the Lord?
- ✓ Is it necessary to use certain words or pray in a certain way when we pray? How will this question affect your prayers?

PRACTICAL IDEAS

In the coming week, pay attention to your prayers to see if your prayers are sincere, full of faith and persistent. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you improve your prayers for God's glory.

THEME 1: TAKE TIME TO PRAY

LESSON 3

The Prayers Of Jesus

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Understand why God became man in Jesus Christ.
- Appreciate Christ's prayer for the unity of believers.

BIBLE PASSAGE

John 17

OTHER REFERENCES

Philippians 2:5-11

MEMORY VERSE

I John 2:1-2

"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."

INTRODUCTION

How would you feel if someone came up to you and asked if they could pray for you? What if that person is a respected individual – a saint, a leader in the church or community, etc.? What kinds of things would they pay attention to in that prayer? How long will the impact of that prayer last? Allow the Students to discuss these questions. Especially make note of the gestures expressing feelings that they may make that cannot be expressed in words.

Jesus prayed for us! The lesson today is based on Jesus's prayer for His disciples and for us in John 17.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

He Prayed That We Would Have Eternal Life (John 17:1-5)

This prayer tells us that Jesus became man in order to give us "eternal life" (vs.2-3). The term eternal life refers to salvation. The work of Jesus - to take the human form, to preach, to teach and to heal and thus reveal the Father - was about to be completed with the crucifixion and the resurrection. He had lived on earth as a servant, taking the form of a man, suffering mockery and taking our sins upon Himself. In this prayer, Jesus knew that most of His work was done. He asked the Father to restore to Him the glory which He had before the foundation of the world. God

heard the prayer of His Son, Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the Father, as King and Saviour! He and the Father are One perfect unity. The Christian should imitate that same unity which exists between Jesus and the Father.

He prayed for the protection of His disciples (John 17:6-19)

He prayed for the disciples that had walked with Him during the three years of His ministry on earth. They understood that Jesus was the Son of God (vs.7). He asked that the Father keep them from the evil in the world, while they completed His work. He asked that they may be united together in the love of God because they needed that strength to face the world and its persecutions. He also prayed for their total devotion. We will be “protected from the evil one” as we are united with Jesus. If we are not united with Him, we will be lost.

He prayed for believers of all times (John 17:20-26)

He prayed for all believers who today are part the Church of Jesus Christ - all those who believe in Him as Lord and Saviour. All the disciples of Jesus today, whom we call "Christians", should be united "in Christ". That unity should cause others to “believe that you sent me” (vs. 21). Christians should be united amongst themselves in the same way that Jesus is united to the Father or that Christ is united to His Church.

To be united with each other, we must first be united with God. As Christians, we must accept our differences of opinion on the less important matters and be united in regard to the important facts of the Christian Faith like: 1) We are redeemed by the death and resurrection of Christ (Romans 4:25); 2) We should be baptized, even though we have different opinions concerning the method and the time (children or adults); 3) We should participate in the Lord's Supper.

Believers must avoid divisions in the church. Instead, they must have respect for each in spite of their differences. Jesus prayed that we would "all" be one.

APPLICATION

Jesus prayed for us. And if God answers our prayers, how much more will he answer the prayers of Jesus? He prayed that we would have eternal life, that we would be protected from the evil one and that we would enjoy the kind of unity with other believers that He and the Father share. Will you cooperate with God and allow Him to answer Jesus' prayer for you? Give the Students time to pray as you are led by the Holy Spirit.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

During the week, write down examples of times when God protected you from the evil one. As much as possible, keep track of the details of what happened so you can share with others next week.

How can the unity that Jesus prayed for be effective in our world? Make suggestions of things that Christians can do, including what is already happening. Agree on one thing that you, as a class, will pursue during the week.

THEME 1: TAKE TIME TO PRAY

LESSON 4

Prayer Is Power

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Recognize the conflict between God and Satan;
- Know the importance of prayer to receive God's victory;
- Be encouraged to make prayer a spiritual discipline.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Daniel 9:4-23

OTHER REFERENCES

Daniel Chapters 9-11

MEMORY VERSE

Ephesians 6:12

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms".

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Daniel was a man of prayer. His personal life, as shown in the book which bears his name, gives us much material for a prayer manual. He talks about being united in prayer (chapter 2); private prayer (chapter 6); prayer for others (chapter 9); persistent prayer and answer to prayer (10:12-14); and the price of prayer (10:15-17). Ezekiel 14:14-20 calls Daniel one of the three great men of God, just as Moses and Samuel were named in Jeremiah 15:1.

INTRODUCTION

With whom does the Christian fight? When Jesus commanded that we love our neighbor as ourselves, He implied that the word "neighbor" includes our enemies. So, against whom should we fight? We must never fight against the "neighbor", but we do fight against the that which makes us, as well as our neighbors, act in rebellion to God.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

Daniel was taken captive from Jerusalem to Babylon when he was about 16 years old. He remained faithful to God through prayer and faith (Chapter 1). Babylon did not capture his heart, but Jerusalem, the holy city of God, did. Daniel opened his window in the direction of Jerusalem,

and prayed boldly. In Babylon he was known as a man of prayer whose favourite theme was "...there is a God in heaven..." (Daniel 2:28).

In the second half of his book, chapters 7-12, and especially chapters 9-12, we see a man who cares about his people. He prayed and kept praying until he received an answer.

1. The Young Daniel

Daniel was a descendant of the royal family of David. When he was 16 years old, he was taken into captivity to Babylon. In Babylon, he lived in the royal palace, along with three other young men, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They were given the Babylonian names: Belteshazzar, Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego (Daniel 1:7).

2. The Fight in Babylon

These four Jewish young men had been taught to believe in the one true God. They could not accept the heathen religion and pagan customs of Babylon. The faith and the character of these young men was soon put to the test. They were given food and wine from the king's table - food sacrificed to idols. Daniel immediately decided that he would not eat anything which was against what he had been taught. This is the way that Satan works in the lives of those who want to be faithful to God. He causes problems between Christians and the powers around them. Sometimes the fight is difficult and the Christian succumbs to the power of evil. But thanks be to God, He gives us strength to defeat the forces of evil, just like Daniel and his three friends! The Christian is never alone: the Lord Almighty is with him.

3. The Prayer Of Daniel For His People (Daniel 9:4-23)

Daniel was already an old man of 70 years. He was a prophet of God who was well known in that heathen land. At this time, he prayed to God for his people who were still in captivity in Babylon. He knew that the time of captivity was coming to an end, because he knew the prophecy from Jeremiah 25:12 and 29:10. He prayed to God, confessing the sin of his people and asking Jehovah for mercy. (Read Daniel 9:19). The Lord heard and answered his prayer.

4. What was the strength and the secret of Daniel?

PRAYER was the secret and the strength of Daniel. He prayed three times a day. He looked towards Jerusalem from the window of his room in the royal palace, his land where he had learned to love, worship and hope in God (Daniel 6:10).

Prayer is the spiritual food of the believer: it strengthens the heart and gives us hope through the trust we put in the Lord. Prayer frees us from fears and doubts; it gives us strength to overcome temptations and courage to face evil.

APPLICATION

The spiritual life is like a garden where flowers of grace grow. Later these flowers become the Fruits of the Spirit. We must watch this garden so that the enemy does not enter it. Often the enemy enters congregations and destroys the unsuspecting sheep or divides them, by telling them lies that sound like truth. We need to be aware of the conflict between God and Satan, but we must also know how to use the Christian armour to stop the flaming arrows of Satan. Let us allow God to help us in our weaknesses to fight the forces of evil with His divine fire. The most powerful weapon we, as Christians, have is prayer. Let us always use it as a powerful spiritual practice.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Determine it in your heart to be a person of prayer. Set realistic goals and expectations and allow yourself to grow. Make friends with a mature, praying Christian so you can learn from them and ask them to hold you accountable to your commitments. Set a time and make yourself reminders for when you want to pray each day, until it becomes a habit. Celebrate every successful step regardless of the size. Watch yourself grow.

THEME 1: TAKE TIME TO PRAY

LESSON 5

The Power Of Faithful Prayer

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Realize that God participated in history.
- Appreciate our fellowship with God through prayer.
- Accept the risk of spiritual leadership.

BIBLE PASSAGE

I Kings 18:36-40

OTHER REFERENCES

I Kings 18; James 5:16-20

MEMORY VERSE

James 5:16b

“The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”

INTRODUCTION

The Apostle James tells us that the prayer made by a righteous person results in great power. People want to know if prayer still works, if the results are worth the time invested in prayer. Do we, believers, really believe in the power of prayer? James reminds us of the story of Elijah from I Kings 18. We need men and women today who will pray and believe just like Elijah did.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

1. Elijah, man and prophet

Elijah, a prophet of God, is considered one of the great men of Israel. He was a man of prayer. He prayed a lot, even before God called him to be a spiritual leader. He had a strong faith in God, even when the people around him began to worship the false gods of the pagans. He fought against the false religions which an evil king had introduced among the people of Israel, who should only worship Jehovah. The fire of the Lord burned in his heart. There burned in him the desire to do the will of God. He was called by God to deliver God’s message to the people. Elijah did so with courage; without fear of the evil kings.

2. *King Ahab*

King Ahab was an evil king who governed the nation and encouraged the people to commit the greatest sin against God: to worship false gods. King Ahab was married to a heathen Jezebel, who was also very evil. Together they worshipped and forced the people to worship the false god Baal. Those who believed in the true God, Jehovah, were persecuted. Elijah never submitted to King Ahab or his wife Jezebel, rather he obeyed the will of God. He knew that the Lord was on his side.

3. *Test on Mount Carmel*

It was a meeting of powers. On one side, King Ahab and Jezebel, with 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah; on the other side, Elijah! ONLY Elijah? No, he had God on his side. So, we could say, "on the other side is God and Elijah!" Elijah challenged Ahab and Jezebel, the prophets of Baal and even the people themselves, telling them to see who the true God is: Baal or Jehovah. The god who responds with fire, that will be the true God!

4. *"The Lord, He is God"*

Elijah had great faith in God! He was not afraid when he was alone in the midst of people who worshipped idols and at the hands of the king who could easily order his death! When the prophets of Baal got tired of praying to their gods without any results, the time arrived for the prophet of God to act. The first thing that he did was to build the altar of God which was in ruins, proof of the idolatry which dominated the people. Then HE PRAYED WITH FAITH. The power of his faith brought an answer: fire from heaven fell upon the altar and burned everything. The people were astonished at so great a miracle and they said, "The Lord, He is the God".

We have a great and wonderful God, who answers prayer with power when we pray with faith. Let us trust in God and exercise our faith daily.

APPLICATION

We need men and women today who will pray and believe just like Elijah did. It is a privilege to pray for one another! We would have fewer problems (even in the church) if we spent more time in prayer rather than criticising one another (especially those in places of authority)! The places where we work would be different if we prayed for the people we work with. Christians, let us pray more and criticise less.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Faith must be exercised to be seen. Exercise your faith, pray, like the disciples prayed, that the Lord will increase your faith or like the man in Mark 9:14-30 exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

THEME 1: TAKE TIME TO PRAY

LESSON 6

God Guides Us Through Prayer

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Realise and appreciate the power of the prayers of others for us;
- See the guidance of God in the lives of his people; how God can direct lives through prayer (ex. Saul and Ananias).
- See how prayer can be useful to God and to the world.
- Desire the guidance of God in their own lives to help spread His kingdom.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 9:1-24; 22:6-16; 26:12-18

OTHER REFERENCES

Acts 22:1-16; 26:12-23; Isaiah 6:1-8

MEMORY VERSE

Acts 26:17b-18

“... I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Though this event seems strange, we learn that God has His own plan to win souls. Events can sometimes appear strange to us, but they are directed by God. We must not let our plans get in the way of God's plans. The Holy Spirit will help us to know if our plans are right or not. We must have patience.

INTRODUCTION

Our lesson today speaks of an important meeting, the meeting of Saul of Tarsus with the Lord Jesus Christ. The events of the conversion of Saul were extraordinary, but they show us that God directs the steps and lives of those who want to obey Him. We must obey God just as Saul obeyed God. God intended that His Holy Spirit would guide His children. God answers our prayers according to His wisdom and His plan for us. He does not always give us just what we ask for. Every Christian should know that when they pray, God hears them. We must pray to seek God's will for our lives. We must pray for the grace of God. When we do, we proclaim Him Lord of our

lives. In this lesson, we will study the testimony of the Apostle Paul and about his conversion. The experience of this servant could be ours too.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

1. *God Calls (Acts 9:1-6)*

Saul was a very religious man. He was present when Stephen was killed. He believed that he was following the will of God. God knew the desire of Saul was to be obedient to Him, even though his idea of obedience was wrong. The proof of this truth is in the way Saul replied to God: "Who are you, Lord?" Many times, a person who is hungry for the Lord, will do strange things. As Christians, we should try to recognize truth in those who are not saved. Many people are seeking God through various forms of religion, cults, witchcraft, etc. Let's ask God for His Spirit to guide these people to the true path – that they will have a desire to live for Jesus. All Saul knew was that it was the Lord Jesus who spoke to him. God wants us to say "yes" and to walk in the light of the knowledge which we receive. Our initial obedience will open the doors so that we can receive additional light.

God speaks clearly. He spoke to Saul in an audible voice. Most of us do not hear God audibly; but we do hear him speak in our inner being. And He speaks just as clearly as if we heard Him with our ears. The Spirit of God is faithful to deliver His message to our hearts.

2. *God Wants Our Obedience (Acts 9:17-19)*

The conversion of Saul and the answer of Ananias create a story of obedience. Saul became a very important person in the Early Church. Only Jesus had a more important position than he did. When we seek God's guidance through prayer, God joins our experience of obedience with others, so that the whole church works together. The Spirit of God will help us to be faithful as we take our individual steps.

Did Ananias doubt God when God sent him to visit Saul? Should he have been disobedient? Should he be honest in his fears? There are times when God wants us to tell Him our fears. God was patient in explaining to Ananias what He wanted. Once Ananias knew the will of God, Ananias did not hesitate! He will always be remembered as an example of obedience: he knew that God was guiding him. When we seek the guidance of God through prayer, we are obeying God. This type of obedience is found in people who are sanctified. When our hearts are free from sin, we want to do the will of God and we can act in complete obedience to the Spirit.

When Ananias laid his hands upon Saul, he saw the eyes of the future Apostle opened to the truth. Saul was baptized and began to serve the Lord. God provided the initial guidance through prayer; but His guidance will be completed when we continue to seek and to obey the will of God in every area of our lives.

APPLICATION

The Lord appeared to Ananias, a faithful and obedient servant, and commanded him to go and pray with Saul, so that he might recover his sight. Ananias was frightened. The Lord calmed His servant. He showed Ananias His plan for Saul (9:15). Saul obeyed God's plan for him. Saul/Paul spent the rest of his life serving God and praising the name of God, and preaching the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God still seeks men, women and young people who are willing to totally surrender to Him. Will you?

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Think about Saul and Ananias. List reasons they could give for not obeying God. What reasons could present day disciples/followers have? What reasons might hinder you from being obedient like Paul and Ananias were? Make time to pray about them during the week.

THEME 1: TAKE TIME TO PRAY

LESSON 7

God Listens to Prayer

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Understand the nature of revival;
- Realize what revival can do for the church;
- Feel the burden of prayer for revival in the Church.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Habakkuk 3:2-19

OTHER REFERENCES

Psalm 85:1-13; Habakkuk 2:1-20

MEMORY VERSE

Psalm 85:6

"Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?"

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The emphasis is on the Lord reviving His people because only God can revive the saddened hearts and broken hopes of His people.

INTRODUCTION

God acts differently than we do to accomplish His purposes. The prophet Habakkuk was concerned with the things he saw happening in Israel. The lesson shows us that God listened to the prayer of Habakkuk in these difficult times. In the same way, He listens to our prayers today.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

1. The Times of Habakkuk

There were many evil things happening in Israel. The people treated each other unkindly. Oppression, violence, sin and idolatry were present. The prophet of God had a lot of work to do. Today we don't have enough men and women with the courage to speak out against the evil in the world. We need to tell people about the plan of God for salvation. If God called you, would you be willing to share His message?

The pastors and the evangelists of today are like the prophet. They challenge us to seek spiritual renewal. The invitation to pray at the altar reminds people of their failures, anxieties, and sin which should be confessed to God. The altar becomes a place of mercy. Children, teens and adults find a place of worship, repentance, forgiveness and spiritual renewal at the altar.

