



CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE  
AFRICA



# Sunday School LESSONS

FOR ADULTS

Volume 23  
Number 22

Sunday School

# LESSONS

FOR ADULTS

Copyright © 2020 Africa Nazarene Publications

All Rights Reserved.

ISBN 978-0-7977-1555-4

First Printing 2021

2

This book was originally published in English with the title:

The Path – Volume 11

Mesoamerica Region Discipleship Ministries

[www.SDMresources.mesoamericaregion.org](http://www.SDMresources.mesoamericaregion.org)

Copyright © 2020

All rights reserved.

This edition is published by Africa Nazarene Publications

Copyright © 2021

All rights reserved.

Printed by

Africa Nazarene Publications

**AFRICA REGION YEAR PLAN**  
**BIBLE LESSONS FOR ADULTS**  
**Volume 23 Number 22**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

TEACHING ADULTS .....	5
How to Prepare a Sunday School Lesson .....	5
How to Present a Sunday School Lesson .....	5
HELPFUL HINTS FOR TEACHING ADULTS .....	6
HOW TO PRAY WITH THOSE SEEKING GOD’S FACE .....	7

**FIRST QUARTER - Knowing the Psalms**

WHO CAN LIVE IN GOD’S PRESENCE? .....	8
GOD CONTINUALLY SPEAKS TO US .....	10
NATURE AND BENEFITS OF THE CONFESSION .....	12
WHAT TO DO WHEN TROUBLES COME .....	14
A JOYFUL PROCLAMATION OF GOD’S FAITHFULNESS .....	16
THE CONFESSION OF A GREAT KING .....	18
KING DAVID’S LONGING FOR GOD .....	20
WHY DO THE WICKED PROSPER? .....	22
GOD HEARS OUR PRAYERS .....	24
GOD IS OUR REFUGE .....	26
WISE ADVICE AGAINST IDOLATRY .....	28
PLACING OUR TRUST IN GOD .....	30
PRAISE AND WORSHIP GOD .....	32

**SECOND QUARTER - Characteristics of God’s People**

GOD’S PEOPLE ARE A COMPASSIONATE PEOPLE .....	34
GOD’S PEOPLE ARE CALLED TO TRAIN OTHERS.....	36
GOD’S PEOPLE ARE WITNESSES .....	38
GOD’S PEOPLE SHARE A SOCIAL HERITAGE .....	40
GOD’S PEOPLE AND CIVIL GOVERNMENTS.....	42
GOD’S PEOPLE AND THE FAMILY.....	44
GOD’S PEOPLE DEFEND LIFE .....	46
GOD’S PEOPLE CARE ABOUT CHILDREN.....	48
GOD’S PEOPLE SERVE.....	50
GOD’S PEOPLE ARE CHRISTIANS.....	52

GOD’S PEOPLE ARE HOLY PEOPLE.....	54
GOD’S PEOPLE ARE A MISSIONAL PEOPLE .....	56
GOD’S PEOPLE SHARE THE GOOD NEWS.....	58

### **THIRD QUARTER - A Victorious Spiritual Life: Philippians**

THE PRAYER OF A FRIEND IN PRISON.....	60
A LIFE PASSIONATE FOR CHRIST .....	62
CHRISTIAN UNITY .....	64
CHRIST: THE EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY .....	66
CHRISTIANS DON’T GRUMBLE.....	68
TIMOTHY AND EPAPHRODITUS: FAITHFUL SERVANTS .....	70
PUTTING OUR COMPLETE TRUST IN CHRIST.....	72
WE HAVE TO LOSE TO WIN .....	74
PRESSING ON TO ACHIEVE OUR GOAL .....	76
CITIZENS OF HEAVEN.....	78
REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS .....	80
GODLY MINDFULNESS .....	82
CHRIST IS MORE THAN ENOUGH.....	84

### **FOURTH QUARTER - The Work of Christ in the Believer: Colossians**

WALKING WORTHY OF THE LORD.....	86
THE GREATNESS OF REDEMPTION .....	88
THE SURPASSING GREATNESS OF JESUS .....	90
RECONCILED WITH GOD.....	92
ROOTED AND BUILT UP IN CHRIST .....	94
OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST.....	96
THE FREEDOM THAT CHRIST GIVES.....	98
LIVING AS ONE MADE ALIVE IN CHRIST.....	100
A NEW DRESS CODE.....	102
A SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN LIFE.....	104
FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS .....	106
THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER.....	108
CRUCIAL ADVICE .....	110

## 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 relationship with Jesus in front of them and by teaching them to have their 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.

Arrive at least ten minutes before class to prepare your teaching area and set out any lesson materials that you may need.

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.

Do the **INTRODUCTION** section during the next **15 (10) minutes**. Allow time for thinking and reflection; do not expect immediate responses to every question or activity. Feel free to make adjustments so the activities will be more relevant to your students' lives.

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.

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.

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. Despite 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. A 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 the 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 a 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 defenses 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* regularly.

### 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. 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 responds to the lesson in faith. Make arrangements for the pastor and/or other mature believers to help you particularly when many responses are expected.

- a. Realize the importance of the moment and give it full attention
- b. Kneel, sit or stand next to the person you intend to help.
- c. 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.
- d. Listen to the seeker's prayer to determine if they need help.
- e. 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.
- f. If the seeker continues to pray without coming to an end, or without being specific:
  - i. Carefully ask if you can help. Once permission has been granted,
  - ii. Find out why he/she came to pray.
  - iii. Briefly guide them with the relevant Scriptures.
  - iv. Together pray for the specific need and trust God with the request.
  - v. 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.
- g. Remember to give the pastor the names of all the seekers and the outcomes of their prayers.



**Lesson  
01****WHO CAN LIVE IN GOD'S PRESENCE?****Passage to Study:** Psalm 15**Lesson Aim**

To examine the characteristics of the person who wants to live in the presence of God.

**Memory Verse**

"Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain?" Psalm 15:1.

**INTRODUCTION**

Every believer desires to live in the presence of God. That was also the longing of King David who was a great worshiper and who composed this Psalm. The Psalm helps us to think about the requirements of the person who wishes to enter and dwell in God's temple.

Psalm 15 is considered to be a liturgical (public worship) Psalm. As people entered the temple it was either spoken or sung, alternating between the people and the leader. A group of the faithful directed questions about the requirements needed to be admitted to the holy place; and the priest or a Levite with much knowledge in the law responded with a list of "do's and don'ts."

The study of this Psalm invites us to undergo a thorough examination of our consciences.

**I. Worship as a Lifestyle (Psalm 15:1)**

Inhabiting, dwelling, and living are terms that suggest permanence; that is, a continuous state. This shows us that worship is not an experience of a passing excitement that must be faithfully fulfilled as part of the believer's rituals, but the worshiper must live in the presence of God in a permanent union.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul in Romans 12:1 made a very deep statement concerning worship when he wrote the following: "... Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God— this is your true and proper worship." Paul's invitation refers to giving ourselves, with our bodies, as an offering of worship to God.

Following this teaching, there is no difference between religious life and daily or secular life, as we usually call it. Our worship must be a lifestyle – that is seen in real life. We exist to worship God and live in communion with Him. The offering is not something outside of us, but it is ourselves out of love.

**Question:**

How can we worship God at all times as the Word tells us?

**II. Positive Characteristics that should be Practiced in the Life of the Worshipper (Psalm 15:2)**

The life of the worshipper must be characterized by honesty in their lifestyle, acting with justice, and speaking the truth in their heart. The meaning of the term 'blameless' refers to the demand by God to have a heart focused on God. A righteous person lives constantly in obedience to God's commands; and not only who obeys them in some situations. The Psalmist is calling us to carry out deeds of righteousness and justice. It is not sufficient to just talk about it; we need to act to become justice doers. The truth is closely related to honesty and being trustworthy. If justice is related to the proof of honesty in actions, truth is linked to the words and language of the worshipper. These three clearly describe a good picture of those who will live in the presence of God as people who live in honesty, shown in their actions (justice) and also in their words (truth).

## Question

How does honesty relate to working with justice and speaking the truth from the heart?

### III. Negative Characteristics that should be avoided in a Life of the Worshipper (Psalm 15:3-5)

In a society marked by extreme independence where everything is acceptable, and where respect and unity have been lost, the believer is challenged to be different and to make a difference.

This whole list refers to deeply practical and everyday issues of our relationships with others.

- A. “Whose Tongue Utters No Slander...” (v. 3a)

The life of a worshipper cannot be marked by the spread of stories or gossip that calls into question the reputation of their neighbors (James 3:2).

- B. “Who Does No Wrong to a Neighbor” (v.3b)

A worshipper should avoid doing something, which harms another person at all cost (1 John 4:20).

- C. “Casts No Slur on Others” (v.3c)

This part is about collecting comments about others, accumulating and spreading them regardless of the effect they might have or the truthfulness of the comments. True worshippers do not speak ill of their friends.”

- D. “Who Despises a Vile Person but Honors Those Who Fear the Lord” (v.4a)

A worshipper is a defender of righteousness, who faithfully honors the Lord, regardless of their

social position. They do not tolerate those who mock God and are openly living in sin. A worshipper with this characteristic becomes a friend of God and shows harmony with his message of holiness.

- E. “Who Keeps an Oath Even When It Hurts and does not Change Their Mind” (v.4b)

Worshippers who long to live in the presence of God are characterized by their words, which carry more weight than any written document. They fulfill their promises with a sense of responsibility; and in this way honor their words, even if this harms them in some way.

- F. “Who lends money to the poor without interest;” (v.5a)

Worshippers do not take advantage of the need or misfortune of others to enrich themselves, but they consider the other as their brother or sister and seek to help them. This may mean lending money or any kind of help without demanding interest: but according to the possibilities of the needy person.

- G. “Who does not Accept a Bribe Against the Innocent” (v.5b)

Bribery means giving someone money to get something illegally or harming an innocent person in their cause. Those who want to worship God and live in His presence are called to walk the honest path, even if that implies many times delaying procedures or even being harmed by the officials for trying to live fairly.

## Question:

Is there a relationship between the life of worship and our call to Christian holiness? Comment.

## CONCLUSION

Psalm 15 teaches us what a worshipper who truly is seeking to live in the presence of God would look like. To live near to God is not just about fulfilling a list of ethical norms. The desire to dwell in the house of God speaks of worship as a way of life in permanent communion with our Creator. There is no place for separation between the act of worship and the life of the worshipper; but rather a perfect harmony. Likewise, all the characteristics mentioned in this Psalm link the character of the worshippers' lives with a call to a life of holiness, which is constantly reflected in interpersonal relationships with their neighbors.

**Lesson  
02****GOD CONTINUALLY SPEAKS TO US****Passage to Study: Psalm 19****Lesson Aim**

To understand that God communicates and reveals Himself in different ways, so that we can see, feel and hear Him every day.

**Memory Verse**

“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.” Psalm 19:1

10

**INTRODUCTION**

When we read this beautiful song written by King David, in which he exalts God for His revelation to us, and as we meditate deeply on the content, we can realize the beauty of our creative God, the greatness of His work, and how His efforts to restore us are constantly reflected in His Word and His creation. This Psalm is one of the deepest Jewish prayers. The Jews still recite this Psalm 19 in their morning prayers, weddings, and other festivities to exalt God and ask Him for wisdom. God’s Word is still powerful. So, what we read in it, although it was written many years ago, is today a message for our lives (Hebrews 4:12).

If we read Psalm 19 carefully, we can see that although the Psalm exalts the greatness of God shown through His creation, in fact, the Psalm shows us that He reveals himself to us in two ways: through His creation and His law. Everything He has created has a purpose and a message that reflects His love and greatness.

**I. God Reveals Himself to Us Through His Creation (Psalm 19:1-6)**

Just as painters have techniques that distinguish them from the rest, and they put their signature on one side of their artistic work, God has signed His work, giving it His seal of majesty, greatness, and perfection. The skies above us are full of traces that point to the Creator.

Romans 1:19-20 says: “since what may be known about God is plain to them because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse”.

When we see a river continually flowing, we can see that there is life, there is something fresh,

clean, refreshing. This is the work of God: it is a continuous statement. There is no second in whom the glory of God is not seen; the various elements of nature account for it. His creation was done perfectly, precisely to flow every second without running out, sustained by His power and greatness. It is this flow and continuity that speaks. Even so, words cannot express this greatness.

God’s creation reveals its Creator, giving glory to God. As Psalm 19:1 says, they express the One who created them and His attributes. Some of these that we can highlight are the following:

**1. Our God is creative.**

Just look at a tiny part of His creation. In flowers, for example, there are many colors, multiple combinations, shapes, and sizes. Without a doubt, there is nothing dull in the work of God.

## 2. Our God is perfect.

Our perfect God created everything perfect, without mistakes. The Earth rotates smoothly: the skies, the lights, the vegetation, and the animals. Everything we can see, done by his hand, has his perfection as the greatest seal.

## 3. God's creation is expressed in joy (vv. 5-6);

God delights in His creation. So, in Genesis 1, we can see that everything that God created was good, useful, helpful, and beautiful. Undoubtedly, He reveals who He is through what He has created.

### Question:

Share three things that have been revealed to you through God's creation.

## II. God's perfect law declares His greatness (Psalm 19:7-9)

The law of the Lord is perfect and is the straight path that brings joy to the heart as more precious than gold. This fact makes the fear of the Lord to be pure, enduring forever. This expression refers to all of God's teaching, which is perfect, complete, sufficient, and covers all aspects of life. It not only provides us with intellectual knowledge, but it brings us conversion – it transforms, restores, and frees us. The Word of God traces the path that we must follow. The Bible says: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge..." (Proverb 1:7). The greatness of God must be recognized and revered. His Word is clean – transparent. There is nothing hidden in it, nothing that can divert us from His restoration plan. Because it is perfect, it remains forever; it does not need changes or improvements (Matthew 24:35). There is nothing more valuable than God's law. There are no higher criteria for judgment. The divine truth is like honey to our soul; it will sweeten it, nourish it, and cover it. The Word is our best medicine.

### Question:

How would you describe the Word of God?

## III. Surrendering to God's greatness (Psalm 19:11-14)

God's revelation demands an answer. King David, always sincere before the majesty of God, asked and pleaded for the following:

A. "Forgive my hidden faults" (v.12b).

David asked God to forgive those hidden sins because he wanted to be blameless before God (v. 9).

B. "Keep your servant also from willful sins" (v. 13a).

Jeremiah 17:9 says that our hearts are deceitful and perverse. That is why David did not want to rely on his way of thinking; He asked God to keep him from doing always what he wanted to, longing that only God's rules should direct his life.

C. "May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight" (v. 14a).

It is wonderful to see how after praising God for His indescribable creation that declares God's glory and reveals how God continually blesses us and recognizing how faithful and just God is in His thinking, David once again recognized God as the One who sustains his life and his Savior. He said that God was his 'rock and redeemer' (v. 14b). The deepest desires of his heart were to please God with all of his being.

### Question:

Mention practical examples of how to value God's creation.

## CONCLUSION

This Psalm amazes and admonishes us, for there is undoubtedly sublime beauty in everything God did thousands of years ago, and in what He continues to do every day in our lives. Undoubtedly, He expects an answer from us, just as King David surrendered to his Creator. We need to respond with love, humility, and sincerity. Let us ask ourselves how we are responding to the message of our creative God. Praise His holy name!

**Lesson  
03****NATURE AND BENEFITS OF THE CONFESSION****Passage to Study:** Psalm 32**Lesson Aim**

To understand and experience the character of God, who is full of grace and mercy, and who invites His people to confess their sins and experience the joy that comes with renewed forgiveness.

**Memory Verse**

“Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.’ And you forgave the guilt of my sin.” Psalm 32:5

12

**INTRODUCTION**

Are you forgiven today? This is the question that every Christian has to ask himself in this lesson. We may think we were forgiven some time ago when we confessed our sins and were saved. We incline to think about past experiences of faith. I’m not saying that’s wrong, but that experience must be reviewed and renewed in the present in the light of the Word of God and our day-to-day experiences. Forgiveness cannot remain just as something good that we remember from our past when we were saved. Psalm 32 invites us to live or experience forgiveness as a way of life and an important part of our Christian spiritual formation.

Because of its literary form, different scholars have classified Psalm 32 as a Psalm of repentance where the writer reported his experience of confession of sin and the receiving of forgiveness (vv. 3-5). In the title, we see that it is a Psalm of David and may have been written following the sins David committed in connection with his adultery with Bathsheba.

**I. The Joy of Forgiveness (Psalm 32:1-2)**

Psalm 32:1 starts on a positive note: “Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.” This Psalm works as an answer for the present-day because being righteous is not a matter of being without sin; rather, it is a matter of knowing that we have been forgiven, being open to God’s instruction (Psalm 1:2; 32:8-9), as well as trusting in the Lord instead of trusting oneself (Psalm 2:12; 32:10).

Recognizing our responsibility for what we do, expressed in genuine confession and trust in God’s mercy, brings renewed forgiveness and the happiness we need in this life: “Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you

righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!” (v.11).

**Questions:**

How did the Psalmist define happiness?

**II. Sin, Its Effects and God’s Forgiveness (Psalm 32:3-5)**

Psalm 32 reminds us that forgiveness is not an excuse for continuing to do evil, but an extension of God’s grace for us to seek forgiveness and be sincerely regretful.

A close study shows that Psalm 32:5 makes use of three terms for the word ‘sin’. a) “Sin” (Hebrew: pesha), is the most general, and it means ‘to Miss the mark.’ b) “Transgression” suggests voluntary rebellion, and c) “Iniquity”

or “fault” (Hebrew: *hatá*) indicates strong and destructive effects of disobedience.

All three dimensions work simultaneously when sin takes control of our lives. When we fail to do God’s will, we deviate voluntarily, and sooner or later, we experience the consequences in our relationships, mind, heart, and physical health.

The Psalmist tells us that divine forgiveness is always available and is all-inclusive.

Psalm 32 is a testimony, on the one hand, of the consequences of sin in our relationship with God, in our relationship with our neighbor, and us. On the other hand, this Psalm is an instruction to begin to fight sin and correct it through honest confession and acceptance of God’s grace.

#### Questions:

- What 3 words are used here to describe sin?

### III. God is Faithful to Forgive (Psalm 32:6)

King David knew that God had forgiven him. He found the reality of the forgiveness of his sin, not in his achievements, but only and entirely in the faithfulness of God who forgives. For the Psalmist, the “confession prayer” became a way of life; he recognized that his achievements, abilities, and intentions were always insufficient.

Today, it is very easy to focus on ourselves, on our achievements and strong Christian belief or feeling, but Psalm 32 tries to tell us again and again that God always forgives those who confess and repent of their sin. He is the one who takes the first step to find us. The

Psalmist addressed his prayer to the Lord and put all his trust in Him saying, “Therefore let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found; ...” (v. 6).

#### Questions:

What is God’s grace?

### IV. Songs of Deliverance for the Forgiveness Received (Psalm 32:7-11)

Verse 7 makes God the subject and the Psalmist, the object of God’s merciful action: “You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.” Forgiveness not only included the cancellation of the Psalmist’s sins, but also granted a new relationship with God and righteousness of the heart. God faithfully protects us (see also Psalm 27:5; 31:20; 61:4; 91:1). God promises to instruct and teach and, with His loving eye to guide us (v. 8). If we keep looking towards the Lord, we will know what is right and wrong and which way to go.

Verse 10 states: “... the Lord’s unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him.” The expression, “unfailing love”, indicates a new condition of the Psalmist in his relationship with God: it is the eternal love of God that surrounds and sustains him. In the New Testament, John would make clear what is suggested here: that “God is love” (1 John 4:8).

#### Questions:

What does this Psalm teach that God promised to do for us?

How do you experience God’s ‘unfailing love’ in your life?

## CONCLUSION

King David had made a mess of things and was suffering because he knew that he had done wrong. In this Psalm, we can see how coming to God, and repenting of his sins restored his relationship with God. God promised to guide him, and the Psalm ends on a joyful note of gratitude and praise.



**Lesson  
04****WHAT TO DO WHEN TROUBLES COME****Passage to Study:** Psalm 34**Lesson Aim**

To understand what is happening and practice trust in God in the midst of difficulties.

**Memory Verse**

“The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all; ...”  
Psalm 34:19

14

**INTRODUCTION**

Problems are part of life in this world, nevertheless, to the believer, everything that happens works for good (Romans 8:28), even when humanly speaking, we think that it is something negative. Some say that becoming a Christian means the end of trials, difficulties, and afflictions. But this is not true, and often these things are part of our growth in God and fulfillment of his purpose. This Psalm is one of eight that relate to Saul’s persecutions of David (1 Samuel 21:10-15). David was running away from King Saul, and when he arrived at Gath, the land of King Achish, they began to threaten him because the officers recognized him as David of Judah (1 Samuel 21:11). Because of this, he was afraid of the outcome and started to pretend to be crazy. The words we find in Psalm 34 were born in the setting of this complicated trial. In this Psalm, David shows us the attitude that as God’s children we should take when we must face trials.

**I. Exalt God at All Times (Psalm 34:1-3)**

It is difficult for some believers to exalt God when things in life are not going the best way.

A. Exaltation: the attitude of the believer (v.1)

Trials and troubles cause two opposing attitudes in the lives of believers: Some turn away from the faith and their trust in God will be weakened while others grow and strengthen their faith. However, no matter what happened in his life, David was always going to bless and praise God. This is what each believer is invited to do amid adverse situations. The circumstances we go through cannot condition the faith and spiritual position we have in Christ. Everything else can lead us to new dimensions of spiritual growth and Christian maturity.

B. Invitation to exaltation (vv. 2-3)

When believers go through trials and their souls rejoice in the Lord, the people around will be affected and they may very well rejoice with them.

David, in his Psalms, invites us to worship and give glory to God even in times of trouble. This Psalmist encourages us to glorify God in the worst circumstance affecting those around us.

**Questions:**

Difficulties and troubles cause two opposing attitudes in the lives of believers. What are they?

**II. Seeking God at All Times (Psalm 34:4-10)**

A. Seeking God in the midst of trouble

David was expressing himself forcefully in this section of Psalm 34. If trials and troubles are knocking at our door today, Let us begin to experience what it means to meet God in intimate prayer. If we love Him, the trials will bring us closer to Him. If we have neglected our spiritual life a little, we need to come back with a strong, deep thirst for God in our innermost beings.

B. Blessings for seeking God

David lists a series of blessings that all those who seek the face of God receive amid trials. Let us now see what these are: God answers (v.4); He delivers them from all fears (v.4); He enlightens them (v.5); He does not allow them to be ashamed (v.5); He saves them from all their troubles (v.6); they see that God is good (v.8); nothing is lacking for those who fear him (v.9); and “those who seek the Lord lack no good thing” (v.10).

#### Questions:

Share some of the blessings that those who seek the face of God receive in the midst of trials (Ps 34:4-6, 8-9).

### III. Living a holiness lifestyle at all times (Psalm 34:11-17)

The word ‘righteous’ in this Psalm does not refer to being fair but to holiness, that is, righteous living before God. The Lord does not want us to lose our holy lifestyle during trials. He blesses the righteous, not sinners. His favor is over believers who keep His Word.

Verse 17 says: “The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.” We should not misunderstand this verse by believing that the only way to get an answer from God is to be good. His response is tied to His will, but it is a promise about how God treats the life of the believer.

#### A. Limits for the righteous

David listed a series of limits that must be present in people who fear God and want to have a long life. Jesus and the apostles underlined these as examples of holiness. Let us see what they are:

“Keep your tongue from evil ...” (v. 13; see also James 1:26; 3:5-6); “Keep ... your lips from telling lies” (v. 13; see also Ephesians 4:25; 1 Peter 3:10); “Turn from evil ...” (v. 14; see also 1 Peter 3:9); “... do good ...” (v. 14; see also Romans 12:21); “... seek peace, and pursue it” (v. 14; see also 1 Peter 3:11).

#### B. Right living is the way forward

God established a model of right living in his Word. A model that will help us avoid many difficulties. For example, if we do not raise our voices in anger, we will have better relationships with others (Psalm 34:13-14; Colossians 3:8).

#### Questions:

- What are the limits for the righteous before God according to Psalm 34:13 and 14?

### IV. God answers the prayer of his children (Psalm 34:18-22)

One thing which all who love God are convinced of is that He answers the prayer of his children (Jeremiah 33:3).

#### A. God works for the righteous

Scripture does not tell us that the righteous are free from trials and pain but affirms that the righteous also suffer. Against these, what God promises is His deliverance and his presence in each one of those experiences (v.19).

Trust in God in the midst of trials is the most important key. Believers must believe that God will deliver them, although it may not be in the way they expect. God’s deliverance is always certain and better than ours.

#### B. Promises of God in favor of the righteous

From the Psalmist’s list of some of the promises of God’s favor which he experienced in his life, we can also expect that: He will keep our life completely (v. 20), those who hate us will be condemned (v. 21), our soul is redeemed (v. 22) and we will not be condemned (v. 22). God’s promises in Scripture, correctly understood, are always valid. Since they are not just for the future, we need to confidently ask for them, receive and make them ours on a day-to-day basis.

#### Questions:

What does God promise in these verses?

## CONCLUSION

Troubles and difficulties are a normal part of the life of the righteous. They will prove if we are suitable or not. What God expects is that we exalt him, seek him, continue living according to His standards, and as always, He never fails. Our prayers will be answered.



**Lesson  
05****A JOYFUL PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S  
FAITHFULNESS****Passage to Study:** Psalm 40**Lesson Aim**

To encourage believers to realize and celebrate God's faithfulness and learn to trust Him.

**Memory Verse**

"Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, who doesn't look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods." Psalm 40:4

16

**INTRODUCTION**

The Psalms are a collection of words to songs by the Israelites. Originally, the Psalms were sung to express the feelings, emotions, and truths that their authors felt at the time of writing and were later used by the community. Psalm 40 is a personal song of thanksgiving for the faithfulness of God.

**I. The benefits of Waiting on God (Psalm 40:1-3)**

Waiting for a long or short time always requires patience. Yet, patience is one of the least practiced qualities today. As a society, we have come to accept that everything has to happen quickly – immediate satisfaction, fast food, fast internet, effective and fast teaching-learning methods, etc. Everything seems to move at a very fast pace, and fewer people have the patience needed to wait for things. However, the Psalmist shows that it pays to patiently wait upon the Lord. He begins the Psalm by saying: "I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry" (vs. 1). The time it took him to wait seems not to matter as he rejoices in the benefits he received. He waited: God turned to him and heard his cry, saved him from danger and set him in a safe place, and then gave him a new song in his mouth (vss. 2-3). Many times, we feel like God does not answer our prayers, but we are not patient enough to wait for His answer. As God's children we can rely on the Holy Spirit to help us to be patient (Galatians 5:22).

Many who may have seen the Psalmist's struggles, will now also see how the Lord saved him and put their trust in Him (vs. 3b). And since he benefitted together with many others because he waited for

the Lord, he could thus celebrate God (vs. 4-5; Isaiah 30:18b).

**Questions:**

What were the benefits of the Psalmist's waiting upon the Lord?

**II. God's Blessings for the Believer (Psalm 40:4-8)**

The Psalmist feels blessed because he trusted in the Lord and not in false gods and began to think about the many blessings he had received. He proclaims: "Many, Lord my God, are the wonders you have done, the things you planned for us" (v. 5). He recognized all the things that God has done and planned on their behalf. These wonders, the deeds of God, are "too many to declare" (vs. 5c). Not only are they many, but they also made the Psalmist realize the greatness of God: "None can compare with you..." (vs. 5b). Nobody, even the false gods (vs. 4b) can do what the Lord does. Also, he came to understand that God is not pleased with sacrifices without honesty; and fully committed himself to obedience and submission to God's will (vss. 6-8). Even today God's deeds towards believers are too many to tell and they all testify to His greatness and lead to a deeper relationship with Him. Everything that happens in

our lives can be used to increase our trust in God as we experience His faithfulness.

#### **Questions:**

Ask members to count their blessings in a word or phrase without repeating what has already been said and then discuss how they show God's faithfulness.

### **III. A celebration of God's faithfulness (Psalm 40:6-10)**

Following his commitment, and having rejoiced over the benefits of patiently waiting on God and the countless blessings of God, the Psalmist celebrates God's faithfulness. In the great assembly, he proclaims God's saving acts, he does not seal his lips (vs. 9). That the faithfulness of God is said twice in verse 10 shows how much the Psalmist appreciated this quality of God as it was revealed through His saving deeds. The Psalmist's experience with God drew him into a deeper understanding of His faithfulness, righteousness, and love, thus he could not seal his lips. But how could he have experienced these qualities in God?

The faithfulness of God means that He can be fully trusted and depended upon first, to love His people. In unfailing love, God always acts in the best interest of His children, thus the Psalmist could wait for Him even in a very difficult situation. Also, God's faithfulness means that He can be trusted to keep His Word. The Psalmist seems to have known that God watches over His Word to keep it (Jeremiah 1:12). Lastly, God's faithfulness is seen in His righteousness and justice. God, the righteous Judge will never make a mistake and will bring comfort to people who suffer wrong. Therefore, the Psalmist could wait on Him even when He seemed to take long. On the whole, God's faithfulness, taken seriously, must inspire believers to trust God and be patient in every situation.

#### **Question:**

What do you understand by God's faithfulness, love, and righteousness? How have you experienced them in your lives?

