



CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE
AFRICA



SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

for Adults

Volume 22

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

for Adults

Volume 22

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TEACHING ADULTS

There are two qualities necessary to be a Sunday School teacher: You must love God and love people. The most important thing you need to do is to help those 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.

Follow the instructions given on *How to Prepare a Sunday School Lesson*. Then follow the guidelines on *How to Present a Sunday School Lesson*:

How to Prepare a Sunday School 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 Sunday School 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 regular attendees and visitors 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.** On Sunday afternoon, 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 Sunday School 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 read and meditate on 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 organise the lesson into a format that suits you and that you will be able to follow and understand best.
- 10 minutes** **The last minute check-up.** This is the last thing that you do before you go to class on Sunday morning. 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 SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

Learning needs to take place on all levels: emotional, spiritual, social, and mental. Christian Education intends to provide an interaction with the Truth of the gospel in such a way as to change the lives of the students. It is not enough to know and understand a concept mentally, the truth must affect every aspect of a person's life, from the way they think or feel about a subject to the way they respond and treat other people.

Your lesson time should be carefully planned and organised to put into practice your preparation and thought. We would like to suggest the following basic outline for your Sunday School class time. Times given are based on an hour class. Numbers in parentheses are for 45 minutes 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 **10 minutes** to greet your students as they arrive. Allow a time of informal fellowship and discussion of events of the past week. Have the class offer various prayer requests. Start the lesson with prayer, allowing class members to pray for the different requests. Take attendance and receive the offering. Follow-up on any assignment from last week and review last week's lesson.
3. Do the **INTRODUCTION** section during the next **15 (10) minutes**. Allow time for thinking and reflection; do not expect immediate responses on every question or activity. Feel free to make adjustments so the activities will be more relevant to your students' lives.
4. The next **15 (10) minutes** should be spent on the **CONTENT** 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 **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**. Emphasize the importance of allowing the truth to penetrate the lives and behaviours of each one in their everyday life.
6. During the last **5 minutes**, close with prayer and clean up the class area.

Review the success of the lesson as soon as you can. Spend a few minutes making a note of what worked and what didn't for future reference. Remember Sunday School teaching is all about building strong relationships with God, fellow Christians and other people.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR TEACHING ADULTS

The Fellowship Factor

Friends are the main reason that most people choose a church. From 75 to 90% of the people who become church members already have friends within the congregation. In spite of the importance of good teaching in growing a Bible Fellowship group, good relationships are even more important! Fellowship is *not* something we do just to have a good time. Christian fellowship is an act of ministry because it helps people to have a sense of belonging.

To be an effective leader of an Adult Bible Fellowship group (Sunday School class) you should make it a high priority to develop and utilise the leadership skills of others in your class: * *Involve them*: You can't do it all! The involvement of your group members can deepen their commitment and develop their leadership skills; * *Affirm them*: Show your appreciation for your officers and leaders, and give them positive feedback; * *Empower them*: Don't just give them a title, allow them to do the job; * *Recognise them*: Don't let work done behind the scenes go unnoticed. Say 'thank you' often.

Spiritual Formation Foundations

The three steps of spiritual transformation:

- *Believing*: Faith in Christ cannot be separated from the Word. The proclamation of the Good News requires a response (see Romans 10:17).
- *Belonging*: We need each other! We need the example and support that come from community. It is important to know that we belong.

- *Becoming*: God isn't through with any of us. We are all in a process. When we are serving Him and living out our faith, we are in a place where He can work in us.

The goal of every class session is an obedient response to the truth of God's Word. Simply sharing information cannot satisfy our purpose. It is not enough for the truth to be discussed or examined or even acknowledged. We have the privilege of dealing with realities so significant that they demand a response. That which begins as an exercise of reason should end with an exercise of faith. Our aim is for the truth of the Word to be internalised as belief and externalised as action.

The purpose of your class group is life transformation. As leader, you will have the joy of seeing your investment in others produce remarkable changes in their living . . . sometimes. But you will also experience the pain of serving some who appear to be unchanged. How should you respond to those who seem unresponsive? Continue to be a faithful teacher and a true friend. Continue to look for opportunities to get close to them. Continue to trust God to do His good thing in the lives of those you serve!

Memory Verse

Putting God's Word to memory is one of the best defences we have against temptation. The Psalmist understood this, centuries ago when he said: 'I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you' (Psalm 119:11). It is true for God's people in every age. Encourage your class to memorize the *Memory Verse* on a regular basis.

Reaching Beyond Ourselves

Service to others is not an extra to be tagged on to what we do now and then. It is an expression of who we are. Paul tells us to *serve one another in love* (Galatians 5:13). Your group is a perfect arena for participation in Christian service. In fact, thriving groups will always offer some kind of opportunity for meaningful involvement in ministry. Those areas of activity are often a key source of vitality within the group.

HOW TO PRAY WITH THOSE SEEKING GOD'S FACE

Be prepared to pray with those who want to pray as the class respond to the lesson in faith. Make arrangements for the pastor and/or other mature believers to help you particularly when many responses are expected.

- Realize the importance of the moment and give it full attention
- Kneel, sit or stand next to the person you intend to help.
- Silently pray for God's guidance and, without interrupting his/her prayer, pray for them too. He or she is the one who must pray and you are only there to assist as the Holy Spirit leads.
- Listen to the seeker's prayer to determine if they need help.
- When the seeker has finished praying, find out if he has the assurance that his prayer was answered. You do not have to know what the prayer was about.
- If the seeker continues to pray without coming to an end, or without being specific:
 - Carefully ask if you can help. Once permission has been granted,
 - Find out why he/she came to pray.
 - Briefly guide them with the relevant Scriptures.
 - Together pray for the specific need and trust God with the request.
 - When you have finished praying, find out if he has the assurance that his prayer was answered. If not, briefly encourage them to continue trusting God and walking in the light as God leads them. Remind them that it is only by faith in God that they can have victory and, once the work is done in them, the Holy Spirit will testify with their spirit. There may be no physical manifestations but the assurance of the Holy Spirit will always be there.
- Remember to give the pastor the names of all the seekers and the outcomes of their prayers.

GUIDE TO TEACHERS FOR PRESENTING THE LESSON IN ORAL FORM

Overview: Jesus chose to minister to the people of his time in ways that connected to them in practical, memorable and engaging ways. He told stories and he asked questions. These simple tools remain incredibly effective today. In order to benefit the most from the oral approach is to accept your two roles as storyteller and facilitator. Familiarize yourself with the story, then share it in a compelling and accurate way and allow the participants to share their ideas as they answer the questions.

Process: Share your lesson aim for the day and the title of the lesson first. Open discussion by sharing the local proverb. Let everyone reflect and share what they think it means. Then ask them to listen to your story and share it with passion and accuracy. Show the images and ask what people see in these drawings that reminds them of the story. Next step is to ask the suggested questions in order. Keep people focused on the content of the story and not their own opinions. After the main discussion, share the key verse which is a memory verse repeating it several times. Finally share the story slogan and ask how it connects with the local proverb you started with. Repeat the story slogan several times to help people remember the story and the lesson it teaches.

Successful Tips:

1. For oral learners, truth must be delivered in ways that they are familiar with in their communication with each other. Allow time for discussion.
2. There are no wrong answers if you ask the questions well. Allow everyone to participate.
3. During discussion repeat parts of the story to help people draw the lessons from the story. Your goal is to *let them discover the truths*, not to tell them the answers.
4. Explore the local wisdom through discussing the proverb. These visual images created by these proverbs will help people remember and will connect with the scripture.
5. Don't remain on one question too long. Your goal is to ask follow up questions that will help people to discover the truth and know how to apply it to their own lives.
6. Don't allow one or two people to answer all the questions. Choose others so that you hear from everyone and learn from each other. People learn best when they are active participants.
7. The story slogan is important to people remembering the truths. Use repetition to reinforce what they are learning.
8. Your context determines the application of these lessons. If in a rural setting encourage students to apply their lessons in that context. In an urban setting the application may be different. A call to action is always the goal of learning.

Good Facilitator: Your goal is not only to be very familiar with the story but also to guide the learning experience. You must know the content, be ready to keep the conversation going, and create memorable and creative ways to discover truths. The images provided are to help visualize the key parts of the lesson. Make it a point to listen well to the answers people are giving and affirm their answers and participation. People love a good story so they will come back again and again if you are a good storyteller and facilitator.

Now . . . Go and Tell the Story!

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Lesson 01 | THE GOSPEL BRINGS FREEDOM |
| | Scripture: Galatians 1 and 2 |

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|--|
| Objective |
| To learn to apply the gospel and its benefits to our lives as believers. |

| |
|--|
| Memory Verse |
| “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God’s curse!” - Galatians 1:8 |

INTRODUCTION

In the middle of the first century A.D., Galatia was a Roman province located in the central region of Asia Minor, part of what’s now known as Turkey. In the letter to the Galatians, Paul speaks of the Galatian churches without specifying the name of any city. Paul defended the authenticity of the gospel he had preached to the Galatians, insisting that he had received his mission from God through Jesus Christ, and not from men.

As in the days of the apostle Paul, the gospel has been manipulated and perverted throughout church history by people who used it for interests foreign to the gospel. This lesson is important because it will help us recognize the true gospel and its benefits; and, if anyone tries to change the gospel message, “let them be under God’s curse.” (Galatians 1:8)

I. The Gospel Is Received By Revelation (Galatians 1:6-17)

A. The Gospel Is Revelation

We receive the gospel through an encounter with God, revealed through his Son Jesus Christ. He is “God with us.” The encounter that the apostle Paul experienced with the Lord Jesus transformed his life; He went from being a persecutor of the church to a preacher of the gospel (Acts 9:1-19, Galatians 1:15-16). From that time on, Paul walked according to this revelation, as he indicated in Galatians 2:2. We can compare this to the experience of the Israelites in the desert; they moved when the cloud moved; and settled down when the cloud stopped; that was how the Israelites recognized the presence of the Lord (Exodus 13:17-22). In Paul’s case, what was important was his encounter with Christ.

B. The Gospel isn’t Something We Just Learn

It’s not enough to simply learn the gospel. If this were so, only a few academics would be Christians. Remember the visit of Nicodemus to Jesus (John 3). Nicodemus was a member of the Pharisees, a religious teacher, a sincere man who was attracted by the character and teaching of Jesus.

So, when this Pharisee sought Jesus at night, the Master told him clearly that he needed to be born again (John 3:3). Nicodemus, as an academic and a teacher of the Jews, without a doubt, knew that the law was the Word of God. However, the Lord explained that this wasn’t enough nor was it a guarantee to inherit the kingdom of God. The only way he could become a true disciple, to be transformed by having an encounter with God, was that he needed to be born again (John 3:5).

II. The Gospel Brings Freedom And Not Bondage (Galatians 2:1-5)

A. The Freedom Of The Compulsive Power Of Sin

In the first place, the freedom that Christ gives us is freedom from the chains of sin (John 8:34, Romans 6:5- 23), and also, from the vain obsessive illusion that people can obtain life and freedom under their own initiative. The gospel has the power to free us from sin and the consequences that sin brings with it through Jesus’ death (1 John 1:7). This freedom begins and continues the process of completely liberating us mentally, physically, socially and spiritually. The plan of God’s kingdom, prophesied in Isaiah 61:1-3, was confirmed by the Lord in Luke 4:18-21.

All this demonstrates the complete freedom that Jesus Christ brings to mankind.

B. Freedom Is A Voluntary Act

Galatians 2:3 says: “*Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek.*” God, through the gospel message, wants us to choose freedom, He doesn’t obligate us to be free. People are free to make choices. Voluntary freedom means submitting ourselves to our Liberator. As Christians, we voluntarily submit to the principles and values of God’s Kingdom. Remember that salvation is by God’s grace (Ephesians 2:8 John 6:44). God’s gospel message is for everyone (Ephesians 2:8). Grace is a completely free gift from God.

III. The Gospel Brings Justification By Faith (Galatians 2:15-17)

A. Justification isn’t Gained By Works Of The Law

In the old covenant, there were general laws for the people, and also, specific laws for each transgressor, if they wanted to be absolved from guilt. However, those laws failed because humanity, due to its contaminated condition, couldn’t meet the demands. Therefore, a new agreement was necessary where nobody can be justified by human works. One of the Psalms says: “*Don’t bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you.*” (Psalm 143:2).

B. The Gospel Brings Us Justification By Faith

We’re justified by God when He forgives us. Through the love of Christ, God forgives our sins, our blame is canceled,

our punishment remitted, and we’re accepted by God as just people. Thanks to the blood of Christ, there’s a provision to erase and absolve our sin. Through Adam, sin entered the world, and through Jesus Christ, righteousness entered the world (cf. Romans 5, 6) “*You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.*” (Romans 6:18)

IV. The Gospel Is New Life In Christ (Galatians 2:20)

A. “... I No Longer Live ...”(v. 20)

Paul demonstrated a total consecration to the Lord. This implies dying to oneself, because God perfects us when we put our self under His will. Consecration means offering all of ourselves to God. The power of sin in our lives is broken because we have died to sin with Christ. Death to our self with Christ is the only way in which those who are enslaved by the law can find freedom. What dies is the old selfish side of our self which is both impotent and desperately contaminated by sin.

B. “. . . Christ Lives In Me . . . ”

What immense security! This expression shows that Christ is the owner of our lives. In other words, He is no longer like the tenant who lives in the house, who at any time can be removed, rather, He comes to be the absolute owner of the house, because He already bought it with a price. There are other terms that express the essential place Jesus should play in our lives and the life of the church such as, captain, pilot, the cornerstone, and the head of the body. Consecration to Christ brings real value to our lives.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What’s revelation?
- Could you say, like the Apostle Paul, the following: “... I no longer live ...”? Why?
- Since you received the gospel, what have you been freed from?

CONCLUSION

The gospel, which was announced by the apostle Paul, is a divine revelation and it has its maximum expression in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Only He, by His sacrifice on the cross, can give us freedom from sin in its many forms. In Christ, we’re now declared righteous. In Christ, through faith, we have been declared blameless before God. Let us not be deceived by the new indulgences of this century!

Lesson 1:

THE GOSPEL BRINGS FREEDOM

Lesson Aim: To learn to apply the gospel and its benefits to our lives as believers.

Local Proverb: There is no need of carrying one's luggage on the head in the car.

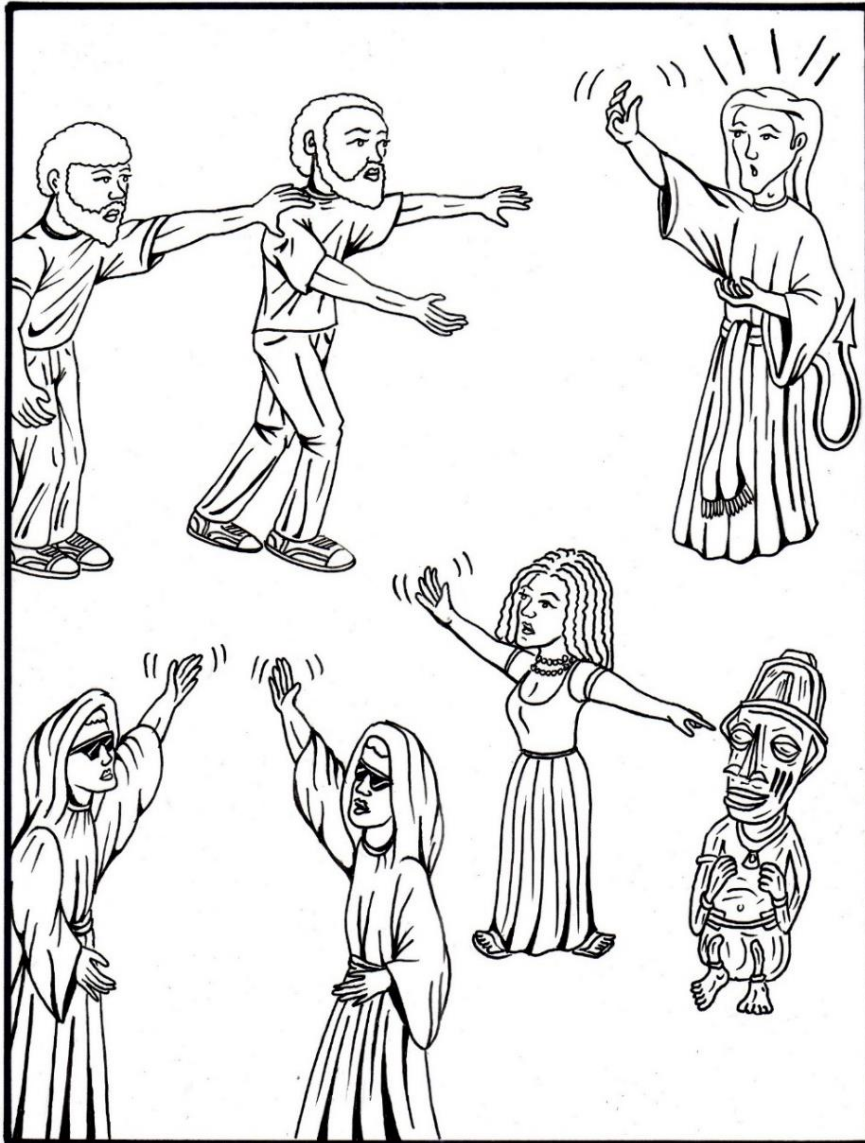
Passage to Study: Galatians 1 & 2

Memory Verse: So if we ourselves, or even an angel from heaven, preach to you something different than the Good News, he should be condemned! Galatians 1:8

Questions to Ask:

1. What gets your attention in this story?
2. What do we hear about freedom or bondage in this passage?
3. Have you or someone you know had a similar experience to today's story?
4. What do we learn about how to live a Spirit filled life and why is that important?
5. Which truth from this story will you share with someone this week?

Story Slogan: The gospel of Christ is enough to make us free.



| | |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| Lesson | LIVING ONLY BY FAITH IN JESUS |
| 02 | Scripture: Galatians 3 |

| Objective |
|--|
| To understand that the Spirit of God is received by faith and not by the works of the law. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because “the righteous will live by faith.” Galatians 3:11 |

INTRODUCTION

In the first verses of Galatians 3, we see that the apostle Paul was upset with the Galatian church; he called the Christians foolish. Supposedly, these brothers and sisters understood the meaning of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and were testifying to the blessing of the Holy Spirit in their lives. However, what they were doing disappointed the apostle. The Galatian Christians were allowing themselves to be influenced by some Judaizers who were making the gentile Christians adhere to ‘carnal’ practices (traditions and works of the law). .

It’s through faith in God that every blessing is received, from Abraham’s time until our own. Our blessings don’t come through just keeping the law, but by faith in the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Paul told the Galatians, correcting their distorted concept of the new life in Christ. The Holy Spirit is received by Faith (Galatians 3:1-5)

A. The Unnecessary Dependence On The Works Of The Law

Paul spoke out very strongly against the Galatians’ weak faith through their constant dependence on the works of the law. They had fallen into the folly of letting themselves be influenced by religious practices (legalism) that supposedly would nourish their spiritual life. The Galatians were being influenced by Jewish traditions, possibly mixed with some pagan elements, and these were affecting their testimony.

The Galatians’ desire to keep religious practices that were not required by the gospel, for example, special dates or observing historical events (Galatians 4:9-10), had diverted their attention from the spirit of dependence and devotion on Christ.

B. The Necessary Dependence On The Holy Spirit

Sin separates people from God. The sinner, through his repentance before God, accepts the sacrifice of the blood of Jesus Christ as the only payment for his sins. God justifies the repentant sinner, regardless of whether he keeps the law (works of law or Jewish traditions). Justification is received by faith in that unique and miraculous redeeming work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is accomplished by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:17, 8:11).

The church of the Lord should encourage congregations to live according to the works of the Spirit and not by the law. We must be motivated by faith and communion with God, who has adopted us as his children. Paul was very firm in confronting this problem, reminding them, in no uncertain terms, of the justifying power of God in their conversion.

I. The Covenant Of Faith With Abraham Is Ratified In Christ (Galatians 3:6-18)

A. Abraham Reached The Blessing Through His Faith

The Old Testament also bears witness to the fact that Abraham was justified by his faith, not by his works. This experience took place during his encounter with God and obedience to His call, obeying all that God had asked him to do. Genesis 12:7 says: “*The LORD appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your offspring I will give this land.’ So, he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him.*” Abram, who God later re-named Abraham, left his country to go to the land that God had promised to show him, “... *even though he*

didn't know where he was going" (Hebrews 11:8). After Abraham arrived in the land, God announced that He would give that land to Abraham's descendants.

Genesis 15:6 says: "*Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*" Paul used the example of Abraham in his Epistle to the Galatians. Abraham didn't receive merit for his works but rather for his faith.

B. We're Blessed Through Faith In Christ

In the light of God's plans for Abraham and his descendants, there's no doubt that his moral character, and not his works, would constitute the basis of his obedience and constant validity of the many blessings of the Almighty to humanity, through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, God's blessings and promises for his children are still valid. Our mission as a church is to secure those blessings of redemption and provision for all those who join the divine purposes by faith in Jesus Christ.

Even today, we're brothers and sisters of Abraham because we too profess faith. We're blessed by receiving the grace that leads us to believe and to receive justification. Living by faith means that both Christ's redeeming and justifying work operates in each one of us for salvation, and frees us from every yoke, whether they're legalistic laws, false doctrines, traditions or paganism. Jesus is the fulfillment of every blessing that the Lord planned to give to the world through Abraham, our brother.

II. The Law Comes Before The Promise (Galatians 3:19-29)

A. The Purpose Of The Law

Our inheritance as believers is based on the promise, and we'll receive it by faith, just as Abraham did. This

inheritance doesn't just come from keeping the law. In the Old Testament according to the law, a man was considered cursed for dying on a tree, yet the One who died for us on the cross brought great blessing. In Christ Jesus, we're blessed and free from every legalistic or traditionalist yoke that the Old Testament covenant had placed over the people.

Paul offered a clear explanation and understanding in Galatians 3:2,5 and Romans 3:20-26 regarding the role of the law. Paul said that while just keeping the law cannot offer us spiritual justification, God the Father, and Jesus Christ demand every believer, guided by the Spirit, to fulfill the law of God's love to others. "*Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ*" (Galatians 6:2).

B. The Privilege Of Being Co-Heirs With Christ

We have the joyful privilege of being free in Christ, the new law in Christ no longer represents a heavy yoke. He leads us in love through his Holy Spirit to put the commandments into practice as a result of the justification of our lives. Christ has baptized us by His Spirit, we're clothed with his holiness, and enabled to fulfill the redemptive purposes for which God has called us. The essence of our blessed heritage doesn't distinguish us from other races, cultures, etc. but rather, it unites us and strengthens us in communion with others, without prejudice.

The nature of this so-called 'New Covenant' commits us to a unity of true faith in Christ, as heirs of His liberating grace. We must be very clear that the Spirit of God in us covered us with His mercy when we believed in Jesus Christ and accepted His unique and wonderful work that freed us from all bondage to the flesh. So, let's be consistent with this gospel of truth, holding on to its sound doctrine, and living out the faith that unites all true believers.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- Are you sure you have been justified before God? (Galatians 3:6-7)
- Are you sure that you have already been redeemed from the curse of the law (by not having to fulfill it)? Comment (Galatians 3:10-14).

CONCLUSION

Currently, our traditions, although they may seem lawful and helpful, can weaken our faith in the Spirit, and prevent us from reaching the precious and great promises of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lesson 2:

LIVING ONLY BY FAITH IN JESUS

Lesson Aim: To understand that the Spirit of God is received by faith and not by the works of the law.

Local Proverb: The sun will shine on those who stand, before it shines on those who kneel under it.

Passage to Study: Galatians 3

Memory Verse: "So it is clear that no one can be made right with God by the law because the righteous will live by faith." Galatians 3:11

Questions to Ask:

1. What gets your attention in this story?
2. What do we hear about freedom or bondage in this passage?
3. Have you or someone you know had a similar experience to today's story?
4. What do we learn about how to live a Spirit filled life and why is that important?
5. Which truth from this story will you share with someone this week?

Story Slogan: Traditions trap us; faith in Christ frees us!



| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Lesson 03 | BLESSED FREEDOM IN CHRIST! |
| | Scripture: Galatians 4-5:13 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To know and express our gratitude to God for the freedom we have received as His children; to understand that nothing is by our merit alone, but we're freed by Jesus Christ. |

| Memory Verse |
|---|
| "It's for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and don't let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." Galatians 5:1 |

INTRODUCTION

Many times as human beings, we tend to forget who brought us to the state in which we are currently. In this lesson, we'll study the true meaning of freedom in Christ, focusing on those issues that prevent us from fully enjoying this freedom.

The apostle Paul visited Galatia on his first missionary journey, establishing churches there as he had already done in other places. Unfortunately, some years later, he learned that the Judaizers had infiltrated the churches he had begun. The Christians were being deceived to such an extent that some ended up moving away from true Christianity by accepting Jewish rites and ceremonies. Paul realized that there was a serious crisis in these churches, which brought him much pain and worry.

I. We're Redeemed By Christ And Adopted As Sons (Galatians 4:1-7)

A. Slaves Under The Elements Of The World

The apostle Paul used symbolisms, such as the freedom that a child receives when he reaches the age of adulthood, and the symbolism of slavery. When we were children, we lived under the rules established by our family. When we reached adulthood, we no longer were obligated to comply with the rules imposed on us when we were minors. Galatians 4:1 says: *"What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate."* Thus, a child doesn't differ from a slave in terms of dependence on the rules established in the house, even when the child owns everything in the house.

As people, we're slaves to the laws of this world, such as children who are subject to the established rules, or as a slave is subject to the rules of their master. Only the father or the master can say how long they were obligated to follow the rules, and only the master or father can say when they can be independent or free.

B. The Fulfillment Of Time

Galatians 4:4 says: *"But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law..."*

When the time was right, the one who could lead us from childhood to maturity, from slavery to freedom, came to our world. This wonderful freedom came when the Lord decided it was time, because the conditions wereright.

The Lord leads us from slavery to freedom. But, we don't gain this freedom on our own merits. Only Christ can give us this freedom when we recognize Him as the Son of God and surrender our lives to Him. The Father frees us and receives us as his children.

II. We're Free From Human Traditions (Galatians 4:8-11)

A. Influence Of Traditions

There are many people who are influenced by traditions. However, when Christ comes into our lives, He makes us new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17), and this implies a change of direction in our

whole way of life. Today we struggle with Christian syncretism, where many who, having known Christ, haven't yet left past pagan and idolatrous traditions behind. Many sing to God on Sunday, but on Monday, they dance to 'Baal', and they continue as if they never knew God. In Galatians 4:8, we read: *"Formerly, when you didn't know God, you were slaves to those who by nature aren't gods."*

By receiving the freedom of Christ in our lives, we're free in an integral way. That's to say that we aren't freed from only some things, but it's a complete freedom. Therefore, we must recognize that Christ doesn't share His place in our lives with anyone, especially not with someone who kept us in bondage for so long. We must always bear in mind that Jesus Christ is the only Lord, and we must recognize Him as such.

III. We're Children Of The Promise (Galatians 5:1-13)

A. Signs In Freedom

In Galatians 5:1, we read the following: *"It's for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and don't let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."* Christ made us free and He expects us to be subject to Him and not to the beliefs of this world. He doesn't want us to live under the yoke of slavery. He wants us to live as true children of God, free through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Freedom doesn't come from belonging to a congregation, or from doing two or three things within a church. Freedom doesn't come from what

we do or from the merits we may have, but it comes through the work of Jesus Christ.

Freedom is based on faithfulness. We're free, because Jesus Christ was faithful to God's purpose. To stand firm in the freedom of Christ requires extreme faithfulness.

B. A Little Bit Of Yeast Affects All The Dough

Galatians 5:9 tells us: *"A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough."* The 'yeast' in this text doesn't represent evil, but the false teaching about circumcision and the 'dough' represents the churches. The Message version of Galatians puts it very clearly: *"You were running superbly! Who cut in on you, deflecting you from the true course of obedience? This detour doesn't come from the One who called you into the race in the first place. And please don't toss this off as insignificant. It only takes a minute amount of yeast, you know, to permeate an entire loaf of bread. Deep down, the Master has given me confidence that you will not defect. But the one who is upsetting you, whoever he is, will bear the divine judgment"* (vs. 9-10).

Let's be careful not to leave a small door open for wrong teachings to come in! Sometimes, we spoil the work of Christ by granting ourselves the freedom to think or believe that sin can coexist with the holiness to which we have been called to live. Once we have been called to freedom by Jesus Christ, He transforms us to live in holiness. In the life of holiness, there's no room for evil.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- Whose slaves were we before we met Christ?
- When are we really free from human traditions?
- What attitude must we have in regard to the freedom that Christ gives us?

CONCLUSION

Christ paid a high price for our freedom, and only He can give us that freedom through faith. It doesn't matter who we are; there's no way to achieve that freedom by our own merits. We need Christ to truly be free.

Lesson 3:

BLESSED FREEDOM IN CHRIST!

Lesson Aim: To express our gratitude to God for the freedom we have received, and to know that Christ have made us free, now we are children of God.

Local Proverb: “A man who takes away another man’s freedom’s is a prisoner of hatred”

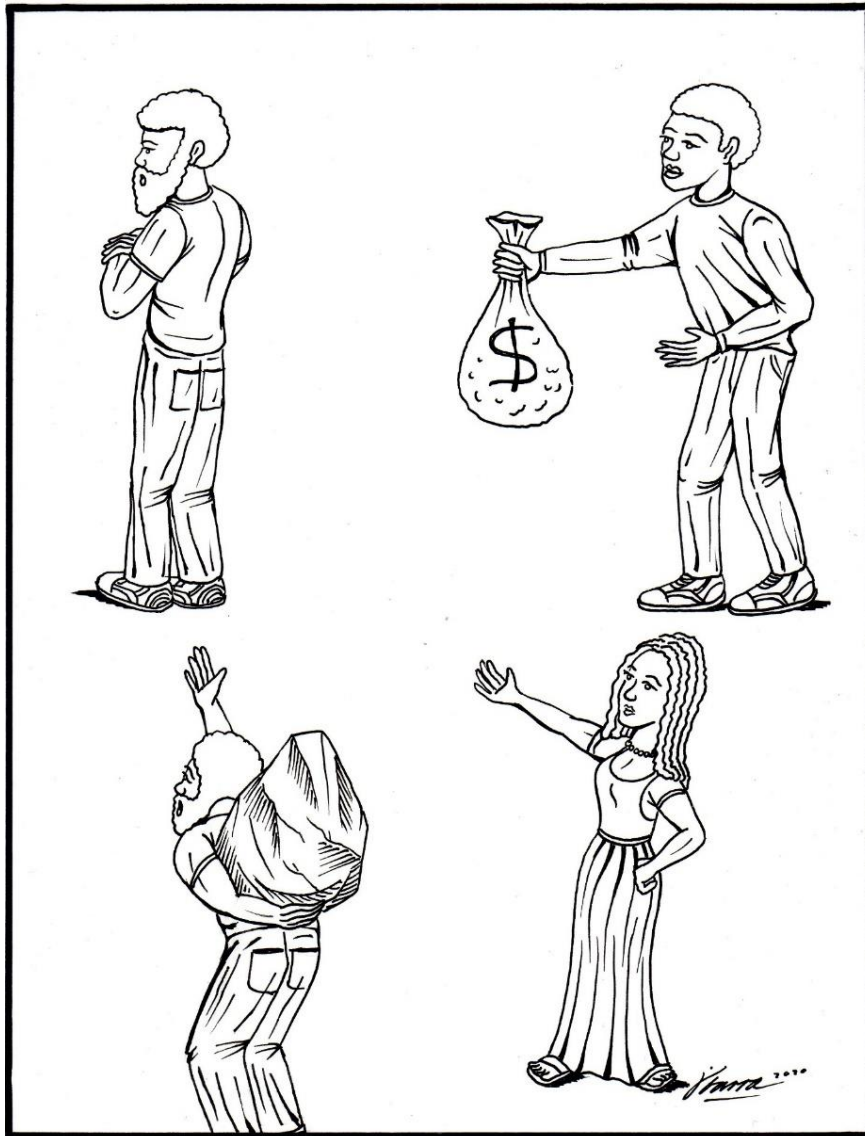
Passage to Study: Galatians 4 - 5:13

Memory Verse: We have freedom now because Christ made us free. So stand strong. Do not change and go back into the slavery of the law (Galatians 5:1)

Questions to Ask:

1. What gets your attention in this story?
2. What do we hear about freedom or bondage in this passage?
3. Have you or someone you know had a similar experience to today's story?
4. What do we learn about how to live a Spirit filled life and why is that important?
5. Which truth from this story will you share with someone this week?

Story Slogan: True freedom is found in bondage to Christ.



| | |
|-----------|----------------------------------|
| Lesson | GUIDED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT |
| 04 | Scripture: Galatians 5:16-26 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To motivate ourselves to experience what it means to live guided by the Holy Spirit |

| Memory Verse |
|---|
| “So, I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” Galatians 5:16 |

INTRODUCTION

Every person who becomes a Christian begins to experience a struggle in their inner being: desires arise from hearts not given completely over to Christ, an insatiable thirst to satisfy the flesh, a struggle against what’s being produced in our hearts by the action of the Holy Spirit. While God is making us new, we face internal struggles which end only when we totally surrender to God and God’s Spirit fills us. This is made visible through the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

The Holy Spirit guides us and fills us, but we have to choose to let him do it. Because some people haven’t made that choice, we can observe in the church long time believers who are up and down in their Christian lives and frequently fall into sin again and again. One of the main reasons is that they haven’t surrendered their lives completely to Christ, thus impeding the work of the Holy Spirit.

A. What Must Be Crucified? (vs. 19-21)

The Lord’s church should be composed of people who walk by the Spirit and have repented and been forgiven of all the things in their lives that displeases God (the works or desires of the flesh). We have to die to the former way of living. The Holy Spirit, through the Bible message, teaches us how to live in the kingdom of God.

Paul said that those who keep on sinning won’t inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:21). It’s not enough to go to church, be a member in good standing, tithe, be baptized, be a leader, etc. All this is important, but we must crucify the flesh, because practicing the works of the flesh will impede us from inheriting the kingdom of God. God wants people guided by His Spirit and living the fullness of the life that He offers. People who disobey His will, who don’t put God first, will have to pay the consequences.

B. Crucifying The Flesh.

Here are some recommendations of things we can do to obtain victory:

1. Seek to have a real experience with the Holy Spirit.

2. Live daily in the fullness that He imparts.
3. Surrender the selfish desires to God in personal times of prayer.
4. Avoid places, people, and situations that can tempt you to fall or backslide.

People in our churches need to know God personally and have experiences with Him that will impact their lives. This is the only way the process of transformation into the image of Christ can take place.

**I. What steps can I take to crucify the flesh?
The Fruit Of The Spirit (Galatians 5:22- 26)**

The manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit in one’s life is the most tangible evidence of the presence of God in the life of a believer. In many churches today, people seek supernatural experiences, moving worship, speaking in tongues, euphoric experiences, among others. However, these events don’t necessarily change the human heart, and many people continue life without being transformed. The supreme goal is for Christ to dwell within us. Paul said: “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there’s no law*” (vs. 22-23).

When we have really experienced the fullness of the Holy Spirit, we'll demonstrate the fruit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23 in our lives.

1. Love: The love expressed in this text is 'agape' love. This Greek word is used mostly in the New Testament and it means the following: a universal, unconditional love that transcends and persists regardless of circumstances. Agape love will always wish for the best. With agape love, we don't just love 'because of', but 'in spite of.' God wants believers to love with agape love. If we're full of the Holy Spirit, our lives will show love towards God and those around us. Let love be what distinguishes our lives as believers! (1 Corinthians 13:1-2)

2. Joy: The Greek term implies that joy comes from what the believer experiences spiritually (Romans 14:17). True joy is acquired in God, and isn't produced by the circumstances of life. A believer may be having a bad time, and still have joy. This joy has to do with the fulfillment of God's purpose in our lives. When that's happening, the Holy Spirit keeps us joyful. A clear example is Jesus: "For the joy set before him he endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2).

3. Peace: Usually in the New Testament the Greek word 'eirene' corresponds with the Hebrew word 'shalom' and means not just freedom from trouble, but everything that makes life good. Peace is the tranquility of heart that stems from having faith that everything is in the hands of God.

4. Forbearance: Implies waiting for God's timing in every area of life. The Holy Spirit guides us to be still, and allow God to work. If we're patient, we'll know when to walk ahead and when to wait.

5. Kindness: Those who are led by the Spirit always have a kind and gentle character. They treat others with affection, tenderness.

6. Goodness: It is an active virtue; the willingness to always do good, to give to others. A good person puts his personal interests aside and cares for his neighbor. The parable of the good Samaritan exemplifies goodness very well (Luke 10:25-37). There we see the good Samaritan going out of his way to do good to someone without calculating whether he deserved it or not. It's a continual attitude of giving.

7. Faithfulness: Means to be trustworthy.

8. Gentleness: Closely linked to humility, gentleness is grace of the soul. It's not weakness, but instead it's strength under control. Jesus gave us the greatest example of gentleness or meekness (Matthew 11:29). Gentle people aren't violent and are humble. Violent believers haven't yet been filled with the Spirit. Meekness is tested in the way that we respond to criticism. An indignant response, or the thought that we know more than others, will fail the test. When this 'fruit' of the Spirit is in our hearts, no matter that people might have done to us, we'll seek the forgiveness and the well-being of the other person.

9. Self-control: It's the power that God's Spirit gives us to control our sinful desires and say "no" to our flesh. It's used in the disciplines of an athlete (1 Corinthians 9:25) and in the domain of sex that characterizes the Christian (1 Corinthians 7:9). Self-control gives us the power to say "yes" to the Spirit and foster a beautiful, bountiful harvest of spiritual fruit!

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- List the fruits of the Spirit.
- How are the fruits of the Spirit evident in your life?
- Take some time to self-assess in this regard.

CONCLUSION

If we say we're a child of God but are still constantly struggling with sinful desires that lead to stumbling and backsliding because we want to satisfy the desires of the flesh, we must seek urgently to settle accounts with God and give him our whole being sincerely and totally. For God, nothing is impossible! (Luke 1:37). A committed Christian will produce a harvest of Christlike fruit in their lives.

Lesson 4:

GUIDED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Lesson Aim: To learn how to live by following the Spirit and what are the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Local Proverb: Those that plan without the help of the Spirit must plan again.

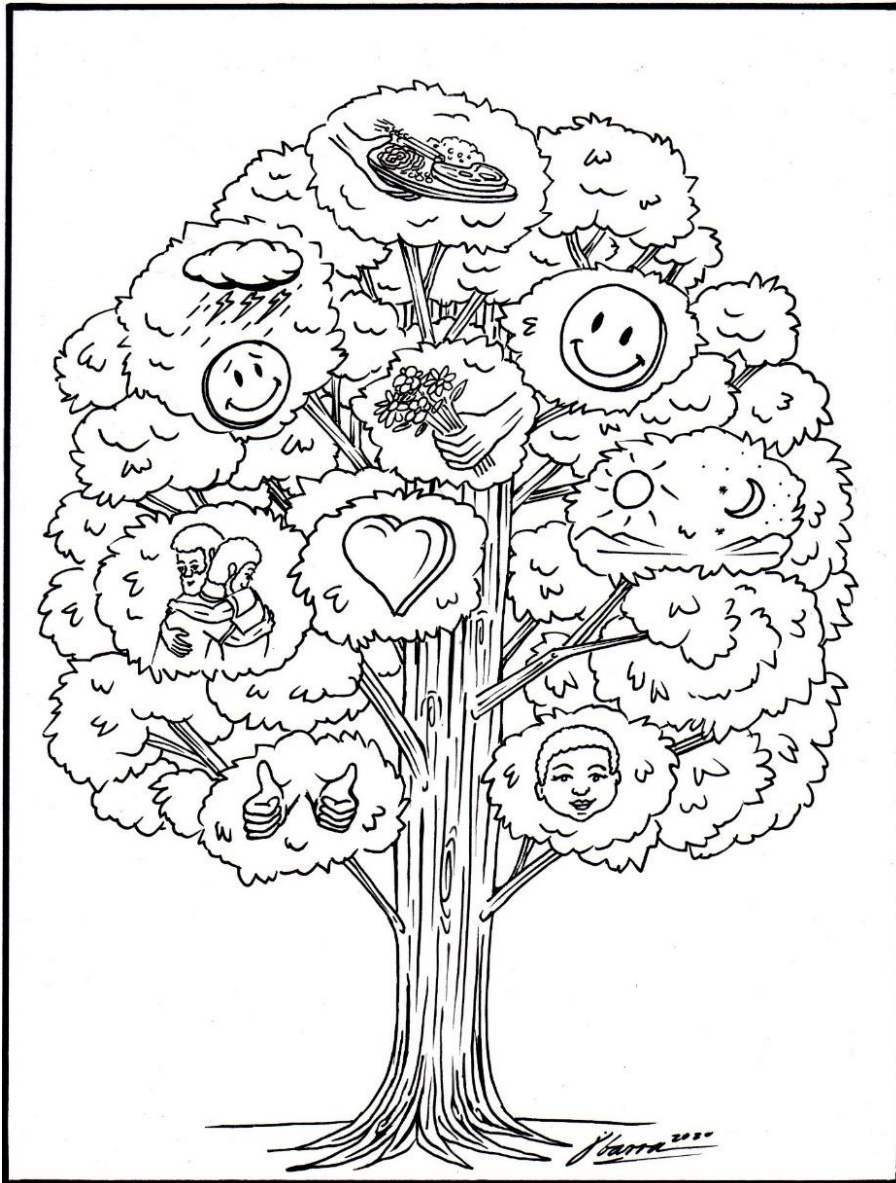
Passage to Study: Galatians 5:16 - 26

Memory Verse: But the Spirit gives love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. There is no law that says these things are wrong.

Questions to Ask:

1. What gets your attention in this story?
2. What do we hear about freedom or bondage in this passage?
3. Have you or someone you know had a similar experience to today's story?
4. What do we learn about how to live a Spirit filled life and why is that important?
5. Which truth from this story will you share with someone this week?

Story Slogan: Live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.



| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Lesson 05 | DOING GOOD TO OTHERS |
| | Scripture: Galatians 6:1-10 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To understand that the gospel of Christ implies doing good to others; and that the true life in the Spirit does good deeds out of love. |

| Memory Verse |
|---|
| “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we’ll reap a harvest if we don’t give up.” Galatians 6:9. |

INTRODUCTION

What does it mean to restore someone who has fallen into sin or difficulty? Do our churches really do this? What happens when we discover that a brother or sister is at fault? Do we criticize them or even expel them from the congregation? Or do we restore them with a loving gentle spirit?

I. True Spirituality Restores (Galatians 6:1-2)

The apostle Paul challenged the Galatian Christians on this issue. What does restore mean? The word ‘restore’ means to return something to its former condition. An analysis of this definition leads us to ask ourselves: In how many churches is this a reality? Apparently, the Galatian churches needed to be reminded that this practice is in keeping with the true Christian spirit.

However, the true gospel, the gospel of grace, isn’t like that. When the Holy Spirit rules in the church, there shouldn’t be a tendency to condemn those who have fallen, but rather to restore them. So, when a member of the church is caught committing a sin, they shouldn’t be judged or condemned, but restored through the appropriate process leading to a renewed and full relationship with God.

A. “... You Who Live By The Spirit ...” (v. 1b)

Paul says it needs to be done “gently” (v.1c) referring to the care, patience and love that the restorer should put into this ministry. This restoration process needs to be done lovingly, putting aside feelings of superiority which could cause despair or discomfort. Paul warns those whose seek to restore others: “But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted” (v.1d). There’s no place for spiritual superiority. We’re no better than others, and God has not made us their judges; we’re only brothers and sisters who aren’t saved by obeying the law perfectly, but by faith in Christ.

B. “Carry Each Other’s Burdens” (v. 2a)

In this Christian journey, we cannot deny that we need each other’s help. If we see a fellow Christian in some fault, we have to restore him. If they see us in any fault, we’ll also need to be restored with love. Therefore, we always need to help each other. This doesn’t mean that we’re always going to be sinning. However, when we’re going through problems, when we’re tempted, we should know that our brothers and sisters will support us; and if we fall, we’ll be restored, just as we would do for others.

II. True Spirituality Is Humble And Pleasing (Galatians 6:3-6)

A. Recognize That Without Christ, We’re Nothing (v. 3)

We Christians, without Christ, are nothing. Therefore, we have no right to condemn the one who is in need and regrets what they have done. Rather than condemning them, we must do the opposite and help them enter into a restoration process. For just as we need Jesus, our brother or sister also needs Him. If we think that we can win or overcome by our own strength, we’re fooling ourselves. We can only overcome sin in the power of the Spirit of God. Nobody is free from being tempted. For all this, we must not deceive ourselves ... We all need Jesus!

B. “The One Who Receives Instruction In The Word Should Share All Good Things With Their Instructor” (v. 6)

We might ask, what does this verse have to do here? It's important to consider the concept of gratitude.

This teaching about gratitude could be applied to the following cases:

1. The giving of our goods to the church for the blessing of the servants of the Lord who work in setting up and restoring the 'sheep' that move away from the fold.

2. Sharing with one another and helping each other as the Lord has prospered us, and as we're helping each other materially, we also help in spiritual aspects.

So, in the true spirituality of the gospel, we need to be grateful and share our material goods as well. We must not forget this!

III. True Spirituality Does Good (Galatians 6:7-10)

A. "A Man Reaps What He Sows" (vs. 7-8)

This passage stands as a warning. It's true that we aren't saved by the works, however, it's also true that real faith will become evident in our actions (James 2:18). We cannot deceive God. What we sow, we'll reap in due time.

I. Two Types of Sowing (v. 8)

A. Worldly planting would involve:

1.) Not sharing our assets, but thinking only about ourselves, being selfish (v.6).

2.) Not restoring the brother or sister when they fall. Deciding not to help them or show interest in their restoration, being judgmental instead of guiding them to a process of restoration, turn our backs on them, leaving them alone.

3.) Keeping on sinning and not fleeing from evil in our personal lives.

B. In contrast, sowing in the Spirit implies:

1.) Lovingly sharing that which you receive from the Lord.

2.) Abandoning the life of sin and live practicing what pleases God (Galatians 5:22-23).

II. Two Types Of Harvest (v. 8)

- If you sow for the flesh, you'll reap corruption. *"Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction"* (Galatians 6:8). That destruction refers to self-destruction, the loss of personal salvation, and finally, loss of eternal life.

- If you sow for the Spirit, you'll reap eternal life! This appreciation of the harvest is key to a correct perspective of justification by faith, because although we're saved by faith, what we sow becomes a determining factor. For this reason, it's important to emphasize: *"whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life"* (v. 8).

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- How would you define a spiritual Christian?
- In your own words, define the term "humble."
- What does sowing and harvesting refer to in this biblical passage?

CONCLUSION

The true gospel of Christ is the gospel of the Spirit that fills the believers so that they live in perfect love. The believer who lives in the perfect love of God does good: Restoring with gentleness those who have fallen; sharing what they have with those who are their teachers and all that are within their power to do so; and living a life of holiness, apart from sin. Our harvest will be eternal life through faith in Jesus.

Lesson 5:

DOING GOOD TO OTHERS

Lesson Aim: To understand that the gospel of Christ implies doing good to others.

Local Proverb: However little food we have, we'll share it even if it's only one locust. What you give you get, ten times over.

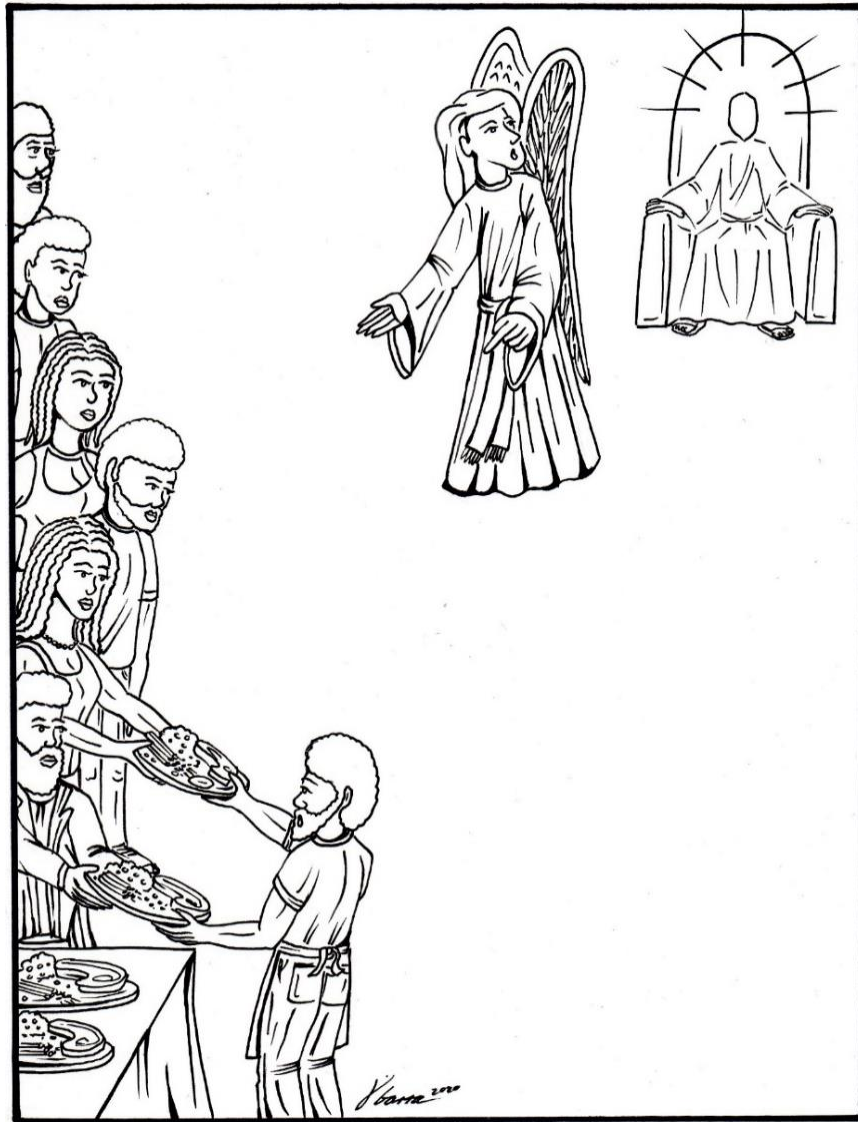
Passage to Study: Galatians 6:1-10

Memory Verse: "We must not become tired of doing good. We will receive our harvest of eternal life at the right time. We must not give up!" Galatians 6:9

Questions to Ask:

1. What gets your attention in this story?
2. What do we hear about freedom or bondage in this passage?
3. Have you or someone you know had a similar experience to today's story?
4. What do we learn about how to live a Spirit filled life and why is that important?
5. Which truth from this story will you share with someone this week?

Story Slogan: The believer who lives in the perfect love of God does good.



| | |
|-----------|-----------------------------|
| Lesson | CHOSEN TO BE BLESSED |
| 06 | Scripture: Ephesians 1:3-6 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To know about and enjoy God's blessings for us as believers |

| Memory Verse |
|---|
| "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." Ephesians 1:4 |

INTRODUCTION

Walking along the pathway of the gospel of Christ, we get to know little by little who God is, and what he has for his sons and daughters. In this lesson, we'll see that all human beings have been chosen to be blessed. God is like a loving father and mother who designate for all their children their respective inheritance, with the sole condition that they are their children.

I. Blessings By God (Ephesians 1:3)

Remember that the apostle Paul was a Jew, a Jew who professed fidelity to the Word of God. However, after his conversion and being a Christian Jew from that moment on, his purpose was to glorify the heavenly Father, who in his mercy chose him to be his instrument of blessing to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15), including the Ephesians.

A. Can Human Beings Bless God?

First, we'll examine verse 3: *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."* Immediately after greeting the Ephesians, Paul prayed a prayer of gratitude and blessing to the Father: *"Praise be to the God and Father..."* Let's look at this prayer.

1. It's common to read in the book of Psalms expressions of this nature. Psalm 34:1 says: *"I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips"* (see Psalms 41:13; 96:2; 103:1-2).

2. We can bless God by praising him and giving him glory. In other words, we bless God when we worship Him. What Paul taught us is that the first duty of every Christian is to worship God. We need to give Him first place in our lives, recognizing that without Him, we have nothing.

B. Father Of Our Lord Jesus Christ

1. The Bible confirms that Jesus is God's son: "and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22); Jesus is part of the Trinity and we must worship Him too (1 John 5:20). We must insist on the deity of Jesus Christ since many people who don't read the Bible with care end up affirming ideas contrary to His deity, or denying the existence of the Father and the Son as two different persons. God is one God in three persons.

2. For Christians, Christ is central to everything we do. That's why, in praising God, we do so to the whole Trinity, whether we refer directly to the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit separately, or to the three persons together. May our voice rise up gratefully to always bless our good God.

II. Chosen To Be Holy And Without Blemish (Ephesians 1:4)

Verse 4 states: *"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."* After praising God, Paul said that the children of God have been chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world, to live holy lives.

A. God Wants All Mankind To Be Saved

God's plan was broken by Adam and Eve's disobedience which brought death in its wake (Romans 6:23). But God's original plan didn't change. He continued to find a way in which mankind wouldn't need to be entirely condemned,

but saved, hopefully including everyone (2 Peter 3:9). Let's make the decision to obey and not reject Him. God's redemptive plan finally came through Jesus Christ (Luke 3:23-38).

B. Salvation Is Through Jesus Christ

1. Jesus is the only way (John 14:6). Before Christ, there was the law of God, with the idea that whoever obeyed it would be accepted by God (Deuteronomy 28:23). But the truth is that nobody could obey the law to the letter. Therefore, the sacrificial work of Christ was necessary so that we could be redeemed and become children of God (John 3:16).

2. God's redeeming provision through his Son was for ALL humanity. It doesn't exclude anyone (John 3:15-17). No race, culture, human group, no sinner is exempt from being a beneficiary of God's redemptive plan. Simply, you have to accept it. We thank God for this wonderful blessing in Christ Jesus!

III. Predestined And Adopted By Love To Praise Him (Ephesians 1:5-6)

The last passage we're going to study says: *"In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves"* (vs. 5-6). Many people say 'We're all children of God' but this isn't strictly true. We're all God's creation, that's true (John 1:3). The condition to be sons or daughters of God is to follow the path that God himself has given for salvation: Faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world (John 1:12).

A. "In Love He Predestined Us..."

1. In the general biblical context, God has predestined all human beings for heaven. But this predestination is conditional. It depends on whether we want to surrender

to God and accept the ONLY WAY to Him through Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

2. God's predestination is based on his love (John 3:16). If it weren't for the love of God, Christ wouldn't have come. Had it not been for His love, his sacrifice on the cross of Calvary, or the resurrection, this never would have happened. So, if it were not for the love of God, this world would have no hope (2 Peter 3:9).