2. *The Man, Habakkuk*

Very little is known about Habakkuk. We do know that he was a man of powerful faith, a spiritual leader, and a prophet of God. Courageously he shared the message that God gave him. He committed himself to the ministry that God had called him. He was not afraid when God sent him. Do you think that the spiritual leaders of the past were a special kind of people? Did they have magical powers? No! But they were consecrated (set apart) one hundred percent to God. They were obedient to the voice of God. Today, we excuse ourselves when the Lord *calls* us. We say: "Later..., I don't have time ... , I'm not prepared ... , I'm too busy ... ", etc. God always comes back later and at the end of our projects and our lives. May the Lord help us to reply: "Here am I, Lord, send me!"

3. *The Prayer of Habakkuk*

"Why does God allow the wicked to remain without punishment?" asked the prophet. "For how much longer will the Lord tolerate such evil and injustice?" cried Habakkuk before the Lord. It seemed that God was ignoring sin. But that is wrong thinking. God the Creator still had control of the world and of the historical events of mankind. He had not abandoned His Creation. It was then that Habakkuk cried out with the words in 3:2.

4. *The Answer of God*

God answered the prayer of Habakkuk: He sent punishment at the right time. Habakkuk learned to trust in God, even in difficult times. God answers our prayers, but many times, if the answer is not 'no', He tells us to wait or merely gives us His peace.

APPLICATION

All around the world, there are wars between nations, violence, shedding of blood, and economic inflation which leaves thousands without work or security. The judgment of God seems very near. Perhaps God wants to give us a warning that we must prepare for His coming, that we must examine our hearts, that we must pray for revival and that we must recognize that spiritual renewal only comes from His mercy. The prayer for revival seeks spiritual renewal and the consecration of the believer. It is only by the mercy of God that we are kept from the consequences of sin. Let us accept the responsibility of praying for revival and of dedicating ourselves to God.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

The hope for revival is God's mercy. In our prayers for revival, we should not ask God to set aside the judgment against our sins, but we should plead for His mercy and grace. We will always hear the cry for revival among the people of God. There are times in the life of the church when our hearts cry out for revival. We receive spiritual blessings which will sustain us at the current spiritual level for a time, but, eventually, we must move forward again or we will fall backward. Every church should pray for revival. Mercy and grace are available to all who seek the face of the Lord! Join those praying for revival or begin praying and invite others to join you.

THEME 1: TAKE TIME TO PRAY

LESSON 8

Blessings in the Bible

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Memorize the blessings in the lesson;
- Be encouraged by the spiritual strength that the blessings give us;
- Be encouraged to use them in worship at home as well as at church.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Daniel 9:1-23; 10:11-14, 15-17; 6:19-24; Matthew 26:36-46

OTHER REFERENCES

Numbers 6:22-27; Romans 11:33-36; 16:25-27; II Corinthians 13:14;
Ephesians 3:20-21; II Thessalonians 2:16-17; II Timothy 2:8; Philemon 25;
Hebrews 13:20-21; Jude 24-25

MEMORY VERSE

Numbers 6:24-26

"The Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you, and give you peace".

ADDITIONAL NOTES

WHAT A BLESSING IS NOT:

It Is Not A Greeting

It is more of a praise to God and may be understood as a prayer eg. Ephesians 3:20-21; 1 Peter 1:3; Jude 24-25

It Is Not A Prayer

Our prayers can be a blessing for others. They can ask the blessing of GOD upon others, they can bless in the name of the Lord, but they are not blessings, like the blessings of the Bible. The prayer goes from the bottom upwards, it is man communicating with God. Blessing come from the top to the bottom, God communicating with man.

It Is Not An End Point

The blessing is not the end: it joins worship to service. It is God saying: "Go, serve in My Name - I grant you this by grace"! When the blessing is left out, something is missing in our

service.

INTRODUCTION

Generally, the whole Bible is a blessing because it gives the blessings of God to the human race. The greatest blessing that anyone can receive is the way to heaven and Wesley said, "He has written it down in a book. Give me that book!" The Bible is the Blessing of blessings. In every part of it we hear God blessing His people.

You may ask, "What is a Blessing?" A blessing is an act of God in which He gives His grace, love and presence to all who have their hearts open to Him. It is for all who, through praise, prayer and worship, are ready to receive it. In the blessing, it is God who acts. When the leader pronounces the blessing in public worship, he acts in the name of God; but when he blesses God in the public service, the leader acts on behalf of the people who are gathered. The blessing is the crown of God upon our worship in His name.

The blessing is God blessing people, not things. "Things" can be blessed in the sense of being separated for the use of God. In that way it is like a dedication (of a book, etc.) to the service of God. However only people can receive the grace, inspiration and the promise of God. Because only God can bless us, the blessing is from God and comes from Him to the whole congregation

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

Today we will study some of the blessings God gives in His Word.

1. Numbers 6:22-27

This is known as the Priestly Blessing. God gave it to Moses to give to Aaron and his sons who were given the honor of being the first priests in the temple and it was handed down for generations, later it was used by rabbis in the synagogue, to bless the people of Israel.

"The Lord bless you, and keep you". Each time we repeat these words to someone, we are asking God to prosper them in everything and to keep (preserve) them with every step they take.

"The Lord make his face shine on you". We want God to illumine their minds and feelings, so that they think, feel and act according to the will of God; and that the mercy of God may be continually upon them.

"The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace". We are asking God to give them the light of salvation which brings peace from God.

2. Romans 11:33-36

The Apostle Paul reminds us of many of the characteristics of God and that God is infinite, all-knowing and we are not able to understand the mind of God. We must accept by faith the things we cannot understand.

3. Romans 16:25-27

This scripture tells God's secret in relation to His plan of salvation for man. God's secret was this: He planned to include the Gentiles in the plan of salvation. They would receive salvation by believing in Jesus Christ and not by obeying the law given to Moses. The results of that plan of salvation gives eternal glory to God. The word "amen" means "so be it".

4. Jude 24-25

The Apostle Jude directs this blessing to all the believers of the world. Jude tells us that Jesus is powerful enough to keep us from all evil and to present us to God in heaven without sin. For this reason, we should give Him all the honor and praise "to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen." (Romans 16:27)

APPLICATION

What part does the pastor play when he repeats a blessing? In those blessings, God promises to His people His care, His peace, His love and favor, His protecting power; provision for needs and His intention of guiding us through enemy territory. It is God who blesses us. His servant - the pastor - is the one who asks for love, favor and blessings of God upon His people.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Memorize these blessings. They will help you in your spiritual growth.

THEME 2: JESUS, THE MESSIAH KING

LESSON 9

A Picture of the Messiah King

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Be exposed to the prophecies recorded by Matthew, related to Jesus Christ, the Messiah

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 12:15-21; 13:34-35; 21:1-5

OTHER REFERENCES

Isaiah 52:7-15; Isaiah 9:1-7; Isaiah 53:1-6; Acts 2:22-36; Philippians 2:5-11; Zechariah 9:9-14; Psalm 118:19-26

MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 26:56a

“But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.”

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Emphasize the memory verse.

Matthew chose three different parts of the life of Jesus to emphasize that He fulfills the prophecies about the Messiah.

1. Jesus is presented as Lord and Saviour of the Jews and Gentiles; the Servant chosen by God for a special work; to redeem the sinner.

2. Jesus fulfilled everything that was predicted about the Messiah. He revealed, through parables, the secrets of the Father.

3. Jesus acted as Messiah, fulfilling the prophecies, when He entered triumphantly into Jerusalem as King.

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Matthew is the first book of the New Testament. It is like a bridge, uniting the two testaments. Because Matthew was writing to the Jewish people, he tried to show the connection between Jesus and the Old Testament prophecies – that Jesus was the fulfilment of these prophecies about the Messiah. That is why you will find a lot of quotations from the Old Testament in his book.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

Jesus Christ Ministers As Messiah (Matthew 12:15-21)

Verse 14 tells us that the Pharisees were angry because Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath day. They made a plan to kill Him. But the Lord was not ready to be arrested. His mission had to continue. Jesus could not avoid the multitude that followed Him, but He warned them not to say anything about His miracles. Christ did not want to be known because of the miracles that He did. He wanted to be known for what He was - the Redeemer and Saviour of the world.

Christ Speaks As Messiah (Matthew 13:34-35)

The Lord had come to make known the secrets of God. The heavenly Father did not intend to hide anything from man, but man's rebellion hindered him from knowing the Truth. Man continued in the darkness of ignorance and of sin. But no man should remain in the darkness because Jesus is the Light of the world. "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32).

Christ Acts As Messiah (Matthew 21:1-5)

Christ sent His disciples to prepare for His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. His entry would proclaim that He was the Messiah. Jesus chose to enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey, an animal which represented peace, because He is the Prince of Peace. The people sang, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Jesus said: "But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." (Matthew 26:56a).

Who Do You Say That He Is?

Once Jesus asked His disciples: "But what about you? Who do you say that I am?" Matthew wrote that He is the Promised Messiah. Peter said that He is the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16). And what do you say? Do you know that He is God; the Word made flesh, the promised Redeemer, your Savior?

APPLICATION

Two Atheists And The Son Of God – During a journey on the train, two atheists were talking about the life of Jesus. One of them, a writer said that the life of Jesus was interesting and he might like to write a book about it. After discussing it, it was agreed that the writer should write a book, but that the book would only show Jesus as a man and not as the Son of God. The book was written. The author was General Lew Wallace. The book is the famous novel Ben-Hur. However, as the writer studied and collected material to write the book, he became more and more convinced that Jesus was the Son of God. Before he finished his famous book, he had to confess: "Truly, this man was the Son of God". What do you say?

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Prayerfully and systematically study these Scriptures to discover who Jesus is to you.

THEME 2: JESUS, THE MESSIAH KING

LESSON 10

Are You Ready?

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- See the importance of the second coming of Christ;
- Realize the need to be prepared for Christ's coming.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 24:36-51

OTHER REFERENCES

Matthew 24:1-51

MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 24:42

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come."

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Describe the events of Jesus' return so you make an impact on the minds and the hearts of the pupils. Then ask suddenly: "Are you ready for a meeting with Christ?"

Certainly we know that the Saviour is coming. We don't know when and we should not waste time trying to guess when he is coming. The important thing is that we are prepared, living righteously and in holiness.

When Jesus returns the sinners will be judged and punished because of their rebellion. Be careful not to fall into temptation. Let's fight for the crown of life.

INTRODUCTION

In Matthew chapters 24 and 25 Jesus talks about three themes: 1) the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, 2) the second coming of Christ, and 3) the end of the world. Jesus warns everyone to be ready for these events. There are four warnings in chapter 24 that tell us to be ready for Christ's return: verses 36, 42, 44 and 46.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

The Coming Of The Son Of Man

- a. The hour is unknown. Only God knows when Jesus will return.

- b. The people will be like the people in the days of Noah. Even though the Gospel message is being proclaimed in the world, many people continue to ignore the truth.
- c. The event will be sudden. God has given enough time for repentance. If we accept Christ, He will be our Salvation now and for always.
- d. On that day God will only take those who are prepared to meet Him. He knows the secrets of our hearts; we cannot deceive Him.

The Path We Must Follow

We must live our lives prepared for the coming of the Lord. The Lord warns us to be faithful and wise. He will reward the efforts and faithfulness of His followers.

Rewards And Punishments

Disaster will come to those who think that they still have time and do not need to be prepared now. Those who have already heard the Word have a responsibility before God. We must be faithful to proclaim the Good News. We must be faithful and live by this same Word. The unfaithful and the hypocrites will be judged: there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:51b). Are you ready for the coming of the Lord? We do not know the day and the hour. Surrender your heart to Jesus and watch for the return of the King of kings with joy and gladness.

APPLICATION

How ready are you? Think about this as you read the following poem:

THE SECOND COMING

When Christ will come, This we do not know – *Matthew 24:36*

That it will happen, And soon, we believe – *Acts 1:11*

All who have that glorious hope – *Titus 2:13*

Purify themselves, because this is the faith – *I John 3:3*

What is going to happen? - *Matthew 25:19-21*

The one who believes will hear:

Behold your light; *Isaiah 60:19-20*

Enter now into the joy.

A sad time it will be: For those who inherit darkness – *Jude 13*

They will always remember

That they lost the Bread of Life – *John 6:48-51*

Eudo T. Almeida

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Jesus will definitely come for He has promised that He will but we do not know when. The Word of God is sufficient to maintain our hope. And that hope cannot be taken from us. Rather than seeking to guess the date and interpret the signs, heed Jesus' warnings in Matthew 24:42-44, Mark 13:33 and Luke 21:34. Memorize these Scriptures, list the actions mentioned and plan to make a habit of them.

THEME 2: JESUS, THE MESSIAH KING

LESSON 11

The Great Judgement

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Be convinced, through the parables in the lesson, that no one can escape the final judgment;
- Realize that through Christ we can have eternal life.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 25:31-46

OTHER REFERENCES

Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 12:32-34; John 21:15-19; James 2:14-26

MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 25:40

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

INTRODUCTION

In today’s lesson, we will study the coming judgment and the importance of being prepared. When He first came, the Lord Jesus came as the Saviour to free man from the condemnation of sin. In the second coming, He will come as Judge. He will judge man according to whether he has accepted or rejected the Son of God. Good works do not guarantee us salvation; but they prove that we are Christians.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

All Will Be Judged

Whether we want to or not, all must appear before God for the final judgment. Jesus, who is the Judge, has authority and majesty. Jesus is also presented as King of a righteous kingdom. All the nations of the world will be judged before God. Each person will give an account for His own life. Those who died without Christ will be judged later.

"You Did for Me" (Matthew 25:40)

The Parable of the Ten Virgins introduces the main theme of this lesson: the sins of omission and their results.

The negligent servant, in the Parable of the Talents, will be thrown "into the darkness: where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 25:30)

The sins of omission referred to in verses 41-46 are from the most important teachings of Jesus. We see that the blessed (the righteous) are not rewarded because they worked to receive a reward from God. They are rewarded because they have hearts which have been purified and are ready to obey God.

The revelation is surprising: great deeds do not open the doors of heaven and give us eternal life. But if we neglect to help "the least of these", we will receive the condemnation of the "goats". If we ignore the social and spiritual needs of people around us, we choose our own eternal future.

APPLICATION

The theme of this lesson is not very attractive to young people; be very careful in the simple application of these eternal truths. The final judgment is a certain event and no one will escape it. But we can escape eternal punishment if we have accepted Christ as Saviour. After we accept Him, we must live a clean life, walking in His presence and giving ourselves to Christian service.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

"Every Tuesday morning I have a Bible Study in the prison with about two dozen prisoners. We are studying the Gospel of Mark. Ministering in a prison has given me the opportunity to discover new people of all ages and types. But more than that, it is an open door to testify about Christ. We meet at 9:00 and we begin with prayer. Then we study the Bible, verse by verse. There is a discussion between the teacher and the students. At the end we spend 15 minutes in prayer. Some prisoners are irregular, but others are always present with their Bibles in their hands. They ask questions and try to learn about what the Bible says.

I will never forget one man who was 31 years old. He had committed murder when he was 17 years old. He had already been in prison for 14 years. One day he attended a service in the chapel, with the aim of causing trouble.

But God caused him to keep quiet and seated in the chair. Instead of arguing, he felt something strange happening inside himself". (Ministry Among The Prisoners; J Grant Swank).

To make the story short, this man got saved, was sanctified and was called into the ministry. He married a woman who was also a young believer, was released from prison and together they served the Lord as pastors.

"The Lord won this couple. They *love* the Savior and one another. I am thankful for their friendship and for the privilege of leading this prisoner to Christ. I thank God for opening the door to ministry in prison. Is it possible that God is also opening a door for you in your community? If He is, enter it. There are many people who still need to hear the gospel".

Accept Christ, live for Him, seek and embrace opportunities to serve Him in the church and in the community so you will not fear the coming judgement.

THEME 2: JESUS, THE MESSIAH KING

LESSON 12

The Last Prayers of Jesus

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Recognize Jesus' dependence on the Father
- Appreciate Jesus' struggle regarding the crucifixion
- Realize that Jesus first had victory over sin and Satan in prayer
- Desire to follow His example by doing the will of the Father

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 26:39-42; Mark 15:34; Luke 23:34, 46; John 19:28,30; Colossians 2:9-15

OTHER REFERENCES

Colossians 1: 14, 20; Matthew 7:21-23; Hebrews 5:7

MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 16:24

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The first three Scriptures are the prayers of Jesus in the Garden of Gethesemane and at His crucifixion. The fourth Scripture contains a prayer which reveals that He is human and also that He is God.

INTRODUCTION

Ask the class if there was something they really want to have or to do such as designer clothes, sports, money, friends, etc. what would that be. What would they be willing to do to get it? Ask questions to get them to name the ultimate price they are willing to pay for it.

Jesus also had something – someone He really wanted to have a relationship with. And, He paid the ultimate price for that relationship. A study of Jesus' last prayers will help us to understand His love for us and submission to God, even through Gethsemane, and His suffering and death on Calvary.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

Divide the class into groups. Have them read the assigned Scriptures and tell what stands out to them in the passage they read.