### **IV. Requesting divine help and protection (Psalm 40:11-15,17)**

In these verses, the Psalmist requested help and protection from God based on God's faithfulness and love (vs. 11). The troubles that had surrounded him were many, and some came because of his sins. He compared his many sins with the hairs on his head. The Psalmist possibly contrasted his many sins with the many favors of God (vs. 5, 9-10, 12).

But once he confessed his sin and his sad and troubled situation, he asked: "Be pleased to save me, Lord; come quickly, Lord, to help me" (vs. 13). This shows the Psalmist's integrity for he did not hide his sin. We too need to recognize and not hide when we have sinned. Then, we can ask God for help to live victoriously over sin every day. Assured of God's saving help according to His faithfulness, he prays that this experience will be a testimony that baffles the troublemakers (vss. 14-15). It should also make those seeking the Lord to "rejoice and be glad" in Him and to "always say, 'The LORD is great!'" (vs. 16). After a prayer for himself that the Lord may think of him although he is "poor and needy", he stated his sure trust in God, his help, his deliverer, and his God – proof that He trusts God's faithfulness.

Even in the most difficult affliction, we too need to turn to God and praise Him despite our circumstances. Can we wait patiently in times like these? Remember, patience is not being passive. While we are patient, God faithfully does His work in us.

#### **Question:**

The faithfulness of God brings joy to believers and confusion to unbelievers. True or False. Explain.

## **CONCLUSION**

Let us consecrate ourselves completely to God so that our lives may become living testimonies to His faithfulness. When we are going through times of affliction and need, let us trust the Lord and not forget to praise His name, for He will turn the situation into something helpful. He will also strengthen our commitment so that we can see what He is doing in our lives and His church. Let us share the stories of how God has blessed us, however small they may seem so that we may rejoice in the Lord's faithfulness together with the saints.

**Lesson  
06****THE CONFESSION OF A GREAT KING****Passage to Study:** Psalm 51**Lesson Aim**

To understand that true confession and repentance renew our relationship with God.

**Memory Verse**

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” Psalm 51:10.

**INTRODUCTION**

People in some areas of Guatemala hunt monkeys. To do this, they tie a clay jar with a small opening to a tree. They put peanuts inside the jar. A monkey smelling the peanuts, would squeeze its hand into the jar., grab the peanut, close its fingers around it, but it could not take its hand out of the jar. The answer was simple; all the monkey had to do was to let go of the peanut by opening its hand. However, the monkeys always clung to the peanut and that is how they were caught. At first glance, the clumsy action of these animals seems to be stupid; however, it is a good picture of what often happens when we sin. We persist in continuing to do wrong when we could just let go and be free.

This Psalm shows us what to do when we have sinned. It follows an event in which King David had committed sin (2 Samuel 11, 12). He tried to cover it up but God exposed him through the prophet Nathan. It is in this background that David wrote Psalm 51.

### **I. David confesses his sin and asks for forgiveness (Psalm 51:1-5)**

When the prophet Nathan pointed out King David’s sin (2 Samuel 12:7-9), the king adopted the right attitude (2 Samuel 12:13a). The first five verses of this Psalm reveal that David was crying out for God to show mercy to him. David’s conscience, which had been woken up by the Holy Spirit during the timely message of the prophet, recognized that he had done serious actions that God did not approve of.

The effect of sin on David was manifested in his body, in his mind, and his spirit; He was tangled up in sin and needed a way out. We must remember that before the arrival of the prophet Nathan, David was trying to act as if nothing had happened. But it is impossible to hide our sins from God. When he woke up to

this fact, he was filled with regret and deep sorrow for what he had done.

After appealing for God’s mercy, David made some key requests:“... blot out my transgressions “ (v. 1). David asked God to erase his rebellions (Psalm 51:2a). “... Cleanse me from my sin” (Psalm 51:2b). David begged God to cleanse him from sin; he wanted the divine surgeon to operate on his thoughts. People who are in high positions have a hard time recognizing their sins and deprive themselves of benefits from God. But not so with David on hearing Nathan’s story. This king was not afraid to admit his fault before God.

The behavior of some kings of Israel and Judah shows their unwillingness to admit their sin. The following chart shows some examples of those who did not listen to the voice of God:

King	Prophet	Verse
"Even after this, Jeroboam did not change his evil ways ..."	a prophet	1 Kings 13:33
"... [you, Baasha] caused my people Israel to sin..."	Jehu	1 Kings 16:2
"This is what the king [Ahab]: says: Put this fellow in prison..."	Micaiah	1 Kings 22:27

### Questions:

According to 2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12, what had David done wrong?

## II. David asks for spiritual renewal for his innermost being (Psalm 51:6-12)

David's personality had been affected by sin. As a famous king, he had experienced the care and power of God. He realized that without God, his innermost being was falling apart. The same happens today when Christians give in to sin. The apostle Paul exhorted us to take care of how we walk (1 Corinthians

10:12).

In these verses we can see that David felt his need to get right with God again, to renew the close relationship that he had enjoyed before. He asks God to hide His face from his sins (v. 9). He wants to "hear joy and gladness" (v. 8). Realizing that he has done something terribly wrong, he pleads: "Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me" (v. 11). David realizes that he needs to be changed completely – mind, body, and spirit. "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (v. 10). He desperately wants God to forgive him and renew the deep relationship that they had together before. "Restore to me the joy of your

salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me" (v. 12).

### Questions:

How does sin affect our thinking, our wills, and feelings?

What is the difference between confession and repentance?

## III. David's desire to do right before God (Psalm 51:14-17)

The Law of Moses included forms of atonement for sins, depending on how rich or poor people were so that every person could bring an offering for sin and its atonement (Leviticus 5:5-7). David could easily bring the sin and atonement sacrifices needed by law; nevertheless, David knew that God did not "delight in sacrifice" or "take pleasure in burnt offerings" (v. 16). He knew what God wanted: "...sacrifice" of "a broken spirit" and "a broken and contrite heart" (v. 17).

David had learned a deep lesson and he promised to "teach transgressors" God's ways, "so that sinners" could turn back to God (v. 13). The church needs to carry out this role, like Nathan, warning people of their sins. David too wanted to warn his people of the terrible results of sin. The great Hebrew poet who wrote Psalms and played music to king Saul asked God to: "Open" his "lips" so that his "mouth" could praise God (v. 15).

However, there is a sad side to David's story. God completely forgave his sins but the results remained in his family situation. Thus he is still the model king after God's own heart.

### Questions:

In what ways can we see that David was humble?

## CONCLUSION

David's humble attitude, admitting his sin before God, shows us the depth of his relationship with God. He truly repented of his sin and his relationship with God was restored. God healed his innermost being – the mind, body, and spirit. But sin has its results.

**Lesson  
07****KING DAVID'S LONGING FOR GOD****Passage to Study:** Psalm 63**Lesson Aim**

To encourage us as believers to have a deeper and more meaningful relationship with God.

**Memory Verse**

"You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water."  
Psalm 63:1

20

**INTRODUCTION**

David wrote this Psalm at a very difficult time in his life. He had been dethroned, although temporarily, and was forced to go to the dry arid desert. Maybe it was like those who have been forced into exile. For example, there are people here in Africa who are forced to leave their villages, cities, families, belongings, and much more because of politics. They end up in other parts of the world where they leave as strangers. Generally, these people have to face many difficulties in their daily lives.

David was east of the Jordan River (2 Samuel 15:23, 16:2, 17:16). This situation led king David to desire more than anything a close intimate relationship with God. This Psalm speaks clearly and firmly about the life of devotion to God. Although David wrote this Psalm in a crisis, he shows us his desire to have communion with God (vs. 1-2), as well as how David valued and esteemed God (vs. 3-4). Likewise, one cannot help but notice David's satisfaction in God (v. 5), the result of his closeness to Him (v. 6).

Regardless of our situation at this time, we can learn three important things from David: first, the value of a close relationship with God (vs. 1-4); second, how to praise God in difficult circumstances (vs. 5-8); and third, how the Lord protects and gives us victory in unpleasant situations (vs. 9-11).

**I. David's close relationship with God (Psalm 63:1-4)**

It is moving to hear David when he cried out: "You, God, are my God" (v. 1), in the middle of the desert. This expression is the result of the close and personal relationship David had with God. This same expression can sustain our spiritual lives in unpleasant circumstances or crisis. If we go back in history, from the Garden of Eden, we will realize that the relationship of human beings with God was broken because of sin; that is, the disobedience of man to the laws made by the Creator (Genesis 3:1-24). Since that conscious and voluntary act of the human will, we have lived far away from God. Thus the Bible says: "...for all

have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

However, despite this hostile reaction of man towards his Creator, God took the initiative to restore his relationship with us. The apostle John spoke of the greatness of God's love when he said the following: "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 (John 3:16).

While in the desert, David could foresee the glory of the Lord by faith and felt God's touch, thanks to his moments of communion with God in the sanctuary (Psalm 63:2). Thinking about this



experience was a motivating delight, which enabled David to face the desert with hope.

#### Questions:

According to Psalm 63:1-4, what are the elements that could prevent us from having an intimate and meaningful relationship with the Lord?

### II. David Praises God (Psalm 63:5-8)

David experienced that communion with God satisfies the devout soul. A church that only knows how to complain, but does not know how to be happy in any circumstance, does not know how to praise God at all times. The Psalmist's words should serve as a lesson today. Despite the desert, we can be sure of God. Our communion with God satisfies us more than anything else. In the midst of a crisis, we can praise God and be sure that His right hand supports us. Our churches need teaching about godly contentment today, rather than one of prosperity.

When we are close to our God, with grateful hearts, the words spoken by King David take on their meaning, regardless of our immediate circumstances: "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing...Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me..." (Psalm 23:1-4).

No grateful believers can meditate on all the benefits they have obtained from the Lord without supporting the words of gratitude, praise, and satisfaction that the Psalmist used in these verses: "I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips, my mouth will praise you...Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. I cling to you; your right hand upholds me" (Psalm 63:5,7-8).

#### Questions:

Regarding this passage, mention two situations in which you have experienced that only the hand of God was able to deliver you?

### III. David received God's promise of Protection (Psalm 63:9-11)

Here in Africa, it is common to talk about the world of spirits, witchcraft, fetishism (magic charm), etc. We are known worldwide for our animistic culture. That is, the belief that behind every object there is a spirit that can either harm or help us. Therefore, Africans claim that there are spirits in the sea, in the mountains, in the jungles, in the rocks, etc. This belief is also frequently seen in the Christian world. Many live always thinking about how to avoid the darts of their enemies (evil spirits). Others are looking for some so-called prophets or apostles to sell them water, salt, or protective oil. Most "evangelical cults" do not celebrate what Christ did for us, and are far from preaching the gospel of salvation and forgiveness of sins. All the time they talk about deliverance from some evil, spiritual warfare, and similar practices instead of rightly explaining God's word and living by it.

However, in the midst of this reality, the Psalmist's words must resound in our ears like thunder to lead us to a life of rest in the hands of the King of kings: "I cling to you; your right hand upholds me. Those who want to kill me will be destroyed; They will be given over to the sword... But the king will rejoice in God" (vv. 8-11).

In the Scriptures, we find many promises from the Lord where He offers us His protection. For this reason, there is no reason to be worried or to live in fear. On the contrary, we can sleep in peace and sleep safely, because the Lord helps us live with confidence (Psalm 4:8).

#### Questions:

Do you have any enemy or expect any threat?

Does King David's words apply to your situation (vs. 9-11)? Explain.

## CONCLUSION

Difficult situations in the lives of true Christians are to be expected. David's experience expressed in Psalm 63, when he was in the desert, serves as a model. Let us seek to build an intimate and meaningful relationship with God, and learn to praise him in all circumstances because He is our protector. Whatever our desert maybe, the Lord will give us victory.

**Lesson  
08****WHY DO THE WICKED PROSPER?****Passage to Study:** Psalm 73**Lesson Aim**

To understand that the goodness of God does not depend on circumstances, our expectations, or the decisions we make. God is good to His children all the time.

**Memory Verse**

“Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart” Psalm 73:1.

**INTRODUCTION**

Understanding that we live in a world that does not agree with our faith, way of life, and love for the Lord, can help us improve our lives in several ways. Regardless of our circumstances, we may experience what the Lord promises in His Word: “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7).

Some situations may arise in our lives as Christians because we have beliefs different from those around us. These beliefs cause unbelievers to see us as rare, old-fashioned, crazy, or with little understanding. Paul said to the Corinthians: “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Experiencing that damaging feeling of being treated unfairly can be difficult for the life of any believer.

**I. Why Do The Wicked Prosper? (Psalm 73:2-16)**

Many times, the Christian’s life is calm and peaceful, but at other times it is troubled, full of trials, problems and struggles. These difficult moments are very important because they can stop us from understanding what God is doing. The Psalmist wrote: “...I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked” (v. 3).

The truth is that some of the wicked take advantage of everyone and everything in order to achieve their desires. Often, they secretly act with dishonesty and tricks, like those of Satan. So, as children of God, we need to remain alert, for we can be tempted to take the easy and crooked path of the wicked. We can lose sight of the Lord, and end up in the wrong place: the outward happiness of the wicked.

Some believers may be tempted to want to be like the wicked (vs. 15-16), imitate them, and engage in their business, in order to be accepted or get some material benefit. We must be careful not to be dragged into their sins. A preacher once said: “Temptation exists. We cannot avoid it. It will come, it must come. The terrible thing is when God’s children yield to it”. Of course, these feelings and thoughts can come into our lives; but are we going to yield to them? The answer is found in the last verse of the Psalm, verse 28: “But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.” (v. 28).

**Questions:**

What is envy?

**II. The Psalmist Finds Answers (Psalm 73:1,17)**

We must not let outside influences affect us as God's children. But, when we are tempted like the Psalmist, what should we do? How can we avoid falling? Within this Psalm, we find a few important teachings. They are not the only ones, but they can make a difference:

A. The first is: "Surely God is good to Israel..." (v. 1). We need to keep in mind the fact that God is good to his children. Let us submit to God daily so that He can examine and cleanse our thoughts and motives by the power of His Holy Spirit.

B. The second important teaching is the constant search for the presence of God (vs. 16-17). Any envy we might feel for the riches of the wicked will go away as we gain God's viewpoint in a close relationship with Him, in our private prayer places! The Lord's presence teaches us, encourages, calms, comforts, satisfies, fills us with wisdom, helps us to grow and see life and people as God sees them. We will learn to know ourselves better and be shaped by His love and wisdom."

### **III. Difference Between The Ungodly and The Righteous (Psalm 73:18-28)**

In Christ, we have the promise of a full life on earth and an eternal life in His presence. Glory to the Lord!

The difference between an ungodly person and a righteous one lies mainly in the issue of salvation. Those who have put God aside will not fare well in the end, while those who have a close relationship with the Lord, trusting in Him and seeking His help in life's paths and decisions, will enjoy eternal salvation. For a person justified by the blood of Christ, the outward things cease to be the most important. Also, problems and pain may exist in our lives, as is common with everyone, but the righteous are not alone, for God's rod and staff will lead them (Psalm 23:4). Even more wonderful is that "...we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

#### **Questions:**

Describe the difference between the ungodly and the righteous.

According to the passage studied, what is the end of the wicked?

---

## **CONCLUSION**

---

Always keep in mind that God is good to those with clean hearts, and that our end will be glorious: sharing the riches of our wonderful Lord Jesus Christ.



**Lesson  
09****GOD HEARS OUR PRAYERS****Passage to Study : Psalm 83****Lesson Aim**

To learn to depend on God in prayer at all times with the assurance that God will always answer.

**Memory Verse**

“Let them know that you, whose name is the Lord — that you alone are the Most High over all the earth” Psalm 83:18.

24

**INTRODUCTION**

The Psalmist presented a very detailed description of the times when God’s people were attacked, and could not face it in their army. They had to turn to God immediately and make their requests clearly and precisely. Psalm 83 has two divisions: 1) Verses 1 through 8, in which the call to God is made, and the problem that was approaching the people of Israel is described. 2) Verses 9 through 18 are a call of the people to God, in which they stated what they hoped He would do. This leads us to understand that this Psalm is considered “imprecatory” (a request that God would take revenge against the enemies of his people; curse).

This type of Psalm also seems to be in opposition to the words of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, but it is good to note that in the Old Testament, the Israelites frequently spoke of Jehovah’s wrath against peoples who did not live under the law of God and who disrespected His name.

**I. The Reason for Israel’s Prayer (Psalm 83:1-8)**

A. There came a time that they thought they were alone (vs. 1-3)

The first reaction of God’s children is to think that He is not listening. We constantly expect quick answers, and thus, show that we like to try to manage God’s times and how He should listen and respond. It is important to note how the Psalmist used possessive adjectives and personal second-person pronouns in verses 2 and 3. This is to highlight that those who attacked God’s people were attacking the Lord directly; the enemies of His people were His enemies. Likewise, these adjectives and pronouns teach us that when enemies try to destroy God’s people, in reality, they are attacking God himself, although perhaps they do not see it in that way.

B. The way in which the enemies of God’s people act (v. 3)

The enemies of God’s people have always used dark ways to destroy them. Many of the enemies of God’s people not only want to destroy, but they are also investing money to carry out these purposes. In some cases, they use people in the service of God to achieve their ends (Numbers 22).

C. A coalition to attack God’s people (vs. 4-8)

It is interesting to see how the enemies of God were able to unite against the Israelites. In the call to destroy the people of God, all these peoples are mentioned, and although they were enemies of each other, they had something in common ... a desire to destroy God’s people. Throughout the Old Testament, we see that the nations around them wanted to destroy Israel. Joshua 11:1-5 tells us how a group of kings and their people went out to fight against Israel to destroy them; and in 2 Samuel 8, we also read how pagan peoples united to fight against Israel. So, we can learn in many other Bible passages that this was repeated constantly.

Right now, there are several threats against the church as God's people. One of these is regarding teachings on gender and the pressure of the gay lobby. In the name of the freedom of the human being, governments pass laws contrary to the freedoms of other human beings. When churches raise their voice, they are said to fear and dislike gay people or are backward. The political parties in power have difficulties agreeing on many matters, but in one voice in this matter, they attack the church.

### Questions:

According to verses 1 through 8, how should we approach God in prayer?

## II. A Very Strong Prayer (Psalm 83:9-18)

The Psalmist continued to remember what God had done with other kings and nations in the past in favor of His people.

### A. Remember God's great victories

The Israelites asked that God would set them free, as He did when He delivered them from Midian (Judges

7:1-27) and against Sisera and Jabin (Judges 4:13-14). Let us note that these two cases are mentioned in the book of Judges. Also, that in the first case, the people of Israel were delivered without using their army, and that in the second case, it was a woman, Deborah, who led the battle, although in a society where women did not go to war.

### B. Why did God destroy their enemies? (V. 12)

Firstly: the enemies were against the people of God and as a result had decided in their hearts to take over the lands that the people of Israel had. Secondly: they put themselves above God. These peoples created their own rules, made their values, and in the madness of wanting to be God, made decisions against the will of the Lord.

It is interesting to notice how in Psalm 83:12 those peoples wanted to be heirs of God's dwellings. Today, some people or governments have wanted to take the lands that belong to the church and, therefore, to the Lord. But God has always fought those battles for His people and the church has regained its properties.

### C. The curse (vs. 13-16)

Imprecatory (curse) prayers were what God's people prayed for against their enemies. We must make it clear that the church was not commanded to pray for the destruction of its enemies. However, it is entrusted to pray for the destruction of evil plans. Likewise, we must pray for God to change the heart of the enemy, and thus be sensitive to the voice of the Lord.

### D. A wonderful purpose in prayer

One of the tasks of the church today is to pray for God to interfere when someone is trying to destroy His people. We also need to consider that we have a missionary responsibility even towards those who are opposing us. They too need to know God as their Savior and Lord.

### Questions:

What is the importance of remembering what God has done in the past in favor of his people? Should the church cry out with prayers of cursing against those who oppress or try to destroy them? Why or why not?

## CONCLUSION

Throughout history, God's people have suffered battles of all kinds. Societies have sought in one way or another to attack them and to destroy them. This, like everything else, is a result of sin in the human race. However, in the midst of all this, we must remember that as God's people, we can and should cry out in prayer when they attack us, pleading with God to act because of His great love for His church.

**Lesson  
10****GOD IS OUR REFUGE****Passage to Study:** Psalm 91**Lesson Aim**

To know we have God's protection, and cling to this promise.

**Memory Verse**

"Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name" Psalm 91:14.

26

**INTRODUCTION**

Can we trust God's protection? A mother and her four-year-old daughter were getting ready for bed. The girl was afraid of the dark and, on that occasion, alone with just her mother, she also felt somewhat frightened. When the light went out, the girl saw the moon through the window, and said to her mother: "Mommy, I want you to tell me, is the moon God's light?" The mother replied: "Yes, little daughter." Then the girl asked, "Will God turn off His light to sleep?" The mother replied: "No, my daughter. God never falls asleep." Then, with all the simplicity of her childhood faith, the girl said: "Well, if God is awake; I'm not afraid".

**I. Solid affirmations about God's protection (Psalm 91:1-2)**

A. "Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High" (v. 1a)

In this text, to dwell is to live in the 'shelter' of the Most High. The Lord Jesus mentioned this in his sad lament over Jerusalem: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing" (Matthew 23:37) We see in this God's interest in caring for and protecting us.

B. "... will rest in the shadow of the Almighty" (v. 1b)

Here the Psalmist invites us to rest in God's shadow. In the heat of the Mediterranean sun, the rocks provided cool shadows for the weary travelers to rest. God invites us to have a permanent attitude of restfulness. Both the

'shelter' (v. 1a) and the 'rest' (v. 1b) offer us relief from the stresses and difficulties that twenty-first (21st) century everyday life throws at us.

C. Statement of trust (v. 2)

Verse 2 states: "...He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." We can trust Him because He gives us refuge – a safe place, and he says that He is our fortress. He is the rock of our salvation.

**Questions:**

Name two reasons why you are sure that God protects you.

**II. Description of God's sweet and wonderful protection (Psalm 91:3-13)**

A. Several pictures of God's protection (vv. 3-6)

From verses 3 to 6, the Psalmist uses several pictures to describe how God acts to protect His children. These were taken from the

experiences of daily, community, or national life of Israel of those times. He promises to save us from:

“...The fowler’s snare” (v. 3a); “...from the deadly pestilence” such as Ebola, (v. 3b); “...the terror of the night” (v. 5a); “...the arrow that flies by day” (v. 5b); “...the pestilence that stalks in the darkness” such as Covid 19 today (v. 6a); “...nor the plague that destroys at midday” (v. 6b).

We are protected “... under His wings (v. 4a); and His faithfulness is our “...shield and rampart” (v. 4b).

B. Extraordinary things that God will do to protect us (vs. 7-13)

The Psalm mentions unique acts that God will do to protect us: He will save us from death in the midst of battle (v.7); from harm and disaster (v. 10); angels will be sent to protect us (vs. 11-12).

We will step on fierce and poisonous beasts (v. 13). However, we must note that this expression is an exaggeration. We all know that it is not a good idea to go around treading on snakes or lions. What the Psalm is emphasizing is that God is there with us in every situation that we have to deal with. We have to trust in Him.

#### Questions:

Name the different things that God promises to protect the Psalmist from?

### III. Final divine provision (Psalm 91:14-16)

For those who have put their love in God, He declares the following:

A. God promises to rescue the Psalmist (v. 14b)

God promises to rescue those who acknowledge Him. It comes back to the first verse of the psalm. We need to continue to have a close relationship with God, recognizing that He is the only one who deserves our worship and praise and our obedient consecration.

B. Interact with them in worship (v.15)

This interaction of God is seen in three very brief statements that God made to the Psalmist but which are still relevant for us today:

“He will call on me, and I will answer him” (v. 15a); “I will be with him in trouble” (v. 15b); and “...I will deliver him and honor him” (v. 15c).

C. Satisfy them with a long life (v. 16)

God’s plans can be hindered, but not eliminated. He established a plan so that we could live forever with Him. He sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross, bearing our sins, so that by believing in Him, we will be free from all condemnation and live eternally with Him.

#### Questions:

What three things does God promise to the Psalmist?

## CONCLUSION

One of the things we want most is security. God knows about this longing and satisfies it with all the promises he gives us in Psalm 91. All of us must stop trusting in ourselves and begin to love God, believe in Him, and place all our trust in Him. This Psalm is like a spiritual balm to help eliminate our anxieties, calm our fears, and ensure our continued divine protection.

**Lesson  
11****WISE ADVICE AGAINST IDOLATRY****Passage to Study: Psalm 115****Lesson Aim**

To understand the nature of idolatry and the correct meaning of trusting in God.

**Memory Verse**

“Do not turn to idols or make metal gods for yourselves. I am the Lord your God” Leviticus 19:4.

**INTRODUCTION**

Psalm 115 begins with the exaltation of God and the denial of all praise for man. The writer desired that no man would steal the glory due to God. It is common for humans to want applause for their actions. But Psalm 115 calls us to give all worship, praise, and glory only to God, even when we have achieved something. The first verse says: “Not to us, Lord, not to us but your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.” If we have been able to do something worthy of praise, it is because God in his never-ending love and faithfulness has allowed us to achieve it.

By nature, we want to give worship although sometimes we wrongly give it to ourselves or other gods. The pagan nations, seeing that the Jews refused self-worship and did not have an idol system as they had, wondered: Where is your God now?

The Psalmist answers the question by showing four serious thoughts to be kept in mind if we want to please God. This advice contains replies to the idolatry of the world. Let us examine this wise advice:

**I. A serious warning: Idols are useless (Psalm 115:4-8)**

For the Psalmist, our God is everywhere and is all-powerful. Even though his presence lies in heaven, He has all power on earth. On this basis he warns us that idols are useless and gives these reasons:

**A. Idols are senseless (vs. 5-7)**

“They have mouths, but cannot speak...” (v. 5a); “... they have eyes, but they cannot see” (v. 5b). “They have ears, but cannot hear...” (v. 6a). A good example of the uselessness of idolatry is found in 1 Kings 18:20-40. On that occasion, Elijah challenged the followers of Baal and Asherah (Phoenician idols). They cried all day asking their gods to send fire. But nothing happened because although idols had the shape of ears, they could not hear. On the contrary, Elijah prayed and the Lord of heaven heard and answered.

In addition, they have “... noses, but cannot smell” (v. 6b); “...They have hands, but cannot feel” (v. 7a), “... feet, but cannot walk ...” (v. 7b). They cannot “utter a sound with their throats...” (v. 7c).

**B. Those who make them are like them (v. 8)**

Psalm 115:8 ends by saying: “Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.” Unfortunately, an idol is like its maker because of its uselessness. Just as we, who worship the true God, want to be more like our God, the idol worshipper becomes like his or her idol, useless and vain.

**Questions:**

What do you understand about idolatry?

**II. A serious instruction: Trust in God (Psalm 115:9-11)**

After the Psalmist revealed the true state of idols, he made this serious instruction to the people: trusting the Lord is better, much better. To the people of Israel: “All you Israelites, trust in the Lord ...” (v. 9)

Israel was the people chosen by God, a people who were born from the thought and heart of God. Going after other gods was a betrayal of their Creator and Maker. The great instruction is this: “Set aside these idols that are of no use to you. Israel trust in God.”

A. To the priests: “House of Aaron, trust in the Lord ...” (v. 10)

Although today all of us who belong to Christ are priests (1 Peter 2:9), at that time, the priests served alone in the temple. Unfortunately, many priests in the Psalmist’s time had turned from the true worship of God.

Today, as priests of Christ, we must be very careful of the secret ways in which the devil wants to turn us away from the true worship of God. We may not have physical idols like statues, but we may accept idols of flesh and blood, like preachers, singers, etc., or things thought to be holy as the Bible, cross, dove, etc. For example, the cross is a symbol of salvation, but it is not the means of salvation. The same goes for the Bible that people respect and even leave open at Psalm 91 in their sitting room, but often never read or obey what it says.

B. To all worshippers: “You who fear him, trust in the Lord ...” (v. 11)

This verse seems to include people who were not Jews (verse 9), foreigners who, though not Jewish by birth, were added to the people of Israel, for they loved and honored God. Just like us, who are not Jews by birth, but fear and honor God. It is senseless for someone to say, “I fear God,” and be an idolater. However, even in our times, we can confuse our fear of God with idolatry. The devil is very cunning and can lead us astray in our trust in God.

Each verse of Psalm 115:9-11 ends by telling us: “He is their help and shield.” In this expression, there are two reasons why we have to trust God, and not the gods who do nothing for us. The greatest help we have received from God has been to get us out of the mud of our sin and save us. And the best shield is that he protects us from the devil’s tricks. An idol needs to be protected and helped. On the contrary, God protects us and helps us because we are special to Him.

### Questions:

What were the different groups that the Psalmist named, and in which of these groups are you? Comment.

### III. A serious promise: True blessing (Psalm 115:12-15)

If we put our absolute trust in the Maker of heaven and earth, surely we will also have his blessing.

Paul wrote to the brothers and sisters of the church in Ephesus who had turned away from idols to the only true God through Jesus Christ. He mentioned a list of spiritual blessings they had earned through their newly found faith. That is, by choosing Christ and not idols, they had received, as we have, the following blessings (Ephesians 1:1-13): a heavenly place (v. 3), to be adopted as His children (v. 5), have redemption through his blood and forgiveness of sins (v. 7), be overabundant in wisdom and intelligence (v. 8), attain knowledge of God’s will (v. 9), be His heirs (v. 11), bring praise to God’s glory (v. 12), and receiving the seal of the Holy Spirit (v. 13).