B. We Were Predestined To Be Children Of God

1. Paul used the expression 'adoption'. We understand that a family may adopt children originally born into another family. For this, a judicial process is followed. Once all the legal requirements have been met, the judge declares that from that moment on, the child is their adoptive child. So, for us to be adopted as children of God, Christ fulfilled all the legal requirements. So we need to say: "Yes, Lord. I accept that you adopted me as your child".

2. He who is adopted as a child of God receives all the benefits that Jesus Christ has. Paul said, we're co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:15-17). First, we're saved from sin, condemnation and eternal death. Second, God adopts us as His children with all the rights of His Son, Jesus Christ. Third, He opens the door for a new life where we're "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation..." (1 Peter 2:9).

C. The Children Of God Praise Their Creator And Savior

Every child is loved by his birth parents and she/he loves them too. They speak well of their parents, and the parents are proud of their children. We who have been adopted as children of God through His immense love must praise, exalt and glorify our beloved Father who has adopted us as His children, through Jesus Christ.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- How can we bless God?
- How do you share the salvation message with others?

CONCLUSION

As God's sons and daughters, we have the great privilege of having been chosen for present and eternal blessings in Christ. Therefore, as His children, we must worship our Creator continually and serve Him in this world and then afterwards for eternity.

Lesson 6:

CHOSEN TO BE BLESSED

Lesson Aim: To know about and enjoy God's blessings for us as believers.

Local Proverb: He who worships the king becomes a king.

Passage to Study: Ephesians 1:3-6

Memory Verse: "In Christ, he chose us before the world was made. In his love he chose us to be his holy people—people without blame before him." Ephesians 1:4

Questions to Ask:

1. What gets your attention in this story?
2. How does this story describe a new life in Christ?
3. From this story, what should we leave behind and what do we gain if we are to live a new life in Christ?
4. Is there anything else in this story that you have learned?
5. How will you share a truth from this story with someone this week?

Story Slogan: We have the privilege of being chosen for present and eternal blessings in Christ.



| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Lesson 07 | THE TRUE RICHES OF THE BELIEVER |
| | Scripture: Ephesians 1:7-13 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To understand the dimensions of divine grace is, in the person of Jesus Christ. |

| Memory Verse |
|---|
| “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit...” Ephesians 1:13. |

INTRODUCTION

Salvation is the central and most important theme in the entire Bible. Around this doctrine, our condition as disobedient humans is described, which brought death in all its dimensions. The Bible also shows us the blessing of a loving and merciful God who redeemed us in His quest to restore the original condition in which we were created. Our salvation becomes, then, the fundamental theme of the message we proclaim as the Church of Jesus Christ. The church needs to be very clear about the elements and processes that are part of the salvation that God offers to humanity.

In this class, we'll study Ephesians 1:7-13, where the apostle Paul mentioned some of the benefits that Jesus Christ brings to us through His sacrifice by giving His life on the cross as a price for our redemption.

I. What Does Redemption Mean? (Ephesians 1:7-8)

The term “redemption” emphasizes the outcome of the liberating action that our Lord Jesus performed. Our redemption is a real experience, procured for us through the shedding of His holy blood. Also, the word redemption, like adoption, is a legal term and refers to an external aspect of our salvation. Jesus fulfilled the necessary requirements to rescue us.

In the New Testament, redemption refers both to deliverance from sin and freedom from captivity. In Leviticus 25:47-52, we read about how a slave could be redeemed and gain his freedom. The children of Israel were rescued or redeemed from slavery in Egypt by God's mighty actions. In redemption, a person is freed from a situation of which they were unable to free themselves, or from a debt they could never have paid back on their own.

A. Redemption Requires Bloodshed

We have been redeemed by the liberating act of Jesus who shed His blood on the cross. It refers to both what Jesus did, and the result of His action. In the first century, referring to the blood of Jesus was an important way of talking about His death. His death points to two wonderful truths: Redemption and forgiveness.

Redemption was the price paid to obtain the freedom of a slave (Leviticus 25:47-54). Through His death, Jesus paid the price to free us from our bondage to sin. This price was His blood. In the New Testament, blood is a biblical symbol that represents the death of Jesus on the cross.

B. Redemption Requires Forgiveness

Forgiveness was guaranteed in the Old Testament times on the basis of the blood of animals (Leviticus 17:11). Now, we receive forgiveness based on the shedding of Jesus' blood because He died for us and it was the perfect and true sacrifice. That is, in Jesus, all believers have redemption through His death on the cross. Redemption is ours through the death of Christ. In Ephesians 1:7, the expression “*the forgiveness of sins*” is closely linked to the idea of our redemption, but, they aren't identical concepts.

C. Redemption Requires Grace

Grace is the voluntary and loving favor given by God to everyone. We cannot win it, we don't deserve it, and no moral or religious effort can earn it. Salvation comes only by the mercy and love of God. Without divine grace, no one can be saved. To receive it, we must recognize that we cannot

save ourselves, but only God can do it, and there's only one way, through faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9).

II. We Have Spiritual Knowledge (Ephesians 1:8-10)

This divine grace is "...lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding" (v. 8). Paul tried to communicate the profound meaning with which God has given us the wisdom and practical knowledge necessary for us to lead upright lives according to His purpose. Thus, the expression 'lavished' suggests an overabundance. The results of the outworking of His divine grace helps us understand His ways and comprehend His will for our lives as well, as opening our mind to know something of His purposes for this universe. Paul hinted that the source of this wisdom and understanding isn't human but divine.

III. We Have An Inheritance (Ephesians 1:11)

We have already studied that in Christ, we have been wonderfully redeemed, and that in Him, God has revealed his plan of salvation for mankind. Through the sacrifice of Christ, we receive the following blessings:

A. Inheritance As Adopted Children (v. 5)

This idea is found only in the New Testament, and it means that we have been chosen as His inheritance or portion, and it's derived from the concept presented in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 9:29; 32:9-10; Psalm 16:6) regarding the tribes of Israel that were chosen by God to be His people.

As adoptive children, we inherit everything that the Father has for us. It brings us many blessings and it was made possible through Christ. The initiative and actions are exclusively God's.

B. Our Inheritance Is Because We Were Predestined (v. 11)

The inheritance (portion) has been defined and determined in advance, and we were chosen as its recipients. The limits and conditions have been predetermined in the heavenly realm before the creation of the world. Those who respond are those who enjoy this inheritance, and are already the chosen portion of God, although now only partially until this divine plan is fully realized when Christ comes in the definitive fulfillment of the times. The expression "In him" at the beginning of verse 11 explains the content of the rest of the verse. It's not that God has arbitrarily chosen certain people for salvation, but that Christ is the chosen one, and those who receive Him as their savior obey him and serve him, and are also chosen by God in Him.

Paul confronts us with the reality of an inheritance that we cannot imagine what it will be like when it's revealed in its entirety, but he also encouraged us to enjoy from now on the benefits that are included in the presence of the Holy Spirit in us, as heirs of the heavenly Father.

Finally as God's people, we must announce this good news to all. The church was commissioned to announce the message of this redemption by God's grace to everyone.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- Define redemption.
- Define Grace
- Name two blessings that are part of our inheritance as children of God, and which you are experiencing in this life.

CONCLUSION

Although it's impossible to gauge the magnitude and depth of the salvation that God gave us in Christ, we must be grateful for all that the Lord did to rescue us from the bondage in which we were kept in sin. On the other hand, we must enjoy this salvation that gave us freedom from what enslaved us and implies doing good and loving others with the same love with which God loved us, loves us now, and will always love us.

Lesson 7:

THE TRUE RICHES OF THE BELIEVER

Lesson Aim: To understand that the Bible tells us to honor the presence of God.

Local Proverb: Ordinary riches can be stolen; real riches cannot

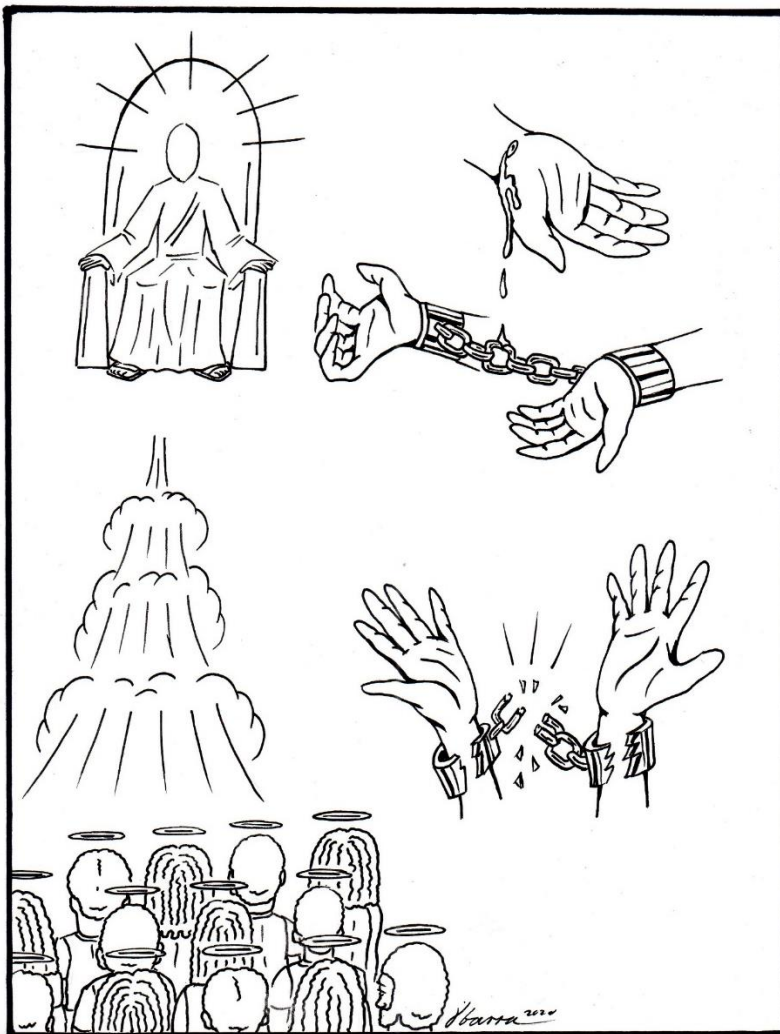
Passage to Study: Ephesians 1:7-13

Memory Verse: So it is with you. You heard the true teaching—the Good News about your salvation. When you heard it, you believed in Christ. And in Christ, God put his special mark on you by giving you the Holy Spirit that he had promised. Ephesians 1:13

Questions to Ask:

1. What gets your attention in this story?
2. How does this story describe a new life in Christ?
3. From this story, what should we leave behind and what do we gain if we are to live a new life in Christ?
4. Is there anything else in this story that you have learned?
5. How will you share a truth from this story with someone this week?

Story Slogan: Whoever trusts in his riches will fall; trust Christ instead.



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| Lesson | GROWING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD |
| 08 | Scripture: Ephesians 1:17-23 |

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|----------------------------------|
| Objective |
| To grow in our knowledge of God. |

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| Memory Verse |
| “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.” Ephesians 1:17 |

INTRODUCTION

One of the reasons why the apostle Paul wrote this epistle was to explain the eternal purposes of God, a key concept to understand in the letter. This is true not only for the believers of the city of Ephesus, but also for the entire Christian community of his time, since they were in a formative stage. In this period, the foundations of the Christian faith were being laid. In our day, the challenges that believers face also require that we base our hope on solid foundations that help us strengthen our faith so that we’ll grow in faith more and more.

Upon receiving news of the church in Ephesus, the apostle was mobilized to pray. Prayer that, far from becoming a list of requests to satisfy some material need of the Ephesians, focused on asking what he considered indispensable to prevent the Ephesians from deviating from God’s purpose for their lives. Moreover, he asked that the Lord would enable them to know Him more deeply. In his prayer, he emphasized what was really important, eternal, and which would consolidate the foundations of their faith, giving them the power to live out the gospel fully.

I. A Unique Call (Ephesians 1:17-19)

In these verses, Paul began to describe the reason for his prayers for the believers, first revealing God as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Father of glory. The apostle recognized that it’s Jesus Christ who shows the way to the Father, who has glorified him, and who has given humanity the privilege of being able to be reconciled with Him and enjoy a new life full of faith and hope in our Savior. Hence, the importance of having a spirit of wisdom and revelation. In this passage, we must understand by the “spirit of wisdom and revelation” (v.17) the ability to perceive what has been revealed to us, understanding the direction and meaning of what God wants us to know. Many people know about God, and some even say they believe in Him, but their actions are far from reflecting this assertion. They know of His existence and admit that He is real, but they don’t know him because they haven’t experienced Him in their lives. So, their knowledge is merely theoretical or academic.

For the disciples of Christ, knowing God means recognizing Him as the source of life and truth, experiencing His revelation through Christ, and recognizing that He illuminates our mind with the power of His Holy Spirit, helping us to understand deep eternal truths. For the Jews, it was typical to ask for a spirit of wisdom and revelation. Therefore, Paul prayed not for them to receive special information, but that those who

had already received the Holy Spirit would learn to perceive and know God more deeply as He is revealed in Christ. Gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as wisdom, enlightenment and revelation, were the typical gifts that the Jews could expect.

The hope of God’s calling allows us to face the pains of life. The riches of His glory make it possible for us to rejoice even if the circumstances are adverse. We can overcome discouragement when we remember the power of God demonstrated in the resurrection of Christ, our Lord and Savior.

II. Unparalleled Power (Ephesians 1:20-21)

In these verses, Paul highlighted how the power of God is mediated through Christ for Christians. The main theme of this part of the passage is the manifestation of God in Christ through His resurrection and exaltation. Regarding His resurrection, although we recognize that the death of Christ is the main demonstration of God’s love, we also know that the resurrection is the main demonstration of His power. In Ephesians 3:20, Paul gave more details about this concept by declaring that the power that resurrected Jesus is the power that acts in us; hence the importance of the resurrection for the knowledge of God and His power.

III. A Triumphant Church (Eph. 1:22-23)

Just as Psalm 110:1 is an invitation from God to the Lord to sit at His right hand until He puts his enemies as His footstool, Eph. 1:22-23 affirms that God has already put all things under Jesus. Psalm 8:6 presents Adam as the crown of creation, with dominion over creatures, by affirming the following: “You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet.” Now, Jesus Christ, the second Adam, has broken the power of the fall, and with His Redemptive Work, has become Sovereign as head of the new creation. To understand more deeply the power that acts in the church, the apostle used two images, the one of the body and one of plenitude.

Paul presents the church as a body that belongs to Jesus and is intimately united with Him. Hence, Christ presides over the church in all things. Christ is the head, in the sense of being the basis of the very existence of the church, its source of life and ruler (Ephesians 5:24). The church is also the object of the atoning death of Christ. Just as the Father gave his Son for the world (John 3:16), Christ gave himself for the church (Ephesians 5:25-26).

Like the body of Christ, the active or evangelizing aspect of the church must be emphasized. Under this symbol, we pay attention to the unity, growth and varied types of ministry of the church. The unity of the church is the unity of the Spirit.

This concept should help us make a difference in our Christian commitment as part of the community of faith in which we serve. We’re the body of Christ, not only when we congregate in worship services, but in all areas of our life,

such as in our homes, in relationships with our relatives and neighbors, our society, etc. Although things often don’t happen as we expect them to, we still continue to be the body of Christ, the triumphant church that, obedient to Him who preside over it, preaches with power through witness and service.

Verse 23 says that Jesus is: “...the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” The concept of filling includes the task of bringing all things to unity and harmony in Christ, who is the head. Paul prayed that the believers would understand that the power that acts in the church will also produce a new harmonious and united universe under Christ. So, the union between Christ and the church is a foretaste of that end.

As a church, we have the unique opportunity to live fully, and in everything we do, be the triumphant church of which Christ is the head. As an anticipation of what’s to come, today our faith communities can experience love, forgiveness and mercy, and this, not only among the believers, but also in the society in which we’re immersed, illuminating even the darkest places where sin has veiled people’s wills. We must be believers who, day by day, coexist with dark situations, shining with their faith and good works, allowing the world to know Christ through them. When Jesus walked among villages and towns, people were impacted by His power. Today, our church must also walk triumphantly with the gospel that transforms lives, in the power that raised Christ.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What’s the evidence that the power of God acts in us?
- What does it mean to know God more deeply?
- What does it mean that the church is the body of Christ?

CONCLUSION

Today we can grow in the knowledge of God! To do this, in the first place, we must keep in mind who has called us, understand and experience that call, and know who we are and where we’re going.

Secondly, we must keep in mind that the same power that raised Christ from the dead now acts in us.

And finally, be aware that as the body of Christ, we bring light to this world wherever we go through our witness and service.

Lesson 8:

GROWING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Lesson Aim: To grow in our knowledge of God.

Local Proverb: Knowledge without wisdom is like water in the sand.

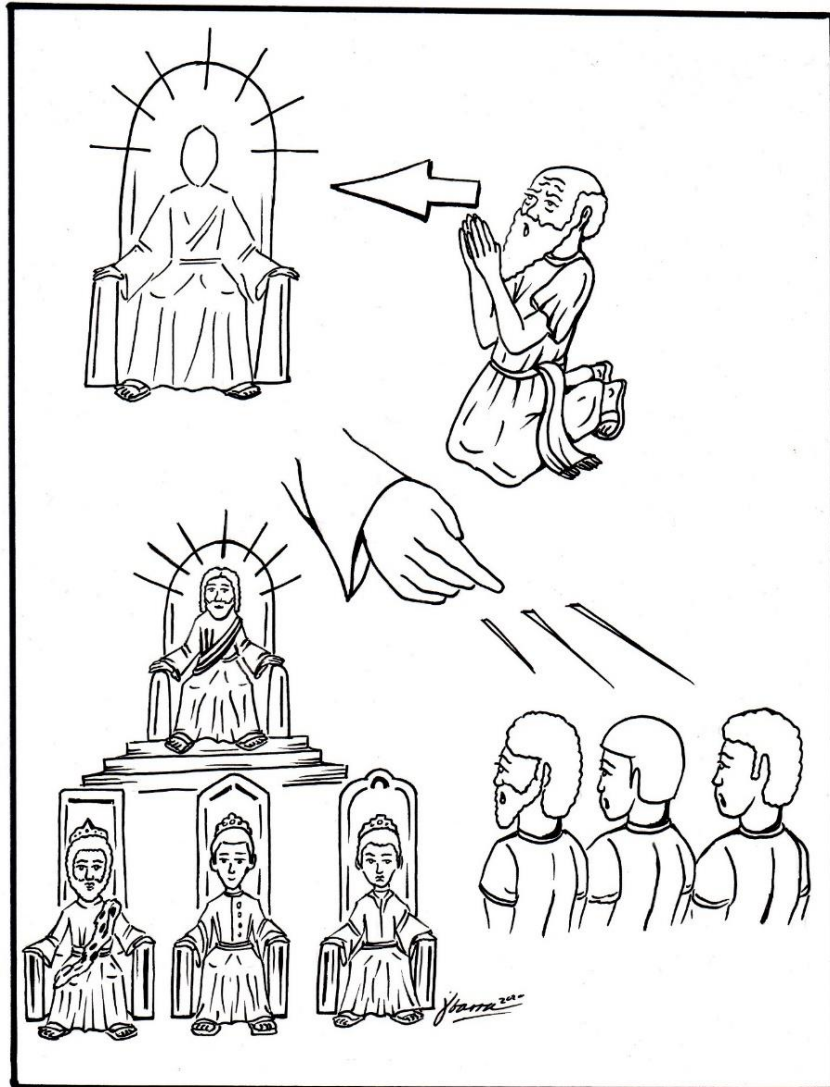
Passage to Study: Ephesians 1:17 - 23

Memory Verse: I always pray to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ—to the glorious Father. I pray that he will give you a spirit that will make you wise in the knowledge of God—the knowledge that he has shown you. Ephesians 1:17

Questions to Ask:

1. What gets your attention in this story?
2. How does this story describe a new life in Christ?
3. From this story, what should we leave behind and what do we gain if we are to live a new life in Christ?
4. Is there anything else in this story that you have learned?
5. How will you share a truth from this story with someone this week?

Story Slogan: If knowledge is not put into practice it doesn't benefit anyone.



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|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Lesson 09 | SAVED BY FAITH TO DO GOOD |
| | Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-10 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To take a good look at the doctrine of salvation in Christ, how to persevere, and the importance of doing good deeds. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “For we’re God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Ephesians 2:10 |

INTRODUCTION

“Salvation isn’t a last-minute plan, it’s the preconceived manifestation of God’s love” (Cleverdon, Frederick T., Encyclopedia of Moral and Religious Quotations, pg. 391).

Only a heart that has experienced the love of God can appreciate the great love of God fully manifested (Ephesians 2:4) to save us from a terrible and eternal condemnation. Let’s look with a diligent eye and grateful heart on this precious passage from Ephesians 2:1-10.

I. Salvation From A Life Of Sin (Eph. 2:1-3)

When someone is rescued from a rushing stream by someone who loves him, it’s inevitable that the rescued person praises and thanks his rescuer and surely will always remember him. Those of us who have been saved from the condition of spiritual death and the condemnation of our sin don’t have enough words of praise, love, and above all, gratitude to God who has rescued us. Let’s always thank Him for His great love for us which has rescued us from spiritual and eternal death.

A. “You Were Dead In Your Transgressions And Sins” (v. 1)

The apostle Paul reminded the Ephesians that their life in Christ was the result of a tremendously transcendental act. Before they knew about Christ, (including everyone who is without Christ today), they were spiritually dead. Death, in biblical thought, implies separation. The scriptures speak of three types of death:

1. Physical death, which is the separation of the material and the spiritual or soul of the person. We’re all going to have go through this;
2. Spiritual death, which is the separation of the person from God because they haven’t submitted to Him. Everyone without Christ is in this group, but they can choose life and finally,

3. There’s eternal death, which is the perpetual separation of God or the condition of those who reject the eternal salvation offered by Christ; and here there’s no way out.

B. “You Followed the Ways of this World And of the Ruler of the Kingdom of the Air” (v. 2)

In the spiritual world, there are only two kingdoms: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. So, either we’re in the kingdom of God or we’re in the kingdom of Satan. People who think they’re free in every way because they aren’t subject to a pastor, to a church or to a denomination, or even to God, are only showing that they’re obedient to the prince of the kingdom of the air, and of darkness.

1. They lived in the desires of their flesh, by passions that governed their wills. They lived in the will of the flesh, in other words, they weren’t able to submit to the will of God.
2. They did what they wanted to, and their thoughts were continually bent toward evil, contrary to the holy will of God; and they were children of anger, like the rest.

II. Heavenly Salvation Through God’s Love (Ephesians 2:4-7)

Although many deny it, human beings have a special desire for heaven. However, they repress it out of pride or ignorance. God, who knows the most intimate desires of our beings, has provided a satisfaction for that longing through his Son, Jesus Christ. And the offer is for everyone.

A. “God Who Is Rich In Mercy” (v. 4)

God’s love has no measure. Humans, with much effort, are trying to measure the expansion of the universe, but no matter how hard we try, we cannot measure God’s love. Because of this love, He shows mercy to all, without distinction (John 3:16). Every day that passes in this world, when we see the news, we hear about crimes against babies, mothers, fathers, etc. Some are terribly cruel, bestial crimes that humanly have no forgiveness, but the love of God reaches incomprehensibly to all, including all those murderers, rapists, thieves, exploiters, etc. God’s love is very rich.

B. “He Made Us Alive With Christ” (vs. 5-6)

Here the statement made in verse 1 is emphasized. God gave us life despite being dead in sin. That life is given to us through Jesus Christ, and just as Christ was raised from the dead, we who believe in Him have also been resurrected from spiritual death, and will one day be seated in heavenly places with Jesus Christ. What does this mean? It means that having believed in Christ and having a new life in Him, we’re heading to the antechamber of the celestial homeland. This is beautiful! We enjoy a special relationship with God, we live in His presence, we’re sure of His presence, we know that Christ is our faithful and firm companion, and the Holy Spirit guides us daily in everything.

III. Salvation By Faith, But For Good Works (Ephesians 2:8-10)

A. Saved By Grace, Through Faith (v. 8)

Humanity is saved by the gracious gift of God in Christ Jesus. As John 3:16 says: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” That’s grace, to receive everything freely, but we must bear in mind that this grace cost Jesus His life on the Cross!

We’re saved ‘through faith’. We aren’t saved because we have paid something for our salvation. However, God does require that we do something to receive that salvation: that we put our faith in Christ. Faith is believing, trusting. If someone doesn’t believe and place their trust in Christ, the gift of God is without effect. It’s like when someone is sick, and the family brings the doctor who prescribes medicine, but if the patient rejects the doctor and refuses to take the medicine, it has no effect. This is the case with our salvation.

B. “Not By Works, So That No One Can Boast” (v. 9)

We ask ourselves: “and those who say that we must do works to save ourselves?” But these verses are very clear. The truth is that many don’t submit to the Word of God, but to the doctrinal slogans of their leaders. Paul said clearly that salvation is free and it’s not because of anything we have done. We cannot earn salvation with our good deeds. If we could, people would live boasting of their works deserving of salvation. Or they would be anxious to know if what they do is enough to merit salvation. The salvation that Christ offers isn’t by works, but by trusting in the sacrificial merits of Christ on the cross, and by the deep love of God who freely offers us salvation through His beloved Son.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- Explain what the expression “dead in transgressions and sins” means.
- What do you expect God to show you in the future?
- Why do you think God doesn’t allow salvation by works?

CONCLUSION

Because of His great love, God gave us life in Christ Jesus by his grace, through faith. By giving us life, He has transported us to a new dimension, to the kingdom of God. And in that Kingdom, we must live doing the works that God has prepared for us to honor Him and testify powerfully of His work in us and for all of humanity.

Lesson 9:

SAVED BY FAITH TO DO GOOD

Lesson Aim: To understand salvation in Christ, perseverance and doing good.

Local Proverb: A good deed is something one returns.

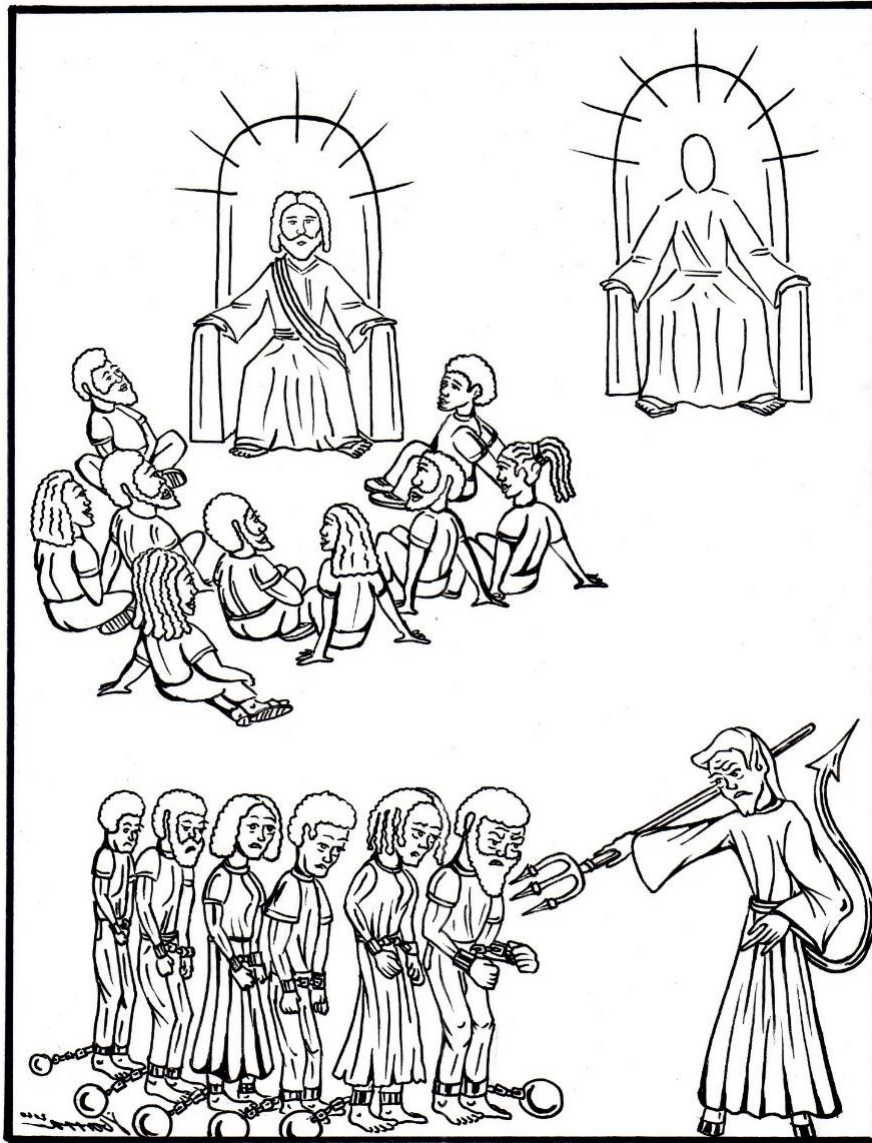
Passage to Study: Ephesians 2:1-10

Memory Verse: God has made us what we are. In Christ Jesus, God made us new people so that we would do good works. God had planned those good works in advance for us to live our lives doing them. Ephesians 2:10

Questions to Ask:

1. What gets your attention in this story?
2. How does this story describe a new life in Christ?
3. From this story, what should we leave behind and what do we gain if we are to live a new life in Christ?
4. Is there anything else in this story that you have learned?
5. How will you share a truth from this story with someone this week?

Story Slogan: God created me to do good, so I will!



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|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Lesson 10 | GOD'S WONDERFUL LOVE |
| | Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-19 |

| Objective |
|--|
| To understand the Apostle Paul's prayer and make it a part of our lives. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| "... to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." Ephesians 3:19 |

INTRODUCTION

Ask your students the following questions:

- What is love?
- How can we know that someone loves us?
- How do we love others?

In this letter, the apostle Paul addresses to God two prayers for the Ephesians. In the first one (Ephesians 1:16-23), he asks that the Ephesians could deeply understand God's greatness, and in the second prayer (Ephesians 3:14-19), the request was for them to receive personal empowerment which would lead them to deeper knowledge of God, and as a result, they would be able to experience fully the spiritual privileges that God had for them. The focus of this lesson will be on the second prayer.

I. Strengthening in the Inner Being (Ephesians 3:16)

A. What's The Inner Man?

The theme of the inner man refers to the elements that constitute our human nature. In order to explain human nature, we can make the distinction between the spiritual and the physical aspect. It's enough to know that the dichotomy presents the human being with two different elements: the physical (body) and the immaterial (spiritual).

However, for the purposes of this lesson, it's sufficient to know that we're made up of two natures: a physical one, which interacts with the material world, and an immaterial one, which gives us life, can communicate with God and where our personality is located. These aspects of our being are integrated and work as a single unit. Thus, we're whole people but with different dimensions.

B. Strength In The Inner Being

In this prayer, the apostle Paul prays to God as the source of spiritual riches and whose purpose is to

strengthen, through His Holy Spirit, the creatures that are the object of His care. Here, the element 'riches' is a Pauline term used to describe grace, the undeserved favor that comes from God. John Wesley expressed the element 'riches in his glory' as follows: "The immense fullness of his glorious wisdom, power and mercy."

C. A Second Work Of Grace

In this prayer, it seems that Paul also asked for the second work of grace so that the believer's heart would be cleansed and strengthened completely. It's in this crisis, when the inner struggle of the heart that's divided between its loyalty to the Father and this fallen world ceases, and the inner man begins to delight in God "*For in my inner being I delight in God's law.*" (Romans 7:22)

This experience or crisis impacts the totality of the person in their spiritual, mental, emotional and moral aspects. This strengthening is what allows us to move ourselves forward into the future with confidence. It enables us to live victorious lives, that is, a life in which we can overcome the chains and fears that bind and paralyze us, and thus be truly free: "*So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*" (John 8:36)

I. “That Christ May Dwell In Your Hearts...” (Ephesians 3:17)

A. The Experience Of Christ And The Holy Spirit

In this section, we need to emphasize that Christ and the Holy Spirit work simultaneously in the life of the believer. The strengthening by the Holy Spirit and the indwelling of Christ in the believer aren't separate experiences. When we experience the Holy Spirit's presence, we're also experiencing the presence of Christ. That is, where the Spirit of God is, Christ is also (Matthew 28:20, John 14:15-20, 2 Corinthians 13:14).

B. A Life Rooted And Grounded In Love

A life rooted and grounded in love is one that's blessed and strengthened daily through its relationship with Christ. The tangible result is a stable and constantly growing spiritual life. Taking this into account, Paul exhorts us not to be like the double minded man of James 1:8. The prophet Jeremiah tells us: *“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It doesn't fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”* (Jeremiah 17:7-8)

II. Knowledge Of The Love Of Christ (Ephesians 3:18-19)

A. The Dimensions Of The Love Of Christ

The sense of sight allows us to perceive four dimensions, the width, length, depth and height of objects and landscapes in nature. In these verses, the apostle Paul uses these dimensions to express the magnitude of the splendid panorama that's presented before us as we reflect on the ways of God.

Paul invites us to understand that reflection about God's ways doesn't occur in isolation but it's an experience that's cultivated in communion with all the saints, those who profess the same hope in Christ. Therefore, trying to live a solitary spiritual life is foreign to the Christian experience. Decidedly, it is to be incomplete.

B. The Fullness Of God

As our capacity to receive grows, God fills us again and again. The idea of fullness implies that we subject our minds, our emotions and our will to God in Christ. Wesley interpreted that the phrase *“all the fullness of God”* (v. 19) to mean: *“With all His love, His light, His wisdom, His holiness, His power and His glory”*

This fullness doesn't mean that we'll have the capacity to be like God, or be deified. Nor does it imply that we're better than those who haven't yet come to know God. Rather, it reminds us that humanity is constantly searching for love in sources that are only temporary, and imposes on us the responsibility of proclaiming the message of reconciliation and hope in Christ.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What's the inner man?
- What's the necessary requirement in the heart of the person for Christ to dwell in their being?
- How can we grow in God's love?

CONCLUSION

If we wish to grow into spiritual maturity, we need to come to the knowledge of the perfect love of Christ for us. If we do this, we'll develop our potential, that is, we'll achieve what we're capable of in Christ.

Lesson 10:

GOD'S WONDERFUL LOVE

Lesson Aim: To understand that this prayer is to become part of our lives.

Local Proverb: A house of a person you love is not far.

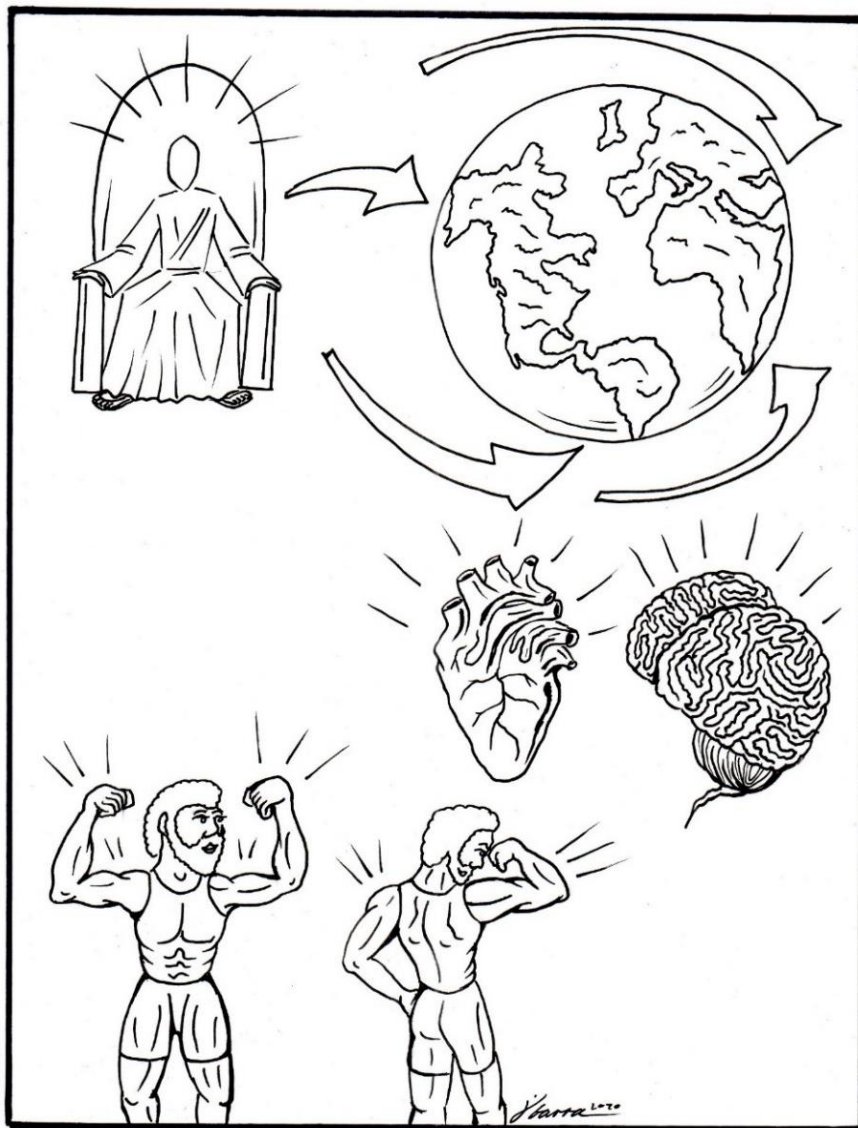
Passage to Study: Ephesians 3:14-20

Memory Verse: Christ's love is greater than any person can ever know. But I pray that you will be able to know that love. Then you can be filled with the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:19

Questions to Ask:

1. What gets your attention in this story?
2. How does this story describe a new life in Christ?
3. From this story, what should we leave behind and what do we gain if we are to live a new life in Christ?
4. Is there anything else in this story that you have learned?
5. How will you share a truth from this story with someone this week?

Story Slogan: Christ's love, flowing through me, can do anything!



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|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Lesson 11 | THE CHURCH: GOD’S TEAM |
| | Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-16 |

| Objective |
|--|
| To understand the implications of the new life in the Lord, and the practical and functional sense of belonging to the church as the body of Christ. |

| Memory Verse |
|---|
| “But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.” Ephesians 4:7 |

INTRODUCTION

For some years, I belonged to a bowling team. I remember that when they accepted me on the team, they told me that this was a high ranked team that participated regularly in championship tournaments. This status imposed on its members the commitment to maintain the high position they had earned over the years.

When I think of the church, I like to compare it to a team, because many characteristics of a team are similar to the characteristics that distinguish the church. The main implication of comparing the church with a team is to suggest two important considerations: (1) Our personal formation in the experience of the faith and the body of Christ, and (2) How our training collaborates with the rest of the body in achieving the team’s objectives.

I. Personal Formation (Ephesians 4:1-3)

In Ephesians 4, the apostle Paul presented us with a series of characteristics that we should observe, in line with what he called “a life worthy of the calling you have received” (v. 1). Paul emphasized the characteristics that must be manifested in all of us who have responded by faith to the call of God in Jesus Christ, by virtue of which, we’re now part of His body, that is, the church.

A. Humility

Humility, according to an on-line dictionary “is the quality of being humble and means putting the needs of another person before your own, and thinking of others before yourself. It also means not drawing attention to yourself, and it can mean acknowledging that you aren’t always right.” The humble person is one who voluntarily submits his character in order to encourage good relations with others. The humble person ties his character to an initiative of service, detachment and love. Just like Jesus did! The humble person gives the best of himself so that peace reigns with his neighbor.

B. Meekness

In the book I wrote about the fruit of the Spirit, meekness is described as a controlled power: meekness is a characteristic of a docile person, and it’s manifested in

dealing with others. However, today we’ll learn a new consideration in the definition of this virtue: “Meekness is a power, because it’s part of the fruit of the mighty Holy Spirit. But it’s a power that we must strengthen in our spirit. It’s a power that has to become part of our whole being, so that our whole being is subdued and controlled by that power” (Dr. Elvin Heredia PhD, 2015)

C. Patience

Like meekness, patience also is part of the fruit of the Spirit. Patience is part of the character of every believer because faith feeds on patience. Patience is the practical exercise of a firm and unwavering faith. The person who is patient knows how to wait. For this reason, faith in God makes us wait patiently for his answer. In my book, I present the following practical definition of patience: “Almost by accident I discovered this reality. If we combine the word ‘peace’ with ‘science’, we’ll find an interesting relationship between the two.

II. Integration into the Body Of Christ (Ephesians 4:4-16)

The main idea of the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4 was to emphasize the importance of growing healthily in the experience of faith because the health and maturity of each believer would be manifested in the healthy growth of the church. That is, the church would show the world

the efficacy of the gospel to the same extent that each of the believers and/or members of the church would have assimilated the effective power of the gospel in their own character. This, in turn, leads us to consider three fundamental truths about who we are as Christians, and how they allow us to be part of a community of Christians, part of the church and part of God's team.

A. Definition Of Character (Ephesians 4:7-10)

Paul emphasized that *"to each of us grace was given according to the measure of the gift of Christ"* (v. 7), implying that we have all been impregnated with the same characteristic elements of Jesus to resemble Him in character and conduct. Jesus himself told us: *"learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart..."* (Matthew 11:29). Paul returned to that definition of Christ's character in the church to emphasize the importance that this has at a functional level. In other words, to the extent that our personal character is defined as that of Jesus, so will the character of the church of Christ in the world be so defined. The church of Christ, then, must resemble the Christ of the church.

B. Commitment To The Team (Ephesians 4:11-13)

Recalling the initial anecdote, we can make a practical application to the apostle's intention: We must also have a commitment to God's team. We must all be perfected in our character. We must all strive for complete sanctification. The reason for this is explained in the biblical passage of study. Each member of God's team is committed to perfect growth, because in this way the whole body of Christ will also grow equally. Each one of us is committed to being a part of the body and must represent optimal growth.

As we can see in verse 11, each of us has a definite participation in the functioning of the body. In turn, each part of the body functions for the benefit of the body in general. As verse 12 indicates, the individual function of each one of the members of the team fosters *"the edification of the body of Christ."* That is, we're all blessed to fulfill the particular function that each member of the body has, and as a result, we'll reach the goal of *"equipping His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up"* (v. 12).

The second of these objectives is to become mature Christians. Paul used this term to describe Jesus. *"The measure of the stature of Christ's fullness"* suggests progressive growth until reaching the goal of maturity as a Christian. Paul affirmed this experience of growth as progressive in character, an experience in which he considered himself to be in process: *"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me"* (Philippians 3:12).

The goal of the great commission is the rescue of the lost. Now, those who are lost have to be rescued, just as we were when we were without Christ. Those who become Christians will also become part of the team, and therefore, discipleship becomes an essential part of that goal in which we all *"reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God"* (v. 13).

The church is also a 'championship tradition' team. As God's team, we must seek excellence. The Holy Spirit helps us respond in character and function to the excellence of Christ.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What are those three characteristics that Paul highlighted in the biblical study passage?
- What are the implications of being members of the body of Christ as God's children?
What's the importance of growing healthily in the experience of our faith?

CONCLUSION

Let's assume our commitment to grow and mature properly as the church of Christ. If we do, we'll reflect to the world the Christ who lives in the church, and we'll fulfill our objective and our mission. The award and the championship await us!

Lesson 11:

THE CHURCH: GOD'S TEAM

Lesson Aim: To understand that we are part of the body of Christ and each of us must play our role on the team.

Local Proverb: If you want to go fast go alone, if you want to go far go together.

Passage to Study: Ephesians 4:1-16

Memory Verse: He has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ.
Ephesians 4:7

Questions to Ask:

1. What gets your attention in this story?
2. How does this story describe a new life in Christ?
3. From this story, what should we leave behind and what do we gain if we are to live a new life in Christ?
4. Is there anything else in this story that you have learned?
5. How will you share a truth from this story with someone this week?

Story Slogan: Be prepared to play your part in the mission of God.



| | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| Lesson 12 | MAKING THE MOST OF TIME |
| | Scripture: Ephesians 4:25-5:20 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To understand that, as disciples of Jesus, we're called to express the unparalleled renewing potential of the gospel. |

| Memory Verse |
|---|
| "Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children." Ephesians 5:1 |

INTRODUCTION

Of the many ways in which the Bible expresses the sublime potential of the gospel, perhaps, the broadest or most inclusive are those that Luke left us recorded in Acts: *"Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets"* (Acts 3:21); and the one that John left us recorded in Revelations, where we read that a voice that came from the throne of God said: *"He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'"* And, to emphasize the firmness of those words he said, *"Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."* (Revelation 21:5)

But between that purpose and the reality faced by Paul, and also the one we face today, there's a great deficit; a tremendous need for renewal or transformation. That's why God sent His Son. The goal of the gospel is that we can live fully and renewed when the kingdom of God is fully established.

I. "Don't Grieve The Holy Spirit" (Eph. 4:25-32)

To grieve God's Spirit implies much more than ignoring or making Him sad. The Holy Spirit is the person of the godhead who is imminent, and is working amongst us. Not paying attention to the Spirit of God will numb our consciences, and if we persist, will cause us to stop listening to His voice. It's this rejection that drives many away from God. If we grieve the Spirit, our relationship with God is interrupted, and our participation in God's plan collapses.

A. God Works Through The Third Person Of The Trinity – His Spirit

The Holy Spirit participated with the Father and the Son in creation (Genesis 1:26). The Holy Spirit is active in the restoration of creation (Acts 3:20-21). He always exalts Christ (1 John 5:6). And we can point out that from the death of Christ until this day, it's He who shows us how to live and in what way we can cooperate with God in this purpose (John 14:16-17).

B. The Holy Spirit is Part Of Our Daily Life

He reminds us of everything Jesus taught (John 14:26, 16:13), constantly updating God's will for us. One of

the ways He does it is by speaking to us through the Bible. So Paul in Ephesians 4:25-32 gives us very specific instructions to help us avoid corruption and its continual influence. Taking some examples, we can see the usefulness of this advice. For example:

1. Lying (v.25). One of the greatest damages caused by lying is distrust. Without trust, we can't work together. The church as the body of Christ needs to work together to function effectively (Ephesians 4:16).
2. Anger (v.26). Anger can have a positive aspect when it leads us to oppose injustice, lies, etc. But in real anger, our ability to reason and solve problems is annihilated. When the Holy Spirit doesn't control our emotions, anger becomes a totally negative emotion. As a result, Christians and the Church will lose their effectiveness.
3. Bitterness, anger, loss of temper, bad words (v.31). All these emotions mentioned in this verse are symptoms. The cause lies deep in the heart of the person. As Jesus said in Mark 7:21-23, these manifestations comes from our hearts. Since the message is inseparable from the messenger, these negative attitudes are an obstacle to the propagation of the gospel and render the gospel of power ineffective.

II. “Be Imitators Of God” (Ephesians 5:1-13)

Paul presented us in the previous verses much of what we need to avoid. Then, he inspired us to look for the highest model we could find, so that by imitating Him, our life will display the efficacy of the gospel. The model is God himself (v.1). The problem is that no one has seen God (John 1:18). So how can we imitate Him? The apostle left us two unmistakable signs:

A. We Need To Walk In Love (v. 2)

This is the true guarantee that the gospel is the most powerful weapon in the history of mankind, and the only one that can save us from failure and eternal perdition. Love is the reason that moved God to send His Son, and also led Jesus to die on the cross. Without fear of making mistakes, we can say that love is the fuel that moves the universe. At the same time, love is the unmistakable sign of all that God promotes and, for the same reason, must be the motivation of every true disciple of Jesus. Love is what characterizes us. In fact, it is by grace or love that God sustains us, and moved by this is why we serve him.

B. Walk As Children Of Light

A simple way to describe the life of those who are God’s children is to live every day, moment by moment, in the light of the Word of God. The psalmist testified long before: *“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path”* (Psalm 119:105). Walking in that light is what protects us from evil. Walking in the light allows us to be in communion as children of God, and be cleansed

from our sins (1 John 1:7). In making this possible, the gospel shines in all its splendor and efficacy; because *“everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that’s illuminated becomes a light”* (Ephesians 5:13).

III. “Be Filled With The Spirit” (Eph.5:14-19)

The Christian life is life in the Spirit. It wasn’t in vain that Paul called Him the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2). We’re born by the work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-6), but we also live sustained, moment by moment, by the work of the Spirit (Galatians 5:25). When Jesus’ followers today reach the point of understanding, in the light of all of Scripture, the complete and deeper message of the gospel, they will understand that being filled with the Holy Spirit is not an option, it’s an essential issue. It’s a question of spiritual life or death.

IV. Giving Thanks Always And For Everything (Ephesians 5:20)

A. Always Means At All Times

We recognize what He has done in our lives. We must never forget that God has freed us from sin and given us everything that has contributed to our spiritual well-being even if we may not have been aware of it (Ephesians 2:8). Everything good is a gift comes from God.

We must accept all that God has done here and now, realizing that God is fully active in motivating, instructing, and correcting us. In other words, He works intensely to complete His purpose in our lives (Psalm 138:8).

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- In what ways can the Christian grieve the Holy Spirit, and what consequences can this generate?
- How can we practice Ephesians 5:20 in daily life on a personal level?

CONCLUSION

The restorative power of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ announced in the gospel is what Paul experienced and taught the church. If the church wishes to cooperate with God in rescuing the human race, then, in the first place, we must accept by faith the new life announced in the gospel, and secondly, show clear signs of effectivity by witnessing tirelessly until the triumphant return of Jesus.

Lesson 12:

MAKING THE MOST OF TIME

Lesson Aim: To be disciples of Christ we must leave behind evil deeds and be filled with the Spirit of God.

Local Proverb: He is like a drum which makes a lot of noise but is hollow inside.

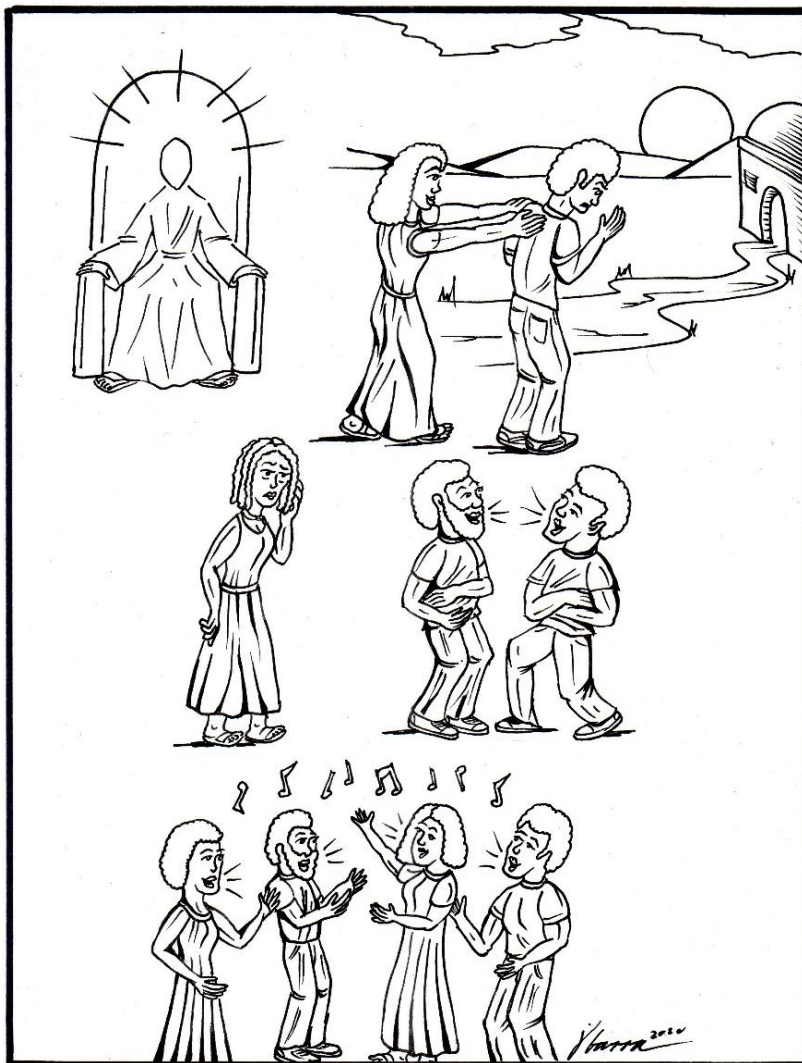
Passage to Study: Ephesians 4:25-5:20

Memory Verse: “You are God’s children. He loves you. So try to be like God.” Ephesians 5:1

Questions to Ask:

1. What gets your attention in this story?
2. How does this story describe a new life in Christ?
3. From this story, what should we leave behind and what do we gain if we are to live a new life in Christ?
4. Is there anything else in this story that you have learned?
5. How will you share a truth from this story with someone this week?

Story Slogan: Examine your life, choose the light, and live by God's holy example.



| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Lesson 13 | EACH OTHER |
| | Scripture: Ephesians 5:21-6:9 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To understand the biblical model for interpersonal relationships in the home and at work. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Ephesians 5:21 |

INTRODUCTION

In our study of the Gospel of Christ in Galatians and Ephesians, we come to Ephesians chapters 5 and 6, where the apostle Paul dealt with the subject of relationships. He did it from his own socio cultural reality, a reality that, in the matter of relationships, was far removed from the divine model. The passage of scripture that concerns us today ranges from chapters 5:21 to 6:9.

In these 22 verses, Paul put on the table problems that were common in his society: The denial of the rights of women, specifically in the family as wives and mothers, the rights of the children, and the workers, who at that time would have been slaves. Note that in referring to each of these relationships, the apostle did so by first citing how each relationship had been marginalized: wives (5:22) mothers (6:2), children (6:1) and servants (6:5), denoting the writer’s intention to dignify those who were being discriminated against and expose a new model for human relations.

I. Wives And Husbands

When Paul wrote this letter, marriage was a relationship of power and male domination over women. Men had all the rights and there was no one to protect the woman. Remember that Paul wrote to those who were converting to Christianity and brought with them lifestyles and practices contrary to those of the new life in Christ. That’s why the apostle addressed the husbands with very precise commands (vs.25-33) for the marriage relationship. The weight of the action is placed on mandates (imperatives) that are addressed to the husband, and indicatives for the wife (vs.22-24). The wife responds to her husband who lives guided by the Spirit under the fear of God (v.21).

Already in 1 Corinthians 13, written some 10 years earlier, Paul introduced love as the most excellent way for interpersonal relationships. Consistent with his thinking, the apostle followed the same idea and introduced love into the context of first-century marriage. This was something unheard of and totally daring, and even more when we consider that he doesn’t deal with just any kind of love, but with agape love, a love for those who don’t even deserve it. This is the love that brought Jesus down to Earth, a love where God gave us absolutely everything, in Him (John 3:16, Philippians 2:1-11).

Paul is following his line of thinking: “there’s neither male nor female”, we’re all “one in Christ” (Galatians 3:27- 28) clothed with Him, and not only that, but “Abraham’s lineage”

and “heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29). When the apostle wrote “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord” (v.22), he did it after saying: “Submit yourselves to one another in the fear of God.” Such submission is mutual and we should never think about the submission of one gender to the other. Paul was setting out to restore the model found in Genesis 2:24. The relationship between spouses that the writer presents leads to the unity of a single body.