The Prayer of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39-42)

Jesus was alone. His disciples were sleeping. He was praying because He knew that He would be crucified soon. He asked God, "If it is possible, may this cup be taken from me". "This cup" represents the anger and the judgment of God over evil (Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 51:17; Jeremiah 25:15). On Calvary the cup of the anger of God would have to be drained by the Son of God Himself. Jesus knew He must accept this cup - the anger of God. For this reason He prayed. But He also added: "Yet not as I will, but as you will".

The love of Jesus was very great. He was willing to die as a sinner so that His death might bring salvation! He was actually saying to the Father: "If it is not possible to redeem fallen man without My dying for them, then I am ready and willing to die on the cross!"

Good Friday (Mark 15:34)

In this verse, Jesus cried out to the Father, because He felt abandoned and alone. He hung on the cross. God the Father had not abandoned His beloved Son, but it was necessary for Jesus to suffer for us! Have you thought about His suffering? He suffered so that each one of us would not suffer that punishment.

In this prayer, the Son of God identified Himself with us when we pass through the valley of death and of suffering. The cry of the human Jesus is the same cry of a world buried in darkness.

Crucifixion (Luke 23:34)

Jesus, who was crucified between two thieves suffered physically. But He prayed to the Father to forgive those who accused Him and nailed Him on the Cross! He did not hate those who had condemned Him to death.

Salvation was finished! (John 19:28-30)

The phrase "It is finished" means that the plan of God for the salvation of the world was completed with the death of Jesus on the Cross of Calvary. He fulfilled the purpose of God, the plan which existed since the foundation of the earth. He fulfilled all the requirements of the sacrificial law. Now the way to God was opened through His blood on the cross. Jesus completed the work that the Father had given Him - to die on the cross so that we might have life.

These prayers show us the great love Jesus has for us. He died so He can have a relationship with you and I, and with all humanity. They also show us His obedience to the Heavenly Father when His time of death drew near. He came out victorious through total obedience to God.

APPLICATION

As the saying goes: "Tough situations don't last but tough people do". Jesus paid the highest price ever and endured much suffering. The question is: What will you do for Jesus, who gave His life for you? How do you react when someone is unkind to you? Have you accepted His sacrifice and love, by surrendering your heart to Jesus?

Give Students time to think and prayerfully commit their lives to God. Be sensitive and pray with them as the Holy Spirit leads.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

To help nurture the commitments made, plan together with the class, a time to pray, read and study the Bible individually and in small groups during the week. Encourage them to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit to refine their lives in the obedient, submissive love of Christ.

THEME 2: JESUS, THE MESSIAH KING

LESSON 13

What Will You Do With Christ?

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- See the tragic results of rejecting Christ
- Seriously ponder in mind and heart the question: WHAT DO I DO ABOUT CHRIST?

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 27:11, 15-23; 27-31

OTHER REFERENCES

Matthew 26-27; Isaiah 53:1-9

MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 27:22a

"What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?"

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The Gospels tells us that Christ was accused of being the following:

1. An imposter because He said He was Christ, the Son of God (Matt. 26:64).
2. A blasphemer because He made Himself equal with God (Matt. 26:63-64; John 5:18).
3. A mad man because He said that he could rebuild the Temple in three days (Matt. 26:61).
4. A revolutionary because He said He was greater than Moses and the law and that He was Lord of the Sabbath (John 5:18; Mark 2:28).
5. A mad man because He claimed to have been in heaven before He came to earth (John 8:58; 17:5).

All these accusations arose from wrong interpretation of the words of Jesus. There were misinterpretations because the leaders were jealous. (Matt. 27:18)

INTRODUCTION

This question Pilate asks is like another question which Jesus asked the Pharisees: "What do you think about the Messiah?" (Matthew 22:42). It is not a question only for the educated people; but it is for all people who will face the Saviour-Judge in the future. It is an important question which will determine the future of each one of us. Pilate was asking whether he should sentence Jesus to be crucified or not. It is a question every person must ask. If Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, let us crown Him as our King. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords to whom we owe obedience and honour.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

As King, Jesus did the following things for us: He became human as we are, leaving His throne in glory. He was proclaimed king in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He was crucified. On top of the cross a sign identified Him: The King of the Jews. After the resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven and took His place at the right hand of the Father. Christ will return one day to establish His Kingdom.

Jesus Rejected

After reading the scriptures, answer the following questions:

- a. Who was the judge of Jesus and who were His accusers?
- b. Who was freed in His place and why?
- c. What did Pontius Pilate say? Why did he wash his hands?
- d. What did the crowd say to confirm His rejection?
- e. Why was Jesus rejected?
- f. Why did He not avoid that rejection?
- g. What feelings did Jesus show based on the words He said about those who rejected Him?

Why Did Jesus Have To Die?

Crucifixion was not a pleasant thing; it was a brutal, bloody murder. Read Isaiah 53 to learn what He suffered. Why did Jesus die?

Are You Rejecting Christ Today?

Pilate asked: What shall I do with this Jesus who is innocent? He answered his question by handing Jesus over to His enemies. Pilate rejected Him, losing the opportunity to save his own life.

Today we are rejecting Christ when we do not determine to follow Jesus. We give excuses. We attend church, but we do not make a total surrender of our lives to Christ. There are people who only pretend to be followers. They say they are Christians but are not true followers of Christ.

Today Is The Day Of Salvation!

Today you can make the most important decision of your life. You can (must) choose Jesus Christ as your Saviour and crown Christ as King of your heart and life.

APPLICATION

What Do You Think Of Christ? These are responses from people of various age groups to this question:

Students: I am too happy to think about it. I'll think about it later.

Adults: I am too busy to think about it. I need more money first.

Middle-aged Adults: I am too worried to think about it. I need to think about work.

Elderly: I am too old to think about it. My life is already shaped.

When death approaches: I am too sick to think about it.

At death: It is too late to think about it. The mind is already gone.

After a brief discussion about the judgment of Jesus by the Hebrew and Roman authorities, ask the question: What are you doing about Christ? Give time for thinking and self-examination. Encourage the Students not to reject King Jesus, but to make Him King in their hearts and lives.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Man must decide what he should do with Jesus. Often like Pontius Pilate, we act in one of the following ways to reject Christ:

1. We honour Him with our lips and forget His teachings in daily life.
2. We say that His standards are impractical.
3. We ignore Him completely.

And you, what will you do about Christ, the Son of God. Whatever you think, do not forget or ignore Him.

However, this is also a reminder and an example for us: An innocent person can be accused. When we are accused unjustly, we should follow the example of Jesus and patiently endure the accusations, trusting that God will restore truth and justice (Isaiah 53:7).

THEME 2: JESUS, THE MESSIAH KING

LESSON 14

Celebrate Easter

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Appreciate and accept Christ as the Son of God, the Promised Messiah and "...the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 28:1-10, 16-20

OTHER REFERENCES

Matthew 27:33-61; 28:11-15; Isaiah 53; Romans 1:1-9; I Corinthians 15:1-58; I Peter 1:3-9

MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 27:54b

"Surely He was the Son of God.!"

ADDITIONAL NOTES

1. What does the death of Christ mean to mankind?
2. What was the meaning of the sign, which was written in three languages, that was put on the cross above Christ's head?
3. What is the meaning of the words spoken by the Centurion?

INTRODUCTION

Write these words so that everyone can them: "He died to conquer death". For this reason, Jesus came to the world. He died by giving His life on the cross to conquer death. He conquered the death of the soul with His blood on the cross, giving us eternal life in His name. Physical death did not have power over Him to keep Him in the tomb. Jesus is alive in heaven today. We will continue to study the suffering of the Lord Jesus. He suffered for us because He loves us. From the time He humbled Himself to become a baby in Bethlehem, until He took the place of sinners on the cross, Christ acted deliberately to buy our salvation with His life.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

A World Without Easter

What would life be if Christ had stayed in the tomb? Read and discuss what Paul wrote in I Corinthians 15:12-19. "If Christ has not been raised ...", what would happen?

The Resurrection - Past, Present, Future

Past - The resurrection of Christ actually happened. We read this truth in the Bible. Before meeting with Christ, Paul was a persecutor of the Church; after he met Christ, he became an evangelist, theologian, and missionary for the Church which before he had persecuted!

Present - The new birth (salvation) is a type of resurrection. We are raised from spiritual death to life (Ephesians 2:1-5). We see the continuation of the Church. We hear the testimonies of Christians who experience the power of the Living Christ. Through the centuries, we see lives changed.

Future - The resurrection of the believers is certain, because it is based on the resurrection of Jesus. Because God was able to resurrect Christ, we too have the hope of one day being resurrected from the dead.

If Christ Was Resurrected

Christ has conquered sin, death and hell because He was resurrected. The Scripture was fulfilled and we can be saved from our sins. If we are saved from sin, we have eternal life now and the glorious hope of the future resurrection of our bodies.

APPLICATION

A man from another religion was speaking with a Christian. He was boasting that they still have the body of the founder, but that the Christians did not have the body of Jesus. The Christian replied: "If we had the body of Jesus. Christianity would be meaningless. It is because Jesus is alive that we have our hope".

He is Risen: It was not the nails that kept Christ on the Cross. It was love, redeeming love. The stone was not taken from the tomb to allow Jesus to get out. He was already gone. The stone was taken away to show the women who sought him that the tomb was empty. The most beautiful words ever written on a tomb are the words: "He is not here. He is risen!"

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Celebrate Easter!

This Easter celebrate the Resurrection of Christ. Choose one of the following ideas to do or perhaps use your own idea:

- If you do not know Christ, accept Him as your personal Saviour. There can be no better way of celebrating Easter.
- Explain to someone from a different religion, the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus.
- Today, greet people by saying: "He is Risen!"
- Plant a seed or seedling and meditate on John 12:24.

THEME 2: JESUS, THE MESSIAH KING

LESSON 15

Jesus Commands Us: GO!

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Understand the responsibility of the followers of Christ as a result of the resurrection;
- Accept the responsibility for world-wide evangelization

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 28:7-20

OTHER REFERENCES

Matthew 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-20; Luke 24:1-53; John 20:1-31; I Corinthians 15:20-28;
Hebrews 13:20-21

MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 28:19-20

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

ADDITIONAL NOTES

1. What was the command that Jesus and the angel gave to the women?
2. How does the Resurrection show that Jesus is the Son of God?
3. What is included in the command of Christ to the Christians?

INTRODUCTION

The appearances of Jesus after the resurrection met the needs of each disciple. Whatever the temperament or spiritual condition, the presence of Jesus fully satisfies the heart. For Mary whose heart was broken, for Peter who was repentant, for the two from Emmaus who were discouraged, for Thomas who doubted - the presence of Christ filled doubts, wiped away tears, removed fears, leading them to complete joy.

The Gospel of Matthew ends with a call to service. The risen Christ has all power to redeem man. He commissioned His disciples - of yesterday and today - to preach salvation in His name. His presence will be with us until He returns in glory!

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

"Greetings"

The women who had gone to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus witnessed the greatest event. Many things happened: the angel came, the stone was rolled away, and the guards fainted because of fear. The women were probably afraid when these things happened. The men, the disciples of Jesus, were hiding. The women were happy to hear: "Do not be afraid ... He has risen ... Go ... tell his disciples: He has risen. . ." (28:5-7). They ran to give the news to the disciples. Their obedience to the command of the angel brought them a great surprise. Jesus appeared to them and said: "Greetings!" (Matthew 28:9). The message of Easter brings life and hope.

A Commission

The instructions that Jesus gave to the disciples were clear. They must GO to the ends of the earth proclaiming this message: EVERY man is a sinner and needs the salvation of Jesus. Missionary societies were formed because of this command of Jesus. But this command is not only for missionaries. Everyone who has received Christ as Saviour is called to win others for Christ. We can be sent by God to our own country, city or family. Today we can join the army of God to win the world for Christ.

A Promise

These men from Galilee were uneducated; some were fishermen. Yet Jesus commanded them to spread the Gospel around the world. They must have doubted their abilities when they heard the Great Commission that Jesus was giving to them. But they did not make excuses or ask for guarantees or demand conditions. They had been prepared by Jesus. Now they would spread the Word as God's messengers on earth. They were not trusting in human power. They were going in the strength of the Lord. Jesus promised: "I am with you." The greatest among men would be present to help them with the greatest work.

APPLICATION

The Message Of The Cross Is Best

The first Moravian missionaries sent to Greenland learned that the natives were uneducated. They decided to educate them first before giving them the message of the Gospel. The results were not very satisfactory. They became discouraged and decided to return to their country. While they were waiting for a ship to take them home, they began to teach Biblical passages to some of the natives who were waiting with them. They taught them about the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. The natives listened silently. At the end of the lesson, one of the chiefs stood and asked them to read all the Scriptures again. He asked if this story was true. When the missionaries told him that it was true, the chief asked: "Why didn't you tell us all this from the beginning? Don't go home, we want to know more about the one who has suffered so much for us". What are we preaching today - Christ or culture and knowledge?

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Discuss the ways the first people reacted to the news of the resurrection. How would the radio, TV, and newspapers announce this story today? What is our personal reaction? Do we believe it? Do we reject it? How do we apply the resurrection to our lives? What hope does eternal life give us? How will I fulfill the command of Jesus? What is the message that I should give to others?

THEME 3: IT REALLY MATTERS

LESSON 16

Does My Life Have Value?

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Understand, through parables, the true meaning of the Kingdom of Heaven
- Understand its challenge
- Accept its challenge

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

OTHER REFERENCES

Psalm 78: 1-8

MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 13:16

"But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear."

ADDITIONAL NOTES

A parable is a story that simplifies and teaches complex truths. In the original Greek, the term “parable” means “comparison”. It is a comparison from nature or from daily life to teach a spiritual truth. The God who works in nature and in the daily life is the same one who brought His Kingdom to the world through the ministry, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus used parables to teach truths. His goal was not to hide anything, but to present the truth to those who wanted to hear it.

INTRODUCTION

What is it that gives value to life? Is it age, health, fame, education, wealth, etc. Discuss. Someone said: “Dedicate your life to your fellowmen and you will receive eternity”. Discuss this statement.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

The Kingdom In Parables

Jesus used parables to illustrate the deep truths of the Kingdom of Heaven. He used every method possible to help His listeners to understand the spiritual truths. The sparrow which fell from the tree, the sower in the field, a rebellious son who left home, a simple coin and many other examples helped to explain the truths of the Gospel.

The Interpretation of the Parables (Matthew 13:31-52)

Divide the Students into five groups and assign parables to read and find answers to the following questions: Mustard Seed (Matt. 13:31-32); Yeast (Matt. 13:33); Hidden Treasure (Matt. 13:44); The Pearl of Great Price (Matt. 13:45-46); Net (Matt. 13:47-50).

- a. What is the main idea of the parable?
- b. What does the parable say about the Kingdom?
- c. What lesson can we learn for our lives?

After each group has given its answers, briefly discuss and explain the meaning of each parable: the Mustard seed (growth); Yeast (change); Hidden Treasure (the value of salvation); Pearl (the good investment of following Jesus); Net (the urgency of preaching the Kingdom at every moment in every place).

Jesus ends by showing that each disciple has the responsibility to share the gospel to the extent that they have received it (Matt. 13:51-52). Therefore, each one of us must invest their lives, talents and treasures in the work of spreading the kingdom!

The Kingdom And The Church

Is the Kingdom of God the church? The Kingdom of God is not a denomination. It is all those who accept and follow Jesus Christ as Saviour, whose names are written in heaven.

Christ came to the world to establish His Kingdom in the hearts of those who accept Him. The church is not the Kingdom, because the church can have members who are not part of the Kingdom. However, the church is the only organization that exists to spread the Kingdom of God.

Citizens of the Kingdom

Usually we think about the citizenship of the Kingdom in negative ways: we must not do certain things, or be certain things; there is suffering and sacrifice. Being a Christian does involve sacrifice and self-discipline. But the advantages and the benefits outweigh what may seem to be disadvantages.

The choice is yours. The price is high: it cost the death of Jesus on the cross. His life is very precious.

APPLICATION

Life only has value when it is laid down for others. All that a person may acquire in life only has value when it benefits others. It is even more so if that life is given to Christ. Therefore, Kingdom people are those who have devoted their lives to God and to others. They are sensitive to the needs of others – physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual.

The question is, seeing that the church is not the Kingdom of God, are you a member of the Kingdom or of the church?

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Using the meanings of the parables, monitor your growth in specific areas of your spiritual life during the week. Record your observations and share them with other reliable Christians so they can help where necessary.

THEME 3: IT REALLY MATTERS

LESSON 17

What is "Faith in Christ"?