### Questions:

In your view, what do you think are the divine blessings that have come to you?

### IV. A serious decision: A call to praise His name (Psalm 115:16-18)

No one in the world, or above in the heavens, or below the earth or under the waters, or anywhere else, deserves worship; this belongs to almighty God alone – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Through Jesus Christ, we give all our worship to God the owner of the heavens. The Psalmist says we should praise God while we live; because once we die, our praise will not be heard, since “It is not the dead who praise the Lord, those who go down to the place of silence; ...” (Psalm 115:17).

### Questions:

What words would you say today in praise to God?

## CONCLUSION

Idolatry is the most common sin in the Old and New Testaments, and continues into the present times. The warning is clear: “Do not turn to idols ...” (Leviticus 19:4). Perhaps, we do not worship man-made idols of saints or virgins, but other things like family, work, or hobbies become our idols! We must not allow anything or anyone to steal time and glory due to God. Let us be true worshippers of God in spirit and truth (John 4:24).



**Lesson  
12****PLACING OUR TRUST IN GOD****Passage to Study:** Psalm 125**Lesson Aim**

To recognize the way in which God protects the righteous, and learn to trust Him more.

**Memory Verse**

“Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever” Psalm 125:1.

30

**INTRODUCTION**

“A Song of Ascents” is a collection of 15 Psalms (from 120 to 134). These Psalms were sung by the Jews who traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the three great annual feasts ordained by God: The Passover or The Festival of Unleavened Bread (liberation), The Festival of Weeks (thanksgiving), and The Festival of Tabernacles (God’s faithfulness) (Exodus 23:14-17; Deuteronomy 16:1-17). These Psalms express the thinking of pilgrims who are away from home, seeking peace, protection, provision, help, and safety on their way to the temple.

Jerusalem is known as Mount Zion. It is located on a hill about 700 or 1000 meters above sea level. Because of its elevation, travelers always went ‘up’ to Jerusalem (John 2:13). Psalm 125 belongs to this collection, and without a doubt, as we study this lesson we will identify with the thoughts, feelings, needs, and beliefs of these traveling Jews, and the divine protection we can receive while on our journey in this world.

**I. God gives security to the righteous (Psalm 125:1-2)**

The Psalm is a song of joy for the security that God offers to those who walk in integrity.

**A. Who are the righteous?**

The righteous are those who practice justice. Righteousness is received by faith, by learning what is taught about it and then putting it into practice. It is enjoyed based on a special relationship of communion with God (Habakkuk 2:4).

Through faith in Christ, we receive God’s justification and His grace enables us to live justly and righteously.

**B. God’s promises for the righteous (vs. 1-2)**

1. Rest and stability. “Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion ...” (v. 1).

2. Constant security. “As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people both now and forevermore.” (v. 2).

God assured His presence to Jerusalem through Zechariah: “‘And I myself will be a wall of fire around it,’ declares the Lord, ‘and I will be its glory within’” (Zechariah 2:5). He dwells in the hearts of the righteous, and they exclaim with certainty along with the Psalmist: “For you have been my hope, Sovereign Lord, my confidence since my youth” (Psalm 71:5). Jeremiah testified: “But the Lord is with me like a mighty warrior; so, my persecutors will stumble and not prevail ...” (Jeremiah 20:11).

**Questions:**

Those who trust in God enjoy calmness and stability. Can you mention some other reasons to continue trusting God and be grateful?

**II. God protects the righteous (Psalm 125:3)**

A. God puts an end to the cruelty of the oppressor (v. 3a)

1. God takes great care of his people.

When Pharaoh oppressed the Israelites, they cried out and God heard their groan. He came down to deliver them and led them to the land flowing with milk and honey (Exodus 3:8). The church is the people of God, “the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). So, the enemy has no power over her; Jesus guaranteed that “... I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18).

2. God delivers the righteous from all danger. “Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more because God took him away” (Genesis 5:24); God saved

Noah from the flood (Genesis 6:18); Lot was saved from death (2 Peter 2:7); God told Moses in time of affliction: “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest” (Exodus 33:14-15); David was freed from the envy and hatred of Saul (1 Samuel 23:10-14); Daniel and his friends were saved from death (Daniel 3:27, 6:22). Paul affirmed that those who love God have the promise of being more than conquerors through him who loved us, Jesus Christ (Romans 8:28,37).

B. He guards the righteous from temptation (v. 3b)

God has promised security, protection, supplying and blessing. But he also knows that when the oppressor and corrupt government of the wicked are prolonged, the pious are tempted to sin through doubting, rebelling, breaking God’s law, and talking back to the Lord. So, the righteous need to live in intimate communion with God to stand firm when facing trials and ask to be strengthened like Abraham (Genesis 22:12), and victorious before temptation like Joseph (Genesis 39:21,23, 50:20), have integrity like Job (Job 42:10) and triumphant as Jesus was (Matthew 4:10-11). God has promised to keep the righteous. “... God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond

what you can bear” (1 Corinthians 10:13); He will not let the righteous fall forever but will sustain and help them (Psalm 55:22).

### Questions:

Do you remember any difficult situation in which you have found yourself? Share how God delivered you.

### III. God fills the righteous with good things (Psalm 125:4-5)

A. The prayer of the righteous (v. 4)

“Lord, do good to those who are good, to those who are upright in heart” (v. 4). In God’s covenant with Israel, the rule of blessing was for those who walk in communion with Him and obey His commandments (Deuteronomy 28:1).

But what is the greatest good that people can receive? It is salvation. That is, “Immanuel” which means God with us (Matthew 1:23) and in us. Jesus said: “apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). It is the presence of Christ that makes us good and upright and enables us to have good manners and actions.

B. The end of those who abandon the straight path (v. 5)

The Psalmist said that those who abandon the duty to honor God would be condemned. The prophet Isaiah lamented: “But those who turn to crooked ways the Lord will banish with the evildoers” (v. 5). Isaiah 3:11 says: “Woe to the wicked! Disaster is upon them! They will be paid back for what their hands have done.” The psalmist concluded with a prayer: “Peace be on Israel.” Christ is our peace. He has put an end to the oppression of sin because when we were weak, he met us; when we were sinners, he died for us; when we were enemies with Him, he reconciled us to Himself and saved us from His wrath (Romans 5:6-10). He has given us freedom, security, and communion, and has promised to be with us until the end. Our trust must be placed in Him.

### Questions:

How many benefits have you received through prayer? Mention some of them.

## CONCLUSION

Psalm 125 teaches us that God is Almighty. And, the wonderful thing is that He uses His power to constantly protect us because He loves us with eternal love (Jeremiah 31:3). God dwells in our hearts, and also gives us His protection. We need to renew our trust in Him and reaffirm together with the Psalmist that: “Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion...” (Psalm 125:1a).



**Lesson  
13****PRAISE AND WORSHIP GOD****Passage to Study:** Psalm 149; 150**Lesson Aim**

To use the Psalmist's rules of praise today.

**Memory Verse**

"Praise the Lord. Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of his faithful people" Psalm 149:1.

32

**INTRODUCTION**

Psalm 149 and Psalm 150 are part of the group of four Psalms (146-150) located at the end of the book of Psalms. They all begin and end in the same way with: 'Hallelujah', which means 'Praise the Lord! This group of Psalms forms a detailed hymn of praise for the book, and its main theme is praise to God. They are Psalms for public worship, to be sung in the weekly celebrations (services) of believers. This way of beginning and ending the Psalms gives us the idea of the festive tone they suggest when they are sung. In addition to exalting God, these texts provide specific reasons to praise Him. They suggest ways of expressing worship to God, the use of musical instruments, and talk about the places where we praise God.

These two Psalms point to praise as part of the customary weekly celebration in the life of believers of the time. While in Psalm 149, praise is encouraged everywhere with joy and expressions of joy, Psalm 150 deals more with the musical instruments that were used at that time.

**I. Praise God all his people (Psalm 149)**

Psalm 149 calls first for praise to take place in the congregation of saints, and for this praise to be a new song (v.1). This is interesting for as we have already mentioned, it is a Psalm for public worship, to be sung in celebrations by believers. We assume, then, that it was sung many times. So, what does 'new' mean (v. 1a)? Although it may refer to new songs, here, the use seems to suggest expressions of new, fresh feelings and emotions.

The second part of Psalm 149:1 says: "... his praise in the assembly of his faithful people." We understand that the center of praise is God, and the expression, 'his praise', indicates that the focus of the celebration is on God Himself. There are a number of subtle ways to change the focus of praise and worship in our services. When this activity stops being a pastoral task (a ministry) and becomes a show of musical talent, then praise stops to be part of the speech between God and His congregation. It thus becomes the

center of the celebration. On some occasions, it is possible that praise may be turned into a mini-concert where there are actors and spectators, disturbing community worship.

Praise in this Psalm identifies a congregation that is engaged in warfare and faithfully obeys God's will. Likewise, the fact that in this Psalm praise is linked to revenge and judgment is totally unusual. As emotional beings, we need to 'feel' the presence of God. However, what confirms our relationship with God is how we act day by day.

**Questions:**

In what sense should praise be a new song?

**II. Praise God for what He is and does (Psalm 150:1-2)**

The Psalmist here highlights three qualities of God, and therefore encouraged those benefiting to praise God. He did this with three phrases full of emotion: "... praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his

surpassing greatness ...” (vv. 1-2). It is impossible to read this final part of the praise-hymn softly. It communicates strong feelings of joy, gratitude, and devotion. Psalm 150 encourages us to praise God for what He has done, for what He continues to do, and for what He is.

We, who are part of the great family of God, celebrate what He does for us, and what it means for each one and for the people of which we are apart.

#### **Questions:**

Just as the Jewish people celebrated their history, what do we celebrate?

### **III. Praise God with every instrument (Psalm 150:3-5)**

In this section, instead of commenting on musical instruments, let us talk about music, remembering that praise generally refers to the chanted expression of worship. Music unites believers. All worship is directed to God and it is a celebration by the entire congregation. All people come together to sing to God in addition to musical instruments. Music spreads evangelical beliefs. Jesus is present in praise when beliefs such as ‘sharing’, ‘living in community’ and ‘serving’ are enacted.

In Psalms 149 and 150, we are encouraged to join in praising God as a congregation in the sanctuary (v. 1a), using all the instruments of the temple band.

There are three types of instruments mentioned in Psalm 150: wind, string, and striking. Those of wind mentioned were: the horn or shophar also called ram’s horn in Joshua 6:4. This was an

instrument used to give signals and not to play melodies.

The string instruments were next. The psaltery or nebel was a type of harp. It was a small instrument with 8 or 10 strings made of lamb gut, probably like the one David used to comfort King Saul.

The striking instruments were the following: tambourines, which may well resemble the current tambourine. The instruments mentioned in this Psalm are those that made up the band of the temple. There were other musical instruments used in public parties and private celebrations that were not allowed in the temple.

The Church of the Nazarene around the world is old enough to reflect, give opinions and decide on the forms of praise that best enrich the discussion between the people and God in celebrating the weekly service. Our cultures are spiced with many contributions, as well as the particular way of understanding the Scriptures of the Nazarene people. Our cultural identities modify the form of the worship, the duration of the celebrations, the musical instruments we use, the tunes, and the rhythms that are most expressive to us, including our physical posture, among other qualities. We experience moments of memories, amazement, and deep respect; and at the same time respectful fear mixed with the natural joy that arises from a lively and energetic relationship with our God.

#### **Questions:**

List three instruments that were used in the temple band at the time that Psalm 150 was written.

What is the role of music in public worship?

## **CONCLUSION**

These last two ‘alleluia’ Psalms serve as a bridge between the praise in the time of the Psalmist and the ways of praise for today. Likewise, the beliefs that identity us are shown in the content of praise, words of songs, prayer, preaching, and offerings. Our worship and praise is the vehicle that describes and expresses the truths we believe. It is not about imitating ritual expressions, or following fashions online. We need to worship by thinking about the words we sing, and by expressing our praise to God together.

**Lesson  
14****GOD'S PEOPLE ARE A COMPASSIONATE  
PEOPLE**

Passage to Study: Matthew 9:36; 14:14-21; 22:37-39 25:34-45; Luke 14:13; John 14:12

**Lesson Aim**

To understand that Jesus commands us to show compassion, to live it and to apply it every day in whatever situation we find ourselves.

**Memory Verse**

“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd”  
Matthew 9:36.

34

**INTRODUCTION**

Begin the class by asking participants to name examples or share testimonies of compassionate actions that could occur in different areas of life such as school, work, and church. Then, based on the examples mentioned, develop a definition of compassion together with the participants, and write it down. Conclude the activity by explaining that while we understand compassion to be that feeling of identifying with the suffering of our neighbors and finding actions we can carry out to relieve or stop their suffering, we can get a more complete understanding of the meaning of this word through the Scriptures, especially, through the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Christian compassion is presented as a command from God that, when driven by His love, believers are led to carry out actions of unity in favor of those who suffer. Unlike those carried out by charity groups and non-governmental organizations dedicated to helping others, Christian compassionate actions result from the work of God in our lives, and they are expressed, not only as visible actions of love for our neighbors but as a lifestyle. In this lesson, compassion will be discussed from the viewpoint of the Bible, by looking at the teachings, life, and work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**I. Compassion is a command**

The Bible indicates that it is not possible to serve God while ignoring the needs of others. This is a command that the Lord makes to His people, and which is recorded in different passages of the law that he gave to Israel. For example, in Deuteronomy 24:20-21, God said: “When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow. When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow.”

It is in Jesus that this command for compassion can be seen in His life and teaching. He considered

people in a whole and complete way: preaching, teaching and healing all diseases and all ailments in the people (Matthew 4:23). Jesus saw people's needs and placed a great emphasis on the importance of considering compassion as a response to God's great commandment: “Jesus replied, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37-39). In this way, Jesus is the foundation for Christian compassion. And, our social responsibility is part of our relationship with God by taking special care of those who suffer the most. Thus, compassion is not an option for Christians, but it is one of God's commands,

seen in Christ and taught by Him. Every disciple needs to show compassion with joy and in holy obedience.

The compassionate life, as a response to the command of Jesus, is a life driven by love that is proven by actions that seek to make loving neighbors the priority. Christian love makes it possible for believers to share what they have with the poor, the handicapped, the lame, and the blind (Luke 14:13). This is the bond that unites us in Christian love.

#### **Questions:**

Why do we affirm that compassion is not an option for the Christian?

### **II. Compassion is love in action**

Jesus' compassion was reflected in visible compassionate actions. (Matthew 14:14) The Lord stopped His schedule and healed the sick that were in the group that was waiting for Him near the sea. This compassionate action of Jesus, prompted by love, happened again at dusk when he fed the crowd (Matthew 14:15-21). On many occasions, we may feel that we do not have all the means we would like to have to act with compassion, and it is here where faith becomes more obvious. Remember the feeding of the 5,000 was done with only five loaves and two fish (Matthew 14:19).

The teachings of Christ can be seen through us when we help our neighbors and get involved in such a way that we can serve Him with love and joy.

#### **Questions:**

How did Jesus express his compassionate character?

### **III. Compassion is a way of life**

Compassion is a lifestyle that proves the fruit of the Holy Spirit's compassionate way of life that is unfailing and is supported by the Scriptures. On the other hand, we need to be clear that

compassion is much more than the compassionate actions of believers. Compassion reflects that Christ lives in our lives and leads us to do the things that He did (John 14:12).

It is important that those who want to get involved in working with the needs that the social demands of today pose, bear in mind that compassionate actions must be understood within the framework of the actions of the holy life. One has to acknowledge that Christian love, expressed in compassion, expects nothing in return, which is a value contrary to that which prevails in many of our current societies. However, we receive our reward from Christ himself because He sees us as we serve with joy and fullness those who are invisible in a marginalized world (Matthew 25:34-45).

In addition to the believer's involvement in compassionate ministries carried out by the congregation, or in social actions carried out as members of a community, it will be in the sphere of daily life where we will be able to put into practice more quickly Christ's compassionate character in Matthew 9:36 where we read: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." The love for those who suffer will make us commit ourselves to help people we would never have thought of caring for. We would also serve the weakest and most underprivileged areas. This we will do in places that, perhaps, we would never have visited were it not for having decided to allow the compassionate character of Christ to be increasingly formed in us.

#### **Questions:**

What does it mean to have a compassionate lifestyle?

## **CONCLUSION**

People often have different perceptions about the meaning of compassion, mistaking it even for charity. But believers have a clear description of its meaning and the way to carry it out in the Scriptures, especially through the teachings and work of Jesus Christ. So, for the church, compassion is not an option, but the response to God's command that is made clear in a lifestyle that shows the holy character of Jesus as we act selflessly for those in need in the midst of great social challenges. Acting with compassion in all spheres of our lives requires seeing people as Christ sees them, and taking steps to change their unpleasant reality.

**Lesson  
15**

# **GOD'S PEOPLE ARE CALLED TO TRAIN OTHERS**

Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians, 3:18; Ephesians 4:11-16

## **Lesson Aim**

To understand the importance of education in the church as an instrument for the fulfillment of God's mission.

## **Memory Verse**

"...to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up"  
Ephesians 4:12.

36

## **INTRODUCTION**

When we think about the role that education plays among the members of the church, many questions may arise like: What makes Christian education different? What is the basis of our task in education? And what is the purpose of God's people being formed? These are key questions for our lesson today. The first is related to the nature of Christian education; the second, to its foundation; and the third, to its reason for existing its purpose.

### **I. The nature of Christian education: a process of shaping God's people (Ephesians 4:12-16)**

According to the Scriptures, Christian education is a process that is different from any other for several very important reasons:

- A. It is a process that focuses on the importance of the person being formed, and not merely on the mind. The whole person is included (Luke 2:52).
- B. The student is not an object in the educational process, but a subject that actively participates in it. Based on the Bible, we accept that people have been created in God's Image (Imago Dei) (Genesis 1:27), and as such, have in themselves the ability to reflect, learn and understand as thinking beings.
- C. The training period is not a stage in the person's life with an end. Rather, it is a life-long process in the continuous development of being ready for the challenges of the Christian life, and in seeking fullness in Christ (Ephesians 4:13,15).

### **Questions:**

How different is Christian education from other types of education? Please complete the following comparison chart.

Christian Education	Other Types of Education

### **II. The Word of God is the foundation for Christian education (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Acts 2:42; 2 Corinthians 3:18)**

The Scriptures show us that God is basically, the great Teacher who is deeply interested in forming His people. He has made himself known and, as a sign of His highest desire to identify himself with His creation, He made himself man in the person of Jesus Christ (Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 1:1-2). We could not know Him if He had not revealed Himself to us. God's intention to teach is a common thread that runs throughout the Scriptures.

- A. In the Pentateuch



In the model of education designed by God himself, the role of the Hebrew father was key for the education of his children. That responsibility was based on the passing on of the Shema, which is the most important prayer in Judaism (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). According to the Scriptures, the method of shaping the people of God begins within the family and is passed on from generation to generation. That has been the secret of the survival of the people of God through the centuries, and it is certainly good advice for the church today.

#### B. In the historical and prophetic books

The Historical books are full of wonderful stories that show us the character, faithfulness, love, forgiveness, power, and mercy of God. Highlights of God's action in the past become a label, the identity of His people. In the books of the prophets, God Himself, through His direct spokesmen, the prophets, spoke to actual situations in the life of the people of Israel in order to offer them instruction, warning, judgment, and mercy.

#### C. In the Gospels

When we study the New Testament, it is essential to recognize that the greatest sign of God's intention in teaching was given when God became man through Jesus Christ. Through this event, Jesus, the Son of God, identified with the human race, showing Himself and sharing not only His teachings but also His own life. The Lord said it: "... He who has seen me has seen the Father ..."

#### D. In the Book of Acts

The early church had teaching as one of its main ministries. The passage in Acts 2:42, referring to this practice in the life of the early Christians,

says: "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching..." That teaching did not refer to the instruction about a body of beliefs required to become a member of the church, but to the passing on of the basic teachings of Jesus by word of mouth.

#### E. In the Epistles

The Epistles are a clear example of the extension of God's educational action on His young church in the setting of the first century. Especially in the books of Paul, the importance of the shaping of the believer is always present. For Paul, God's demand for the Christian's life was to be perfected to the measure of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 1:6; Colossians 1:28-29). Thus believers are called to teach and to train others according to the Word of God.

As the foundation for Christian education, the Word of God reveals God as the Teacher and provides content and purpose.

#### Questions:

What role does Scripture play in forming God's people?

#### III. The purpose of being formed as a Christian in fulfilling the mission of God (Matthew 28:18-20)

The task of forming believers is a priority task for the church because as the keeper of the faith, she is responsible for giving continuity to the proclamation of the Gospel message. She is to be faithful to the final charge of the Lord Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20). It is possible to affirm that for both Jesus and the apostles, it was clear that the ministry of forming others was not an end in itself, but a means of reaching others with the Kingdom message.

#### Questions:

How is God's mission related to the teaching of the truths of the Bible?

## CONCLUSION

All Scripture gives evidence of a teaching God who seeks to teach and train His people to live in fullness of life. Since creation and for that purpose, He has revealed himself and made Himself known in many ways. But in Jesus' becoming man, that purpose of God left us with the greatest historical history lesson. To shape the people of God is a task given to the church, which must be understood as a process that seeks to affect all areas of a person's life and to continue throughout the life of the believer.

**Lesson  
16****GOD'S PEOPLE ARE WITNESSES****Passage to Study:** John 9:35-41; Romans 10:12-15**Lesson Aim**

To value the deep meaning that our testimony has for God and His church.

**Memory Verse**

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes..." Romans 1:16.

**INTRODUCTION**

In this lesson, we will see why, when we believe and become true followers of the Lord, we are expected to testify and proclaim the gospel to all people for the glory of God and the fulfillment of the Kingdom. The Lord Jesus Christ made this specific command: "Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations ..." (Matthew 28:19); to which he added: "... and you will be my witnesses ..." (Acts 1:8).

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul made a statement that should inspire and motivate every believer to join in this great task: "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him ... How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Romans 10:12,14).

The task is to testify, to announce the Good News of salvation. The gospel, at its heart, is "... the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith ..." (Romans 16:25b-26). That mystery that is to be revealed is the Good News about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have access to God's forgiveness, receiving salvation through grace and faith. In this lesson, we will study how to offer the Good News of salvation from the perspective of the Bible.

**I. A people who share their testimony for the glory of God**

Sharing our testimony for the glory of God must be the primary motivation. It is not about us but the Lord. Believers need to share the wonderful news that God wants to forgive sinners and walk alongside them in their search for God and new lives in Christ when they believe. Witnessing is not about offering peace, joy, health, or prosperity (although these things may follow). The message of salvation is not about our well-being in the flesh, but about the eternal purpose of God (Ephesians 3:11).

When we witness, our motivation should not involve making promises of quick remedies that will solve their lives when they become Christians. Following Jesus is not a magic formula for solving the problem of life itself. Rather, people should be helped to realize that they are sinners. They have sinned against God (Romans 3:23, 6:23a). However, we must be careful with the other extreme of focusing only on the negative issues. These may include difficulties and don'ts of the Christian way because this can discourage a person. The wise and balanced thing is to teach that, in light of God's law, disobedience

is sin, but the important thing is that Christ came to save the sinner (Luke 19:10).

Offering a promise of a better life as a benefit to the convert must be of secondary importance to the great motivation to glorify God for His grace and provision in Christ. Being Christian is about having a relationship with Christ. By His grace, we are saved from sins to have fellowship with Him.

#### **Questions:**

What attitude should the believer avoid when witnessing? Explain.

### **II. A people who use the Bible to testify**

The Bible tells us the pattern of a genuine conversion: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

The Lord’s promise is as follows: “As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:10-11).

This helps us see that it is good to use Scripture when witnessing to a person, because this is what the Holy Spirit uses to convince the listener of sin. Romans 10:17 supports this: “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.” So, we must know the Scriptures to be effective witnesses.

On the other hand, our testimony is good because it describes how our lives have changed, how we received the peace and comfort of the Lord in difficult times, etc. Through our experiences, God can touch hearts and save sinners. Therefore, we need to share what the Bible teaches about Christ

(his promises, commandments, and warnings), and what He has done in our lives. Christ is the only way, the truth, and the life and no one comes to the Father except through Him. (John 14:6).

#### **Questions:**

What is essential to know and use when sharing your testimony? Explain.

### **III. A people who recognize that salvation comes from God**

Anyone who longs to obey God by witnessing effectively must have a personal experience with Christ, be a faithful Christian, and be a good role model for the person they are trying to reach out to. Paul said: “In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech...” (Titus 2:7-8a). A witnessing Christian must have personally experienced the transformation they want to proclaim: “All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ...” (Ephesians 2:3-6).

A good reputation is needed to support our testimony. But in itself, reputation without personal knowledge of the Savior is no more than mere personal pride. Only when we as witnesses have found Christ will we be able to testify effectively, speaking to others of Jesus Christ as our Savior.

#### **Questions:**

What would you say to those believers who think that they can change a person’s heart by themselves? Explain.

## **CONCLUSION**

We must all testify of God by speaking about Christ, using the Word, firmly grounded in our personal experience with the Savior, and living a life of holiness for the glory of God and the benefit of his church.



**Lesson  
17****GOD'S PEOPLE SHARE A SOCIAL HERITAGE****Passage to Study:** Matthew 7:12; 25:35-46; Luke 4:18; Ephesians 6:9; Hebrews 13:3**Lesson Aim**

To know our Biblical and Wesleyan heritage that emphasizes social compassion and how it can be applied to the current ministerial context.

**Memory Verse**

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free" Luke 4:18.

40

**INTRODUCTION**

John Wesley was brought up in a Christian home where he received a lot of instruction from his mother. He became a symbol of the revival of the 18th century in England. His life of zeal in the Spirit, his attachment to the Holy Scriptures, and his passion for the mission of God have been referred to throughout the history of Christianity.

His life of traveling to preach in different parts of the British Isles, and the large volumes he wrote about doctrine and theology, influenced parts of the society of the world he lived in. He dealt with the existing problems of the society of his time, not only by questioning them but also by creating different solutions in visible ways.

Following the example of Christ, Wesley's theology was practical and mission-oriented. Dealing with different problems of society was the focus of his life. The law of love was strong in Wesley's theology and action. So, in the preface to the first Methodist Hymnal published in 1739, Wesley wrote: "The gospel of Christ knows of no religion that is not social, no holiness that is not social. We have this mandate from Christ, the one who loves God loves his brother too."

**I. Caring for the poor (Luke 4:18a)**

Wesley's viewpoint on caring for the poor was born from the example of Jesus as well as rules given by God in Scripture. Jesus was clear in His mission statement: "... because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18a). The poor, for God, has always been the target of his mission for the whole person.

In the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus, two qualities were very noticeable: his attitude towards the poor, and the command He gave on their behalf (Matthew 11:5; 19:21). These teachings of the Master influenced the early church and the writings of the apostles (Galatians 2:10; James 2).

Wesley referred to the responsibility of looking after the 'poor' in society as a special "means of grace" (ways God helps people grow as Christians) for the giver. He strongly insisted that his

followers could call themselves Christians only if they were involved in such activities."

The Church of the Nazarene has given much importance to the care of the poor and this is stated officially in paragraph

917 of the Manual 2017-2021 (pp. 317-318). It would be very helpful to read this paragraph in class. Likewise, if you think that it is appropriate, you can ask for examples of practical ways that the church, as an organization, or some of the participants, have cared for the poor. This can serve as a motivation for everyone.

**Questions:**

How do you think our responsibility towards the poor should be focused today?

**II. Freeing the slaves (Matthew 7:12; Ephesians 6:9)**

Slavery has been practiced for thousands of years. Slaves made up a weak and helpless section of society and were therefore exposed to many sufferings. The apostle Paul spoke the most about slavery, and in his letter to Philemon, he dealt with slave-master relations. This apostle commanded that slaves converted to Christianity respect their masters to maintain the good witness before God and before the world. Respect them even more so if their masters were believers (1 Timothy 6:1-2).

By the 18th century in England, when John Wesley lived, the treatment of slaves was very cruel, and this motivated him to deal with the subject with a great push. He openly criticized the slave trade and supported the campaign that would eventually lead to the ending of slavery.

A theology found in the Bible based on the love of neighbor outlined the path for John Wesley and other friends like Wilberforce to work tirelessly for slavery to end.

The position of the church today must be focused on three specific actions on slavery:

1) Opposition to any form of human slavery: Because of the teaching of the Bible, we need to promote a mindset that is focused on the freedom that each of us have in ourselves. 2) Relationships, whether marital or otherwise, can be modern examples of slavery when in many cases there is a sense of one being owned by another. 3) We need to help people today who live in modern slavery. The church must find ways to help people, who, due to their economic position, have had to sell themselves as slaves.

If you think it is suitable, ask the participants how modern slavery is manifested in the country where they live.

#### **Questions:**

What is your opinion of slavery that exists today?  
What do you think should be the position of the church?

### **III. The prisoners (Matt. 25:35-46; Hebrews 13:3)**

The writer of Hebrews wrote many pieces of advice to the church, including Hebrews 13:3. Here, he referred to the responsibility we have towards prisoners. This is God's command that forces us to serve them, as we would for ourselves. It is not just about doing something or completing some plan, but it must be motivated by deep love.