II. Children and Parents

Another relationship where we need to “*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ*” is the relationship between children and parents; a relationship that’s not normally seen as “submission,” a relationship that in the first century was authoritarian, despotic and violent. Absolute power was used by the father (man), without fear of making mistakes. We can say that the children resembled slaves more than sons and daughters. The mother didn’t count in this relationship, and if she did, it was only to follow the father’s instructions. There are even authors who speak of the infantilization of the wife, referring to the fact that she was treated as an infant or child.

Paul went against what was customary in the family relationships of that time by presenting a new model of relationship between children and parents. It was very direct and concise. He went straight to the center of the scene, those without rights and without voice: the children.

Note that he spoke first to them, directly to the children! As with the women, Paul reordered the relationships and gave back to the children the place they deserved. The apostle commands the children to obey their parents (both of them), and to do so in obedience to the commandment of the Lord (v. 1-3). Put another way, submit to your parents in the fear of God.

Again, Paul was concise in verse 4 where he addressed the parents, confronting the situation of the moment. Paul was saying, submit to your children “out of reverence for Christ.” Don’t forget that they’re God’s creation, equal to you, given by Him for you to nourish and train so that they may attain their fullness of life and serve the Kingdom (Proverbs 22:6). The apostle gave a knockout punch to the despotic authority of the father (male) and equaled the children (boys and girls) with the parents (mother and father) and explicitly pointed out their differentiated roles in the family relationship, roles with rights and obligations for both children and parents.

III. Servants and Masters

Once again, Paul went against the established order, specifically addressing the question of slaves and masters. Already, the situation about how the slaves lived was well known. Aristotle, some 300 years earlier, had developed a theory about slavery on the basis that slavery was natural, since according to him, some were born to command and others to be ordered and commanded. The Greek philosopher maintained that slaves were living tools, that they were no different from animals and that their bodies naturally differed from free men, since they were prepared for serfdom. In the first century, in full expansion of the Roman Empire, much of the population was slaves and did almost all jobs. They had no laws

to protect them and their masters had absolute power over them, even killing them without suffering any consequence. This was a totally utilitarian and dehumanizing relationship.

In the midst of this reality, Paul addressed himself first to the unfortunates of that time: the slaves. We can imagine them listening to the new model of relationships since the new faith was embraced by both masters and slaves (Philemon and Onesimus) and they lived together in community.

It can be said that this new model of relationship that Paul maintained was a pathway to abolish slavery. Already Paul had said to the Corinthians that a slave converted to Christ was free in Him, and his master too was a slave of Christ (1 Corinthians 7:22).

The slaves were freed from working for an earthly lord. Paul helped them see that their work was directly for Christ, their true Lord (vs. 6-7). In this way, the apostle elevated the slaves to a human condition they had never considered before. Paul then called the masters with an imperative, give equal treatment since Christ is the one Lord. Those masters needed to stop using the customary methods used by slave owners without Christ (v. 9). By contrast, we understand that by asking them to stop threatening their slaves, Paul is calling the masters to respect and be just in their dealings with the slaves. The apostle put the slaves and masters on the same level; both slaves and masters need to “*submit to one another out of reverence for Christ*” (v. 9).

The redeeming work of Christ is reflected in our working lives when owners, bosses, superiors and employees, hired and subordinates follow the principles of submission, love and service to one another.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What should the relationship between married couples be like?
- Do you agree with the concept that father and mother are equally responsible before God for raising, educating and disciplining their children? Why or why not?
- Following the relationship model that the apostle presents, what should my attitude be at work?

CONCLUSION

This passage in Ephesians teaches us that God is the only one who is above all human beings, both women and men, and that the new nature “in Christ” and “filled with the Spirit” demands a new way of building relationships in the different areas of daily life. We must “*submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*”

Lesson 13:

SUBMIT TO EACH OTHER

Lesson Aim: To understand the biblical model for interpersonal relationships in the society.

Local Proverb: To be without a friend is to be poor indeed.

Passage to Study: Ephesians 5:21 - 6:9

Memory Verse: "Be willing to obey each other. Do this because you respect Christ." Ephesians 5:21

Questions to Ask:

1. What gets your attention in this story?
2. How does this story describe a new life in Christ?
3. From this story, what should we leave behind and what do we gain if we are to live a new life in Christ?
4. Is there anything else in this story that you have learned?
5. How will you share a truth from this story with someone this week?

Story Slogan: New life in Christ changes US!



| | |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| Lesson | OUR TEMPERAMENT IN GOD’S HANDS |
| 14 | Scripture: Acts 22:1-16 |

| Objective |
|--|
| To know and understands that nothing is impossible for God; He can change our temperament. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city.” Proverbs 16:32 |

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the class, ask the students:

How would you define “*temperament*”?

How would you describe your own temperament?

How would you describe the temperament of your spouse or your children?

Are there aspects of your temperament that you would like to change?

Have you ever done anything in the past to try to change your temperament?

Based on these questions, encourage a time for dialogue where your students can chat together and share their opinions. Temperament is a word we use to describe our personalities.

I. The Human Temperament In Psychology

Temperament is a concept of psychology that describes the tendencies of the character and behavior of a human being. Psychologists have studied the human temperament through the different stages of life, from childhood to adulthood. Some cry much more than others, some are more active. Some babies love being hugged; others twist uncomfortably when they’re picked up. Some are highly reactive to the stimuli that surround them, while others remain calm no matter what they see or hear.

The scientists underline that regardless of what external influences might occur, a baby’s temperament often remains stable over time. These definitions help us understand that human temperament is usually formed at an early age, and is shaped by the experiences that a fetus has from the womb of its mother and during the first years of life, in the care of the adults who raise and educate them. We can conclude, then, that at the beginning, we don’t have any personal decisions to make about our temperament.

In this lesson, we’ll study about the power of the Holy Spirit in help us shape our temperament toward the will of

God and for the glory of His name. There are four basic types of temperaments described in psychology.

SANGUINE PERSONALITY

Qualities: Warm and vivacious, have “charisma”. Communicative, never lost for words. Care free, the future doesn’t often afflict them, nor does the past; excellent storytellers. They live in the present; their conversation has a contagious quality; it has a spark; uncommon ability to enjoy everything cordial.

Negatives: They may cry easily, find it hard to find peace. They can have outbursts of anger. They often exaggerate the truth. They often have no control over themselves; they make emotional decisions, and impulsive purchases; they are sensation seekers.

CHOLERIC PERSONALITY

Qualities: They make good decisions, have strong wills and are tenacious, self-determined, optimistic, bold and courageous.

Negatives: They may have problems with their violent nature. They can be stubborn and insensitive to the needs of

others. They usually aren't very emotional, often cold and don't appreciate aesthetic details. They may lack sympathy and can be sharp, impetuous and violent. They dislike tears; can be vengeful if they perceive an injustice has been committed against them. They can be proud and find saying "sorry" hard. They can be excessively self-sufficient.

MELANCHOLIC PERSONALITY

Qualities: They're sensitive and rich internally, analytical, tender and reflective.

Negatives: They can be depressive and pessimistic. They often like others to think that they're suffering. They can be hypochondriacal, and introspective, proud and egocentric.

PHLEGMATIC PERSONALITY

Qualities: Reliable and balanced, of good character and easy to get along with, a happy and peaceful spirit. Sometimes they don't talk much. They're kind and conciliatory.

Negatives: They often have no self-confidence, can be pessimistic and fearful, grieve and worry easily, rarely manifest their emotions, are often passive and indifferent and accommodate the circumstances in a self-righteous and selfish way.

Ask you students which of these four types do they think describes their personality?

II. The Human Temperament In The Hands Of God

In the Bible we can find several characters whom God transformed in a miraculous way (Abraham, Moses, Thomas, and Peter, for example). Reading their stories, we can see that God, our Creator, knew them intimately. He understands us even better than we do ourselves. God is the best person to do 'heart surgery' to bring changes to our

temperament. (Here, we understand the word 'heart as the 'source of our decisions.')

III. My Personal Temperament In The Service Of God

As with Paul, we can trust in the power of God today. The first step is believing that our Creator can and wants to permanently effect a change in our temperament. Many people say that our personalities are determined by genetics and that therefore they're fixed permanently. Our personal experiences and decisions can also have an effect on genetics. For example, if I knew that I have a predisposition to diabetes, my personal struggle will be to eat healthily, avoiding sugars and starches in my diet, and exercising daily, as well as having regular medical check-ups. I may have to fight with this predisposition because I am a human being and illness is part of my earthly existence. In the same way, I believe that God can take control of diabetes and remove it from the body if He so wills to, because even genetics is under the power of God. My part is to always wait in faith and do his will daily: *"because nothing is impossible for God"* (Luke 1:37). Amen!

We must trust that God desires to use us for the glory and honor of His holy name. He himself created his children with a temperament different from others to reach different people. He doesn't want us all to have the same temperament; God is a God who creates variety. But if sin has used our temper for evil, then we know that God wants to heal us from that bondage. He wants our temperament to be useful for His ministry on earth.

Our part is to submit ourselves totally to the voice of guidance of the Holy Spirit, our excellent counselor who will guide us every step of the way. And when we fail at some point, He will help us renew strength and return to the path that God has laid out for us.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- Which temperament is the most similar to yours.
- Is your temperament very strong, given to inflexibility and anger?
- Do you have an overly docile temperament, almost unable to make any decision of your own without the influence of others?

CONCLUSION

The main thing is to seek God's answer in prayer; He knows specifically how our temperament can be a blessing for our lives and for others. When God does the work, He will show us how our natural responses and reactions can be according to His holy will. And all this will bring greater glory and honor to the blessed name of the Lord.

Lesson 14:

OUR TEMPERAMENT IN GOD'S HANDS

Lesson Aim: To know and understand that nothing is impossible for God; He can change our character.

Local Proverb: If there is character, ugliness becomes beauty; if there is none, beauty becomes ugliness.

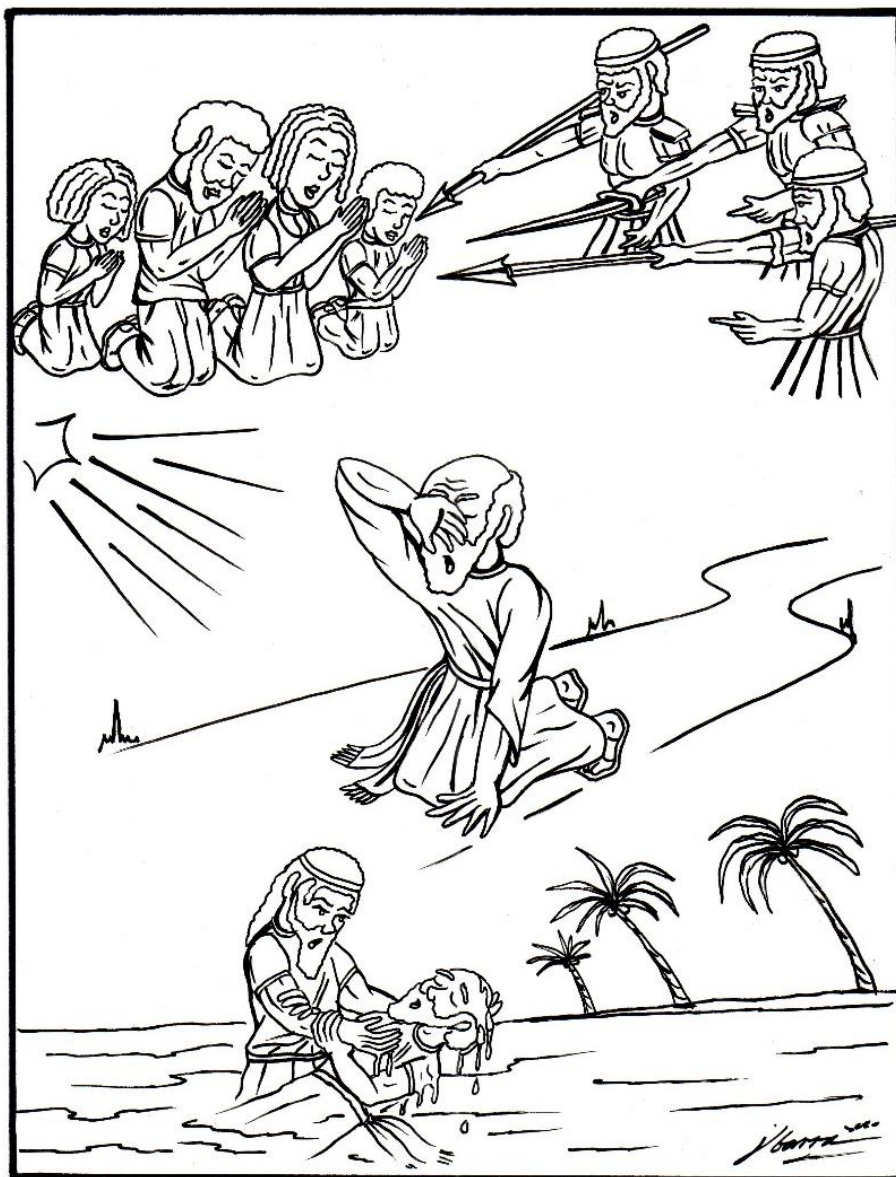
Passage to Study: Acts 22:1-16

Memory Verse: "You will be his witness to all people. You will tell them about the things you have seen and heard." Acts 22:15

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story that gets your attention?
2. What did Christ teach you through this story?
3. Where do we see the care of Christ in this story?
4. How should the believer respond?
5. How will you share the truth you took from this story with someone this week?"

Story Slogan: When God does the work, the clay can be molded into his character.



| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Lesson 15 | TOOLS AGAINST THE DEVIL’S FORCES |
| | Scripture: Mark 9:14-29 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To learn that demonic possession is a sad reality; and that if we aren’t prepared to face it, we may end up being defeated and humiliated and bring dishonor to the name of Christ. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “. . . This kind can come out only by prayer” Mark 9:29. |

INTRODUCTION

Imagine that one day, a neighbor knocks on your door insistently asking for your help. You rush out to see what is happening. When you open the door, you see your neighbor hugging and holding his teenage son, who is shaking intensely and speaking in a terribly chilling voice. Then, you clearly understand that it’s not the boy’s voice. The neighbor tells you that his son has been playing the Ouija game, and now he is possessed by a demon, and he has brought him to you because he knows that you are a Christian who prays for healing.

Question: What would you do in that case? Would you attend to it, or would you apologize by making an excuse?

I. Humiliated By The Devil’s Power (Mark 9:14-18)

A. A Troubled Father And Son (vs. 17-18)

Mark presents the case of a troubled father and his son. We don’t know if the son was unique, but apparently, he was a teenager who suffered severe attacks of epilepsy that exposed him to death. Because the boy was having fits or seizures, he was in danger of falling into water or fire. He was frothing at the mouth, and apparently was suffering from severe dehydration (v. 18). This father who loved his son was keeping an eye on him. Hoping for a cure for his son, he possibly carried him to where Jesus’ disciples were, seeking the long-awaited recovery of his beloved son. How good it would be if there were more responsible parents in our countries looking after their children like this man. Surely, we would have fewer human dramas. At present, the statistics of the number of children abandoned by irresponsible parents are frightening.

B. A Father And Son Disappointed In The Disciples Of Jesus (v. 18c)

The Bible mentions what the anguished father said to the Master: *‘I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not’* (v. 18). However, these same disciples of the greatest Master at some point had become famous when they successfully fulfilled the mission that Jesus had given them (Matthew 10:8 and Mark 6:12-13). These were the same

men commissioned and invested with authority by the Lord Jesus, and who had previously succeeded in the mission entrusted to them. But on that day, they staged a sad and embarrassing spectacle before the eyes of a multitude of priests, and especially of the scribes who were looking for any reason to mock the Lord. It looked as if all the efforts made by that father, with the only hope of being able to see his son recover, was going to fail, as his expectations vanished with the disciples’ inability.

II. Released From The Devil’s Power (Mark 9:14-27)

A. Jesus Was Present (vs. 14-15)

While the disciples suffered the shame of their failure, and the father felt helpless and full of grief and pain and disappointment, the scribes enjoyed the derision towards the disciples, and the audience enjoyed the show. At that moment, the Lord Jesus arrived. Suddenly, the mood of the party was charged with tension by the enemies of the Lord, and the father’s faith who for a moment had renewed hope. How beautiful to have a Lord and Master who comes just when we need Him the most! And this wasn’t coincidence because the Lord was fully aware of the situation.

B. The Cry Of A Father Troubled By His Son’s Situation (vs. 17-18, 21-22, 24-27) In that terrible circumstance, the boy’s father, when he saw Jesus arrive, couldn’t contain his despair and longer and

decided to interrupt the enthusiasm of the people who began to surround the Master to greet him. So, he shouted with all the strength of his soul: “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech.” (v. 17) Then he immediately told him about the resounding failure of his disciples.

C. Jesus Releases The Demon-Possessed Boy (vs. 20,26-27)

The Lord Jesus, after reproving the disbelief of all, including his disciples, ordered that the boy be brought to Him (v. 19). They had barely presented him to Jesus when the demon, upon seeing Jesus, reacted by shaking the boy violently (v.20). The Lord asked the father for the history of the disease; and he after he told him, he said to Jesus: “But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.” (v.22) Then this father cried out saying: “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” (v. 24) And before the crowd, Jesus commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the boy and never enter him again (v. 25-26).

III. Tools To Conquer The Devil (Mark 9:19, 29)

A. Discard Disbelief (v. 19)

Unbelief is the antithesis of faith that connects us with the inexhaustible source of life, healing and sanctifying power.

We can have knowledge, important positions, broad ministerial experience; but without power. In the end, it’s no use, for we cannot give what we don’t have, and we disappoint the world hungry for a God who comes to us with help. We also shame the Lord, and give place to the children of darkness, and the devil himself, to make fun of the

inability and ineffectiveness of our ministries. Today, churches can boast of having many resources that the church of the first century didn’t have. Peter says: “Silver or gold I don’t have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” (Acts 3:6) How important it is to have spiritual vigor because you never know when someone will need your help.

B. Take Care To Pray (v. 29)

A ministry devoid of prayer is a ministry lacking power; and the lack of power affects the testimony of believers. The lack of prayer weakens our passion for Christ and for the needy souls of God. “*Passionate love for Christ produces in the believers a holy passion similar to that which Christ himself had for the salvation of the people. What ignites this passion? ‘Prayer!’ Pray as the believers prayed on Pentecost: united, in an intense and continuous way.*” (Greenway, Roger S. Go and Make Disciples! Costa Rica: Libros Desafío, 2002, p. 93). If we stop praying, we begin to lose vitality and freshness. The church can have the best organization, the best doctrine, the best ecclesiology, etc. but if we don’t pray, they’re just like a beautiful corpse.

C. Take Care To Fast (v. 29)

We can see a group of nine disciples who were mortified and defeated by their lack of faith (Matt. 17:20), which in turn was the result of their lack of prayer and the absence of self-discipline. However, the experience of believers for generations with the practice of fasting as a spiritual discipline has served to nourish spiritual vitality and fervor. Prayer is the medium that keeps us in touch with the supply of spiritual power. Fasting itself has no spiritual power, but it helps us put God above material food, and take time to be with Him.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What was the father’s attitude in seeing Jesus (v.17)?
- Have you ever prayed for the healing of a person?
- What can you learn from this lesson?

CONCLUSION

The use of the means of grace is indispensable in cultivating the freshness of our relationship with God in achieving the fulfillment of an effective mission. We cannot give what we don’t have. Only the real presence of Jesus in our lives, as believers and His ministers, can guarantee us an effective ministry before a world in need.

Lesson 15:

TOOLS AGAINST THE DEVIL'S FORCES

Lesson Aim: To learn that demonic possession is a sad reality, but that there is a solution in Jesus through faith in prayer.

Local Proverb: All animals are nothing before the lion.

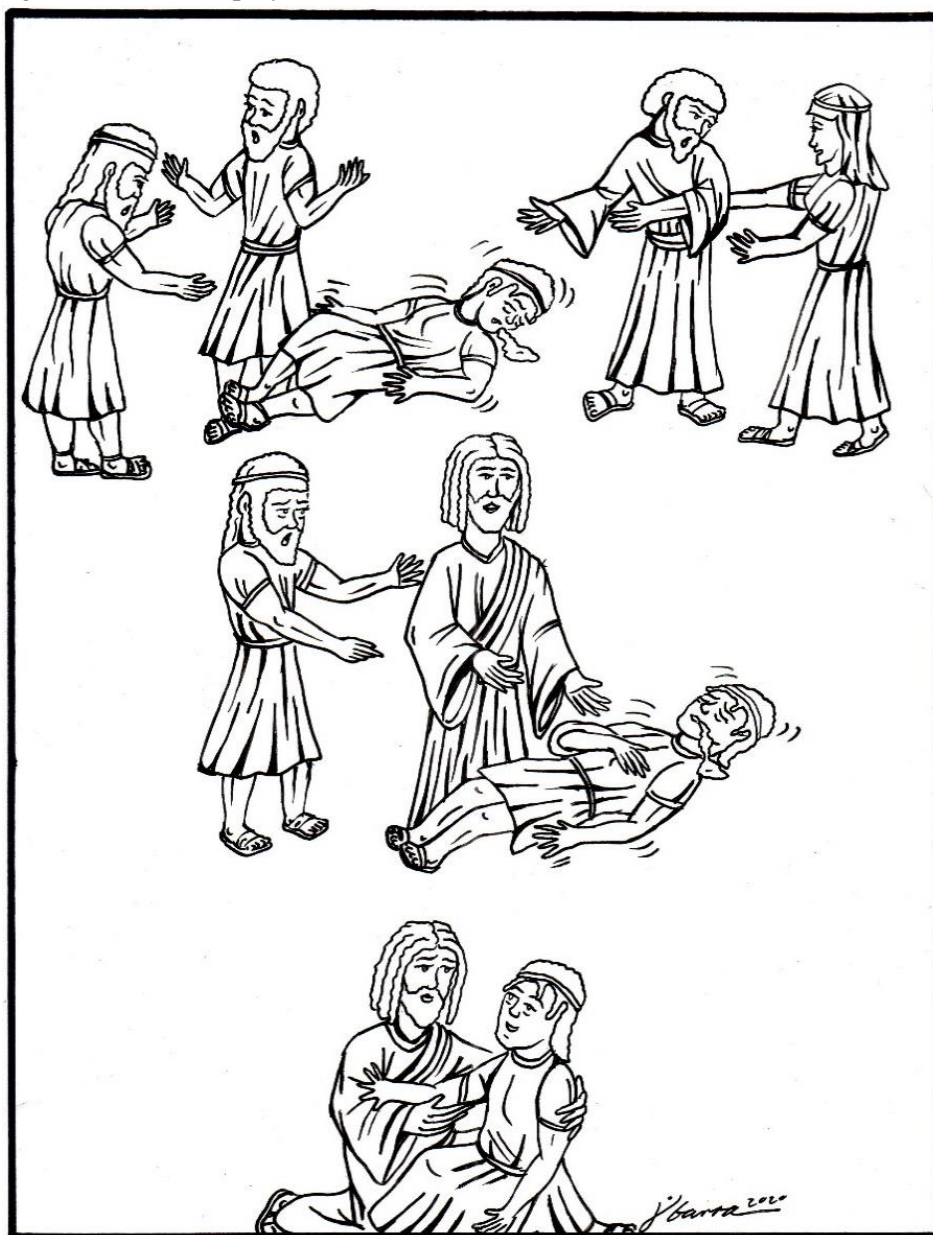
Passage to Study: Mark 9:14-29

Memory Verse: "Everything is possible to one who believes" Mark 9: 23.

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story that gets your attention?
2. What did Christ teach you through this story?
3. Where do we see the care of Christ in this story?
4. How should the believer respond?
5. How will you share the truth you took from this story with someone this week?"

Story Slogan: Through our faith filled prayers, demons bow to Jesus.



| | |
|-----------|-----------------------------|
| Lesson | JESUS, OUR DELIVERER |
| 16 | Scripture: Luke 8:1-3 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To reflect, appreciate and share the freedom that God has given us in Christ Jesus. |

| Memory Verse |
|---|
| “After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him.” Luke 8:1 |

INTRODUCTION

Each of the people who saw and knew Jesus were people who had forgotten what God had done for His people. After the Old Testament book of Malachi, about 400 years passed, during which time there were no prophets delivering God’s message, or kings chosen by God to guide His people according to God’s commandments. They only had the Scripture, and in them, the stories of the experiences of their ancestors, but none of them had seen the Red Sea open up or had eaten the manna. The most recent thing for them was the preaching of John the Baptist. They had the unique opportunity to know this Jesus, the probable Christ that had been prophesied about.

I. Following The Master

A. A Special Man

The first memorable appearance of Jesus occurred in Galilee. He went there to be baptized by John in the Jordan River (Matthew 3:13). All those present were able to hear clearly from John that this man, Jesus, was the Christ who was to come; He was the Messiah whom they had all waited for so many years. John the Baptist said: “ *I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.*” (John 1:34) This statement was crucial since many of those who knew the prophecy, and others who had been converted through John the Baptist’s preaching, believed that God would fulfill the prophecy that the long-awaited Christ would come. From that moment, many followed Jesus, in addition to those He would choose as His apostles (Matthew 4:25).

B. Who Was Jesus To Them?

The fame of Jesus spread quickly (Luke 4:14,37), and multitudes followed after Jesus, (Matthew 5:1, Luke 5:1,15). Many people followed Jesus, although clearly, not all had the same intentions. Some wanted to see his miracles; many only wanted to be healed; others followed Him to see if they could trick him, and some also wanted to know how they could be saved.

Ask your students to meditate a few minutes about why they’re following the Lord Jesus today.

C. What Did It Mean To Follow Jesus?

The disciples were the most faithful followers of Jesus, and He taught them many things while they walked around the villages with Him. He was their mentor and gave them an example to follow, and He brought them closer every day to the kingdom of God. His words were coherent with his actions. His gaze spoke of His truth and sincerity. He also spoke to them gently, corrected them, persuaded them, and He taught them to be like Him, step by step. Many times, He and His apostles would have been able to have shelter and meals normally; although there may have been times when they had to go without. The disciples learned in their walking around the towns and villages to be strong, overcome fatigue, endure hunger and thirst, fast, and other discomforts. Our Lord, without needing to speak, was strengthening and preparing them for when they would have to undergo in their missionary work to distant regions later. Following Jesus means constantly learning from Him, following His steps every second, learning about His teachings and obeying His commands.

II. When Jesus Christ Frees Us

A. The Truth

Jesus taught about life, about the kingdom of God, and about what the Old Testament Scriptures revealed. His truth wasn't limited to mere words written on a page, or to the strict adherence to some law. He went much deeper, teaching that what was really important was a humble and submissive heart before God.

We too must keep in mind that words and deeds, as in Jesus' times, are the consequence of clean hearts (Luke 6:45). Christ's truth was and is the only total and complete truth, and He says that we must live holy lives (1 Thessalonians 4:3a).

B. Health And Salvation

Jesus demonstrated His absolute power and authority. Along with what He taught, He performed miracles which also provided lessons for those who followed Him. The miracles authenticated the authority of the words of Jesus, confirming His divinity. They were and are eloquent signs. He healed the lepers to teach about faith and gratitude (Luke 17:11-19). Jesus healed the paralytic man to teach about the true meaning of the Sabbath (John 5:1-18). The resurrection of Lazarus taught those near Him about faith, and was a wonderful way to display the glory of God (John 11:38-44). When He calmed the storm, He showed His sovereign power over nature (Luke 8:22-25). And we could quote many other instances.

C. Free From Oppression

Children, men and women witnessed the miracles that Jesus did, and they followed him. Some were spectators and others were the protagonists of His miracles. Everyone could see that Jesus not only had authority over common diseases, but also over the elements of nature. Currently, it's difficult for people to recognize the oppression that Satan exerts on them. Instead, they have attributed these attacks to disturbing diseases. Maybe now we don't carry out many exorcisms.

III. The Joy And Peace That God Gives Us

A. Get Rid Of The Load

We will no longer have that weight, which we were carrying around for a short or long time. That limitation, that oppression, would no longer be there, and from then on, our decisions will not depend on our limitations. And because of that, we can now truly say that we're free (John 8:36).

B. Leaving Behind The Past

We will no longer suffer from that experience. We don't have to pour out more tears for our past. It will no longer be part of us, it will only be part of the past (2 Corinthians 5:17).

C. Enjoy The Joy And Peace Of God

One day, we came before Jesus with our burdens, sorrow and sadness, the product of the oppression of sin. He offered to take all of it from us, and in return, we need to accept His joy and peace and begin to move toward the paths He has prepared for those who follow Him (Acts 2:28).

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- When Jesus began his ministry, where did he make his first public appearance, and who saw him? (Matthew 3:13)
- What do you think people thought about the prophecy of the Messiah? (Isaiah 7:14)
- What freedom do you think John 8:36 refers to?

CONCLUSION

Although we're all different and have different needs, our motivation to follow Him must be same: We need to thank Him, for He died to give us freedom and eternal life. The benefits or blessings we receive should be understood as gifts that we receive as a result of His immense love and kindness, and should motivate us to follow Him.

Lesson 16:
JESUS, OUR DELIVERER

Lesson Aim: To understand that we have been set free and should share that message with others.

Local Proverb: If you educate a man you educate one individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family.

Passage to Study: Luke 8:1-3

Memory Verse: "There were also women with him who had been healed of sicknesses and evil spirits. One of them was Mary, called Magdalena, from whom 7 demons had gone out." Luke 8:2

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story that gets your attention?
2. What did Christ teach you through this story?
3. Where do we see the care of Christ in this story?
4. How should the believer respond?
5. How will you share the truth you took from this story with someone this week?"

Story Slogan: Christ delivers us so we can serve others.



| | |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Lesson 17 | CHRISTIAN PERSONALITY |
| | Scripture: Acts 22:1-16 |

| Objective |
|--|
| To understand that nothing is impossible for God; He can renew our personalities |

| Memory Verse |
|---|
| “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there’s no law.” Galatians 5:22-23 |

INTRODUCTION

The study of personality can help us understand others better, and this will result in being able to relate to them in an effective, healthy way so that we can bring more glory and honor to God. In the class we’ll see how a natural personality can be changed radically when the supernatural power of God touches a human life. When we allow God to enter into the scene and take a central role, our lives change course in amazing and exciting ways.

This lesson will be based on a Christian perspective about the human personality. Most of us can agree that personality is a very complex concept to understand. We must trust in God, the Creator of the human mind, to be our best guide so that we can understand ourselves a little bit more.

I. The Source Of The Christian Personality

Our personalities are based on natural tendencies. Children can be quite selfish about sharing their toys, for instance. There’s a tendency to want to get our own way. All these are general characteristics of almost all human beings in early childhood. A moment came when we had the capacity to understand that we were different from the others and that we could make our own decisions. This is where the possibility to choose for ourselves began, which affected our personalities.

When someone gives their life to Christ and receives good spiritual guidance, that person can learn too that he can choose to develop a Christian personality. God can, through His Spirit, make us into a new person with a new personality transformed by the Holy Spirit of God. We can decide to be committed to remain under the guidance of the Holy Spirit daily so that we can experience His presence and transformation in a constant and permanent way throughout our lives.

II. Characteristics Of The Christian Personality

By studying more closely the characteristics that make up a Christian personality, we’ll take David Stoddard’s book, *The Heart of Mentoring* (2003), as a guide. Stoddard says that personality is the set of qualities that constitutes one person and distinguishes him from another; that is, each

person is in some way different from another. When we speak of a Christian personality, we aren’t thinking that every Christian will be the same, but there are certain qualities that should be part of the life of every Christian

We’ll study some elements of the fruit of the Holy Spirit that will be the best guide so that we can evaluate ourselves and allow ourselves to be molded into God’s plan for us as His children. By having times of communion with our heavenly Father, we’ll be able to see these virtues flourish.

A. Love: In the original Greek, the word is ‘*agape*.’ “*Agape love is a little different. It’s not a feeling; it’s a motivation for action that we’re free to choose or reject. Agape is a sacrificial love that voluntarily suffers inconvenience, discomfort, and even death for the benefit of another without expecting anything in return*” (CompellingTruth.org).

We see that this Christian quality directs the personality of the person, producing decisions that benefit others. This way of feeling and thinking is in complete contrast to the egoism that’s innate to our personalities.

B. Joy and Peace: In the Bible, these two Christian virtues are mentioned several times. Spiritual joy is an element of the fruit of the Holy Spirit that refers to a feeling of well-being and tranquility that’s independent of the circumstances that surround us. Note here the desire New Testament writers had that God’s children should

experience joy and divine peace. Peace is true inner tranquility, with a general sense of harmony. In our societies, people are seeking for true joy and true peace. In several verses, we see the peace that Jesus offers; He understands our need for it (John 14:27, 16:33, Philippians 4:6-7). Likewise, we see in the Bible the joy to which God calls us, expressed as a commandment (Philippians 4:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18), and how God is the source of joy for the Christian (Psalm 16:11, 94:19, 118:24; Habakkuk 3:17-18).

C. **Patience or Forbearance:** This element of the fruit of the Holy Spirit comes from the word meaning, waiting long enough before expressing anger. This helps us prevent the use of force (or retribution) that arises from inappropriate anger (a personal reaction). We can see the following biblical quotations about patience: Examples of God's patience (Romans 2:4, 9:22); the example of Timothy as a Christian leader (2 Timothy 3:10); and the call to patience for us today (Ephesians 4:2).

D. **Faithfulness:** The original Greek word for faith is *'pistis'*, which denotes trust, faithfulness, being faithful. A personality that cultivates faith is a personality that trusts in God as Creator and sustainer without losing peace and joy. In these biblical citations, we can observe the following: Examples of people of faith who can be used by God (Stephen, in Acts 6:5, Barnabas, in Acts 11:22-24); the importance of faith in the walk of life (1 Corinthians 16:13; Ephesians 6:16); and the results of faith (Matthew 15:28, Mark 10:52, Acts 14:9-10).

E. **Gentleness or Meekness:** Refers to an inner spirit of quiet assurance. It's tamed strength, the ability to deal appropriately in difficult situations, not to take revenge.

Let's see some biblical references of this Christian virtue: It's necessary in leaders and lay members of the church (Galatians 6:1); it's a quality of the children of God (Colo. 3:12); and it's a call for us today (Titus 3:2).

F. **Self-control or self-governance.** The root of the word means "to govern". In modern psychology, human personality is characterized by different roles, for example, father or mother, son or daughter, student, worker, friend, enemy, etc. Often, we experience several of these roles at the same time. We need to experience self-control in each case to avoid emotional and behavioral disorders. The Bible underlines the importance of self-control to withstand the temptations of the enemy (1 Peter 5:8); and the dangers/consequences of not having self-control. (Proverbs 25:28).

III. Results Of The Christian Personality

The Christian personality, which includes self-control, meekness, and patience, will bring great benefit to those who they live and work with. There will be a lot of harmony, unconditional love, personal sacrifice for the welfare of others, a sense of security and well-being, true trust and mutual support, and collaboration for mutual edification.

Third, we'll see the results of Christian personality in our relationship with God. As a loving Father, He wants us to enjoy His love and His presence in continuous communion. By living a life in the Spirit, we'll develop His fruit in our lives. God's presence in our lives will bring unspeakable joy, a peace that passes all understanding, and abundant life just as Jesus promised us (John 10:10b). These experiences can help us get closer to God and desire to remain united to Him.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- Do you think we can change our personality? Could you share some change that you have personally experienced?
- Can you share some other thoughts about the results of how to develop a Christian personality today?

CONCLUSION

Each fruit of the Spirit is a necessary characteristic and distinctive element of a truly Christian personality. We need to examine ourselves. How are we manifesting these virtues? Allowing the Spirit to mold our personalities will produce very beneficial results in our personal, family and social lives. We can trust that God, our heavenly Father, wants us to be healthy, joyful and close to Him, and with His power, this can be achieved in our lives.

Lesson 17:
CHRISTIAN PERSONALITY

Lesson Aim: To understand that God can renew our personalities.

Local Proverb: Love, like rain, does not choose the grass on which it falls.

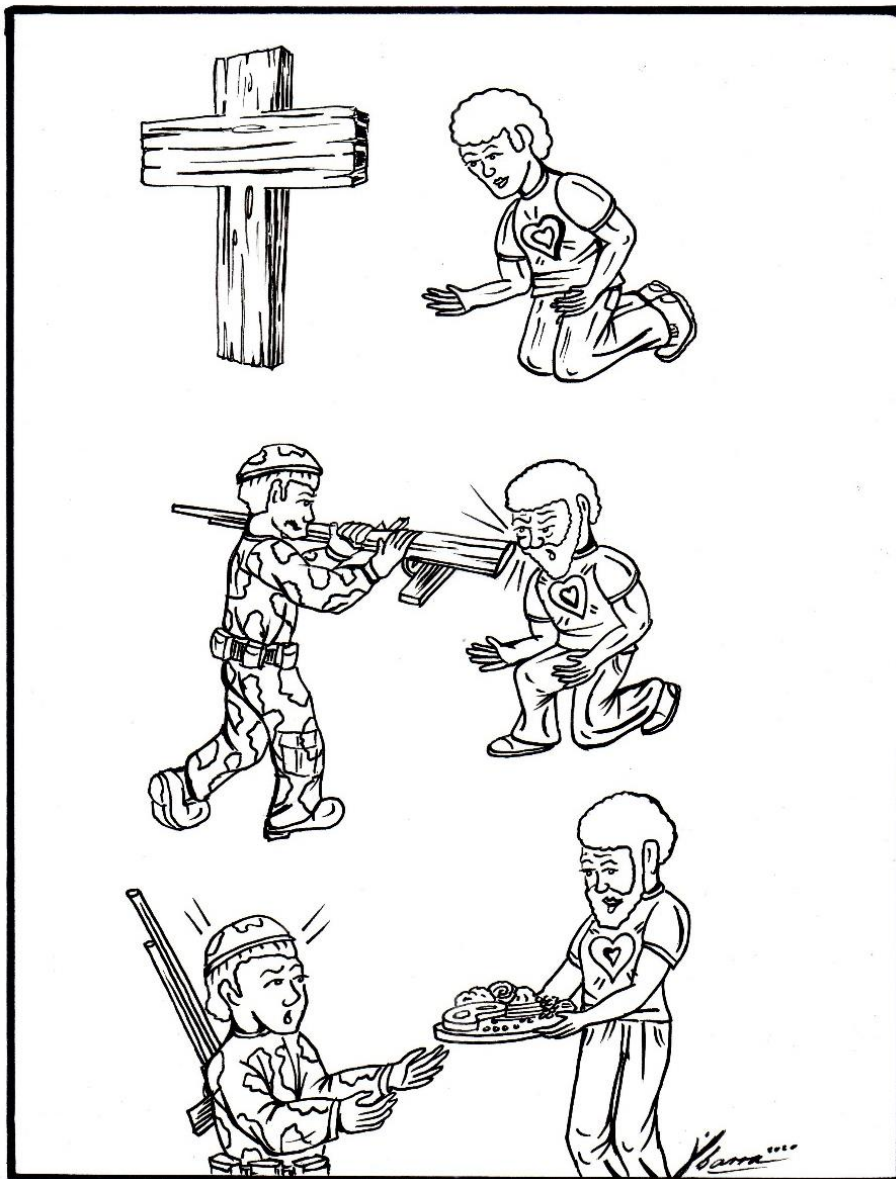
Passage to Study: Romans 12:1-21

Memory Verse: "Do not think that you are better than you are. You must see yourself as you really are. Decide what you are by the amount of faith God has given you." Romans 12:3b

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story that gets your attention?
2. What did Christ teach you through this story?
3. Where do we see the care of Christ in this story?
4. How should the believer respond?
5. How will you share the truth you took from this story with someone this week?"

Story Slogan: With God's power, we can be healthy, joyful, and like Him!



| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Lesson 18 | MANAGING OUR MOODS |
| | Scripture: Mark 14:32-42 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To learn to remember that God doesn't want us to be dominated by our moodiness. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7 |

INTRODUCTION

We humans are made up of spirit, soul and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23). For these to work harmoniously with each other, we need to be at peace with God, our Creator, with ourselves, and with others.

In the post-modern culture of the 21st century, there are millions of people suffering from a lack of peace, and this absence of peace in the human heart carries devastating consequences. Likewise, this lack implies stress, discomfort, and emotional and spiritual illnesses. This uneasiness is due to the lack of harmony in our souls that happens when we aren't at peace. All this ends up affecting our minds, hearts and spirits, and in the end, all this affects our bodies as well.

I. Sharing Our State Of Mind With Our Friends (Mark 14:32-34)

Our moods are emotional manifestations expressed in external and/or internal behaviors, which affect our attitudes. These emotional manifestations can be toxic or non-toxic; they often originate in our thoughts, and can be manifested later in other forms.

Our different moods are a part of being human. We read how Jesus, knowing that his terrible hour was approaching, went to a place called Gethsemane to pray with three of his closest disciples: Peter, James and John (vs. 32-33). There, Jesus said to His friends: "*My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death, he said to them. 'Stay here and keep watch.'*" (v. 34) We notice that in the midst of that sad feeling, Jesus decided to share his feelings with his closest disciples. Because of what he was suffering, he asked for their emotional support in prayer. This teaches us that in the middle of our complicated moments, we can share with our closest relatives and/or friends how we feel. We can seek their emotional support and their support in prayer. Galatians 6:2 says: "*Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.*"

II. Crying Out To God In The Midst Of Complicated Situations (Mark 14:35-36)

In the parallel passage to Mark, Matthew recorded that the Lord Jesus shared with his heavenly Father in a personal

way his suffering through a profound prayer: "*My Father, if it's possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.*" (Matthew 26:39b) The Lord shared with His heavenly Father all His feelings, and trusted Himself to God, showing His dependence on His Father as His helper. To be able to understand the heart cry of a person in the midst of a complicated situation, we need to know their state of mind and how they can be helped to be victorious. We must learn not to make mistakes in this regard. Let's look at some Bible characters to illustrate this.

A. Moses' Anger Due To The Murmuring Of The People (Numbers 20:1-13)

In this story, the people asked Moses why he had brought them to the desert to kill them of thirst. Faced with this, God commanded Moses to speak to the rock to get water out; but in a moment of desperation and anger, Moses struck the rock with his rod (Numbers 20:10-12) instead of speaking to it as God had commanded him. That outburst of frustration and anger cost Moses dearly. For this reason, God told him: "*you will not bring this community into the land I give them.*" (Numbers 20:12) !

B. Elijah's Weakness (1 Kings 19:1-4)

- He was so discouraged that he wanted to die, just as many of us feel in the face of certain events that happen to us (v.4).
- He experienced depression. This can be seen in the heartfelt prayer that this prophet raised to God: "*I have had enough, Lord, ... Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors*" (v. 4). We can understand how

foolish our prayers can be when our state of mind falters.

III. Delivering Every Situation Into The Hands Of God (Mark 14:39)

Faced with what our Lord Jesus was experiencing and suffering, He continued to cry out in the same way: “*My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.*” (Matthew 26:39b) We see, then, that what our Master was experiencing didn’t lead him to take any other decision; He prayed and continued trusting in God, in the midst of all his suffering.

I wonder how we would feel if we knew that we were about to die. What would our mood be? But most importantly, what would we do at those precise moments? Many people make hasty decisions in those critical moments when they’re experiencing different states of mind, and afterwards, they regret those decisions. This often leads to situations that cause them even more distress, uncertainty, etc. than what they had before.

A. The Case Of Asaph (Psalm 73:1-23)

The psalmist Asaph was David’s musician. After 12 years of service to God, he doubted, lost his trust in God, and was envious of the ungodly. He even said: “*Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in innocence.*” (v. 13) This man was experiencing a mood of complaint and his complaint was to the Most High. But this changed when he entered God’s sanctuary (altar), and he realized what the end of the wicked was (v. 17). From there, Asaph acknowledged and accepted that he had

made a mistake. In the same way, a certain state of mind in us could lead us foolishly to doubt or disown God, entering into conflict with Him. Let’s be careful! Let us pray to the Lord asking for patience at all times.

B. God’s Tenderness Towards Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-18)

God answered Elijah by giving him the following:

- He gave him rest (sleep) (v. 5). Although it seems incredible, physical rest is also a blessing from God. Think about this: How many people cannot sleep peacefully or normally?
- He fed him with adequate food (v. 6).
- He allowed him to talk about his afflictions. This is often a very good way to help others in the midst of their moods. Thus, Elijah explained his case to God and relieved his depression (v. 10).
- God revealed himself in his various ways. The wind, the earthquake, the fire and the soft voice were all God’s voices (vs. 11-12).
- The Lord gave Elijah more work to do: to anoint others, showing his depressed prophet that He wanted to continue to use him. Thus, God changed Elijah’s depression through work (action). This was a complete therapy (vs. 15-16).
- He told Elijah good news, that there were seven thousand faithful remaining in Israel (v. 18). In this way, his feeling of loneliness was removed (Spurgeon, Charles, Notes on Sermons, USA: Editorial Portavoz, 1974, pg. 55).

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- Why did the Lord Jesus ask his disciples Peter, James and John to go with him?
- What can happen when a person decides to act in a hurry under a certain state of mind that they are feeling?
- What words of the Master’s prayer show that he shared with His heavenly Father the situation of agony that he was experiencing?

CONCLUSION

In our personal lives, how many times have we encountered situations that cause us anguish, despair, etc. Remember, in the midst of all those moments, to learn to rest in Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:28). No son or daughter of God has been abandoned in their human problems. The Lord Jesus is always attentive to our situation; He wants us to come to Him.

Lesson 18:

MANAGING OUR MOODS

Lesson Aim: To remember that, God doesn't want us to be controlled with a temporary state of mind or feeling.

Local Proverb: Sorrow may sadden your face but it sharpens your understanding.

Passage to Study: Mark 14:32-42

Memory Verse: "He said to them, "I am full of sorrow. My heart is breaking with sadness. Stay here and pray."

Mark 14:34

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story that gets your attention?
2. What did Christ teach you through this story?
3. Where do we see the care of Christ in this story?
4. How should the believer respond?
5. How will you share the truth you took from this story with someone this week?"

Story Slogan: If we don't manage our moods, those moods will manage us.



| | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Lesson 19 | DON'T WORRY, TRUST! |
| | Scripture: Luke 12:22-31 |

| Objective |
|--|
| To understand that anxiety or worry is an evil that afflicts many people, and that God doesn't want us to worry. |

| Memory Verse |
|---|
| "Don't be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6 |

INTRODUCTION

Many times in life, we face uncertain situations where we cannot see a way out. In times of crisis, we question ourselves about which decisions to make or where the resources will come from to meet a need. In the face of all this uncertainty, it's normal that worry and anxiety arise in us as we look at what we see as an unknown future, and not as present reality. Jesus knew that his disciples had questions about their future and how their needs would be met. In Luke 12:22-31, we see that the Lord took time to let them know that God was looking after each one of their needs, so they only needed to trust in His divine care.

I. The Origin Of Anxiety

Anxiety is: *"a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome."* That's to say, anxiety is a state in which the being of the person is totally restless and a bit fearful. Such a state is a normal and natural reaction, which arises when our agitated thoughts activate this reaction in our bodies. Anxiety causes physiological changes in us that prepare us to increase performance and stay alert. This is normal, however, what's not normal is being constantly anxious for different reasons.

A. Routine And Hectic Life

The current pace of life and the overload of activities and occupations can be a constant source of anxiety and stress. When we don't set appropriate priorities and allow circumstances or other people make decisions about our time and activities, we can experience periods when we're overloaded with work, which keep us in constant turmoil.

B. Dissatisfaction

The human heart is insatiable; ambition and passions can govern us. When our gaze isn't on Christ, and we don't let His Holy Spirit guide our life, we're prone to go after our own desires. This interminable search for more

satisfaction ends up exhausting us and leaving us increasingly empty. In his encounter with the Samaritan woman, Jesus recognized this woman's need and helped her see all those decisions that she had made in trying to be satisfied. Then, he offered to quench her thirst and give her eternal life (John 4:13-14). Jesus is the only one who can satisfy all our needs and keep us from being controlled by the pleasures of this world.

C. Crisis And Uncertainty

The loss of a loved one can leave such a large void that it can make us think that we'll never recover. So, we focus our attention on the uncertain future and on how we can continue with life from that moment on. The breakup of a family or marriage relationship can also make us feel anxious. Having put our trust in a relationship, we see how our plans are frustrated and we feel disoriented. Also, the loss of work, interpersonal conflicts or any other situation that generates instability ends up disturbing our mind, giving way to ideas and thoughts that don't allow us to move forward.

II. Let's Learn From Birds And Flowers

A. Don't Worry About Daily Life

When we think about our basic needs like food and clothing, we can see that they become indispensable to guarantee our life here on earth. However, Jesus helped His disciples see

how God diligently takes care of his creation (Luke 12:24b,28). When we return our gaze towards the afflictions of this world, it's easy to forget that God is the one in control and who sustains everything. We can be sure that God will put his wonderful care over our life and our needs.

B. God Takes Care Of You

In Luke 12:29-30, we can clearly see Jesus drawing attention to the fact that we aren't to be like unbelievers, whose lives revolve around anxiety and worry. For Jesus, the anxiety in our life is the result of forgetting that we have a loving Father who is watching over us and knows all our needs.

III. The Effective Antidote Against Anxiety

A. We Need To Put Our Trust In God

An important factor when we face anxiety is to understand, be aware of, and recognize that worries or situations that can cause anxiousness are taking on a higher priority in our lives than the trust we have in God. When we face one of these crises in our lives, we naturally look at our own resources and means first (Psalm 20:7). As we begin to depend on them, we weaken our trust in God. When discovering that what we can do isn't enough, what we'll feel will be anxiety. Reflecting on God's provision, and remembering how He has supplied our needs in the past, is a way of nurturing our faith. In order to be able to rest and counteract the thoughts that provoke anxiety, we need to recover our trust in God.

B. Concentrating Our Thoughts On God

The problem of anxiety is that it stirs our mind and thoughts. It takes away our peace and doesn't let us see clearly the best action we can take. Isaiah reminded us that God will keep in perfect peace the person whose thought is placed on God, who trusts Him (Isaiah 26:3). We need to fill our mind with the thoughts of God, recognizing His action in each moment of our lives, in order to avoid the worries take His place and distract us.

C. We Need To Be Thankful

Paul gave us wonderful counsel in his letter to the Philippians. He reminded us that we have no reason to feel anxious. In the moments in which we experience anxiety, we need to present these concerns before God, praying with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6). To be grateful is an effective antidote for anxiety because it generates a wall of resistance to our worries and anxieties. It also makes us see that, even though we're experiencing a difficult situation, we have valuable resources in God, to whom we can turn at all times.

D. We Need To Pray

1 Peter 5:7 reminds us that we can place all our anxiety on God, recognizing that He takes care of us. God knows that we're human. He knows our needs and he is a loving Father who wants to supply in every area of our life. Our confidence in the certainty of His care is our best resource to be free from anxiety. Although anxiety is a natural human reaction that sometimes alerts us and helps us to prevent dangers and threats, we must be aware that we're often worried and agitated by situations that only show a lack of faith and trust in God's provision for our lives.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- In what ways can being very busy cause anxiety? (Matthew 13:22)
- How can we nurture our trust in God by seeing how He cares for His creation? (Luke 12:24-28)
- Why do you think Paul advised us to be grateful to relieve anxiety? (Philippians 4:6)

CONCLUSION

God expects us to believe that He is a caring Father who knows our needs and wants to supply each of them. When we face situations where we don't see how God can help us, we need to look for His help in prayer and with gratitude, focusing our eyes upon Him.

Lesson 19:

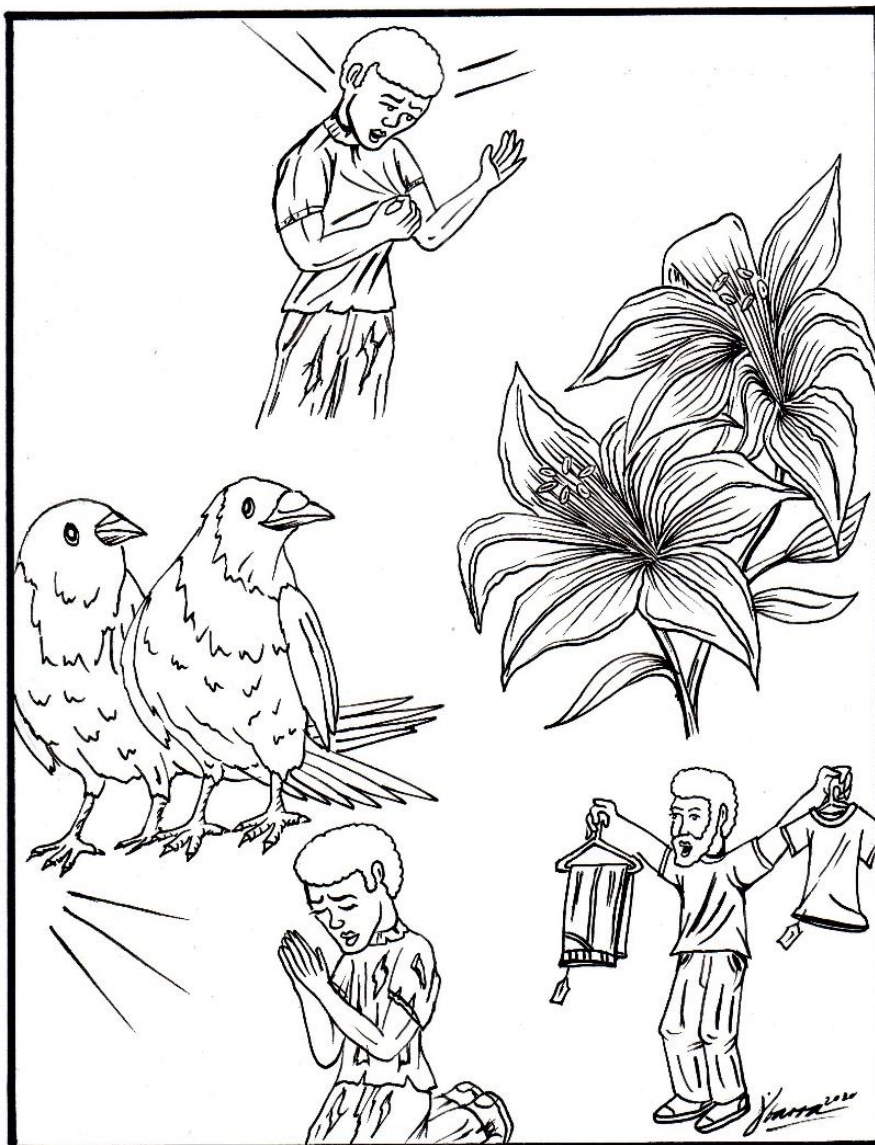
DON'T WORRY, TRUST!