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Develop a strong faith in Christ.
- Be able to complete their understanding by observing the acts of faith in the life of their teacher (the teacher must be an example).

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 14:25-33; 15:21-28

OTHER REFERENCES

Mark 7:31-37; Hebrews 11:1-6

MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 21:22

"If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

INTRODUCTION

Faith is belief in what is not seen or unknown. The missionary John Paton was translating the New Testament into the language of the Islands of the South Pacific. He could not find a suitable word for "faith." Paton was very frustrated. One day, a fugitive entered the tent of the missionary almost breathless and threw himself upon the bed. He was shouting something. "That's *it!* *That is it!*" said Paton happily. He asked the man to repeat the word. It meant that the man threw all of his weight upon the bed. Paton declared:

"This is what it means to have faith in Christ - to throw oneself upon Christ to be reconciled to God".

This definition can also be applied to all of life.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

Wavering Faith (Matt. 14:25-33)

Why was Peter able to walk on water? Discuss. Peter was a Jew, a friend and disciple of Jesus. He submitted to the test of faith, but almost drowned because his faith was full of doubt. He deserved the rebuke from Jesus (Matt.14:31).

Perhaps you have had an experience like Peter. Perhaps you began to follow Christ with a strong faith but suddenly your faith began to cool and you began to drown in unbelief. Jesus is close to you, stretching out His hand of love. God works in many ways even though we do not always recognize Him. In times of fear, the Lord gives us the certainty of His presence. We do not have to continue in darkness, full of fear. The voice of God will give us assurance.

Trusting Faith (Matt. 15:21-28)

The Canaanite woman was a Gentile who called out to the Son of David. She submitted to the test of faith and overcame it. Her faith was victorious and her daughter was healed. She received a great compliment from the Lord (Matt. 15:28). The faith of the woman from Canaan had to be supported by determination and persistence. If you have had a similar experience, share it with the class or allow a member who did. The woman continued to ask, trust and depend on God. A woman who had a great need, prayed a great prayer and exercised a great faith!

Responses of Faith

Everyone who has met with Christ must respond.

- a. **Rejection:** Those who refuse to accept Christ.
- b. **Cowardice:** Those who believe but are afraid to accept Him because of external pressures.
- c. **Hypocrisy:** Those who pretend to believe, but have never accepted Christ as Saviour.
- d. **Faith:** Those who believe, accept, and confess Christ as Saviour (Romans 10:9).

Faith in Action

Every day we are exercising faith - when we drive a car or ride in a bus, we trust in the brakes. But the brakes can fail. Faith in Christ is always rewarded. When we trust in the Lord, we are sure that our trust will not be in vain. He has the answer to our faith. The Lord only requires that we have a genuine faith which will be strong when it is put to the test.

APPLICATION

Draw a tree with roots in the air and another with roots in the soil. Use this illustration to demonstrate that the tree with deep roots will be able to resist the storms and difficulties of life. It is the same with the Christian. He will be a conqueror since his faith is rooted in Christ. Jesus showed that faith and access to God does not belong only to Jews, but to everyone. The blessings of God are given to everyone who believes in Him. How is your faith today? Will it pass when put to the test?

PRACTICAL IDEAS

- Strive to have your faith rooted in Christ.
- Decide what your response of faith is.
- Seek guidance to truly believe in Christ.
- Study and record Scriptures about faith to help your faith grow.

THEME 3: IT REALLY MATTERS

LESSON 18

Seventy Times Seven?

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Understand God's plan of forgiveness and what He expects of us.
- Desire to meet God's expectations in their lives.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 18:21-35

OTHER REFERENCES

Matthew 18; Psalm 51:1-10; 86:1-7; 103:1-12; Luke 23:32-43

MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 6:14

"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

INTRODUCTION

Write these words for all to see: "How many times shall I forgive?" Listen to the answers and comments of the pupils. Talk about the forgiveness we receive from God through Christ. Emphasize the duty of all who receive this forgiveness. The truth is that we will never be able to forgive as much as we have been forgiven by God.

Use this lesson to discuss situations in which the youth often find themselves: in school, at home and even in church. Be honest and practical with the answers. Help them realize that, whatever the offense may be, they must forgive. It is not easy to forgive. They cannot forgive in their own strength, only God's grace will help them to be willing to forgive. The advice of Ephesians 4:26 is a wise guide for every Christian.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

Seventy Times Seven?

Peter asked the question: "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" (Matt. 18:21). In answer Jesus told the parable of the man who did not like to forgive. Verse 22 sounds like a law: $70 \times 7 = 490$. Peter had to forgive 490 times? After that do we have the freedom to close the doors of love?

What do you think of the following verses?

a) Matt. 18:27 – God is full of compassion and mercy. He listens to our requests.

b) Matt. 18:33 – Sometimes a rebuke is sufficient to correct the wrong. Sometimes the punishment needs to be more severe.

c) Matt. 18:35 – God says that we must forgive others because He has forgiven us. Also, forgiveness must have neither limit nor measure. Seventy times seven means "forever."

The Model of Forgiveness

We can learn a lot about forgiveness from people who have forgiven much. When he was being put to death, John Huss, the religious reformer of Bohemia, fell on his knees and cried out in a loud voice: "Lord, Jesus, I will endure this death with humility because of your Holy Gospel - forgive my enemies."

Think of the examples of Paul, Stephen, David and Jesus. Do you know someone who has forgiven someone who wronged him? The wrong can be to lie about someone or something they did, say bad things about someone, envy (wish we had someone else's things), etc. To kill the physical body is not the only wrong that can be done to someone.

What do you think of the following phrases? a) To forgive, but not to forget; b) To forgive and forget. The aim of the parable is shown in comparing Matthew 18:35 with Matthew 6:12 we learn that we should forgive always and totally.

Forgive To Be Forgiven

If we do not forgive those who sin against us, our heavenly Father will not forgive our sins. Whom should we forgive? We should forgive all those who offend us. Should we put a limit on our attitude of forgiveness? We should forgive as many times as is necessary. This is what Jesus was saying when he commanded Peter to forgive 70 x 7. With the help and grace of God we should always keep an attitude of forgiveness and humility. We should not forget that each time we repeat: "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors", we are establishing a rule.

If we keep resentment and bitterness toward our brothers and our neighbours, our prayers and testimonies will be useless.

APPLICATION

Holding hands in a circle, repeat the Lord's Prayer together.

Also pray that the Lord may give you all His grace to imitate Him in this important part of the Christian life

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Prayerfully search your heart and see if you can honestly pray "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors".

Realize and acknowledge that those who do not forgive cannot be forgiven. When we do not forgive others, we harm them, and we also harm ourselves. This is part of the punishment. Also, we should not wait for someone to ask forgiveness before we forgive. We must be willing to forgive others immediately and we can with God's help.

Seek the advice and guidance of your teacher, the pastor or reliable Christian friend to deal with any hindrance you may discover.

THEME 3: IT REALLY MATTERS

LESSON 19

The Church of Christ

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Know the meaning and mission of the Church of Christ.
- Realize their responsibility.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 16:13-26

OTHER REFERENCES

Matthew 16-17; Micah 4:1-7; I Peter 2:4,6-10

MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 16:24

"If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

ADDITIONAL NOTES

1. Why do we say that the Church is a special institution?
2. Why is it important that the Church understands the work of Christ?

INTRODUCTION

Discuss with the class about the definition of "church": church building, gathering of all the believers, congregation, universal church, denomination. Knowing what they think about the Church will help you clarify wrong ideas about its true meaning and mission.

The "cornerstone" of the church is Jesus. He is also known as the Head of the Church; the Church is often called the body of Christ. When He started the church,

Christ placed great confidence in his disciples. The future of His ministry depended on them. It would be the Twelve who would begin a new era and a new people - the Church. They were to serve as examples for all. But they had to learn what the Church would really be. The Church must follow the example of the disciples. Only in this way IS it possible to carry out its mission and purpose. What then is the Church?

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

It is common today to criticize the Church, its importance and activities. Some people no longer think the church is important. We cannot deny some of these criticisms, but we should remember that the Church is administered by people who can and do make mistakes.

The word "church" has several meanings:

- a. building used for worship services.
- b. local congregation of believers.
- c. those who are members of a religious denomination or group.
- d. those who have a personal relationship with Christ.

The Beginning of the Church (Matthew 16:18)

The Saviour gave a new name to Simon: Peter, meaning rock. Peter began a new community of believers. Christ builds His Church upon the confession of Peter, on the truth of his confession. Jesus did not mean that He built His church on Peter. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Peter is only a leader, but never the head of the Church. Jesus is the chief cornerstone and the apostles built upon this Rock (Ephesians 2:20).

The Lord builds His Church with men like Peter. Even though Peter later denied his Master (26:69) and had problems of prejudice (Acts 10; Galatians 2:11-14); he followed in the footsteps of Jesus trying to be like Christ. God can still use men like this today.

Peter knew Jesus as the "living Stone" (1 Peter 2:4). Those who follow Him are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession ... the people of God" (1 Peter 2:9-10).

Jesus wants us all to be a part of His people (1 Peter 2:10). No one can destroy this foundation of God. We are to announce "the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9)

The Powerful Church! (Matthew 16:18)

The words of Christ "the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matt. 16:18), means that the power of *evil* will never defeat the Church of Christ. This also implies battle, a Church advancing against evil. When Christ said that He would give the disciples "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:19), He commanded them to preach the Gospel. They must preach the way of salvation. That responsibility is also ours.

Our Mission (Matthew 16:24-26)

Let us be part of the Church of Jesus Christ. What have you done to help your church achieve the goal of Christ? In Matthew 16:24-26, Jesus taught His disciples what it means to follow Him. When we follow Him, it seems that we are going to lose everything that we consider of value. But really we find the most "excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31). We must take up the Cross and follow Jesus and never leave this path, because He is the Way.

APPLICATION

Thinking of the different meanings discussed, answer the following questions:

1. What has the Church done for me?
2. What have I done for the Church?
3. What other organization can carry out these activities better?

Do not forget that you ARE the Church. The church reflects the believers. You ARE an important stone in the building!

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Think of how the Church can be activated so that it satisfies human needs while focusing on the spiritual?

1. As a class, list things that can be done by the church to achieve the mission of Christ.
2. List the things that you can do both individually and together.
3. Make a plan to reach these goals and commit to it. Remember you may not be able to do them all at once.

THEME 3: IT REALLY MATTERS

LESSON 20

The Requirements of the Kingdom

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Realize the devotion of Jesus to establish the Kingdom of heaven – the way to the cross;
- Understand that the citizens of this kingdom should serve their fellowman.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 19:1-30; 20:17-28

OTHER REFERENCES

Matthew 19:1 - 21:5

MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 20:28 - *"just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

INTRODUCTION

Do you know the story of the soldier-guard of Pompeii? Under the ashes of the city buried by the eruption of Vesuvius was found the body of a soldier. He kept himself firmly in his place, preferring to die rather than to leave his post and flee with the people from the fire of the volcano. The requirements of a good soldier are obedience and devotion to fulfill the mission.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

Goodbye To Galilee (Matthew 19:1-30)

Jesus had ministered for a year and a half in the region of Galilee. During that time, He faced difficulties; but Jesus was always faithful to His ministry. He preached to great multitudes. He taught the principles of the Kingdom of heaven and made many disciples and many believed in Him. Jesus also healed the sick, fed the multitudes and showed His power over demons and nature.

While many worshipped Jesus, others followed Him to test Him. In response to one of the disciples' questions, Jesus answered and taught them the requirements to receive eternal life (Matt.

19:23-30). Rewards are granted for faithfulness and not for favouritism.

When Jesus ended His teachings, He left Galilee. The departure from Galilee was a sad time. The people did not accept Him as the Son of God, the Messiah and He would not go back there again.

The Way To Jerusalem (Matthew 20:20-27)

To go to Jerusalem was the same as going to Calvary. Jesus knew that. His purpose was to fulfill the plan of His Father. There was tension and sorrow among the disciples. Mark 10:32 says that the disciples were filled with fear as they approached Jerusalem. Jesus spoke to them, trying to prepare them for the future events. He explained that He would be the ransom for the sins of the world (Matt. 20:28). This revelation was only for the Twelve disciples. At other times, Jesus had ordered the disciples to say nothing to others about His suffering and death. This time He also spoke only to the Twelve. Jesus wanted them to be well-informed so that they would not be surprised. He would not permit any enemy or event to hinder the plan of God. This was the reason for the secrecy. If Jesus had predicted His crucifixion openly, His enemies would have hindered the plan of God by using another way to kill Him. Christ came to die on the cross; it was established since the foundation of the world. Like a sheep led to the slaughter, Jesus walked to Jerusalem to sacrifice His life.

A Strange Request (Matthew 20:20-21)

This mother has often been criticized for the request that she made to Jesus. She wanted a place of honor for her sons, when Jesus would begin His reign. However, honor and glory will come only if we are faithful to the mission that Jesus gives us. It is not always an easy road. It requires sacrifice and dedication.

The Requirements Of The Kingdom

The Lord Jesus did not condemn the request of that mother. We see His patience and understanding when He explained that there were certain requirements that they must follow to obtain that privilege. In line with some of His teachings: to live, you must die; to save your life, you must lose it; to receive, you must give; to possess, you must give up; the first will be last and the last will be first; Jesus confirmed that the one who wants to be master will be a servant. Jesus was the example of His own teaching because He was obedient to the Father. If we want to have honor in the Kingdom of God, we first must take up the cross and follow Christ. Let us be faithful and we will have the crown of life.

APPLICATION

Jesus is our Model and Example. He served with humility; He helped all those who needed Him. He healed them, encouraged them, took away their fears and saved them. He gave His life as a ransom for all those who believe in Him. His love for us caused Him to die on the cross. Let us be the servants of Christ; let us serve the Church; the community and our neighbours.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

A Christian was standing at the door of the church when another member of the congregation arrived hurriedly and asked: "Brother, has the service already ended?" "No, brother," replied the Christian, "the worship is finished, but the service is just beginning". That is because the worship may be done "inside the doors," but the service, the service to others, begins "outside the doors". What service can you offer to others this week?

THEME 3: IT REALLY MATTERS

LESSON 21

New Direction for Life

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- See the danger of rejecting Christ, the Son of God;
- Realize that some people testify with words of faith in the Lord, but their works do not reflect it (the two sons of the parable). "To say" and "to do" must be inseparable if our Christian testimony is true.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 21:28-32, 42-46

OTHER REFERENCES

Matthew 21:6 - 22:14; Isaiah 55:6-13

MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 3:2

"... 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'"

INTRODUCTION

This parable shows the importance of obedience to the Word of God. A man had two sons. He called the first and told him to go and work in the vineyard. The young man, who was hard and rebellious, replied: "I will not go." But then later he changed his mind and went. Then the father called the second son and gave the same order. This one, a softer and more co-operative character, did not need persuasion. With much respect and courtesy, he said: "Yes, I will go." But he did not go.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

Repentance

The meaning of the parable is clear. The father represents God. The first son represents the common people, the tax collectors and sinners. Even though they did not pretend to be religious or God-fearing, they recognized the voice of the Heavenly Father through the message of John the Baptist. Many repented and took a new direction in life. Even though in the beginning they had said "no", when they repented they said "yes" with their acts.

What Is Obedience?

The second son represents the religious leaders headed by the Pharisees. They pretended obedience to the will of God, but always resisted the message of Christ. To hear the voice of God is not enough. The listener must put into practice the Bible teachings. The Scriptures say: "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." (James 1:22) This is the "new direction" that occurs in repentance.

The Cornerstone Rejected

The stone that the Jews rejected represents the Cornerstone of the Christian Church. If we build our lives on Him, Jesus Christ will help us to endure the difficulties of life. Let us not be like the second son. Let us be obedient to the will of the heavenly Father and accept His Word as the direction for a new life in Christ.

APPLICATION

There are two important things we must do if we want to have true fellowship with God: repent and obey. Write these words for all to see. Our repentance must be sincere; we should trust fully in the power of God for forgiveness of our sins. Obedience is the key to Christian success. To repent of sins and continue in the same life as before, is like throwing a seed in the earth and leaving it to die because it lacks water. Obedience to God and His law will cause the believer to grow spiritually in his walk with God.

Will you receive Christ as the Cornerstone of your life?

PRACTICAL IDEAS

In England, in the Middle Ages, a rich man was dying. He sent for one of his servants who was a Christian. He said to him: "I am dying, John. I am not certain if I am going to heaven. Can you tell me what I should do?" The old and wise servant, knowing that his master was very proud, said to him: "Sir, if you want to be saved, you must go to the pigpen, kneel down and say: 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner'". The master replied: "I cannot do that. A week later, the dying man sent for the servant again. He said: "John, what did you say that I must do to be saved?" The old servant replied: "Sir, you must go the pigpen ...". Then the master answered: "I have been thinking, John ... and I am willing to go." Then the servant exclaimed: "Oh, sir, you do not have to go. It is enough that you are willing!"