Jesus had already spoken about action towards prisoners in Matthew 25:36-40. To focus more deeply on the matter, the Lord warned that the one who cares for prisoners, whoever they are, are looking after Him (v. 40). These words of the Master were the standard for the apostles, the early church, and the ministry of the church throughout all centuries.

Wesley was tireless in his task of helping prisoners. All the churches that hold to Wesley's teachings need to take up the responsibility to care for prisoners based on what the New Testament tells us, as well as the example of Wesley.

If there is a need and prisoners are without attention and are suffering, we must respond. Maybe there is someone who has a family member in prison. Find a way to help them, always motivated by the love of Christ in your life.

What one experiences in prison is very difficult. Prisoners, as well as their families, need Christians who hold on to Wesley's teaching who are willing to show the love of Jesus and thus, help relieve the physical and soul pains they experience there.

#### **Questions:**

What did Jesus say about our responsibility towards prisoners?

What can the church and believers do for prisoners?

## **CONCLUSION**

Today's societies need Christians who stand for the life of Jesus, and who show their love in this world. Believers are needed to spend time caring for the poor, the modern slaves, and the prisoners just like John Wesley. He was an ordinary man in eighteenth-century England, who was not limited by a church building, a country, a society, a family, well-being, or structures, to work in favor of the needy, and achieved changes in society that were far-reaching and left a mark in history.

**Lesson  
18****GOD'S PEOPLE AND CIVIL GOVERNMENTS****Passage to Study:** Romans 13:1-8; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; 1 Peter 2:13-14**Lesson Aim**

To understand the prophetic role of God's people in the political context where they live

**Memory Verse**

"Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God" Romans 13:1.

42

**INTRODUCTION**

The church and the state are two organizations established by God. Each one has been given a function to fulfill, and neither should take over the other's area of authority because when this happens, confusion is unavoidable. The mission of the church is to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God, and the responsibility of the State is to order society, protect life, ensure the safety of its citizens, protect property and oversee justice.

While it is true that the church, as an organization, should not be involved in political parties, believers (as good and better citizens) must be involved. They should ensure that the best leaders are chosen, that the best laws are enacted, and that they are used fairly. We must not overlook the good testimony of godly leaders like Joseph in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon and Queen Esther in Persia. They did spiritual things, which greatly influenced the economy, society, politics and moral life of pagan peoples. We must also consider that God can use men and women fully committed to Him as useful instruments for his glory.

**I. Civil government was founded by God****A. God established earthly government**

The gospel of the kingdom of Heaven is not stained with any of the passion of earthly politics. Rather, it upholds Jesus as the King of kings and the Lord of lords; that is to say, He occupies the seat of the highest authority. Therefore, rulers, from a king, a President of a Republic, legislators, magistrates, police, army, and a mayor of a city, are authorities that fulfill functions given by God. They all fulfill functions established by God, to whom they will finally have to give an account.

**B. The civil government authorities are servants of God**

The civil magistrate has the power of the sword (force). The state is authorized to use force to ensure justice and protect the internal order and

borders of the country. Civil authorities govern by law, enforcing it by strong legal means.

**C. Are all the laws fair?**

Christians are called to be role models of civil obedience whenever possible. We honor Christ by praying for those in authority over us, by submitting and being obedient to his laws (Romans 13:1, 5; 1 Timothy 2:1-2;). We must obey the magistrates as long as they do not order us to do something contrary to what God commands or prohibits (Acts 5:29). In both cases, we have to discern and choose when to obey and when to disobey the authorities even when living under controlling governments. Some examples of civil disobedience in the Bible include, among others, Hebrew midwives who disregarded Pharaoh's order (Exodus 1:17) and Daniel and his friends in Babylon (Daniel 1:1-21).

## Questions:

Do you consider that God has set a wicked government too? Explain.

## II. Christians must submit to the government

### A. For the Lord's sake

The primary reason we should obey the authorities is to be a good witness to them (1 Peter 2:13-14). Those who received Paul's letter to the Romans lived under the rule of a cruel and over-controlling government (Roman Empire). But they did not oppose the emperor's policy, or that of their enemies. Quite simply, Paul sent instructions on the Christian duty towards the civil rulers of his time. He called his readers to pay special respect and honor to those in power under God's authority. It is from this perspective that we should look at our authorities.

### B. To avoid punishment

Civil authorities, whatever the system of government, are empowered to administer justice by punishing those who commit crimes against society (Romans 13:4). Christian citizens must lead lives pleasing to God, living in the light of the Holy Scriptures as the Lord has ordered.

### C. For reasons of conscience

Like every human being, Christians will want to avoid the punishment that results from disobedience to the laws established in their own country. But there are other reasons why people submit to their rulers. Some of these are as follows: for the sake of conscience (Romans 13:5); and, because rulers are recognized as servants of God (Romans 13:6). The standards for the Christian conscience can be summed up as 1) to obey the authorities, so that by this means we can spread the gospel and win others to Christ; 2) to obey civil law, which is better than revolting and

rebellion, just as long as it does not oppose the law of God.

## Questions:

Do you consider that obedience to civil authorities has any limits? Comment.

## III. How to submit to the civil government

### A. Submitting to the government system

All Christians have to submit to the rulers and the laws of their own country. However, this obedience to the laws is not about blind and limitless submission, for there are laws that clash with divine laws, and work against the dignity of the human being. Jesus' disciples disregarded the order of the Jewish leaders that prohibited them from preaching in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18-19). When human laws disagree with God's laws, the Christian must always abide by godly laws, even if he has to pay dearly for his action.

### B. Paying your taxes

Christ gave us an example by paying his taxes to support the house of God (Matthew 17:24-27), and he urged us by saying: "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Matthew 22:21). We have to pay our taxes, and the government has to use these funds correctly for the benefit of the people.

### C. Maintaining good relationships with other people

The Lord Jesus Christ taught us to live the law of love. The love of God is natural and voluntary obedience to the first commandment, and the love of neighbor is a natural and voluntary fulfillment of the second commandment (Matthew 22:37-39).

## Questions:

As citizens, how can we maintain good relationships with other people?

## CONCLUSION

The church and the state are two organizations established by God. Each of them has its mission and is responsible before the Lord for the fulfillment of its functions. Civil authorities were ordered by God and have the power to administer justice. God has given them this responsibility. So, when a government claims too much power, it takes God's authority by force, and thus it becomes cruel, abusive, and corrupt. Christians must submit to the authority of the government as long as it does not break the laws of God.

**Lesson  
19****GOD'S PEOPLE AND THE FAMILY****Passage to Study:** 1 Corinthians 7:2-11; Ephesians 6:1,4; 1 Timothy 5:4**Lesson Aim**

To apply the basic principles of the Word of God to the various family problems that we experience today.

**Memory Verse**

“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number...’” Genesis 1:27-28a.

44

**INTRODUCTION**

We need to save God's design for the family today in the 21st century. How many families are based on the wise counsel of scripture today? Living as loving families requires time and energy, both scarce today. What we need most today is to discover the meaningful experience of 'koinonia'. This rich Bible term is generally translated as "fellowship." It refers to "fellowship or deep communion of the New Testament Christians. Families need to live in close fellowship too. In this lesson, we will study the truths that God has left us in His Word to be better able to face the different problems that families experience today.

**I. God's original design for the family**

The Bible says: "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him'" (Genesis 2:18). Then God made Adam fall asleep, He took out a rib; and from it, He made Eve, whom He then presented to Adam (Genesis 2: 22-23). Because of this perfect creation, God affirmed: "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame" (Genesis 2:24-25). Adam and Eve thus formed the first marriage of humanity, created by God (Genesis 1:27-28). We can affirm that God brought the first married couple together and they lived in perfect union. This union involved physical, mental, and emotional parts, resulting in them complementing one another. It was thus designed by God to last for as long as both spouses live on earth. Therefore, married men and women should take care of their thoughts, and not give rise to the temptation to desire to have sexual relations with someone other than their spouse.

This special union, was, however, affected when Adam and Eve sinned. Thus today families are very much like this first family after the fall. As a result, we can see that there are a lot of sexual relationships between couples before and after marriage, as well as unfaithfulness, divorces, single parents, etc. This often leads to the following generations living in families full of disagreements, fighting, and abuse, with terrible results that cannot be measured.

**Questions:**

What does the Bible mean when it says, "Therefore a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife ..." (Genesis 2:24)?

**II. The reality of 21st-century families**

The situation in many families is both sad and heartbreaking. When we look at this world in which our children have to grow up, we feel sad. The view shows a world eaten away by sin, and which appears to get worse by the day. Currently, independence is more common among many spouses.



There is an alarming increase in the divorce rate, even among Christian couples. Sadly, today we see in the news the increase of domestic violence, which can lead to femicide (killing of women). This must not take place among God's people. There is never any excuse for a husband to beat his wife and vice versa. This also goes for violence in families. We sadly recall the case of the first murder in humanity, which occurred between two brothers: Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-16), both sons of Adam and Eve.

#### **Questions:**

Name two characteristics of 21st century families.

### **III. The character of a Christian family**

The Christian family needs to have genuine faith. We live in a world where appearance has become so important and is emphasized too much. But we need to be real, authentic, and true. Paul told Timothy: "I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also" (2 Timothy 1:5). It is seen here that the mother of this young disciple, as well as his grandmother, had sincere faith.

The second characteristic of a Christian family is that it is committed to the Lord and His work. The Bible says: "Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be

slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness" (Romans 6:16-18).

The third characteristic of a Christian family is that unconditional love is poured among its members. The Bible says: "Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:1-2). As God's children, we must reflect God's love in our families at all times. This will influence other families. Families, where there is love, will build good foundations for society. God's love must always guide how people relate to one another between members of a family.

The fourth characteristic that a Christian family must have is that it must be united. Its members are called to be one in Christ. We see this unity displayed in the relationship between our heavenly Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus prayed for us to be united.

It is said: "Healthy families, healthy churches." If our family relationships are directed and blessed by God, this will be reflected in our churches as they seek more of Christ. Therefore, in face of the disconnected family picture that exists today, our Christian families urgently need to be good witnesses.

#### **Questions:**

What is the character of a Christian family?

## **CONCLUSION**

God created the family. The first family began in fellowship with God. In the beginning, everything was perfect, but everything changed because of sin. The male-female relationship in marriage suffered serious changes from the original design of its Creator. But, He had a wonderful plan - He sent His Son Jesus Christ to save all the families on earth. Believers are now called to bear good witness and announce that in Christ there is hope to solve all kinds of family conflicts.



**Lesson  
20****GOD'S PEOPLE DEFEND LIFE****Passage to Study:** Psalm 139:13-16**Lesson Aim**

To value the responsibility we have as a church to oppose abortion and create spaces to help mothers and children.

**Memory Verse**

"...He himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else" Acts 17:25.

46

**INTRODUCTION**

Every year, the number of abortions in the world increases. Among the factors that contribute to this is the progress of abortion medicine and surgical skills that have made less or removed the risks of such operations. Also, 1) the increasing openness to and acceptance by society of people ending pregnancies; 2) the quick growth of the number of people, which may cause governments to promote the practice of abortion to control the population; 3) fear of pregnancies with physical faults that are discovered before birth; 4) the freedom of women and the increase of motivations by persons; 5) seeing the unborn baby as less important; 6) situations of social injustice and poverty, deficiencies in education, culture and lack of adequate housing and work; etc. all contribute to the increase in the number of abortions carried out.

Abortion is able of removing the basic worth of creation, established by God. It is undesirable and although it is promoted as something that liberates, always carries bitter baggage of grief, oppression, injustice, and loneliness.

**A. The viewpoint of the Bible**

In the Bible, there are many references to human life in the womb. Perhaps the most recognized is that of Psalm 139:13-16. In it, the Psalmist, looking back at the beginning of his life, declared: "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body..."

The first statement points out that the unborn baby is God's creation. It is He who wove it together. Two metaphors are used to show God's ability to create: the potter and the weaver. God is like a skilled craftsman who "formed" us, just as a potter models clay. The same thought is repeated

in Job 10:8, where Job claimed that God's hands 'made' and 'formed' him. Also, the other illustration Job mentioned was that of the weaver: "...clothe me with skin and flesh and knit me together with bones and sinews?" (Job 10:11)

The second statement that the Psalmist highlighted is continuity. At the time of writing Psalm 139, he was an adult. But, he looked back to the time when he was not yet born. He referred to himself before and after birth because he was aware that during his life before and after birth, he was the same person. He also recognized four stages in his life. The first (v. 1): "You have searched me (the past). The second (v. 1b): "Lord, and you know me" (the present). The third (v. 10): "Your hand will guide me (the future). And the fourth (v. 13): "you knit me together in my mother's womb" (the stage before birth).

The third affirmation that the Psalmist expressed was communion. Our Creator loved us and related to us long before we could respond to Him in a conscious relationship. So, each of us was already a person in the womb, and God already knew us and loved us.

Other Bible references to life before birth reinforce these truths: God called Isaiah and Jeremiah before they were born (Isaiah 49:1; Jeremiah 1:5), even before they were able to hear or understand their calling (Psalm 22:9-10; 71:6; 119:73; Luke 1:15, 41-44). Genesis 25:22-23 mentions that Esau and Jacob fought in the womb, showing the beginning of the competition and arguments that would later characterize their family life.

## **B. The viewpoint of Science**

Four proofs of science that show that the embryo is a perfect human being will be discussed. 1) In Genetic identity, two systems of both parents stop working separately; and create a new system that has a new code of genes that is unique and cannot be repeated. The result is a human being, unlike his parents. 2) Concerning the making of the embryo, fertilization is first in the process. It begins with the coming together of the gametes, which is about 20 minutes. After this, it takes about 20 hours to fertilize the egg, combining the hereditary material. When the first cell begins to divide, the purpose of each cell of the embryo is already decided. 3) Then, the pregnant mother's body undergoes some adjustments, which make it possible for her child to be introduced into her body without being rejected. 4) Finally, the embryo and its mother begin to talk when the embryo sends messages to stimulate the mother's body to support the new being.

However, keep in mind that the process of developing and maturing lasts about 800 weeks, about 20 years, but the new being will only be 40 weeks in the womb. What happens is that the same person will be going through different stages.

## **Questions:**

In your opinion, can we find a link between what the Bible says and what science says regarding the origin of life in the womb? Explain.

## **II. The value of the pregnant woman**

In recent years, in many countries, a law has been debated that defends the killing of an unborn child because of concerns for the mother's life. We are all concerned about the life of women, but abortion is not the solution.

Chile is a country that carried out some successful plans to decrease the deaths of pregnant women: They increased the level of education of women; provided balanced food for pregnant women and their children; provided contraceptive methods to control fertility; improved the hygienic system, gave psychological, social, employment, and financial support, etc. and provided universal access to quality women's health services.

## **Questions:**

How can we help a woman who is considering the option of abortion?

## **III. Our role as Christians**

Christian lawyers are needed to defend the rights of the unborn child, and work on simpler adoption laws where a family does not get old waiting to adopt an infant. We also need godly doctors who will object responsibly, and show that they were trained to save lives, not to destroy them. Likewise, social workers are required to be in the field, seeing the needs of these women to sustain them, and psychologists who can emotionally support them. As the Lord's church, we need to be those men and women who are challenged to create spaces to teach, care, and guide people.

## **Questions:**

What could we implement as a church to decrease the number of abortions?

# **CONCLUSION**

In Psalm 82:4 the Word of God advises us: "Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked" Let us find a way to help both the confused mother who is planning to abort and that helpless child. Both deserve to be valued and respected.

**Lesson  
21****GOD'S PEOPLE CARE ABOUT CHILDREN****Passage to Study:** Matthew 19:13-14**Lesson Aim**

To understand the importance of focusing on the wellbeing of the children, based on the different problems that they face today.

**Memory Verse**

"And he said: 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven'" Matthew 18:3.

48

**INTRODUCTION**

Childhood is a stage of human life in which activities have very particular characteristics and, each is different from any other. All this makes this time unique, special, and very important. The skills and abilities learned will be the basis for the stages that follow until they become adults.

Children can jump or run throughout the day, and very rarely look tired or bored since they always find something to do. Their social and communication skills are also developing and they start learning various subjects such as mathematics, history, science, technology, etc.

In the spiritual area, they are free and do not plan their prayers. Almost always, they are intercessors praying for others, and their prayers are spoken in very simple and specific words. They also can believe all spiritual matters; they do not question God, they just trust Him.

All children have basic needs, which are physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Adults close to children should meet these needs.

**I. Jesus blesses and protects children (Matthew 19:13-14)****A. Jesus blesses the children**

Parents of the children brought to the Lord were part of the crowd that followed the Master (vs. 13). As parents, we must go to the Lord, lift our children to Him in prayer and ask Him to bless them every day of their lives. This begins with dedicating our little ones to God, even before they are born. We must continue with a constant lifestyle of prayer for them, as well as support them in their daily walk.

**B. Jesus protects children**

The Jewish people had very particular characteristics. One of these was that women and children were not considered to be important in public events or when counting, and they had no rights. Knowing these discriminations, Jesus,

whose mission was and is to restore and give protection to the helpless, took care of the children (Matthew 19:14) and showed the need to help them (Matthew 18:5). This message of Jesus to the adults of that time continues today.

**Questions:**

In what ways can parents ask God to bless their children?

**II. God teaches us through children**

The disciples of the Lord Jesus had not understood the explanation that the Master had previously given them about children and the Kingdom (Matthew 18:3-4). On the contrary, they were not thoughtful and became unfriendly and harsh. But unlike the disciples, Jesus was friendly and loving to the boys and girls.

A. Jesus intercedes for the children (Matthew 19:14a)

Jesus, tenderly and lovingly, extended His arms to the children, and not only blessed them but also thus protected their tender childish hearts. Today, many minors are emotionally destroyed and mistreated in many ways or even assaulted. If we help them get closer to Jesus, they will receive forgiveness, healing, comfort, etc. Their hearts will be filled with hope again. Our Lord not only gives children much-needed emotional help but also, spiritual help. He promised to intercede for them (Hebrews 7:25).

B. Jesus includes the children (Matthew 19:14b)

Jesus considers children as models for His Kingdom. On at least four other occasions, the book of Matthew speaks of children (Matthew 11:25; 18:2-3; 19:13; 21:16). In all of them, there is a guiding truth: the special place children occupy in the heart of God. We read that the Master revealed His mysteries to them, gave them the Kingdom, and made their praise perfect. Many of Jesus' teachings about the Kingdom have children as an example (Luke 18:15-17). Jesus taught that to be able to enter the Kingdom of God, we must be like children.

C. Characteristics of children as models of kingdom greatness

Children, as people who generally want to serve, are not concerned with high positions or power. Jesus makes them the models of greatness and power in His Kingdom because they are simple and humble. We are called to learn from the example of children about how to be bearers of God's power as we offer ourselves as servants of God. We need to approach God as children do. Jesus' call to conversion and being truly changed

is clear. We cannot enter the Kingdom through our human efforts. Not only do we have to be like children, but also it is clear that Jesus includes children in the mission. Not just because they are listeners, but also, as active participants.

### Questions:

In what ways might some Christian parents be preventing their children from meeting the Lord Jesus?

### III. Children today

Today, we also come across people, events, and circumstances that prevent boys and girls from the opportunity to be blessed by Jesus. We must be very careful when we are with the children since through our actions or words, without realizing it, we may be taking away from them the chance to meet with the Lord.

Some of the obstacles and angry behavior that surround children are found in the family, school, society, government, church, etc. These same areas have created laws and guidelines to protect children, providing them rights and benefits. However, many times their rights have been violated. Today we see that the rate of violence and angry attacks towards minors has increased. Looking at tables of statistics, the most common crimes are abortion, abandonment, drug use, discrimination, different forms of violence (psychological, sexual, and verbal), etc. In the face of this reality, Jesus' protection towards children is very fitting. The organization of the church must give support that helps to reduce the dangers that children face.

### Questions:

Why is the child a model of entry into the heavenly kingdom?

## CONCLUSION

There is a great blessing in being like a child, for this way of life is the key that will allow us to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Let us commit to protect boys and girls through a ministry that provides friendship, protection, and formation for them to grow deep and naturally, into the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13) because children are prepared to be part of the mission.

**Lesson  
22****GOD'S PEOPLE SERVE****Passage to Study:** Mark 10:35-45; Luke 22:24-27; John 13:13-17**Lesson Aim**

To see serving others as a lifestyle as we follow Jesus' example.

**Memory Verse**

"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" John 13:14-15.

50

**INTRODUCTION**

On one occasion, a girl, after being scolded by her teacher for talking a lot in class, approached her and the following talk was started: "When I grow up, I'm going to be a teacher," said the girl. "Really?" asked the teacher. "Yes" replied the girl, "I want to be like you." "That is good! So, you will be able to teach other boys and girls," said the teacher. "No," replied the girl, "I want to be able to scold others as you do, and only I can speak in class."

Sometimes we want to be like someone else for the wrong reasons. As God's people, we must seek to be like Jesus, and live according to His teachings. To reach this goal, we must see different qualities and teachings of His life. One of the important qualities of the Lord's life was service, and to be able to understand it better, we must examine the teaching that the Bible gives us on the subject. Perhaps you have heard the following saying: "If we don't live to serve; we don't deserve to live". What a decisive statement! Is that what happens to those who do not know Christ? Is this what Christians are doing? Service is an important point in the life of the person who decides to follow Jesus ... a person who shows that they are mature and committed.

According to the Bible, to have a servant heart is very important in the lives of those who want to be like Jesus Christ.

**I. Serving others is a commandment for God's people (Mark 10:35-45; John 13:13-15)**

In Mark 10:35-45, we find two young disciples of the Lord Jesus who came to Him with one request. They wanted to sit one on his right and the other on His left. At first glance, this seemed like a simple request, but these places were positions of very high authority and honor. Finally, Jesus explained what His purpose was for coming into this world. In doing so, he indirectly made clear what their purpose should be as well. Jesus did not come to be a king to be served and obeyed by everyone, but quite the opposite, He came to serve (v. 45).

What does it mean to serve? According to Mark 10:45, it is as follows: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve,

and to give his life as a ransom for many." So, what does service involve? First of all, it means handing over. This is giving ourselves to another person, even if we do not know whether they will take advantage of it, appreciate it, or value it. Second, it suggests giving; that is, spending our strength and means for another person. Jesus gave himself to serve knowing that not all people would value what He was doing. Serving suggests putting yourself at the command of another person, to do what they want or need. Thirdly, it involves sacrifice. If there is no sacrifice, there's no serving others. This sacrifice includes doing things that are not to our liking, but which will benefit the one who receives the service. Jesus left us the best example of what serving others is by giving his life to save us (Galatians 1:4).



In John 13:13-15, we see another example of serving that Jesus left us. On that occasion, He washed the feet of his disciples, which was a task intended for the lowest servant in a house. It happened that once the Lord Jesus finished washing their feet, he said to his disciples: “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”

When someone needs our service, we must remember these words of our Lord Jesus, and not make excuses or some opinion about it. We need to understand this Bible passage in light of what we can do for others. This commandment to serve is so important that from Jesus’ viewpoint, it will be used to decide at the time of judgment. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus states what will happen after His second coming. Serving others, as already said, must be disinterested; that is, we must not think of receiving something in return. However, we must remember that just doing good works will not get us to Heaven. It must be served for the love of those who need it.

#### **Questions:**

How did Jesus define serving? (Mark 10:45; John 13:15).

### **II. Serving makes God’s people Christlike (Luke 22:24-27)**

The disciples wanted to be great (Luke 22:24-27), but they never would have thought to do what Jesus did. We see in John 13:13-14 that Jesus had to give the lives of His disciples the correct focus. If Jesus had asked one of His disciples to wash His feet, possibly more than one would have done it. Who would refuse to wash Jesus’ feet? Possibly, many of us today would

wash the feet of someone in authority or a high position. But Jesus took the first step and washed the feet of His disciples. By doing this he broke the idea that leaders do not serve and humbled himself before His disciples. He said that we must do the same. This is the service that God expects of his people.

#### **Questions:**

What are the characteristics of serving, according to Luke 22:24-27?

### **III. Serving blesses God’s people (John 13:13-17)**

The Greek word for ‘blessed’ in verse 17 is the same word that Jesus used in the Sermon on the Mount. But this is more than a mere word. The happiness that Jesus referred to has to do with the character of the person. Being blessed has to do with something inside for it is the result of what one does. We could say: “Blessed (happy) are those who serve others; they will feel satisfied”. Happiness has to do with BEING, rather than having. It does not matter what we have or do not have, we are happy for what we can be and do together with Christ.

In Mark 10:35-45, the problem was that the disciples wanted to be bigger or more important, but they did not understand the conditions of Jesus’ new Kingdom. For some people who want to stand out, serving others is difficult because they are not willing to serve, or feel that it is not on their level. Similarly, Jesus tells them that if they want to be the first, there is only one way: to serve. In other words, if you want to be blessed, there is only one way: obey the command to serve following the Master’s example.

#### **Questions:**

What is the view of happiness for Jesus, according to John 13:15-17?

## **CONCLUSION**

Take time in class to ask the participants to discuss what the conclusion of this lesson could be for their lives, and how they plan to put it into practice. Then each one can write their conclusion on a piece of paper.



**Lesson  
23****GOD'S PEOPLE ARE CHRISTIANS****Passages to Study:** Romans 15:4; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Ephesians 4:3-6; 2 Timothy 3:15; 1 John 2:6**Lesson Aim**

To understand what identifies us as true Christian people.

**Memory Verse**

"Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." 1 John 2:6

52

**INTRODUCTION**

Loss of identity is one of our problems today. Many people seek to guarantee their identity with things like position, money, appearances, brands, or groups, etc. All this speaks to us of a problem, which began with the sin committed by the first couple, Adam and Eve. When they sinned, they damaged their relationship not only with God but also between themselves.

However, there is a solution for this serious problem of sin for all humanity. The remedy is Jesus. When we come to Him, things change completely. John, in John 1:12, wrote: "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God ..." Here, John clearly used the verb to 'become' which points to identity and being part of, as opposed to being left out and not known. So, one of the most important themes John focuses on is for us to understand our identity in knowing Jesus. This is how he put it in John 1:12: "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God", where he spoke of 'receiving' the Lord Jesus. This means that we need to have a relationship with Him as a Person. We will also see that this relationship points towards always being with the Lord. Finally, our identity is defined by Jesus and will help us walk as He walked, "Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did" (1 John 2:6).

**I. A people who know Jesus**

The first decision we have to make is to get to know Jesus. In the Bible, the word "know" has to do with keeping a relationship. In the original language of the New Testament, there are two words for "knowing". One is "ginosko"; and the other, "gnosis". The second refers to mind knowledge only, such as when we discover information without experience; and the first word has to do with knowledge based on being connected with the other. This means that when something happens in one's life, knowledge of the happening and its lessons remains. This is how the apostle John described it in his first letter: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and

our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life" (1 John 1:1).

What Jesus wants us to have with him is a relationship with him as a Person, where we see him at every moment, think about him, listen to him, etc. The reason is that when you and I relate to Jesus, we will see what He is like, and what is described in the Word of God. This tells us that the apostle John understood Jesus' love, His character, His honesty, His justice, and His mercy.

**Questions:**

What more do you think you need to know about the Lord Jesus?

**II. A people that abide in Jesus**

If we are constant in our relationship with the Lord Jesus, we will become more and more like Him, and he will shape our identity. The apostle John wrote it this way: “If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love” (John 15:10). To “remain” suggests obedience. But to obey, we need two basic things: to know the commandments (reading the Scripture) and to live according to those commandments. So, when we say that we believe in Jesus, we are actually saying: “I am willing to live my life according to what He wants.”

John wrote the following in one of his later letters: “This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God’s child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister” (1 John 3:10). What John tells us in this passage is that one of the qualities that help us remain near to God involves loving our brothers and sisters, and this, in turn, will guarantee our identity as children of the Lord. This is very strong. The apostle John was very clear: there is a way to know whether or not one is a child of God, that is, whether or not we are part of His people.

### **Questions:**

Do you think that something is separating you from the Master?

### **III. A people who walk as Jesus walked**

Walking like Jesus means loving like Him, speaking like Him and treating others in the same way that He treats us.

The apostle John tells us that this is very important for our identity as Christians. He wrote: “No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us” (1 John 4:12). This is what we should aim for in everything we do. We need to put into practice the love of God. What John teaches is that loving God includes loving our neighbor. This is a very necessary quality because love covers all faults. Proverbs 10:12 says: “Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs.”

Our Lord Jesus, when He saw those in need, had compassion on them (Matthew 9:36). He fed them, healed them, and always loved them as He also did for His disciples. Even after the disciples had failed, He looked for them. He loved them and fed them. “Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast.’ None of the disciples dared ask him, ‘Who are you?’ They knew it was the Lord” (John 21:12).

To be forgiving is a characteristic of being like our Master, and of walking as He walked. Jesus treated the people who were discriminated against in a very special way. He treated the Samaritan woman, publicans and sinners, and even the teachers of the law well and with love and mercy. This is the stand that we must take day by day.

### **Questions:**

In what ways do you think you need to be more like the Lord?

## **CONCLUSION**

Our identity lies in the fact that we are children of God. As such, we belong to Him. We depend on our beloved Father and we are continually learning. Our character must be like that of Christ. He wants to continue doing His work of making our lives perfect. For this, we need to live humbly. When we read the Gospels, we can see how the Lord treated people; and He continues treating them with love. How do we treat people – our spouse, our children, our siblings, our parents, etc.? Keep in mind that love is the believer’s hallmark.