Lesson Aim: To understand that God does not want us to worry.
Local Proverb: Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength.
Passage to Study: Luke 12:22-31
Memory Verse: "Then Jesus spoke to His disciples. He said, "I tell, do not worry. Don't worry about your life and what you will eat. And don't worry but your body and what you will wear." Luke 12:22

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story that gets your attention?
2. What did Christ teach you through this story?
3. Where do we see the care of Christ in this story?
4. How should the believer respond?
5. How will you share the truth you took from this story with someone this week?"

Story Slogan: Worry steals; prayer reveals, so let's pray!



| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Lesson 20 | WHAT THE BIBLE TELLS US ABOUT STRESS |
| | Scripture: Matthew 11:25-30 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To understand that God wants His children to live a restful life physically, spiritually and emotionally. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28 |

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of mankind, problems and pressures have existed in the lives of us humans. They can be physical, social, spiritual and / or emotional. In our study passage, Jesus is speaking to the Jewish people, a people loaded with many things. As a nation, the Jews were under the yoke of Rome. While it's true that they could cultivate their land, they had to pay taxes for it. Also, while it's true that they had a center of worship (the Temple in Jerusalem), it was also true that their religious leaders were imposed upon them by the government that oppressed them. If we go a little further, it's true that they had the freedom to believe in God, but their religion was full of many rules almost impossible to fulfill. With this in mind, let's study Matthew 11:25-30 and see what God has for us when we seek Him wholeheartedly.

I. Stress, Its Causes and Consequences

A. Causes Of Stress

As the times have progressed, we have generated our own problems. Humanity is increasingly loaded with problems. We struggle with ourselves because we want to know more. This has led to the generation of pressures of all kinds, including emotional ones, because we haven't been able to find answers for our existence. In a time when there's more science, there are also more suicides, more drug users, more alcoholism, and similar things. And all this makes us wonder. There are many answers, but I think one of them is that we live more and more stressed because we cannot find real answers.

B. Stress And Its Consequences

Stress has been defined as a feeling in which everything falls apart, and can be aggravated by the inability to handle problems. It's also feeling burdened with worries about work, home, family, money, car, and a series of factors. All this may result in high blood pressure and dermatitis to mention just a couple of them. But it can also lead to spiritual problems such as despair and anguish, which leads some people to consult everything related to spiritualism and occultism. These emotional problems and mental tensions are like invisible forces that pull or push against a person. Also, stress manifests itself as anger, tearfulness, disability, loss of control, loss of appetite or

binge eating, causing mistakes, anger, nervous depression, and, sometimes, very dramatic incidents or accidents.

II. Jesus' Response To The Problem Of Stress

A. The Religious Society In The Time Of Jesus

The problem of the Jewish people in the time of Jesus was that the Jewish religion itself didn't offer them alternative solutions to their anguish. Their religion was so laden with rules and regulations. Jesus himself condemned the religious leaders, saying that they were capable of putting burdens on the people that even they themselves couldn't carry (Matthew 23:4).

B. Society Today

Everything that's developing around us today can be stressful. Alarmingly, even religion has become a source of stress. In our society, people seek to get things. Young people want to have a good job in order to be able to buy a car, house, brand clothes, etc. They believe that this will make them feel happy, but it turns that these things don't really satisfy them. Married couples believe that they will be happy if they have all the necessary things for their new stage of life. But we're again talking about material things. Neither religion, or money, or professions, or the things that we can acquire are helping us to be happy.

C. What Jesus Offers

In this situation, Jesus made the following invitation: *“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest.”* (Matthew 11:28) In relation to this precious invitation, we need to ask ourselves two important questions: “How can we come to Him?” and “What kind of rest does the Lord offer?” There are many people who hear about Jesus, and they’re invited to believe that He can forgive their sins and give them a new life. Many of them say that they will fix some things in their lives, and then accept the invitation. However, the truth is that if we could fix our lives on our own, why do we need Jesus? Remember what the Psalmist said: *“Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous be shaken.”* (Psalm 55:22)

III. Being Yoked to Jesus

A. *“Take My Yoke Upon You, And Learn From Me ...”* (Matthew 11:29a)

When someone comes to Jesus, they must learn to walk with new rules: no more pride, and no more self-centered rules. Now, they must follow Jesus’ rules. It’s interesting that He tells us to take His yoke, that is, his teachings, and begin on a new path, the path of humility, subjection, relearning how to walk in life. Jesus told us: *“...learn from me...”* (v.29). But where and how can a child of God learn from Jesus? He himself gave us the answer: *“...study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me.”* (John 5:39)

B. *“... I Am Gentle And Humble In Heart ...”* (Matthew 11:29b)

Jesus’ description of himself was totally different from what the Jewish leaders were like: arrogant, proud, legalistic and commandeering. Jesus is meek, in other words, gentle and kind, very different from the attitudes of the priests and the high priest of that time! Jesus’ nature is peacefulness. He’s the one who can comfort our souls. In the story of the prophet Elijah in 1 Kings 19:1-18, we find the prophet fleeing from Ahab and Jezebel, depressed and distressed. They were looking for him to kill him. God helped him sleep, and then spoke to him in a cave. God used a strong wind, an earthquake and fire to get through to Elijah, but he didn’t see God in them.

C. *“... And You Will Find Rest For Your Souls”* (Matthew 11:29c)

People’s greatest desire is to be able to rest from their afflictions. We need to be at peace with ourselves. In Philippians 4:6, the apostle Paul invites us to pray for the things that normally concern us, and which take away our peace. The solution then is that we should talk more often with God. If we pray for all the things that concern us, we would have much less stress. Here are two practical suggestions to obtain peace for your soul. First, find more time to be with the Lord Jesus, time for yourself, and stop running after things. Secondly, settle for less, that is, learn to live with what God has given you.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- In your opinion, who do you think are those who live in constant stress?
- Could the contemporary church cause stress in society? Explain
- What kind of relationship do you have with Jesus?

CONCLUSION

God is very interested that His children live a life of rest physically, spiritually and emotionally. To do this, we must stop looking at what we don’t have or at what’s causing us anguish or concern. Instead, we must share it all with God in prayer, and then we’ll experience the true peace that only comes from God.

Lesson 20:

WHAT THE BIBLE TELLS US ABOUT STRESS

Lesson Aim: To understand that God wants His children to live a restful life.

Local Proverb: "You can outdistance what is running after you; but you cannot outdistance what is running inside you."

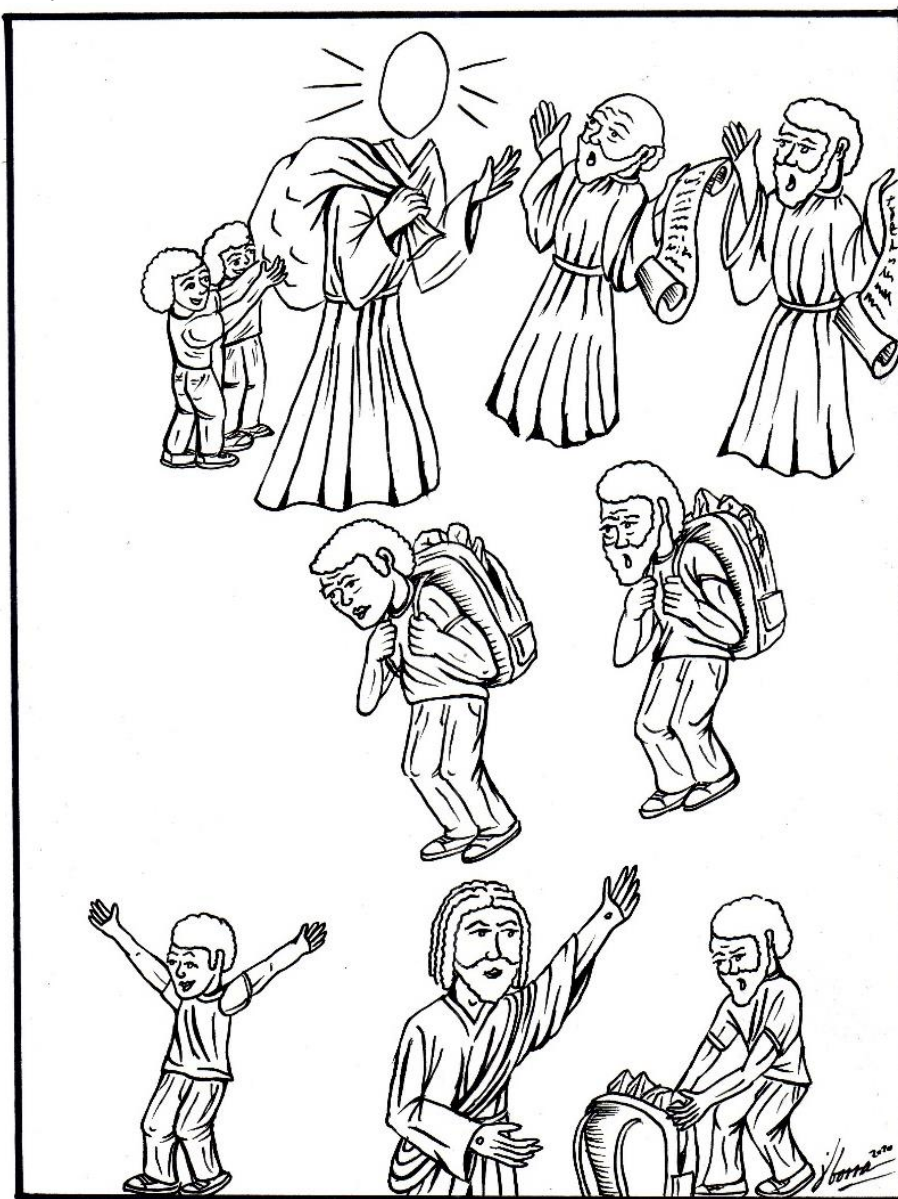
Passage to Study: Matthew 11:25-30

Memory Verse: "Come to me, all of you who are tired and have heavy loads. I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story that gets your attention?
2. What did Christ teach you through this story?
3. Where do we see the care of Christ in this story?
4. How should the believer respond?
5. How will you share the truth you took from this story with someone this week?"

Story Slogan: God is very interested that His children live a life of rest.



| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Lesson 21 | GOD FORGIVES THOSE WHO FORGIVE |
| | Scripture: Matthew 18:23-35 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To learn that God wants us to forgive others the offenses that they have done against us. |

| Memory Verse |
|---|
| “Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?” Matthew 18:33. |

INTRODUCTION

One of the themes that Matthew dealt with in the gospel he wrote was the theme of forgiveness. We read that to be children of God means to live a peaceful life (Matthew 5:9). We read as well that if before presenting our offerings (economic or praise) to the Lord, we remember that we have something against a fellow Christian, we need to pause, go, and be reconciled with the other, and then worship God (Matthew 5:23-24). It’s interesting that chapter 5 ends with the urgent call to love our enemies if we want to become children of our heavenly Father (vs. 44-45). Apparently, our perfection in holiness rests upon forgiving others (v. 48).

I. The Characteristics of God’s Forgiveness (Matthew 18:23-27)

A. God’s Forgiveness Doesn’t Seek Its Own

The servant said to his king and lord: “... *be patient with me ...*” (v. 26). The on-line dictionary defines patience as: “*the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset.*” The servant also told his Lord: “...*and I will pay back everything.*” (v. 26) The response of this servant shows his arrogance. He didn’t ask to be forgiven all the debt or part of it. He didn’t ask for comfortable installments to repay his debt. But he asked for something which was impossible for him to pay back on a servant’s salary. Sin leads us to see overly optimistic options, instead of seeking the divine forgiveness that’s freely given to us.

B. God’s Forgiveness Is Merciful

We read: “...*the servant’s master took pity on him.*” (v. 27) The idea expressed here is often found in the Bible (Judges 2:18, Luke 10:33, 15:20, etc.). The king had profound compassion on his servant. We too need to show mercy when we have to forgive someone. Just as we need God’s mercy, so must we show it in our relationships with others. We’re invited in the Bible to become like Jesus, manifesting Jesus Christ in our lives. Learning to forgive one another will keep us united, and that will give testimony to the world (John 17:21).

C. God’s Forgiveness Grants Freedom

Our destiny was going to hell, a permanent prison for our souls (Luke 16:26), but God in His mercy paid our debts, taking away our guilt and declaring us to be righteous, thus guaranteeing our eternal freedom if we remain in Christ. We’re free because divine forgiveness brought justification to our lives. This parable of the debtors also helps us understand that by ourselves, we cannot buy our freedom. Our pride cannot do it, nor our good intentions. The only thing that can give us freedom for eternity is divine forgiveness (John 8:36). Matthew 18:27 ends by saying: “*He canceled the debt and let him go.*”

II. Demonstrations of Unforgiveness (Matthew 18:28-30)

We move on now to the other servant who owed the first one the sum of one hundred denarii, a salary of one hundred days. At present, it would be the equivalent to three minimum wages, a payable debt. This is in contrast to the debt that his lord had forgiven him, which was equivalent to millions of dollars. But the first servant refused to forgive him (v. 28).

A. Lack Of Forgiveness Affects Others

The pardoned servant didn’t have the same forgiving attitude as his lord had had for him. The passage says that this servant violently took his fellow servant and wanted to hang him (v. 28). And even though this fellow servant threw himself at his feet and begged him (v. 29), using

the same words he had previously said to the king (v. 26), he didn't want to forgive him. Here we can understand that the absence of a forgiving attitude gives rise in us to violence against others, suffocating our peers, unleashing anger, tantrums, unnecessary pain, insults, lawsuits, etc.

B. The Lack Of Forgiveness Accuses

The servant said to his fellow servant: *"Pay back what you owe me!"* (v. 28). Often as offenders, we wish to be forgiven not only by God, but also by our neighbor so that we no longer have to feel the weight of guilt. But when the situation changes, when we're in the position of being the one offended, how difficult it is to forgive! We want to keep on blaming our offender and seek to make them remember what they have done because what they did hurt us. It's hard to forget. However, true forgiveness overlooks all shortcomings, mistakes and sins committed against us.

III. The Consequences Of Not Forgiving (Matthew 18:31-35)

A. Unforgiveness Will Be Observed By Others.

Among the characters that are mentioned in this story are the other slaves, some of whom were sad and others angry about what they had seen: *"When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened."* (v.31)

The Jewish leaders correctly applied the law, *"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."* (Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20, Deuteronomy 19:21). But this wasn't to avenge but because punishment was necessary. The king had to act

with justice in this case. The wicked servant had done an injury to his fellow servant; he needed to be punished. Sooner or later, people will demand justice. There needed to be forgiveness between those two servants.

B. Unforgiveness Brings Back The Judgment Of God

God will correct us if we don't forgive. The divine correction required from the servant who didn't want to forgive is the same judgment he would have had if he hadn't been forgiven (v. 34). Now he had to pay back all the debt. The king wasn't interested in the money, neither did he condemn the wicked servant because all the others demanded it, but because he didn't want to forgive his fellow servant. Therefore, the king said to him: *"'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'"* (vs. 32-33).

C. Brings God's Unforgiveness

In the same context in Matthew, there's a requirement if we want God's forgiveness. We must accept Christ and receive a forgiving attitude from Him. In the Lord's prayer, we read, *"And forgive us ... as we forgive..."* (Matthew 6:12). This is the will of God. And closing this same passage, Jesus adds: *"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."* (Matthew 6:14) Jesus knows our human tendencies: *"But if you don't forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses."* (Matthew 6:15)

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What are the characteristics of God's forgiveness according to Matthew 18:23-27?
- What causes the lack of forgiveness according to the passage? Explain.
- How would you help a person forgive their offender?

CONCLUSION

Sometimes it's almost impossible for us to forgive, but God's perfect love enables us to do so. But how can we forgive a rape, a robbery, a relationship disappointment, a homicide, an economic debt, etc.? We cannot do it in our own strength, but with God's help, we can. Jesus left us an example (1 Peter 2:21- 23). We can be empowered through His Holy Spirit to forgive.

Lesson 21:

GOD FORGIVES THOSE WHO FORGIVE

Lesson Aim: To learn If you have offended someone, ask for pardon: if offended forgive.

Local Proverb: The bitter heart eats it's owner.

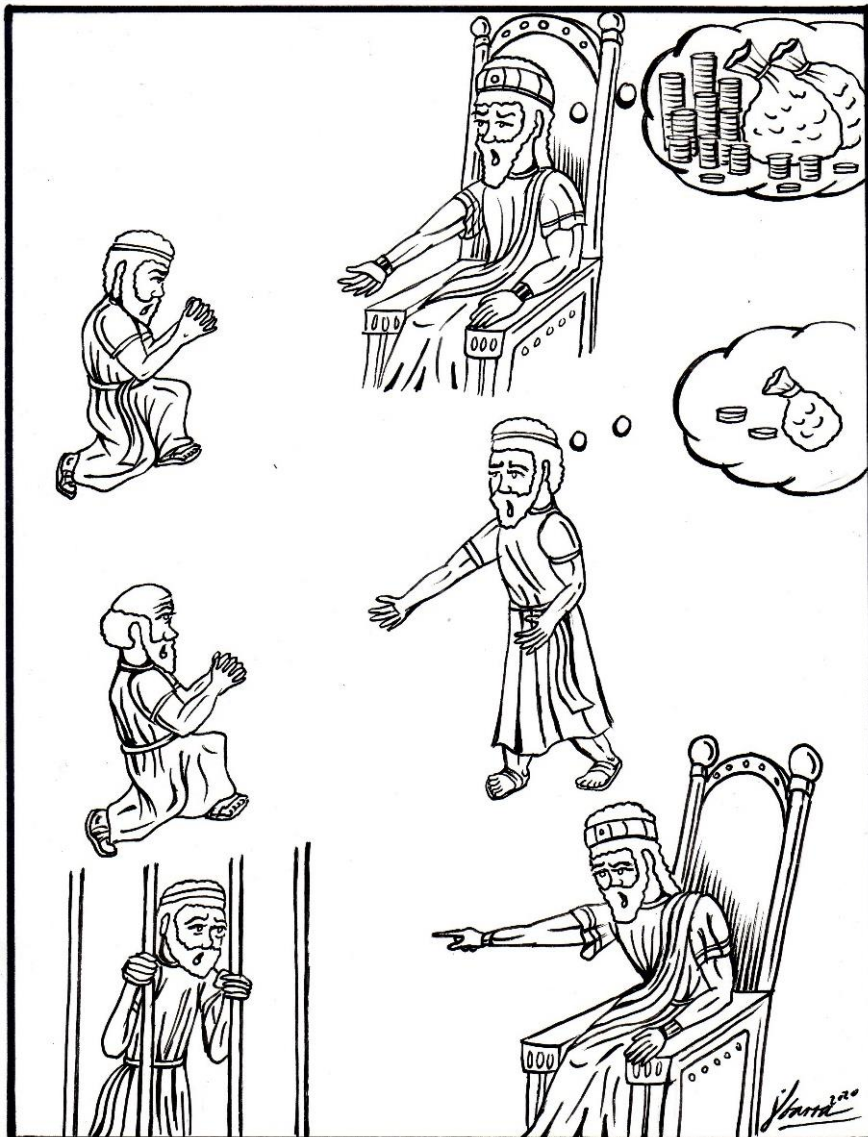
Passage to Study: Matthew 18:23-35

Memory Verse: "I had mercy on you. You should have had the same mercy on that other servant." Matthew 18:33

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story that gets your attention?
2. What did Christ teach you through this story?
3. Where do we see the care of Christ in this story?
4. How should the believer respond?
5. How will you share the truth you took from this story with someone this week?"

Story Slogan: God's perfect love enables us to forgive anyone.



| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Lesson 22 | BE CONTENT! |
| | Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:3-10 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To understand that it's God's will that his sons and daughters be content and live content with what they have. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| "But if we have food and clothing, we'll be content with that" 1 Timothy 6:8. |

INTRODUCTION

Decades later, it has been found that wealth, independence and individualism have brought down solidarity and left as a result the immense loneliness that leads many to suicide. The end result of independence isn't happiness, but emptiness and an absolutely unimaginable boredom. Faced with this reality, the passage of 1 Timothy 6:3-10 shows us a better way through godliness and contentment.

I. The Benefits Of Godliness Accompanied By Contentment (1 Timothy 6:3-6)

A. Following Jesus' Godly Example

The apostle Paul emphasized piety or godliness when he exhorted his disciple Timothy to teach about this matter. In 1 Timothy 6:3, he expressly indicated that the teachings should be: *"the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and ... godly teaching."* When the Lord Jesus Christ began His ministry, He indicated what this godliness consists of. One day when He was in the synagogue, the Master read the book of Isaiah, mentioning that He would bring good news to the poor, freedom to captives, sight to the blind (Luke 4:18). These actions show acts of love for others, worthy of piety. Also, Jesus had compassion on the helpless multitudes (Matthew 9:36). In addition to all His compassionate acts, His greatest manifestation of compassionate love was to surrender himself to death on the cross for all of us (Philippians 2:8).

B. Contentment

The on-line dictionary defines "contentment" as: *"a state of happiness and satisfaction."* In the Greek, this word is 'autarkeia', meaning 'sufficiency in oneself' and was used by the Stoic philosophers to describe a person who wasn't disturbed by external circumstances. Christians must be satisfied and sufficient people, without feeling the need to seek more of what God has already given them. Christ is the source of true contentment (2 Cor 3:5; 9:8, Phil 4:11-13:9).

C. The Benefits Of Godliness And Contentment

In 1 Timothy 6:6, the apostle Paul indicated that there's great gain when godliness is accompanied by contentment. Piety, like every act of love, when it's authentic, always implies a sacrifice. Thus, the Lord Jesus came and gave himself up on the cross of Calvary: *"Who, being in very nature God, didn't consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness."* (Philippians 2:6-7) Human logic would say, how can being open handed make us happy? However, Paul reminded us of the words of Jesus: *"... It's more blessed to give than to receive."* (Acts 20:35)

II. Manifestations Of A Contented Life (1 Timothy 6:7-8)

A. Recognize That We Had Nothing When We Were Born And We'll Leave With Nothing

In 1 Timothy 6:7, the Apostle Paul quoted one of the blunt truths that accompany our earthly life: *"For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it."* In some cultures, people had the custom of burying their dead with items that would serve them in "the afterlife", especially if they had been wealthy people. However, for sure, none of that stuff could be used. In spite of this truth, it's also necessary to bear in mind that financial resources and material goods are necessary both for our personal lives, for missions, and for the enlargement of God's Kingdom. The apostle Paul worked to earn a living, and in this regard he said: *"... The one who is unwilling to work shall not*

eat”(2Thessalonians3:10).

B. Enjoy The Simple Life

Oneofthecharacteristicsoftheworldinwhichwe live is its tendency to buy things endlessly. In contrast to this, 1 Timothy 6:8 motivates us to findsatisfactioninthesimple things of life. The Word of God exhorts us to use our resourcesintelligently: “*Why spend money on what’s not bread, and your labor on what doesn’t satisfy?*” (Isaiah 55:2). Human nature was designed to identify better goals.Inthegarden of Eden, God gave Adam and Eve the mandate to administertheearth (Genesis 1:28); God gave them the ability to do so. Unfortunately, the fall messed up God’s plan. So now, we humans must work to meet our needs. The desire to have more must not take the place of our dependence on God, piety, and contentment. We must be satisfied with having the essentials, working, and be willingto share(Ephesians 4:28). This is the secret of happiness.

III. The Consequences of Not Being Content (1 Timothy 6:9-10)

A. Temptation, Greed And Ruin

1 Timothy 6:9 states that: “*Those who want to get richfall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.*”

Estrangement from God produces in us numbered and hardened hearts where we often call good things bad and vice versa (Ephesians 4:17-19). The search for a state of well-being in which we can all be content is God’s ideal, but we cannot achieve it without Him. Falling prey to temptations can lead to negative and diverse results, going from the apparently good to the definitely bad. Thesearch

for well-being without God brings temptation for illicit immorality, loneliness and greed - all condemned by God (Exodus 20:17).

B. Destruction And Ruin

In the recent past, we have seen the media present the events of government corruption with big headlines. Beforethereport, we had considered those who performed government functions as honorable. However, the accusations, denunciations and even condemnations of a significant number of officials at all levels, including the sports arena, have provoked citizen disenchantment (Proverb 29:2). This has also caused loss in people and their families, particularly in those who wanted to have an honorable life; nowthey live marked by these signs.

C. Loss Of Faith

1 Timothy 6:10 says, “*For the love of money is a root of all kinds ofevil.*”

In this passage, the key phrase is “love of”. As we have already said, money is a useful resource. However, as the popular saying goes: “*Money is a good servant; but lousy master.*” In 2008, there was a financial crisis that threatened to collapse whole countries of the developed world.Itwasunleashedby what was called “*financialpanic*”. Many documentaries have been published after that disastrous event, and in all of them, it’s easy to observe how “*the love of money*” was the source of the problem. God says: “*The silver is mine and the gold is mine*” (Haggai 2:8). When our faith is deposited in these metals, our faith ceases to be “*Christian*” and becomes idolatrous. That was the experience of the people of Israel in the desert (Exodus 32).

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What should be the correct teaching according to verse 3?
- How would you define a simple lifestyle today (1 Timothy 6:8)
- What practical steps can you take to get rid of the consequences of “*not living in contentment*”? (vs. 9-10).

CONCLUSION

If we’re content with what we have now and don’t worry about things, we can trust the owner of all the silver and gold to help us have what we need to cover our needs, and at the same timeexperience the joy of sharing.

Lesson 22:

BE CONTENT!

Lesson Aim: To understand that God's will is for His children to live a life of contentment.

Local Proverb: If you want all; you lose all.

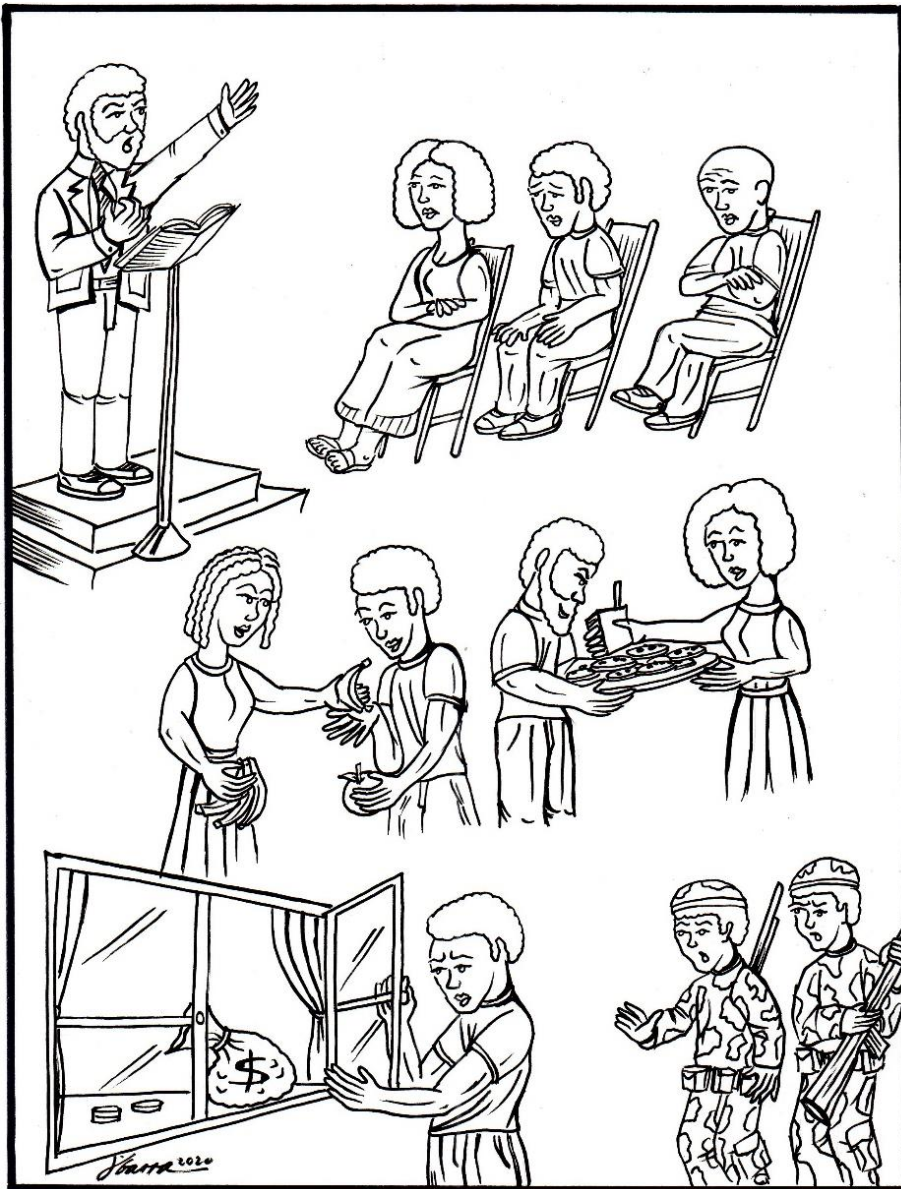
Passage to Study: 1 Timothy 6:3-10

Memory Verse: "So, if we have food and clothes, we will be satisfied with that." 1 Tim 6:8

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story that gets your attention?
2. What did Christ teach you through this story?
3. Where do we see the care of Christ in this story?
4. How should the believer respond?
5. How will you share the truth you took from this story with someone this week?"

Story Slogan: Trusting God helps us to be content and willing to share.



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| Lesson 23 | LET'S TAKE CARE OF THE TEMPLE! |
| | Scripture: 1Corinthians 6:12-20 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To learn that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and we need to take care of them. |

| Memory Verse |
|---|
| “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You aren’t your own?” 1 Corinthians 6:19 |

INTRODUCTION

The Bible teaches us that the Holy Spirit indwells us and enables us to worship our living and omnipresent God. In the Old Testament, the dwelling place of God was the tabernacle of meeting. Today, each believer is a tabernacle where God dwells by the means of his Holy Spirit. Therefore, if our body is the abode of God, we must take care that no part of it is contaminated. This also means that we must take care that our mind (thoughts) is pure and holy, because the Bible says in Philippians 4:8: *“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”*

I. How Are We Using Our Bodies?

Platonic philosophers believed that the body was material and corrupt, and was therefore bad, and that only the soul was eternal. The Corinthian new believers that Paul wrote to were influenced by these ideas. Some didn’t believe in the resurrection. Paul was very clear in 1 Corinthians 15 that there would be a bodily resurrection. Paul also taught them in 1 Corinthians 6:12 that God has given us free will but we have to choose correctly: *“Just because something is technically legal doesn’t mean that it’s spiritually appropriate. If I went around doing whatever I thought I could get by with, I’d be a slave to my whims.”* (1 Corinthians 6:12 The Message)

Paul clearly told the Corinthians that as people regenerated by our Lord Jesus Christ, their bodies were included in the transformation done by the Lord, creating their own personal tabernacle (dwelling place of God) which must not be contaminated. With this teaching in mind, we must remain completely free of any contamination that comes to attack our bodies, souls and spirits. *“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there’s freedom.”* (2 Cor. 3:17)

II. Sins That Destroy Integrity & Physical Health

Just as the tabernacle of meeting was the dwelling place of God in the time of Moses (Exodus 26, 27, 33:7-11), today our body is the temple and abode of the Lord, *“Do you not know*

that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You aren’t your own.” (1 Cor. 6:19) We can say we’re made up of several parts: body, soul and spirit (1 Thess. 5:23). Therefore, it’s our responsibility to take care of the body God has given us because He dwells there if we’re sons and daughters of God (Eph. 1:13). What sins can destroy integrity and physical health?

The historical social context of the Corinthian church was full of sexual immorality. High on a hill in Corinth was the temple to the goddess Aphrodite, where more than a thousand prostitutes were employed as priestesses, and sex was part of the ritual of worship. The apostle Paul warned the believers in 1 Cor. 6:13-18 to *“Flee from sexual immorality.”*

The current context in which we live may not be very different from what the Corinthian church experienced. Today in many places, there are countless motels and brothels where both men and women carry out sexual actions. So we too must heed the warning to *“Flee from sexual immorality.”*

There’s also another and maybe more subtle danger lying in wait for God’s people: spiritual infidelity, not having a close relationship with God, being unfaithful. Paul told Timothy: *“if we’re faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself”* (2 Tim. 2:13a). When we’re close to God, we do what pleases Him: *“But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.”* (1 Cor. 6:17)

Therefore, let's be careful and vigilant about our walk and fellowship with the Lord. We need to love Him with our all our hearts. If we turn away from the Lord, our integrity will be destroyed, and we'll become nothing (John 15:15).

III. Ways To Glorify God In Our Body

As we have mentioned, we're made up of different components body, soul and spirit "*May God himself, the God who makes everything holy and whole, make you holy and whole, put you together—spirit, soul, and body—and keep you fit for the coming of our Master, Jesus Christ. The One who called you is completely dependable. If he said it, he'll do it!*" (1 Thess. 5:23 The Message). Just as the Israelites worshiped in the tabernacle, we can and should glorify the Lord in our bodies (1 Cor. 6:20). But how can we do this? Here are some suggestions.

A. Glorifying God In Our Body.

We need to maintain a healthy body, being careful of what we eat as Daniel did (Daniel 1:8). In our contemporary culture, there's lots of foods that aren't healthy. Junk food may be delicious, but it can be harmful to our bodies. A healthy diet based on cereals, fish and white meats, and enough fruit and vegetables will provide the necessary source of proteins, vitamins, minerals, etc. that we need to keep us healthy and strong. We need to eat at the right times. If we eat balanced meals in an orderly fashion, we'll be looking after our bodies as the place where God dwells. We know that as sons and daughters of God, we have been bought for a price (1 Corinthians 6:20).

We must also take care of what we drink. We know that alcohol is harmful and can cause addiction, but also some sodas or juices damage our bodies because they contain

too much sugar. We ought to drink more water. Everything that causes addiction (dependence) is harmful to the body.

B. Glorifying God In Our "Psyche" Or Souls

There are two types of thinking. Let's see what they are:

- Non-toxic thoughts motivate and encourage our will (heart) to carry out good actions. The source of good (or non-toxic) thoughts lies in the Word of God, which helps us discern between what's good and what's evil (Psalm 15:1-5, 24:3). So, we must take care of that part of our personal tabernacle by constantly feeding our mind with the Bible. In that way, we can glorify God in our thoughts (Luke 6:45a).
- Toxic thoughts are the ones that contaminate our thinking and disturb our relationship with God. This will lead the person to not glorify God with his deeds. The Bible says that our thinking will lead to actions. What kind of thoughts are we allowing ourselves to have and what kind of testimony are we giving?

In glorifying God in our spirit, the third part of our personal tabernacle, we must seek to be filled with all the virtues of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25). We need to cultivate the talents that God has given us, consecrating them and using them for His service and for the building up of the church.

We must continually study the Bible. Studying and meditating on the Bible will take us along the paths of righteousness and we'll follow the Lord Jesus. In addition, it will give us the strength to put His teachings into practice, and to share them with others, with the sole purpose of glorifying God.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- According to 1 Corinthians 6:19, what's the body?
- What's idolatry, and what does it generate in a person's being?
- List three actions with which you can glorify God in your body.

CONCLUSION

Let's honor God with our bodies, as temples of the Holy Spirit. Let's not contaminate them. Let's discard everything that can harm our bodies so that we can live to glorify the name of God at all times.

Lesson 23:

LET'S TAKE CARE OF THE TEMPLE!

Lesson Aim: To understand that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and we need to take care of them.

Local Proverb: A heart at peace gives life to the body.

Passage to Study: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Memory Verse: "You should know that your body is a temple for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is in you. You have received the Holy Spirit from God. You do not own yourselves." 1 Corinthians 6:19

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story that gets your attention?
2. What did Christ teach you through this story?
3. Where do we see the care of Christ in this story?
4. How should the believer respond?
5. How will you share the truth you took from this story with someone this week?"

Story Slogan: The Body is sacred, keep it Holy.



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| Lesson 24 | THE GOD WHO HEALS |
| | Scripture: 1Corinthians 6:12-20 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To reflect on what disease is, and how God wants us to face it. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So, I went and washed, and then I could see” John 9:11 |

INTRODUCTION

Disease has been present since the fall of man, and there are many myths and interpretations about how we get sick. Here are some questions: Does God cause disease? Are we sick because we have sinned? Should a Christian ever get sick? Does God always heal? These questions are useful to start the class, and we’ll find the answers during the class.

I. Interpretations About Diseases (John 9:1-3)

A. Jewish Interpretation

Jesus had to face sick people whom He tried to help, and at the same time, the Jewish ideas about disease. Following these Jewish beliefs, the disciples wanted to know who had sinned, the man who was blind from birth or his parents (v. 2). The Jews had been discussing for centuries this problem of whether sickness was inherited or because of some personal sin. We must ask ourselves the following questions: What’s the origin of diseases? Why are some people born blind, deaf etc.? The answer is that everything came because of the entrance of sin into the world.

B. Damaging Interpretations

In the same way that the Jews had their interpretations about diseases, the churches today also presents many currents of thought and interpretations on this subject, as confessions of faith, as well as the interpretation of believers in particular. We’re going to analyze some of the most widespread and damaging interpretations that have gained space in the Christian public.

1. Disease Is Caused By The Devil

There are some cases where demon possession may cause disease and that after a liberation, the person is totally healed. Jesus, on several occasions, expelled the demons that were in a person’s body, and healed them of the illness they suffered (Matthew 9:33, 17:18, Luke

8:29-35). But this happens only in non-Christians who haven’t had an encounter with the presence of God.

2. Christians Never Get Sick

Nowhere in Scripture is it stated that Christians don’t get sick; our experience proves that this is false. We all get sick, some more and others less, but disease always touches our door. The Bible affirms that God has power to heal us (Exodus 15:26), and that He is by our side at all times (Matthew 28:20).

3. People Are Sick Because Of Lack Of Faith

We can be healed by faith when it’s the will of God. He is the one who heals, and even if a person possesses all the faith of the world, the will of God is sovereign. So, a believer can suffer, and not necessarily because of lack of faith. God is a God who heals, whether or not you have faith. However, although faith is necessary, even when the person doubts this doesn’t constitute an impediment to God’s will to heal someone.

II. The Will Of God In The Midst Of An Illness (John 9:4-5)

The important thing that the passage of study is highlighting is that this man was blind until Jesus came and healed him. While the Jews were discussing where this man’s blindness came from, and then how he was healed, John emphasized that Jesus ended the blind man’s condition.

A. Illnesses For Believers

1. All Are For God's Glory To Shine

The disease of this blind man showed that Jesus was God; He showed his light (John 9:5). Illness allows us to get to know God as our healer. The only way we'll experience the God who heals is when we have been sick and God has done the miracle. Many times, it's through miracles of divine healing that people affirm themselves in the faith and others come to the knowledge of the truth. But if God doesn't perform the miracle, His glory also manifests itself in His children who peacefully face illness, constituting a public testimony of the greatness of God.

2. Everything Fulfills A Purpose In Our Lives

a.) They affirm us in faith. We know God in our experiences, we see His protection and care day by day. In the midst of trials, He becomes more visible.

b.) Conversions to Christ. It allows the believer to preach to others who are in their same or similar condition, and to transmit a message of hope and the good news of salvation. The family that doesn't know Christ sees an example to follow, and hospitals and consultations with doctors become excellent pulpits.

c.) Family unit. In many cases of family divisions, sickness provides a bond that God has used to unite entire families.

d.) The miracle of healing can happen. God can even use medical science.

B. Illnesses In Non-Believers

Believers as well as non-believers get sick, it's part of life after Eden. One of the fundamental purposes that many

diseases fulfill in non-believers is to bring them to an understanding of the existence of God and acceptance of Him into their hearts, although this isn't always achieved.

III. God's Wonderful Ways To Heal (John 9:6-12)

The Scriptural truth is that God is the one who heals, and He does it as He wills, through whom He wants, wherever He wills, and with whom He wills.

A. Knowing The Healing God

The least that the blind man and those around the Master expected was that he would spit and make mud, and with this mud anoint the eyes of the blind man, and order him to wash in the pool of Siloam to be healed (John 9:6-7). It wasn't the saliva, or the mud, or the pool, but the person who was behind all this - Jesus! It's not the human actions that someone performs that makes the miracle of healing happen, it's God who deserves the glory.

B. The Mission To Pray For Healing

All the children of God, without exception, have the authority to pray for the sick so that they may be healed by Him. This responsibility belongs to the whole church. It's the church, as the body of Christ, that is responsible for carrying out the fulfillment of God's mission, and a very fundamental part of it is praying for healing. The Church of the Nazarene, in its Article of Faith No. 14, urges its members to pray prayers of faith for the sick.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What are the prejudiced interpretations that the present church has regarding diseases?
- Mention some tips for people living with a disease.

CONCLUSION

There are different interpretations about why we get sick. However, we must be clear that disease entered humanity after the fall in Eden. The good news is that God is willing to heal people according to His holy and perfect will. The ways He does so can vary. Likewise, the church must remember that part of our mission is to pray for the healing of people, and to trust that the Lord will do it according to His will.

Lesson 24:

THE GOD WHO HEALS

Lesson Aim: To reflect on what disease is, and how God wants us to face it.

Local Proverb: The person having running stomach is the one who runs to open the door.

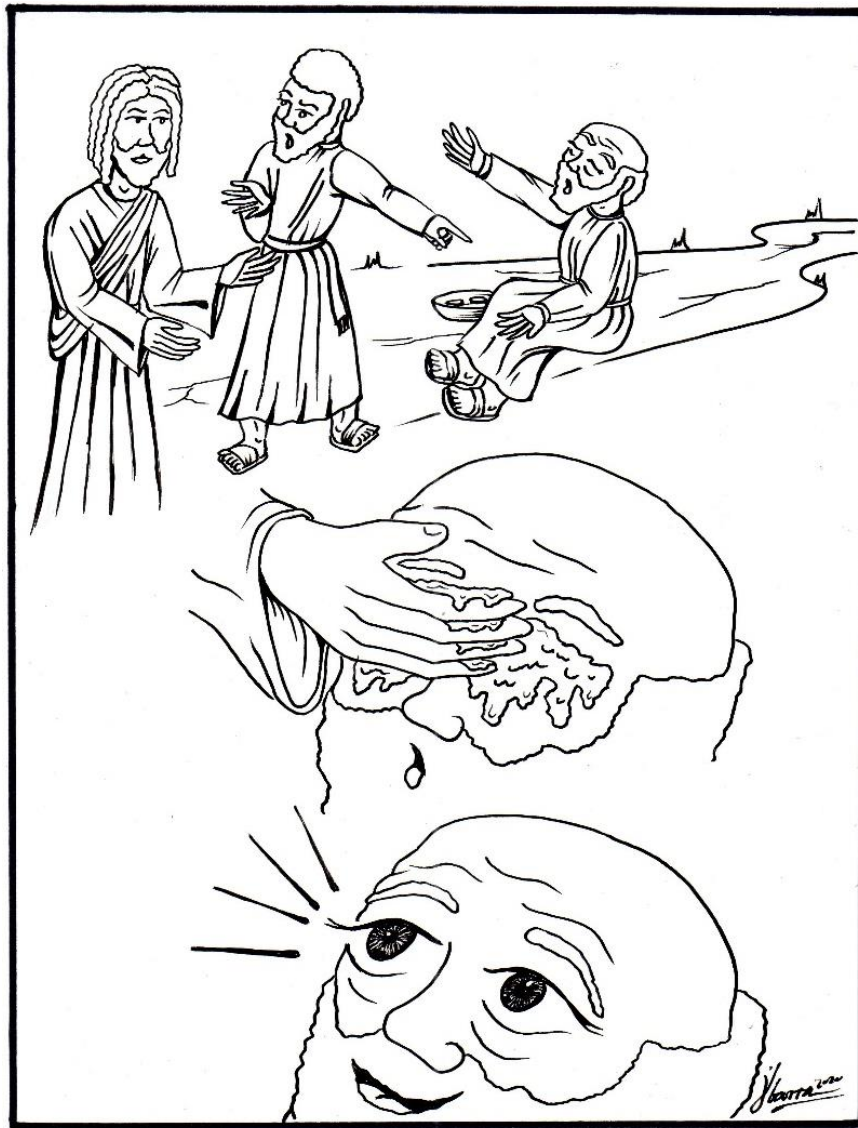
Passage to Study: John 9:1-12

Memory Verse: "The man named Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. Then he told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed and came back seeing." John 9:11

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story that gets your attention?
2. What did Christ teach you through this story?
3. Where do we see the care of Christ in this story?
4. How should the believer respond?
5. How will you share the truth you took from this story with someone this week?"

Story Slogan: God is willing to heal us according to His will.



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| Lesson 25 | OUR GREATEST HOPE |
| | Scripture: John 9:1-12 |

| Objective |
|--|
| To learn how to put our faith into practice; and when we have to face death, to trust in the power of the promises of the Lord Jesus Christ. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.’” John 11:25 |

INTRODUCTION

The most important question in any religion is the one that has to do with death. There are questions that have to do with this life; but the great mystery is death. Christ offers us many benefits right now, but the greatest of all benefits is eternal life. It's therefore very practical to ask the following question: Will the dead rise again? Life here is so short. Anyone who has lost a loved one knows that the hope of the resurrection is a very practical reality. If we don't have this hope when faced with death, we'll surely be overwhelmed by melancholy and sadness. But there's good news!

I. How To Face Death? (John 11:1-4)

A. The Purpose Of Lazarus' Death

When Jesus received the news that his friend Lazarus was sick, he said that this illness wouldn't be to death (v.4). With that, he was implying that death wouldn't be the end result of that illness because although it was true that Lazarus was going to die, the sepulcher wasn't going to be able to retain for long the body of his friend. We must understand, therefore, that the Lord was anticipating that death wouldn't come out victorious, but would be defeated when He raised his friend from the dead.

The expression "*the glory of God*" in this gospel is used to refer to those attributes of God that are shown to people. And on that occasion, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared as the "*resurrection and the life*" (v.25), two of His attributes that are closely related to the most fundamental needs of man.

B. "Lord, The One You Love Is Sick" (v. 3)

Here we have a good example of the first thing that we Christians should do when we're sick or going through any difficulties, we must seek the Lord. It's true that we can't do it in a physical way, as Mary and Martha did, but we can always come to Him through our prayers. Of course, this doesn't mean that we shouldn't use other means to recover our health. First and foremost, we must bring our ailments to the Lord in prayer and trust Him completely, and also

thank our brothers and sisters for praying for us! As for the message that Lazarus' sisters sent to Jesus, there's a very important and beautiful detail that we see: "*Lord, the one you love is sick...*" (v.3) They didn't add anything else, they didn't make any request. They had full confidence that the Lord would do what he considered best.

II. The Need For Mourning (John 11:5-16)

A. Severe Pain

In this world, every living being dies. Only those who don't live don't die, for death is an inseparable part of life. We carry it with us always and it's absolutely inevitable. We know with certainty that we'll all die. But here we need to ask ourselves: How do we face up to that reality? How would we feel about the death of a loved one? Well... Pain! Sadness! The most terrible suffering!

B. Pain Is Part Of Life

Death causes pain! It's natural ... Nobody wants their loved ones to die. It's the saddest and most painful thing that can happen to us. John tells us that when Jesus arrived at the house of that beloved family, Lazarus' sisters were deeply sad, crying inconsolably. In its shortest verse with just two words, the Bible expresses how Jesus, who is God and true man, was touched: "*Jesus wept*" (John 11:35).

C. A Time For Grieving

It's good to cry when we suffer the pain of losing a loved one. We can cry for our pain, and we can also cry for the

pain of others. Let's relieve our grief and support and comfort each other in the harsh reality of death. But after the terrible moments of that brutal impact, after the natural and necessary days or months of mourning, let's continue living!

III. "I Am The Resurrection And Life" (John 11:17-44)

A. "... If You Had Been Here ..."

As soon as Lazarus' sisters heard that Jesus was coming to see them, Martha quickly left to meet Him, while Mary stayed at home (v.20). Once again, these sisters expressed how different they were from each other. Martha was always active, agitated, impatient, while Mary was calm, thoughtful, meditative. However, when both sisters met Jesus, the two said the same thing: "*Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died*" (vs. 21, 32). Surely, this is what the two would have repeated to each other during their brother's agony. They showed faith, yet at the same time disbelief is perceived. These women didn't doubt the power of the Lord to heal their brother, if He had been present.

B. "But I Know That Even Now God Will Give You Whatever You Ask" (v. 22)

Despite all her pain, Martha still believed that God worked powerfully through Jesus. Her trust in Him remained unmovable. In fact, she hoped that He could still do something because she knew that God listened to His prayers (v.22). But here we notice the vague and confusing ideas that Martha had regarding Jesus. She spoke as if He

were only a human prophet who lacked independent power, as if He couldn't order a healing by himself without asking God. On the other hand, although he said that God would give him "everything" he asked for, it seems that for her, the matter of the resurrection of her brother Lazarus was excluded.

C. "Your Brother Will Rise Again" (v. 23)

The first words our Lord pronounced when he arrived at Bethany are truly extraordinary. He promised Martha that his brother Lazarus was going to rise from the dead. But Martha was still struggling with her faith and wasn't able to interpret the resurrection promised by Jesus as a reality for the present time. She only interpreted it for the last day (v. 24). In fact, a few moments later after Jesus had the stone removed from the entrance to the tomb, Martha seemed to not yet believe that Jesus was going to raise her brother, and all she could say was that he was already stinking because he had been dead for four days (v.39).

"I Am The Resurrection And The Life..." (v. 25)

Martha believed that God would give Jesus everything He asked for, but at that moment, the Lord told her that He Himself had the authority and power to give life and to restore it by means of resurrection (vs. 25-26). He is the "*Author of life*" (Acts 3:15), the incarnate God himself, source of all life, whether spiritual or physical. Therefore, no one but He could make a statement like this: "*... I am the resurrection and the life ...*" (v. 25). In verse 26, Jesus said: "*whoever lives by believing in me will never die.*" The believer will be delivered from death or eternal damnation by the power of the Lord.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- Does the Lord have a purpose for our lives in difficult situations that we face? Explain.
- Briefly explain the reason for Jesus' weeping (v.35)
- Briefly discuss what implications Jesus' statement that He is life has for your personal faith,.

CONCLUSION

When we're in the midst of terrible and indescribable pain at the death of a loved one, we need to put our faith into action. The Lord is always ready to comfort us through his Holy Spirit! We need to trust in the power of the promises of the Lord Jesus Christ, and continue to live in Him, knowing that death doesn't end everything. He is the resurrection and the life!

Lesson 25

OUR GREATEST HOPE

Lesson Aim: To learn how to put our faith into practice and trust God for the results.

Local Proverb: God never delays.

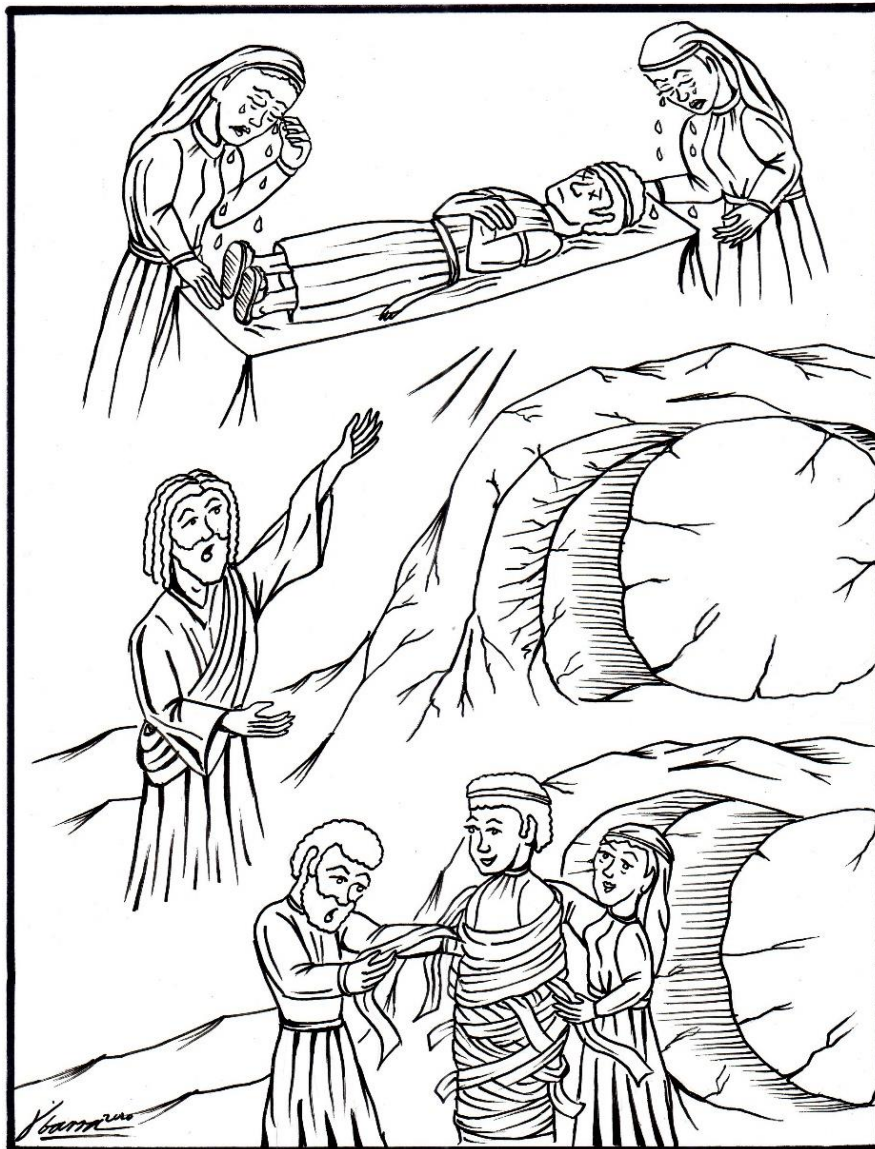
Passage to Study: John 11:1-44 (As provided)

Memory Verse: "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will have life, even if he dies.'" John 11:25

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story that gets your attention?
2. What did Christ teach you through this story?
3. Where do we see the care of Christ in this story?
4. How should the believer respond?
5. How will you share the truth you took from this story with someone this week?"

Story Slogan: Our faith in Christ produces hope now and for eternal life.



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| Lesson | LIVING WITH ILLNESS |
| 26 | Scripture: John 11:1-44 |

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|---|
| Objective |
| To learn that we need to accept with a good heart the will of God in the midst of incurable diseases. |

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|--|
| Memory Verse |
| “...My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” 2 Corinthians 12:9 |

INTRODUCTION

Many times, we have believed that if we get sick, God has to heal us because we pray and confess healing. He will do it. Although as Nazarenes we believe in divine healing through the prayer of faith or through medical science, God isn't necessarily always going to heal us. As He wills, He will heal one and say to the other one: *“My grace is sufficient for you”* (2 Corinthians 12:9).

I. Paul's Thorn In The Flesh (2 Cor. 12:1-7)

A. Paul's Thorn

Commentators say that Paul may have suffered from an illness for a long time. Some think that it might have been his eyesight. He was blinded on the Damascus road as a result of the brightness of the light of heaven (Acts 9:3,8), and even though he was healed initially, and something like scales had fallen out of his eyes (Acts 9:18), his eyesight apparently wasn't right (Galatians 4:13-14). Maybe he needed glasses, which hadn't been invented at that time. His eyes might have been giving him pain. Another disease that he may have suffered from is epilepsy, a product perhaps of the constant beatings he suffered, such as those he received in the city of Lystra (Acts 14:19). We don't know exactly what Paul was suffering from. But that thorn in the flesh appears to have been some physical illness.