Try the wise servant's advice and persist until you get a break through.

THEME 3: IT REALLY MATTERS

LESSON 22

Are We Genuine?

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Understand that Jesus loves for us to be genuine.
- Realize that while man judges by the outward appearance, God looks at what is on the inside.
- Desire to be honest in following Christ

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 23:27-39

OTHER REFERENCES

Matthew 22:15-23:39

MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 23:23

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law- justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.”

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Jesus’ accusations:

The hypocrites

- Prevented other people from finding the true way (Matt. 23:13).
- Were taking their converts to eternal death (Matt. 23:15).
- Confused their values (Matt. 23:16).
- Were legalists (Matt. 23:23).
- Followed rituals (Matt. 23:25)
- Were deceitful (Matt. 23:27)
- Were like their ancestors even though they denied it (Matt. 23:29).

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 23 of Matthew contains the hardest accusation which ever came from the lips of Jesus. The seven woes of Jesus were directed to the scribes and Pharisees, to the priests and the religious leaders of the nation. Many of them were known for their greed and their lack of compassion and justice. Jesus said to them: "How will you escape being condemned to hell?" (Matt. 23:33). Permit the students to express their feelings concerning the lesson. Unfortunately this evil is present today even in the church.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

Hindering the Advancement of the Kingdom (Matthew 23:27-36)

Jesus knew the daily life of the people. The Jewish people would often white-washed their tombs so that travelers would not touch them. If they did touch the tombs, the people became unclean and could not take part in the religious ceremonies in Jerusalem. The sight of the tombs was deceptive. In the light of the sun, they had a beautiful appearance, but inside they only had bones and rottenness. These leaders appeared very religious but their hearts were impure, full of evil. Their behaviour hindered the advancement of the Kingdom of heaven on earth.

The Great Heart Of God (Matthew 23:37-39)

In spite of all the evil of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus sincerely desired their salvation. There is much compassion in His words: "... how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings ..." (Matt. 23:37). If at that time the people had repented and turned to God, Jesus would have been happy.

How Do We Live Our Religion?

This lesson considers the hypocrisy among the religious leaders of the time of Jesus. But it also shows the general attitude of the people and the shameful decision to reject Jesus Christ. Let us be honest and sincere before God. What type of religion are we following and living? Is it a religion for others to see - of words only? A true religion is shown in right actions towards our neighbours and a right relationship with God. The Christian who lives that religion is pure.

APPLICATION

A Genuine Sculpture: Long ago, some sculptors hide the defects of their sculptures with wax. In this way, the works looked nice and sold easily. One day the fraud was discovered. Since that time, before anyone would buy a sculpture, he would ask the artist: "Is the sculpture genuine (without wax)?" The test in the sun would tell the truth.

We cannot be deceitful all our lives. When the sun of justice shines on us, every evil will be seen. It is important that our lives be "genuine" - without wax!

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Read this whole chapter and list the accusations of Jesus to the Pharisees. Make a list of things that Jesus might accuse Christian leaders today of? How do you measure up? Examine your character and conduct in the light of this list. Seek the Lord's help and make a plan to overcome any untruth in your life.

THEME 4: LIVE THE WORD

LESSON 23

The Bible: More than just Another Book

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Understand and believe in the absolute inspiration of Scripture.
- Desire to study the Bible and allow it to change their lives.

BIBLE PASSAGE

2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Luke 24:44-47; Hebrews 4:12

OTHER REFERENCES

Church of the Nazarene Manual - Article IV.¹

“We believe in the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, by which we understand the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation, so that whatever is not contained therein is not be enjoined as an article of faith”¹.

MEMORY VERSE

Hebrews 4:12

“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

INTRODUCTION

There are many religious books and literature that have been circulating the world. People have claimed some of these to be the greatest books ever written. Even powerful and famous people have written and produced books that were deemed to be the most powerful ever. Other books have inspired people to do certain things. But none of them can compare to The Bible!

What makes the Bible more than a book? What give is status above other religious literature and books? After all, it was written by people who lived and died like all other authors. As a church we believe that the Bible is God’s word and that it has a divine purpose. However there are people and scholars who refute this because to them the Bible is like any other religious literature. Today we look at what makes the Bible more than just a religious book.

¹ Church of the Nazarene Manual- Article IV

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

1. *The Bible is God's Word*

Have the youth read the following passages and then together discuss the underlined words and phrases. Paul declares that “All Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16). Here is a specific declaration that the Bible is God's Word. Peter also states that “prophecy never has its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21). The words underlined and their emphasis prove that the Scriptures cannot be ascribed to men as they did not originate in the human mind, they are not a human product and cannot be accounted for on human grounds. Many times, particularly in the Old Testament we read that God spoke or the Lord said to ... (Exodus 20:1; Jeremiah 13:1). Jesus Christ himself quoted the Old Testament as the Word of God. He also declared that Moses and the prophets wrote about him and that he was the fulfillment of these Scriptures (Luke 24:44-47).

2. *People as Channels of God's Word*

God used people to bring His Word to us. When we say that we believe the Bible is ‘God-breathed’ and that God used men as channels, it means that the authors of the Bible were divinely inspired to write what they did. And without that inspiration they would not and could not have done so. And it also means that there is a human element in the presentation of God's message.

God used individuals to deliver His message according to their particular time in history, people, culture, etc. Thus the time and culture affected how the divine message is presented. For example, Matthew writes his gospel with directness towards Jews. Therefore, Matthew is divinely selected to present Jesus as the Messiah to the Jews, while Luke is, on the other hand, better placed to deliver the message to the Gentiles. The Word of God came through human channels, but these men spoke from God and were inspired by Him.

3. *Why we need the Bible*

It was written to help us know God and his will for us and to lead us to a living relationship with Him. The Scriptures make us “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:14-15). It also rebukes and corrects us when we do what is wrong. It trains believers to become righteous as God intends them to be.

‘The Bible is inspired because it inspires me’ - this is a common but wise saying and it carries such truth! No other book has such power. There is no other book that is able to transform people's lives like the Bible. That the Bible is indeed the Word of God that transforms those who believe and this is shown by the lives they live. This has been proven throughout generations.

APPLICATION

Our response to such truth is to believe that the Bible is God-breathed and is living and active. Though there is a human element in how we got the Bible, the message is directly from God. We need to take it as such. We need to take time to study the Bible at home and at church so that we know it and in order for it to become living and active in our lives. It is not always easy to separate the message from the packaging, therefore it is important that we spend time in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to help us understand and unwrap the packaging.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Help all pupils draw up a time-table for reading the Bible at home. Have them include in it Bible study times with others at church and in cell groups.

THEME 4: LIVE THE WORD

LESSON 24

Practicing God's Word:

Be Doers

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Understand the need to practice God's Word
- Plan to start practicing God's Word

BIBLE PASSAGE

Mark 12:30; John 14:9-24; 15:1-15; 1 John 2:5; 5:2-3

OTHER REFERENCES

Church of the Nazarene Manual 2009-2013 - The Covenant of Christian Conduct 27.1

"They shall evidence their commitment to God...By doing that which is enjoined in the Word of God, which is our rule of both faith and practice..."

MEMORY VERSE

1 John 3:9-10

"No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child..."

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge that does not help the one who possesses it is worthless. Imagine if someone was regarded as the most educated person in the world and yet that education or knowledge does not benefit him in anyway, that person would have wasted time, energy, and money. The same thing applies to us as Christians who read, hear and study God's Word. If it does not benefit us and we are not able to use it we are wasting time and energy.

There are many people in the world today who claim to be Christians and yet their lifestyles do not reflect who Christ is. I am sure we can think of such people. Allow the Students to briefly

discuss what they think could be the reason for this and then lead them into a discussion about the word 'Christ-ian' focusing on the root 'Christ' and its meaning. The truth is that it is a result of people knowing about Christ and yet their knowledge not benefiting them. In today's lesson we look at what it means to put our knowledge into practice.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

1. Our Love for God

Ask the class to tell how would they know if someone loves them. The greatest command is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30) Many of us do claim to love God, but when it comes to obeying him, we are reluctant. In John 14:15, 23 Jesus says that if we love him, we will do what he commands. Obedience and love go together. We cannot claim to love him when we fail to live out his commands, and we cannot obey him unless we love him. Practicing God's Word proves our love to him. It is not enough to say we know, but we have to act according to what we know.

There are incredible blessings that Jesus promises when we love and obey him. Assign students to read John 14 and 15 and tell what blessings are there (John 14:23, John 14:13; 15:7; John 15:4,8). God's promises are true.

2. Our Trust in God

How much do you trust God? Practicing his Word proves that we trust him with everything that he is and what he says that he will do. We have to ask ourselves if we really believe that his ways are perfect. When we believe that, it will become easy for us to follow his commands even in the most difficult situations. When Jesus was faced with a difficult decision in Gethsemane, he chose to trust God even to the point of death. That's what it means to practice God's Word. It means to do what he says, even when it means laying our lives down. This is because we trust his purpose and we trust his will for our lives.

3. Evidence of Salvation

When we practice God's Word we give evidence of our salvation. There are certain qualities and a way of life that characterizes followers of Christ and these are found in the Word of God (1 John 3:9-10). The day we decided to be Christians we chose to become followers of Christ. Therefore it is expected of us to emulate what the Scriptures teach us.

APPLICATION

When it comes to practicing God's Word, the main question is how much do we really love God? How much do we really trust in his will and purpose for our lives? When we answer this question honestly in our lives, we will discover that it is possible to do his will. Our obedience is the result of the greatest commandment.

If you are struggling to obey the Word of God, check your heart by asking these questions: Do I really love God? Do I trust him with my life? Ask God to help you to reach a point where you have a consuming love for him and trust.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Encourage the class to take a passage from their Bible reading and put it into practice (or do as it says) during the week. We call it, 'Living by the Word'. Next week before the lesson starts, ask how many were able to 'live by the Word'.

THEME 4: LIVE THE WORD

LESSON 25

Practicing God's Word:

Be Imitators

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Understand what it means to imitate God.
- Have a deep desire to imitate God.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ephesians 4:17-5:2; 2 Corinthians 2:14-16; Philippians 4:14-19

OTHER REFERENCES

Manual – Covenant of Christian Character (General rules)

MEMORY VERSE

2 Corinthians 2:14

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ’s triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere.”

INTRODUCTION

Last week we looked at how practicing God’s Word proves that we love God and have put our trust in Him. Our love for God and our trust in Him is evidenced by our relation to others. When Jesus was teaching in Mark 12:30-31, he added “Love your neighbor as yourself.” as the second greatest command. This shows us that loving our neighbor is a natural development out of love for God. In this lesson we look at what that means.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

1. ‘Just as’

Have one of the students read Eph. 4:32-5:2. Underline or emphasize the occurrences of the phrase ‘just as’. Note: the phrase is used twice in the three verses. Ask the students what the phrase means to them. Write down all the definitions or examples they give.

When we become Christians we are to “put off your old self” and “put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” (Eph.4:22-24). Our ‘new self’ ought to be like God. There has to be a resemblance to show that we are indeed God’s children. Jesus in his earthly life showed us what God is like and taught us what God expects of those who are his children. We need to imitate that in our daily walk.

How did Christ show the qualities Paul says we are to imitate? Ask the class to give examples of the following from the life of Christ: Kindness; Compassion; Love; Forgiveness. The way we imitate God is to act ‘just as’ Christ did.

- Just as **Kind**- He did not discriminate, his kindness was extended to all; sinners and those who claimed to be righteous alike.
- Just as **Compassionate**- When people were hungry he fed them, when they were sick he healed them.
- Just as **Loving**- He loved so much that he had to ‘lay down his life for his friends’.
- Just as **Forgiving**- He forgave even those who crucified him.
- Nothing less is expected of us.

2. *Fragrant Offering*

What Jesus did: his kind, compassionate, loving and forgiving act on the cross was considered a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. In the Old Testament when a sacrificial offering was pleasing to God, it was said to be a ‘pleasing aroma’. Paul’s life of service is described as an ‘aroma of Christ’ (2 Corinthians 2:14). Wherever he went, Paul was spreading the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ.

APPLICATION

Christ lived a life that gave us a clear picture of what is expected of his followers. When we sacrificially serve others like Christ did, we too can be the aroma of Christ, a pleasing aroma and fragrant offering acceptable to God.

Paul also described the gift of the Philippian church as a “fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God” (Phil.4:18). Our sacrificial service to others includes sacrificially giving our time, talents and things we own for God’s work to continue.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

- ✓ Take one of the qualities discussed above each day and look for opportunities to live it out.
- ✓ Choose a ministry in the church that you are going to sacrificially give to this month.
- ✓ Read and study the Covenant of Christian Character – (General rules).

THEME 4: LIVE THE WORD

LESSON 26

Avoid Evil: Hate It!

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Understand what it means to have integrity.
- Desire to be people of integrity.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Job 1:1; 2:9

OTHER REFERENCES

Romans 12:9b; Proverbs 8:13; Psalm 5:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22; 2 Timothy 2:22

MEMORY VERSE

1 Thessalonians 5:21-22

“but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.”

INTRODUCTION

The world in which we live is evil.

Every day, it seems that evil is becoming more and more common. Though the world seeks goodness and wants people with good values, it just seems like evil and wickedness prevail and are becoming the norm. Is there any hope for our world today? We, as Christians, are the hope for this evil world. Though we live in an evil world, we are called to live a holy life which will combat wickedness in our world. How does living a holy life combat evil? The answer is simple; holy people hate evil and they will reject it and fight it wherever they see it.

Discuss these questions with the class:

- If you had to choose a spouse what kind of a person would you choose?
- If you owned a business what kind of a people would you hire?
- If you had to choose a community leader who would you vote for?

Follow up their answers with “why” especially if their answer is “a Christian”. The underlying ideas you should look for in the answers are: good moral values; well mannered; honest and INTEGRITY.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

Have one member read **Job 2:9**. Job's wife is accusing Job of maintaining his integrity. She does not understand why he is holding on to his integrity, obviously and according to her, he is justified in compromising his principles here. Discuss with the class what it means to be a person of integrity.

There are four things that made Job a man of integrity. Ask another one to read **Job 1:1**. Let the rest of the group underline the key words as the verse is being read: Blameless, upright, feared God and shunned evil. Allow the class to discuss what the words mean to them. The world we live in is hungry for people with these qualities.

Some of the words that define integrity are:

Honest	Truthful	Honorable
Trustworthy	Reliable	Upright

Everything we have discussed so far is positive. It is the opposite of evil, something that we ought to be. However there is another principle of integrity that should be emphasized; shunning evil. To shun evil means to not condone or support evil. This means to not make any allowances for evil. To shun evil also means to fight and speak out against it. It is not enough to say we are holy and yet turn a blind eye when we see evil being done. Some justify their non-involvement with the fact that the evil done does not affect them. That is not a proper attitude for a Christian to have. What if Jesus had done nothing about our sin because it does not affect Him? As much as we are truthful, we are to influence those we can influence to be truthful as well.

APPLICATION

It is easy to think and say these are my values and principles. But it is another thing to actually put them in practice, especially when we are under pressure. Being a person of integrity means holding on to the truth even when no one is watching. It means holding to what you believe even when under pressure, even if it means losing face with your friends or colleagues.

Give an example of a situation you might be in where people are pressured to be dishonest, (e.g. in my community traffic police like bribes and if you do not bribe them they fine you an enormous amount of money. Therefore it is easier to bribe them, and some Christians do.)

It is sad to say that even as Christians we try to find ways to justify why we compromise. Where I am, I have heard young people say 'God will understand'. There is a simple truth in Proverbs 8:13 "To fear the Lord is to *hate* evil..." (emphasis added). Therefore if we are serious about growing in grace we can not afford to find excuses to be dishonest or to compromise what we believe.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Have the class think about an area of their lives in which they have a tendency of being dishonest. Ask them to silently pray about it, repent of it and commit to finding ways to grow in honesty.

THEME 4: LIVE THE WORD

LESSON 27

Avoid Evil:

Sin Shall Not Be Your Master

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Understand the impact that sinful habits can have on their Christian growth.
- Realize the need to rid themselves of sin.
- Realize that with God's help they can daily overcome sin in their lives.

BIBLE PASSAGE

1 Corinthians 6:12-20; 10:23

OTHER REFERENCES

Romans 6: 12-14; Ephesians 4:26; Matthew 6:24; 1 Timothy 6:10; Ephesians 5:5; 6:1; 1 Samuel 15:23; Galatians 5:20; 2 Timothy 1:7

MEMORY VERSE

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

"Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies."

ADDITIONAL NOTES

You can be disciplined.