**Lesson  
24**

**GOD'S PEOPLE ARE HOLY PEOPLE**

**Passages to Study:** Mark 12:30-33; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Galatians 5:25; Philippians 2:1-2

**Lesson Aim**

To learn about holiness and allow this knowledge to help us live it out daily.

**Memory Verse**

“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” Mark 12:30-31.

54

**INTRODUCTION**

What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear about holiness? Some, perhaps, have heard so much about this subject in sermons, classes, counseling, books, formal studies in seminars, family spiritual times, etc., that their ears are sometimes flooded with so much information about the same thing. Therefore, some will say: ‘I already know about that’ or ‘I know what God wants me to do, nobody has to repeat it to me so many times.’ But we may have a lot of information without understanding it correctly or how to use it in our lives.

It is unlikely that we do not know what sort of life pleases God. In fact, God Himself wrote His law on our hearts (Hebrews 10:16). But it is not about how much we know, but how we live based on that knowledge. Hence, this lesson will give us guidelines to help us live out holiness day by day.

**I. We are a holy people because God loves us (Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Galatians 5:25)**

Love is the centerline of holiness. God loved us so much that He was able to give up His own son to die for us (1 John 4:10). Our holiness is born from His love; therefore, we can guarantee that love is at the heart of holiness.

**A. He reconciles with us**

Holiness is the fruit of God's love. No person can become holy without making Christ's redeeming work their own. Holiness has to do with something that God has already done for us (Jesus' death to pay for our sins). If we do not take this redeeming work for ourselves, it is impossible to live in holiness. It is through His cross that the believer receives the power to begin to live differently. That is why, every person,

experiences reconciliation with God when they have an encounter with Christ. We become someone different, and everything changes.

This is the mystery of something happening inside that is revealed in how we live. We leave everything that belonged to the world of darkness, which is opposite to God, not because someone has swayed us, but by the deep work of the Holy Spirit carried out in our innermost being. That experience produces a loud ‘no’ to sin, and a start in the path of life that pleases God.

**B. He fills us with His Holy Spirit.**

The life of holiness must show that God comes first. God's love made it possible for sinful man to be reconciled to God (God's first work of grace). He can also guarantee that our life is kept in grace, and that is where being filled with the Holy Spirit is necessary for the holy life of every believer

(Ephesians 5:18-20). The Holy Spirit is making us a new people who belong to Christ. We have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:24-25).

It is clear that no person can live in holiness without the power of God's reconciling work and the filling of His Spirit. The life of holiness, which we live and experience, has its foundation in the love of God and His eternal purpose, for all who surrender their wills to Him. It is in the setting of His grace that the power to live in holiness is received. We have the power to not sin, to not surrender to the purposes of the flesh or whatever the devil offers, but to live a holy life.

### Questions:

Why do we need to be filled with the Spirit as believers?

## II. A holy people because we love God and our neighbors (Mark 12:30-33; Philippians 2:1-2)

These commandments that Jesus mentioned in Mark 12:30-33 were already known by the Jewish people centuries ago (the shema of Israel in Deuteronomy 6:4-5, and also in Leviticus 19:18). But the new thing that Jesus did was to bring these two commandments together. Jesus made these commandments to be of highest importance. Hence their importance for the church is to be seen in the clearest experience and proof of a life of holiness. Those words of the Master focus on what each child of God should do, and how they should live.

A. Holiness means loving God with everything we have (Mark 12:30)

Jesus said that we should love God with all our being because we love Him. This is what living in holiness means. We must love with all our hearts, souls, minds and all our strength, giving ourselves wholly to Him.

The life of holiness of a believer must show that God comes first as follows:

- The time of a loving closeness with the Lord is never to be broken or missed. It is

more important than anything else we have to do in the day.

- Our commitment in His Kingdom stops at nothing. We have a godly task of winning and making disciples of the won, investing our lives in others and teaching them to live like Christ. Our love for God changes into being like Christ.
- B. Holiness is reflected by loving people (Mark 12:31; Philippians 2:1-2)

God is very interested in the relationships that His created creatures have with each other. For God, a strong way of knowing we are living in holiness is seeing the way we relate to our neighbors. The apostle Paul gave various spiritual laws that must be part of the lives of the saints; and all of these have an influence on our relationships (Ephesians 4:17-32).

The New Testament places a marked interest in love for others as part of the life of holiness (Matthew 5:23-24). If we are involved in church meetings, in ministries, or as leaders, pastors, etc., our service and worship will not be pleasing to God unless we first fix relationship problems that we have with someone. God's command is that we leave everything at the altar and first reconcile with that person. Nothing we give to God is important if this does not happen. Love, as the central axis of the life of holiness, includes forgiveness and reconciliation between human beings.

Paul, in writing about the important basics of the life of holiness, focused more on relationships between believers. In these passages we are told to: learn to agree with each other from the heart; love each other; and be united in purpose (Romans 13:10; I Corinthians 13; Philippians 2:2; 1 John 3:14-15 and 16-18).

### Questions:

In what way can love of neighbor be proved in your daily life?

## CONCLUSION

The greatest symbol of holiness is love. God's Holy Spirit wants to fill us with this spirit of love. If we love God and our neighbor as ourselves, and walk in a close loving relationship with our Lord, we will live holy lives, and by our loving actions, we will show the world what God is like.

**Lesson  
25**

**GOD'S PEOPLE ARE A MISSIONAL PEOPLE**

**Passages to Study:** Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-20; Luke 24:45-48; John 17:20-26, 20:30-31, 21:15-17

**Lesson Aim**

To understand that as God's people in this world, we are a sent people.

**Memory Verse**

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light"  
1 Peter 2:9.

56

**INTRODUCTION**

We are a missional people. This means that as a church, we should be aware of who we are in light of a very important task that we have to do. Our Core Values teach that being missional means that, "We are a sent people... (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Corinthians 6:1)."

At least two passages in the Old Testament that are related to what God wanted the people of Israel to be, help us understand our being as a missional people.

Exodus 19:5-6 show that: 1) God's people are commanded to obey and keep the covenant of the Lord; 2) God considered his people as his special treasure; 3) The mission of God's people is to be a kingdom of priests, that is, mediators and intercessors; 4) God's people, which is His special treasure, are to be holy, called by God to reveal what He is like.

Isaiah 49:6 introduces us to Israel as the servant of God, called to bring salvation to humanity (also see verse 3). When interpreting this verse, we commonly use it as a symbol that points to our blessed Savior, Jesus. But we can also affirm that it points to the Great Commission given by the Lord in the New Testament. Putting together these two passages and the idea of being a missional people, it can be said that the Jews were the first God's people to be missional, and then after Pentecost, God commissions all the believers to be missional and to go to all the nations.

As a nation, the Israelites were to live every part of their lives as God's missionaries to all the other nations. This view of things expands the familiar understanding of the "sent" being the missionaries and other church leaders. However, while upholding the importance and the need for these leadership roles, the task of being sent should not be carried by them alone. That is why it is important to understand who we are as missional people. This means that every Nazarene should be driven by "the call of Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to go into all the world, to witness to the Lordship of Christ, and to participate with God in the building of the Church and the extension of His kingdom". This means that every Nazarene is always on a mission in everything they do and wherever they are.

In this lesson, we will briefly consider the Great Commission in the New Testament and what our mission as a missional people involves.

**I. The Great Commission in the New Testament**

Jesus gave a mandate to His disciples. Each gospel puts this Great Commission in a slightly different form. In Matthew 28, the Lord commanded the disciples to go and make disciples

of all nations, baptize the new disciples and teach them all the things that He had taught them (vss. 19-20). In Mark 16, the command included five signs that would follow those who believed in Him (vs. 17-18). In Luke 24, Jesus pointed out that His disciples were to be witnesses of everything that



had happened to Him (v. 48; Acts 1:8). But they needed to wait in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father (v. 49). Lastly, in John 20:21, Jesus said: "... As the Father has sent me, I am sending you", which reminds us of His mission "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). The mission of the disciples was to win others and seek their unity with Christ and with one another so that they become like Christ (John 17:20-26).

In Acts 26:16-18, we learn of Paul's response to the mandate of Christ. God called Paul to be His minister and a witness of all that Christ would show him. He sent him to the Gentiles (also in Romans 1:1, 14-16). And to summarize the extent of the call, Peter showed that all believers are God's chosen people to announce the Good News of our blessed Savior, Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:9-10).

Thus we see that through the Gospels and the testimonies of Paul and Peter all the followers of Christ, as God's people, are to live with a sense of being sent and live to fulfill the Great Commission. This is the joyful burden of the people called Nazarenes as a missional people!

### Questions:

Based on this study, what do you understand by being "a missional people"?

## II. A missional people carry out the Great Commission

What is involved in carrying out the Great Commission as a missional people? Briefly stated:

- a. Our mission begins with worship. This means that the gathering of the local church before God in worship is very

important and basic to our mission to the world. Through meaningful and regular worship we come to know "what it means to be the people of God". Thus we are committed to our "meeting together" (Hebrews 10:23-25).

- b. Our mission "ministers through compassion and evangelism". This means that "we share God's love for the lost and His compassion for the poor and broken. The Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40), and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) move us to engage the world in evangelism, compassion, and justice." The joy of worshipping God forces us to lovingly seek others so they can also experience Him.
- c. Our mission "encourages believers toward Christian maturity through discipleship." To become and to make Christ-like disciples, various means are provided for believers "to grow in their understanding of the Christian faith and their relationship with each other and with God" (Matthew 28:20).
- d. Our mission "prepares women and men for Christian service through Christian higher education." Through Christian higher education, they "... are equipped for lives of Christian service ... to accomplish our God-given calling of serving in the Church and the world" (Matthew 28:20; 2 Timothy 2:2).

### Questions:

- Discuss the effects of carrying out the Great Commission in these ways in your setting?

## CONCLUSION

God has always called His disciples to fulfill the most important mission of all, the salvation of all human beings. He wants them to be freed from their sins, and become His children and heirs of eternal life. Our mission as a people of God is to be faithful to divine mandates and not fail the Lord at any time or place. Israel failed by not fulfilling her mission faithfully. We must do better, and I believe we can if we would become a missional people. May God help us!



**Lesson  
26****GOD'S PEOPLE SHARE THE GOOD NEWS****Passages to Study:** Matthew 28:16-20; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:6-9**Lesson Aim**

To learn that as God's people, we must share the Good News and feel a deep passion for people who do not know Christ.

**Memory Verse**

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" Matthew 28:19-20.

58

**INTRODUCTION**

Have you ever wondered why we are not immediately taken to Heaven to be always with Christ when we receive Him? This is a good question for which there may be two answers:

1. Because the Lord wants us to worship him here, on earth. While there is life here and the final judgment has not yet come, the Lord wants His creation and humanity to worship him. The people who worship Him must be holy.
2. Because the Lord wants us to reach out to other people with the gospel so that they too may be saved (1 Peter 2:9; 2 Peter 3:9), have abundant life, and also worship Him. While there is life on Earth, people are needed to share Christ and His salvation with other human beings who have not yet experienced this grace.

This lesson deals with the second reason: the work that the Lord wants His children to develop so that other people also might know him and experience the power of the gospel. We call this task of sharing the Good News (Gospel) "evangelizing," and that is what our lesson for today is about.

**I. Our Lord's last words.**

In the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) and Acts, the last recorded words of Jesus were about the task that He left to us, His disciples, while we are here on Earth. This charge is to make disciples of the Lord (Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8).

**Questions:**

What do the last words of our Lord recorded in the synoptic gospel and Acts talk about (Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8)?

**II. The Great Commission or the "Great Omission"? (Matthew 28:18-20)**

A. Explaining the difference

Many know Matthew 28:19-20 by heart, but the honest question is this; do we put it into practice?

Before looking a little more closely at the Great Commission, consider the difference in meaning between "Commission" and "Omission." The Internet Dictionary defines commission as: "an instruction, command, or duty given to a person or group of people." An omission is defined as: "someone or something that has been left out or excluded" (www.google search).

Generally, we know this passage from Matthew 28 as the Great Commission; but in practice, for some believers, or perhaps for many, it is the "Great Omission". So, this question that cannot be avoided arises: what about us?

B. A Brief Analysis of the Great Commission

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) consists of:

A command (“Therefore go...”): we have to go to them. A process (“... and make disciples...”): to help people uphold their faith in Christ and learn to follow Him with all their heart. A vast responsibility (“...of all nations...”); to all peoples of different races, color, those who live in the next block or ten blocks away, those in jail and hospitals, and those who behave like our enemies, etc. In short: everybody. To keep new believers company (“...baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit”): it is necessary to come along with new believers in a discipleship process before and after their baptism. Constant teaching (“...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”): is not only leading them until they are baptized, but we need to continue teaching new Christians to obey everything that Jesus commanded.

While we fulfill the Great Commission, the Lord will come alongside us with His power and with wonders worthy of His name (Matthew 28:18-20).

#### **Questions:**

What is the difference between ‘commission’ and ‘omission’?

### **III. A practical method of Sharing the Good News**

- A. God created everything, including human beings, because he loves us

Genesis 1:1 states that God created everything we see. Genesis 1:27 says that God created man and woman in His image. The same God who created man and woman put them in the paradise of Eden, where He had a close and special relationship with them. Genesis 3:8 shows us that God “... walked in the garden.”

- B. Sin spoiled our relationship with God and with creation

Genesis 3 shows us that the people were tempted, yielded, and sinned, and as a result, they separated

themselves from having communion with God. They were expelled from paradise, and since then, mankind has lived in a state of separation from God. We were not only born with sin, which we inherited, but we have also sinned for ourselves (Romans 3:10). We all sin and because of this, the punishment is death (Romans 6:23).

#### **C. The solution to sin is Christ**

Although sin separated us from God, He gave us a solution. The Lord Jesus took our sins and died for us. He took our place and received the punishment that each of us deserved, because of his great love (Isaiah 53:5; Romans 5:8). By His sacrificial act, we can now have new life and be adopted as children of God.

#### **D. The decision to accept Christ**

God has already done everything for us so that we can be forgiven of our sins and receive salvation and eternal life. Each one must decide for themselves to receive Christ as their Savior. Each person must repent of all their sins, asking God for forgiveness, and accepting the sacrifice of Christ in their place (Revelation 3:20).

Once the Good News has been shared and questions answered, we can ask them: “Do you want to receive Christ as your Savior?” If the answer is affirmative, we need to help them repeat a sincere prayer of faith like this: “Lord Jesus, I acknowledge that I am a sinful person; I have done many wrong things. Today, I sincerely regret all of this. I ask you to forgive me and enter into my heart through your Holy Spirit. Make me your child because you love me. Amen”.

As already discussed, the fulfillment of the Great Commission does not end there. The new believer must now be disciple, baptized, and continue to learn all that Jesus taught.

#### **Questions:**

Name the four parts of the plan of salvation suggested in the content of the lesson according to Genesis 1, 3; Romans 3:23, 6:23, and Revelation 3:20.

## **CONCLUSION**

The last words of our Lord, what He especially wanted us to remember, was that we share the Good News with those who do not yet know Him, guiding them to repentance, the forgiveness of their sins through Christ, discipleship, baptism, and encouraging and teaching them to obey all that the Master taught us.

Lesson  
27

## THE PRAYER OF A FRIEND IN PRISON

Passage to Study: Philippians 1:3-11

## Lesson Aim

To understand the role of Christian love in fulfilling a full and holy life.

## Memory Verse

“...this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight...” Philippians 1:9.

60

## INTRODUCTION

The letter to the Philippians is the most personal of all Paul's letters because, in it, the apostle shows his love for the recipients. With it, Paul sought to encourage the church to persevere in faith and love, even in the midst of persecution (Philippians 1:9; 3:1; 4:4).

No one would think that this letter was written from prison. Let us take a minute to honestly think about what our attitude would be if we had to write a letter as prisoners for preaching the gospel.

Paul's prayer as an intercessor for the Philippian brothers and sisters had characteristics that must be considered:

There is no specific prayer written in the letter because the apostle's prayer for his friends was permanent; Paul's prayer was filled with very strong love; it was a prayer that thought about the spiritual needs of those for whom he interceded; it was a prayer of gratitude. Paul's prayer for his friends was an appeal for them to persevere in Christ. Paul knew that prayer sometimes requires the will and effort of the one who prays or of those for whom the prayer is made.

When we make our petitions to God in prayer, we must be willing to be involved in the answers to prayer. In this lesson, we will try to discover what the apostle's desire was for his friends in the situation in which they were living.

### I. Paul prays for fellowship in the gospel (Philippians 1:3-5)

The deep fellowship that united Paul with his Philippian readers was based on a common element that is greater than any difference. According to the Bible, fellowship is not intended to end natural differences between human beings. But it is about working together for the common cause – sharing the Good News about Christ. Christian unity has its foundation in Christ (His nature, His ministry, His teachings, and the hope of His return) and not on any other basis. In Paul's idea of fellowship, Christ is the bonding agent of all things, rather than things like nationality, systems of thought, politics, or philosophy. Paul's theology was always centered on Christ and the idea of fellowship was deeply rooted in this

teaching: thus being in Christ was the same as being a member of the body of Christ

Paul's understanding of fellowship has two directions: (1) a vertical direction, that is, the relationship of the believer with Christ; and (2) a horizontal direction, of believers among themselves, and non-believers. The second is an outcome of the first, while it also provides space for the first to grow. These dimensions of fellowship cannot be separated.

Christ offers us the possibility of going through the ups and downs of life supported by a community with whom we share the hope that our sufferings will not be eternal, in vain, or greater than our hopes. Paul knew how important and meaningful this was to the Philippians, and therefore, he

prayed that they might enjoy God's love and the fellowship of the flock.

### Questions:

What are the two directions of fellowship according to Paul?

## II. Paul prays for the abundance of love in the heart (Philippians 1:6-9)

Fellowship begins and remains in the person of Christ. The apostle understood that Christ and love cannot be separated, and he never forgot this key component of Christian relationships. Fellowship must not be just a theory, but rather, it must be a reality in the life of the church.

To begin with, love according to the Bible is completely free of bias and above everything else. 1 John 4:8 says that "God is love." This means that love exists beyond emotions and circumstances; it is the very nature of God. Believers, in whose heart the Spirit of God dwells, may become angry, but they will not allow themselves to hate or hold a grudge. Let us remember what the Bible says: "Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen" (1 John 4:20).

Christians cannot ignore love, nor keep on hating, showing bitterness, or resentment. The basic truth from which Christians cannot be separated is forgiveness. For fellowship to be possible, we must grow the ability to forgive. Jesus made this clear, for forgiveness was one of the central themes of his teaching.

The motivation for forgiveness lies in the mere fact of having been forgiven by God and nothing else.

### Questions:

What do you consider to be the necessary ingredients of fellowship with our neighbors?

## III. Paul prays for lives pleasing to God (Philippians 1:10-11)

Finally, Paul revealed to them the final purpose: "...so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ (v. 10)

Holiness and godliness are expressed through community life. Life in communion with God makes it necessary for a believer to be in fellowship with others. It is this fellowship that enables believers to grow in discerning "what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ" (vs. 10). To love your neighbor is to honor God. God through Jesus Christ, identified with all of us, and thus, believers can become true bearers of His image. Finally, let us remember that for this fellowship to be possible, forgiveness, love, and mercy are necessary. Paul said: "... that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19). If Christ gave His life to reconcile us to the Father, we must become agents of reconciliation, and this forces us to live and actively seek fellowship with our neighbors.

### Questions:

Personally, reflect on what actions you should take to be in fellowship with your family, brothers, and sisters in faith, neighbors, coworkers, etc.

## CONCLUSION

Paul's prayer for the Philippians allows us to see his concern that they remain united. Unity is vital for the church to fulfill its purpose of witnessing God's love for the world. But this is not achieved by itself; it is built through fellowship, love, and forgiveness based on our relationship with Christ. As Christians, we must be careful not to separate the idea of community life from personal devotional life. Holiness is social; that is to say, it is expressed in our life as a community, and in a character that watches over the peace of the world and the unity of the body of Christ.

Lesson  
28

## A LIFE PASSIONATE FOR CHRIST

Passage to Study: Philippians 1:12-30

## Lesson Aim

To accept the challenge of living passionately for Christ.

## Memory Verse

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain”  
Philippians 1:21.

62

## INTRODUCTION

In this beautiful passage, we see the great passion for Christ that distinguished the life of the apostle. Paul denied nothing of himself for his beloved Lord and Savior. He was flooded with a sense of thankfulness that cannot be compared to anything for the grace of God showed in him. He was also deeply persuaded of his duty to urgently preach the gospel to all people. He thus responded to the “supreme call of God in Christ Jesus” without any condition (Philippians 3:14). This meant a daily struggle involving suffering and the permanent danger of death. Without a doubt, Paul’s life challenges us to surrender ourselves completely to Christ.

### I. A passionate life for Christ as a witness (Philippians 1:12-17)

When our hearts are full of passion for Christ, we can overcome any hardship, and with the help of God’s grace, make it an opportunity to grow in faith and witness to the gospel.

#### A. Announcing Christ in hardship (vs. 12-14)

The degree of difficulty in our life or ministry is not a sign that God is not with us, or that His purpose has been shortened. Rather, it is the opportunity for God to glorify himself and show his supernatural power. The word ‘advance’ in verse 12 is a military term. It includes the idea of someone who is making his way through the forest while walking along a difficult path. Probably in this life, we will never fully understand how far we have influenced people when we have witnessed courageously Christ in the midst of life’s hardships.

#### B. Announcing Christ for the right reason (vs. 15-17)

Next, the passage teaches us the importance of preaching the gospel for the right reasons. In verses 15-18, Paul pointed out that “some preach

Christ out of envy and rivalry.” Preaching the gospel out of envy or rivalry is not foreign to our times, but how much damage it does to the body of Christ! The apostle James also spoke about envy, selfishness, ambitions, and strife that do not come from God (James 3:13-18); whatever is of God will always enlighten the church. Finally, Paul spoke of those who preach the gospel “out of love” (v. 16). They are the ones who can say: “Christ’s love compels us...” (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

#### Questions:

How passionately do we preach the gospel?

### II. A passionate life for Christ in faith (Philippians 1:18-26)

To testify passionately about Christ, we need to be sustained by faith, especially when everything seems to work together against us.

#### A. Sustained by prayer and the Spirit (v. 19)

Paul’s confidence was not based on any human element; it was based on the will of God. For this, he asked for prayer. The other foundation of his trust was the “provision of the Spirit of Jesus”. This probably points to the effective presence of



the Holy Spirit in the ministry of the church. We always need to rest in Christ from our cares and worries, even those related to the work of God.

**B. Trusting in the goodwill of God (vs. 20-26)**

In verses 20b and 21, the apostle affirms that God had never failed him, and therefore He will not fail us either. When we walk in His will, any event that happens to us will be God's best for us. We may not have all the answers to every difficult situation, but we know that God has a firm purpose for us (Romans 8:28). The only communion with God can give the Christian such a sense of security. We need to place our full trust in His will, whatever our situation may be.

In verses 22-26, Paul revealed a deep inner conflict. According to his feelings, he wanted to leave this world promptly to be with Christ. However, the great and demanding need of the church retained his love. The first idea seemed much better to him, but the second, the most necessary for the church. So, God allowed it.

**Questions:**

What was the reason that Paul asked for the church to pray?

**III. A passionate life for Christ in conduct (Philippians 1:27-29)**

Paul is also an example of a life that is passionate about holiness. What he expected from each believer was that his conduct would correspond to the holy call received from the gospel. However, the situation in which the Philippian brothers found themselves meant a permanent struggle to stay in line with the call. It took a real passion for Christ to stand firm in the midst of such a corrupt society. The passion for Christ can be proved when the believer behaves in a manner worthy of the gospel. The conduct of a Christian must

correspond with his words. In other words, what we do must agree with what we say. Paul required several important things from the church here:

**A. We need to have the same purpose (v. 27a)**

A passionate love for Christ allows for agreement despite the small differences of opinion that often arise. This allows efforts to be directed towards a common goal. Love helps us overcome any type of barrier. Paul said that love binds everything "together in perfect unity" (Colossians 3:14). The main purpose that unites us is the Great Commission.

**B. We need to fight together for faith (v. 27b)**

Philippians 1:27b says: "... striving together as one for the faith of the gospel." The gospel makes us be a different people, free from the selfish independence that characterizes the world around us and marked by unconditional love for others. On the other hand, Paul's idea here seems to be that of a team of gladiators who fight together, protecting and helping each other in order to achieve victory.

**C. We need courage against those who oppose us (vs. 28-29)**

The Christians in Philippi faced persistent hardships, but the steadfast fight of the believers in defense of the faith was a clear sign of their salvation. At the same time, it was a clear sign to the unbelievers who were on the way to their destruction (v. 28b). Paul invited them to consider it an honor to suffer for Christ (v. 29). Let us not be terrified by hardships, for "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

**Questions:**

Why do we Christians need to live striving for the same purpose?

---

**CONCLUSION**

---

We need to have the courage to share the gospel in an unbelieving and difficult world together with firm confidence in the will of God, and conduct characterized by practical holiness. These are the signs of life passionate for Christ. The passion for the Lord does not come from us, but from the grace of God that fills our being.



**Lesson  
29**
**CHRISTIAN UNITY**
**Passage to Study:** Philippians 2:2-4

**Lesson Aim**

To understand the importance of serving in unity as the church, and the practical ways of achieving it according to the advice of the apostle Paul.

**Memory Verse**

“...make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind” Philippians 2:2.

64

**INTRODUCTION**

Philippi was a very important city within its region. In it, Latin was spoken, and its social, political, and religious organization was so similar to that of Rome that its inhabitants felt as if they were living in the very capital of the empire. It was like Rome away from the capital, to the point that it came to be called ‘Miniature Rome.’

The inhabitants of Philippi had a high civic and regional pride. They boasted of being citizens of Rome. It was a proud Roman colony, exempt from taxes with many privileges. Like all human beings, the Philippians battled with their pride.

In Acts 16:12-40, we are told of the birth of Christ’s church at Philippi. It was during the apostle Paul’s second missionary journey that God gave him a vision of a Macedonian man asking for help (vs. 6-10). Paul, Silas, and Timothy immediately set sail for Philippi. When they got there, they announced the gospel, and a woman named Lydia was the first convert (v. 14). Then in the name of Jesus Christ, Paul expelled a spirit of predicting the future from the life of a slave girl, who gave good profits to her owners (vs. 16-18). As a result, Paul and Silas ended up in jail. But it was there inside the prison that a great miracle happened. The place shook, and all the doors flew open. Then, the jailer in charge wanted to kill himself thinking that the prisoners had fled, but Paul told him that none of them had escaped. The jailer, seeing himself close to death, decided to give his life to Christ, along with all his family (vs. 19-34). This is how the beautiful church in Philippi began.

The entire letter to the Philippians is a message from the heart of a pastor to his beloved church, of a father encouraging and urging his children. We can see the heart of a mature servant who gave his life to the preaching of the gospel, which led him to suffer a lot. But this letter gives us a message of strength, confidence, encouragement, and joy, so necessary for us who are also often overwhelmed by the weight of living in this fallen world.

**I. Unity through love (Philippians 2:2)**
**A. Complete joy**

The measure of the Apostle Paul’s joy was not complete because he discerned that there was a lack of humility and unity. Paul’s main desire was not for his quick release from prison, but rather, the spiritual progress of all the Philippian brothers and sisters.

**B. Paul’s request to the Philippians to be of the same mind and in one spirit**

The apostle Paul asked the church at Philippi to be of the same mind (see v. 5), that is, to have an agreement of opinions and feelings. They must all share “the same love”. That is, they must all share the loving concern, vibrating together in one accord to the sound of the same morals and driven by the same reasons with unity of purpose. Even if

we disagree on minor issues, we can put aside our own opinions that do not compromise any beliefs of the Bible, for the good of others.

This means having the mind of Christ ... seeing things as He would see them and responding to them as He would have. Sharing the same love means showing the same love that Christ has shown us, a love that paid for everything. Being in one accord means working together in harmony for a common goal. Feeling the same thing means acting in such a united way that it becomes clear that the mind of Christ is directing our activities. But this does not mean that we are exactly like each other, or our lives match. Expressing unity in purpose is to allow the mind of Christ, His way of thinking, to be in us. This allows for differences of expression, differences in gifts, differences in forms of serving, and even differences in less important doctrines, but without fighting.

#### **Questions:**

List some practical ways that you can further promote unity in your congregation.

## **II. Unity through humility (Philippians 2:3)**

### **A. The root of some problems**

We can affirm that many of the difficulties faced by churches today are not due to differences in beliefs, but are caused by human passions or feelings such as envy and competitions that cause conflict. We need to follow Paul's advice about acting in such a way as to not cause opposition and, without envy. If we did this, almost all problems among Christians would be avoided.

### **B. Examining our motivations**

Some believers do things only because they hope to receive public recognition for their actions. Paul's advice is to do nothing out of selfishness or vanity, nor to provoke conflicts or compete as enemies. In his letter, Paul urged the church to be rid of the attitude of wanting to be noticed, which is a symptom of pride.

### **C. The pastor's advice**

Philippians 4:2 says, "I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord." It seems that these two sisters had some problems in their relationship. They seem to have been causing difficulties through their competing spirit. This had come to Paul's attention and he wanted them to resolve their conflict.