B. A Messenger Of Satan

In the context of verse 7, Paul presented the thorn in his flesh as a messenger of Satan. It's worth mentioning that in this verse the word *'messenger'* means *'angel.'* What Paul was suggesting was that this thing that was piercing him was a spiritual being, a messenger of destruction and death, not belonging to God's ranks. Whatever it was, it was under the command of Satan (Matt. 25:41, Rev. 12:7). Therefore, this messenger of Satan was an enemy and opponent of Paul. The attack was a physical one bringing discomfort to his

body. That messenger of Satan was constantly present in Paul's life.

C. A Slap In The Face

When someone suffers an incurable disease, it's because God has allowed it. He knows that the person can endure these hard blows (1 Cor. 10:13). Even in the midst of an illness, God measures our maturity and our capacity for resistance. So, let's remember not to judge those who are chronically ill by labeling them as sinners (remember what we learned in previous lessons). The beggar Lazarus is a good example since he died poor, sick and alone. However, when he died, he went directly to eternal life, quite the contrary to the rich man who died in economic prosperity with his family and friends around him and in good health, but his final destiny was eternal death (Luke 16:19- 31). In spite of the hard blows caused by the disease, it's allowed for a divine purpose.

II. Embracing The Divine Will (2 Corinthians 12:8-9)

A. In Order Not To Boast Or Exalt Ourselves

It's curious that Paul said the cause of his thorn was the possibility of him being too conceited (2 Cor. 12:7). He was a great missionary and apostle, but it seems that he was tempted to be arrogant. Remember, he was a converted Pharisee. Luke, one of Paul's disciples, paints the picture in his gospel of a Pharisee (Luke 18:11-12). If you analyze the Pharisees, they were not bad in themselves because they were not drunkards, they were

fair, they didn't commit adultery, they fasted and tithed. But the Pharisees had forgotten something, for they had exalted themselves and ended up despising their fellow men (Luke 18:11).

B. "...Three Times I Pleaded With The Lord..."

Did Paul lack faith? Was Paul a terrible sinner? Was it not enough to have accepted Christ? Christians shouldn't have to suffer? The fact that we're Christians isn't a guarantee that everything in life will go to perfection. Not all of our needs will be covered, but the Lord does promise us eternal life. The guarantee is there, that's why we live by faith. Only when we cross the threshold of death will he wipe away all our weeping (Revelation 21:4). Pray for healing, but if you aren't healed, follow Paul's positive attitude.

C. "... My Grace Is Sufficient"

Our Lord told His apostle: "... *My grace is sufficient...*" (2 Cor. 12:9). Paul didn't need to give up. God had not abandoned him to his fate. He has provided His grace. When God says to him, "*My grace is sufficient for you,*" He is also saying "*I am sufficient for you.*" In some cases, God's grace will bring about healing, and in others, this same grace will bring strength to be able to resist with optimism the illness for the rest of their days.

We must not lose our faith in Him, but rather, follow Paul's attitude. He didn't deny the thorn in his flesh, but assumed a humble attitude and glorified God for it (v. 9). We can rest in God, for He has told us that to those who love Him, all things (even incurable diseases) will

work for our good (Romans 8:28). In the midst of our illness, we need to depend on the grace of God, and be confident that it's not God's will to heal us.

III. Glorifying God In The Midst Of Illness (2 Corinthians 8:10-11)

A. "...My Power Is Made Perfect In Weakness."

What does God need to perfect in you? Some say Hebrews may have been written by Paul, and in Hebrews 12:5-11, we're told about divine discipline. Thus God, who loves His children, disciplines us (Heb. 12:6). If He didn't discipline us, we wouldn't be true children (Heb. 12:8). The purpose of discipline is that we partake of the holiness of God (Heb. 12:10), without which no one will be able to see Him (Heb. 12:14). So, it can be said that illnesses are a discipline, because through them, we're taught and corrected.

B. Resting In Christ's Power

In the midst of disease, the power of Christ will rest on us. He bore our sins, and by his wounds we have been healed (Isaiah 53:5). His power can heal us instantaneously, or He may choose to heal us progressively, or simply His power will help us to endure the disease until the day we close our eyes. Those of us who are well and don't have a terminal illness need to learn the sort of battle that sick people are dealing with. That battle can be an incurable disease, and our kindness can be used by the Lord to give encouragement so that they will have the courage to face the disease.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- If Paul, being one of God's great apostles, suffered diseases, what do you think about Christians suffering from a chronic illness? Should they be judged as sinners?
- Do you believe that if God is sovereign, he also uses illnesses to consecrate us more to Him? Explain.
- How should we face the diagnosis of a chronic and/or incurable disease?

CONCLUSION

May the power of Christ rest on us and on our bodies weakened by illness. God will sustain us and continue to use us for great things (1 Cor. 1:27).

Lesson 26:

LIVING WITH ILLNESS

Lesson Aim: To learn that we need to accept with a good heart the will of God in the midst of incurable diseases.

Local Proverb: Even the mightiest eagle comes down to the treetops to rest.

Passage to Study: 2 Corinthians 12:1-9

Memory Verse: “My grace is enough for you. When you are weak, then my power is made perfect in you.” 2 Corinthians 12:9

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story that gets your attention?
2. What did Christ teach you through this story?
3. Where do we see the care of Christ in this story?
4. How should the believer respond?
5. How will you share the truth you took from this story with someone this week?"

Story Slogan: Faith makes us enjoy God's grace even in difficulties.



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| Lesson 27 | HOW TO HONOR THE PRESENCE OF GOD |
| | Scripture: 1 Chronicles 13-16 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To understand that the Bible tells us to honor the presence of God. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “He appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, to extol, thank, and praise the Lord, the God of Israel.” 1 Chronicles 16:4 |

INTRODUCTION

Regardless of our personal opinion on the matter, the Bible teaches certain fundamental truths that all Christians must learn. One of the biblical characters that can teach us a lot about the presence of God is King David. As we can see from the Psalms, he was constantly worshipping God. This lesson based on 1 Chronicles chapters 13-16, teaches us how we can approach the presence of God in accordance with the commandments of His Word.

I. The Presence Of God (1 Chronicles 13)

One of the first decisions David made as king was to bring the ark of God to Jerusalem. It had been captured by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4). Some commentators consider that after establishing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, this was King David's most important decision. David wanted to restore proper worship and consequently deepen the religious life of the people. This is narrated in 1 Chron. 13. More than any other, this decision would mark the destiny of the nation of Israel.

A. A Priority For The Whole Congregation (vs. 1-4)
The presence of God is the most important need that people have. A person, church or nation can achieve many things, but if they're far from the presence of God, they're really lacking the greatest good (1 John 5:12). However, honoring the presence of God isn't about expressing mere emotions or interest only through words. Our reverence for the presence of God is truly demonstrated by concrete actions of love and obedience to His commandments (John 14:23). Why did David decide to bring the ark to the capital city? It was an act of loving obedience to the divine commandment. He wanted to do the very best for God. It's not activism that we should look for in the church, but the holy presence of God. This must be the high priority of both the leaders and the congregation.

B. A Wrong Approach (vs. 5-13)
In 1 Chron. 13:5-14, the episode of David's frustrated attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem is recounted (v. 10).

Bear in mind that Uzzah had good intentions when he tried to prevent the ark of God from falling, but he wasn't the person assigned to do it. Only the Levites were authorized to move the ark, and this had to be done according to the way prescribed in the law (Num. 4:5-6). We need to point out that this procedure was extremely strict because the ark was one of the most sacred things of God (Num. 4:1 Chron. 15:12-15).

This leads us to think about how holy the things of God are! In God's work, one cannot proceed only with good intentions, but in strict obedience to His commandments. In an attempt to do something "good" for God, we can find ourselves in total contradiction to His holy Word. Therefore, the only way to serve Him acceptably is to receive by faith the sanctifying grace that allows us to obey His Word (Heb. 10:19-25).

II. The Presence Of God Brings Blessings (1 Chronicles 14)

A. God Fulfills His Promises In Us (vs. 1-7)
The presence of God imparts prosperity and personal blessings. Verses 1 to 7 tell us two important facts that corroborate that God was pleased with David's decision to honor his presence. One of the first confirmations of God's blessing was the recognition of his reign by Hiram, the Phoenician king with whom he developed a political alliance and lasting friendship, bringing great benefits to both nations.

Here we can see the fulfillment of God's promise to David to build him a strong family from which God would raise up the eternal King, our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Chron. 17:2 Sam. 7:11-16). In this part of the lesson, we learn that one of God's great blessings in the believer's life, when we honor His presence, is the fulfillment of His precious promises.

B. God Manifests His Power In Us (vs. 8-17)

As king, David always recognized the almighty presence of God. His great victories came as a result of his dependence on divine omnipotence. Verses 8 to 17 show us his great victory over the Philistines, staunch historical enemies of the people of God. We can say that this was a complete and definitive victory.

By trusting in God, we reach decisive and definitive victories over the biggest adversities of life. Sometimes, such victories are inexplicable from a human point of view. They correspond exclusively to the intervention of the omnipotent hand of God: *"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that's at work within us."* (Eph.3:20)

III. Let's Rejoice In The Presence Of God (1 Chronicles 15-16)

A. Holiness Demanded In The Presence Of God (vs. 1-15)

David's new attempt to bring the ark of God to Jerusalem was done by demanding strict obedience to the moral and ceremonial requirements clearly established in the Mosaic code. 1 Chron. 15:1-15 shows us the fulfillment of these two fundamental aspects. David commanded that the ark be

moved exclusively by the Levites and with the correct procedure indicated (Ex. 25:10-22, Num. 4, Deut. 10:8).

Let's especially note the fulfillment of the requirement of sanctification (1 Chron. 15:12-14). Vine, in "The Dictionary of Old and New Testament" states: *"The expression 'sanctify' comes from the Hebrew 'kadosh' (sanctify, be holy), and is used in the sense of doing something or being pure and meeting all the requirements of God in terms of purity in people or things. It's used in the formal worship of God... Although in these cases the main emphasis is cultic, there are also ethical-moral nuances"* (pg.307).

B. Rejoicing In The Presence Of God (1 Chronicles 15:16 - 16:43)

The last part of this lesson narrates the great national celebration on the occasion of the transfer of the ark and the restoration of the Levitical worship. Let's notice how the Levites were organized appropriately according to their different capacities for worship and service (gifts and ministries): ark transporters, singers and musicians, porters, and Priests in charge of doing the sacrifices.

Finally, we find a psalm of gratitude from David. This was a new song for God on a great occasion. It's probable that this psalm was composed by David in advance for this special moment. David appointed Asaph and his associates to lead the worship using this great Psalm (1 Chron. 16:7-36). The poem includes reminiscences about some of the main events of God saving His people Israel, and certain sections are inserted into other psalms of Scriptures (Psalm 96:1-13, 105:1-15, 106:47-48).

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- Why was Uzziah struck down by the presence of God while trying to hold the ark? What does that teach us today?
- What do 1 Chronicles 14:10, 14 and 16 teach us and how can we apply it today?
- What things can we mention in our lives that will lead us to rejoice in the Lord?

CONCLUSION

There are many ways in which believers can honor the presence of God; always it must be in accordance with the commandments indicated in the Bible. Honoring the presence of the Lord means giving Him priority in our lives and approaching Him with a consecrated and grateful hearts.

Lesson 27:

HOW TO HONOR THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Lesson Aim: To understand that the Bible tells us to honor the presence of God.

Local Proverb: He who worships the king becomes a king.

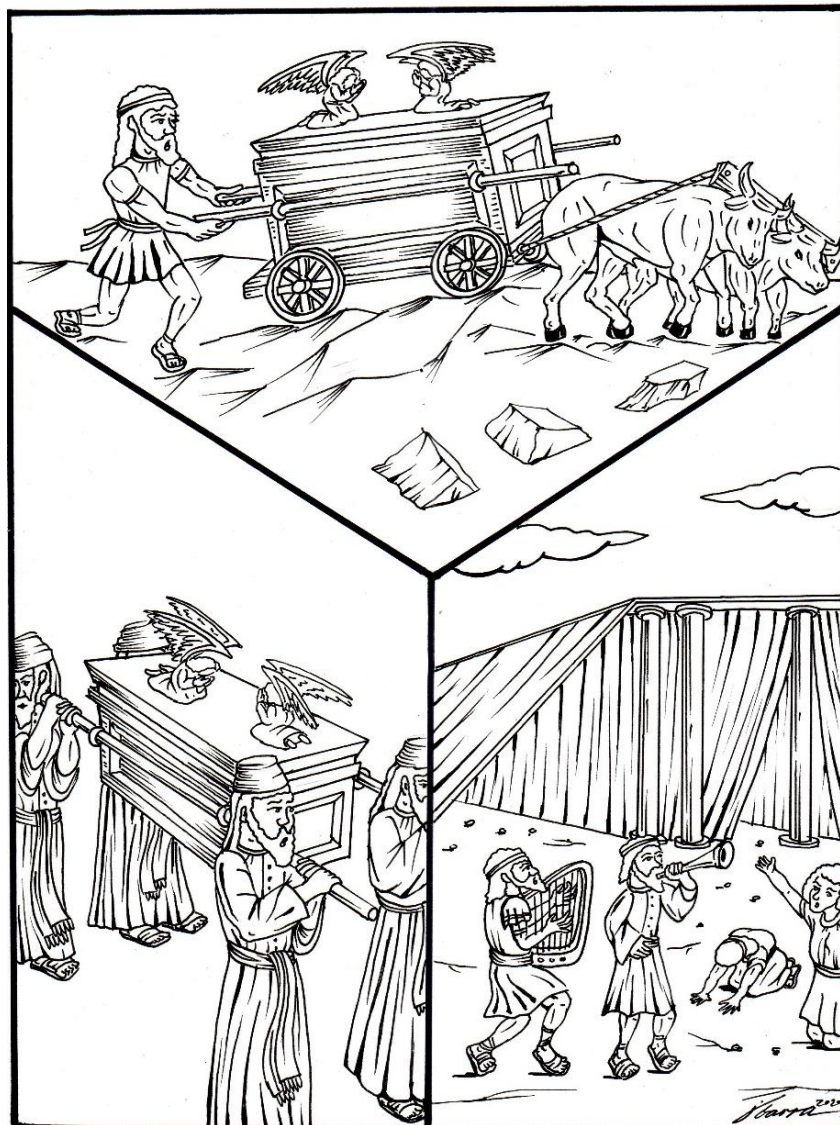
Passage to Study: 1 Chronicles 13 - 16

Memory Verse: "Give thanks to the Lord and pray to him. Tell the nations what he has done." 1 Chronicles 16:8

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. How is God honored or not honored in this story?
3. If you were in this story, what would you do differently and why?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to this week?

Story Slogan: Glorify and honor God in whatever you do in life.



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|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Lesson 28 | BUILDING THE HOUSE OF GOD |
| | Scripture: 1 Chronicles 17 |

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| Objective |
| To learn about the joy of being part of God’s church through his Holy Spirit. |

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|---|
| Memory Verse |
| “He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever.” 1 Chronicles 17:12 |

INTRODUCTION

Churches, as places where we worship God and carry out a large part of the church’s life, are extremely important. But the Bible teaches that “...*God ... doesn’t live in temples built by human hands.*” (Acts 17:24) Likewise, King Solomon said: “*But will God really dwell on earth with humans? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!*” (2 Chron. 6:18). The true dwelling of God in our hearts, sanctified through the presence of His Holy Spirit. So, our greatest concern every day should be that our lives are a holy temple for the Lord.

I. The House Where God Dwells: His People (1 Chronicles 17:1-10)

How important are our churches to us as Christians?

A. Concern About A House Of God (vs. 1-4)

While walking through the luxurious rooms of his new palace in Jerusalem, King David was concerned. The ark of God was in a simple building, while he enjoyed a beautiful and comfortable palace. David hated the idea that God would have a house less worthy than him. So, he decided to build a beautiful temple for God, and he told this to his trusted counselor, the prophet Nathan (v. 1). Verses 1-4 tells us that the prophet shared the same concern as King David, and thought that this was a noble initiative, and even of divine origin (v. 2).

David thought that that rustic building wasn’t worthy of God’s presence, and building a good temple was a reasonable idea. But God had better plans, which would be completed in His time and in His way. As one commentator points out, “*David’s purpose was correct, but untimely*” (Beacon Theological Dictionary, volume II. p.54).

B. God’s Lives With His People (vs. 5-10)

The lack of a temple was never an obstacle for God to live with His people. Verses 5 through 10 indicate the

development of the divine purpose of grace in the history of Israel since their liberation from Egypt, followed by the period of the judges, until the establishment of monarchical government. God never failed to keep His promise made to Moses to accompany His people with His presence (Ex. 33:14-15). All of His promises were faithfully fulfilled (Joshua 23:14).

Here we see that just as God, by His great faithfulness and love, blessed David’s descendants in Jesus Christ, we’re also blessed by grace in Him, along with our children (Acts 16:31, 1 Cor. 7:14). However, in light of such wonderful grace, each one must personally believe and be grounded in Jesus to be part of His house and Kingdom, and thus be able to enjoy all the promises given by God to His church.

II. The King Who Built the House Of God: Jesus (1 Chronicles 17:11-14)

A King Like David: But Greater Than All Others

God revealed to David that from his lineage He would raise the greatest King in history, our Lord Jesus Christ. Verses 11-14 contain a double reference to this prophecy, the immediate and the future. “...*I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom*” (v. 11b), refers to the reign of David’s son, Solomon, who succeeded him on the throne. But for the future this prophecy referred to Jesus Christ, in human terms, a descendant of David. In various

passages of the New Testament, Jesus was called the 'Son of David' (Matt. 9:27, 12:23, 15:22, Luke 1:32; John 7:42, Romans 1:3). Jewish interpreters believed that a son of David would come who would be the Messiah, the Savior announced in the Old Testament.

Even today, the Jews erroneously await the coming of the Messiah, and one of the requirements for this is that he be a descendant of David's family. All the prophecies clearly identify Jesus with that eternal King who was to come, fulfilling the Davidic covenant. Jesus also referred to himself as the 'Son of God'. Jesus debated with the Pharisees about what the Scripture teaches about the Messiah, and showed them that David, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, recognized Him as their Lord (Psalm 110:1, Matthew 22:41-46). Jesus is the King of glory!

A. A People And An Eternal Kingdom

The messianic announcement contained in the message of the prophet Nathan pointed out that this glorious and eternal King would build the house of God: "*He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever.*" (1 Chronicles 17:12)

That house refers, beyond David's own blood family, to the people of God, the church. The church is called the 'House of God' (1 Tim. 3:15) and 'holy temple' (Eph. 2:19-21), and has been founded on 'the rock' which is the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Matt. 16:18) He is the only and unchanging foundation of the church (1 Cor. 3:11).

III. God's Purpose for His 'House' (The Church) (1 Chronicles 17:15-27)

A. A Purpose Of Grace

Verse 16 states: "*Then King David went in and sat before the Lord...*" (v. 16a). The prophetic announcement caused a great impact on David, so much so that he immediately felt moved to approach God through prayer. His petition here is one of the most beautiful in the entire Bible. It's a prayer that reflects reverence and gratitude to God.

Who was David before being called and anointed by God to be king over his people Israel? A simple shepherd of the sheep (v. 7). But God raised him up to do great things, so that after being a complete unknown, his fame as king spread through all the nations that surrounded Israel (1 Chronicles 14:17).

When each of us looks back on our lives, considering where we were before we knew God, we can realize what great things the Lord has done for us!

B. An Eternal Purpose

At the end of his beautiful prayer, which begins in 1 Chron. 17:16, David emphasized the fulfillment of God's purpose in His people. What made this purpose of God unbreakable was His faithfulness and choice of His people by His sovereign will (v. 19). So, we can be completely sure that God will lead the events of our lives until the full realization of His purpose, despite any adversity, just as it happened with David and the people of Israel (v. 21, cf. Rom. 8:28-39).

Finally, King David's prayer reflects the gratitude of the believer. As the people of God, we must remain in an attitude of thanksgiving to God for our eternal salvation and all His blessings (v. 24).

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What do you think is God's priority for his people today?
- What does the word 'house' refer to in the messianic promise?
- What does King David's prayer reflect?

CONCLUSION

From the foundation of the world, God had a purpose in Christ, to build a house and an eternal Kingdom. Each Christian is a part of that great spiritual house of God, that is, His people, the church. This also implies that we're citizens and heirs of His eternal Kingdom. This marvelous reality must always keep us in an attitude of gratitude and serving Him with a holy life.

Lesson 28:

BUILDING THE HOUSE OF GOD

Lesson Aim: To learn about the joy of being part of God's church.

Local Proverb: When a bird builds its nest, it uses the feathers of other birds.

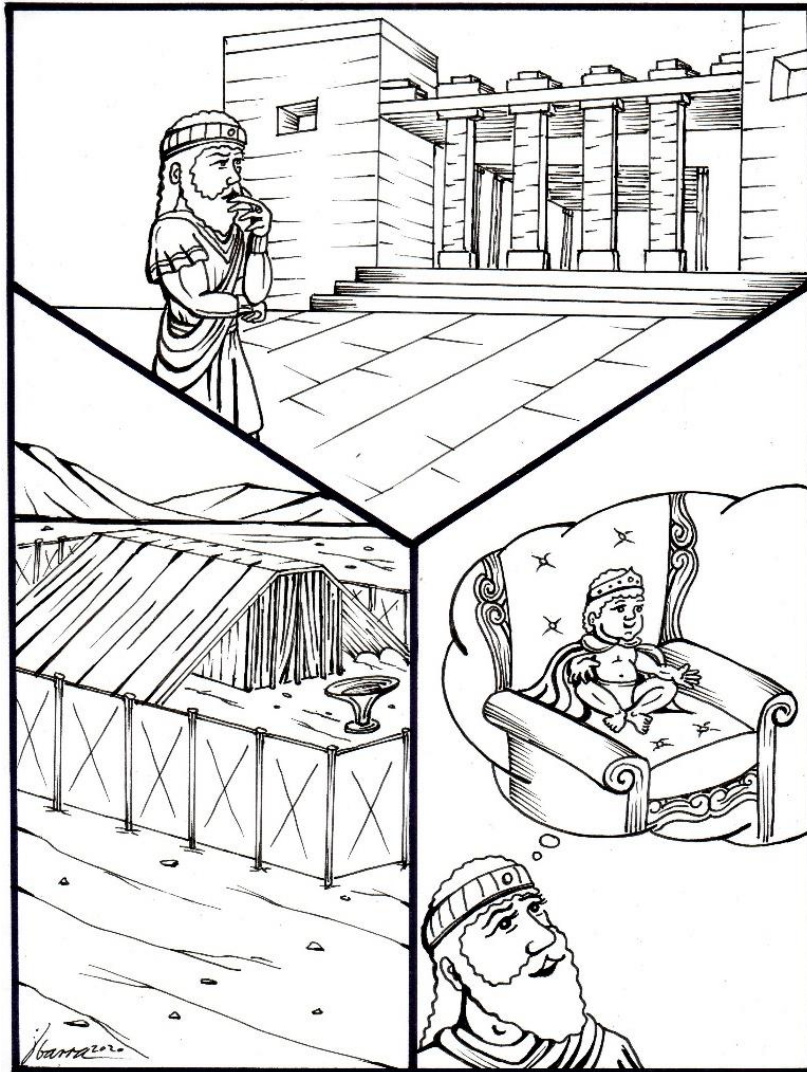
Passage to Study: 1 Chronicles 17

Memory Verse: "Lord, you have done this wonderful thing for me because you wanted to. You have let me know all these great promises." 1 Chronicles 17:19

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. How is God honored or not honored in this story?
3. If you were in this story, what would you do differently and why?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to this week?

Story Slogan: God gives great Joy; Joy characterizes God's people.



| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Lesson 29 | GOD IS FAITHFUL, EVEN IF WE'RE NOT |
| | Scripture: 1 Chronicles 18,19,20,21 |

| Objective |
|--|
| To understand that every time we triumph in life, the honor and glory must be only for our God, since He is the one who gives us the strength and the wisdom to achieve. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “Be strong, and let us fight bravely for our people and the cities of our God. The Lord will do what’s good in his sight.” 1 Chronicles 19:13 |

INTRODUCTION

It’s clear that Chronicles 1 and 2 were written to give perspective and historical continuity to the Hebrews, a post-exile community that desperately needed to know that the covenant God was still their God. Israel’s past history shows God’s faithful love for His people.

Chronicles reflects the priestly point of view, and isn’t merely reduced to repeating or adding some details for posterity. Rather, because of their point of view, details about the temple and liturgical interests are given, and the omissions and additions are important for a thorough understanding of the Jews and the divine plan of salvation. The biblical passage for our present study is within the context of David’s reign, which ranges from 1 Chronicles 11:1 to 1 Chronicles 29:30.

I. David, As A Warrior, Extends The Kingdom (1 Chronicles 18-20)

These chapters summarize David’s offensive wars against the enemies of God’s people (2 Sam. 8). David achieved important victories that made him famous among his own people and among the surrounding nations (1 Chron. 14:17). Likewise, the spoils of war and tribute brought him great riches.

A. David’s Conquests (1 Chronicles 18:1-13)

David, in obedience to God, advanced in his enterprises with extraordinary determination and vigor. The details given about the Philistines, both here and in 1 Chron. 20:4-8, indicate that they were a powerful enemy. The Philistines had oppressed the Israelites for several generations; but David defeated them and humiliated them. (2 Sam. 8:1-14). He even crippled their horses (2 Sam. 8:4). The current animal protectionist associations wouldn’t be happy with David’s treatment of the horses. However, this was the common practice of those times, especially to prevent the horses from being used by the enemy.

B. David’s Riches (vs. 7-11)

We must honor God with what He blesses us with. As the commander in chief of the army, David gave glory to God

for each victory. He dedicated to God the bronze captured in Damascus and the presents that Tou, king of Hamath, sent to him (vs. 10-11).

1 Chron. 18:6 and 13 repeat the phrase: “*The Lord gave David victory wherever he went.*” At this point, we must keep in mind that God gives power to people, not to make themselves magnified but to do good.

II. David Orders The Census (1 Chron. 21)

Verse 1 states: “*Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel.*”

Joab, the general of the army, argued strongly against this census. In verse 4, we see that the discussion between both protagonists was concluded, with Joab in obedience to David, and starting the census.

Perhaps we think that there was nothing wrong with a census. We ask ourselves, Why shouldn’t the shepherd know the number of his sheep? But we need to observe that David acted with the impulse of his pride, which offended God. By the wording made in verse 1, it can be noted that the chronicler blamed Satan, who, appealing to pride of the king, induced him to count the people. Apparently, David wanted to calculate his military might. However, when the king ordered the census, he showed a lack of confidence in God’s promise.

people around us who could be affected by the consequences of our actions. The Plague (vs. 14-17)

Verse 12 mentions the three options that were presented to David because of his disobedience to the Lord: A great famine (sowing the seed in vain), fleeing before enemies, or a three-day plague. David decided to choose the plague, for he knew that the hand of God was better in mercy than the hand of man. And indeed, God extended his mercy and ordered the angel to stop the destruction (v. 15). David recognized his guilt and that God's wrath was solely because of his wrong decision (v. 17).

3. An Altar And A Sacrifice (vs. 18-27)

David was instructed to erect an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite (v. 18) as a sign of reconciliation. Araunah offered the use of his threshing floor for free, but David refused to offer God cheap worship. David said: *"No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the Lord what's yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing."* (v. 24) God showed His acceptance of the sacrifice by responding by fire from the heavens on the altar of the burnt offering (v. 26). God stopped the punishment (v. 27).

4. A Place For The Temple (1 Chron. 21:28-22:1)

The bronze altar that Moses had built was in Gibeon (v. 29), and that's where all the sacrifices of Israel were being offered. But David was terrified of the sword of the Lord's angel, so he wouldn't go there (v. 30). David was so impressed with the place of the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite that he decided to build the temple there. (1 Chron. 22:1).

A. David's Sin And The Plague (1 Chron. 21:1-22:1)

1. The Census (vs. 1-6)

The original word is *"to review"*. The census had military purposes. David's relationship with God wasn't right; he provoked God, placing himself on the side of the spiritual enemy. When David's relationship with God wasn't right, it also affected his relationship with his people. Surely, King David had neglected his devotion and dependence upon God. Meditating on the extent of his rule, he ignored that God had promised that Israel would be as numerous as the sands of the sea. The victories he had won were not the fruit of strategies or forces, but of God's power. How important it is not to lose our communion with God! Let's remember, when we reach the place where the Lord leads us, our dependence on Him should be the beacon that guides our steps.

2. Correction And Redemption (vs. 7-13)

David recognized before God his sin and need, and begged that his guilt be taken away (v. 8). But God had already determined to punish him for his wrong decision. The divine punishment on the people of Israel reflects the influence that a person's decisions can have on those who are close to him. David could choose between three years of hunger, three months of humiliating defeats in the war, or three days of plague on earth. He chose the latter (vs. 12-14). Although God's forgiveness was on the way, David couldn't get rid his country of the consequences of not consulting God in making his decisions. How important is to pray and not act unwisely in our lives and/or ministries! We must bear in mind that there are

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What can we learn from David's military victories? (1 Chronicles 18:1-13; 20:4-8).
- Briefly how you feel this lesson will help you in your Christian walk.

CONCLUSION

The hand of God is always in favor of His people, and He promises to bless those who obey Him. So, no matter how hard the difficulties are that we'll have to face, the hand of God is always willing to bless the efforts of His children. However, any attitude of pride will offend the heart of God, and although God, in Christ, extends His mercy, the painful consequences of disobedience will have to be faced.

Lesson 29:

GOD IS FAITHFUL, EVEN IF WE'RE NOT

Lesson Aim: To understand that our triumph comes from God's faithfulness.

Local Proverb: To love the king is not bad, but a king who loves you is better.

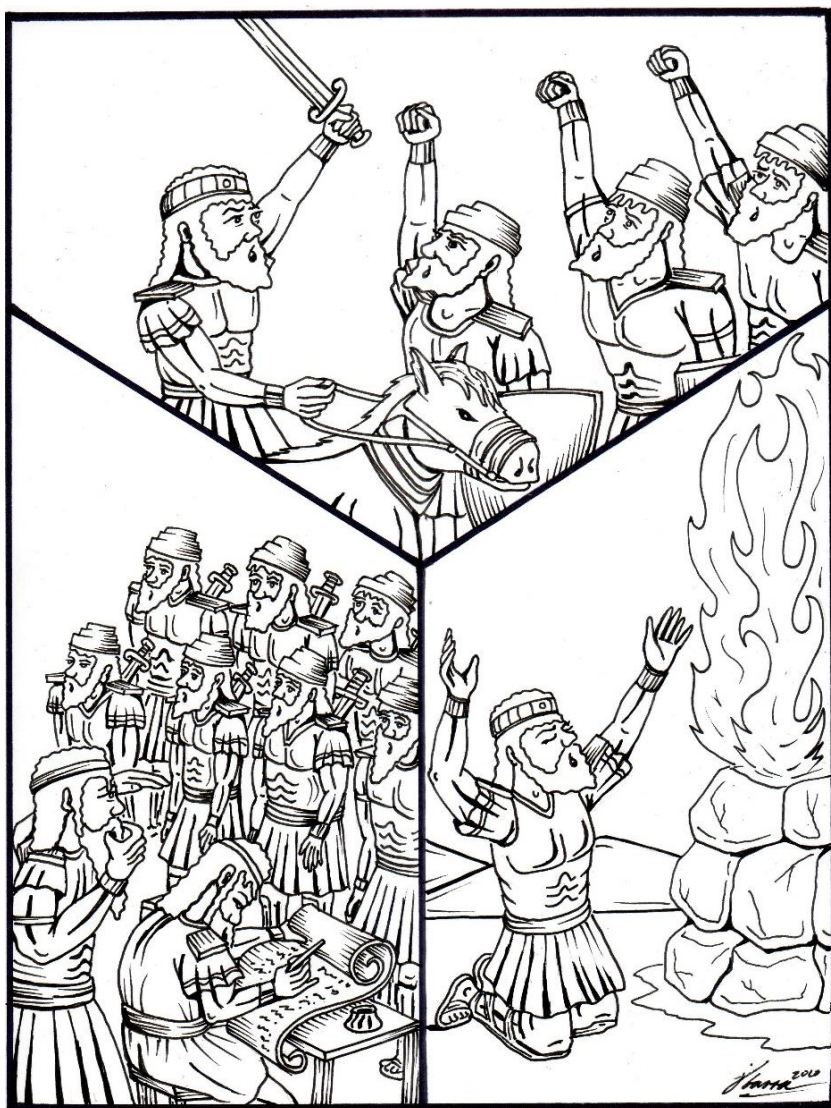
Passage to Study: 1 Chronicles 18-21

Memory Verse: "Let's be strong. We must fight bravely for our people and the cities of our God. The Lord will do what he thinks is right." 1 Chronicles 19:13

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. How is God honored or not honored in this story?
3. If you were in this story, what would you do differently and why?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to this week?

Story Slogan: Our triumph does not depend on the quantity of our soldiers.



| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Lesson 30 | KING DAVID'S MOST IMPORTANT PROJECT |
| | Scripture: 1 Chronicles 22:1-13 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To identify, relate, analyze and apply King David's different attitudes and actions as he carried out this big project. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| "Now devote your heart and soul to seeking the Lord your God. Begin to build the sanctuary of the Lord God..." 1 Chronicles 22:19 |

INTRODUCTION

Based on the memory verse, get the students to reflect on the importance of having a place specially designed for the worship of God in King David's time. According to a popular expression, what all humans should do in life is to have a child, write a book and plant a tree. But none of the three things is easy to do. Perhaps we have no children, have never planted a tree and or written a book, but what legacy will we leave when we die? Get the students to discuss this question.

I. Preparations For The Project (1 Chronicles 22:1-9)

God asked David to build an altar and offer a sacrifice, which was accepted by the Lord (2 Sam, 24:1-25; 1 Chron. 21:2-27). David then, grateful for the mercy of God, determined the following: *"The house of the Lord God is to be here, and also the altar of burnt offering for Israel"* (1 Chron. 22:1).

A. Call For Workers (vs. 2, 15)

David ordered the foreigners who lived among them to work in the quarries and cut stones for the project. Possibly, they were people taken captive during the wars against the nations. The king spared no effort to get a large number of workers: masons, stonemasons, carpenters and many specialized people for each area of the task. This included the artisans specialized in wood, and goldsmiths who made unique artistic pieces with precious metals.

B. Building Materials (vs. 3-4)

David was diligent in planning, as well as providing the necessary materials such as stone, iron, bronze, fine wood, gold and silver. He planned and organized everything, but the only thing he couldn't do was the actual building of the temple. The kings of Tyre and Sidon provided a great quantity of Cedar wood, which is extremely durable, doesn't rot and has a pleasant smell. It's interesting to note the repetition of some terms related to the generosity and splendor of the resources: large amounts of nails, and more bronze than

could be used (v. 3); incalculable amount of cedar wood (v. 4); one hundred thousand talents of gold, one million talents of silver, iron and bronze without measure (v. 14). This teaches us about giving generously. We don't need to be rich to offer something. What's important is the disposition of our hearts. In fact, many times the poor are generous and the wealthy stingy.

II. Instructions And Requirements For Solomon (1 Chronicles 22:10-16)

A. A Lasting Kingdom (v. 10)

This verse is extremely important regarding the relationship that God wanted to have with Solomon, David's successor. God wanted to have a relationship as close as that of a father with his son. That implies a daily relationship of trust, but also of obedience. In addition, the Lord promised David that His family line would be everlasting *"And I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever."* (v. 10) Solomon finished his days ruling in peace, just as God promised. However, this promise transcended Solomon's reign. It was a messianic promise fulfilled at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, just as the angel told Mary (Luke 1:33).

B. The Indispensable Presence Of God (v. 11)

What do we need to do to be successful people? This is a very interesting question that we can ask ourselves. David told Solomon that the presence of God was indispensable if he was going to prosper, and that he

needed to build God’s house. Thus, the same divine presence would guide Solomon’s understanding and make him a prudent ruler of Israel. Today we too need prudent leaders who are close to God to govern our nations wisely! In many cases, our politicians seek positions of power solely to increase their personal assets. In addition, many of them loot the coffers of the state at the expense of the suffering of others. This is a sad situation!

C. The Need To Keep God’s Law (v. 13)

The absence of practice of the principles established in the law of God is the reason why there are so many evils in our society, such as corruption, unemployment, delinquency, poverty, lack of work, injustice, insecurity, alcoholism, and abuses of power in different spheres of daily life. David’s advice for Solomon was the same that God gave to Joshua before he took leadership of the nation (Joshua 1:8). This also goes for all rulers and citizens today: We must keep, observe and fulfill God’s law so that there will be a just and healthy society. So, the key to personal prosperity isn’t to make economic deals, but to love the law of God and put it into practice (v. 13).

D. Effort, Courage And Courage (vs. 14-16)

David told his son Solomon: “*Now begin the work, and the Lord be with you...*” (v. 16). Solomon’s training had been very different from that of his father David. The latter was raised in the fields performing harsh and dangerous tasks, and

he even had to face wild beasts (1 Sam. 17:34-36). Solomon, on the other hand, grew up among the rich where servants supplied all his needs. He was used to being served, not serving. For that reason, David challenged him not to remain static, but to act to carry out the king’s greatest project: God’s House.

III. Support From The Countries’ Leaders (1 Chronicles 22:17-19)

A. Project Of Gratitude (vs. 17-18)

The nation of Israel had faced a great mortality due to the census, and David, grateful for the mercy of the Lord, wanted to prepare everything necessary for the building of the temple. But Solomon couldn’t do it alone, he needed his leaders to get involved in the project. God had delivered the nation from death. Therefore, all Israel should participate in this project of gratitude to make a glorious place for the worship of the Lord. A good leader involves other people in God’s service.

B. A Firm Purpose (v.19)

We need the leaders of our nation and our churches to make a firm commitment to seek the face of the Lord so that He will give them wisdom and understanding to govern with righteousness. We need in these days the firm determination to seek the Lord! But many are trapped by the cares of this life and don’t have the heart or the time to have fellowship with God. How firm is our decision to seek God, especially when hard work entangles us?

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- Regarding the preparations for the construction of the temple, list the outstanding attitudes of David (vs. 1-5, 14, 16).
- What did Solomon need to do to be successful?
- How important is it that we as Christian leaders motivate and involve other brothers and sisters in the service of the Lord?

CONCLUSION

David had many children, wrote many Psalms, and left a mark on the life of his fellow citizens by providing for the building of the temple of the Lord as a place where the whole nation could worship God for generations. We too need to search for the presence of God, obey His commands, and search for His divine direction every day of our lives. The same God of peace who was with David and Solomon is the one who is with us to help us today!

Lesson 30:

KING DAVID'S MOST IMPORTANT PROJECT

Lesson Aim: To understand that David helped Solomon to succeed in building the Temple

Local Proverb: A single bracelet does not jingle.

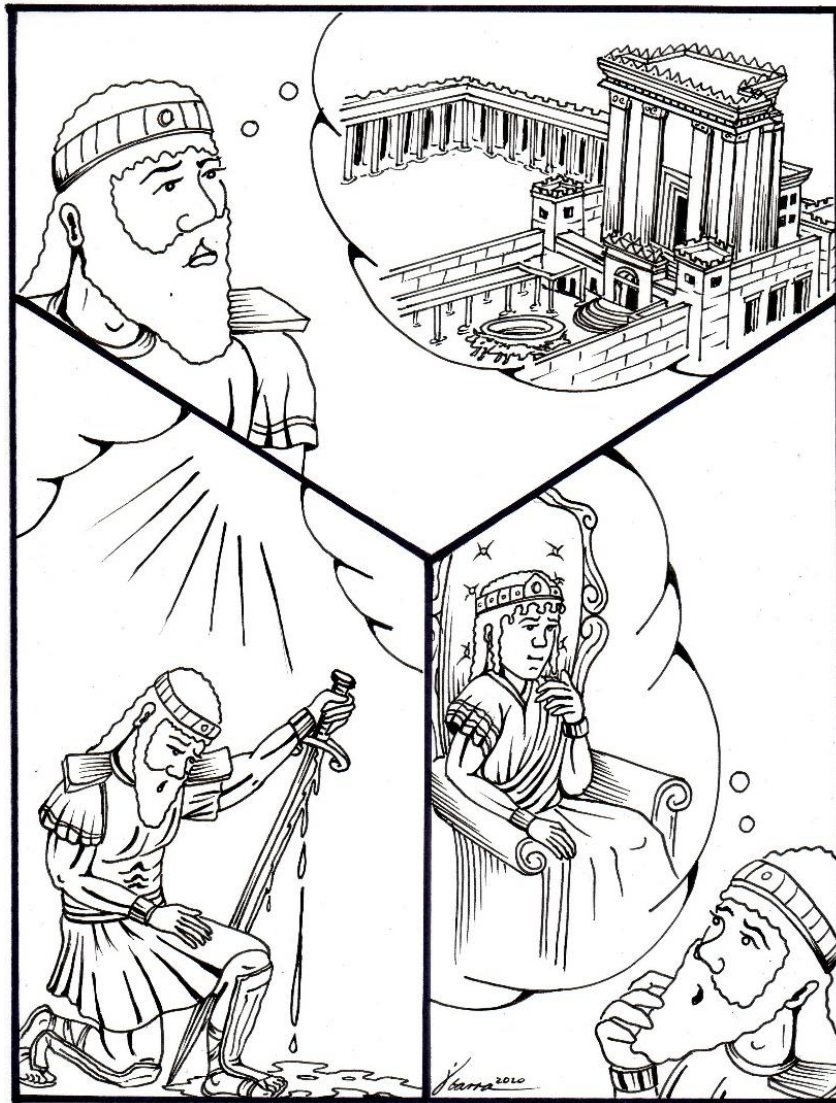
Passage to Study: 1 Chronicles 22:1-13

Memory Verse: "Be careful to obey the rules and laws the Lord gave Moses for Israel. If you obey them, you will have success. Be strong and brave. Don't be afraid or discouraged." 1 Chronicles 22:13

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. How is God honored or not honored in this story?
3. If you were in this story, what would you do differently and why?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to this week?

Story Slogan: We need to pass on our godliness to the following generations through words and actions.



| | |
|-----------|---|
| Lesson | ORGANIZATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF HUMAN RESOURCES |
| 31 | Scripture: 1 Chronicles 23:6, 24-27 |

| Objective |
|--|
| To apply the biblical principles of organization and distribution of human resources given to us by God to administer. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “When David was old and full of years, he made his son Solomon king over Israel.” 1 Chronicles 23:1 |

INTRODUCTION

In the last years of life, people make plans with specific instructions about their finances, material goods, relationships, etc. King David did this before leaving the throne, leaving instructions with his son Solomon. He made arrangements for all the available resources in the kingdom, especially human resources. This is an excellent lesson for us! Although we may not have thousands of people in our care, nevertheless, the principle is the same: to be faithful administrators of all the resources that God has entrusted to us. May our goal be one day to be able to hear the voice of the Lord telling us: “... *Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!*” (Matthew 25:23)

I. Levites In The Service Of The House Of God (1 Chronicles 23)

A. David Was Old And Full Of Days (vs. 1-3)

The Bible tells us that King David was old. He decided to start making certain necessary arrangements before his departure (vs. 1-3). We too can start early in our lives organizing, distributing and taking care of all the blessings that God gives us.

B. The Organization Of The Levites (vs. 4-5)

In these verses, we observe the importance of precision. David and Solomon didn’t just have to know how many Levites there were, but they needed to be distributed in different tasks and responsibilities. This must have been a great lesson in stewardship and administration. David said, “*Of these, twenty-four thousand are to be in charge of the work of the temple of the Lord and six thousand are to be officials and judges. Four thousand are to be gatekeepers and four thousand are to praise the Lord with the musical instruments I have provided for that purpose.*” (vs. 4-5)

C. Careful And Detailed Organization (vs. 6-12)

What we find in vs. 6-12 is a meticulous distribution by names and ages (it must be remembered that at that time, there was no computer technology). This teaches us that we can and should be careful with all resources, especially in relation to the people under our care and supervision. Behind each name, there’s a face and a heart. Perhaps for many systems, especially in the present era of computers and technology, each one of us doesn’t go beyond being just a ‘number’ in statistics. However, for God we’re much more than a number.

D. Greater Responsibility (vs. 13-15)

All service to the Lord is holy, and must be sacred, because God is holy. Some things require a clearer sense of holiness, or of the responsibility that comes with doing certain tasks. For example, in the New Testament we observed that serving the tables required leaders full of the Holy Spirit: “*Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We’ll turn this responsibility over to them.*” (Acts 6:3) Therefore, every task done for the Lord is a great responsibility.

II. The Sons Of Aaron As Priests (1 Chron. 24)

A. Functions Of Priests (vs. 1-6)

The duties of the priests were basically twofold: carry out the religious rites and communicate with God. In this way, they served as intermediaries between God and His people. God had established earlier that the members of Aaron's family should be priests: *"Have Aaron your brother brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, so they may serve me as priests."* (Exodus 28:1) The priests were like bridges to God helping the people communicate with Him.

B. The Priests Worked In Shifts (vs. 7-31)

In these verses, David organized the priests into 24 groups. He not only distributed them, but also assigned them shifts in the ministry.

III. The Distribution Of Musicians And Singers (1 Chronicles 25)

A. "All Of Them Trained And Skilled In Music For The Lord" (v. 7)

When it comes to service for the Lord and His people, we should not rely solely on natural aptitude, ability, gifts or talents. Really, there must be a strong sense of commitment and continual preparation. A good musician, as in many other areas, must always keep growing in all those areas related to his ministry. Serving God through music must reflect serious preparation, both technical and practical, and above all, a serious spiritual preparation.

B. "Young And Old Alike, Teacher As Well As

Student, Cast Lots For Their Duties" (v. 8)

Another very important aspect in the organization and distribution of participation roles was the opportunity that everyone received. They served in shifts, and everyone participated. How many practical lessons do we find here for our days? In the service of the Lord, no one is indispensable, all are important: the little ones, the senior citizens, the disciples and the teachers. Thank God that the church gives each and every one the opportunity to participate according to their abilities, talents and responsibilities!

IV. Gatekeepers And Officials (1 Chron.26-27)

In chapter 26, we find the following: the organization of the gatekeepers (vs. 1-19); the organization of the treasurers (vs. 20-28); and the organization of officers and judges (vs. 29-32). In chapter 27, we can see the following: the organization of the army (vs. 1-15); the organization of the tribes of Israel (vs. 16-24), and the administration of King David (vs. 23-34).

A. The Temple Gatekeepers (1 Chronicles 26)

The gatekeepers of the family of Kore were priests charged with guarding the entrances to the temple of God (v. 1). The word gatekeeper means *'concierge, or guard.'* This office was of the utmost importance; and even from the time of Moses, gatekeepers had already been established. They needed to be Levites (1 Chronicles 9:26). The Levites had several tasks in their charge: to look after the temple (2 Chronicles 23:19); protect the ark from robbers (1 Chronicles 15:23); watch over the offerings (2 Kings 12:9).

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- Do we have to wait until old age to make arrangements for organizing the resources that have been entrusted to us during our life?
- Describe the role of gatekeepers.
- How is this service in your church? Where and how are you serving?

CONCLUSION

God calls us to be excellent and dedicated in the administration of personal, family and church resources, the correct distribution of human resources within Christian service, and the preparation and carrying out of the different tasks of ministry. Let's always remember: our God and His people always deserve the best of our service!

Lesson 31:

ORGANIZATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Lesson Aim: To wisely use what God has given us to manage.

Local Proverb: One head cannot carry the roof.

Passage to Study: 1 Chronicles 23-27

Memory Verse: "These men were skilled and capable leaders. They had jobs for serving in the Temple of the Lord. Their relatives also had jobs in the Temple." 1 Chronicles 26:12

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. How is God honored or not honored in this story?
3. If you were in this story, what would you do differently and why?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to this week?

Story Slogan: "These men were skilled and capable leaders. They had jobs for serving in the Temple of the Lord. Their relatives also had jobs in the Temple." 1 Chronicles 26:12



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|---------------------|---|
| Lesson 32 | PREPARATIONS FOR BUILDING THE TEMPLE |
| | Scripture: 1 Chronicles 28:1- 29:21 |

| Objective |
|--|
| To learn from the wise counsel that David gave to Solomon, his principles of justice and his generosity for the temple where the people could worship God. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “‘All this,’ David said, ‘I have in writing as a result of the Lord’s hand on me, and he enabled me to understand all the details of the plan.’” 1 Chronicles 28:19 |

INTRODUCTION

David was the only king of Israel who by his authority and temperance was able to accomplish many things. As the youngest son of Jesse, he learned how to be a good courageous shepherd who protected his sheep against the attacks of bears and lions. In his teens, he saved the people of Israel from a war against the Philistines that seemed impossible. King Saul couldn't see how to get past what seemed to be an insurmountable difficulty – the giant Goliath. Young David with his sling and his 5 stones was able to down an enemy three times his size. In addition, he was a musician and singer, and a composer of many songs.

I. God’s Plans Through David (1 Chronicles 28:1-8)

After many years, David wanted to build a temple to honor God. We can see this in chapters before 1 Chronicles 28: “*After David was settled in his palace, he said to Nathan the prophet, ‘Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of the covenant of the Lord is under a tent.’*” (1 Chronicles 17:1) David was struck by the incongruity between the magnificence of his house and the fact that the Ark of the Lord was still among curtains, tapestries, and cured animal skins with which it was made. David intended to build a temple where the Ark of God could be kept in honor.

Then, already very elderly, King David called the people to a meeting (1 Chron. 28:1). He revealed to them his original desire to build the temple for God and shared with them that he wasn't going to build the temple, because God had better plans (vs. 2-3) He was making plans which his son Solomon would be able to carry out with the people (vs. 11-19). God had told him that because of all the blood he had shed in his military battles, he wasn't going to be the one to build it. But God cheered David up by giving the task to Solomon (vs. 5-6). Through Solomon, God would bring a double blessing for David, which would also favor his people Israel. First, he would be the king who would give continuity to his lineage; and second, he would build the temple for worship of the name of God.

King David must be our model in loving and longing for God's presence (Psalms 27:4, 122:1, 84). Today, we're the temple of the Spirit Holy (1 Corinthians 6:19), but as children of God, there should be no better place to be than where we gather to participate in the worship of our God in community.

II. Recommendations Of David To The Future King (1 Chronicles 28:9-10)

Having chosen the future king of Israel, David, from his experience, gave five recommendations to Solomon. If Solomon obeyed God, he would be successful. Now, we'll study each one of those recommendations.

A. “...And You, My Son Solomon, Acknowledge The God Of Your Father...” (v. 9)

David urged his son not to forget that God wants honor and fidelity. Solomon had the privilege of hearing many historical experiences first hand, like when our grandparents tell us their fascinating stories. David's stories were very exciting stories due to the spiritual weight they had. This shows us that as parents, we have the responsibility to live in such a way that our children can truly see God in every area of our lives. As parents, we can also tell our children with conviction this same recommendation to honor and be faithful to God.

B. “Serve Him With Wholehearted Devotion” (v. 9)

Another exhortation given to Solomon was that he should

serve God with integrity and intentionality. Holiness of the heart is the seal and testimony of loyal service to God. God is interested in our service, but above all, the state of our heart, our spirit and even our intentions. We're called like Solomon to serve "with a willing mind..." With this recommendation, David told Solomon not to simply have an active government, but service dedicated from the heart to God. Service has to be with joy, because God knows with what motivation and intention we do it. So today, the redemption of Christ must be our maximum motivation in serving. David told his son: "If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever."

C. "...The Lord Has Chosen You To Build A House As The Sanctuary..." (v. 10)

Solomon's number one priority as king was to build the temple of the Lord. Building the temple wasn't an easy matter since there were going to be many obstacles. Therefore, in 1 Chronicles 28:20, King David gave Solomon words of encouragement. When starting out on a big project, we must count the cost to enable us to finish the project. Someone once said: "To start a big project, you need courage. To finish a big project, you need perseverance." How many projects end up as mere emotion or illusion? Maybe we've started to read a book of the Bible and have never finished it. Perhaps we began to pray every morning and then gave up, etc. Whatever the issue is, we must be courageous and persevere, trusting absolutely in the Lord.

III. Recommendations For The Nation (1 Chronicles 29:1-5)

A. The Generous Offering Of The People (1 Chronicles 29:6-9)

David, after making his generous offer, ended with the

following words: "Now, who is willing to consecrate themselves to the Lord today?" (v. 5). Up to this point, David preached by example; and from there, he would wait for the response of the people. The work of God needs the effort of all, not just a few. Although the commitment must always begin with those who are leading the work of the Lord, that is, pastors, presidents, teachers, etc., everyone needs get involved. We see that in the end, "The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord. David the king also rejoiced greatly." (1 Chronicles 29:9) T

B. David's Prayer (1 Chronicles 29:10-25)

With joy, David prayed before God. It was a humble and heartfelt prayer that involved five relevant actions:

1. Adoration to God, giving Him the honor and glory (vs. 10-13).
2. Humiliation and recognition that His grace is what enables us to share with him (vs. 14-15).
3. Gratitude for building a house in the name of the Lord (v. 16).
4. Honest confession and willingness to live honestly and faithfully (vs. 17-19).
5. Petition to God for a heart that perseveres in generosity (v. 17).

The people blessed God and joyfully sacrificed their animals to God (vs. 20-22). Today, we're the true sacrifice of true worship to God (Romans 12:1-2). The last verses of 1 Chronicles confirmed the faithfulness of the Lord (vs. 23-25).

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- Why didn't God let David build the temple (vs. 2-3)?
- Why are the leaders or older brothers and sisters in the faith called to support young leaders now?
- What does the generosity we read of in this passage teach us (1 Chronicles 29:6-9)?

CONCLUSION

David was obedient to God. Although there were torments in his life because of some bad decisions, at the end of his days, God gave him old age in peace. He fulfilled his desires, and through him bequeathed a model of a life worthy of imitating in true generosity and adoration to our Lord.

Lesson 32:

PREPARATIONS FOR BUILDING THE TEMPLE

Lesson Aim: To learn that God's work need good preparation.

Local Proverb: When you follow in the path of your father, you learn to walk like him.