Say and prayerfully strive to practice the following or similar statements:

- ✓ I will not sleep when its time to pray,
- ✓ I will not eat until it is time to eat,
- ✓ I will not have sex until I am married,
- ✓ I will not be angered.

All of these statements are the first step, but training yourself in these areas is crucial to being disciplined.

INTRODUCTION

Young people are passionate about serving God, yet they are held back by things in their lives that do not glorify God. Some of the sinful habits and attitudes are obvious while others are very subtle and they may find ways to justify them.

Have the class identify and list some of the habits and practices that are common but not pleasing to God. In the lesson today, we look closely at some of these habits.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

Take time to read **1 Corinthians 6:12-20** and **10:23**. There are many things that are permissible, but not all of them are beneficial and not all of them are constructive. Let the students come up with some things they think are not inherently wrong (amoral) but are not beneficial and not constructive, (eg. watching sports; playing computer games).

What the Bible is teaching us in these passages is that we need to treat our bodies as something sacred; it is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Just because we are allowed to do something does not mean that we have to do it or that it is good to do. We have to stop and ask ourselves if what we are doing is honoring the one we have asked to live in us.

God has created our body with its desires. The problem comes when food, sleep or games begin to control us; when we let these activities, even though they are not necessarily sin, lead us to dishonor God. The mistake most of us make is to let the body dictate to us how we should live. Paul determined not to “be mastered by anything” (v.12). Our desires become a problem when they start controlling our lives like little gods, to the point that we would do anything to satisfy them. Let’s look at some of the habits that many young people struggle with:

Sexual Immorality – There is nothing inherently wrong with having sex. Actually sex is created by God for our enjoyment and reproduction. Sex becomes sin when it is used in contradiction to God’s will and plan which is for one man and one woman to be united in marriage. Anytime it is done outside of this union it is sin. Look at what Paul says in **1 Corinthians 6:13, 18**. Sexual immorality is not only sinning against God but against yourself as well.

Substance Abuse – Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, we should treat it as such. Any time that we indulge in substances that are known to be destructive to our physical and mental well-being, we are disrespecting the Holy Spirit and dishonoring what God deems sacred. Therefore, Christians must stay away from such substances.

Greed (including love of money) – Jesus warned that we can not worship two masters – God and money. Paul also taught that the love of money is the root of all evil (Matthew 6:24; 1 Timothy 6:10; Ephesians 5:5).

Rebellion – Many young people struggle to obey parents. We want to go out, have fun entertaining ourselves, and do not understand why our parents put restraints on us. Some of us use the church as an excuse for doing as we please. This is not godly! Read **Ephesians 6:1** and **1 Samuel 15:23**.

Rage – is becoming normal in our society. We hear of rage in schools, work places and on the roads. The Bible says that “fits of rage” are an act of the sinful nature (**Galatians 5:20**). Does it mean that we are not to be angry? Read **Ephesians 4:26**.

APPLICATION

There are many other habits that young people have that are not honoring to God. We have only mentioned a few. Other habits that should be explored are gambling, pornography and other addictive habits. If a habit, activity or event in one's life is not honoring God, it must be avoided. If a hobby or an entertainment begins to control you – you will become miserable and outraged if you miss it – watch out, sin is knocking at your door. As Christians we are to control ourselves and honor God with our bodies (2 Timothy 1:7).

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Let the young people think about a hobby or habit that they think is controlling them. Help them make a practical plan to train and discipline themselves. Set a time to follow-up with them to help keep them accountable to their plan.

THEME 4: LIVE THE WORD

LESSON 28

Abiding in Fellowship: Be Part of a Local Church

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Understand the importance of being part of a local church
- Desire to be actively involved in the mission and purpose of the local church

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ephesians 2:19-22; 4:16; Colossians 3:16; Galatians 6:2; 1 Peter 2:4-5

MEMORY VERSE

Hebrews 10:24-25

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

INTRODUCTION

I have heard many people say that they believe in God and yet they do not attend a church. For them faith in God is more important and being part of a local church is not essential. In fact, some would claim that avoiding church politics is best. Ask the class if they know of such cases and how they would respond to someone with that attitude. Can one just visit several churches and not be committed to one specific local church? Is there a need to belong to one specific church and be a member there? Let us talk about the importance of being part of a local church.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

The church is both local congregations and a universal body. Going back through the Bible, we find that since Pentecost, believers have constantly met together as local congregations.

The local congregation helps and builds us to be part of the universal church and the Kingdom of God. **Ephesians 2:19-22; 4:16** and **1 Peter 2:4-5** speak about how we are being built into a spiritual house. God uses the local congregation to achieve this. Some of the responsibilities of the local church to accomplish this purpose include:

Administration of Sacraments

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are two important sacraments in the church. If you were to continue as a visitor, it will be difficult for you to participate in these sacraments. Many churches schedule these events, will you even know where and when to go to witness or be part of these special events? The sacrament reminds us of the work of Christ in our lives and our response to it. It is a beautiful time for us come closer to God.

Spiritual nourishment

Another responsibility for the local congregation is to provide spiritual nourishment through cooperate worship and Bible study. Read **Colossians 3:16**. This verse highlights the importance of coming together. Yes, we might claim to study the Word at home, but the more we come together the greater the opportunity to do as we are commanded here.

Accountability for Believers

One of the reasons why many people do not want to be part of a local congregation is that they do not want to be held accountable for their actions. If we are not a member of a local church, no one will hold us accountable for our actions. In this regard a local congregation is a blessing in that it has the responsibility and authority to hold us accountable. Jesus in **Matthew 18:15-17** revealed this truth.

Spiritual Support

There are many hurdles we come across in this world. Often in the hard times we need someone to walk with us, support us and pray with us. Imagine, if you are not a part of a local church, who will you turn to when you need support. As part of a local congregation, this benefit is automatic for the church is your spiritual family. The pastor, along with the church members, feel and have the responsibility to support one another for we are to "carry each other's burdens ..." (**Galatians 6:2**).

Family like structure

The local congregation provides a structure that unites members in a family-like unit. The pastor, working together with other leaders, takes on the role of a "parent" nurturing members. They will ensure that the responsibilities/benefits mentioned above happen.

Being a member of a local church, gives us a sense of belonging. We can not be Christian in isolation. We are not islands. We are united together in Christ.

APPLICATION

Every believer should find and commit to a 'spiritual home', where they will find the above and more. In every aspect of human life, church included, we experience conflicts, but we do not give up on life because of it. Let us take the words of **Hebrews 10:24-25** and help find solutions even to conflicts.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Ask the class how they feel about their local church. Do they feel that it is their spiritual home? If not what can they do to make it feel more like home. If they already feel like its home, what can they do to influence visitors and friends to choose their local church to be their spiritual home?

THEME 5: THAT'S WISDOM – IN GOD'S TERMS

LESSON 29

True Wisdom

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Realize that true wisdom is a gift that God gives to those who ask.
- Realize that it is the Christian's duty to seek wisdom for all the decisions of life.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Proverbs 2:1-15

OTHER REFERENCES

Job 28: 12-28; Psalm 19:7-14; Proverbs 1-2; 9:1-12; Ecclesiastes 9:13-18; James 1:5

MEMORY VERSE

James 3:17

"But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere."

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Form Of Literature

The books known as the Books of Wisdom include Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Sometimes the Psalms and Songs of Solomon are added to these three to form the Books of Poetry and Wisdom of the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the Epistle of James is considered to be a book of wisdom.

The Wise Writers

The wise men of Israel included: 1) the priests who guided the formal worship of Israel, sacrifices and other ministries in the temple; 2) the scribes, like Ezra, who studied and explained the sacred writings; and 3) the prophets who received the revelation of God and proclaimed it to the people.

The Source Of Wisdom

The wisdom of the Bible explains the problems of the world as God sees them.

The Wisdom Of The Hebrews came from God.

The wise man is a thinker who believes that God is the Creator and Lawmaker of the universe. The wise man studies the nature created by God, using the mind that the Lord gave him.

INTRODUCTION

Man is always searching for Wisdom. Eventually he finds God, the Creator. God wants His people to be wise. In the past, He inspired the men who wrote the books of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes, known in the Bible as the Books of Wisdom.

Talk about the value of wisdom and the benefits which it gives to all who possess it. Write and explain the three levels of learning: Knowledge, Understanding and Wisdom.

God is the giver of wisdom. He gives liberally to all who ask believing and trusting in Him. Encourage the young people to seek true wisdom - that which comes from God by reading and studying the Word of God, by praying for the guidance of God in all the steps of their lives and by exercising their faith daily.

Read Proverbs 2:1-5. The Wisdom which speaks to us in this passage represents God. He addresses us as "my son" or "my daughter".

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

1. Advice Of A Father

Solomon was the son of King David. According to the plan of God he became king of Israel. Bathsheba was his mother. The prince, Solomon, was young and inexperienced, perhaps fearful of governing such a large nation. Solomon followed the advice of his father, King David. (**1 Kings 2:2-3; 1 Chronicles 28:9,20**).

2. A Wise Request

When God asked Solomon what he wanted, he asked for wisdom to be a wise ruler over Israel (**II Chronicles 1:10-12**). His request pleased God and God gave him the desire of his heart. During the 40 years of his reign, he received riches, fame, glory and wisdom because God was with him. The people also increased and prospered.

3. The Proverbs Of Solomon

According to the custom in the countries of the Middle East, the parents prepared their children for life with advice, sayings or proverbs. Proverbs 1:2-4 states the intention of these sayings.

Most of the Proverbs were written by Solomon. Chapters 22:17 - 24:34; 30 and 31 were not. All the writers were chosen and inspired by God to guide us in a daily life of devotion to God.

Verses 2:1-4 urge us to receive the Word of God, to keep His commandments and to be attentive to wisdom. The reward is identified in **verses 5-9**: We will understand the fear of God and we will speak in His knowledge. If we ask for wisdom from God, He will give it. Wisdom is not only intellectual knowledge; it is more; it helps us and guides us in life.

4. How Can We Receive Wisdom?

We can receive wisdom by doing the following: a) follow the advice of those who love you: parents, teachers and pastor; b) use your will to choose the right thing; c) pray daily; d) follow the advice of **Proverbs 1:10**; e) remember what God said in **Proverbs 1:33**.

APPLICATION

A Thought: There are certain privileges which only the Christian can enjoy. One of the privileges is to have the wisdom and direction of God.

-Billy Graham

PRACTICAL IDEAS

God gives wisdom to those who ask in faith (**James 1:5**). Just do it.

THEME 5: THAT'S WISDOM – IN GOD'S TERMS

LESSON 30

Seek Wisdom

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Understand that God is the source of true wisdom.
- Realize that we must obey His commands as we find them in the Bible.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Proverbs 3:1-18

OTHER REFERENCES

Proverbs 3-5

MEMORY VERSE

Proverbs 3:5-6

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight"

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Try to understand the commands and the principles in the lesson so that you can help your pupils to understand them. Explain the following:

What does it mean to keep the commandments of God? To respond with all of oneself, mind, emotions and will. This is the response that pleases God. Christ must be the Lord of everything - a commitment required in the Old and New Testaments (Deuteronomy 6:5; Mark 12:30).

What is parallelism? To understand the Proverbs and Hebrew poetry, we need to know the principle of parallelism. In modern literature, to emphasize something, we repeat the idea with different words. The Hebrew writings expressed the same idea in parallel form: "keep my commands in your heart," (Proverbs 3:1b); "write them on the tablet of your heart" (Proverbs 3:3b). Parallelism does not add a new idea; it only reinforces the previous one. Try to find some of these parallel constructions in Proverbs 3:13-18.

What does the "fulfilment" of life mean? To serve God is the greatest fulfilment and happiness in life. A wise man knows that to serve God satisfies all the needs of the soul.

What does it mean to participate in the holiness of God? Proverbs 3:11-12 is repeated and explained in Hebrews 12:5-13. (Read the scripture). You may ask: Why does God punish? The answer seems strange and may be difficult to accept. But God punishes so that we can receive His

holiness. God acts like the father who punishes the son to help him recognize his error and avoid it in the future for the good of his soul.

INTRODUCTION

In Proverbs, the commandments to live a life that is pleasing to God are repeated several times, because of their importance. In today's lesson, we'll examine six of them: 1) We must love God with all our hearts; 2) If we accept God's wisdom, it will lead to long life; 3) the love of truth makes life better; 4) We must not put human judgement above God's wisdom; 5) To share my wealth with the work of God improves my life; 6) The heavenly Father disciplines me in order to make me more like Him.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

1. Wisdom And Discipline

Families, church and school need a lot of wisdom from God to deal with the rebellion of children against parental authority. There are people who defend the absolute freedom of the child and say they must not be disciplined. The idea that the father who loves his child should not punish him is not biblical. Every child must be disciplined. Children should be thankful if/when parents correct them, because the parent is helping the child(ren) learn the difference between right and wrong **Proverbs 3:11-12**. Wisdom advises that the child should be disciplined with love.

2. The Discipline Of God

The conclusion of verse 12 tells us that 1) God punishes those whom He loves; 2) Our parents punish us because they love us; 3) God invites us to accept His wisdom. God wants to guide people to do good. Through discipline we are able to understand that God loves us and for this reason, he rebukes us. We need His wisdom to understand the true meaning of discipline. God encourages us to trust in Him and not in our own values, because He knows what is best for us (**Proverbs 3:5-7**).

3. Discipline With Love

When a father disciplines his children, he knows that he is going to cause them pain. He also suffers when he applies the punishment/discipline. It is the same with God. When our heavenly Father disciplines us, He suffers in His heart but He also knows that the discipline is for our good. When He sent Jesus to die in our place, God suffered because He sent His Son to suffer the pain of the crucifixion. However without the death of our Lord, sin would not have been conquered. Apply the truth of these verses, about the discipline of the Lord, to our family.

APPLICATION

Understanding that God's discipline and punishment comes because of His love for us will help us appreciate Jesus' death on the cross on our behalf. Recognize and accept God's discipline with love for it comes to you with much love and for your own good.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Find Bible verses relating to these commandments. Then personalize them and keep them. Then monitor and celebrate every accomplishment regardless of the size.

- 1) Love God with all your heart;
- 2) Accept God's wisdom, it will lead to long life;
- 3) The love of truth makes life better;
- 4) Do not put human judgement above God's wisdom;
- 5) Sharing my wealth with the work of God improves my life;
- 6) The heavenly Father disciplines me in order to make me more like Him.

THEME 5: THAT'S WISDOM – IN GOD'S TERMS

LESSON 31

Who Is Wise?

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Understand that to accept Christ as Saviour is a decision that each person must make;
- Thank God because He shows us His purposes for our lives.
- Decide to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Proverbs 8:32 - 9:12

OTHER REFERENCES

Proverbs 6 – 9

MEMORY VERSE

Luke 21:15

"For I will give you a words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist nor contradict."

ADDITIONAL NOTES

DEFINITIONS:

Knowledge is the intellect. It gives information, presents facts and designs plans. It knows what the Word of God says. It also knows what should and what should not be done.

Understanding responds to the truth. The mind says that the Word of God IS true and the judgement confirms that it is right.

Wisdom is the truth that comes from experience. It knows and understands the principles established in the Word of God and applies them to daily living. Wisdom sees the world and its problems in the way that God sees it. It tries to find and to follow the purpose of the creation of God instead of destroying it.

Compare the wisdom in Proverbs 8:22-31 with John 1:1-4.

INTRODUCTION

A lazy person is unwilling to work. No one likes to be known as a lazy person. If we think about our daily actions, we will see that everything we do requires the action of the will (will power). If we want to eat a good meal, we must prepare it. If we want to have a good education and receive a diploma, we must go to school, study and pass all the exams. From the smallest to the biggest things, will power is necessary. Ants can teach us a lot about will power. They do not have a

captain or director, but they work all through the summer collecting food and keeping it for the winter (Proverbs 6:6-8)! Any young person can prepare himself for the future. Anyone who works hard to obtain a good harvest will enjoy the fruit of his efforts. The Christian who remains faithful to the Lord and who works hard for the growth of His kingdom will enjoy the reward of eternal life.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

1. The Meaning of Wisdom (Proverbs 8:22-31)

Wisdom is the voice of God. The call for wisdom is more than encouragement to use to balance the questions of daily life. The author of Proverbs helps us to see life in the way that God sees it and to help us make our decisions with the guidance of God.

Wisdom is the Son of God. The language of **Proverbs 8:22-31** leads many students of the Bible to identify the Wisdom of Proverbs with Christ. In this Scripture, Wisdom says: "I was there when he set the heavens in place ... and when he marked out the foundations of the earth ... I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind" (**Proverbs 8:27, 29-31**).

Let us compare this passage with **John 1:1-4**. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... All things were made by him ... In him was life ... ". Can we read these two passages and not believe that both describe our Lord?