These problems are very common today when one person or another wants to be on top. Paul's advice is to consider other people above us. Arrogance is a deeply rooted sin and we need to pray for the help and intervention of the Holy Spirit to deal with those wicked attitudes of our old nature.

#### **Questions:**

What would be some correct reasons for serving in the church?

## **III. Unity through compassion (Philippians 2:4)**

### **A. Maintaining the balance**

Self-esteem is how we understand and know ourselves. But we can have too high a regard for ourselves, and this leads to pride, arrogance, vanity, and a feeling that we are superior to others. Regarding this, Paul said that we should not consider ourselves superior to others, but rather, we must look at and treat everyone around us as superior to ourselves. That is humility.

### **B. Yielding my place**

Selfishness is thinking only of us, of our interests, forgetting the good of others. Paul rebukes us not to be like that. We need to be humble. Valuing others as better than us, and seeking the well-being of others is a very important thing for life in communion, in harmony, and unity.

#### **Questions:**

Make a shortlist of problems that can be avoided in the church if personal pride is removed.

## **CONCLUSION**

The matchless love of Christ in us will lead us to have the same desire to strive for holy unity. Encouraging each other always, we will not be proud, but genuinely show interest in the well-being of those around us. To achieve all this, we must develop a life of constantly listening to God and allowing Him to change us. This way the church will shine with the light of Christ.

**Lesson  
30**
**CHRIST: THE EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY**
**Passage to Study:** Philippians 2:5-11

**Lesson Aim**

To understand that only Christ can teach us how to live humbly.

**Memory Verse**

“And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” Philippians 2:8

66

**INTRODUCTION**

When we speak of true humility, we are speaking of something deeper than an action that appears to be humble. We are talking about something that reveals the very core of who we are as Christian people. True humility springs from a heart whose core is to be humble.

Genuine humility is not just a false act. We cannot pretend to be humble, or think that it will just appear. It has nothing to do with who we are physically, or what we wear, but with what we are in our deepest being. It springs up from a sincere heart full of love for others. To follow Jesus' example means walking the same path that our Master walked. In other words, we must follow His example in life and teachings. Jesus is our example, He is the model we need to imitate. Scripture teaches us that we must “have the same mindset as Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5); and humility is one of His qualities.

When we have been changed by Jesus Christ, we can have ‘His mindset’ and with it, the ability to live in true humility. Let us see in this portion of Paul’s letter written to the Philippians, the meaning of Christ’s humility. And then we can decide to imitate Him, and with His help, be true citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

**I. Christ did not cling to his nature as God (Philippians 2:6)**

In this passage, the apostle Paul taught that Christ is equal to God; He is God Himself. Thus to look at Christ is to look at God. They are both of the same nature and they are superior to everything. This tells us that Christ, being God, did not cling to His nature as God. This He did to act in kindness to people. He wanted to teach us something much deeper. Every Christian must understand that humility is not about how we look, speak, or what we look like: it is who we are. We should never use it to oppress others, rather, we should live humbly following Christ’s example as seen in His life on this earth.

**Questions:**

What does the following expression mean: “He did not consider being equal with God something to be used to his advantage”?

**II. Christ agreed to be a man (Philippians 2:7)**

Out of love, Jesus took up the nature of a slave to fulfill the plan of redeeming humankind. He was not forced to do it. He chose to take our human form, showing His humility. He gave up His throne to walk among people and share their nature as humans. Genuine humility must spring from a changed life coming and from a heart that is willing to help those in need, regardless of their condition. The real meaning of true humility is being able to sacrifice everything for the love of others. Christ became a servant because of true humility and great love. In this way, He taught us the true way of living the Christian life.

### Questions:

If Christ, being God, became a servant and lowered himself, what should we do?

### III. Christ experienced pain (Philippians 2:8)

Philippians 2:8a says: “And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself ...”

A. “... by becoming obedient to death ...” (8b)

Death is not something, which is part of God’s nature. He is everlasting; and has no beginning and no end. Death belongs to creation, not to the Creator. Christ came among us in true humility and His death, He experienced human weakness. He did this in obedience, to fulfill God’s eternal purpose.

B. “... even death on a cross! (8c)

Our Lord was not only willing to experience death, but He was put to death in the most shameful place of public dishonor: crucifixion. All of us, who continue to be changed by Christ, and have decided to belong to the kingdom of heaven, are called to mirror Christ’s act of greatest humility.

### Questions:

- What does the death of Christ mean for humankind?
- What does Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross teach us with regards to humility?

### IV. God exalted Him (Philippians 2:9-11)

After Christ’s sacrificial act on the cross, He continues to be the Lord, the King of all mankind. Christ’s authority is universal; all powers are placed at his feet. True humility is based on the fact that if we do the will of the Father, we will be able to achieve the greatest reward ... that of living together with our Lord Jesus Christ for eternity (Matthew 7:21). God promised that every person on Earth will have to recognize Christ as the King of all humankind. Christ is Lord of all, and the day will come when everyone will see and confess that He is Lord, regardless of whether they had accepted or rejected Him (Philippians 2:11).

This verse ends by saying: “...to the glory of God the Father” (v. 11b). This saying is linked to the first part of the verse. It shows that even this exaltation is not for the Lord Jesus’ benefit but for the glory of God the Father. When we are humbly following in the Master’s footsteps, we too will bring glory to God.

Truly humble people put others before themselves, live lives loving God and their neighbor as themselves. They do nothing for selfish reasons but for the ultimate goal of pleasing God and bringing glory to His name. All that we are and have belonged to God, who wants us to follow the example of Jesus who came to serve others out of love.

### Questions:

What was the result of Christ humbling Himself?

## CONCLUSION

The apostle Paul taught us how Christ, being God, was able to humble himself to such an extent that he was sacrificed on the cross. The Creator became human to redeem mankind. God wants us to have the same “mindset” that Jesus had; be humble and live day by day for the Glory of God.

**Lesson  
31**
**CHRISTIANS DON'T GRUMBLE**
**Passage to Study:** Philippians 2:14-18

**Lesson Aim**

To seek to live a life of honesty and joy before the world.

**Memory Verse**

“Do everything without grumbling or arguing...” Philippians 2:14

68

**INTRODUCTION**

The type of conduct, to which the Christians of Philippi were called, responded to the standard of God proclaimed by the apostle Paul. Their conduct had to be faultless and blameless. The same applies to us today. If we live in accordance with the will of God, we will have a good testimony before those who do not know God.

Competitions, unimportant discussions, or bad relationships with others, are not the way we should behave if we want to be genuine witnesses for Christ. We are called to be light and salt on this earth as God's children (Matthew 5:13-16).

Every believer has a responsibility to communicate the gospel driven by caring love for the lost. This call commits us to be good witnesses of God's love to our neighbors, both in speech and how we relate to others daily. We are also called to show love and concern for our Christian brothers and sisters, and care and respect towards the church leaders (Hebrews 13:17).

**I. There must be zero gossip (Philippians 2:14-15)**

The word ‘grumbling’ used by Paul refers to speaking almost with one's lips closed, which is similar to whispering. This sense of the word can also be found in some passages in the Bible that talk about the Israelites when they rebelled during their journey in the desert (Exodus 15:24, 16:2; Numbers 16:41). Whispering behind people's backs is frightening and highly displeasing. The book of Colossians reminds us that whatever we do, “whether in word or deed,” we need to “do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Colossians 3:17, 23). On the other hand, Galatians 5:15 warns us: “If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.”

Grumbling against others including those in leadership, starts when a believer disobeying the Holy Spirit, insists that they are right instead of

submitting to others. However, their grumbling reveals the prejudices they have, which hurt others. Often, rebellion and grumbling are due to some frustrations of the past that have not been solved.

Those who grumble are only thinking of themselves, distancing themselves from their brothers and sisters in the faith. But we are called by the Lord to keep the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:39). The apostle Paul strongly emphasized the need to be seen by the world as Christians who are “blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation” (Philippians 2:15). God expects us to imitate Jesus and live our lives before the world as a shining example of what He wants to do with each and everyone in the community. Paul said if believers did this, they “will shine among them like stars in the sky” (v. 15b) guiding people into the Kingdom of Heaven.

**Questions:**

What could be the reasons why some Christians show shameful behaviors such as gossip and faultfinding?

## II. Holding on to the Word of life (Philippians 2:16)

Obedying what God has revealed in His Word should be sufficient support for us in this present and the future. Obedience is the key to fellowship with God, which results in lives changed by the power and love of God. We need to keep short reports with God, repenting of our failures or shortcomings day by day. The Lord calls us to faithfully commit ourselves to His cause. He wants us to glorify Him in all areas of our lives, every day. Galatians 5:13b calls us to: "...serve one another humbly in love." We are called to faithfully serve in love as we imitate Jesus. This we do by getting involved in the tasks of evangelizing, making disciples, and working together to build up the church. The Scriptures encourage that we must support one another by being understanding, forgiving, showing humility, having patience, and much love (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13). If we obey what God lays down in His Word, there will be no place among God's people for faultfinding, arguments, or strife, which destroy relationships.

The Bible is like a plank that holds a building up strong in order to make it stable. In the midst of any difficulty or distress in our relationships, the Word should direct our thoughts and actions; and thus lead us to peaceful relationships and to being a good witness to our neighbors. Our life must be flooded with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and faithfulness to God's Word if we want to be good witnesses.

### Questions:

Describe the results of your behavior in relation to others, according to the standard of the Bible.

## III. Living in joy (Philippians 2:17-18)

The heart of Paul's joy laid in the fact that, first, he had not worked in vain. Also, he was joyful for being allowed to offer himself out of love for others. We agree that it is not easy for any person to feel satisfied or joyful in the midst of the difficulties that life holds. However, Paul's secret to joy rested in the fact that he had been faithful in carrying out his ministry motivated by the love and sacrifice of Christ, his Redeemer.

The confidence and satisfaction of walking and serving the Lord can result in a faith that is complete and does not change. It leads every committed Christian to confess with the apostle: "for me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). This is an expression of complete satisfaction with life now and a steady hope for the future. People who are satisfied with their lives do not grumble. The Philippian Christians could also have this steady promise as citizens of the heavenly kingdom, and imitators of Jesus Christ and their pastor Paul (Philippians 3:10-11,17). In the midst of danger and persecution, Paul's trustworthy testimony has become a solid anchor and authority.

Joy is one of the highlights of this epistle, and here the apostle is inviting his readers to rejoice with him because of the countless gifts and blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Just as Paul rejoiced in Jesus Christ in the midst of suffering for the sake of the gospel, let us also rejoice, living lives consecrated to Him as worthy children of God.

### Questions:

What can you list as proof that Paul acted with full joy in everything he did for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

## CONCLUSION

Let us take up the challenge of forsaking all gossip and faultfinding against our brothers and sisters in faith. If we do this we will shine in the midst of a lost generation. Let us learn to rest in the faithfulness and authority of the Word of God in our daily life and, rejoice in the Lord at all times and in all circumstances.



**Lesson  
32**
**TIMOTHY AND EPAPHRODITUS: FAITHFUL  
SERVANTS**
**Passage to Study:** Philippians 2:19-30

**Lesson Aim**

To see the need for commitment in serving from the example of Timothy and Epaphroditus.

**Memory Verse**

“So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him...” Philippians 2:29.

**INTRODUCTION**

Read and think about the following chart.

Based on this chart, why do you think most church members do not commit to serving in ministry? And how can commitment to ministry be encouraged?

Differences Between Going To:	
The Work Place	Church
Five days a week	One day a week
If you do not feel well, you still have to go	If you do not feel well, you do not have to go.
If you do not have money you still go	If you do not have money you do not go
If you are depressed, you still go	If you are depressed, you do not go
If you feel sick, you still go	If you feel sick, you do not go
You work overtime to make more money	You leave as quickly as possible
No problems with co-workers	Problems with fellow church members
You commit and comply	You do not keep your commitments
You stay awake	You fall asleep during the sermon
You work hard, giving your all to your job	You do not help or get involved at all
At work things are done for money; At church what we do we do for the Lord.	
If you do your best for your boss; then should you not do your best for your Lord?	

**I. The reality of the believer's commitment to ministry (Philippians 2:21)**

The search for God arises because we need Him, which is correct since only God has the solution for human needs. The problem arises when believers stop there, relying on God to meet the human needs that made them go to God. As it happened in Paul's day, they then start "looking out for their interests, not those of Jesus". But Timothy and Epaphroditus chose to be different and were committed to God (vs. 19-20, 25).

Generally, we are often like the prodigal son who returned home because of need. This young man sought his father because of personal interest; he was dying of hunger. Very often we seek God in the first instance not because we love Him, but because of our needs. However, when we afterward discover His love and having

experienced it, we learn to respond by loving Him. As we grow, we no longer approach the Lord out of necessity, but out of true love. As John said, "We love him because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

**Questions:**

What does Matthew 6:33 say to us today?

**II. Timothy proved himself to be a dedicated leader (Philippians 2:22-24)**

Paul spoke of Timothy as a servant of Christ (Philippians 1:1), who was sincerely interested in how the church at Philippi was growing. He really cared for them and was not interested in any personal gain. Timothy put God and His work first. Thus setting an example for believers, both

pastors and members in our day, to have the same mindset about God and His work.

#### A. Responsibilities for pastors and congregations

Now certainly, pastors are servants of God. However, this does not mean that pastors, having been set apart for leadership, become owners of the congregation. The shepherds are not the owners of Christ's sheep! They are stewards of the Lord's sheep; shepherds hired by the Prince of Shepherds, Christ Jesus himself.

Our Manual says something about this in paragraph 115.4: "When agreement has been entered into between the church or the church board and the pastor, the payment of the pastor's salary in full shall be considered a moral obligation by the church. If, however, the church becomes unable to continue the payment of the salary agreed upon, such inability and failure shall not be considered a sufficient cause for civil action against the church by the pastor".

The writer of this lesson respects and admires pastors who take on secular work in addition to pastoring. There are churches in situations that cannot pay their pastors as they should. However, so that the economic matters do not hinder the work of God, these pastors do not ask their congregations to support them with a salary even though it is their right. On the contrary, they carry the church on their shoulders and look for another job to be able to support their families and continue with the kingdom of Christ, until their church improves and can pay them when it is possible.

The apostle Paul was a tentmaker to support him. He spoke about the responsibility of the church to pay its leaders (1 Corinthians 9:7-12). He also stated that, "... the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14). Based on this then, if a church is able but fails to support their pastor with a fair salary, they are failing to fulfill the command of God.

#### B. Timothy: God's faithful servant.

Timothy was like a son to Paul, and Paul could trust him. Paul wrote that Timothy served with him in the gospel. In Paul's time, servants had few rights and had to do what their masters told them to do. We are to serve the Lord as Timothy did, not out of a sense of duty but because we really want to. We have a loving Master! So, it is worth giving up our interests to serve His interests. When we understand this, we will faithfully serve our Lord in everything. Briefly discuss Matthew 6:33 together.

#### Questions:

What truths do we find in this lesson about looking after our pastors?

### III. The committed Epaphroditus fell ill (Philippians 2:25-28)

Epaphroditus also had a ministry because Paul called him his "brother, co-worker and fellow soldier" (v. 25). He was the person who was going to carry the letter to Philippi (v. 28). He was a member of the Philippian church who had been sent to take care of Paul's needs (v. 25b). Epaphroditus was concerned because the Philippian Church had heard that Epaphroditus was very ill (v. 26). Paul verified that "Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow" (v. 27). Paul was sending him back and he asked them to "...welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him because he almost died for the work of Christ (vs. 29-30). We do not know what illness Epaphroditus had. People get sick through hard work in ministry or for many other reasons. They may experience stress or maybe have other sicknesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure, among others. Ask the participants how they can help their pastor and his/her family keep well. Congregations need to take care of their leaders' health.

#### Questions:

What can we learn about Epaphroditus in this chapter?

## CONCLUSION

Both Timothy and Epaphroditus were faithful servants of the Lord in the great missionary task led by Paul to share the Good News with the people around the Roman Empire. May we also put God's kingdom and His righteousness first in our lives and ministries.

Lesson  
33

## PUTTING OUR COMPLETE TRUST IN CHRIST

Passage to Study: Philippians 3:1-7

## Lesson Aim

To understand that no heritage or personal effort can replace the power of the saving work of Jesus Christ.

## Memory Verse

“But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ” Philippians 3:7.

72

## INTRODUCTION

How should we respond to the increasing number of leaders who claim titles such as ‘apostle’, ‘prophet’, ‘the anointed one’, etc.? How should we deal with the temptation of their teachings? Through these teachings, they replace the cross and the demands of disciple-making with a self-styled gospel. Their gospel uses Christ and the Bible to exalt their self-image and spread cheap salvation.

In Paul’s times, the churches lived through similar troubles. This drove the apostle to give a forceful response in this epistle to the church at Philippi. This letter and its teachings are completely suitable for the church today.

## I. The fault of false doctrines (Philippians 3:2)

The church of Philippi was attracted, tempted, and confused by the preachers and the doctrines in fashion at that time. The apostle Paul saw the urgent need to reject them and make a series of warnings regarding the Judaizing preachers of that period.

## A. “Watch out for those dogs”

In the ancient Orient (East Asia), “dogs were outcast animals that roamed the streets and fields, sometimes in packs, searching for food in the rubbish heaps and barking and growling at everyone they encountered”. In connection with this, the Jews of the Bible times used to disrespectfully refer to the Gentiles as ‘dogs.’ The apostle Paul reversed the saying and used it on the Judaizing Christians who were twisting the Good News about Jesus.

## B. “Watch out...for evildoers”

The Judaizing teachers were convinced that the new gentile Christians were required to also observe the countless rules and teachings of the Jewish law to become righteous. But what they were teaching was further distancing people from God. Today, the Christian church is facing a serious problem. There is, among others, an

increasing number of the so-called ‘teachers’, ‘preachers’, ‘apostles’, ‘prophets’, ‘healers’, ‘evangelical shamans’, ‘spiritual warriors’, ‘preachers of a gospel of prosperity’, etc. They deceive the churches and taking advantage of the ignorance of many believers regarding sound doctrine.

## C. “Watch out for... those mutilators of the flesh”

With this saying, Paul referred to the rite of circumcision, which since Abraham’s time was an outward symbol and sign of having entered into a special relationship with God. Lastly, he calls them, the ‘party of mutilators’ (those cutting body parts). Circumcision without a covenant of relationship with God is nothing more than mere mutilation of the body. True worship is in the temple of the Spirit (John 4:20-23) and not in the flesh. Much of what is called worship today is nothing more than a religion of the flesh. In this way, believers could be mutilating the body of Christ too.

## Questions:

Who did the apostle Paul called “dogs”? Why?

## II. The fault of religious heritage (Philippians 3:3-6)

Was there ever a Judaizer who enjoyed the privileges of heritage like that of the Apostle Paul?

**A. Extreme following of ritual**

Speaking about himself, Paul said that he was “circumcised on the eighth day” (v. 5a). But, religion, which is not voluntary or learned, does not make us new creatures. Similarly, circumcision without new birth is just a small operation. Paul had to give up his religious heritage when he trusted in Christ for salvation.

**B. Being part of a certain race**

Also, Paul added the following about himself: “of the people of Israel” (v. 5b). Once again, the apostle Paul emphasized his kinship bond with God’s chosen people. However, Paul had to give up even that way of thinking and accept that salvation is only by grace, through personal faith in Christ Jesus. It should be noted that it is a privilege to have been born into a Christian home, or to have received highly disciplined morals with sound rules! But if we are not born again, we will not be able to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3).

**C. Being part of a select religious group**

Paul indicated that he was “of the tribe of Benjamin” (v. 5c). However, he had to accept that neither the privilege of being a descendant of God’s chosen people, nor the social level, nor anything else, entitled him to the kingdom of God. Salvation is not obtained by inheritance or tradition, but by personal faith in Jesus Christ.

**D. Tradition**

Paul mentioned that he was a: “Hebrew of the Hebrews” (v. 5d). He had the satisfaction of having been born in the best religious family. In addition, he had remained faithful to the orthodox traditions, language, and customs of their ancestors until he reached adulthood. But all of this could not make him a child of God, so he had to give up his most precious traditions to trust only in Jesus Christ.

**Questions:**

Explain what the apostle Paul meant when he said that he was “a Hebrew of the Hebrews” (v. 5).

**III. The fault of replacing Christ with human achievement (Philippians 3:7)**

Who could display a better ‘curriculum vitae’ (CV) than the Apostle Paul?

**A. Religious education**

Paul further stated: “concerning the law, a Pharisee” (v. 5d). He was educated according to the strictest demands of the Jewish religion, reaching the highest level of observing the laws of Judaism with a sincere heart; that is to say, the level of dying for it. But not even his status as a Pharisee could entitle him to the kingdom of God. Religion alone cannot bring us to God because we are saved by grace, not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Jesus said to a famous Jewish teacher: “You must be born again” (John 3:7b).

**B. Religious zeal**

Paul’s zeal for God led him to try to destroy Christianity in a persistent, merciless, and cruel way. He was so sincere in his religious beliefs, and in what he did, but he was wrong.

**C. Spotless morality**

Paul was quite an honorable and exemplary gentleman. He had sincerely and strictly observed all the demands of Judaism regarding rituals and law. But later, he was able to recognize the condition of his heart and cried: “For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do— this I keep on doing... What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?” (Romans 7:19, 24) So, all highly educated, civilized, and religious sinners need to trust Christ for salvation.

**Questions:**

Do you consider that a religious legacy (inheritance) can be of help or hindrance in trusting Christ? Comment.

## CONCLUSION

One of the ideas of religion says that people need to build their staircase to God. But self-effort will not succeed. There is only one ladder that God has provided for salvation: Jesus Christ, who is “... the way, and the truth, and the life ...” (John 14:6). How many people who are blameless, sincere, and honest in their beliefs and behavior today need to understand that one thing is missing, they need to give up the things they have been trusting in and begin trusting fully in Christ.

Lesson  
34**WE HAVE TO LOSE TO WIN****Passage to Study:** Philippians 3:7-11**Lesson Aim**

To understand that accepting Christ in our life involves making changes in character and values to have a new life in Christ and a better relationship with God.

**Memory Verse**

“But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ” Philippians 3:7.

74

**INTRODUCTION**

Who could have boasted of the rewards of faithfulness to religion and the law, better than Paul? In Philippians 3:4-6, we find a perfect life plan for any member of the Pharisees, the most disciplined and strict religious sect of Judaism. Paul came from the tribe considered the purest in Jewish identity, the tribe of Benjamin, and from which Saul, the first king of Israel, had come (1 Samuel 9:10). Certainly according to the criteria of the law, Paul was a worthy representative of the highest religious class of his time. His service, his character, and his performance in defending the law were faultless.

But something powerful happened on that day when Paul (formerly called Saul of Tarsus) was on his way to Damascus (Acts 9). He had an experience with the Lord Jesus, which changed that powerful man's way and standard of life. That experience with Jesus Christ was a most superior event in Paul's life, just as it was and is for us today, because it requires the same change in life. Only this experience with Christ can change our life. That was my case, and surely, it is yours too, just as it was for Paul.

**I. What we must lose from the past (Philippians 3:7-8a)**

The apostle Paul, after making a list of his qualities, gains, and human and religious achievements, immediately identified them as losses. This did not mean that he had removed the benefits he had from his life, but that he changed how he viewed them. The experience with Christ marked a past and a present in the life of this man. As he referred to it in Ephesians 4:22, it was about putting off his “old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires.” For Paul, the things he cherished so much in the past had turned into wickedness and disturbances that deceived him and led him astray from the true path of grace.

Now, Paul used the word ‘loss’ to describe all those things that he gloried in the past. In the same way, we must consider as rubbish all those

things from our past life that can become harmful disturbances to our relationship with God. Anything from our past that represents any form of deceptive disturbances, for our relationship with God must be thrown away as trash, or as things that are no longer important, as we put all our faith in Christ Jesus.

**Questions:**

What are the qualities and benefits of the past that have seemed important reasons for pride to us today that we should throw away?

**II. What we must gain in the present (Philippians 3:8b-9)**

Paul discovered that his entire past life had been a mere and futile attempt to achieve the righteousness and peace that he could only find in



Jesus. He found that the law and its teachings were useless to achieve the righteousness that can only be obtained by grace and faith in Christ (v. 9). Paul could not achieve peace with God by human benefits or by keeping the law, since human effort does not lead us to Heaven. So, Paul had to lose to win. He had to abandon the idea that self-sacrifice would lead him to God, and instead, he accepted the sacrifice of Christ for his salvation. The apostle Paul's example reminds us that we too must lose to win ... lose all our useless list of worldly values, hypocrisy, and false holiness, to reach, as Paul himself said, the excellence of the knowledge of Jesus Christ (v. 8).

We must continue to get to know Christ more and more. Paul is suggesting here that we must assume an attitude of constantly seeking to gain more in the grace of the gospel, while at the same time continuing to throw away everything that limits us from obtaining spiritual gain.

This seems to present us with an interesting lively happening in the life of Paul. As he got rid of all the useless self-acts to achieve grace, he was also gaining knowledge and becoming perfect in his relationship with God. There is no doubt that this must also be something constantly happening for us. Dying to the flesh and living in the Spirit should be daily practices. We must convert that relationship of loss and gain into a lifestyle. Now, as this lifestyle pointed, and points today, towards something greater and more glorious, Paul foresaw its effects in the fulfillment of a great promise in the future.

#### **Questions:**

What was the quality that Paul had toward constantly growing in his relationship with God?

### **III. What awaits us in the future (Philippians 3:10-11)**

Paul always understood the fullness of his relationship with God as something partial and incomplete while on this earth. His hope rested in that time when the love of God in Christ Jesus will be manifested in the final completion of our salvation, when we will know God fully, as He now knows us. In the end, our relationship with God and our knowledge of Christ will be complete.

Paul expected the knowledge of Christ to be perfected through the resurrection of the saints. We must share Paul's thinking regarding our relationship with God. The resurrection of Christ is not merely a fact of the past, it is the guarantee of our future if we remain faithful in the present. Likewise, Christ's resurrection was not only His victory, but it was a promise and a model for ours. Paul did not regret the loss of all those things past because he had found a better way. He was losing everything to gain in Christ everything that he could ever want or be. He was burying the junk from his past life to flourish in his new life in Christ, full of the fruit of the Spirit. He had to die to live. He had to lose to win.

#### **Questions:**

How did the apostle Paul understand what our knowledge of Christ is while we are in our human condition?

What is the meaning of the resurrection with regards to our knowledge of Christ and our relationship with God being made perfect and complete?

## **CONCLUSION**

Today, we are called to lose to win. We must reject everything from our life that does not add meaning and connection to our relationship with God, in order to grow daily in the experience of the Christian life. Losing our past, in the present we gain the grace that can only be obtained through faith in Jesus Christ. This also involves obedience to God's commands, even if doing so means participating in the same sufferings of Jesus in his death. If we remain faithful to the end, we will have a glorious future, where the power of the resurrection will be revealed in us.



**Lesson  
35**
**PRESSING ON TO ACHIEVE OUR GOAL**
**Passage to Study:** Philippians 3:12-16

**Lesson Aim**

To learn how to remain steadfast in our faith: practicing Paul's three suggestions that will help us reach Heaven.

**Memory Verse**

"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.

76

**INTRODUCTION**

In John Bunyan's classic book, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, written in the 17th century, we find the main character Christian on his journey to the Kingdom of Heaven. Along the way, he experiences several difficulties, which discouraged him. However, with wise actions and God's direction, Christian manages to reach his desired prize, the heavenly city.

When Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, he did so from prison in Rome. He was nearly ready to hand over the ministry to others and had his eyes on finishing the race (2 Timothy 4:6-7). He encouraged his readers to continue faithfully along the path of salvation until God's final call. He encouraged them to be faithful. Let us analyze the three suggestions Paul gave to the Philippians.

**I. Do not live on past spiritual experiences (Philippians 3:12-13)**

The Christian life must be lived out on a day-to-day basis. We may all have our spiritual program, but if we think that what we have achieved in the past, or any church position we may have reached, will convince God, we will be mistaken. What is happening in the immediate present is what counts.

In the Christian life, many think that they already know everything, or that they have experienced everything. This is a mistake. Strong religious beliefs and merely upholding rules can only make us feel good. God is a God of newness. He says in His Word that His mercies are new every day. He has everything each of us needs daily (Lamentations 3:22-24).

Paul taught the complete opposite of mere observance of spiritual practices. He said: "... but I press on ..." (Philippians

3:12). Spiritual life is about growth, moving forward, continuing to progress, and doing even

better things for God. In the Christian life, no one ought to feel they have arrived, no matter how many years they have served in the church. We cannot live on past experiences, since all they do is make us repeat religious practices.

One day Christ knocked on the door of our hearts, and we invited him into our life. Now we live with Him every day, not just once a week. Every time we open our eyes at dawn, there is a new opportunity to have fellowship with Jesus Christ. We need to forget our past. Yesterday has passed and today God has something fresh for us. As bitter or sweet as yesterday was, we should not linger, but press on. God wants to teach us new things in our lives, so, we have to turn the page. Let us commit today to give up yesterday and ask God to renew every area of our lives.

**Questions:**

Do you think that some past spiritual experiences are hindering your spiritual growth?