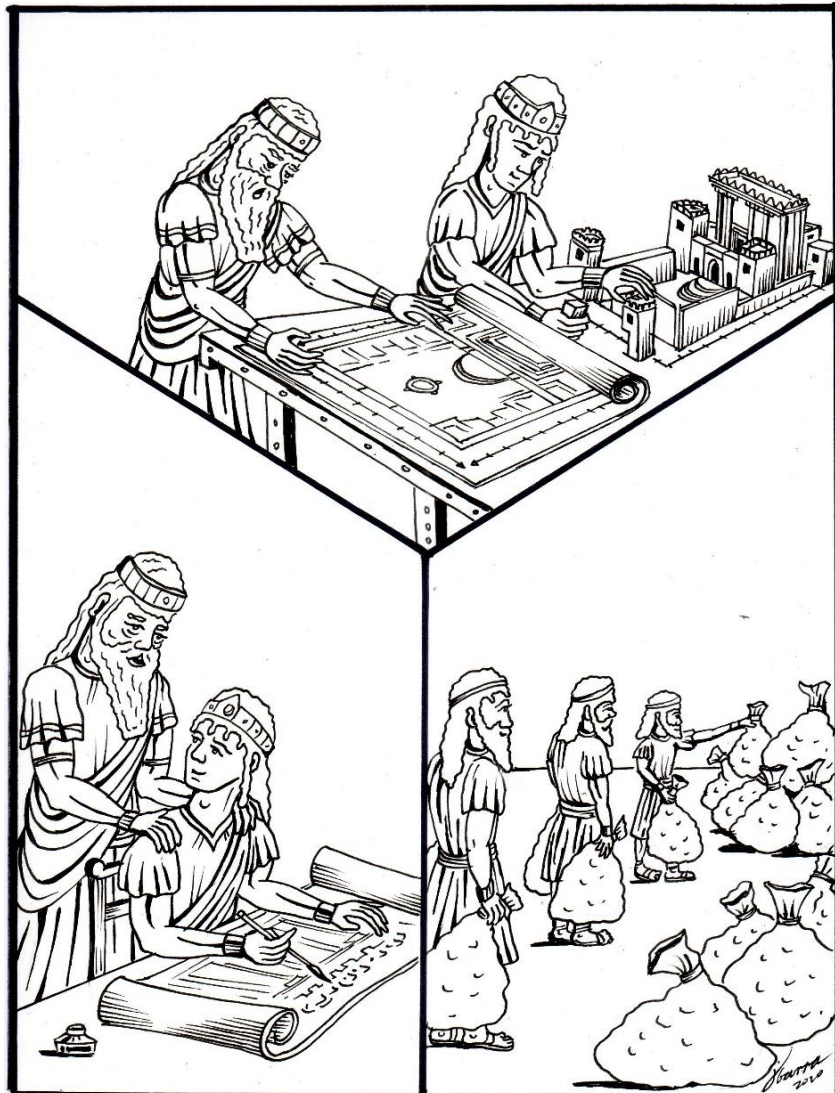
Passage to Study: 1 Chronicles 28-29

Memory Verse: "...The Lord knows what is in every person's mind. If you go to him for help, you will get an answer. But if you turn away from the Lord, he will leave you forever." 1Chronicles 28:9

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. How is God honored or not honored in this story?
3. If you were in this story, what would you do differently and why?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to this week?

Story Slogan: The best sacrifice is our lives of worship to God.



| | |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| Lesson | A VITAL REQUEST |
| 33 | Scripture: 2 Chronicles 1:1-13 |

| Objective |
|--|
| To know that there's no greater treasure than the wisdom that emanates from above, on which our decisions must rest. |

| Memory Verse |
|---|
| "Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding." Proverbs 3:13 |

INTRODUCTION

What similarities and differences are there between Thomas Young and Solomon? King Solomon is considered the wisest person of all time; and Thomas Young is said to be the last man who knew everything. The latter was born in the eighteenth century. At two years old he learned to read, and at four years old he had read the Bible twice. At age 14, he could read ten languages, including Hebrew. In addition to reading Egyptian hieroglyphics, he also made many scientific discoveries. Intelligence and wisdom are different things. Intelligence appeals to scientific knowledge, but wisdom is the ability to distinguish between good and evil. The first is acquired through study, and the second is a gift from God to enable us to not stumble and live eternally. But how did Solomon get so much wisdom at a young age? Let's see what 2 Chron. 1:1-13 says.

I. A Wise Request (2 Chronicles 2:1-10)

According to some commentators, Solomon began to reign when he was between 16-18 years old. While he was young, he was very willing once David his father had confirmed him as the future king of Israel: *"Then King David said to the whole assembly: 'My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen, is young and inexperienced. The task is great, because this palatial structure isn't for man but for the Lord God.'"* (1 Chronicles 29:1) The government of the nation wasn't easy to manage, including the important recommendation to build the house of God, something that David couldn't do by divine order (1 Chronicles 28:2-3).

The writer of 1 Kings chapter 2 described how David exhorted Solomon to act with wisdom. This highlights the two things that a father expects of his child: to work and to act with wisdom: *"Deal with him according to your wisdom, but don't let his gray head go down to the grave in peace"* (1 Kings 2:6); *"...You are a man of wisdom..."* (1 Kings 2:9). David was expecting his son Solomon to act with wisdom, and he had the certainty that he would do so. This demonstrates God's will for Solomon to rule the kingdom and build the desired temple, something that Adonijah his brother, who also wanted the throne, couldn't have done (1 Kings 1:5-27).

Because of everything mentioned in the previous paragraph, Solomon needed nothing more than a wise heart.

Solomon wanted to encourage his father's heart who trusted him to be the new king in spite of the fact that he had several brothers who could have been anointed as the king. Every child should aim to bring joy to their parents. Later, in his wisdom, Solomon wrote these words on three occasions: *"A wise son brings joy to his father..."* (Prov. 10:1, 15:20, 29:3). On the contrary: *"A foolish son brings grief to his father"* (Prov. 17:25, 19:13). To find wisdom from above, Solomon began by giving place to God in his life: *"Solomon went up to the bronze altar before the Lord in the tent of meeting and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it."* (2 Chron. 1:6)

In response to his devotion and generosity in worship, God presented himself and said: *"Ask for whatever you want me to give you"* (v. 7). The only tangible way to find the presence of God is when we enter into communion with Him in spirit and in truth. Today, God has left us His Word to speak to our needy hearts. At God's offer, Solomon remembered all the words of his father David about the great responsibility of leading the nation of Israel (vs. 8-9). That's why in his youth, he said to the Lord: *"Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?"* (v. 10). As a prince, Solomon surely had been well instructed and educated. However, that wasn't enough to govern the nation of Israel. His father motivated him, and he sought that wisdom in the right place: In the presence of God.

Although we aren't kings, we do have to make good decisions in our lives. Many have fallen into an infinity of

errors and, as the saying goes, they still stumble over the same stone. The reason for this is because they don't ask God for wisdom. The Apostle James teaches us the following: *"If any of you lack wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."* (James 1:5) We need to carry out a self-analysis in our lives: Is what we are because God wanted it that way; or is it because it has been the result of our foolishness? Let's do what Solomon did: Let's ask God for wisdom.

II. A Divine Gift (2 Chronicles 1:11-12)

We have a giving God, and when we ask for things that benefit our spiritual and inner life, He is ready to help us. Remember what our Lord Jesus said: *"Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."* (John 16:24) We must bear in mind that when the Master said this, he didn't mean for us to ask for material things, because in reality, material things don't satisfy. Rather they lead us to want even more. However, to ask for his continued presence through his Holy Spirit is to have eternal joy; and *"... no one will take away your joy"* (John 16:22). Joy is the cure for sadness, fear and loneliness.

Solomon wasn't only able to judge with wisdom, but also through his government in Israel, he was able to do three things that other kings didn't achieve: First, he built the most magnificent and splendid temple there could be, with all the measurements and special areas that God had indicated through David. Secondly, he enlarged the national territory without the need for wars or deaths as other kings had done. This brought peace and renown to the nation of Israel. He honored the meaning of his name: *"peaceful."* The surrounding nations were willing to make friends with Solomon to achieve certain benefits. One example of this was the visit of the queen of Sheba (2 Chronicles 9:1-12).

He had the ability to trade with different countries. That's why he was able to import many resources and materials used for the construction of the temple. His weakness was horses, which he traded between the countries of the north and the south (2 Chronicles 1:16, 9:24). His wisdom brought prosperity to the nation of Israel. In addition, Solomon became famous through his advice and writing. As a poet, he wrote three thousand proverbs and one thousand and five songs (1 Kings 4:32); as a philosopher, he was able to lecture on trees, animals, birds, reptiles and fish (1 Kings 4:33). This king also may have been the author of three canonical books: Proverbs, Songs of Songs and Ecclesiastes.

III. An Added Reward (2 Chronicles 1:12-13)

2 Chronicles 1:12 says: *"...therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you. And I will also give you wealth, possessions and honor, such as no king who was before you ever had and none after you will have."* When Solomon made his request to God, he didn't think of himself, but he thought more about the responsibility he had as the king for his nation, that is, in the mission for which he had been chosen. His priority wasn't to get riches, acquire more goods, or the glory or fame that the world could give him. God mentioned these things that were not his priority or delight. However, God wanted to add these things as a reward for humbly requesting only wisdom and knowledge to govern Israel.

Everything that God promised to Solomon was fulfilled. However, he also warned him in 2 Chronicles 7:17-18 that these additions should not be the object of worship, but that he must be faithful to God so that evils wouldn't come to him.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What do you expect from your children?
- What did Solomon ask of God which gladdened his father's heart? (2 Chronicles 1:10).
- What temptations can come along with riches and glory of this world?

CONCLUSION

Wisdom is better than all the gold and silver put together, and every precious stone. The arrogant make the mistake of following riches; they will end badly (Proverbs 8). Christ is the source of true wisdom; to have Him is the greatest wealth that can be achieved. If we remain in Him and His Word remains in us, we can ask for everything we want and it will be done to us (John 15:7).

Lesson 33:

A VITAL REQUEST

Lesson Aim: To know that no one can rule without the wisdom and knowledge from God.

Local Proverb: Knowledge is like a garden: If is not cultivated, it cannot be harvested.

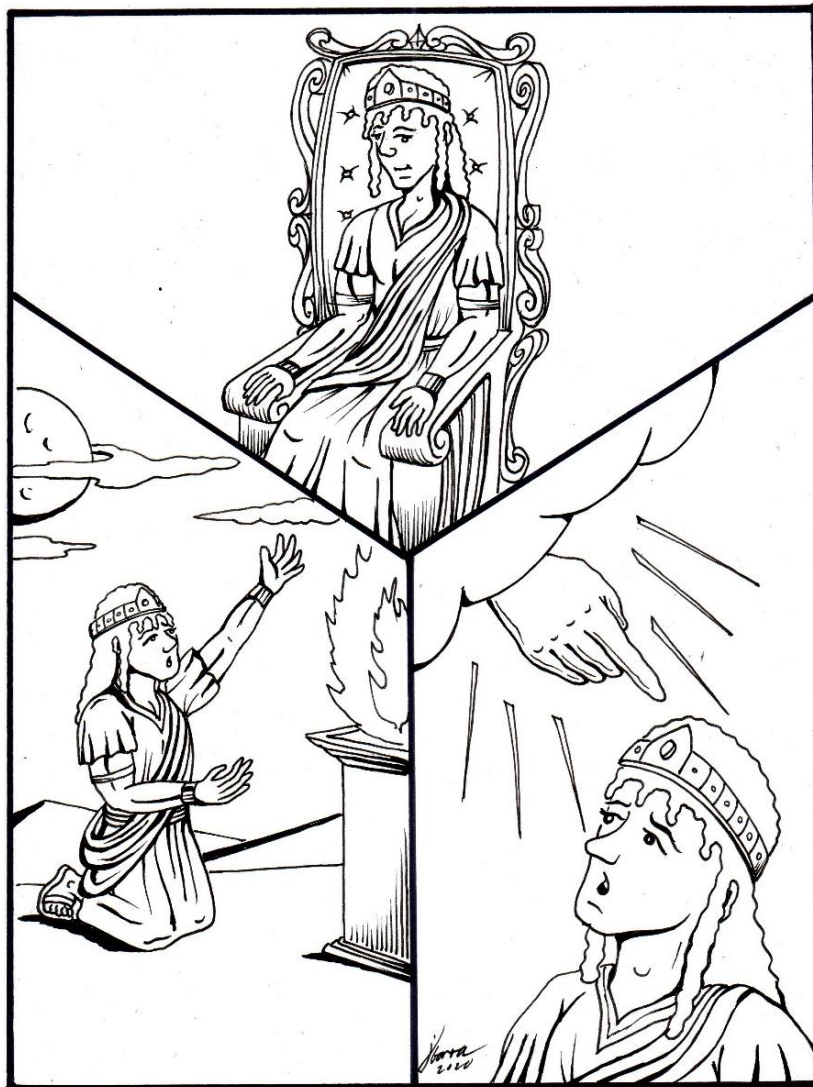
Passage to Study: 2 Chronicles 1:1-13

Memory Verse: Now give me wisdom and knowledge so I can lead these people in the right way. No one can rule them without your help. 2 Chronicles 1:10

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. How is God honored or not honored in this story?
3. If you were in this story, what would you do differently and why?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to this week?

Story Slogan: Seek God's wisdom and knowledge and He will honor you.



| | |
|-----------|---|
| Lesson | A HOUSE WORTHY OF GOD |
| 34 | Scripture: 2 Chronicles chapters 3 through 7 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To recognize that we're the temple of the Holy Spirit and discover what this implies. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| "May your eyes be open toward this temple day and night, this place of which you said you would put your Name there. May you hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place." 2 Chronicles 6:20 |

INTRODUCTION

King David wanted to build a temple, which would be a unique and special place for God. However, his wish wasn't fulfilled because as we have seen in previous studies, he had been a war faring king and the task was to be carried out by his son Solomon. As we study this passage, we can discover important aspects of the construction of that temple that can be applied to our Christian lives today. *The Building Of The Temple* (2 Chronicles 3:1-17)

The temple of Jerusalem, known as Solomon's temple, was to be the place of worship which would replace the tabernacle that had accompanied the people of Israel in their journey through the desert, and had rested in the high place of Gibeon: *"The tabernacle of the Lord, which Moses had made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering were at that time on the high place at Gibeon."* (1 Chronicles 21:29)

A. The Place Of Construction

In 2 Chronicles 3:1-2, we read that Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, on Mount Moriah. The Jewish tradition identifies Moriah to be the same place that God instructed Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac (Genesis 22:2). The land was acquired by David when he made an altar to Jehovah where he offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and the Lord responded by sending fire from heaven to the altar in response to his sacrifices (1 Chronicles 21:22-26).

B. The Measurements (2 Chronicles 3:3-4)

The measurements of the temple that King Solomon built for the Lord were these: Sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and one hundred and twenty cubits high (2 Chronicles 3:3-4). In meters, *"the building should have an interior length of approximately 27 meters, 9 meters in width and a height of 13.5 meters (60 × 20 × 30 cubits)."* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_of_Jerusalem).

C. The Materials

In the construction of the temple, the best and most valuable materials from Solomon's time were used, such as: Pure and fine gold; cypress and cedar wood; fabrics for the veil, such as blue, purple, crimson and linen; bronze, carved stones for the walls, and precious stones.

In 1 Corinthians 3:9, Paul wrote: *"...For we're co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building."* In this construction, one sets the foundations, another builds, but each one builds into the lives of those who compose God's temple. Each must choose the materials they want to use, which can be gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, or poor quality materials like hay and stubble. In the last day, the materials we have used will be tested by fire.

D. The Finishing Touches

Everything was covered with fine gold. Two columns were placed in front of the temple, each of which was named. The one on the right was called Jakin and the one on the left, Boaz (1 Kings 7:21). The construction stones were covered by cedar wood in such a way that they were not visible. Likewise, the cedar wood had carvings of wild pumpkins and flower buds, and all were covered with gold (1 Kings 6:15,18).

I. The Temple Furniture (2 Chron. 4:1-5:10)

The temple included furniture and utensils needed to perform the ceremonies and rituals (sacrifices and burned sacrifices). The new temple had to have the items God had told Moses to include. But this new temple was going to be very elaborate. They made ten gold lamp stands, ten tables, a hundred gold sprinkling bowls and lots of water. The art work was finely done. Four hundred pomegranates were carved at the top of the pillars. Many of the items were made of polished bronze. There was a golden altar, lamp stands of pure gold to burn in front of the inner sanctuary as prescribed. In the holiest place they put the Ark of the covenant, which by this time only had inside it the tablets of stone with the ten commandments. *“There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the Lord made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt.”* (2 Chronicles 5:10) God wants us to be adorned with a holy and clean heart. He looks for our sincerity and purity of motives (1 Samuel 16:7 and 1 Peter 3:3).

II. The Dedication Of The Temple (2 Chronicles 6:1-7:10)

A. The Ceremony

When Solomon finished building the temple, he called the people to a great feast for the dedication of the temple. King Solomon, with all the congregation of Israel, gathered before the Ark of the Covenant and sacrificed countless sheep and oxen (2 Chronicles 5:6). In addition to the sacrifices that the people made, Solomon also sacrificed twenty-two thousand oxen and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. At the moment of the dedication, the king prayed to the Lord asking for forgiveness for the sins of

the people and offering sacrifices, burned offerings, and peace offerings: *“When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple.”* (2 Chronicles 7:1) The presence of God was so great that the priests couldn’t remain in the place for a cloud had filled everything. That same presence of God is still manifest in those of us who have believed in the Son of God, through his Holy Spirit, as he says in Matthew 18:20 *“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”*

B. A Great Party

Apart from the dedication ceremony of the temple, there were seven days of celebration with the whole nation of Israel. *“All the Levites who were musicians— Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and their sons and relatives— stood on the east side of the altar, dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps and lyres. They were accompanied by 120 priests sounding trumpets. The trumpeters and musicians joined in unison to give praise and thanks to the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, the singers raised their voices in praise to the Lord.”* (2 Chronicles 5:12-13)

The care of David and Solomon for the construction of the temple of God should be imitated in our lives, bearing in mind what Paul said: *“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst?”* (1 Cor. 3:16) And we have the certainty that even if this house were destroyed, we have an eternal promise *“For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.”* (2 Cor. 5:1)

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- As a temple of the Holy Spirit, how can we contribute to honor God with it?
- Today we’re the temple of the Holy Spirit. What are those furnishings today?
- Who were present at the dedication of the temple? (2 Chronicles 5:2,12)

CONCLUSION

Solomon, in obedience to God, built the temple with the best he could find, making it a truly beautiful and awesome construction. Today, God, who is the King of kings and Lord of lords, is also worthy of dwelling in the best temple. The Bible teaches us that He chooses to live today in us, in His church, As the temple of the Holy Spirit, let’s live holy lives that honor our God.

Lesson 34:

A HOUSE WORTHY OF GOD

Lesson Aim: To recognize that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Local Proverb: A small house can lodge a hundred friends.

Passage to Study: 2 Chronicles 3-7

Memory Verse: "Hear us when we pray facing this Temple. Hear from your home in heaven. And when you hear our prayers, forgive us." 2 Chronicles 6:21b

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. How is God honored or not honored in this story?
3. If you were in this story, what would you do differently and why?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to this week?

Story Slogan: We are the temple because God chooses to live in our lives today.



| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Lesson 35 | A KING WITH EXTRAORDINARY WISDOM |
| | Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:11-9:28 |

| Objective |
|--|
| To learn how seek the wisdom of God for each moment of our life, and thus be truly prosperous. |

| Memory Verse |
|---|
| “All the kings of the earth sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart.” 2 Chronicles 9:23 |

INTRODUCTION

King Solomon was one of the kings of Israel who remained on the throne for 40 years (2 Chron. 9:30). Of all the kings who reigned over Israel, he left a great mark for his virtues, especially wisdom for which he was widely recognized (2 Chron. 9:23). The biblical passages in this lesson show us what King Solomon achieved because of the wisdom that the Lord gave him, including abundant prosperity.

At that time, there was no king or kingdom that had not heard of the great King Solomon, and they wanted to be like him and enjoy wealth like his. Surely because of this, King Solomon received many visits from international leaders who were curious about how he had got to where he was.

I. God’s Covenant With Solomon (2 Chronicles 7:11-22)

A. A Heart With A Right Attitude (vs. 11-12)

1. The word ‘heart’ in the Bible is more than an essential physical organ for life. Although in the Scriptures the term ‘heart’ appears more than 900 times, the great majority of these occasions it’s almost never in a literal sense. ‘Heart’ in the Bible refers to the inner space of our being where emotions reside (Ps. 62:10); thoughts (Gen. 6:5); the will (Ps. 119:2); and often, it represents the deepest part of our being (Gen. 6:6).

2. The Lord’s appearance to Solomon, and the words he spoke to him (2 Chron. 7:11-12), are evidence that He always hears the prayers of his children, and is pleased with those who seek to give him their best (Ps. 145:18-19), and they look for it with all their hearts (Jer. 29:13).

B. A Beautiful Promise About His People (vs. 13-22)

1. His Gaze Full Of Love.

The gaze of God was on Solomon, but also, especially on His people. God knew what was in the hearts of the Israelites, and although His gaze was and is full of love,

He is pleased by what is just and holy; thus rebellion brings His judgment (v. 13).

Have a moment of reflection with your students and ask them: How do people in the world live today? Why is there so much crime, scarcity, injustice, indifference, frustration, pain and fear? What relationship do all these aforementioned problems have to the issue of obedience to God’s commandments?

2. Conditions To Receive The Promise.

Even in the midst of all this reality, there was a beautiful promise of healing for those of us who genuinely repent and humble themselves before His sovereignty. God promised the Israelites three things if they humbled themselves, prayed, sought after Him and left their bad behavior: i) He would listen to their prayers; ii) He would forgive them, and iii) He would restore prosperity to their country. However, to achieve these promises, God laid down some concrete conditions (v. 14). They needed to do the following:

- God wants His people to be humble (Eph. 4:1-2).
- God wants His people to pray (Eph. 6:18) and seek His face (Col. 3:1-2).
- God wants His people to turn from their evil ways

(Rev.3:19).

The promises of the Lord continue for His people, and He promises to be attentive to the situations through which we have to pass; and obedience remains a fundamental condition for the blessing of the Lord (2 Chron. 7:15).

In these passages, Solomon is encouraged to walk like his father: to live in obedience and humility to God, so that his government would prosper (vs. 17-18). Ask your students to share some experience or anecdote where, because of a good attitude and being obedient to God, they received good rewards.

3. Consequences Of Disobedience

Placing God in second or third place in our lives will always expose us to multiple sufferings, which can lead us to being separated from Him forever (vs. 19-20). The temple built by Solomon was a beautiful sanctuary where the name of God was praised and where His presence was felt. However, after the people of God left the path of obedience, the situation changed. Today, there's a Muslim mosque on the site of the temple.

II. God Gave Him Great Achievements (2 Chronicles 8:1-18)

God was being faithful to what He had promised King Solomon. For his part, King Solomon fulfilled his obedience to God. During this period of his reign, King Solomon achieved the following:

A. Finished The Building Of The Temple (v. 1)

The temple was a long-term project. It took Solomon half the total time of his reign to conclude it. God was attentive to all that. Mention is made of the only battle that occurred in the Bible during the reign of Solomon. These passages also

mention other building projects in new cities and strengthening existing ones, expansion projects such as warehouses, forts, places for horses and chariots. Definitely, King Solomon was an excellent builder (vs. 2-6).

B. His Public Worship Address (vs. 11-16)

This was an interesting decision that Solomon made in relation to his wife, the daughter of Pharaoh. He built a palace for her, far from the city of David. *"This was a mixed union between an Egyptian princess and a Hebrew king, a worshiper of many gods united to a worshiper of Jehovah. At least, common sense and his still manifest spiritual sensitivity led him to consider Jehovah's opinion of this union, by building his wife's residence away from the sacred places (v. 11)."* (op. cit. 2000, p. 335).

A possible interpretation of why Solomon married women from different nations was to get political advantage. When he married the daughter of some ruler, they probably wouldn't attack him if one of their princesses was queen. We don't really know if that explanation is true or not. The fact is that Solomon had many wives. Such behavior was contrary to God's instructions.

C. Commercial Achievements (vs. 17-18)

Finally, this chapter closes with the story about Hiram, whose gold went to Solomon. It was unusual for an Israelite to visit Ezion-geber since the Israelites were not sailors and didn't work at sea (v. 17). This was a port near the north of the Red Sea. Solomon's action shows us the great vision that Solomon had for business, sending his servants to Ophir, a place with a great quantity of gold (v. 18, 2 Chron. 9:10; Isaiah 13:12). Although

King Solomon was a great business man, sadly that led him to neglect his relationship with God.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- Do you think God wanted to make King Solomon famous?
- What has more value: Wealth or wisdom?
- When the Bible mentions the word "heart," what does it refer to?

CONCLUSION

Many kings and nations recognized how great God was through Solomon's wisdom and victories. It's important to have a heart that's obedient to the commandments of God. This must be above personal desires, self-satisfaction and carnal passions.

Lesson 35:

A KING WITH EXTRAORDINARY WISDOM

Lesson Aim: To learn how to seek God's wisdom for each situation.

Local Proverb: Wise knots are loosened by wise men.

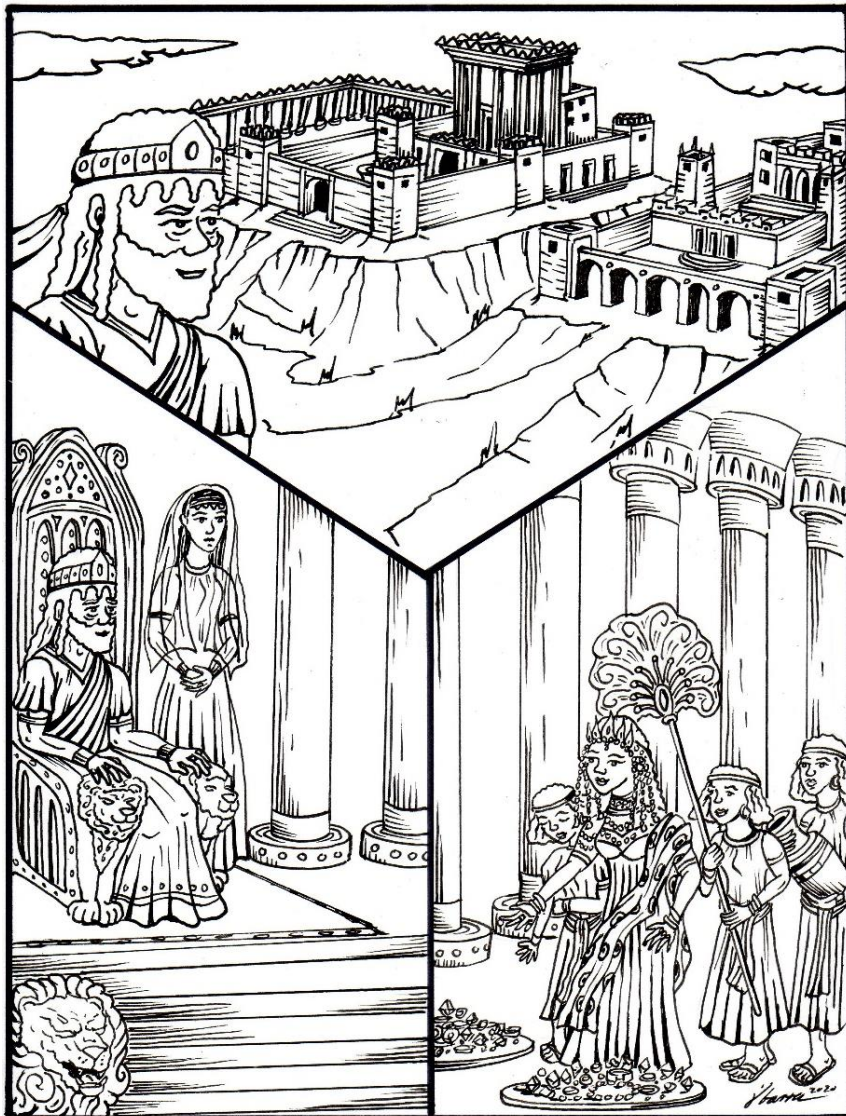
Passage to Study: 2 Chronicles 7 - 9

Memory Verse: "All the kings of the earth came to see Solomon. They wanted to hear the wisdom God had given him." 2 Chronicles 9:23

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. How is God honored or not honored in this story?
3. If you were in this story, what would you do differently and why?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to this week?

Story Slogan: When we seek God's wisdom, people will recognize how great God is.



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|-----------|---------------------------------|
| Lesson | CHOOSING THE RIGHT TEAM |
| 36 | Scripture: 2 Chronicles 10:6-14 |

| Objective |
|--|
| To accept that there's a need to balance the advice of older people with that of young people before making decisions. |

| Memory Verse |
|---|
| "If you will be kind to these people and please them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants." 2 Chronicles 10:7 |

INTRODUCTION

Rehoboam was the direct successor of the wisest king that ever existed on the face of the earth. As King Solomon's son, at the beginning, he demonstrated wisdom that his father had bequeathed him. He sought advice from the elders of his people and didn't despise the youth of his contemporaries to whom he also sought advice. However, the problem that arose later was that Rehoboam didn't balance both counsels wisely; and decided to lean towards one. The issue wasn't the fact that he had asked the young people, but rather, that he ignored the advice of those who has experience, and this resulted in a terrible mistake. This doesn't mean that in our churches and societies we shouldn't consult with the young people; we should consider their views.

1. The Advice Of Experienced Statesmen (2 Chronicles 10:6-7)

In the people of God, the elders were held in high esteem; they were literally the oldest. In those times, a man could be considered to be an elder when he was 50 or more, while in the case of women, they needed to be 60 or more (Numbers 8:25, 1 Timothy 5:9). In all the nations, the elders either governed with their king or were consulted before any major decision of national interest, and Israel wasn't an exception. Therefore, King Rehoboam wisely turned first to the elders of the nation to seek advice. In this case, the elders of the reign of Rehoboam gave good and precise advice.

The elders gave him three good suggestions. Let's have a look at them:

- i.) "If you will be kind to these people..." (v. 7): This means treating them like humans, treat them with kindness, bringing them well-being, with joy, and mercy and above all, seeking their prosperity. The king needed to remember that we have all been created in the image and likeness of God, and thus treat his subjects accordingly.
- ii.) If the king served his people, "... they will always be your servants" (v.7).
- iii.) They told the king to "... give them a favorable answer" (v.7). These counselors were reminding the king

that he needed to listen to his people and treat them well and speak kindly to them.

The advice given by the wise elders points to the way the Messiah will rule. It will certainly be a totally different sort of government where love is at the core of everything, and the people of God, His redeemed people, will enjoy prosperity, well-being and joy. It will be the best. He will speak to everyone with kind words, of blessing and not of cursing (Revelation 22:3).

II. The Young People's Advice (2 Chronicles 10:8-11)

After listening to the wise and experienced, King Rehoboam sought advice from the young. Why did he do that? Verse 8 says: "*But Rehoboam rejected the advice the elders gave him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him.*" Ask your students: "Do you have a friend (or friends) that you have known since childhood? Remember the pranks you all did? Remember who advised you? Do you remember with whom you formed a team in your multiple games of childhood and adolescence?"

We understand that Rehoboam's choice was logical, because these young people had grown up with him. Maybe they were relatives, princes like him, servants, etc. However, more than counselors, these were friends and brothers in

every way, with whom he had probably done mischief since childhood, with whom he had experienced the development of adolescence. So perhaps they had lived together all their childhood and youth, and especially their formation in the law of God. We can imagine that they may have gone to the temple together and lived through countless experiences as we did when we remember those friends with whom we grew up together. God knew Rehoboam would choose the advice of his friends because he loved them and wanted to be with them. (2 Chron. 10:15, 1 Kings 11:29-33).

This is the advice that his friends gave him: *“The people have said to you, ‘Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but make our yoke lighter.’ Now tell them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s waist. My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.’”* (v. 10-11) Apparently, Rehoboam saw only the difficulty of governing the country, not the opportunities. He mentioned only the harshest aspects of Solomon’s government, and decided to be tougher on the people.

The most logical thing was to continue with this type of leadership, it was what they knew. They had been trained like this, with hard leadership. This means that each government or administration must look for its own model of leadership and not necessarily continue in the same pathway as the previous government, or in the case of the church, the previous pastorate.

The duty of Rehoboam as king was to lighten the burden of that present generation that had worked hard with his father in building the temple and the king’s palace for 20 years (2 Chronicles 8:1). He needed to raise a new generation of young people with whom he could work.

He had to work with his contemporaries, involving them in arduous tasks, without disregarding the advice of the elders. Each young person must listen to the wisdom of those who are experienced, listening to their good advice to be able to make good decisions.

III. King Rehoboam’s Wrong Decision (2 Chronicles 10:12-14)

The king’s words were these: *“My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.”* (2 Chronicles 10:13-15a).

The young people had observed that Solomon was harsh with people, demanding high taxes from them. It would be logical to think that since Solomon was such a wise king, this heavy taxation was a good thing and the young king should continue but with more force. Each decision, each action, generates consequences. King Rehoboam chose the counsel of the young men who were brought up with him, and the people of God ended up rebelling (2 Chronicles 10:16). The problem wasn’t the hardness of the servitude itself, but these young men boasted of their strength (Proverb 20:29), and wanted to add more harshness than that which King Solomon had imposed on the people of God (2 Chronicles 10:10- 11, 13-14).

When boasting of their strength, the young people erred in their advice. This teaches us that society is made up of young people and older adults. For successful leadership and governance, the welfare of all has to be considered. To have a balanced society or church community, both young people with their enthusiasm and strength, as well as the wisdom and experience of those who have lived longer, is needed. So, one group leads with its strength, while the other group leads with their advice.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What might have happened if the king had listened to his older advisors?
- Why did these young men give the king this advice?
- What’s the role of older members in our congregations?

CONCLUSION

We all need each other. We need to listen to the advice of our senior statesmen and pastors who have rich experiences to teach us. At the same time, given that society and even our churches are forever changing, we need to listen to the voice of the Millennials and those of Generation X. Together, in unison, we can build the church of Jesus of the twenty-first century for His glory.

Lesson 36:

CHOOSING THE RIGHT TEAM

Lesson Aim: To accept that we need to balance the advice of older and younger before making decisions.

Local Proverb: When a king has good counsellors, his reign is peaceful.

Passage to Study: 2 Chronicles 10:6-14

Memory Verse: They answered, "Be kind to these people. Please them and give them a kind answer. If you do, they will serve you always." 2 Chronicles 10:7

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. How is God honored or not honored in this story?
3. If you were in this story, what would you do differently and why?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to this week?

Story Slogan: Young or old may have wisdom, let us listen!



| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| Lesson 37 | FAITH PUT TO THE TEST |
| | Scripture: 2 Chronicles 20:1-30 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To be challenged to use the spiritual disciplines as exercises that God has given us to strengthen our faith, and emerge victorious in the face of adversity. |

| Memory Verse |
|---|
| “Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that’s attacking us. We don’t know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” 1 Chronicles 20:12 |

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter to our study, we find Jehu the prophet exhorting the king of Judah to not make alliances with enemy powers (2 Chronicles 19:1-27). But King Jehoshaphat didn’t take heed and made an alliance with the enemies of God (v.2). However, he also did good things (v. 3). He led the people back to the Lord and sought justice (vs. 6-7). He led the people in truth with an honest heart (v.9).

As we study 2 Chronicles 20, we’ll see that when King Jehoshaphat was in danger, he and the people asked the Lord for help and He responded to their call. We’ll identify how the use of different spiritual disciplines was the means of grace that strengthened the faith of King Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah in times of adversity.

I. Testing Times (2 Chronicles 20:1-3)

The on-line dictionary defines “fear” as: *“an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat.”* There was a real reason for fear. Verse 2 states that a vast army was coming against them from Edom. They were alarmed.

The issue is that in certain situations in life that seem to us to be a danger, a risk or a threat, we usually react with fear or anxiety. Jehoshaphat was no exception to that. Many people in the Bible felt the same. Moses felt afraid when they were attacked by Og, king of Bashan (Numbers 21:33-34). Zacharias was afraid when the angel announced that he was going to be a father in his old age (Luke 1:12-13). When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water, they were afraid (Matthew 14:26).

King Jehoshaphat had a real threat to face: Three nations were coming against him (2 Chron. 20:1). As the king, Jehoshaphat knew his army wouldn’t be able to win in a battle against the armies, and he felt powerless since he couldn’t give his people a satisfactory answer to such a threat.

Fear attacks us in time of trials and shows us that we cannot achieve everything through our own self-sufficiency. It also reminds us that we must depend on each other, and above all, we need to put our trust in God!

This is what Jehoshaphat did in this situation (v. 3b). Even though fear had invaded Jehoshaphat’s heart, he knew that there was only one way that he could dispel his fear: he needed to turn to God with all his heart and seek His guidance and counsel.

II. Exercising Faith (2 Chronicles 20:3-19)

A. Worship (vs. 3,6)

Worship is the act of attributing reverent honor and homage to God. The first decision that Jehoshaphat made, upon receiving the news of war, was to worship: *“...Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord...”* (v.3). The Beacon Dictionary defines “worship” as *“the human response to the divine nature”* (p.32). Jehoshaphat exalted the attributes of God as an act of worship (v.6).

B. Prayer (v. 4a)

In prayer, we consciously connect with God, communicating with him, or seeking His help in time of need. Making use of this spiritual discipline, Jehoshaphat didn’t limit himself to worship and seeking the counsel of God, he also called all the people of Israel together to ask for their help (v. 4a).

C. Praise (v. 7)

Praise exalts God for what He does. Part of Jehoshaphat’s

worship was to recognize how God had acted on their behalf in history (v. 7).

D. Fellowship (vs. 9-13)

We can only be impressed when we read in the book of Acts that the first disciples: "...had everything in common" (Acts 2:44, 4:32). Although they were in very difficult times, given the persecution initiated against the Christians, they remained together and in harmony (Acts 2:1). This close fellowship gained the respect of those who saw them (Acts 2:47).

E. The Word Of God (v. 15)

One of the spiritual disciplines or means of grace that always strengthens our faith and gives us hope is to take refuge in the promises of God. The people of Israel received word from God that brought them encouragement and hope (v. 15). Fellowship with God helps us correct our perspective. Jehoshaphat remembered that his life and that of the people didn't depend on him, or on an army. The Almighty God told him not to fear, but to believe in Him. God said: "*Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful.*" (v.20).

III. An Act Of Faith (2 Chronicles 20:20-22)

The people of Israel began to act in faith: "*Early in the morning they left for the Desert of Tekoa. As they set out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, 'Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will*

be successful." (v.20) Faith requires full trust in God and total obedience to Him. When we act in faith, the perspective of the circumstances of our life are transformed (v. 21). Jehoshaphat faced the test with praise. His faith was strengthened when he submitted himself to God, sought His counsel in prayer, along with the people, remembering God's portentous deeds and His character. He reminded the people that God is merciful and would lead them through. This is FAITH.

IV. A Supernatural Victory (2 Chronicles 20:23-25)

Jehoshaphat was no exception to the leaders God had raised before. He was leading his small army against three united kingdoms. He did it because he believed in God's promise: "*You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Don't be afraid; don't be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you.*" (2 Chronicles 20:17)

When the time had come to take up arms and attack, Jehoshaphat gave the order we least imagine to hear in a war context. Jehoshaphat told a group of Levites to sing (2 Chronicles 20:21). Jehoshaphat's confidence in God was compensated in a supernatural way: "*As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.*" (v. 22)

Jehoshaphat, like Moses and Joshua, acted by faith, knowing that God is true and that the Israelites would see the supernatural act of God, who had promised them victory.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What spiritual disciplines are reflected in 2 Chronicles 20?
- How can we express our gratitude and joy for the wonderful ways God shows himself and acts on our behalf?

CONCLUSION

Spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, fasting, among others are important for our spiritual growth and victory. God has given them to us as exercises through which we can strengthen our faith and face life's adversities. Let's not stop practicing them!

Lesson 37:

FAITH PUT TO THE TEST

Lesson Aim: To understand that spiritual disciplines though challenging are necessary.

Local Proverb: The tree does not fall at the first stroke.

Passage to Study: 2 Chronicles 20

Memory Verse: We have no power against this large army that is attacking us. We don't know what to do so we look to you for help." 2 Chronicles 20:12b

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. How is God honored or not honored in this story?
3. If you were in this story, what would you do differently and why?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to this week?

Story Slogan: When you face a challenge; stop, ask, and pray in faith!



| | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| Lesson 38 | A NECESSARY TRANSFORMATION |
| | Scripture: 2 Chronicles 29:3-31:21 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To show what can happen when God revives His people when they have backslidden. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “...Listen to me, Levites! Consecrate yourselves now and consecrate the Temple of the Lord, the God of your ancestors. Remove all defilement from the sanctuary.” 2 Chronicles 29:5 |

INTRODUCTION

Revivals have been a constant in the story of God’s people. In the Old Testament, we see how time after time the people strayed way from God and He called a leader to help them repent and renew their alliance and fellowship with Him in obedience. This story about King Hezekiah represents one of these revival moments.

I. King Hezekiah Reestablished Communion With God (2 Chronicles 29:2-36)

A. What Was King Hezekiah Like? (vs. 2-5)

Verse 2 reads: “*He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father David had done.*” Because he was a god-fearing righteous king, he perceived the ways that the people were disobeying God. He saw their idolatry. In the reign of his father Ahaz, the doors of the temple had been closed to eliminate any desire to return to the worship of God (2 Chronicles 28:24, 29:7). He saw that the temple doors were closed. Verse 3 stated that he opened the doors of the temple and mended them.

King Hezekiah recognized that the nation needed to humble themselves before God. He acknowledged that what some of his ancestors had done was bad, and urgently stated that the people needed to come back to God. The first thing he did was to gather the Levites and priests and invite them to repent of illicit religious practices and to consecrate themselves before God.

B. King Hezekiah’s Analysis Of The Situation (vs. 6-9)

Verses 8-9 clearly paint the results of disobeying God. Sin brings consequences. “*The anger of the Lord*” had fallen on Judah and Jerusalem. Other nations were laughing at them. Because of ancestral sins, many had “*fallen by the sword*” and some of their sons and daughters and wives were in captivity.

What would God say about our churches today? Are we as

faithful as we should be? What about false doctrines such as prosperity theology, leaders and pastors who fall into adultery, false church accounts, not looking after the poor and the needy, etc.?

C. King Hezekiah’s Solution (vs. 10-36)

These verses recount what the Priests and Levites had to do to cleanse the temple. Get the students to make a list of what was done. In verse 10, the king states that he is going to renew the covenant with God. He warns them not to be negligent and to do the duties assigned to them in the law of Moses. The Levites listened, repented and began to work cleaning out the temple of all traces of idolatry. When they had finished, they had a wonderful ceremony with sacrifices, music and worship (v. 29). “*So the service of the temple of the Lord was reestablished. Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced at what God had brought about for his people, because it was done so quickly.*” (vs. 35b-36)

II. King Hezekiah Celebrates The Passover (2 Chronicles 30:1-20)

A. A Feast To Unite The People Of God (vs. 1-6)

The Feast of the Passover should have been celebrated every year to remember how the angel of death had ‘*passed over*’ the Israelites’ homes in Egypt. This very important celebration was to be handed down from generation to generation. 2 Chronicles 30:5 mentions that they hadn’t properly celebrated this important religious feast for a

long time.

King Hezekiah and all the sanctified Levites felt a burning desire to obey God. Since they needed time to prepare for the Passover, they made plans to celebrate it in the second month of the year, and not in the first, as God had commanded (2 Chronicles 30:13).

This was to be a great event. Couriers were sent out to both Israel (the northern kingdom) and Judah inviting the people to the great celebration. In verses 5 to 9, we can read the letter that the king sent out to both Kingdoms. Have your students analyze it.

B. A Call For Repentance (vs. 7-20)

The rest of the chapter describes the wonderful Passover feast where many lambs were sacrificed and there was much rejoicing. The chapter ends with Hezekiah's prayer and the final blessing of the Lord. *"May the Lord, who is good, pardon everyone who sets their heart on seeking God—the Lord, the God of their ancestors—even if they aren't clean according to the rules of the sanctuary. And the Lord heard Hezekiah and healed the people."* (vs. 18-20)

III. What role does repentance have in our fellowship with God? King Hezekiah Reestablished The Priestly Service (2 Chronicles 31:1-21)

A. The Destruction Of Idolatry (vs. 1-2)

As a result of meeting with God, the people went about in both kingdoms destroying the pagan elements of idolatry.

Hezekiah organized the priests in groups to take turns serving in the Temple. King Hezekiah restored the place of worship, and the priests and Levites began to see again the meaning of the life and work with which they had been entrusted (2 Chronicles 31:2).

Hezekiah realized that the people had strayed far away from God. He also realized that he alone wasn't going to be able to change the situation. It was very important to challenge the Levites to repent and return to God, because with a team of holy men, the king was going to achieve much more.

B. Restoration Of Tithing (vs. 3-21)

His team of helpers needed financial support. The members of the tribe of Levi, since entry into the Promised Land, didn't have any land on which to grow their food and keep their animals. The other eleven tribes were to bring 10% of their produce to the storehouse for the Levites' use. But it appears that for quite a long time, this had not been the case, so the people designated by God to serve in the Temple had had to ignore their religious duties to support their own economic interests.

The people who had repented and had been blessed by the Lord were very generous in bringing in their tithes. In fact, they were so generous that there were heaps of different items. In verse 9 we read that the Chief priest told the king that: *"Since the people began to bring their contributions to the temple of the Lord, we have had enough to eat and plenty to spare, because the Lord has blessed his people, and this great amount is left over."* All the families of the Levites were cared for so that they could minister in the Temple.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What was the first thing King Hezekiah did to restore the temple service? Why?
- What were they remembering at Passover time?
- How did Hezekiah prepare his team of Levites?

CONCLUSION

When God's people in the Old Testament and even today fall into sin, forget Him, and wander away from His ways, God raises up someone to lead a revival. Every revival starts with a clear consciousness of sin, leading to repentance and blessing. This is what happened in the reign of this good king. He also trained and provided for the Levites so that they could be what God had called them to be – guides for the people towards holiness!

Lesson 38:

A NECESSARY TRANSFORMATION

Lesson Aim: To show what can happen when the people of God confess their sins, return to him, and honor their God.

Local Proverb: Do not look at where you fell, but where you slipped.

Passage to Study: 2 Chronicles 29 - 31

Memory Verse: ". . . The Lord your God is kind and merciful. He will not turn away from you if you come back to him."
2 Chronicles 30:9

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. How is God honored or not honored in this story?
3. If you were in this story, what would you do differently and why?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to this week?

Story Slogan: When lost in sin, repent, pray for our God that restores



| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Lesson 39 | ALWAYS DO WHAT'S RIGHT |
| | Scripture: 2 Chronicles 33–35:19 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To learn that God is gracious and forgiving but wants us to always do what's right. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and followed the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left.” 2 Chronicles 34:2 |

INTRODUCTION

Those who occupy a place of leadership, in one way or another, will leave a mark of their times. In other words, their lifestyle will influence decidedly for good or bad in the present and in the future of their people. They will be remembered as either good or bad leaders. In this class we'll talk about three types of leaders who made their mark on the history of the Lord's people. We can learn a lot from their successes and failures, and we'll be challenged to be remembered by the marvelous and unforgettable phrase: *“He did right in the eyes of the Lord, without turning to the right or to the left.”*

I. King Manasseh Started Badly And Ended Well (2 Chronicles 33:1-20)

Chronicles dedicates 20 verses to King Manasseh. He reigned in Jerusalem 55 years. He was 12 years old when he began to reign (v. 1). In verse 2, it says: *“He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, following the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites.”* However, verse 13 states: *“And when he prayed to him, the Lord was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so, he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord is God.”*

A. He Made Pagan Idols And Worshiped Them (v. 3-7)

King Manasseh built altars to Baal and made images of Asherah and worshipped them. He worshipped the stars, making altars to them in the temple. He also made a sort of totem pole to Asherah, with sexual connotations, and placed it in the Temple. This was an abomination to God. He consulted with mediums and even sacrificed his own baby sons in fire. So, this king was a pagan astrologist with occult practices who sought omens, was given to divinations, consulted fortune-tellers and enchanters.

B. The Good News About King Manasseh
Well into his reign, King Manasseh was taken captive to

Babylon. In a dark cold prison cell, this evil king remembered God and repented. He ended his reign as a repentant king, but his reign brought much damage to the nation.

1. He Prayed To God, Greatly Humbled (v. 12)
2. Arranged And Protected The City (v. 14)
3. He Removed The Gods And Repaired The Altar (v. 15-16)

II. King Amon: A Bad King (2 Chronicles 33:21-25)

The leader who both started badly and ended badly was King Amon. The Bible dedicates only five verses to this king. He reigned in Jerusalem for two years. It's necessary to review them so that we don't fall into the same mistakes. The Bible clarifies that Amon increased the sins that his father King Manasseh had committed at the beginning of his reign (v. 23). He didn't follow the example of his father after he had humbled himself before God and abandoned sin. Amon had a sad end; he was murdered at court (v. 24). King Amon started badly and ended badly. This teaches us that if we live badly and don't change, we'll not even be remembered; or if we are remembered, it will be as a bad example.

III. King Josiah A Truly Good King (2 Chronicles 34 -35:27)

“He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and followed the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left”. Then, when he died we read: *“Jeremiah composed laments for Josiah, and to this day all the male and female singers commemorate Josiah in the laments.”* (2 Chronicles 35:25) Let’s see what he achieved in his life.

A. He Cleansed The Land Of All Idolatry (2 Chronicles 34:3-7)

Josiah began to seek God as King David had done in his time. He removed all the heathen high places and images to Asherah. He demolished all the altars to the Baals. He smashed the sun images. He tore out and pulverized all idols to dust. He burned the bones of the idolatrous priests. In this way, he not only cleansed Judah, but also other tribe lands such as Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, and Naphtali. All this indicates that Josiah did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. God is jealous and will bless all who worship Him alone.

B. He Repaired The House Of The Lord (2 Chronicles 34:8-17)

Josiah made a great contribution in repairing the Temple. Carpenters and stonemasons and many other volunteers worked hard until the work was finished. This must have pleased God and the people. We must make our talents and gifts available so that the Church of our good God may be admired and honored as it should be.

C. He Ruled And Made Sure That Everyone Obeyed The Word Of God (2 Chronicles 34:18-33)

King Josiah was shocked by the reading of the book of the law that Hilkiah found (vs. 18-27). As he listened to

the written Word of God, Josiah was deeply moved in his heart. King Josiah not only heard and was moved and obeyed the Word of God, but he made decrees that all his people should obey the Word of God (v. 33). That’s the position of a leader who does what’s right before God. While he was king, he did his best to keep the people close to God, helping them not to fall back into idolatry.

D. He Celebrated The Passover (2 Chronicles 35:1-19)

Apparently, for a long time they had stopped celebrating this annual feast. King Josiah made sure that all participated with all the pertinent details. It was a true time of celebrating the liberating God and the God who kept promises. The king exhorted, instructed and encouraged the priests and the Levites to fulfill their office well:

- i). He reminded them of the ministry for which they had been designated by the law of Moses (v. 6), David and Solomon (v. 4).
- ii). He ordered the Ark of the Covenant to be put in its place (v. 3).
- iii). He commissioned the Levites to serve the Lord God and his people (v. 3);
- iv). He also charged them to be holy and train their family members (v. 6).
- v). He encouraged the Levites in the service of the Lord’s Temple (v. 2).

The priests and the Levites faithfully fulfilled their ministry (v. 10), and also honored God as they also participated in the Passover (v. 14).

We should want to be remembered as men and women who start well and end well. King Manasseh teaches us that God is

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What lessons can be learned from King Manasseh?
- What happened when King Josiah read the book of the law?
- In what ways did he please God?

CONCLUSION

full of grace and will forgive those who humbly seek Him even if they’ve been really bad. King Amon was bad, but his son King Josiah was one of the best kings who brought the people back to God. From an early age, he decided to always do what was right before God.

Lesson 39:

ALWAYS DO WHAT'S RIGHT

Lesson Aim: To learn that God is gracious and forgiving but wants us to always do what is right.

Local Proverb: Where you will sit when you are old shows where you stood in youth.

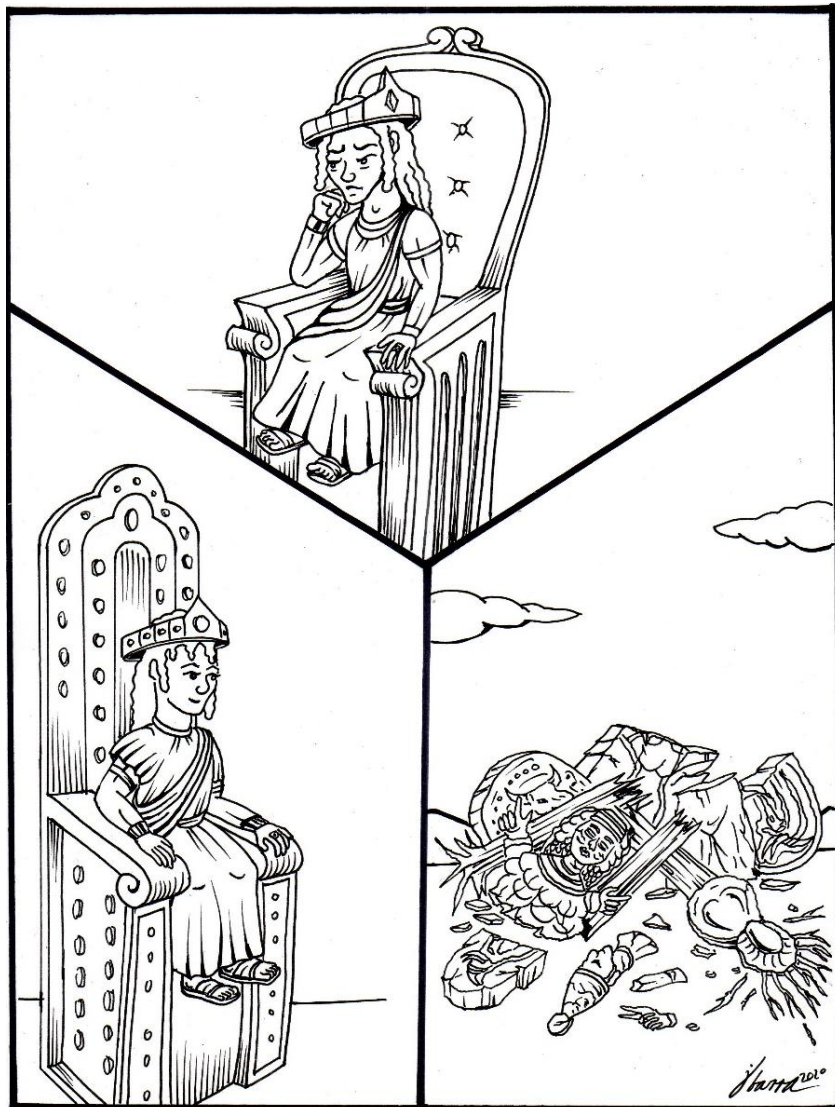
Passage to Study: 2 Chronicles 33 - 34

Memory Verse: "He did what the Lord said was right just as his ancestor David had done. Josiah did not stop doing what was right." 2 Chronicles 34:2

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. How is God honored or not honored in this story?
3. If you were in this story, what would you do differently and why?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to this week?