About Christ, Paul wrote: "For in him all things created: things in heaven and on earth". Also, "...Christ in you, the hope of glory. He is the once we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ." (**Colossians 1:16; 27-28**).

The call of God then presents an unusual message, whether it is found in the Wisdom of Proverbs or whether it comes from the perfect revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The message of the Bible is unusual. The New Testament is hidden in the Old; the Old Testament is revealed in the New.

2. Choice And Destiny (Proverbs 8:32-36)

How do we hear and respond? Every father, pastor or teacher wants to help people who are born with a free will to understand the questions of life and to make the right choices. Wisdom teaches us that right choices come from right knowledge. God's method begins with the revelation of the truth. The demand of God is: "listen to me" (**Proverbs 8:32**). In another scripture, the cry of the prophet is; "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). Jesus said to pilate: "In fact, the reason I was born, and came into the world is to testify to the truth." (John 18: 37a). But God knows, and we also know, that knowledge is not enough. The truth should be known and obeyed: "Blessed are those who keep my ways." (Proverbs 8:32). **Proverbs 8:34** shows how the truth of God can influence our lives. We must continually listen to the voice of God, realize that God's Word is truth, and obey it.

The decisions that God allows us to make have eternal results; they establish the difference between life and death (**Proverbs 8:35-36**). Jesus explained this truth in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-24). Our decisions for or against God cause us to win or lose.

APPLICATION

Are you wise? In God's eyes or in the world's? Does knowing that Christ is the wisdom of God, change anything for you? The choice is yours.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

The decisions that God allows us to make have eternal results; they establish the difference between life and death (**Proverbs 8:35-36**). Let this statement influence the decisions you make from now on.

THEME 5: THAT'S WISDOM – IN GOD'S TERMS

LESSON 32

My Responsibility to Others

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Understand the true meaning of "love your neighbour as yourself".
- Relate this commandment to their social responsibility.
- Feel responsibility for the people around them, following the example of Jesus.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Proverbs 18:23-19:9, 17, 26

OTHER REFERENCES

Proverbs 15 – 19

MEMORY VERSE

I John 3:17

"If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?"

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Ask the class to prepare a list of other responsibilities that Christians have to other people. For example:

- ✓ Be honourable in your work and in your dealings.
- ✓ Respect the rights of others.
- ✓ Help the sick and the needy.
- ✓ Be loving and have compassion on your neighbour, helping them with their needs.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty can be used in many areas of life. For example, you can say that there is poverty of understanding, of wisdom, of material goods and of spiritual things.

How does poverty affect a person? What can we do to help people who have material needs? We are never so poor that we are not able to share something that belongs to us. Think about the attitude that Jesus had toward the poor. What is the teaching of I Timothy 6:10?

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

Poverty will not guarantee us a place in heaven and riches will not keep us out of heaven. Both poor and rich people need Jesus and His salvation. However, Jesus taught us to have compassion for the needy (Mark 14:7).

1. Advice For The Rich

In the first book of the Bible, God reminds us of our responsibility toward those who need help.

"Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?'" (Genesis 4:9a). With a selfish and sinful attitude, Cain answered: "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?" (4:9b). Indifference and selfishness are not acceptable to God. Often the poor are mistreated (Proverbs 18:23). What advice does God give to those who are able to help the needy?

- a. Indifference is evil (**Proverbs 17:5**)
- b. Generosity pleases God (**Proverbs 19:17**)
- c. Money can ruin an honest relationship between people (**Proverbs 19:6**).
- d. Riches can lessen our dependence on God (**Proverbs 18:11**).
- e. The excessive desire for riches can ruin the home (**Proverbs 15:27**).
- f. To obtain riches through injustice or force is not the will of God (**Proverbs 16:19**).

2. Advice For The Poor

This advice shows that God wants everyone to do their part faithfully and fulfill their responsible to others.

- a. Even if you are poor, you must be honest (**Proverbs 19:1; 15:16; 17:1**).
- b. God cares about your needs (**Proverbs 15:25**).
- c. Avoid laziness (**Proverbs 19:15**).
- d. Be honest (**Proverbs 19:22**).
- e. Do not beg (**Proverbs 19:7**).

3. Help Make Life Enjoyable For All

Accept responsibility (**Proverbs 19:3**). A good religion and a good society must have people who accept responsibilities. Proverbs 19:3 points out the evil of blaming others for our mistakes. "People ruin their lives by their own foolishness and then are angry at the LORD". (NLT) Let us accept the blame and try to improve the situation with the strength of the Lord.

Take care of the old people (**Proverbs 19:26**). The Lord cares for the individual who has a need. He expects us to show the same compassion. The Ten Commandments refer in a special way to our parents who gave us life and provided for our needs until we were able to care for ourselves (Exodus 20:12).

Have a happy heart (**Proverbs 17:22**). Whether you are young or old, the world will be a better place if your life shows hope and good will to others (Proverbs 15:30). We accept a great part of our responsibility to others when we sing with the Psalmist: "This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalms 118:24).

APPLICATION

One day a hungry little boy dressed in rags came to the door of an orphanage and asked if he could be admitted. The director told him that the decision was not easy. He needed to be recommended by someone who knew him. "Excuse me, sir, I do not have anyone to recommend me. I thought that my condition would be enough to show my need". The director thought about the words of the little boy and then accepted him.

Let us open our eyes to see the needy world that is stretching out its hands asking for help. Close with prayer.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

As a class, it would be good to start a project to help others. Allow the young people to make the plans and lead the various aspects of the project. The teacher will be the guide. The best way to learn is to practice what you have studied.

THEME 5: THAT'S WISDOM – IN GOD'S TERMS

LESSON 33

Are Our Desires Good or Bad?

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Be reminded that God planned for us to control our natural desires.
- Be encouraged to follow the will of God for the satisfaction of our desires.
- Understand the importance of making responsible decisions.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Proverbs 23:23-35

OTHER REFERENCES

Proverbs 20-24; 31:1-9

MEMORY VERSE

1 Corinthians 10:31

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Emphasize that God plans for us to control our desires with wisdom.

INTRODUCTION

The Creator created us with desires. These desires include hunger, thirst, and sexuality. These natural desires are designed to preserve life and satisfy our needs. Animals have no control over their desires. When they feel the impulse, they respond. However men and women are superior to the animals. Just as God gave us natural desires, He also gave us intelligence, free will and the ability to make decisions. Along with these desires, people acquire good and bad habits. These make us react like animals react to impulses. We are encouraged to use the intelligence which God gave us and our ability to choose between good and bad when we form habits.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

After the death of Christ, a false doctrine developed known as "gnosticism". This doctrine taught that because the material world, including the human body, is opposed to the spiritual world, we cannot believe that God created the world. This doctrine implied that everything that is material is evil including the human body.

1. The Body Is Not Bad

Still today there are people who think that our bodies are bad and that only the spirit is good. This doctrine is false, God did not create evil or any evil thing or evil person (Genesis 1:26, 31). The Bible says that everything that God created is good. Evil and everything that is bad are the result of the sin of man (Genesis 3). The human body is a perfect creation of God, it is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Those who use the body to commit sin cause the physical and spiritual ruin of man.

2. The Desires Are Not Bad

God created us with natural desires; each one for a good purpose. If we satisfy them in the right way, they will benefit us. But if we satisfy them in the wrong way, it will lead to all kinds of evil. The desire to eat and drink are necessary for survival. The sex desire is necessary to continue the human race. There are also the desires to sleep, to work, to love and to be loved, and many others. God also gave us a conscience to know the difference between good and bad.

What happened to those who satisfied all these appetites uncontrollably? They lost the favour of God and were punished for their sin. One example in the Bible is the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The same happens with a person who allows himself to be controlled by sin. At first the sin makes him unhappy, it troubles his conscience. But after some time it no longer causes him shame and he allows that sin to lead him to an evil miserable life (Ephesians 4:17-19). The first puff of a cigarette can be the ruin of a smoker; the first drink can lead to alcoholism and disgrace; the first experience with a drug leads to slavery to drugs. All of these lead to the destruction of the body and soul.

3. Wisdom In Temptation

Young people are full of life. They are discovering their natural desires. The student who allows God to control these natural desires receives strength and wisdom to make right decisions in the time of temptation. God created us with freedom of choice and gave us a conscience which guides us to know the difference between good and bad (I Corinthians 6:12; 10:23). Jesus promised us victory in temptation (Matthew 26:41; Luke 22:40, 46; Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:15-16).

APPLICATION

The uncontrolled desires cause us to do things which we would not normally do. The world is full of people who have guilty consciences. They allow themselves to be led by their desires, and they commit sinful acts. There are many people in unpleasant situations who allowed their desires to control them. Today, the result is sadness and tears. It is only our resolve to control our desires with the help of the Holy Spirit that will save us from uncontrolled desires.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

God is interested in all you do or say. Think about your decisions before acting. Remember, Human intelligence + Guidance from the Word of God + Indwelling of the Holy Spirit = Wisdom.

THEME 5: THAT'S WISDOM – IN GOD'S TERMS

LESSON 34

What Pleases God?

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Understand that the true meaning and true purpose of life is only found in God.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

OTHER REFERENCES

Ecclesiastes 1:1-14; 2:1-26; 3:1-15

MEMORY VERSE

Ecclesiastes 3:11b

"He has made everything beautiful in its time."

INTRODUCTION

Solomon concluded that vanity caused by the works of men always leads to unhappiness while the works of God are always perfect. Solomon accomplished many things, but instead of being content with them, he concluded that everything was meaningless (Ecclesiastes 2:11). He understood the monotony (sameness) of everything that is worldly. He realized that his accomplishments were useless and that the search for happiness through the pleasures of the flesh is useless. He also realized that even when he had good intentions, sin frustrated his plans. The only source of meaning for human life is found in God, who is in control of the world.

If Ecclesiastes represents the struggle of a person who is full of doubts, it also reveals a man who finally discovered the positive side of life. He discovered that life is as precious as "the golden bowl" (Ecclesiastes 12:6). The final response for the search of meaning is: "Fear God and keep his commandments" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

1. Wealth Is Not Happiness

Solomon was crowned king of Israel and prayed to God for wisdom. God gave him wisdom and also fame and riches. With the passing of years, Solomon forgot that everything he possessed came from God and he separated himself from his Creator. After receiving so many blessings, Solomon withdrew from the way of God. The book of Ecclesiastes tells us that when Solomon withdrew from God, he sought happiness in many material things and pleasures of the world. We also know that the material things cannot satisfy the spiritual needs; they cannot make us happy.

What did Solomon do in his search for happiness?

2. *The King Fails Without God*

“‘Meaningless! Meaningless!’ says the Teacher.” (Ecclesiastes 1:2). After we study the first two chapters of Ecclesiastes, we realize that only God can give meaning to life. Solomon decided to write his experiences so that future generations would learn from his example and conclusions.

3. *Return To God*

After separating himself from God in search of satisfaction, Solomon had to recognize that no person or thing could give the true happiness that God promised to those who were faithful to Him. People today also withdraw from God like Solomon. If we withdraw, we do not know if we will have the opportunity to turn back to Him. Why do we withdraw from His way if it only brings us unhappiness? Let us accept the words of the Psalmist: "Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him; and he will do this:" (Psalm 37:5). He will give salvation, peace and the certainty of eternal life with Jesus.

APPLICATION

An older Christian says: "One day Oswald, a young atheist, told me that the Bible, God and religion are crutches for Christians. Without these crutches they would not be able to walk. Months after that conversation, I had to help Oswald. He was defeated. He could not face the problems of life. I talked with him about the Bible, God; and the wonderful promises which the Lord gave us. Oswald needed the "crutches" which he hated before. I do not know if the term "crutches" is a good term, but I need God to walk and to live. He is the one who supports me. I glorify God for the constant support that He gives me".

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Take it from a God-inspired expert. Solomon had access to every possible pleasure, wealth, fame, success, etc. and could not find meaning in them until he returned to God. His advice: "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind." (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

THEME 5: THAT'S WISDOM – IN GOD'S TERMS

LESSON 35

Reverence for God

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Desire to worship God with total reverence.
- Promote responsible worship in church

BIBLE PASSAGE

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7; Psalm 27

OTHER REFERENCES

Deuteronomy 23:21-23; I Chronicles 16:23-36; Psalms 15; 24:1-6; Ecclesiastes 3:16 - 6:12; Ecclesiastes 8:10-13; Habakkuk 2:18-20

MEMORY VERSE

Revelation 7:12

"... Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Elements of Worship:

Trust – Obey God and trust Him

Worship – Realize that God is Almighty and worthy of our love and loyalty

Praise – Gratitude for the blessings He has given us

Petition – Approach God with our needs and thus make Him a participant in our lives

Intercession – Praying for others and through our prayers we share His love for all people.

Blessing – Finding strength and courage in the Lord to expect Him to fulfill His promises

INTRODUCTION

The summary of this lesson is the phrase "Fear the Lord". It is used often in the Old Testament. It is an encouragement to obey God and to reverence Him. Some people think that to fear the Lord means we must not bother Him. But that is not the picture of God in the Bible. Jesus tells us that God is a good and loving Father. We must obey and love Him. From this relationship, we find a joyful fellowship in His presence. We can share joys, pains and problems with Him.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

1. Are You Afraid Of God?

Do you know a big, strong pupil in your school who scares everyone? When I was in school, there was one pupil of whom we were all afraid. Some people believe that God frightens everyone. When difficulties come to us, usually we become very religious. We promise God that we will be obedient, that we will surrender ourselves to Him, we ask forgiveness for our sins. But after the bad time disappears, we forget our promises and continue to live as before. What happened to the promises that we made and the repentance that we felt? It was not repentance, it was fear of dying. It is easy to conclude that God is ready to punish us if we do something wrong. But that is not the meaning of the first seven verses of Ecclesiastes 5.

2. Fulfil What You Promise

Ecclesiastes advises us of two very important things about our relationship with God which we can put into practice in living with others:

- a. Reverence to God (Ecclesiastes 5:1). The most important thing that we should do in the house of the Lord is to worship Him.
- b. Reverence in love. Even though God does not have a whip in His hand to beat us, we must be careful in our relationship with Him. God is our best Friend. As a friend, He does not want us to make false promises. What happens if we promise something to someone and then do not fulfil it? Before we make a promise to God, let us be sure that we intend to keep that promise (Ecclesiastes 5:2-7).

When we deal with God, words cannot take the place of honest intentions and prompt action. Jesus confirmed this thought with another verse (Matthew 7:21). Let us not permit our lips to sin by making a vow which we do not keep (Ecclesiastes 5:6).

3. The Security That We Find In Him

The Psalmist expressed the need for strength and assurance. God knows our needs and problems, and wants to be our Friend, Counsellor and Guide. He wants the best for us. This was the conclusion of the Psalmist (Psalm 27:9-10).

APPLICATION

"We Praise You, Oh God!" It is said that Henry V of England knew that he and his soldiers would receive great honours for winning the battle of Agincourt. He called his chaplain and asked him to read a Psalm of David, so that all the troops would realize that God had helped them. When the chaplain read the words: "Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory" (Psalm 115:1), the king got down from his horse and everyone did the same. The troops bowed down and worshipped God. The reverent silence expressed the thankfulness which they felt. We should always remember that God helps us to have victories. Let us join our voices with the Psalmist: "Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory".

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Time To Praise God – Life is not always the way we plan it, but everything is better if we take time to praise God. In prison, Paul and Silas sang praises to the Lord. The blindness of Fanny Crosby did not stop her from praising God, or from writing many beautiful hymns which speak of the greatness and faithfulness of God. Oscar Espinoza was blind at 19 years of age. He wrote in one of his poems: "How beautiful it is to be blind in your eyes, then you can see God with your soul."

When you feel sad or depressed, when it seems that life has taken you to its darkest and most lonely place, remember that God is not dead. Victory is found in praise and worship.

THEME 6: FAMILY MATTERS

LESSON 36

God Established the Family

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Know the three basic elements which make the foundation of the home: one man, one woman and their mutual commitment.
- Understand that the family is the basic unit, created by God.
- Appreciate that from the beginning, God planned for one man and one woman to be a family.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Genesis 1:24-31; 2:18-25; Psalm 8

OTHER REFERENCES

Genesis 24:1-67

MEMORY VERSE

Genesis 1:27

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female he created them"

INTRODUCTION

In the beginning when God created people, He planned for families. 1) God did not plan for divorce. The laws of divorce in the Old Testament and mentioned by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount came because of the fall of man, and because of sin in the heart. 2) God did not plan for widowhood. Death came as a result of sin. 3) It also seems like God did not plan for people to be single, although there are some examples of single people in the Bible, like the Apostle Paul and Lydia, the seller of purple. The problems of the home and the family arose after the nature of our first parents was changed by sin.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

1. The First Man (*Genesis 1:26, 2:7*)

The created world was beautiful and God found that His work of creation was good (Genesis 1:25). After God completed the earth, He created man. God formed the body of the man from the dust of the earth "...and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life..." (Genesis 2:7) to give him a living soul. This person, different from all the animals, was created in the image and likeness of

God (Genesis 1:26). This person was the first human being, man, later called Adam, our first father. God gave man control over the created world: over the animals, over the plants to care for everything and to cultivate the earth. God also created a beautiful garden, the Garden of Eden, for man to live in (2:8, 15).