## II. There's a heavenly goal and prize to achieve (Philippians 3:14)

As Christians, we must always look to the final line, just as great athletes do. To achieve this, we will have to forsake many things to achieve the prize of Christ. On another occasion, Paul wrote to the Corinthian brothers to tell them that those who run or fight in the stadium do so for a prize that “will not last”. We must do the same, but our prize “will last forever”. We must put our humanity in bondage so as not to be excluded on the last day (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

Spiritual citizenship must be our reward beyond any other earthly citizenship. There is no greater prize that we can achieve, for this award cannot be compared to anything material. In one of His parables, Jesus made this point clear: The Kingdom of Heaven (the prize) is like a priceless pearl, and whoever finds it must do everything possible to buy it (Matthew 13:45-46). Paul also teaches us that to have that ultimate goal and prize, our priority must be Christ, and everything else must come second.

### Questions:

What is your goal?

## III. Hold fast to the progress you have made in Christ (Philippians 3:16)

Past experiences should not be what we live on, but they can bear witness to how far we have come. An unnamed proverb says: “Use the past as a springboard, and not as a sofa.” Nothing happens by chance; everything has worked to receive the grace of God.

Building on our progress in Christ must be for two main reasons. In the first place, Paul advises us to

love God and neighbor, and not to be carried away by the false and selfish desires of the heart. Bad attitudes will only push us back in our spiritual lives. Communion with Christ, following His example and lifestyle, will help us progress, but living by the flesh will only make us lose our heavenly goal. The second main reason to keep holding on to the progress we have made with Christ is that if we neglect Him and take our eyes off of Him, we can fall backward away from God. Worldliness is one of Satan's tricks to stop us and prevent us from achieving the end for which Christ saved us.

In our spiritual life, we will face many challenges. We should not face them in our strength. We need to fight them with Christ's help. We need to trust Him. He has said that He will be with us until the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). We need to feel His hand guiding us as we move forward into the heavenly kingdom (Philippians 4:13).

Demas, one of Paul's coworkers, did not follow this advice. In the letters to the church at Colossae (Colossians 4:14) and to Philemon (Philemon 24), Demas is mentioned as a servant of Christ. But in the last letter written by the apostle Paul, Demas was described as a brother who deserted him for the love of the world (2 Timothy 4:10). This disciple of Paul did not finish his spiritual career and did not achieve the heavenly prize.

### Questions:

What is the use of everything we have experienced in the past?

Share some ideas about how God can continue to help you grow in grace.

## CONCLUSION

When Jesus knocked on the door of our heart, He did it to enter and live each day with us. But the big day will come when we will see Him face-to-face. Meanwhile, we should listen to Paul's advice to not live only on past spiritual experiences. Set out to reach the goal, the heavenly prize; and hold on to the progress made in Christ.

Lesson  
36

## CITIZENS OF HEAVEN

Passage to Study: Philippians 3:17-21

## Lesson Aim

To understand that our citizenship, as children of God, demands the practice of a lifestyle that honors the Lord and His church.

## Memory Verse

“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ ...” Philippians 3:20.

## INTRODUCTION

People who are foreigners can be recognized immediately because they speak, dress, or behave differently. They have their customs and lifestyle that makes them different.

This also happens with Christians because we have been called by God to be holy and shine with the light of Christ in the midst of a world that sinks into darkness more and more (Philippians 2:15). This holy calling is what shapes our lifestyle as children of God. The apostle Paul spoke of this in detail in his epistle to the Philippians. Let us study the instructions that Paul gave to this church.

### I. “Join together in following my example” (Philippians 3:17)

Imitation is a learning method. Since we were little, we learn from those around us.

#### A. “Follow my example” (v. 17a)

What sort of person should we imitate? When Paul asked them to follow his example (Philippians 3:17), he was talking, not only about all he had given up, but also about his constant and persistent preaching of the gospel, although it brought him serious problems. It is so easy to imitate bad examples. However, as children of God, what a great responsibility we have on our shoulders because we have the duty, and the privilege of being good examples to those around us. We have no idea how many people are watching how we live. Our life must inspire them to remain faithful to Christ. We need to think about how we are conducting ourselves before others. We do not want to be the cause or the excuse they give for not walking in God’s will.

#### B. “...keep your eyes on those who live as we do” (v. 17b)

Paul had the wisdom to recognize that he was not the only one whose life the brothers and sisters were to imitate. He also advised them to take note of other Christians who had exemplary

lives. Today, while the lives of many people are not worth imitating, there are still Christians who live according to the light of the Word and let the Holy Spirit direct them. So, they too can inspire us to follow the Lord in obedience and faithfulness.

We need to lay open each area of our lives for the Holy Spirit to inspect and for the lordship of Christ. God is the only one who can change, perfect, and guide us into all truth. Being a good example every day is every Christian’s responsibility. Through our lives, the Lord will carry the message of the gospel that changes lives to those who need to be saved. We need to focus our attention on those who conduct themselves like Jesus taught us. We cannot waste time justifying ourselves for not living like them, or finding fault with other people who are not living correctly.

#### Questions:

What behaviors should we avoid and which should Christians imitate?

### II. Beware of the “enemies of the cross” (Philippians 3:18-19)

Paul warned the Philippian Christians about the danger of those who are “enemies of the cross” (v.

18b). These people caused a lot of harm and pain to the apostle’s ministry, and also to the

Lord's church. They were not seeking God's honor or the good of the church, but the satisfaction of personal interests. Paul was really troubled about these false teachers. He remembered their actions "even with tears" (v. 18). Paul felt he needed to warn this young church to be careful of these teachers.

These people have little regard for the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ when they decide to live in a way that is opposed to the teaching of the Bible.

Today we too have many enemies of the cross of Christ among us. Let us see who they could be:

Those who are merely religious; false Christians; those who are hostile; nominal Christians; the backsliders; those who believe they are Christians but do not "walk the talk"; the legalists (placing too much emphasis on rules); and carnal Christians (those living by the flesh).

Verse 19 is very clear about these people: "Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame." We need to honestly evaluate our lives to be sure that we are not in any of the groups mentioned here because the end of enemies of the cross of Christ is eternal death. Let us not deceive ourselves into believing that God will overlook the wrongdoings and damage done to His church.

In contrast, there are also true Christians who, although they may not have reached a high state of spiritual maturity, have consecrated their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ. They have also fully committed their wills, allowing the Holy Spirit to rule their lives in a way that is pleasing to God.

#### **Questions:**

Who are the enemies of the cross of Christ? Why?

### **III. "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20)**

True Christians are heavenly citizens. This demands from us, exemplary conduct that will not

dishonor the Lord or His church. We are blessed to be able to live lives different from the standard of the world. Jesus said that we are in the world, but we are not of the world (John 17:14-16). We are not guided by the flesh but ruled by the Holy Spirit. By casting off the old nature, we have put on the new one. We do not take rights that put our salvation and that of others at risk, or act according to our wants and desires, without first consulting the Lord. We avoid being a stumbling block to others or hindering them in accepting Christ. We are not greedy, but follow the code of behavior of the gospel; not only in appearance but with intentions from the depth of the heart. We take care not to reveal a twisted image of Christianity. We do not tell dirty stories or participate in bad discussions that corrupt good habits. We also do not use abusive, dishonest, or hateful words, because we do not want to grieve the Spirit of God. Christians must live in holiness, waiting for the Second Coming of the Lord.

#### **Questions:**

What are the characteristics of those who are heavenly citizens?

### **IV. Christ will "...transform our lowly bodies" (Philippians 3:21)**

Our congregations suffer from many of the problems that cause hopelessness and suffering. But in the midst of so much trouble, the children of God look forward and long for the Lord's coming with joy, because they know that He will do even greater things for His children. The Lord will change our bodies so that they will be like His own glorious, risen body, which will not weaken, age, get sick, or die. The Lord can do this because all power has been given to Him in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18).

#### **Questions:**

When will the body of a child of God change? Do you consider yourself ready for the above?

## **CONCLUSION**

Let us live in holiness to please God, aware that we are not citizens of this sinful world, but the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Let us take care that our behavior corresponds to that of a heavenly citizen, and let us wait in holiness, with joy and longing, for the return of our Lord and Savior.

Lesson  
37

## REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS

Passage to Study: Philippians 4:1-7

## Lesson Aim

To understand that we can live a full life in Christ in any circumstance.

## Memory Verse

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” Philippians 4:4

80

## INTRODUCTION

Philippians is the letter that stirs up joy and perseverance. It is a song to the fullness of life in Christ and to the honor of living in Him and for Him. The apostle Paul encourages us in this epistle to consider qualities and mindsets that we Christians must take on; the same ones that are contained in the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). This fruit is proof that the Spirit of God dwells in us because we are called to be filled with Him (Ephesians 5:18). So, if we are sad, hopeless, disappointed, if it seems to be a hard struggle as servants of Jesus Christ, if we feel tired or unhappy, we need to read this wonderful epistle, especially Philippians 4:1-7, where we will find new strength to continue in the way of the Lord.

**I. “Stand firm in the Lord” (Philippians 4:1)**

Therefore, this passage of Philippians urges us to stand firm in the Lord as a way of life, that we must persevere in our faith. In making a public road, the pavement is the permanent surface material that supports both human and vehicle traffic on the road. This paving must have three basic characteristics: 1) Be waterproof to prevent rain from damaging the base; 2) Maintain a firm and suitable surface for the traffic. If the road surface is slippery or bumpy it can be dangerous for the traffic, and 3) Resistant to heavy loads in daily traffic.

We can compare this to our spiritual life. We, the children and servants of God, are anchored to Christ the rock that cannot be moved. There must be that solid pavement built by the Holy Spirit, able to resist everything that goes through our life. Vehicles, pedestrians, heavy loads, and rains are symbols of those attacks that the enemy puts on our lives, those tests that God allows, and that brings about the fight between the flesh and the spirit. We must stand firm without slipping. We must prevent any cracks, which could affect our faith ( James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7, 5:8). We are

called to remain firm: keeping our eyes on Jesus, the author, and finisher of the faith

**Questions:**

What things can affect the steadfastness of our faith in Christ?

**II. Helping fellow travelers in the Lord (Philippians 4:2-3)**

In Romans 12:13, the apostle Paul indicated that we are to supply the needs of the saints and be hospitable. We know that in this world we have all kinds of needs. Therefore, we have to show love. We can do this by praying for each other and by serving each other with words of encouragement. Likewise, spiritually stronger brothers and sisters must support the weak, without belittling them (Romans 15:1). If someone stumbles and falls, we must restore them with a spirit of meekness (Galatians 6:1). In Matthew 10:40-42, Jesus promised us rewards if we help His disciples. Likewise in Matthew 25:31-46, Christ likened the act of helping others to do it to Him. When we help others without conditions, show love and kindness, the fullness of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives can be seen, making us more like Jesus.



**Questions:**

How can we help people who work for the Lord?

**III. “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4-6)**

The word “joy” is mentioned several times in this letter to the Philippians and it is also one of the nine qualities of the fruit of the Holy Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23. Joy is the second quality, after love, which is the first. In Philippians 4:4, there seems to be plenty of rejoicing. We are to live fully and in victory in Christ. In the midst of any circumstance, we must remember and live according to the warning of Paul: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” Paul was sharing his own experience. The same city of Philippi was the place of showing what prayer and praise could do; imprisoned in a Philippian jail, he and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God at midnight (Acts 16:25-26).

To enjoy Christ is to live a life full of joy and satisfaction day after day; a life that is not affected by the changing circumstances of daily life. Our lives are based on the eternal truths that make us more than conquerors. Christ stated that God knows what we need, and concluded that our main concern should be focused on seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then He will add what we need (Matthew 6:33). Likewise, our Lord invited the hard-working, and burdened to come to Him to find rest (Matthew 11:28). This is what Paul meant when he said, “do not be anxious about anything” (Philippians 4:6).

**Questions:**

How can we live a life with joy?

**IV. Praying with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6)**

The apostle Paul reminds us in Philippians that we have various means of grace, and one of them is prayer. It is a priceless benefit and honor that the Father gives us, to be able to speak to Him without anyone having to go between and in complete

freedom (Hebrews 4:16). The apostle Paul added that we should pray with thanksgiving, a message he repeated to Christians in other churches too (Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 2:7 and 4:2; 1 Timothy 2:1). When we consider all that God has done for us, we must approach Him with thankfulness beyond measure for what He has done, is doing, and will do for us. We must recognize that we are not worthy of His attention, but through His great love and mercy, we can confidently enter before His throne of grace. Our need and haste to ask for what bothers us should never make us forget to thank the Father. We can do this with words of praise, or even silently by offering Him our hearts.

**Questions:**

What does it mean to ask God “with thanksgiving”?

**V. Experiencing the peace of God (Philippians 4:7)**

Paul announced a promise full of encouragement and hope, assuring us that this peace of God will keep the hearts and thoughts of faithful believers in Christ Jesus. Centuries before, the prophet Isaiah proclaimed through a song about confidence in the protection of the Lord: “You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast because they trust in you” (Isaiah 26:3). We will have to give an account to our Lord for what we think and feel. In the Bible, the heart is used as the place where our emotions are focused. We are encouraged to look after our feelings since life flows from them (Proverb 4:23). It is comforting to know that the children of God can freely enter into the peace of God, which will preserve our emotional, relational, spiritual, and mental health during our walk as travelers on road to eternal life.

**Questions:**

What blessings come when we have peace as a fruit of the Holy Spirit?

---

**CONCLUSION**


---

Paul urges us to have a full life in the Lord, even in the most difficult circumstances. To do this, he advises us to remain firm in God, be in unity with love and kindness, helping fellow travellers in the Lord, and always being joyful in the Lord. As we wait in our Redeemer, there is no need to be anxious but we must persevere in prayer, with thanksgiving, believing in the promise that the perfect and complete peace of God will preserve our mind and heart in Christ Jesus.



**Lesson  
38**
**GODLY MINDFULNESS**
**Passage to Study:** Philippians 4:8-9

**Lesson Aim**

To discern the impact that thinking has on our lives, and decide to focus our thoughts on obedience to Christ in order to enjoy full communion with God and with our neighbors.

**Memory Verse**

“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” Philippians 4:8.

82

**INTRODUCTION**

In our daily life, we are continuously surrounded by a great amount of information, which, whether we are aware of it or not, affects and influence us in various ways. It may even influence our relationship with other people, as well as on our approaches towards a specific situation. This information comes from sources of various types such as radio, TV, music, news, talk shows, images, etc., which we receive mainly through our ears and eyes. Most of the time, this information is intended to directly affect our thinking, and of course, it affects and may be the cause of many of our reactions, conduct, and/or our decisions.

We must be aware of our ability to choose what we hear and what we think about because what we listen to, what we think about, and what we focus our attention on will shape our lives and behavior. We, the children of God, have a responsibility to focus our thinking following what the Bible teaches. That way, our thinking will shape our conduct according to our Heavenly Father’s will.

**I. “...Think about such things”**

God put in each one of us the ability to think so that we can create ideas, consider different situations, find solutions to problems that trouble us daily, etc. Thought is something natural in us human beings. Our loving Father tells each of His children to “think about such things.” We can control our thoughts. God does not want us to stop thinking (which would be the same as turning our minds blank). What the Bible advises us is to be sober, moderate, free from unnecessary things, even in our thoughts. The most direct way to start this practice is found in 2 Corinthians 10:5 where we read: “... we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” When a false, dishonest, impure thought comes into our minds, we should not try to fight it using our abilities, but simply turn our minds to thinking of something pleasing to God, giving Him our worship through a sound mind, and thereby obey our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**II. “Whatever is True”**

It is wrong to accept gossip or slanderous talk just because we have received this information. God’s command is direct: Only think about “whatever is true.” So obviously, we must reject all false thoughts, and replace them with what is true. By way of example and in response to gossip, a true thought could be the following: “That person who is saying things about me, regardless of their position towards me, deserves my respect; and even more, I, as a child of God, must show them love and pray for God’s blessing on their lives as Jesus taught us” (cf. Luke 10:27).

In obedience to the Word of God, we need to separate between the false and the true in this world. The Bible can be our guideline on how to always think about “whatever is true”.

**Questions:**

Together with the class, complete the following list of comparisons between true and untrue thoughts.

**True  
Thoughts**
**Untrue Thoughts**

Example: Christians are children of God	Example: God has not heard the plea of my heart.

### III. “Whatever is Noble, Whatever is Right”

The online dictionary defines noble as: “having or showing fine personal qualities or high moral principles and ideals”. God is asking us to fill our minds with righteous thoughts. Romans 12:2 says: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

### IV. “Whatever is Pure”

If we have pure reasons, pure thoughts, this will result in pure actions. In today’s world, where matters relating to sex flood our minds from the TV, the Internet, etc., we need to be very careful about what we think or imagine in this regard about another person. Remember the Lord said that just thinking about someone else with lust is the same as the sin of adultery (Matthew 5:28).

#### Questions:

Ask for examples of thoughts directed toward something noble, right, and/or pure.

### V. “Whatever is Lovely”

When our thoughts are kind, they show that we are wise. If we always look on the better side, believe in people, and trust others, we will become peacemakers: enjoying positive thoughts and personal joy and peace. James 3:17 says: “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.” A kind thought immediately will fill us with peace that will be seen in our interaction with other people. We will be able to give thanks to our God

for their life and for what that person stands for to us. Therefore, let us be kind and make sure that everything we do bears witness and is lovely in the eyes of God and other people.

### VI. “Whatever is Admirable”

Here Paul is encouraging his readers to think of things, which if everyone could hear our thoughts would arouse respect or approval. We are deeply affected by our thoughts and reactions. If our thoughts are admirable, this will spill over into our day-by-day actions. So, the command of God, stated through Paul, is that we think of everything that will have a positive effect on our lives. That is, everything that inspires a character of doing good both as a habit and when asked. Thinking like this will bring us peace and shield and protect us from bad and impure thoughts, keeping us within the will of God. Remember what Matthew 15:19 says: “For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”

### VII. “... if anything is excellent or praiseworthy”

We have received a true blessing because we can see God’s care over us as He supplies everything we need to do His will. Thinking like this gives us the correct vision and direction we need to continue moving forward in all matters of our daily life without giving up due to the conditions around us. Imagine the influence our words would have on other people when they have been derived from praiseworthy thoughts. Of course, they would be words of blessing that would speak of God’s favor and mercy towards those who seek Him with all their hearts.

#### Questions:

What are the steps we must take to obey God in our thinking according to the content of this lesson? (Philippians 4:8)

## CONCLUSION

If our thoughts are wicked, our actions and our lives, in general, are much more likely to be wicked as well. Therefore, we must hold every thought captive in obedience to Jesus Christ, for it is in this way that thoughts of blessing and peace will arise in our minds, and we will have the firm assurance that God is shepherding us “beside quiet waters”.

Lesson  
39

## CHRIST IS MORE THAN ENOUGH

Passage to Study: Philippians 4:10-19

## Lesson Aim

To understand that God, through Christ, provides everything we need for an abundant and satisfying life.

## Memory Verse

“My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” Philippians 4:19.

84

## INTRODUCTION

It is common for many Christians to accept some truth from God’s Word without understanding how it applies to their lives. However, that was not God’s plan. We are responsible for receiving the light, the spiritual knowledge that we have. We are also responsible for seeking more of that knowledge to continue living a lifestyle that pleases God.

To display sincere commitment to the Lord, we must be real. Our good God wants us to participate in true acts of communion with Him. We need to fight against everything, which disturbs us. If we enjoy full communion with God, then His Word becomes relevant, it refreshes our soul and enlightens our understanding. It makes us better Christians, better disciples, and better representatives of God wherever we are. The apostle left us a written testimony that is useful even for the Lord’s church today, about the benefits of making Christ the center of our hope.

## I. Paul was full of joy (Philippians 4:10-12)

Paul was glad because he depended on a God who keeps His promises. His joy did not depend on circumstances; it was the genuine joy that only comes from God. Let us examine why Paul was able to feel joyful. Paul knew that God cares for those who trust and serve Him. This care does not always mean that He will give us wealth, security, or guaranteed health, although this idea is very fashionable in many Christian circles today.

## Questions:

What were the causes of the permanent joy experienced by the apostle Paul?

## II. “I can do all this through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13)

It is worth asking ourselves: how was the apostle equipped?

- A. To resist Satan’s attacks to complete the task commissioned by Jesus

At various times in his life and ministry, this apostle recognized that, although disguised in

various ways, the attacks always came from the same enemy: Satan. Without a doubt, Paul emphasized Satan’s power, cunning, and damaging purposes. But in Christ, the apostle Paul found the armor of God to resist him (Ephesians 6:10-20). His dedication was such that he was able to openly declare: “I have fully preached the gospel of Christ” (Romans 15:19).

- B. To reach the end of his life victorious in Christ

Knowing Christ face to face, seeing the face of his Master, that is, being with him always in eternity, was the drive that led Paul to accept and resist extreme dangers (2 Corinthians 11:23-30). And yet, nothing separated him from his highest objective, which was to keep the faith and know Christ (Philippians 3:8-11; 2 Timothy 4:6-8).

## Questions:

How can we avoid the risk of false security concerning having the adequate capacity for service to God, the church, and our neighbor?

## III. Paul was completely satisfied (Philippians 4: 14-18)

For the apostle, everything received from the Philippian brothers was a special source of satisfaction. But when was this and by what means and for what purpose?

**A. In troubles (v. 14)**

Paul's full commitment and obedience led him to very dangerous circumstances (2 Corinthians 11:23-28) in which his life was always at risk (including being left for dead, Acts 14:19). In all these circumstances, the believers in the new church in Philippi "shared in his troubles" with zeal (v. 14); cared and supported him with money (Philippians 4:15b).

**B. In his service for God (vs. 15-16)**

The Philippians showed how God moved through his sons and daughters. They proved that God uses ordinary and limited people to join a mission of unlimited scale. Their prayers (Philippians 1:19) and their offerings were continuous (Philippians 4:16). It is also very interesting that Paul spoke of "giving and receiving." Without a doubt, these spiritual children also benefited from this relationship of serving. This rule also worked in the apostle's relationship with the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 9:11).

**C. Sacrifice with no personal interest (vs. 17-18)**

Paul had served as a spiritual father, pastor, and teacher to the Philippians. This congregation was born out of the first preaching in Europe, on the banks of a river where Lydia, a purple seller, heard and believed the gospel (Acts 16:14-15). Subsequently, this fabric businesswoman invited Paul and the brothers who accompanied him to stay at her home (Acts 16:15). It is easy to understand the relationship between thankfulness and selflessness. Although we can consider Philippi as a prosperous city, Paul recommended: "Be anxious for nothing" (Philippians 4:6); and especially, he referred to the offering sent as a "sacrifice," and to God's ability to provide for every need (v. 19). This apostle recognized here a fundamental Christian principle: without sacrifice,

there is no offering (2 Samuel 24:24; Mark 12:41-44).

**Questions:**

Name some areas of your life where you previously had dissatisfaction, but later, in Christ, you obtained satisfaction.

**IV. "God will meet all...needs" (Philippians 4:19)**

How does God provide for our needs?

**A. God provides everything**

Believing that God is the Creator and Sustainer of everything is the basic foundation of our dependence on Him. We risk everything and completely depend on Him because we trust him. This is proof that we know He is near to us and knows everything about our situation at any moment.

**B. God provides according to His riches**

God's provision and resources are unlimited; therefore, our trust in Him must be full. Some say that the limit to receive God's blessings is according to how much faith we have. However, the background revealed in Paul's life denies this rule. Because over and over, the apostle pointed to God's will as the key to having enough and experiencing true satisfaction (Philippians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 6:6-8).

**C. God provides in Christ Jesus**

In Christ, we find what is necessary for a full and abundant life (John 10:10; Romans 8:32). Some of God's benefits, although not always taken into account, include perfect peace (Isaiah 26:3), help in times of trouble (Psalm 121), timely discipline (2 Corinthians 7:9-10; Hebrews 12:4-11), friendship in loneliness, and comfort in pain (2 Corinthians 1:3-7), wisdom (Ephesians 3:8-11), security when we lack confidence (Ephesians 3:12).

**Questions:**

Share some personal testimony that you experienced with regards to depending only on God, which led to victory and strengthening of your faith.

## CONCLUSION

As we study Philippians 4:10-19, we can recognize that "in Christ," God provided us with everything necessary for a full and abundant life, as well as for fruitful service and a solid and eternal hope.

**Lesson  
40****WALKING WORTHY OF THE LORD****Passage to Study:** Colossians 1:3-12**Lesson Aim**

To be inspired to walk worthy of the Lord.

**Memory Verse**

“...so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God” Colossians 1:10.

86

**INTRODUCTION**

The congregation in Colossae was made up mainly of people who had come out of ungodly religions. After becoming Christians, they had to face the influence of different teachings from both the ungodly religions and Judaism. These false teachings questioned the high position and power of Jesus Christ and His saving work. They included, for example, the exaggerated importance of angels (to the point that some even worshipped them). The false teaching they heard, also talked about the need to observe rules regarding food and days in the calendar.

These teachers based their positions on a supposed special knowledge that they claimed to have. Because of this, the apostle Paul, after the usual warm greeting common to his epistles (Colossians 1:1-2), continued with thanksgiving. He further described the central beliefs on which the church in Colossae had been founded and detailed the reasons that prompted him to pray for this congregation. To explore more deeply into this prayer of the apostle, we will study three main ideas: Christian hope (Colossians 1:3-6); the fullness of knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual intelligence (Colossians 1:9); and the life of holiness (Colossians 1:10-11).

**I. Faith, love, and hope (Colossians 1:3-6)**

The first reason that led the apostle Paul to be thankful (v. 3) was the blessing of seeing how the fruit of faith, love, and hope were shown in the Colossian congregation (v. 4). These qualities form the central part of Paul’s theology. They are basic to the Lord’s teaching and they need to be displayed in the church. Paul also mentions faith, love, and hope on other occasions (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Faith has two parts to it, and both are equally important. The first part is the belief that God exists and the second part of faith is commitment: a decision not only to believe in our minds that Christ can save us but to put our lives into His hands”(https://billygraham.org/answer/can-you-give-me-a-simple-definition-of-faith/). This is the sort of faith that Paul had learned that the Colossians were experiencing, a faith that meant obedient trust, that is, the entire consecration of

those who sincerely desired to become good disciples of Jesus Christ.

Another quality highlighted by the apostle was the love that the Colossians had for all the believers (Colossians 1:4). Love, in this case, should be interpreted as a demonstration of God’s holy love that enables His children to give it to others. Both love and holiness are part of the very being of God, and this becomes clear in the lives of Christians when they surrender their lives to Christ and walk in His love.

In Colossians 1:3-11, Paul says that the faith and love demonstrated by the Colossians were fruits of a hope kept in heaven. That is, they could behave in this way because they were sure that there was an eternity that awaited them. The hope of the Christian is not the hope of the world, which can be brief and conditioned to a person’s situation. This hope has Jesus Christ himself as to its eternal foundation, who according to John 14:2



is preparing a place for us. So in this passage, hope is the main sign that the gospel had reached the Colossians' hearts. There was hope because of the expressions of faith and love in which they abounded (Colossians 1:4-6).

Although the apostle wrote this letter from prison in Rome, that difficult situation did not prevent him from being inspired for thanksgiving and prayer upon hearing the news that qualities such as faith, love and hope were displayed in the Colossian church.

### Questions:

What does Christian hope consist of?

## II. Knowledge, wisdom, and understanding (Colossians 1:9)

Paul's prayer that began with thanksgiving for the qualities found in the Colossians also included a request: that they are filled with the knowledge of the will of God in all spiritual wisdom and understanding (v. 9). In this request, the apostle focused his prayer on the needs of the congregation at Colossae.

In his prayer, Paul asked the Colossians to find true knowledge, which comes by revelation from God through the display of the life of Christ reproduced in every believer. Spiritual wisdom and understanding are the way believers grow as Christians. Unlike the false Gnostic teachers, who promoted human effort, rituals, and intellectual growth, the apostle reminded the Colossians that there is only one way to heavenly knowledge: Jesus Christ. Everything we need to know about God has been revealed in Jesus Christ, our Lord. In this way, we can see that the will of God is not something beyond our reach for we can know it. In addition to being of the mind, it is spiritual and can become real in a life guided by the Holy Spirit. Like the Colossians, Christians today must come out victorious in the face of temptations regarding rituals and mere knowledge of the mind. They must find in Jesus Christ the full meaning of

the Christian faith, and live in the power of the Holy Spirit as they grow in holiness.

### Questions:

What is the difference between human and godly wisdom?

## III. The life of holiness (Colossians 1:10-11)

The final reason why the apostle prayed for the Colossians was that they might walk worthy of the Lord, that is, in holiness. For Paul, the Christian life involved commitment and a character seeking to please Christ rather than others. This meant that they needed to obey God in their daily lives and get to know Him more and more, living in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the goal of the Christian life.

We must voluntarily surrender our lives to the Lord, consecrate ourselves and walk in holiness and righteousness; not by our efforts, but by the fullness of the Holy Spirit inspiring and bearing fruit in our lives. To walk worthily comes through knowing God. The Colossians were able to please Jesus Christ as they combined spiritual habits and practices that strengthened them in their holy walk. In this regard, prayer, faithful Bible reading, and congregational life are means that can help us grow in the grace of the Lord today.