Story Slogan: Following God's leading assures us of a good ending.



| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Lesson 40 | FAITH AND COMMITMENT |
| | Scripture: Daniel 1:1-7 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To recognize and apply faith and commitment in our lives daily. |

| Memory Verse |
|---|
| “To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.” Daniel 1:17 |

INTRODUCTION

Daniel is the only book in the Old Testament that’s considered to be part of Jewish apocalyptic literature. This literary genre appeared at times of perceived extreme crisis. It’s interesting to note that Christians place the book of Daniel next to the major prophets. Probably, this is because Daniel was a ruler that God used as a prophet, although his main occupation wasn’t that of a prophet.

In the passage we’re studying today, we see that even though the Jewish people were punished for their constant disobedience to God, and a large number of inhabitants of Jerusalem were taken captive to Babylon, God didn’t abandon them. Daniel and the young people in this story are an example of this. Here is the beginning of a fascinating story of faith and commitment. Daniel and his three friends were selected for higher tasks because of their fidelity to God and the principles in which they had been trained in Israel.

L What Was Happening At The Time Daniel And His Friends Lived? (Dan.1:1-4)

Babylon was located in southern Mesopotamia (in what’s now Iraq), on the east bank of the Euphrates River. This city was the rich and powerful capital of a civilization that contributed to the creation of astronomy, the development of medicine, established the science of language, prepared the first legal codes, and taught the Greeks the rudiments of mathematics, physics and philosophy. Likewise, Mesopotamia passed these advances on to the Jews, who in turn passed them on to the Arabs. Examples of this are knowledge of science and architecture.

Those years were very difficult times for the kingdom of Judah. They were passed from one conqueror to another, and although the prophets who served God in those times warned the governors about the consequences of disobeying God, those responsible for the people didn’t pay attention. During the reign of Jehoiakim, God’s prophet Jeremiah exhorted the king (Jeremiah 25:1-11). When Jehoiakim had reigned for three years, in 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians in the famous battle of Carchemish (Jeremiah 46:2), and conquered much of the Near East, which included the kingdom of Judah.

When Judah was conquered, a large number of people

were taken captive to Babylon. In that group were Daniel and his friends. They remained captives throughout the government of Nebuchadnezzar, and the first three years of the reign of Cyrus, the Persian. Babylon was conquered by the Persians in 539 BC.

L What Did People Believe In That Part Of The World? (Daniel 1:5-7)

Each invader brought his own gods and tried to impose the worship of those deities. Because of his military success, Nebuchadnezzar considered his gods to be more powerful than all the others. So, the population of the kingdom of Judah was officially pressured to worship other gods and abandon the Lord. So being faithful to God wasn’t easy in those days, especially when the Jewish rulers were an example of infidelity to the Lord. In the case of the prophets, serving God and representing him before the people wasn’t a simple task. The book of Jeremiah graphically describes the difficulties that Jeremiah suffered.

The Babylonians didn’t participate much in the official celebrations, except for the festivities of the goddess Ishtar, one of the principal divinities of the kingdom, together with Bel, called Merodac by the Hebrews, also identified as Marduk, god of the sun and principal divinity of the Babylonians. Ishtar’s celebrations were colorful, with much joy, and the worship in her temple

included sacred prostitution.

Parallel to the above, popular religion consisted of a multitude of personal and family gods; myths that were developed orally over time. Likewise, people used amulets, fetishes and rituals to solve a variety of situations and illnesses. People actively participated in these religious ceremonies.

The change of names that we find in Daniel 1:7 has a strong religious content, and is verifiable when we observe the meaning of those names. Remember that for the Jews, too, names were important and had a meaning that the bearer of the name took very seriously. In the opinion of some historians, the change of name, for the person in charge of the service of the royal palace, implied that the young people would be under a new spiritual authority from that moment on.

Nebuchadnezzar, according to the biblical account, used a number of sages, fortune-tellers and magicians whom he consulted when he needed it. The Chaldeans, who are mentioned in the book of Daniel, were the scientists of the time and they supposedly had the ability to interpret all kinds of dreams. This knowledge was acquired through study, and the king indicated that the selected captives had to study for three years to be able to serve in the king's palace (Daniel 1:4-5).

■ What Can We Learn From This Story?

We have already noticed the similarities between the international hostile situation of Daniel's time and the environment of the world today. We can also observe similarities between the Babylonian religious context and the current religious plurality. We live in a world convulsed by conflicts. Some places are struggling because they want their independence. In the global economic system, there's a lot of inequality and injustice

where a small proportion of the global population has most of the wealth.

As far as religion is concerned, the western world is full of many options. Even within the Christian world there's a lot of pseudo-Christianity, where followers don't conform to the teaching of the Word, even though they proclaim themselves as Christians.

Having seen this scenario, we recognize that the principles that the story of Daniel and his friends teach us are absolutely relevant. In the first place, Daniel and his friends were clear in their minds that despite the hostility of the situation, God was on His throne and therefore, they affirmed His personal fidelity. Their convictions were not based on the circumstances or expecting God to bless them with material prosperity. The keyword was "submission" to the God to whom they had entrusted their lives. Following God was clearly their first priority.

Daniel and his three friends decided to obey the principles and practices that they had been taught back in Judah. They wanted to obey God even in practical things like diet and maintaining their true identity as Jews, while at the same time being good citizens, honest in all aspects of life.

The decisions made by these young men teach us that in one way or another, we have to take charge of our own life choices. A little later in the account of Daniel (Daniel 3:17-18), his three friends, with courage and humility at the same time, stood firm in the commitment they had taken before God. They were determined to honor God at any price. They made some dangerous and even heroic decisions. We too, day by day, need to make the right choices which will please God.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- Connect the following names with their respective meaning.
 - ◇ Daniel - The Lord is my helper
 - ◇ Hananiah - God is my judge
 - ◇ Mishael - The Lord has had grace
 - ◇ Azariah - Someone who comes from God
- How can we imitate these young people in our daily lives?
- What did you learn from the lessons that you can apply to your life this week?

CONCLUSION

We need to be sure that we have placed our trust in God and apply His teachings daily in our lives.

Lesson 40:

FAITH AND COMMITMENT

Lesson Aim: Apply faith and commitment in our daily lives.

Local Proverb: “A patient man will eat ripe fruit.”

Passage to Study: Daniel 1:1-8

Memory Verse: Daniel 1:7 – “Then Ashpenaz, the chief officer, gave them Babylonian names. Daniel was to be called Belteshazzar; Hananiah was to be Shadrach; Mishael was to be Meshach; and Azariah was to be Abednego.”

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. Why did those things happen?
3. Where do we see obedience or disobedience in this story?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to someone this week?

Story Slogan: “We need to live our faith even if others change our names.”



| | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| Lesson 41 | OBEYING GOD RATHER THAN MEN |
| | Scripture: Daniel 1:8-20 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To be persistent in our Christian convictions in any circumstance, remembering that God honors those who honor him. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.” Exodus 14:14. |

INTRODUCTION

Where we work, or in social situations, at school or university, even in our family circumstances, on certain occasions we may be presented with situations that are in direct opposition to the principles that God gives as a rule of conduct for the life of His sons and daughters. Therefore, it's our duty to be attentive in all those circumstances that could cause us, as believers in Christ, to give a bad testimony to the grace of God, and even to turn away from our faith.

I. Daniel And His Friends Were Not Defiled (Daniel 1:8)

To situate ourselves in the context of the present lesson, let's remember that Daniel was chosen, along with three of his companions (Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah), to reside in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, where he found favor with them in a similar way as Joseph in Egypt.

As members of King Nebuchadnezzar's court, Daniel and his companions had the right to participate in the king's food, as well as the respective drinks and all the delicacies included in the menu (Daniel 1:5). Analyzing the privilege mentioned above, we must confirm that it was the food of the court which the king was providing for them. This situation brought a real dilemma for Daniel and his companions because they were four young Jews who had strong convictions and who had committed their lives to serve the Lord in whatever situation He put them in. Their dilemma was as follows: Accepting the privilege of participating in the king's meal would contaminate their lives, but remaining faithful to their God and rejecting that privilege would bring royal disapproval on them, and that was dangerous.

Keeping this law of the Lord in his mind and in his heart, Daniel demonstrated his conviction of fidelity to the one true God: "...Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine" (Daniel 1:8). We must highlight here Daniel's determination to remain faithful to his convictions in such a way that he had no hesitation in rejecting the privilege offered to him or in disobeying a direct order from King Nebuchadnezzar. In

addition, he made public the decision he had made; since "he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way." (v.8)

Faced with this situation, Daniel and his companions assumed the commitment to go through a consistent test of not contaminating themselves with the king's food, being able to choose their own food (vegetables and water). After ten days, their appearances were as good as those of the other young people who had consumed the same food as the king. Since there was no unfavorable difference, they were allowed to eat the food that seemed best to them (Daniel 1:13).

As sons and daughters of God, we need to be firm in our convictions and completely determined about how we'll behave in specific situations in which our fidelity to God is called into question or compromised. Our Lord Jesus Christ told us in Matt. 5:37 where we read: "All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one."

II. God Rewarded The Integrity Of The Young Men (Daniel 1:14-20)

Daniel and his companions showed their commitment and faithfulness to God, while at the same time they showed their willingness to comply with those who were over them. While it's true that these young Jews decided to reject King Nebuchadnezzar's food, they undertook the commitment that this wouldn't limit their physical abilities or prevent them from fulfilling the tasks assigned

to them. So, they continued to study science, languages, among other matters (Daniel 1:4).

A. Physical Appearance (v. 15)

Their faces had a better appearance and were more robust than the rest of the people who ate the king's meal. This teaches us that even in the first impression we give to other people, God's presence in his children is evident.

B. Knowledge And Intelligence (v. 17)

God was the one who gave knowledge and intelligence to these young men, but not only that, they also received the ability to interpret the dreams and contribute to the science of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. Daniel also received understanding to interpret dreams and visions; confirming in this way what the Word says: *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."* (Proverbs 9:10)

C. The Recognition Of The King (v. 19)

After the time that had been agreed upon to show that abstaining from the king's food wasn't going to affect them in any way, the head of the eunuchs took the four young men before Nebuchadnezzar for his approval. The result was that the king, after speaking with them, determined that among all the other young men in his court there were no others like Daniel and his companions. Nebuchadnezzar came to this conclusion after examining them on various matters in which wisdom and intelligence were required. They proved to be more advanced than the magicians and astrologers that were in the whole kingdom.

III. How did God reward the faithfulness of these young Jews? Similar Challenges Today

The case that I'm going to share next is a real testimony of a Christian, who for reasons beyond his control, was immersed in a situation and a dilemma similar to that faced by Daniel and his three friends in King Nebuchadnezzar's court.

At Steven's workplace (not his real name), an opportunity for job promotion was published so that employees who complied with the requirements established could be promoted to a better job, and therefore, would obtain an increase in their salary. When Steven presented his file with the required documentation, he was informed that he needed proof of a training workshop that he had not attended. But one of his co-workers told him that this wasn't a problem, since this document could be acquired, although he had not gone to the workshop, for a small amount of cash. Faced with this situation, Steven decided that he wouldn't participate in the promotion and would wait until the next occasion in which he would have all his documentation in a legal and honest way, giving testimony that the children of God trust in the Lord's name (Psalm 20:7, 1 Chronicles 16:29).

Let's live in such a way that we don't conform to this world, but that we ourselves are transformed through the renewal of our thinking, so that we may prove the goodwill of God that's pleasing and perfect (Romans 12:2). We must trust in the promise He made to us in His Word: *"...Don't be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today... you need only to be still."* (Exodus 14:13-14)

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What kinds of foods did Daniel and his friends ask for and why?
- What is integrity?
- When we're going through a difficult situation in our lives, what are the ways in which we can witness to God's faithfulness? How can we express our trust in Him?

CONCLUSION

We must always keep in our minds and hearts that our God is the omnipotent God, Creator of heaven and earth, for whom there's no situation that's beyond his control. So, we must trust in Him and in His Word. With transformed minds and hearts, instead of imitating the world and its standards, practices and customs, with grateful hearts, let us show that Jesus Christ reigns in our being.

Lesson 41:

OBEYING GOD RATHER THAN MEN

Lesson Aim: To be persistent in our Christian convictions in all circumstances.

Local Proverb: “Wisdom does not come overnight.”

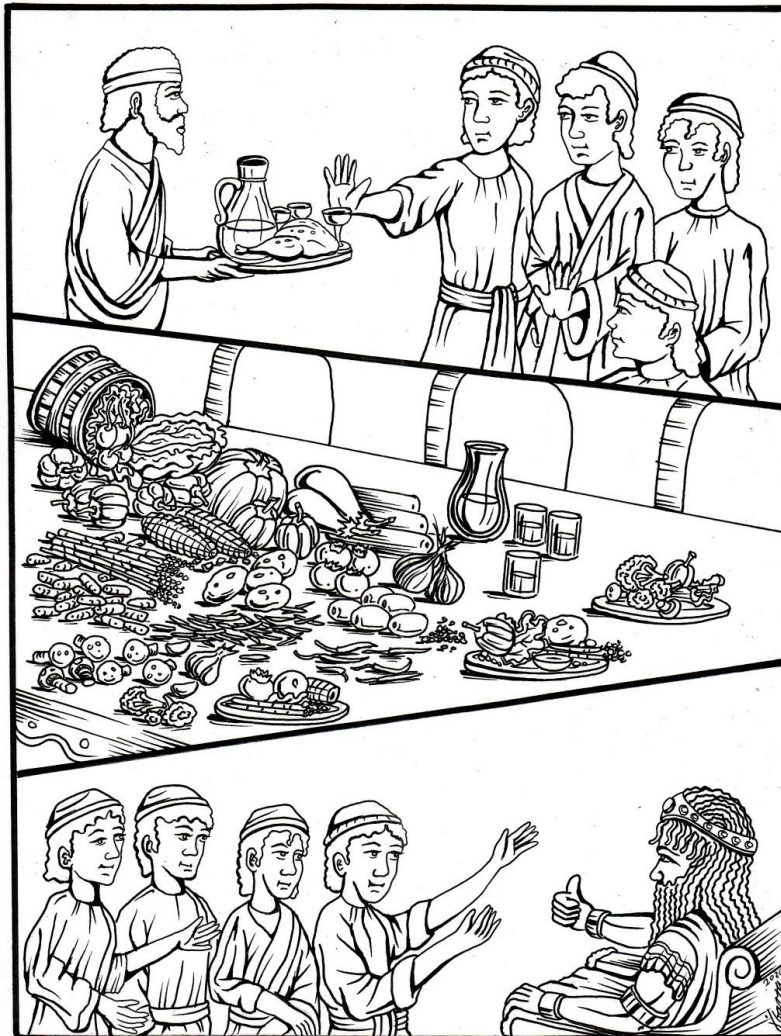
Passage to Study: Daniel 1:8-20

Memory Verse: Daniel 1:8 “Daniel decided not to eat the king’s food and wine because that would be against his Jewish laws and make him unclean. So he asked Ashpenaz for permission not to make himself unclean in this way.”

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. Why did those things happen?
3. Where do we see obedience or disobedience in this story?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to someone this week?

Story Slogan: “God helps us to be persistent in obeying Him in all situations.”



| | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| Lesson 42 | KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM |
| | Scripture: Daniel 2:1-48 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To understand that God always seeks people who know Him in order to reveal His will to the world. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “...there’s a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.” Daniel 2:28 |

INTRODUCTION

Dreaming is part of human life and, perhaps for this reason, we call different things a dream. For example, we say we ‘have a dream’ of something we hope will come true, or we tell about the dream we ‘dreamed last night’, or the dream marriage partner or dream job, etc. But ‘having a dream’ and ‘dreaming’ aren’t quite the same. We all have ‘dreams’. In this story of dreams and reality, of life and death, of present liberation and future consummation, we need to distinguish two key aspects in the dream shown by God to King Nebuchadnezzar: Interpretation and revelation. We strive to interpret the dreams, but this is a unique attribute of God. God reveals His purposes to us. God used Daniel as His agent to interpret the king’s dream.

I. Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream (Daniel 2:1-13)

A. He Was A Superstitious King (vs. 1-4)

Nebuchadnezzar was, like every political leader of his time, enormously superstitious. The importance that mythology occupied in each one of the empires mentioned in the Bible is well known; “*So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed.*” (v. 2) They had books in which the meaning of dreams was defined, and when they dreamed of something such as bread, or the moon, or some animal, they would consult the book and supposedly find the meaning. This is equivalent to what many people do today when they choose a lottery number after having dreamed of something specific. Other people even consult tarot cards or the horoscope. But we must ask ourselves, “Does doing this please God?”

B. He Was An Astute King (vs. 5-11)

Nebuchadnezzar was superstitious, but he was also cunning. It’s probable that some time earlier, some of his magicians may have pretended to deceive him with false interpretations. Maybe that’s why he decided that this time it wouldn’t be like that. Therefore, he asked them not only for an interpretation, but also to remind him of the dream

he’d had. This was very difficult since the only way to interpret his dream was to know its content, and the king appeared to have forgotten it.

C. He Was A Relentless King (vs. 12-13)

Nebuchadnezzar, due to suspicions that his wise men were trying to deceive him, became very angry and decided to end their lives. This dictator was characterized by his mood swings and his violent temper (chapters 3, 4 and 6 show this aspect of Nebuchadnezzar’s personality). However, this terrible decision shows at the same time that his determination to find out the content of his dream, which he considered extremely important, was firm.

II. Daniel Reveals The Dream (Dan. 2:14-23)

A. God Reveals His Purposes To Those Who Are Attentive (vs. 15, 19)

God had given Daniel the ability to interpret dreams. He had been chosen among the best Jewish youths in Jerusalem to be deported to Babylon. Daniel and his friends had been chosen because they were: “*without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king’s palace.*” (Daniel 1:4) But Daniel made a key decision from the beginning of his entry into the absolutely pagan environment of Babylon. This young Jew “*...resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine...*” (Daniel 1:8)

B. God Reveals His Purposes To Those Who Are Brave (v. 16)

Daniel needed to be very courageous after asking the captain of Nebuchadnezzar's guard (v. 15) to take him to the king who had resolutely ordered them to kill all the wise men and astrologers of his kingdom (including Daniel and his friends). The Bible tells us that an edict had already been published (v. 13) and, like other stories we know, the publication of an edict implied that it couldn't be easily annulled (cf. Esther 3:14-15, 8:13, 9:1, 13, Daniel 6:8-9, 15, etc.). Thus, compliance with that edict could only be avoided with the publication of another one annulling it (Esther 8:13-9:1). As in the cases of David, Joshua and other characters, courage and strength come from knowing the one true God.

C. God Reveals His Purposes To Those Who Humble Themselves Before Him (vs. 17-18)

Daniel was also humble enough to go home, share the urgent need with his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. We need to ask ourselves if our faith is real and solid. We'll find answers when we pray together with others in unity of purpose. So, these young people prayed and fasted like Esther did. The disciples in the upper room prayed unanimously before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14, 2:4). When we seek God together, He is with us and can bless us and answer our requests. In addition, Daniel and his companions prayed to a God "...who made the world ...doesn't live in temples built by human hands." (Acts 17:24), to the "God of heaven". And the striking thing in Daniel's intercession request to his friends was that this wasn't to ask for strength, courage or skill; but to ask for "the mercies of the God of heaven"

(v. 18). This points out that Daniel knew very well on what basis the God in whom they waited would act.

III. Understanding God's Will (Dan. 2:24-49)

A. Set Aside Everything That Distracts Us

We need to know in which direction to look. When Daniel understood the magnitude of the challenge, he knew in which direction to look. When we want to understand what God's will is, we must like Daniel look to the "God of heaven" (v. 18). In order to listen to God, we need, like Daniel, to differentiate between the wisdom of the world (the wise men of Babylon in the time of Daniel, or the Greeks in the time of 1 Cor. 1:18-29) and the wisdom from above (James 3:17), which is from God (Dan. 2:27-28). Only the God of the Bible is the source of "power and wisdom" (Dan. 2:20). Nothing should distract us.

B. Understand That History Moves Toward The Consummation Of The Kingdom Of God

Nebuchadnezzar, the emperor in power at that time, called here "king of kings" (v. 37), would be followed by other kingdoms (vs. 38-42), which in their turn would also be destroyed, etc. God will bring about His Kingdom. Let's not doubt that He will do it. Therefore, Daniel said the following: "... The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy." (v. 45) The day announced by Isaiah will come (Isaiah 9:6-7, see also Daniel 2:44). Jesus encourages us to seek above anything else God's kingdom (Matt. 6:33). This Kingdom will encompass everything and the will of God will be manifested over everything created.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- Looking at Daniel 2:1-4 do you think this is seen today as well? In what ways?
- What gifts has God given you? Are you using them carefully?
- If one of Daniel's characteristics was that he was attentive to the voice of God, what prevents us from being attentive today?

CONCLUSION

Many people have all sorts of dreams. God used Daniel to reveal the true meaning of the King's dream. Although His thoughts and ways are much higher than ours, God chooses His children to cooperate with Him in the task of reminding the world of the transient and ephemeral nature of their kingdoms, in contrast to the permanent and lasting kingdom of God.

Lesson 42:

KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM

Lesson Aim: To understand that God explains secret things for His glory.

Local Proverb: "If you close your eyes to facts, you will learn through accidents"

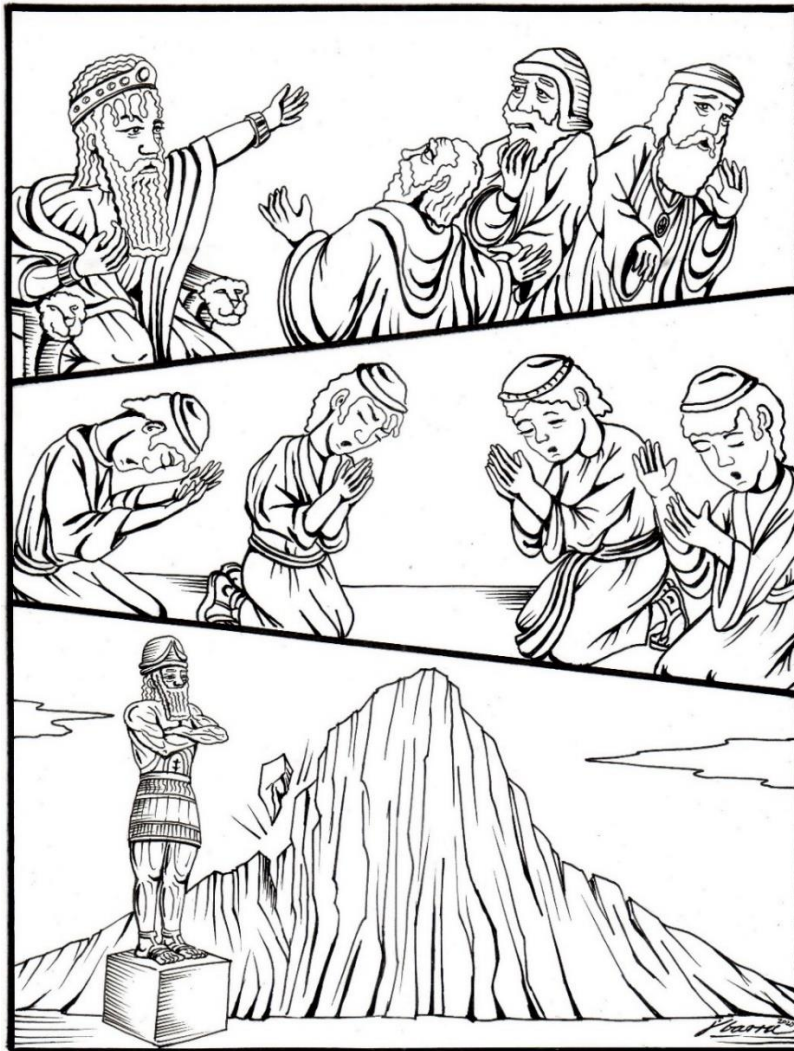
Passage to Study: Daniel 2:1-48

Memory Verse: Daniel 2:28 "...but there is a God in heaven who explains secret things. God has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen at a later time. This is your dream."

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. Why did those things happen?
3. Where do we see obedience or disobedience in this story?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to someone this week?

Story Slogan: "All gifts we receive from God are to be used for His glory."



| | |
|-----------|---------------------------------|
| Lesson | THE VALUE OF LOYALTY |
| 43 | Scripture: Daniel 3:1-30 |

| Objective |
|--|
| To be motivated to be loyal and faithful to God in the midst of false worldly adoration and to always give a true testimony of the power of God. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “Then Nebuchadnezzar said, - Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him...” Daniel 3:28 |

INTRODUCTION

The story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego is also a great example of the power of the Word of God in the lives of those who accept it. Because of their loyalty to their Creator, even King Nebuchadnezzar glorified God, and many witnessed God’s marvelous power. Now, let’s let Daniel 3 reveal to us what God wants to teach us in this lesson.

I. Worship Demanded By King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3:1-7)

From the beginning, when the people of Israel were formed, God demanded His people to be faithful to Him, and that meant not worshipping other gods (Ex. 20:2-5). However, that wasn’t exactly what the Israelites did; rather they did the opposite. For that reason, they were defeated and taken captive to Babylon. At that time, and far from their land, the pressure of idolatry was even heavier. Nebuchadnezzar represents the earthly powers of the past and the present, like the Pharaoh of Egypt or Herod was in the New Testament. However, all of them, as well as those who have risen up arrogant and defiant in every century until today, will be defeated by the supernatural power of God (Exodus 15:19, Acts 12:21-23).

Likewise, it could also be said that Nebuchadnezzar is the typical monarch who used religion for his convenience. After receiving the meaning of his dream, he was convinced of the power of God, but when the fear had passed, he again showed his pride. (Dan. 2:47). Nebuchadnezzar’s attitude wasn’t a sign of humility, but of convenience, because in Daniel 3, we observe this king, who continued with his arrogance, ordering idolatrous worship.

For the dedication of the statue (Daniel 3:2-3), this Babylonian king demanded that all the people who occupied political offices throughout his kingdom meet, among whom were the new officials: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, since Daniel had interceded for them to be in charge of the affairs of the province of Babylon (Dan. 2:49). At the sound of the imperial orchestra, all the people had to

prostrate themselves and worship the golden statue (Dan. 3:4-5).

II. A Firm Attitude In The Midst Of Trials (Daniel 3:8-20)

Maliciously, some Chaldeans realized that Daniel’s three friends were not following the king’s order. Therefore, they denounced that denial and ‘lack of respect’ to Nebuchadnezzar’s statue (vs. 8,12). In this passage, two specific lessons can be detected: In the first place (Dan. 3:12), we see the blackmail to which Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were subjected. These Chaldeans believed that because the young Jews worked for the government, they would do everything the king ordered. Currently, we live in the midst of a world that demands that we live according to its standards and rules. However, it’s up to us to know how to detect what the devil proposes and what God wants of His children. The material blackmail has made many Christians renounce their faith. However, we must remember that although work and business are important, they aren’t more essential than obeying, being faithful and loyal to God.

The devil knows that work is a necessity, and he uses it as a means to blackmail us. So, the following warning is relevant: Beware of bowing to the current statues! Remember that we’re going through these trials, and our faith must come out victorious, trusting fully in the promises of the Lord. Remember that service and worship should only be for our God; then He will provide what we lack (Matt. 6:25-33).

In the second place, Daniel’s three friends teach us not to conform to the social environment in which we live. Some believers, living with the values and priorities of

this world, little by little enter an atmosphere of conformism and religiosity. Maybe at the beginning they said 'no'. but then they become familiar with what this society offers until they tolerate it and see it as normal. This process occurs with the 'idols' of the world, such as music, fashion, hobbies, etc. Compliance makes us slowly flexible, and not radical against these things. Such tolerance can imminently lead us to adopt the worldly lifestyle.

Compliance is potentially subtle; it starts in our mind, and then it goes to our actions. For this reason, the apostle Paul recommended that we consecrate all our life, without conforming ourselves to this world. As disciples of Christ, we must let the Holy Spirit transform our minds to live according to God's will (Rom. 12:1-2). This can only be achieved by being loyal to the Lord by keeping and obeying His Word. Daniel's friends didn't conform to the times or the social context in which they lived. Their constant prayer led them to stand firm in the face of the trial, knowing what to do, no matter what might happen to their lives (Dan. 3:16-18).

III. God's Faithfulness And Exaltation (Daniel 3:21-30)

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were faced with Nebuchadnezzar's harsh punishment. There was no escape. Because of their faithfulness to God, the lives of these men were in danger in the furnace of fire heated seven more times than usual (Dan. 3:19), so much so that the men in charge of throwing them into the fire died (v. 22). So, our Jewish heroes ended up tied up and thrown into the hot oven (v. 23).

However, something totally unexpected and surprising happened before the eyes of the king himself. Full of fear he asked, "*Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw*

into the fire?" (v. 24) Once his question was confirmed, and still with horror, he said: "*Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.*" (v. 25) What Nebuchadnezzar was seeing was the power of God to guard and protect His people.

The Bible is full of miracles that honor the power, majesty and sovereignty of God. This story is one of them. God is faithful to His promises, and their fulfillment is for His glory. Even when the entire nation had departed from the commandments of God, resulting in slavery, there was a remnant who always remained faithful to God. That remnant also suffered from slavery, nevertheless, God guarded them from all evil. This is how God cares for His people, those who truly are His faithful followers, those who make the difference in the midst of a nation that was mostly religious.

God's faithfulness became evident. God looks out for us, and He knows that positive testimonies will bring glory to His name and people will be reached for him. In the New Testament, we find that Paul was willing to die so that the gospel could reach other people. However, there were Christians who persuaded him not to go to Jerusalem because sure death awaited him there (Acts 21:4-14). But the apostle knew in Whom he had believed in (Acts 21:13).

Unfortunately, there are many believers who seek God's faithfulness more for their own benefits than to honor Him as He deserves. So, they ask for God's care for their own wants, but very few are willing to suffer so that others might know Christ. There's a vain and heretical belief that says that children of God shouldn't have to suffer and should have everything they want. However, the Bible is full of examples of followers and disciples of Christ who lived in the midst of want and suffering. Even Jesus himself had no place to lay his head (Matt. 8:20).

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What did Nebuchadnezzar order and what did he ask?
- What was the attitude of the youth according to Daniel 3:12?
- Are my sufferings because of my testimony of Christ, or because of my foolish way of living?

CONCLUSION

In our societies, we also have idols, godless decrees and statutes as evidence of false worship. However, just as those young people remained faithful to God, so we too must be brave and reflect a strong testimony according to biblical principles. We'll have protection and security in God when we make wise and correct decisions based on true biblical values and principles, because God is faithful.

Lesson 43:

THE VALUE OF LOYALTY

Lesson Aim: To be motivated to be loyal and faithful to God.

Local Proverb: "You don't earn loyalty in a day; you earn loyalty day by day."

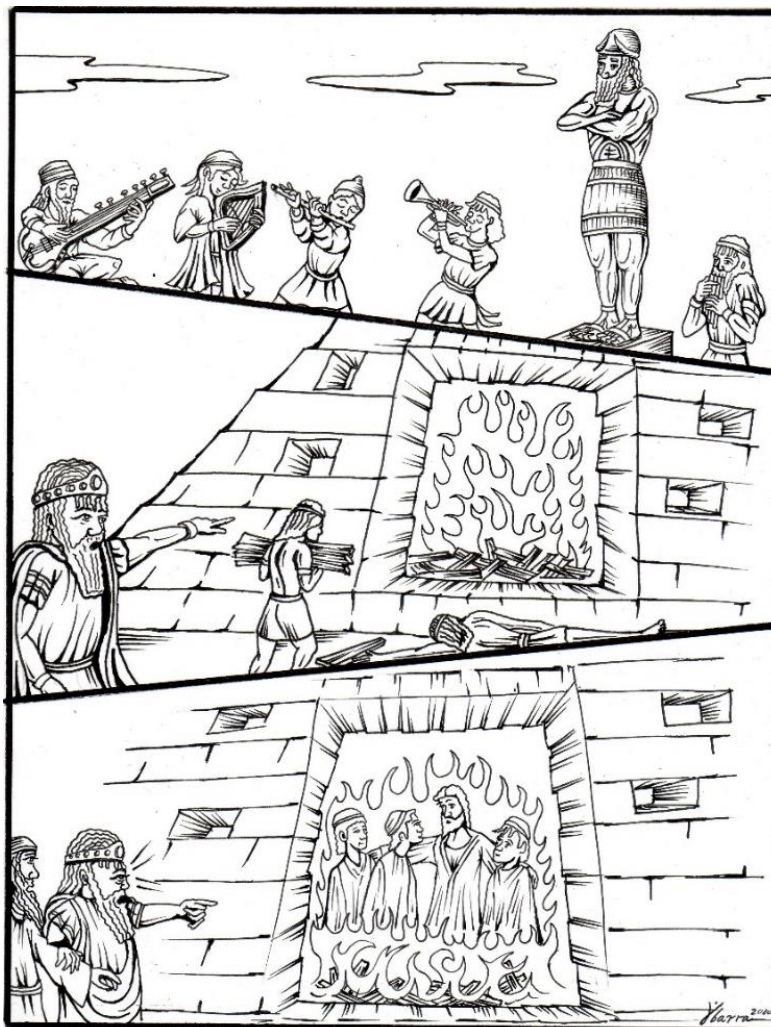
Passage to Study: Daniel 3:1-30

Memory Verse: Daniel 3:28 "Then Nebuchadnezzar praised the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Their God had sent his angel and saved his servants from the fire! These three men trusted their God. They refused to obey the king's command. And they were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god other than their own."

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. Why did those things happen?
3. Where do we see obedience or disobedience in this story?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to someone this week?

Story Slogan: We must be loyal and faithful to God because He is faithful.



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|-----------|------------------------------------|
| Lesson | PRIDE COMES BEFORE THE FALL |
| 44 | Scripture: Daniel 4:1-37 |

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| Objective |
| To reflect on Nebuchadnezzar's sin of pride; how to avoid it, and if necessary, how to deal with it. |

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|---|
| Memory Verse |
| "And those who walk in pride he is able to humble." Daniel 4:37b |

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 4 tells us about King Nebuchadnezzar's pride. Many people (including Christians) have problems with pride, leading to boastfulness, unforgiving attitudes, being unmerciful, hardening of the heart, etc. Pride has led many to fall into countless sins (Proverbs 16:18). We'll develop the theme of pride. In this regard, we can say the following: if it were not for the grace of God, pride would have destroyed us completely. It was and is the grace of God that intervenes to lift us from falling, and helps us to renounce, and seek to be cleansed, of pride.

I. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream And Its Interpretation (Daniel 4:1-27)

A. The Tree, The King And His Kingdom

Daniel declared that God had entrusted this imperial governmental work to Nebuchadnezzar as king. God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to rule all the nations, and especially the people of God who were captive in the capital of his empire. God had entrusted the care of His people to many kings of the Jewish lineage, but most failed. Now, he was giving this task to a foreign king, Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 29:7,14). However, we must bear in mind that the Lord is always in control, so that He can even use enemies to bless His people.

B. The Spirit Of The Holy God Or The Presence Of GOD

In his dream, the king received the following message: *"The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people."* (v 17) Daniel was known for his godliness. He had interpreted the king's dream before. So, the king called him because he perceived that Daniel had *"the spirit of the holy gods"* (Daniel 4:18). Nebuchadnezzar recognized the presence of God with Daniel, but he

attributed this gift to his gods, and not to the one and only true God.

C. Correction Or Divine Punishment

The tree was going to be cut down, divine judgment comes sooner or later. We have a chance to correct our ways before God acts. Daniel faithfully presents this opportunity to the king. Daniel 4:27 mentions: *"Therefore, Your Majesty, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what's right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue."* However, the punishment that God promises to send to the king is a hard one. We see in the history of the people of God that God makes us suffer the consequences of our own sins.

II. The Consequences Of Pride (Dan. 4:28- 33)

A. Haughtiness, Everyone's Problem

Nebuchadnezzar confessed that he had built his kingdom, not for the purpose of glorifying God, but to glorify his own majesty. Hence, he had extolled and enthroned his own ego by saying that he had built all with his strength, when in reality, his reply should have been that it was by the grace of God that he had been able to build and execute. God was and is the one who gives and will give the strength to achieve a common good, an academic achievement, a family, a job or employment,

social or ministerial leadership, etc. Everything that doesn't glorify God, He will correct, for everything belongs to God, and everything that exists is from Him and for Him (Rom. 11:36).

B. Nebuchadnezzar Was Punished And Corrected

1. The Kingdom Was Taken From Him.

Dan.4:31,36 confirms this. King Nebuchadnezzar was removed from his kingdom, but only temporarily. This teaches us that the divine discipline in this life is severe, but temporary. In the case of Nebuchadnezzar, it lasted seven years and after that, the punishment ended.

2. He Lived Like The Beasts Of The Field (vs. 32-33)

Nebuchadnezzar appears to have lost his mind. He began to eat grass from the fields, his body got wet with the dew, his hair grew like eagle feathers, and his nails became like birds' claws. We don't know what exactly happened, but we can conclude that sin transforms people physically and spiritually into animals, into irrational beings who have lost their sanity by unleashing their debauched desires, darkening and cauterizing their reasoning, hardening their hearts.

III. Repentance And Restitution (Dan. 4:34-37)

A. Grace For Repentance

Nebuchadnezzar's sanity was restored (v. 34). He felt better and ceased being a beast and became a man again in the image and likeness of God. But God first began with his spiritual health, when this man recognized him as the only King of heaven and earth.

B. Fully Restored

1. The majesty of his kingdom was returned to him (v. 36). Many times when we fall into sin, we lose some of what we prized. For the king, it was his kingdom, but for us it could be work, a job, society, clients, friends, family, home, etc. Adultery can cause the rupture of the family, even material losses. However, when we repent, God is able to restore a divorced home, a lost job, distant friendships, clients who trust us again, and more.

2. His dignity and greatness were returned to him (v. 36). The fall into sin may also cause the loss of dignity. For example, when a pastor or leader falls, not only does he lose his place, but also his title or dignity, his pastorate. However, when there's a humiliated and repentant heart, God can restore our self-worth and sense of dignity.

3. His leaders sought him (v. 36). Falling into sin also affects any circle of people to which we belong. But there's a call to the people of God to restore the fallen, for when one is healed, all are healed (2 Cor. 2:10-11). Leaders should look out for those who have fallen into sin. God can use them in the process of restoration. People can be restored when there's a heart that has confessed its sin and has asked for forgiveness, not only from God, but also from the aggrieved or affected people.

4. Greater greatness was added to him. Finally, we could say that when God hurts, he heals, when he punishes, He restores. God is fair. However, God isn't only fair, He is also generous, because He often blesses us more than we deserve. This is the glory of his grace. God is good and exceedingly kind.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What did the king dream?
- What are the consequences of pride today?
- What does the restoration of a person in the church involve today?

CONCLUSION

Just like Nebuchadnezzar, many have been tested by pride, but not all were victorious. However, God is good and his mercies are new every morning, and they reach out to the repentant heart that seeks Him.

Lesson 44:

PRIDE COMES BEFORE THE FALL

Lesson Aim: To learn from Nebuchadnezzar's sin of pride.

Local Proverb: "Pride only goes the length of one's spit."

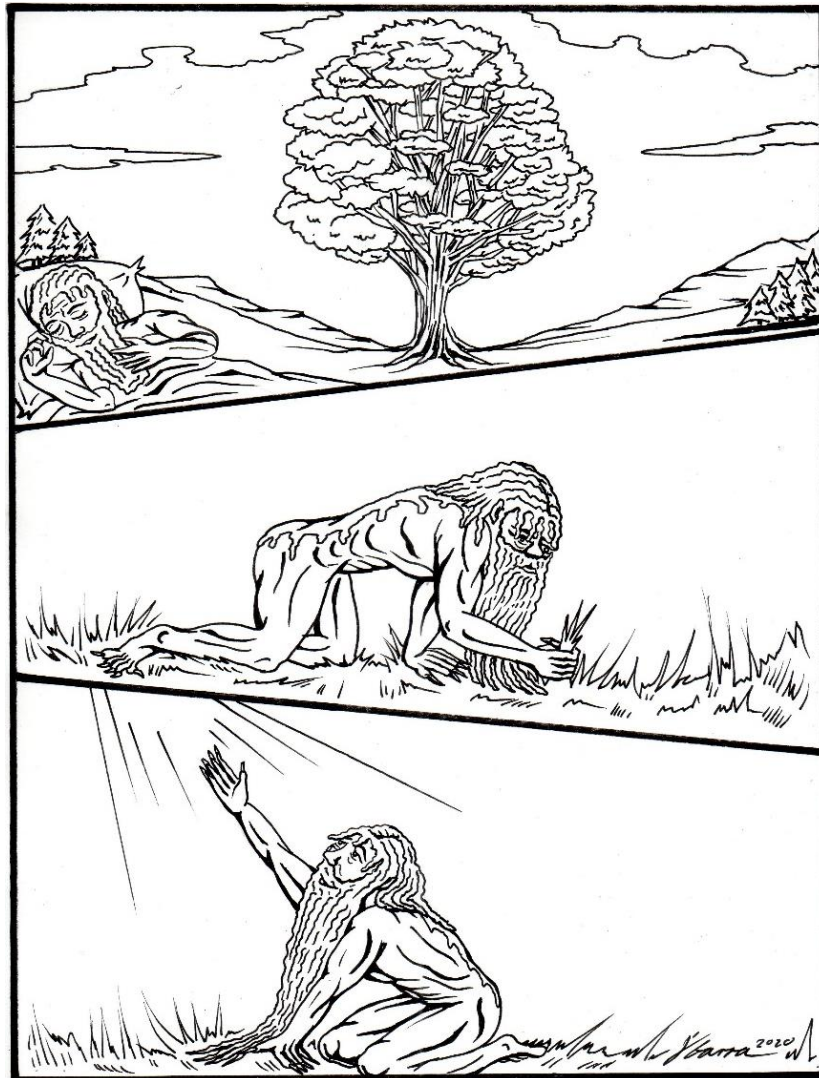
Passage to Study: Daniel 4:1-37

Memory Verse: Daniel 4:37b "Everything God does is right. He is always fair. And he is able to make proud people humble."

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. Why did those things happen?
3. Where do we see obedience or disobedience in this story?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to someone this week?

Story Slogan: "Repentant hearts receive the Lord's mercies and goodness."



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| Lesson 45 | THE WRITING ON THE WALL |
| | Scripture: Daniel 5:1-31 |

| Objective |
|--|
| To understand that sin brings destruction to our lives. We need to remember that we cannot escape from the hands of a sovereign God who has control of everything. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory.” Daniel 5:20 |

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 5 tells us about the failure of the king of Babylon. History tells us that King Belshazzar was the last of Nebuchadnezzar’s dynasty. Afterwards, the Babylonian Empire passed to the Medes and the Persians. The character that stands out in this passage is undoubtedly Daniel as an older man. He had come as a young lad as one of the captive princes of Israel, taken as an exile by Nebuchadnezzar. He was very committed to God, and from his youth he had proposed in his heart to obey the laws of God and be a witness of blessing to all those around him in the palace where he lived.

God is sovereign. He possesses supreme authority, so nothing nor anybody can be above that authority. He places and removes authorities (Dan. 4:25). In the previous lesson, we saw how God revealed His sovereignty to King Nebuchadnezzar, and in this lesson, we’ll see how He also showed it to King Belshazzar.

I. A Great Banquet (Daniel 5:1)

History teaches us that although the text calls Nebuchadnezzar the ‘father’ of king Belshazzar, he was in reality his grandfather. Many years had passed since the invasion and destruction of Jerusalem. This chapter describes a great banquet or party dedicated to the pagan gods of Babylon. The king had invited a thousand of his princes, his wives and his concubines. The party was at its height of noise and celebration. Everyone was drinking wine and praising the pagan gods. There was loud music, dancing, lots of drink, the tables were spread with the most exquisite delicacies. Everyone was getting very drunk, and according to them, having the greatest time and fun. The king was the center of attention and the object of applause and admiration among the top society of the Babylonian kingdom.

II. A Drunken Brawl (Daniel 5:2-3)

In the case of Belshazzar, he used his economic power to unleash his carnal appetites, and in his moral debauchery, he went on to another stage in his personal failure. Due to the foolishness and weakness of Belshazzar, proud Babylon was soon to fall. As usual, the king was willing to pass party time with his young friends. He boasted of his power, and his heart became proud against the God of heaven. But

in the drunkenness and orgy of that terrible night, God was going to open the doors that had been predicted by the prophet Isaiah many years before with these words: *“This is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut.”* (Isaiah 45:1)

Belshazzar, well into his cups, lost his mind. He ordered the sacred Jewish vessels to be brought so that everyone could drink from them and so that they could all worship their pagan gods together. Although Nebuchadnezzar repeatedly and presumptuously challenged the eternal God, he never dared use the utensils of the temple that were known to be sacred. However, his grandson Belshazzar did. The king wanted to prove that nothing was too sacred for his hands. So, the people drank wine and praised the gods of gold, silver and bronze.

III. A Great Blasphemy (Daniel 5:4-31)

Do you know what blasphemy is? Blasphemy is disrespecting God, to make improper use of anything that belongs to God. Thus, Belshazzar was laughing at God by using the cups of the Jerusalem temple to drink with his princes. So, our sovereign God immediately removed him from his kingdom and the Babylonian Empire fell as Daniel had

prophesied. King Belshazzar drank in those sacred vessels to express his hatred against the people of Israel and against Daniel's God.

We observe what sin is doing around us and feel tempted to ask why doesn't God do something to stop these people? But, God has a lot of time; He doesn't hurry to act. He will take care of the situation in the same way that he took care of King Belshazzar. We must never forget that God is just.

A. A Great Judgment (Daniel 5:5-28)

Daniel 5:5 tells us: *"Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote."* God was intervening. He didn't speak through a dream or a vision because this was a man whom God intended to punish. God couldn't bear this evil insult to heaven, so he wrote on the wall of the banquet hall. We believe that the one who wrote this on the wall was the same one who wrote on the sand when they presented that woman who had committed a sin (John 8:1-11).

What he had seen written on the wall had terrified him and he was overwhelmed by fear. Next, the following occurred: *"The king summoned the enchanters, astrologers and diviners. Then he said to these wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom."* (v. 7)

As soon as the hand began to write, *"MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN"* (v. 25), the party, the music, the dancing,

the laughter, the feasting, the praises and the applause to the king ceased. There was a pregnant silence as God transmitted His message. King Belshazzar's knees knocked with terror. The king was disturbed by only one hand. Think about the situation of unbelieving sinners on the day they have to give an account of their sins before the glorious judge, our Lord Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords.

B. A Great Punishment (Daniel 5:29-31)

What was written on the wall said: *"MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN"*. Now in terms of interpretation, we're going to notice a variation in the last word. *Peres* is the singular form of *PARSIN*. Literally, they can be translated as *"counted, weighed, and divided"*. The interpretation of the writing on the wall is: *"MENE: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. TEKEL: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. PERES: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."* (vs. 26-38) King Belshazzar died that same night (v. 30). His death was premature. Sins against God often accelerate the departure to eternity. The kingdom was taken from him; all his glory vanished in a few moments, and he went to eternity without God and without any hope. Let's not be rebellious against God, let's not be proud, because our lives can vanish at the least expected moment. Let's give our lives to the Lord Jesus Christ so that He will forgive us and transform us, and we can look forward to eternal life with Him.

In the story of King Belshazzar, we can clearly see that the wages of sin is death. This king fell into various sins such as pride, drunkenness, and blasphemy, and all this was judged by God, ending in his sudden death.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What events occurred when Belshazzar was under the influence of wine?
- What scene does Daniel describe on the last day of Belshazzar's reign?
- What are our greatest sins?

CONCLUSION

One day we all must go before God to be judged according to our walk here on earth. Is there a hidden sin in our lives? If so, we must repent with all our heart and ask the Lord for forgiveness! But if we feel that every day we're walking with God, let's pray that we'll continue advancing with firm steps on the path of holiness.

Lesson 45:

THE WRITING ON THE WALL

Lesson Aim: To understand that sin brings destruction.

Local Proverb: “Evil enters like a needle and spreads like an oak tree.”

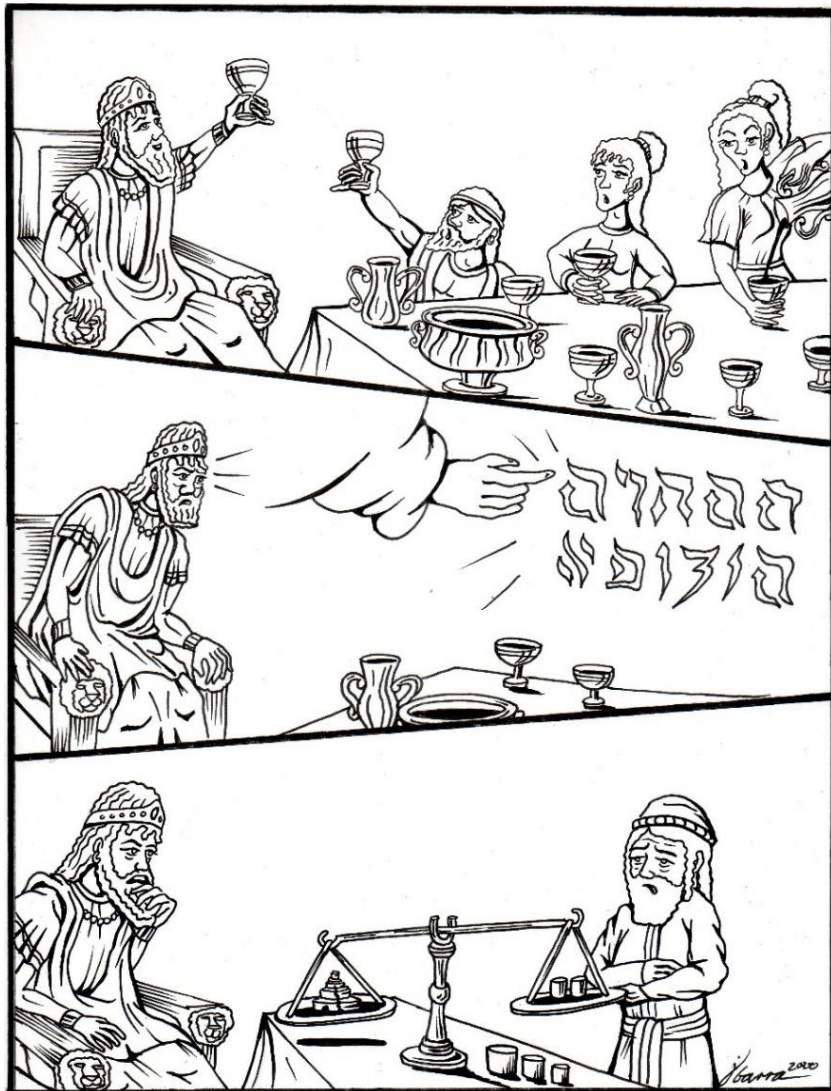
Passage to Study: Daniel 5:1-31

Memory Verse: Daniel 5:20 “But Nebuchadnezzar became too proud and stubborn. So he was taken off his royal throne. His glory was taken away.”

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. Why did those things happen?
3. Where do we see obedience or disobedience in this story?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to someone this week?

Story Slogan: Set aside sin, ask forgiveness before judgment comes.



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|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Lesson 46 | COURAGE IN THE MIST OF TRIALS |
| | Scripture: Daniel 6:1-28 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To learn to trust in the promises of God and determine to not give up in the midst of trials. |

| Memory Verse |
|---|
| “My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight.” Daniel 6:22a |

INTRODUCTION

Throughout his life, Daniel had faced great changes and also suffered various political crises. Various events happened which are recorded in Daniel chapters 1 to 5. In chapter 6, Daniel, now a much older person, is adjusting to the new empire – the Medes and the Persians under their king Cyrus. This new empire was more extensive than the Babylonian empire. It extended from the Persian Gulf in the east, to Macedonia in the West, to the North its limits reached Armenia, and in the South to Egypt to the Euphrates River. This empire wasn't as rich as the Babylonian, although its army was much more powerful. The kingdom of the Medes and Persians lasted 208 years, from 539 until 331 BC. Daniel was well advanced in years, maybe over 80. He was respected since he had gained a privileged place in the various political scenarios of his time. In this class we're going to study the days when he was thrown into the lion's den.

I. When Faith Is Challenged And Put To The Test (Daniel 6:1-13)

A. Daniel's Place On The Political Scene (vs. 1-2)

When the change of government took place, Daniel was still respected as a faithful public servant due to the qualities that God had given him. So, he continued to serve under the reign of Darius, the Median king, and Cyrus, the Persian king. During Darius's reign, the large empire was consolidated under the efficient organization led by satraps and local governments.

We find that King Darius appointed 120 satraps and three administrators (governors) in order to control the system of government (vs. 1-2). The satraps were officials who were accountable to these three administrators or governors, and these three in turn would render direct accounts to the king. And Daniel was one of those three main administrators of government (v. 2). Daniel was one of those three trusted men whom the king had placed as governors. What's amazing is that he wasn't a Persian, but simply a Jew, but whose quality was, without a doubt, integrity.

B. The Integrity Of A Faithful Man (vs. 3-4)

Daniel 6:3 says: "Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him

over the whole kingdom." (v. 3) The reason was very clear; this Jewish man, government administrator, was loyal and scrupulously honest. How important is the impressive testimony of a man of integrity in spheres or positions of authority! So, it's not surprising that they tried to do everything to get him out of power and accuse him to the king. The Bible says that the other governors and the satraps tried to accuse him on several occasions about bad administrative management or some managerial fault in his work, but they found no fault (v. 4).

C. A Malicious Trap (vs. 5-9)

Faced with the impossibility of accusing Daniel, the officials resolved that the only way to discredit him would be through his faith, related to the "law of his God." They got together and planned his downfall (v. 5). Then, they suggested to the king that he sign a decree stating that for a period of thirty days, no one could pray to any god or human being except to the king (v. 7). The plan was to catch Daniel worshipping God.

Devotion To God In The Midst Of A Hostile Scenario (vs. 10-13)

When Daniel learned of the decree, far from being frightened or afraid, he went to pray to God in his chamber (vs. 10-11). He didn't suppress his devotion to God. Another person in his place probably would have

been very careful and opted to hide or simply abide by the edict by not doing his three devotions a day. A man of integrity shows it not only when he is at work, but throughout the day. Daniel showed his devotion to God, not caring that the enemies had set a trap for him. This reminds us of what the apostles replied to the council *"We must obey God rather than human beings!"* (Acts 5:29). This attitude isn't simple civil disobedience, but a firm determination of obedience and devotion to the Lord.

II. God Protects And Accompanies His Faithful (Daniel 6:14-24)

A. A King Who Couldn't Free A Subject (vs.14-20)

Daniel was accused by his enemies of not respecting the king's edict. It was evident that the trap they had engineered was successful (Daniel 6:13). However, King Darius felt very bad about having yielded to this request (v. 14). Added to this, it was by law that the royal authority couldn't be contradicted or dismissed (v. 15). If the laws of the land could be easily broken, political control would be lost.