2. *The First Woman* (Genesis 2:18-22)

God saw that man was alone. With whom could he share the beauty of creation? With whom could he share his own life and feelings? The animals could be company for him, but they could not speak with him. Man was alone and incomplete: he needed another person who would be like him and be his helper (Genesis 2:20). Then God decided to make a companion for man. While the man was sleeping deeply, God took a rib from Adam's body, to form a woman. When Adam woke up and saw a person similar to himself at his side, he immediately accepted her and called her "woman".

3. *The First Family*

God established the first family, when he created man and woman in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:27). The Lord blessed the first couple and commanded them to have children (Genesis 1:28). Adam accepted the companion that God had made for him. He knew that the woman would be an important part of his life and that together they would form a physical and spiritual union. God established marriage as the basis of the family. Marriage is:

- a. The intimate union of one man and one woman, who were created in the image and likeness of God. (Genesis 2:24)
- b. A companionship with one another and with God the Creator
- c. For the continuation of the human race.

Love between the husband and wife comes from this spiritual communion between a man and a woman and is a reflection of the Creator.

APPLICATION

The official of a bank arrived home very discouraged because he had not received the promotion that he expected. When he was questioned by his wife, he answered: "I am a failure. Everyone succeeds, except me." His wife said to him with words full of tenderness: "You found a wife who loves you. You made this woman respect you and admire you with devotion and loyalty. You have given me everything that I need. How can you consider yourself a failure? Who, within these walls, has more success?" Then she drew him tightly into her arms and he was encouraged.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Marriage as the basis for family and since it was founded by God; it should be a reflection of God's love. However, so many families, including those of Christians, are having difficulties and are unpleasant. Think of families you know that are struggling and earnestly pray for them, that they will be reminded of the beauty that God desires for marriage and for families and that they will turn to Him for help.

THEME 6: FAMILY MATTERS

LESSON 37

Four Things a Marriage Needs

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Identify and describe four kinds of happiness in marriage.
- Understand the nature of love between husband and wife as shown in the Bible.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Song of Solomon 4:1-10; Hosea 3:1-5 & 11:1-11; Mathew 10:37-40 & 16:21-28

OTHER REFERENCES

Psalms 12:1-6; Romans 12:1-2; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 11:33-36; 12:49-53;
Matthew 16:21-28; Hosea 11:1-9

MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 10:39

“Whoever finds his life will lose it and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it”

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Four things every marriage needs:

- Love Between Married Couple
- Selfless Love
- Love of God
- Total Dedication

INTRODUCTION

For generations, love has been described in poems and sung about in songs and we continue to do the same today. Love has been defined by many people; but *it is* very difficult to define. Love *is* expressed in many ways: the love of father and mother, the love of brothers and sisters, the love of friends, the love of husband and wife; the love for God, etc. All these expressions of love are the result of a much greater love, the love of God. The love of people can produce worthy fruits and positive results. But when love *is* wrongly used for selfish purposes, *it* can cause evil. Instead of bringing families closer together and healing broken relationships; instead of bringing joy, happiness, satisfaction and good to us; *it* can neglect the family, hurt neighbours, offend God and even kill. I John 4:10 says that we love because God first loved us. Love comes from God (I John 4:7) because "God is love" (I John 4:10).

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

1. *Married Love* (*Song of Solomon 4:7-10*)

Song of Solomon *is* a poem of love which glorifies married love. Some people say *it* represents the love of Christ for the Church (see Revelation 21:9). This love shows us that God planned for marriage and the family (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:23-24). Marriage *is* a physical and spiritual union; it is sacrificial and selfless. Selfless love desires to please the partner more than to satisfy its own interests.

2. *Selfless Love* (*Hosea 3:1-5*)

The story of the prophet Hosea, who sought, bought back and accepted again his unfaithful wife *is* a picture of the love of God for sinners. Love wants only good for the person it loves. Some parents stop eating so that the children do not die of hunger; others respect and care for their aging parents. Love does not seek *its* own interests; it *is* not selfish.

3. *Love of God* (*Hosea 11:9*)

Hosea 11 speaks of the rebellious son, Israel, who goes away from God. But instead of taking revenge, God the Father tries to draw him with "ties of love" (11:4) to convert him. The Lord continues to this day to call and redeem every Sinner. In the same way, parents continue to love and to pray for the disobedient child. In marriage, the couple loves one another even though they are not perfect. This love unites the husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters and establishes strong family ties.

4. *Total Dedication* (*Matthew 10:37-39*)

In a marriage, there are difficulties, pressures from the world, sickness in the family, different personalities, etc. Husbands and wives must dedicate themselves to one another completely. Their union is not only physical, it is not only a marriage contract; it should be spiritual - like the union of the Church with Christ. In any job, the employees must be devoted and loyal for the company to succeed. Christ dedicated Himself totally to the work that God gave Him. In the family relationship there must also be dedication, loyalty, faithfulness and love. Dedicated children will help the marriage of the parents and will help the family. If each person does his part, family ties will be stronger.

APPLICATION

The prophecy of Hosea to Israel and his personal suffering give us two great truths. First, we see the power of God's love, the cost was Calvary. But we also see that love in marriage should be like the love of God; every effort must be made to save a marriage. Christians often react too quickly, claiming their rights and closing the doors to reconciliation. The first interest of the Christian should not be personal happiness; it should be to honour God, to preserve the home and for the salvation of souls. To forgive is painful, costly and difficult; but it was also painful, costly and difficult for God. Marriage counselors cannot save a marriage in danger - only the way of the Cross can save it.

Richard S. Taylor

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Love and the happiness received through love is mentioned often in the Bible and beautiful pictures of marriage are painted (Genesis 2:23; 29:20; Ephesians 5:32; Revelation 21:2,9). But today there are fewer and fewer couples who could be used to represent this ideal. Pray that the Lord will bring revival in marriage, beginning with His children.

THEME 6: FAMILY MATTERS

LESSON 38

Pressures of the World

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Identify the pressures of the world on the family;
- Seek the *wisdom* and guidance of the Word of God regarding these pressures.
- Learn how to lessen the pressure on the family by following the teachings of Jesus.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 5:1-12; 6:19-34

OTHER REFERENCES

Matthew 5:10-19; 6:5-13; 7:1-20; 1 Corinthians 10:12-14

MEMORY VERSE

Matthew 6:33

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

INTRODUCTION

Pressure and competition from our peers are part of daily life. Maria bought a blue dress, so I must have a new dress. Julia likes a certain actress, so I want to have the same hairstyle and like that actress too. The Jones family bought a new car so our family must buy a new car, even if we get into debt! Daily, young people are influenced by other young people. It is worse when young people are influenced to smoke, to use drugs, to experience other worldly pleasures because their neighbours or friends from school do them and they do not want to be different from everyone else!

In the world today, the whole family suffers pressures of one kind or another. Even children are victims of these pressures. Pressures or tensions can come from within us or from the outside. We are controlled by a calendar, a cellphone and a watch, dates, schedules to keep, etc. However, in the midst of these influences, Christian families should give priority to staying devoted to and supporting one another. The Bible gives us answers to the problems faced in our homes, such as the love of God, respect for each other, etc. God’s answers are more effective than the answers of people.

Money and possessions, wrong values, divided loyalties and too much worry are issues addressed by the message of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. These are the four most common pressures

for the family.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

1. *Where Is Your Heart?* (Matthew 6:19-21)

Earthly goods are easily destroyed. Houses, money in the bank, properties, etc., can all disappear suddenly. There is no guarantee or security! Jesus told the people: Do not put all your confidence in the things of this world! When we only think about material goods, and ignore our spiritual needs, we are wrong. It is good to have enough material goods so that we can live without worries; but it will not help us to have too much.

Jesus encourages us to be more concerned about spiritual things. See His question in Matthew 16:26. Paul left position, fame and the glory of the world to follow Christ (Philippians 3:8).

2. *"Seek First The Kingdom"* (Matthew 6:33-34)

If we are Christians, we must be totally loyal to Christ. He must always have first place in our lives. We cannot have a heart divided between God and material goods (Matt. 6:24). We cannot say that we are followers of Christ and have a heart full of greed, envy or pride. The Lord wants our whole heart to love and obey Him. His Spirit and His love will give us peace and satisfaction in life. We must choose: are we following God or are we following the world? Let us surrender today to Christ and He will supply all our needs - material and spiritual.

Let us choose the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33)!

APPLICATION

Three Common Enemies Of The Home:

- ✓ **Selfishness** is the first enemy of the home. Selfishness does not want to participate in anything that does not bring to him self-gain. He follows the law of "everything is for me".
- ✓ **Deceit** is the second enemy of the home. Deceit goes from the small mistakes to sins, such as adultery, etc. We must practice truthfulness.
- ✓ **Divorce** is the third enemy of the home. The greatest cause of divorce is differences of character. Divorce is a great evil which causes unhappiness to the married couple and to the children.

Matthew 6:19-21: In these verses, we have first a negative command and then a positive command. Children realize very early the things that their parents most value - whether material things like a car, money in the bank, clothes and furniture, - or spiritual values, like love, holiness, clean thoughts, good character. If the parents value "things" and life is only an accumulation of goods, the children will be greedy and desire material goods. The Christian parents must show that they value spiritual things "life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." (Luke 12:15b).

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Think about this and act appropriately: Where is your treasure? Do you need to change? Or improve? What if your children followed your example?

THEME 6: FAMILY MATTERS

LESSON 39

You Are An Example

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Accept the responsibility to be the Christian example that children need.
- Understand the role of the parents as the example of behaviour for their children, according to the example of Christ.
- Recognize the pressures of the world upon the family.
- Be encouraged not to abandon the teachings of the family and the church.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Joshua 4:20-24; Job 1:1-5; Psalm 101:2; I Timothy 5:4; II Timothy 1:1-5; 3:14-15; James 3:13-18

MEMORY VERSE

Psalm 101:2

"I will be careful to lead a blameless life – when will you come to me?"

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The young man Timothy is called a "spiritual son" of the Apostle Paul. He received religious education from his mother and his grandmother. He worked with Paul to spread the Gospel. He was the evangelist and pastor of the church of Ephesus. He was in prison with Paul in Rome. According to tradition, he was the first bishop of Ephesus. His name became well known because of his Christian life and because of the two letters that Paul wrote to him. The advice and encouragement that the Apostle Paul gave Timothy are still a great inspiration to many Christian young people.

INTRODUCTION

The best teachers are not in the classrooms, but in the home. The best teachers are parents who are good examples for their children. The parents provide the curriculum; the home is the classroom. When the child is old enough to question the teachings of the parents in relation to other standards in his culture, he has already been influenced by the teachings that have guided his parents. He will never be able to get away from the influence of his early lessons. The time that the parents spend with the children has much more influence on them than the hours spent at school, Sunday school or church. Children take the problems of home to school, instead of taking school problems home. If the family life is pleasant, the child will be able to overcome the problems which

he faces at school. If the family life is unpleasant, the child will accept the options which are offered to him at school, including fellowship with other pupils with similar problems, rebellion and even association with criminal groups. The example of the parent is important in the moulding of adult behaviour. An adult often reacts as if his father or mother were watching him. The decisions of an adult are very often a reaction to the values taught by the parents.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

1. **Inheritance** (*II Timothy 1:1-5*)

When we speak of inheritance we immediately think of lands, goods, houses, jewels, money, etc. that someone left, at their death, to other members of the family. However the inheritance that Timothy received was given by his family while they were still living. The "sincere faith" which was given to him by his mother and grandmother was his inheritance. The material goods which we inherit can disappear in a moment and we remain empty handed. But the teachings that we receive from childhood, if we honour them when we are teens and adults, will continue to produce fruit, as in the case of Timothy. The teachings that Timothy received helped him to become a young man who feared God, a servant who honoured and glorified the name and the work of the Lord.

2. **"Continue ... "** (*II Timothy 3:14*)

The secret of the victorious life of Timothy was not because "from a child you have known the holy scriptures" (3:15). The secret of the victorious life of Timothy was not only that he received the teaching but because he "continued" in the teachings that he received. His obedience strengthened his faith and changed him into a strong young Christian, an example to other young people. Timothy honoured the inheritance which he received from his family. He was obedient to God and kept himself pure. Many young people have had a religious inheritance like the inheritance of Timothy. But they *did* not "continue". They chose to be influenced by the attractions of the world and they left the faith that they once knew.

3. **For You, Young Person** (*II Timothy 3:15*)

Examine your conscience. Where do you find yourself, on the road of faith? Are you a young person who had salvation in Christ and a "sincere" faith, but for some reason you have moved away from God? If this *is* your story, there *is* a remedy: pray to God. Ask Him for forgiveness for your sins. Trust in Him. He will strengthen your faith and will give you a spiritual renewal.

APPLICATION

A great part of the success of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, is due to his mother. She took great care to teach her children the discipline of the home. Charles Wesley became the great hymn writer and his brother became a great preacher of holiness. The home is where the child learns the principles which will guide him for life.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Traditions and customs in the home are part of religious education and are an inheritance for children (Joshua 4:21): pictures, family worship, Christmas, Easter, Sunday worship, etc. How does your religious inheritance benefit you? What inheritance are you preparing for your children?

THEME 6: FAMILY MATTERS

LESSON 40

The Church & The Family

OBJECTIVE

At the end of this lesson students will:

- Examine the importance of the Body of Christ, the Church, to support marriages & families.
- Understand that it is the responsibility of the church to care for those members who need support & comfort.
- Identify & accept responsibility for people who need the support of the church family.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Romans 12:3-21; I Corinthians 12:12-27

OTHER REFERENCES

Galatians 6:1-5

MEMORY VERSE

I Corinthians 12:27

“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it”

INTRODUCTION

The industrial revolution made changes in the family. The search for individual happiness made changes among the members of the family. Divorce became common. In many families the ties which bind the members are very weak. But for many Christians, the system that continues to support the family is the Body of Christ. The local church is the support of the family.

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE PASSAGE

Just as the body cannot exist without a head, the Church cannot exist without the presence of Christ. It is Christ who produces unity, but He alone is not the Church. Religious individuals without Christ, even if they organize into groups of worship, cannot form a Church.

1. The Church Is The Body Of Christ

While the Church is on earth, it needs the daily strength that is received from the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. We are members of the Body of Christ and we are also members of the church family. Just as the Body of Christ needs the support of Christ, the families in the church also need one another. Just as the people in the church respect one another, the members of the family must respect each other.

2. *Members Of One Another*

We are members of the body of Christ and each member belongs to all the others. (Romans 12:5) We do not all have the same work, the same interests, the same gifts. If, in a city, everyone had the same job, the city would die because not all of the jobs that need to be done would get done. No one can think that he controls the body. In recent years, people have begun to think that they must be successful without help from other people. For the Christian, this is impossible. The Christian cannot live without the support of the body of Christ and the control of Christ as the Head. No one should think about what the Church can do for him. Rather he should be more concern with what his gifts enable him to do for the Church.

3. *The Unity Of The Church*

No one should question anyone else's position or usefulness in the Body. Each person has a function given by God, a function which only he can do because he has been given the necessary gifts. We must keep ourselves spiritually healthy if we want to contribute to the Body of Christ. When one part of the physical body gets sick, the whole body is sick. When one of the members of the Body of Christ suffers, the whole Church suffers. The fellowship between the members of the body is necessary for the body to work effectively. Only in this way can there be health and abundant life.

APPLICATION

Use Your Talents! Talent also means "to be interested in" or "to care for". Involvement IS necessary if we want to help others. It takes interest and time to help someone. Many times, we think a talent must be developed with training and education. But being interested in others is a talent. To be interested in others helps us to grow as well as helping another person. It also helps increase our unity. We are a body of believers with the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head and without unity and love, we will be lost and without direction.

Encourage students to thank God for their families, even when their families, are unbelievers. Remind them that they can minister for God to their parents or other relatives. Encourage them not to conform to this world, but to renew themselves daily through the Word of God and prayer. Close with prayer.

PRACTICAL IDEAS

How can you meaningfully minister to your parents or other relatives? Make a plan to renew your mind through the Word of God and prayer in order to achieve goals in this regard.

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JESUS THE MESSIAH KING

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THAT'S WISDOM — IN GOD'S TERMS

UNIT 6
FAMILY MATTERS



ISBN 2370000242663



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