Daniel was thrown into the den of the lions. Darius, feeling very sad, mentioned his only hope for his beloved official Daniel: *"May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"* (v. 16).

It's clear that this human king couldn't deliver Daniel, although he wanted to. But God, the King of kings, could; for Him, nothing is impossible (Luke 1:27), and he doesn't let his servants who trust in his name be ashamed (Psalm 22:5).

B. The Presence Of God For Those Who Trust In Him (vs. 21-23)

What a great surprise! This caused much joy in the king, but above all, what a great testimony to a pagan king! God had delivered his faithful servant! Daniel didn't have any injuries when he was taken out of the lion's den (v. 23). The biblical explanation of this event is simple: *"... because he had trusted in his God."* (v. 23) God was present in this distressing experience. Psalm 138:7 says: *"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life. You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes; with your right hand you save me."*

III. The Exaltation Of God Is A Consequence Of The Courage Shown (Daniel 6:25-28)

A. The Powerful Recognize The Living God (vs. 25-27)

The final result of this lived testimony resulted in another edict of the king to the entire population of his empire in which he commanded everyone to honor and tremble before the presence of the God of Daniel (Daniel 6:22-27). Darius added that the Lord was a *"living"* God; that is, real. He also acknowledged that his government never ends (v. 26). In this way, we can see that the king understood that the offense wasn't really against Daniel; but against the true God.

B. Devotion Brings Prosperity (v. 28)

Today, many Christians have their faith put to the test. But, our relationship with God must never be compromised. People of integrity will be successful. Let's remember what the Word says: *"So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian."* (v. 28) God honors those who show integrity in all circumstances and show courage at all times.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What actions showed Daniel's integrity?
- Think of an example in which your devotion to God was put to the test?
- What can you do so that prosperity doesn't alienate you from God's purpose for your life?

CONCLUSION

God is always present in the midst of the trials that His children go through, and He will be glorified by the integrity and determination of His children who are faithful to Him.

Lesson 46

COURAGE IN THE MIDST OF TRIALS

Lesson Aim: To learn that the promises of God are our source of courage in the midst of trials

Local Proverb: “However long the night, the dawn will break.”

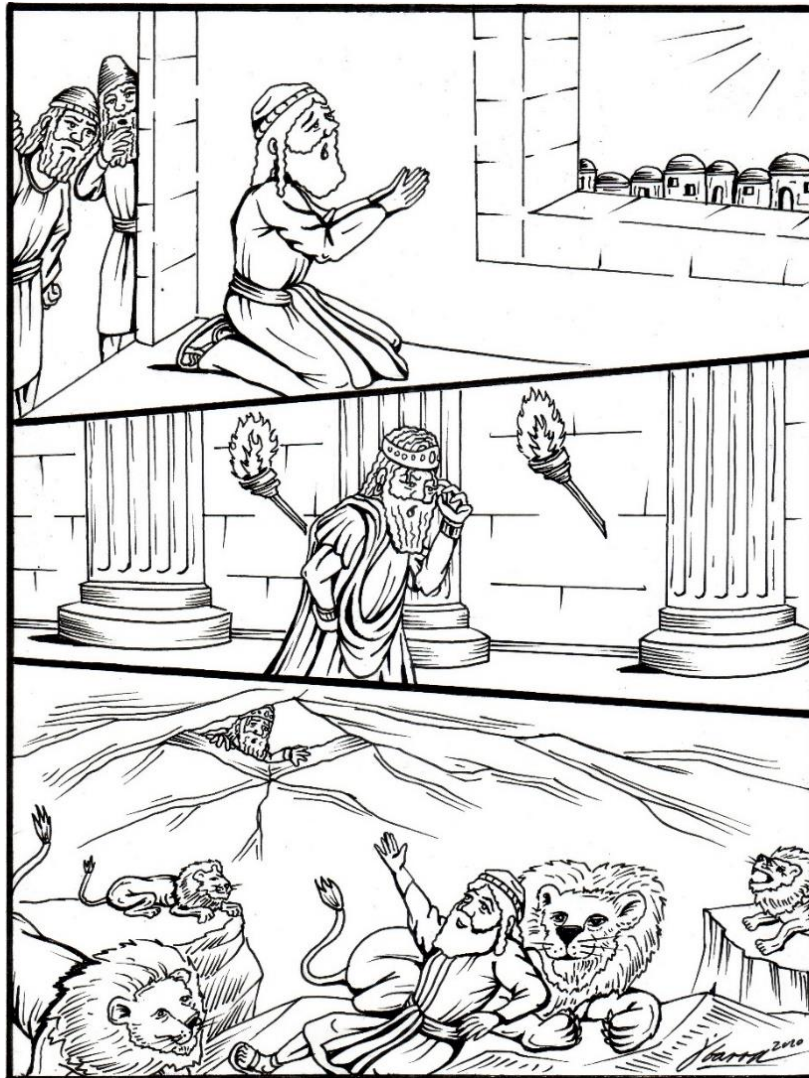
Passage to Study: Daniel 6:1-28

Memory Verse: Daniel 6:22a “My God sent his angel to close the lions’ mouths. They have not hurt me, because my God knows I am innocent.”

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. Why did those things happen?
3. Where do we see obedience or disobedience in this story?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to someone this week?

Story Slogan: God's promises are my courage.



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|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| Lesson | THE KINGDOMS AND GOD’S KINGDOM |
| 47 | Scripture: Daniel 7:1-28 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To motivate resilience in the Christian life, although sometimes we don’t see all the desired results, we should not get discouraged, but keep moving forward in the plans that God has for us. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “But the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever—yes, for ever and ever.” Daniel 7:18 |

INTRODUCTION

The book of Daniel belongs to the group of eschatological books which present a large number of images, symbols and visions. It uses prophetic language and is full of typologies. As a result, it’s a bit difficult to reach one clear interpretation. When presenting this lesson, we must keep in mind that we don’t have the ultimate answers or the exclusive interpretation of the text. In the text of the vision of the four beasts, most of the commentators have coincided in very similar interpretations.

I. The Vision Of The Four Beasts (Daniel 7:1-14)

A. Historical And Interpretative Vision

Before we can interpret Daniel’s text, we must analyze the vision. Daniel had a dream and saw visions during the first reign of Belshazzar in Babylon (v. 1). This vision isn’t in chronological order following the lion’s den, which occurred in the time of the Persian Empire. The vision of chapter 7 predates the Belshazzar drunken party by approximately 16 or 17 years. This celebration took place in the year 17 of his reign. So, the arrangement of the material in Daniel’s book is theological and not chronological.

The first vision of Daniel (Daniel 7:2-14) contains several symbolic elements:

- i). The sea, typifying the nations of the Gentile world (Isa. 17:12, Rev. 17:15). It can also refer to the pristine abyss, which was defined as the abode of sea monsters that were hostile to God (Job 26:12, Psalm 74:13-14);
- ii). The storm, typifying the world war (Isaiah 17:12);
- iii). Beasts typifying the kingdoms of the world powers.
- iv) The beasts in this chapter represent the same as the metals in the image of Daniel 2. That’s to say: Babylon, Medes-Persia, Greece and Rome;
- v) The Ancient of Days refers to God (Daniel 7:13);
- v). The Son of Man mentioned in Daniel 7:13, representing the figure of Jesus.

- v). Daniel points to Christ in a divine/human and in a messianic sense. One such as “... *a son of man* ...” (v. 13) became the Son of Man, the Savior of the world. In contrast to the domain of the beasts, he is given a universal and eternal kingdom. Undoubtedly, this terminology used in Daniel is referring prophetically to Jesus and the establishment of His Kingdom.

B. The Four Beasts (vs. 4-8)

1. First Beast – Like A Lion (Daniel 7:4)

This first beast is considered to represent the nation of Babylon. This conclusion has been reached, among others, due to the revelation of Daniel 2, where he clearly identified the head of gold as Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. There’s also symbolism in this as Babylon had statues of lions with wings, and also the prophet Jeremiah spoke of Nebuchadnezzar as a lion (Jeremiah 50:17).

2. Second Beast – Like A Bear (Daniel 7:5)

It represents the Medes and Persian Empire, successor of the Babylonians. Historically, it’s recognized in this way. In Palestine, it was very common for the bear to be considered second in ferocity, always after the lion.

3. Third Beast - Like A Leopard (Daniel 7:6)

While Babylon had two wings, this empire had four wings. This was referring to Greece, a powerful nation of antiquity that, under the orders of Alexander the Great

and his armies, managed to defeat the civilized world in short periods of time. Also, it's very possible that "the four leopard heads" are typifying the four divisions of the Greek Empire led by four generals after the death of Alexander.

4. Fourth Beast (Daniel 7:7-8)

Although the three previous beasts showed similarities of animals, this fourth beast was different. It was more powerful. This beast referred to the Roman Empire. Rome was in history the successor of Greece.

II. The Explanation Of The Vision And The Eschatological Explanation (Daniel 7:15-28)

A. Biblical-Historical Interpretation

Daniel 7:17 is key to understanding this passage. The writer tells us clearly that the four beasts represent four kingdoms that will emerge from the earth. This shows us a historical progression; v.18 illuminates us in the eschatological interpretation of this vision. But Daniel wanted to know in detail the meaning of the fourth beast, (Dan. 7:19). The characteristics of the fourth beast (Rome) are found in verses 23 to 25.

B. Eschatological Interpretations Of The Fourth Beast

It's remarkable in the biblical text that starting with Daniel 7:19, the writer shows great interest in the fourth beast, since it was very different. That's why we should consider some interpretations such as the following: History points to Rome. This interpretation considers the beast to be Rome, and the ten horns represent an indefinite number of kings and governments until the return of Christ.

III. Teaching For Today

A. God Shows Visions To His Children (Daniel 7)

All of Daniel's revelations brought consolation to the people of Israel who were suffering and being oppressed. Through these words, God demonstrated to the people of Israel that He remained on their side, just as He was with Daniel and his companions. This was one of the purposes of this vision.

B. God Is In Control Of The Kingdoms Of This World (Daniel 7:10-11)

Although powerful kingdoms like these four have existed in history, and others that we know today, God is in control and they all have to submit to His authority and power. These kingdoms are temporary. One day, they emerge, reach splendor, but then they fall, and end up weakened. All the kingdoms of this world are subject to divine judgment (v. 10). Everything is under the control of the supreme Lord.

C. God Always Gives Victory To His People (Daniel 7:27)

Daniel reflects a principle that appears throughout Scripture, God always gives victory to His people. Even when beasts, nations, demons, etc. rise up against the people of God, He gives victory. We experience daily a God who helps us go from triumph to triumph, but the final victory will be consummated with the second coming of Christ.

D. God Promises A Kingdom Without Equal (Daniel 7:14, 18, 22, 27)

A word very frequently used throughout the passage of Daniel 7 is *'kingdom.'* Although in the first vision these four beasts are shown as four great kingdoms, God reveals the majesty and character of His Kingdom. Prophetically He announces the kingdom of the Messiah, of Christ, where the King is the Son of Man (v. 13). Authority comes from God (the Ancient of Days).

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What has God has taught you today with the study of this lesson.

CONCLUSION

Several kingdoms have been typified as beasts and each of them with peculiar characteristics of carnality and ferocity, descriptive of humans without God. But He has declared in His Word the greatness of His Kingdom, which is incomparable. This is an unparalleled Kingdom that brings hope to all of us.

Lesson 47:

THE KINGDOMS AND GOD'S KINGDOM

Lesson Aim: To understand that the kingdoms of this world are temporary but the Kingdom of God is eternal.

Local Proverb: An army of sheep led by a lion can defeat an army of lions led by a sheep.

Passage to Study: Daniel 7:1-28

Memory Verse: Daniel 7:18 “But the people who belong to the Highest God will receive the power to rule forever. They will have it from now to forever.”

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. Why did those things happen?
3. Where do we see obedience or disobedience in this story?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to someone this week?

Story Slogan: Only God’s Kingdom is eternal.



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| Lesson | DANIEL'S VISION OF A RAM AND A GOAT |
| 48 | Scripture: Daniel 8:1-27 |

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|---|
| Objective |
| To reflect on the inevitable manifestations of evil and the faithful sovereignty of God in favor of His people. |

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|--|
| Memory Verse |
| “He said: ‘I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end.’” Daniel 8:19 |

INTRODUCTION

We need to understand some Jewish history of the intertestamental period. Antiochus IV (175-164 BC) was the Greek ruler based in Syria. He gave himself the surname ‘Epiphanes’ which means ‘the visible god.’ He was violently bitter against the Jews, and was determined to exterminate them and their religion. He devastated Jerusalem in 168 BC, defiled the Temple, offered a pig on its altar, erected an altar to Jupiter, prohibited Temple worship, forbade circumcision on pain of death, sold thousands of Jewish families into slavery, destroyed all copies of Scripture that could be found, and slaughtered everyone discovered in possession of such copies, and resorted to every conceivable torture to force Jews to renounce their religion.

This chapter refers to this period, although Daniel is living still during the Babylonian period when he saw his vision. Daniel 8:14 promises that the desecrated temple would be recovered. “He said to me, - It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be re- consecrated.” The Jews celebrate the day they were able to re-consecrate the temple in their feast of Hanukah today. The pictures recorded in Daniel’s vision are hard to imagine. The geographical backdrop in this whole vision is the Middle East of those days.

I. The Vision Of The Ram And The Goat (Daniel 8:1-14)

In the third year of Belshazzar’s reign, Daniel had a vision which began with the description of a ram with two horns, followed by a goat that had only one horn. (vs. 1-5). The ram seemed to be very powerful since his territory extended towards the four cardinal points of the earth. He was haughty and attacked other countries without anyone being able to stop him (v. 4). However, it wasn’t long before the strength of this ram was weakened by the appearance of the goat from the west (v. 5). This goat slaughtered the ram with great success, wounding it and destroying its horns. What’s more, he even trampled on it, and there was no one who could defend it! Purpose Of The Emergence Of The Goat

Notice the representation of the little horn, mentioned in Daniel 8:9. This horn that suddenly blossomed from one of the four horns presented in this same chapter is the same figure as the ‘*little horn*’ of Daniel 7. The purpose of its appearance is to have supremacy over the territories of the earth, including the ‘*glorious land*’ (Daniel 8:9), probably

Palestine. Although this chapter is referring to an earthly king, he was motivated by the evil one who intruded into our history. We know that God has gloriously redeemed us from the clutches of his power. We worship Him for all that He has done for us, giving us victory over the enemy, Satan.

A. The Purpose Of The Angelic Presence

Daniel was overcome by the presence of the angel, and needed to be revived and comforted by the angel (v. 18). After this vision, Daniel was exhausted! He lay ill for several days and was astonished and appalled at what he saw.

II. Gabriel Explains The Vision To Daniel (Daniel 8:15-27)

A. Meaning Of The Ram And The Goat

The angel Gabriel explained what these animals represented. The ram represented the power of the Medes and Persians who ruled from 539 to 331 B.C. (v.20) and the goat, represented Greece (v. 21).

Here we’re seeing two of the empires which dominated the world at this time. The Medes and the Persians under Cyrus conquered and took possession of the Babylonian

empire. But in due course, Alexander the great, a powerful Greek warrior, conquered the Medes and the Persians. When he died at thirty-three years of age, his four generals divided the kingdom among themselves (the four new horns). *“In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a fierce-looking king, a master of intrigue, will arise.”* This refers to one of the Greek rulers who dominated the rest (v. 23). Here the prophecy is alluding to Antiochus IV, who appropriated large geographic areas, subjugated crowds of inhabitants, and even persecuted many of the people of God (vs. 24-25).

B. The Endless Dominion And Power Of The Little Horn

Although verse 14 describes a happy ending, what God was warning the people was that they were going to suffer through the eruption of this horn. For a time, the people of God would be devastated. This vision, for Daniel, would have represented a frightening experience. Daniel was terribly moved by the suffering that was prophesied by the angel and he shuddered and fainted. Bad times were coming, but God was promising them that it would be made right in the end.

How many times has the church, when experiencing trials, not wanted to patiently accept the way of the cross of pain, and suffering! However, the Lord is ready to strengthen our spirit in the midst of desolation, just as the angel Gabriel acted before the unexpected reaction of Daniel, servant of God (Daniel 8:18).

III. Message For Us Today (Daniel 8:1-27)

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What was the ram like and what did it do?
- How did Daniel feel after seeing the vision and receiving the interpretation? Why do you think he felt that way?
- Name some prophecies that have come true?

CONCLUSION

Therefore, we must strengthen ourselves in the joy and future intervention of our Lord Jesus Christ. We faithfully believe that all evil will be overcome. Meanwhile, let us fight with courage and great trust in God. Let's not look at any cardinal point; but rather upward, to the true God, and with great conviction, let us declare as Moses did: *“With God we'll gain the victory, and he will trample down our enemies.”* (Psalm 60:12) Amen.

Some have said that Daniel chapter 8 is a preacher's nightmare. Even noted scholars hesitate to be dogmatic in their interpretation of this chapter. Although the angel Gabriel explains the historical meaning to Daniel, we have to ask ourselves if this passage has some bearing on times beyond these empires that came and went.

Although the passage is talking about those times, there's a relevance for all times. Tyrants have come over and over again. We see this in the period of the Roman persecution, which is the context of the book of Revelation, for instance. The Bible seems to predict some evil power at the end of time. The *“little horn”* seems to change before our eyes, from a mortal man to an incarnation of Satan himself. The focus seems to shift from the Israelites, Israel, Jerusalem, and the temple, to the *“host of heaven”* and the *“stars of heaven.”* This picture could also represent some sinister future powerful figure who could bring much suffering and tribulation to God's people. Since God gave the victory over Antiochus IV, in whatever crisis or political persecution that we may have to pass through, we know that He can do it again.

History has shown that what Daniel saw during the Babylonian period in a vision of the future came to pass. God's Spirit has inspired the biblical authors to record these prophecies to remind us that God is in control. Many of the Old Testament prophecies were clearly fulfilled in the New Testament. We look back in wonder, confessing that we would never have planned it that way. Prophecy assures us of God's infinite holiness, wisdom, power, and goodness. We can trust Him.

Lesson 48:

DANIEL'S VISION OF A RAM AND A GOAT

Lesson Aim: To reflect on God's faithfulness in the midst of evil.

Local Proverb: "When elephants fight, the grass suffers."

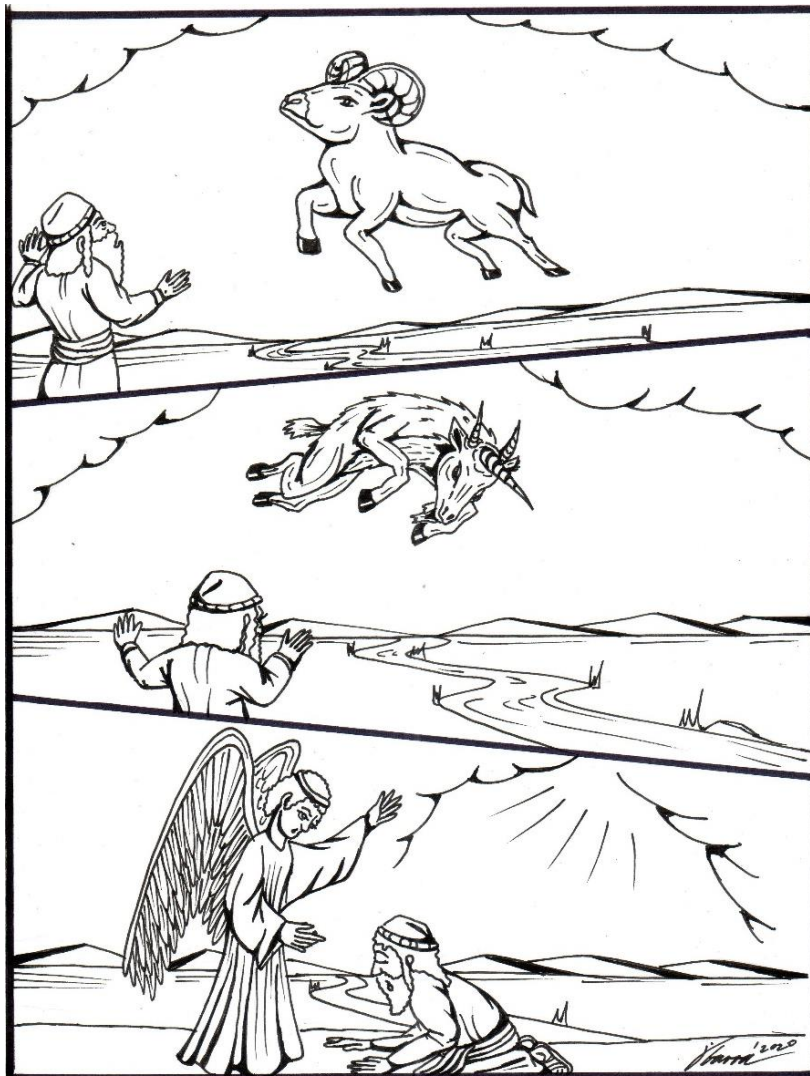
Passage to Study: Daniel 8:1-27

Memory Verse: Daniel 8:19 He said, "Now, I will explain the vision to you. I will tell you what will happen later, in the time of God's anger."

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. Why did those things happen?
3. Where do we see obedience or disobedience in this story?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to someone this week?

Story Slogan: God tramples over our enemies and we are victorious.



| | |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| Lesson | PRAYER, OUR GREATEST RESOURCE |
| 49 | Scripture: Daniel 9:1-27 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To reflect on the great blessings and benefits of developing a life of fervent prayer, as Daniel did. |

| Memory Verse |
|---|
| “Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary.” Daniel 9:17 |

INTRODUCTION

The prophet Daniel had to exercise his ministry while living in captivity. He was taken to Babylon in the first deportation of the Jews by King Nebuchadnezzar (605 BC). Part of the prophecies of the prophet Jeremiah, who had long ago announced the destruction of the temple of God and Jerusalem, was fulfilled (Jeremiah 25:11).

Daniel exercised his prophetic profession for several years, and when he was advanced in age, he studied Jeremiah’s prophecy and saw that the captivity was approaching the 70 years that Jeremiah had prophesied. This motivated him to turn to God in prayer, asking him to fulfill his prophecy (Jeremiah 25:11-13).

I. Daniel Prays For His People (Dan. 9:1-19)

A. His Prayer

In the same way that God motivated Daniel to seek Him through the Scriptures and prayer, God is calling us to seek His face now. He desires that we too have hearts with a burning desire to seek His presence through prayer (Psalm 105:4, Amos 5:4).

Daniel not only prayed, but he **sought** the Lord in prayer (Daniel 9:3). He pleaded with the Lord for his people. The word to plead implies his attitude of humble submission and prostration, seeking with all his heart the mercy of the Lord. Praying or pleading with the Lord denotes our dependence on the mercy of God. We understand that He alone has control and authority. God is unique and incomparable.

B. Daniel Fasted

Daniel not only sought the Lord in prayer, he fasted (v. 3). This is one of the most powerful weapons that God has put at our disposal. To use this weapon, we must understand it and know how to use it. Fasting without obedience to the Word is only abstention from food. Therefore, fasting in sincere obedience to the Word continues to be an important part of the search for God. It’s the time that we separate from everything to devote ourselves to having an encounter with Jesus Christ.

C. Sackcloth and Ashes

Sackcloth was a rough garment that was used as a sign of mourning or great sadness. It was uncomfortable. Sometimes they also slept on ashes (Esther 4:3, Jonah 3:6). Maybe the equivalent would be to find a place to kneel on the hard floor, rather than praying in our beds. Prostration in ashes was the expression of the greatest humiliation and pain for the believers of the past. In his prayer, Daniel confessed to God for his sins and the sins of the people (Daniel 9:4-6). Although he had remained faithful to God in Babylon, and God had revealed great things to him, Daniel had the humility to recognize that he wasn’t greater than the others. His prayer moved the heart of God, and without waiting for it to end, God sent the angel Gabriel to speak with him (Daniel 9:20-21).

II. God Reveals Himself To Daniel (Daniel 9:20-23)

A. God Is Real

Daniel 9:20-21 says that we must be fully sure that when we seek God, we’ll find Him. He shows Himself to us when our faith is right. We need to believe in our living, real and present Lord. The appearance of the angel Gabriel (no longer in visions, but in person) was a supernatural manifestation on God’s part (v. 21). When we pray to God, we must approach Him with faith and full assurance that we’ll find a response from God. In this regard, the Bible exhorts us in

the following way: “...without faith it’s impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6) Without this faith, it’s impossible to please God. How can we get a response from someone we don’t believe in!

B. God Reveals Himself

On that occasion, God went further. He allowed the angel Gabriel to show himself in a visible and real way (v. 21). This was a shocking event for the prophet, for it went beyond what he himself expected as God’s answer to his prayer. This helps us to reflect on how many times we pray to God and actually expect a reply to our faith.

God uses many means to answer our request. So on that occasion, when Daniel was crying out, God sent an angel, although God could also have used any other form of manifestation. Let’s pray not only with faith for an answer, but with total confidence that the Almighty God will be glorified in the midst of our genuine search and faith in Him.

C. God Gave Daniel Understanding And Wisdom

What impressive words must these have been for Daniel’s heart! God answered Daniel because He loved him very much. No doubt we can learn a lot from these verses. God’s response came in a supernatural way because Daniel’s communion with God was deep and solid. It was God who helped Daniel understand the vision. Humanly, Daniel wouldn’t have been able to

understand it. God opened Daniel’s mind and heart to help him understand. In a similar way, God acts with us. If we ask Him, He will give us wisdom and understanding to understand the answer He is giving us (Proverbs 2:6).

III. God’s Answer (Daniel 9:24-27)

A. The Restoration Of Israel

Remember that Daniel was looking for a reply from God at the end of the period of Babylonian exile that he and his compatriots had suffered. Daniel knew there was a portion of the biblical prophecy that assured that God was going to bring a restoration, and thus put an end to the slavery of the people of Israel in Babylon.

So, what the angel Gabriel was revealing to Daniel was precisely the exact times when this would happen; but at the same time, it would take him beyond that (Daniel 9:24). He understood that Israel’s true freedom wouldn’t come just with the restoration, but with the true perfect sacrifice that would make them free from all spiritual bondage.

B. The Crucifixion

In Daniel 9:26-27, we read a great revelation. These verses are talking about the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Anointed One of God. Beyond understanding prophecy, what we must understand is that God’s response to Daniel’s prayer was clear and concise. When we seek God in the right way, we’ll also receive God’s response directly.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What means of grace do we have at our disposal today in order to get closer to God?
- Do you believe that total obedience is necessary in order to receive God’s response? Why?
- How is your prayer life?

CONCLUSION

Prayer is the greatest resource a Christian can have, but at the same time, it’s one of the greatest challenges because it demands a lot from us if we want to see the glory of God manifested. We need to live in obedience and wait with faith for the answer to our prayers. Let’s not abandon prayer. Prayer and intercession are important aspects of our Christian life if we want to live for the glory of God!

Lesson 49:

PRAYER: OUR GREATEST RESOURCE

Lesson Aim: To reflect on the life of prayer and its benefits.

Local Proverb: The care of a mother makes a toothless baby secure.

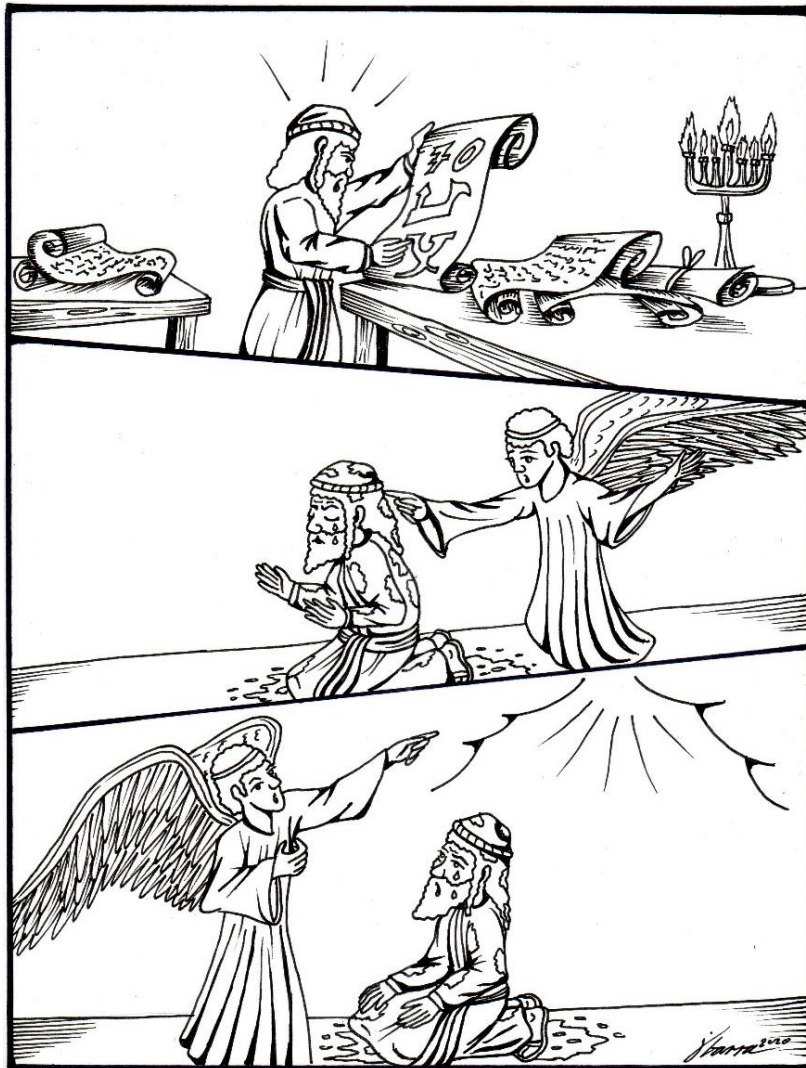
Passage to Study: Daniel 9:1-27

Memory Verse: Daniel 9:17 “Now, our God pay attention and hear the prayers for help of your servant. For Your sake, do good things for your holy place that is in ruins.”

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. Why did those things happen?
3. Where do we see obedience or disobedience in this story?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to someone this week?

Story Slogan: When we pray in faith, God is glorified, He hears and answers us!



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|-----------|--|
| Lesson | SEARCHING FOR THE LORD IN TIMES OF CONFLICT |
| 50 | Scripture: Daniel 10:2-21 |

| Objective |
|--|
| To encourage the students to decide to seek the Lord, especially in difficult times. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “... Then he continued, ‘Don’t be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.’” Daniel 10:12 |

INTRODUCTION

The last three chapters of the book of Daniel must be seen as a single unit, where the action of the governors of the world and the affliction of God’s people are revealed until the consummation of His kingdom. This revelation, which has distinctive features with respect to the previous revelations made to Daniel, allowed him to know more deeply the glory of God and the manifestation of His power in times of conflict for his people. The message of this chapter is relevant for all times. Daniel 10 especially helps us recognize the importance of fasting, worshipping God and valuing his Word.

I. Fasting, A Powerful Weapon (Dan. 10:1-3)

After four years had passed since the vision of the seventy weeks, in a time of political conflicts and before a future that seemed uncertain for the people of God, Daniel, now an old man, decided to start a campaign of prayer and fasting. He set apart special times where he chose to seek more intensely the guidance of God and His holy presence. He deprived himself of food and drink as well as ointments or perfumes (v. 3). In this way, he was putting aside for a certain time, legitimate daily pleasures, in search of a greater good: The presence of God and guidance to do His will. This brought immediate results for Daniel and his times, and points to an important means of grace which has eternal value.

When we’re faced with conflicts in life, many of them unexpected, how should we face them? We may be tempted to immerse ourselves in affliction and pain. In times like these, spiritual disciplines such as fasting, praying or reading the Scriptures will direct our mind and heart toward God. All this will help us deepen our communion with Him, strengthen our faith and grow spiritually by concentrating on His eternal purposes over our daily struggles. Therefore, we should consider fasting as a powerful weapon, especially in the time of conflict.

If the fast isn’t directed towards God, then it’s only a human practice whose results don’t edify us or make us grow spiritually, but, on the contrary, they distance us from Him by concentrating our effort, mind and heart on ourselves and our reality. On the contrary, by directing fasting to God, we divest ourselves of our own

interests and surrender to His direction and will.

Another danger is to trust that through fasting, we can win God’s favor. Jesus teaches us about this in his story about the Pharisee and the tax collector where the Pharisee boasted of fasting twice a week (Luke 19:12), trusting in his own righteousness and belittling others, ignoring even the tax collector who was by his side, repenting of his sin, who Jesus said would be justified before him (Luke 18:9-14).

Finally, another danger is to use fasting to show religiosity or to demonstrate before the eyes of others a supposedly higher level of spirituality. Jesus warned us of this danger in Matthew 6:16, where we read: *“When you fast, don’t look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they’re fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.”*

II. The Lord Shows His Glory And Splendor To Daniel (Daniel 10:5-9)

Daniel 10:5-9 tells us how this Jewish man had an encounter with a glorious being, reminding us of the vision that the Apostle John had on the island of Patmos (Rev. 1:9-20). There are coincidences between both cases in the description of this glorious being. We can observe that in both cases, this being was girded with gold, shone from head to foot with exalted light, his eyes were like torches of fire, and He had a voice like the sound of a multitude.

When we go through situations of conflict that cause us distress, we can decide to plunge into despair and pain, or seek the Lord with greater zeal. At such times,

spiritual disciplines such as fasting will help us focus on this intense search for His guidance and presence. Daniel's experience reminds us that nothing that happens to us will change the beauty and splendor of our Lord. Even in the darkest moments of life, believers can approach His glorious presence to find clarity to face our needs. In doing so, we can recover the ability to see what's happening to us from a spiritual point of view, rather than just seeing the hardness of reality that's hitting us. Our faith will be strengthened as we behold the glory and radiance of our Lord.

Faced with the conflicts of life, and especially in times of affliction, we can decide to seek the Lord in more depth, becoming aware of His guiding presence in our lives. To this end, fasting is one of the most powerful weapons that our God has provided for us, but we should avoid falling into certain dangers that threaten the true meaning of this uplifting discipline.

III. The Lord Speaks To Daniel (Daniel 10:11-21)

Daniel 10:11-12 tells us in detail what the Lord said to Daniel. The Lord touched him and gave him words of comfort and security (vs. 11-19). In a time of political conflicts and affliction in his heart, Daniel had been praying for three weeks. The Lord told him that he had been heard even from the first day of his prayer (v. 12).

When we're willing to surrender faithfully to the will of the Lord, and seek and worship Him with our whole being, we must avoid the temptation of believing that the Lord doesn't listen to our prayers, especially if we're going

through a situation of conflict or if there's affliction in our heart. But we must continue to persevere in prayer, *"being watchful and thankful"* (Colossians 4:2), with the certainty of knowing that the Lord hears our prayers. As the writer to the Hebrews says: *"And without faith it's impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him"* (Hebrews 11:6).

Faith occupies a central place in the life of the person who prays, opening his heart to the Lord with the confidence of knowing that He is attentive to his words. The combination of spiritual disciplines such as fasting and prayer will help us find in the Lord what we need to overcome the harshest and most unexpected circumstances of life. The Lord trains His people to emerge victorious, even in situations that seem impossible to overcome on our own. When we submit to His will, we can receive the benefit gained through his sovereign victory on the cross.

At present, where many believers are attracted by the temptation to listen to extrabiblical doctrines, the message revealed to Daniel reminds us of the importance of the Word of God to evaluate the truthfulness of any teaching or practice. Today we must consider the Bible, which was given to us through plenary inspiration, as a rule of faith and final authority in the life of the church. Scripture is a definitive revelation for believers, and it can never be replaced by Christian thought. Although new teachings and practices appear attractive as means to renew the church, we must examine them carefully in light of the Scriptures.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What are some of the dangers that the believer who is preparing to fast can fall into?
- What happens when we seek the Lord with sincerity of heart?
- What place should the Word of the Lord occupy in the life of the believer?

CONCLUSION

As we search more deeply for the Lord, He will strengthen and guide us to take the correct steps. True worship will lead us to surrender to His will and adore Him. Also, we need to recognize that the Lord will guide us by His Word, which can never be replaced by any other teaching or human practice. The Lord is looking for believers who seek him sincerely, using means of grace like fasting, prayer and having a passion for His Word.

Lesson 50:

SEARCHING FOR THE LORD IN TIMES OF CONFLICT

Lesson Aim: To encourage students to seek the Lord especially in difficult times

Local Proverb: Truth crosses fire without being burnt.

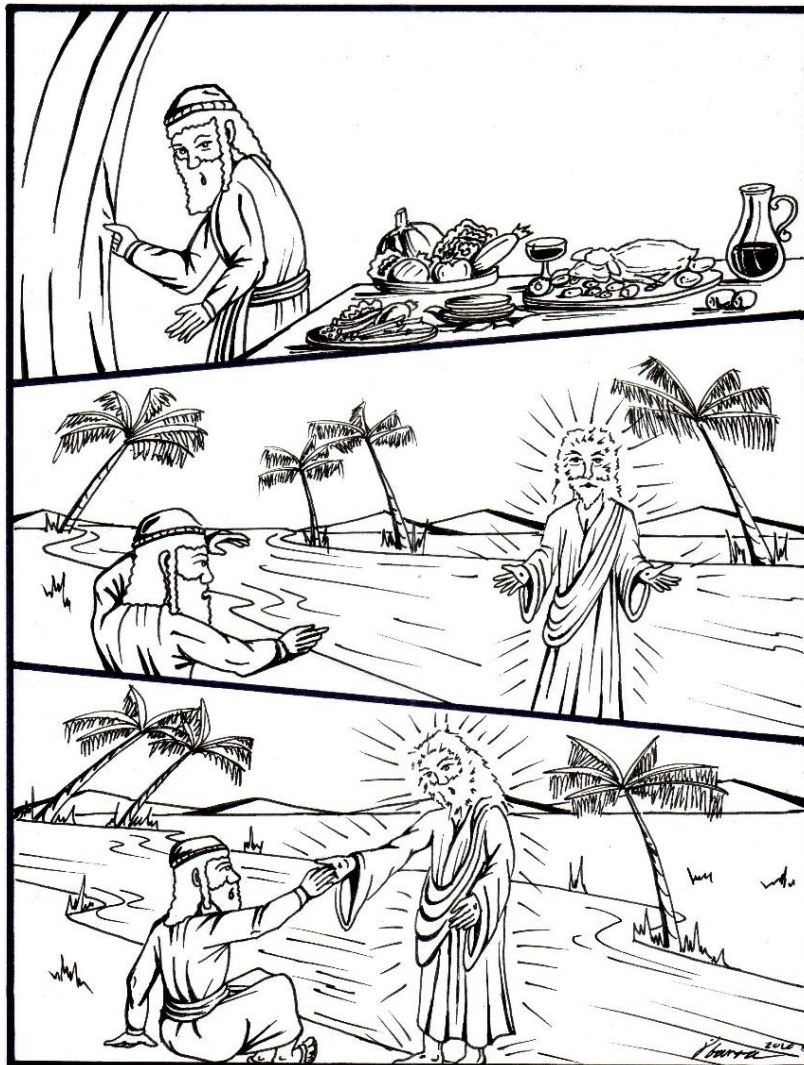
Passage to Study: Daniel 10:2-21

Memory Verse: Daniel 10:12 Then the man said to me, “Daniel, do not be afraid. Some time ago you decided to try to get understanding. You wanted to be humble before God. Since that time God has listened to you. And I came to you because you have been praying.”

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. Why did those things happen?
3. Where do we see obedience or disobedience in this story?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to someone this week?

Story Slogan: To grow, read your Bible, pray everyday and worship.



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|-------------------------|---|
| Lesson 51 | DANIEL AND THE END TIME PROPHECIES |
| | Scripture: Daniel 11:2-39 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To understand the practical purpose of biblical prophecies so that we can strengthen our relationship with God. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there’s no other; I am God, and there’s none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what’s still to come. I say, ‘My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.’” Isaiah 46:9-10 |

INTRODUCTION

Biblical prophecy has always been one of the most fascinating topics for believers, and certainly one of the most challenging topics for biblical scholars. Unfortunately, this combination of fascination and a desire to understand prophecies leads many to divert their attention from the practical applications for everyday Christian life. With this affirmation, we don’t intend to subtract merit or importance from the themes of biblical prophecy, but when we come across some ‘difficult’ matters of theology, we should not lose sight of the fact that, in the first place, some of these issues represent divine mysteries that aren’t within our reach on this earth. On the other hand, some biblical prophecies have already been fulfilled, so that their knowledge and confirmation are already part of the reality that defines our theology.

I. Prior Historical And Prophetic Considerations (Daniel 11:2-4)

The prophecy of Daniel 11 contains particular details about great empires and political powers that would affect the Jewish people in the end times. Note that from the dream of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2), and the vision of the four beasts (Daniel 7), God was already revealing to Daniel about the four world empires which would precede the kingdom of God. The vision of Daniel 11 has its introduction in the previous chapter. Daniel 10:1 says: *“In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel (who was called Belteshazzar). Its message was true and it concerned a great war. The understanding of the message came to him in a vision.”*

A. Prophetic Elements Fulfilled

The initial elements of the prophecy of Daniel 11 have already had their fulfillment. Thus, the fourth king spoken of was King Xerxes (v. 2). This king invaded Greece and reigned during the years 485-464 B.C. Then, the ‘brave king’ mentioned in Daniel 11:3 was, without a doubt, Alexander the Great, who in a period of approximately eight years achieved the most impressive military conquest in history. Daniel 11:4 tells us that this reign would *“be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven.”* This was fulfilled when on his death bed,

Alexander the Great divided his empire between four of his generals: Cassander controlled Macedonia and Greece, Ptolemy took the lower part of Syria, Palestine and Egypt, Lesymachus took Asia Minor, and Seleuco Nicator upper Syria. The Ptolemy section and the Seleucian section represent the two Greek kingdoms that affected Judah, Egypt – the *“king of the south”* and Syria the *“king of the north”*.

B. Prophetic Elements To Be Fulfilled

Daniel 11 doesn’t reveal the names of the kings of the north and south; nevertheless, the historical elements of prophetic fulfillment present these names to us through history itself. Of course, it would suffice to review historical events to find the names of the kings of these conflicting kingdoms, but which cannot be detailed in this lesson for reasons of space. Also, it’s worth mentioning that the expressions *‘king of the north’* and *‘king of the south’* are generic mentions for each kingdom at certain times in history. Here the prophecy isn’t referring to particular kings but to their jurisdiction over Judah. On the other hand, the identities of the kings for the end of time aren’t defined.

II. The Kings Of The North And South (Daniel 11:5-39)

Let’s begin by establishing that the empire located north of Jerusalem was the Syrian Empire, and the

empire settled south of Jerusalem was Egypt. History records Antiochus' attack from Syria to Jerusalem, and the war against the Maccabees, a Jewish family that resisted attempts to conquer the Syrian Empire (Daniel 11:7). Later, between the years 65-30 B.C., both Syria and Egypt fell to the Roman Empire.

1. The names of the possible kings of the north and the south during that long period of time aren't identified, although the constant contention between both empires is affirmed.

2. Perhaps the main reason is that during all that long time there was no constituted nation of Israel. The creation of the State of Israel in 1948 marked an extraordinary prophetic fulfillment. Since then, the empires of the north and south (Syria and Egypt, respectively) again became important in the prophetic moment of the Jewish people, as we see in the 6-Day War in the year 1967.

3. Christian people who have been attentive to all this historical and prophetic events must consider, today more than ever, that all the fulfillment of the prophecy was and will continue to revolve around Israel. Therefore, we must look very carefully at the clock of God in the Middle East. Israel remains the people of God.

III. Practical Implications (Daniel 11:5-39)

1. Biblical prophecies are interconnected in different biblical and historical times. The same prophecies of Daniel 2 and Daniel 9 seem to be related to each other, and which have been fulfilled. Also, the 70-week prophecy is

related to that of Jeremiah 25:1-11. Another prophecy recorded in Revelation 17 is also connected to that of Daniel 11 but has not yet been fulfilled.

2. The prophetic fulfillments are evidence and confirmation of the existence of God. From the prophecies of Isaiah, through those of Daniel, we see the marked evidence of a true God above the other gods of the heathen nations, gods with whom the people of Israel were unfaithful to God on many occasions. Now in our time, the examination of biblical prophecies re-affirms the existence and the presence of our God in all the historical events of humans.

3. Fulfilled prophecies are the guarantee that the end-time prophecies will also be fulfilled. Since the same story confirms the truth of God's prophecies and the actual existence of the God of prophecy, we must have no doubt that our God is real, and that His Word will be faithfully fulfilled.

It's important to emphasize that prophetic events and their dark details should not detract from the goal that's laid out in Christ. There's a grave danger in the fascination with future things, and many *'false prophets'* take advantage of this theological conjuncture to deceive and divert the saints. The prophecies of Daniel reaffirm to us the same words of Jesus in John 14:3 where we read: *"...I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."* Our Redeemer will return for us. Fulfilled prophecies assure us of this truth. Let's wait for His coming. This is prophecy of the true God.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What should Christians be aware of in relation to the prophecies and the Jewish people?
- What lessons can we draw from the prophecies of Daniel for our Christian life?

CONCLUSION

Daniel's prophecies represented a comfort and evidence for the Jewish people that God had not abandoned them, despite the captivity they were living in. Today, we can reaffirm that divine truth among us. We can trust that God will fulfill what he has promised in His Word, and that despite the signs of the end times, the people of God will receive their reward. God's prophecies confirm His faithfulness. The prophecies given to Daniel anticipate difficult times for us. However, they also assure us victory over the forces of evil.

Lesson 51:

DANIEL AND THE END TIME PROPHECIES

Lesson Aim: To understand the practical purpose of biblical prophecies.

Local Proverb: Bitter truth is better than sweet falsehood.

Passage to Study: Daniel 11:2-39

Memory Verse: Daniel 11:4 “After that king has come, his kingdom will be broken up. It will be divided out toward the four parts of the world. His kingdom will not go to his descendants. And it will not have the power that he had. His kingdom will be pulled up and given to other people“

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. Why did those things happen?
3. Where do we see obedience or disobedience in this story?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to someone this week?

Story Slogan: Full dependence on God helps us through tough times.



| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Lesson 52 | DANIEL AND OUR FUTURE HOPE |
| | Scripture: Daniel 12:1-13 |

| Objective |
|---|
| To understand end-of-time prophecy as God’s future hope of redemption and salvation, motivating us to establish a closer relationship with God. |

| Memory Verse |
|--|
| “But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.” Daniel 12:4 |

INTRODUCTION

The prophecies recorded in the book of Daniel warn us of future difficult times for the whole world. Daniel 12 seems to place us historically in the immediate times of the restoration of the nation of Israel in 1948, a historical event with great prophetic implications for the end times. In fact, verse 1 begins by making a reference to the context of the previous passage (Daniel 11:36-45), which implies that the prophecy of Daniel 12 is projected to our times.

I. A Promise Of Salvation And Resurrection (Daniel 12:1-2)

A. Dimensional Extension

For the first time in the Old Testament, resurrection is considered as a reward for the faithful. The resurrection at the end of time is part of the freedom promised to the people of God. Of course, and as Daniel 12:2 suggests and as Jesus himself said later in John 5:29, there will be another resurrection reserved ‘for those who did evil, a *“resurrection of condemnation”*’.

The first resurrection is prophesied as a separate event for the salvation of God’s people, the faithful believers in Christ, who will receive their reward of eternal life (1 Thess. 4:16). The prophecy of Daniel 12 has a historical projection for the people of God, Israel, in times before and after Daniel, which includes us today, and all believers through the centuries.

B. Michael, The Great Prince

The figure of Michael in this prophecy has been the object of important considerations due to his participation in the events of the end times. Some consider Michael as prince among the angels (archangel) like the archangel Gabriel, the messenger of God. Michael is presented in the Scriptures as a warrior angel who came to the aid of the messenger angel (possibly Gabriel), so that he could deliver the

prophetic message to Daniel (Daniel 10:13). Also, this warrior angel appears as leader of God’s armies in the great battle against the dragon and his angels (Revelation 12:7). In this prophecy of Daniel 12, he is referred to as *“the great prince”* who acts on behalf of the children of God.

Due to this unique participation of Michael, others consider him as a figure of Christ, and Gabriel as a figure of the Holy Spirit. However we interpret this passage, he himself says that his prophecy will be fulfilled, affirming the undeniable existence of God.

II. The End Of Time (Daniel 12:3-9)

A. Labor Of The People Of God

Verse 3 contains a reward for those of us who carry the gospel message to the whole world, and for those who remain faithful and firm to the end. Therefore, the church of God must remain active in the great commission.

The church has the responsibility to carry the message of God, warning about the end times. The prophecy of Daniel, to a large extent, is the reaffirmation of God’s justice for all of us who have received Jesus’ message. Today’s church has the mission of forming the church for the end of time, and it has had this mission since Jesus himself entrusted it to His disciples (Matt. 28:18-20).

B. “Seal The Book”

In verse 4, Daniel received the order to close the words and seal the book, which implies confusion for many. If we’re to preach the gospel, and the preaching of the gospel includes the prophecy of the events of the end, why close the curtain so abruptly? Why are some matters of prophecy forbidden to us if the prophecy itself is part of our message?

C. This implies several things.

In the first place, it suggests that some mysteries of prophecy will not be revealed to the church of the end times, reaffirming that the church’s message must be salvation by faith. On the other hand, and according to Ryrie’s commentary, the secrets hidden and sealed in the prophecy will be for the exclusive use of those who will understand the allusion to the Antichrist, and who will lead others to the truth during the period of the great tribulation. This is important because without considering this interpretation as accurate, this will allow the people of Israel to return to the mission that has now fallen to the church, and to continue the prophetic events of the Apocalypse in the Holy Land.

That’s why it can be a dangerous deviation from our mission to want to know and decide aspects of the prophecy that aren’t to be revealed until it’s necessary.

III. Daniel’s Question: Everyone’s Question (Daniel 12:10-13)

A. Details Concerning The Time Of The End

Verses 10 through 12 contain very interesting elements which have been considered within all the known eschatological possibilities. It goes without saying that the understanding of this prophecy requires a spiritual mentality and the direct assistance of the Holy Spirit.

Another important detail concerning the end times is that the ungodly, those who despite revelation and the message from God through the church, will continue to act impenitently; that is, they will not understand or be able to discern the end times (v. 10). Fortunately, and by the grace of God, the opportunity to discern the times, receive the message and turn away from evil is still a reality. Therefore, our mission remains relevant, necessary and vital for the salvation of souls. Let’s keep insisting on our work. Still, many can be saved.

B. The Consolation of God

Finally, Daniel received from God the consoling promise that every believer in Christ receives. The Lord affirmed through this prophecy that he rewards the faithful. The future of the righteous is guaranteed in Jesus and in the fulfillment of the prophecies.

This consolation and this guarantee will not disappear with our eventual death, but the resurrection of the dead in Christ will be for eternal salvation. Jesus’ resurrection is the sure first fruit of ours (1 Corinthians 15:20). Therefore, we can rest calmly and confidently on the certainty of prophecy, and on the assurance of God’s promises. Daniel rests with the same expectation that we do if we pass to eternity before the coming of our Lord.

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- What’s the work of the church within the prophetic framework of Daniel?
- Why is the mission of the church still relevant in our times? Briefly share how you have been impacted by what has been shared in today’s lesson.

CONCLUSION

Fulfilled prophecies tell us that God is real. The promises of God will be fulfilled. Let’s remain firm and constant in our mission. Today, we’re the ones who have to shine because we’re the light of the world. If we remain steadfast in the Lord and fulfill our mission, our reward will be great in the heavens. Work in the Lord is never in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Lesson 52:

DANIEL AND OUR FUTURE HOPE

Lesson Aim: To understand that our future hope is based on God's redemption and salvation.

Local Proverb: Do not hurry the night; the sun will always rise for its own sake.

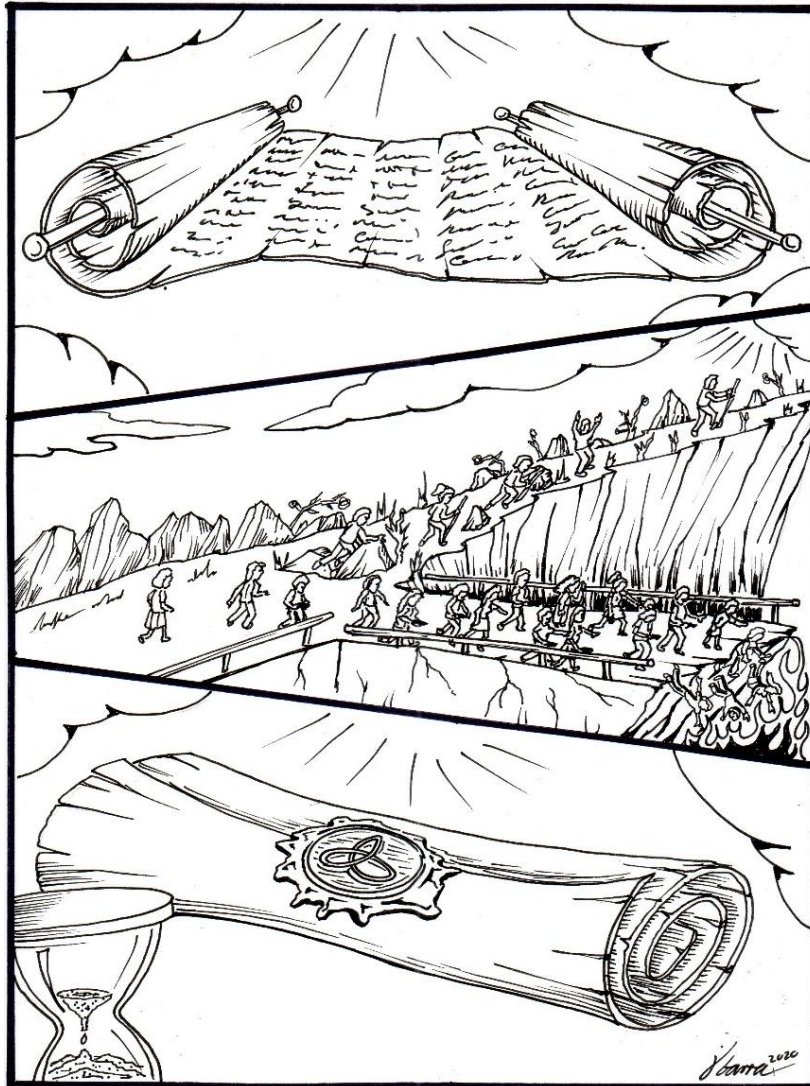
Passage to Study: Daniel 12:1-13

Memory Verse: Daniel 12:4 "Daniel had to close up the book and seal it as those things were to happen at the time of the end. Many people will go here and there to find true knowledge."

Questions to Ask:

1. What happened in this story?
2. Why did those things happen?
3. Where do we see obedience or disobedience in this story?
4. What do we learn from this story?
5. How will you tell this story to someone this week?

Story Slogan: Fulfilled prophecies tell us that God is real.





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