Faced with daily challenges, one of the wisest decisions that we can make is to use spiritual habits that build our lives. We must cultivate habits and customs that glorify Christ and result in a holy walk, worthy of the Lord. Paul's prayer directs us toward a more excellent way: to find means for spiritual nurture and growth in our walk-in holiness. As in the times of the Colossians, we believers are tempted to neglect different areas of our lives. Thus we need to pray urgently for deeper commitment to strengthen the hope that we have, in the fullness of knowledge, in spiritual wisdom and understanding, and the life of holiness.

### Questions:

What does it mean to walk worthy of the Lord?

## CONCLUSION

We need to examine our Christian walk, to see if it is worthy of the Lord. Are there decisions that we could make to be able to live according to the will of God? Today is the time to decide.



**Lesson  
41****THE GREATNESS OF REDEMPTION****Passage to Study:** Colossians 1:12-14 (9-14)**Lesson Aim**

To understand the effects of our redemption in Christ.

**Memory Verse**

“...giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light” Colossians 1:12.

**INTRODUCTION**

The studied passage for this lesson belongs to the section of the letter to the Colossians (chapters 1 and 2) that deals with the doctrine. This small segment of just three verses contains a very rich part of the doctrine. Paul’s beautiful prayer list for believers clearly shows the great heart of Paul as a pastor (Colossians 1:12-14). Likewise, by focusing on the nature and work of Christ, this passage answers important questions related to redemption in Christ: As believers in Christ, who have we become? What does it mean to be forgiven by God? What change has taken place in our relationship with sin and the world? And what are the results of having been freed from the power of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of Christ? Certainly and undoubtedly, the work of Christ is complete, and the idea of redemption fully states such fullness. So, having briefly looked at our topic of study, we are now ready to consider it in its widest and richest sense.

### **I. Qualified to receive God’s inheritance (Colossians 1:12)**

When we believe in Christ, we begin to experience spiritual realities that were previously veiled to our understanding; we have been transformed from slaves of sin to heirs of God. In this passage, Paul was talking about an essential part of salvation: Redemption enabled us to have a family relationship with God. This was one of Paul’s reasons for giving thanks to the believers: God made us His children by pure grace! (Colossians 1:12)

Redemption has lifted us out of the bondage of sin. It enables us to partake of the blessings of God that Paul described here with the phrase, “the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light” (Colossians 1:12). We are heirs of God because He has made us His children. The presence of His Holy Spirit in our lives is what gives us certainty about that family relationship (Romans 8:16).

The text also refers to the nature of the inheritance: “...in the kingdom of light” (Colossians 1:12). This verse talks about our “share” of the

inheritance (Acts 20:32; 26:18; Ephesians 1:11) as “holy people in the kingdom.” The ‘light’ begins in the believer here, descending from the ‘Father of lights’ through Jesus, ‘the true light’, and is perfected in the kingdom of light. The kingdom of light includes knowledge, purity, love, and joy. Here it is compared to ‘the darkness’ of the unsaved state (v. 13; 1 Peter 2:9). The word “light” indicates the area where the inheritance is enjoyed; and clearly, it refers to the sanctified life (1 Peter 2:9; 1 John 1:7). Redeemed children of God have full rights to enjoy their wonderful eternal heritage. The family relationship and the inheritance begin in the present with the new life characterized by the love of God.

**Questions:**

What is the inheritance that we qualify for?

### **II. Rescued from the dominion of darkness (Colossians 1:13a)**

Another important thought that Paul brings about in this passage is that of salvation as liberation from the power of darkness and sin. According to the first part of Colossians 1:13, God “has rescued

us from the dominion of darkness.” The gospel proclaims liberty for the captives (Luke 4:18). For the believer, this liberation is completed on the cross. This means that Satan no longer has authority over us, for his yoke was broken once we came to Christ. The power of the kingdom of darkness was based on our inability to fulfill God’s law due to our sinful nature. In our former state without redemption, Satan had legal authority over us, but once we were saved by Christ, spiritual bondage was ended.

Gnosticism was a collection of ancient religious ideas and systems that started in the first century among early Christian and Jewish sects. The Gnostics emphasized personal spiritual knowledge. In Colossae, this knowledge would have referred to the spiritual captivity of a spirit put in prison in an evil body. According to them, it was impossible to lead a holy life due to the corrupt nature of the human body. But according to Paul, the body is not the prison of the soul, but the temple of God. So, both body and spirit belong to God, and He must be honored with our whole being (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). A person may choose to be a slave to some belief, an attitude, or a way of thinking that is opposed to God’s purpose. There are those, for example, who live each day depending on what their stars foretell, or they are guided by superstitions, philosophies, and human traditions that openly go against Christian truths. It is important to remember Paul’s advice: “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ...in Christ, you have been brought to fullness” (Colossians 2:8, 10).

We have already been freed from the power of darkness and sin. We must not submit to any belief, philosophy, or way of thinking that is against the doctrine of Christ. The main guide of the believer in the Bible, and the Holy Spirit can help us to understand it.

### Questions:

How can someone be spiritually enslaved today?

### III. Changed into the kingdom (Colossians 1:13b)

The change brought about by Christ’s redemption enables us to conduct ourselves worthy of the gospel. The Colossian believers were surrounded by a completely ungodly culture. However, they had to understand that the work of God in them was complete and perfect, and provided them with a new life. Thus they were not supposed to continue to consider themselves as being under the power of sin and darkness, for they had been set free once and for all by Christ on the cross.

Redemption, in Roman times, was better understood in terms of a slave being set free because someone paid for their freedom. The last part of the study passage summarizes the work of Christ: “in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:14). Redemption is here related to the forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness is a work of God’s grace. Paul said: “He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). There was nothing in us that made us worthy of God’s forgiveness, no quality of our own to achieve His favor. But He, in His infinite mercy, loved us in Christ. Quite rightly, Paul’s prayer for the Colossians was that they could continually live in a mindset of joy and be thankful for redemption. Our redemption is a complete and final freedom from the power of sin. Now, we belong to a new state of life, which is the kingdom of God; and membership there means living out our lives in true holiness.

### Questions:

According to what we have studied in the lesson, what does it mean to have been transferred into the kingdom of Christ?

## CONCLUSION

Sometimes our way of life does not match up with our understanding of the work that God did in us through Christ. We live as if the greatness of redemption had not occurred. Colossians 1:12-14 has shown us that God has created us as His heirs through redemption, and we have been adopted as children of God. He has once and for all freed us from the power of darkness, and transferred us into the kingdom of Christ, to live a life of freedom, spiritual joy, and moral purity.

**Lesson  
42****THE SURPASSING GREATNESS OF JESUS****Passage to Study:** Colossians 1:15-20**Lesson Aim**

To understand and experience the nature, power, surpassing greatness, and ministry of Christ, and how this benefits us as believers.

**Memory Verse**

“The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation”  
Colossians 1:15.

**INTRODUCTION**

Being a Christian is an adventure, but who is a true Christian? Knowing about airplanes does not make a person a pilot. Knowing how to prepare a good soup does not make you a chef. Knowing how to nail something together does not make anyone a carpenter. And having heard about Christ does not make the listener a Christian. To be a follower of Christ means to be of Him, to know Him, and to live like Him. So through this lesson, we will learn more about Jesus Christ and this will deepen our faith as disciples.

**I. What is Christology (the teaching about Christ)?**

Christology is “the doctrine or teaching of the church concerning the nature of Jesus, the Messiah of Israel and Son of God. We believe that Jesus Christ is human and divine; that these two different natures are united in one person, and this union is permanent and eternal; this includes: that in Jesus we have a complete and final revelation of God; the second is that in Him, the payment of all sin is possible and can be obtained.” (Taylor, Grider, and Taylor. *Beacon Theological Dictionary*. USA: CNP, 1995, p. 175).

Our way of seeing Christ is closely related to how we have experienced him up to this moment. Let us start with a simple example: what are the natural surroundings like? The answers will vary according to the different places seen or imagined. Personally, I the author of this lesson can say that the landscape where I am has mountains with giant rocks and desert plants and bushes with green shades.

While we remain on this earth, we can get to know Christ more and more, and become more like Him (1 John 2:6). In Colossians 1:15-20, we have the opportunity to get to know more about Jesus

and learn to walk in His footsteps. The study of Christology involves exploring many things including Scriptures and other related thoughts. But in the end, this area of theology will lead us to want to be more like Christ, to reflect each day on His love, and serve him humbly, always seeking to live like Him.

**Questions:**

Define what Christology is in your own words.

**II. He is the visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15)**

What is the difference between something visible and something invisible? This question may sound strange. However, when speaking of Christ, we find that He is the visible image of God, who is invisible.

God revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity. Jesus is the perfect revelation of God. This revelation is seen in part in Psalm 19:1, where the writer said that creation declares the glory of God, and in Genesis 1:27, we find that mankind was made in His likeness. But we can guarantee that Jesus is the image of God.

This was shown by Paul in Colossians 1:15, where he states that Jesus is “the firstborn over all creation.” So, Jesus, the Son of God, was the created and the Creator! In talking about Jesus as the ‘firstborn,’ Paul is emphasizing his absolute greatness, using the metaphor of families. What Paul is saying is that Christ is the most important one. Simply, He is not part of a list, He is everything.

The Lord, in His perfect plan, did everything that humanity needed to have communion with His person. Through Him, the Father is shown; therefore, blessed are they that see not, and yet believe (John 20:29). Many times, our nature makes us want to see rather than believe. Therefore, God provided us with what we needed: being able to see Jesus Christ, who is our mediator with the Father, and who existed with the Father eternally (John 1:1-4, 14:6).

#### **Questions:**

What position does Jesus Christ occupy in your life? Comment.

### **III. He is the eternal Creator (Colossians 1:16-18)**

In Christ, all things were created, simply everything. “All things admit no exceptions, the material and spiritual, and the powers are inferior to Christ and are under his will and dominion.” Talking about Christ, Paul wrote: “For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen” (Romans 11:36).

All of creation is permanent much more because of Christ rather than gravity. That means the world is centered on Christ. In Christ, everything was created to praise His name. We have been created to honor and glorify Him. Jesus was the first to rise, and he did not die again. With this, the plan of redemption was fulfilled.

Paul likened the church to a human body with Jesus as the head (Colossians 1:18). In the head, we find the source of ideas, intentions

and emotions. The Son, Jesus Christ, has the surpassing greatness because He is before everything and is supreme. The function of the human body is amazing. Nothing moves if the brain does not issue the order. Furthermore, the head cannot be replaced; the brain, as an organ, cannot be transplanted. Therefore, the body becomes useless and powerless without the head. Similarly, it is by the inspiration of Jesus Christ that the church acts and lives. He gave himself for us for the forgiveness of our sins out of love; He is the head (Revelation 1:5).

#### **Questions:**

How do you depend on the head, which is Jesus Christ?

### **IV. He is the mediator (Colossians 1:19-20)**

Jesus is the mediator, the one who came to reconcile humankind with God. God, in His infinite love, sought this reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19). Jesus is both fully God and man. Here His part as God is emphasized: to carry out reconciliation that achieves peace and harmony between God and us. That peace was made possible through Jesus’ death and resurrection. Our Lord Jesus had to suffer and die, to pay for our sins. Then He rose again to eternal life, proclaiming victory over sin and death. This is how He mediated peace between mankind and God, bringing us reconciliation with God.

In our Article of Faith X, the following is stated: “We believe that sanctification is the work of God through which believers are transformed into the likeness of Christ”.

Every day, we need to be more like Him. Jesus became man to enable us to get to know God, receive His forgiveness, and become like Him to witness to the world around us that does not know God.

#### **Questions:**

Make a list of the qualities of Christ’s character.

## **CONCLUSION**

When we genuinely know Christ, and experience reconciliation with God, we will want to be more like Him. He becomes the most important focus of our lives. We will be changed as we learn to obey Him. Getting to know God means having a permanent relationship with Him, always longing to live in His presence. If we do this, we can truly say: “I am a Christian!”

**Lesson  
43****RECONCILED WITH GOD****Passage to Study:** Colossians 1:21-23**Lesson Aim**

To understand the reconciling work of God in us and the benefits that it provides for our present and future lives.

**Memory Verse**

“Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior” Colossians 1:21.

**INTRODUCTION**

Reconciliation is one of the greatest mysteries we find in the Bible. It is hard for some of us to understand that we have been transferred from darkness to light, that we were previously enemies of God. Our old life has ended and we began a new life. These actions, which occur in the spiritual world, are not visible to the human eye, but they have real importance for those who accept what God has done. In this lesson, we will look at the apostle Paul’s clear teachings about the redeeming work of Christ, reconciliation, and how we can understand this as well as use it in our daily lives.

**I. Before, we were enemies of God (Colossians 1:21)**

In this text (Colossians 1:21-23), Paul emphasized the redeeming work of Christ, and he began by explaining why we needed to be reconciled with God. Paul was speaking to the Christian community of Colossae, to believers in Christ, people who had experienced reconciliation in their lives. But they needed to understand what they had been before knowing Christ, and what they were after knowing Him. He started by saying “once” pointing to their past lives without Christ (Colossians 1:21). Our past was one of sin, of actions that displeased God, what Paul called “the kingdom of darkness” (Colossians 1:13). In that kingdom, we were driven by laws of evil that governed our way of life, that we condemn today and of which we can say have already been crucified (Galatians 5:24).

**Questions:**

What was our position in the eyes of God before our conversion?

**II. Now, we are reconciled with God and we are blessed (Colossians 1:22)**

Reconciliation is born in the heart of God and is brought about by the redeeming work of Christ, through His sacrificial death on the cross. Reconciliation is the result of atonement (an act of making up for wrongdoing as Christ died for our sins). The way that God used to reconcile us to Himself was through the death of His Son, who paid the price so that we could have fellowship with our Creator again. For this reason, reconciliation is better defined as the new time of friendship that is established between God and us through the death of Christ (Romans 5:10-11). By the witness of the Holy Spirit, the Word, and the daily experience of communion with God, the believer knows that he has been reconciled. Let us now look at the blessings that come with reconciliation:

**A. Friendship with God (Colossians 1:22)**

The central point of reconciliation is that it restores a friendship with God, that is experienced daily in the life of every believer and is enjoyed by any man or woman who believes in Him (John 1:12). It is the basis of communion in the relationship with God, and the sign of His grace and mercy. Friendship with God can be seen in all the believer’s actions, in how God supplies for



their physical, material, spiritual, and emotional needs.

**B. He made us holy and without blemish**

Holiness in the life of the reconciled person is one of the glorious benefits of reconciliation. We experience the reconciling work of God when we receive Christ in our hearts. The sin that separated us from God is forgiven, and we are justified by faith. Reconciliation makes it possible for us to freely enter into the presence of God without sin, that is, free from sin: original and personal. But it does not give us free license to sin in the present; quite the opposite. This new experience helps us reject evil. Our obedience to God's Word, because we love Him, makes possible this state of holiness.

**C. Free from accusation (Colossians 1:22)**

The term used is 'blameless' (v. 22). Guilt is the product of man's enmity with God because of sin. But reconciliation brought us a benefit that we are free from what made us guilty. In other words, God canceled all of our debt to Him so that every human being who receives Christ, is free from guilt and from all that separated them from God. The guilt weighing on the unrepentant man and woman is what can lead them to hell. For this reason, when this benefit of reconciliation is fully understood and experienced spiritually, we can be sure that we have been called to be part of eternity with God and free from sin, which produces an eternity without Him.

**Questions:**

Mention the blessings that come with reconciliation.

**III. Keeping the faith and hope of the gospel (Colossians 1:23)**

What does it mean to remain in the faith? When Paul wrote this epistle, gnostic false teachings were many and sought to weaken the faith of new believers in the church of Christ. Because of this, Paul considered it very important that the members

of the Colossian church understood clearly the reconciling work of Christ, in which they were participants. In turn, they had to be steadfast, that is, they needed to be convinced enough to live under that truth of the gospel without looking to other doctrines.

In this passage, Paul emphasized two main truths for the Colossians on which their faith must be founded and remain:

**A. "Christ's physical body" (Colossians 1:22)**

Paul declared that Christ was not only God, but also he was human. This was because he had a body like ours, and that body was needed to redeem humanity.

**B. The death of Christ brings reconciliation (Colossians 1:22)**

Paul guaranteed that only because of what happened at Golgotha could we have access to the presence of God. It is through Christ's death alone that we can draw near to God and be reconciled to Him. Regarding the hope of the gospel, Paul was talking about a great secret that had been revealed to him: Christ lives in the believer, even in Gentile believers, and this assured him of his participation in the coming glory.

Paul explained it in Colossians 1:27. We must remain in faith and in that hope of the gospel that is translated into the life of Christ in us and the benefits of the coming glory that is in Him. Paul saw Christ as that hope, for in another letter he wrote: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope" (1 Timothy 1:1). Paul spoke in other texts of that hope that we have in Christ and affirmed it as eternal life (Titus 1:2; 3:7). God wants our future to be in the glory of Christ and with Him.

**Questions:**

What did 'keeping the faith' mean to the Colossian believers; and how can we do this today?

---

**CONCLUSION**

---

We must remember that in the past, we were doing bad things, which made us enemies of God. But Christ, through His death on the cross, reconciled us to God, and that work restored our friendship and presented us holy before Him. Likewise, this reconciling work must be maintained by abiding in the faith and the hope of the gospel.



**Lesson  
44****ROOTED AND BUILT UP IN CHRIST****Passage to Study:** Colossians 2:6-8**Lesson Aim**

To know and understand that we must choose to remain in Christ to avoid deviating from the teachings of the Word of God.

**Memory Verse**

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ” Colossians 2:8.

94

**INTRODUCTION**

Children like to play with kites. These are generally flat and can come in different shapes. Kites are made of very thin light materials so that they can be lifted by the wind. Kites go anywhere the wind goes; they can go very high. In some places, they hold great kite competitions where people know how to handle them in amazing ways. The problem with flying kites is that you have to take good care of them, because if they get hooked onto a tree, a building, or another structure, they may very well be torn to pieces. After all, they are very delicate. When that happens, all the fun ends.

Some people resemble kites because their beliefs and standards are so light and superficial that they are carried away by any new fashion, idea, religion, teaching, thought, etc. These people end up living on a roller coaster of emotions and decisions that create a lot of confusion and imbalance in their lives. So, we have to be careful, because the “wind” comes from all places and goes anywhere.

In today’s lesson, we will see that the apostle Paul advised Christians that they should be more like a tree, whose roots are so deep that even hurricane winds cannot uproot or separate them from their foundation.

**I. Rooted and built up in Christ (Colossians 2:6-7)**

In Colossians 2:6-8, we read a portion of the letter that Paul, as a pastor, sent very lovingly to Christians living in the city of Colossae. At the time that Paul wrote the letter, he was in prison. The surprising thing is that even though he was in jail, this servant of God told the Colossians that he always remembered them, loved them and that he was proud of them because they had decided to follow the Lord Jesus. He also told them that he prayed for them so that they could become persevering and faithful Christians (Colossians 1).

Paul was well aware that they were facing very difficult situations in their lives. We too sometimes have to face situations that are so painful that it may seem impossible to continue doing the good that God commands. At times like this, remaining faithful to God’s will requires unchanging beliefs.

Life sometimes is like a hurricane. Letting ourselves be carried away by those winds can lash us against other things, and even making us lose our lives. The best option is to stick to something well-grounded and not let go under any circumstances. The hurricane will go away and we will remain firm.

Knowing human nature, Paul cared for the Colossians and told them to be “rooted and built-in him [Christ]” (Colossians 2:6-7). This practical advice from Paul involves developing strong beliefs about who God is, who Jesus is, and the power of the plan of salvation. When Christians are fully convinced of their place in Christ’s heart, all other decisions will be made according to Christ’s purpose for their lives. If we walk close to the Lord, there is almost no room for wrong decisions. If God is the center of our lives, if God’s love fills our heart and all of our emotional needs, if the almighty power of God is real in our

lives, there is no place to trust anything else, because we have everything we need in God.

The Colossian Christians could live an abundant life, full of joy, calmness, peace, wisdom, and blessings for themselves and others because they had their roots in Christ. No hurricane wind could have defeated them. By believing in Christ, and abiding in Him, the path of their lives was secure.

### **Questions:**

Do you think we can be rooted in Christ? How can we do it?

## **II. Protected from falsehoods (Colossians 2:8)**

Wrong philosophies can cause damage, even death, just like when we are in the middle of a hurricane without protection. The best thing is to learn how to avoid them from the beginning. As soon as we recognize them as hollow philosophies, we must close down that channel of communication. However, we must realize that sometimes deceptive teachings can come so disguised that it is difficult to recognize them, even when a person is very intelligent. We need to know that the one behind all deception, is Satan the father of lies (John 8:44). That is why there are so many cunning ways used to confuse us.

Paul told the Colossians that they should be “strengthened in the faith” as they had been taught (Colossians 2:7). Faith is what helps us remain faithful to the teachings of Christ and put aside all confusing lies. Paul’s advice is very effective and trustworthy.

First, each day we must seek to know more of God’s teachings for our lives. God has guidance for every situation that we may face in this life. There is nothing that can surprise Him; there is nothing that God does not understand. There is nothing that He cannot solve. Second, we must secure and strengthen our faith, which is

encouraged by reading the Word, hearing testimonies, and overcoming the trials we face. Thirdly, we must remember the importance of a firm and consistent faith. We see clearly in the Ephesians passage that faith acts as our shield. Faith receives the force of the arrows of lies and keeps them from our hearts.

A strengthened, tested and firm faith will give us an anchor we need to be “rooted and built up in him.” The prophet Jeremiah said that he or she who trusts the Lord “will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not 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). Jesus said to His disciples: “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). Therefore, we must avoid false philosophies that can enslave us. Instead, we need to know and believe the truth, and fill our minds with it so as not to be confused or doubtful. That is why we must read, study, meditate and memorize the Word of God constantly and eagerly as possible. Really, our life, and that of our family, church and community, depends on this. God has given His church clear and firm teaching to follow. As followers of Christ, we can memorize the Apostles’ Creed to be sure not to be confused by any philosophy or hollow subtle ways. The Church of the Nazarene provides us with the agreed upon statement of faith, and which we uphold as absolute truths (retrieved from <http://nazarene.org/en/beliefs>, November 14, 2018).

### **Questions:**

What are some of the consequences of believing in false philosophies?

## **CONCLUSION**

In today’s study, we have seen that life can bring us situations that are beyond our imagination. However, with Paul’s counsel and the help of Christ, we can squarely face any circumstance that life throws at us. God’s Word encourages us to persevere, remain firm and faithful to the Lord, be “rooted” in Christ, and avoid getting confused and ending up in dead ends. The key is to grow our roots in God, even in quiet times, so that they will be strong and deep when we face difficulties. Jesus’ teachings are perfect. We can trust them wholeheartedly. Let us thank God for His love, faithfulness, and His constant presence with us.

**Lesson  
45****OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST****Passage to Study:** Colossians 2:9-12**Lesson Aim**

To develop our Christian identity in harmony with our place in Christ.

**Memory Verse**

“...in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority” Colossians 2:10.

**INTRODUCTION**

One of the greatest dangers that many Christians have suffered throughout history is what we will call “an identity crisis.” Certainly, in some period of our life, we are forced to face an identity crisis, which could trigger serious torture that is not only psychological and emotional, but also spiritual. In due course, all this causes us a certain amount of emotional and spiritual imbalance, which if well channeled, can help us grow more and strengthen our faith as believers. The study passage in this lesson addresses the issue of the identity of believers in Colossae. The apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians, emphasizing two great qualities that they had: their faith in Christ and their love for all God’s people, “... because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God’s people” (Colossians 1:4). However, Paul also thought it advisable to warn them in his letter about external influences that were twisting their understanding of who Christ is and who they are in Him. A timely correction regarding our true identity of Christ ensures that we develop a healthy identity of ourselves as Christians.

**I. Who is Christ? (Colossians 2:9)**

The Word says: “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (v. 9). It is clear from the passage that the Apostle Paul had particular reasons to urge the Colossian believers.

The physical location of that church caused many influences on the way people practiced their faith. This had caused “religious syncretism,” that is, a blending of two or more religious belief systems. Instead of clearly defining the boundaries of the basic doctrine of Christianity and the customs and beliefs that cannot and should never be harmonized with Christianity, they ended up mixing everything. This situation would have resulted in the inclusion of parts of the mix into the healthy doctrine of Christianity, which would end up undermining the Christian faith and its true identity.

Whereas the Jew made no distinction between religious and national identity because they were both the same thing, the Greco-Roman culture did not link its national identity to religion, and

religious syncretism was part of their culture. For this reason, the Colossians had to deal with the streams of both religion and philosophy around them. Some believed that while on earth, Jesus had not been completely God, and others that he had not been all-human. So those confusing doctrines were spreading around in the church.

They did not realize the damage that this could cause them, so Paul, from his prison cell, felt that he needed to warn them quickly. Although this letter included a warning, one of the purposes was to explain to them who Christ is and who we are in Him. After learning the apostle’s declaration regarding the basic nature of the person and character of Christ, we can ask: how relevant is the apostle’s declaration of faith concerning our identity as believers? How does being in Christ affect our identity? The identity of believers is not limited to a series of beliefs, rituals, or adaptation to a culture. Rather, it is based on the fact that we become like Christ. If we are indeed Christlike, then the fullness of God dwells in our lives through the Holy Spirit.

### Questions:

In your own words, explain who Christ is.

## II. Who are we in Christ? (Colossians 2:10)

“...in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority” (v. 10). The setting of this passage is very important when trying to interpret it. The writer was emphasizing his concern about the false teachers because unproven false theories, skillfully taught, could destroy the trust that the Colossians had in Christ as their complete Savior. It is important to mention that our fullness, as well as our holiness, can only be achieved through Christ. We can never achieve them by our strength or qualities.

What could the consequences be of not being clear about our identity in Christ?

Here are some of them: Looking down upon our body; not feeling worthy; not being able to forgive; feeling inferior to others

### Questions:

What makes us complete in Christ?

## III. The marks of our identity (Colossians 2:11-12)

Colossians 2:11 says: “In him, you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self, ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ.” Both Paul and his disciples strongly resisted the Christians who still wanted new Gentile believers to be circumcised. Circumcision was a mark, a sign of Yahweh’s old covenant with His people. “This is my covenant with

you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you” (Genesis 17:10-11). That is why in this passage of Colossians Paul emphasized that God’s new covenant with His people did not involve physical circumcision carried out by the rabbi’s hand, but a spiritual circumcision in Christ, who leads us on to perfection. It is our relationship with Christ that distinguishes us as God’s people.

We read in Colossians 2:12: “... having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.”

Baptism is now the new sign of believers. At our baptism, we agree to identify with Christ in His death and burial. As we come out, we show that we accept His resurrection by faith. It is a testimony that we have been renewed, born again, brought to a spiritually new life by the power of God. At our baptism, we also accept the resurrection of Jesus as the promise that the image of God, broken in Eden, can be fully restored in us (Rom 6:8-10).

Finally, at our baptism we enter the communion of believers, identifying ourselves as Christians. We belong to Christ’s body, the Church. We become more like Christ and enter the family of God, our Father.

### Questions:

Is circumcision a requirement for salvation? Comment.

## CONCLUSION

Today, as of old in Colossae, we find a fashionable type of spirituality based on mysterious beliefs that offer salvation according to the customer's desire. It is for this and other reasons that we must strengthen our Christian identity by upholding and emphasizing our place in the person of Jesus Christ. In Him, we have everything necessary to live, serve others, and serve God.

**Lesson  
46****THE FREEDOM THAT CHRIST GIVES****Passage to Study:** Colossians 2:13-23**Lesson Aim**

To understand that there is no human tradition that can free us from the dominion of sin; this only comes by the grace of Jesus Christ.

**Memory Verse**

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God” Romans 5:1-2.

98

**INTRODUCTION**

There is something that we must never lose sight of; it is that the arms of God are always extended towards us! He has prepared the way that allows us to run into His presence. By His grace, He gave us what we did not deserve: the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, in our place!

**I. Freedom from sin (Colossians 2:13-14)**

Orton Wiley defines the term “sin” as follows: “a deviation from the way or the end appointed by God”. Sin entered human nature as a result of Adam and Eve’s disobedience (Romans 5:12). Therefore, the apostle Paul tells us in Romans 3:10: “...There is no one righteous, not even one.” For this reason, God provided for our salvation. He gave us the pathway to be free from the dominion of sin (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4). So, in order to be free from the dominion of sin, we must believe and admit this spiritual truth with our mouth: that Christ died for us! The Word of God says that if we have believed, we are now children of God (John 1:12; Acts 16:31). It is His grace that gives us entrance to the Father, through faith in Jesus Christ the Lord (Ephesians 2:8-9). It is wonderful to know that we now have a new nature, for we are no longer slaves to the dominion of sin, but are now free to live for Christ (Romans 5:1-2), for there is no longer any judgment.

**Questions:**

How would you define sin?

**II. Freedom from the world of darkness (Colossians 2:15)**

In this regard, it is reasonable to ask ourselves the following: who are the powers and authorities? These refer to Satan and those who work with him (Ephesians 6:12). Paul stressed that Christ is superior to any of them (Colossians 2:15). Let us see some verses that support what has just been stated:

- Because the Lord Jesus was the one who disarmed them, and He publicly triumphed over them on the cross (Colossians 2:15). So, Christ has triumphed, and His victory is ours too!
- We now have the freedom of grace, which is above the law. The Word says that by His great love, He gave us life by grace, “not by works so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:4,9).
- There is nothing we can do to make God love us more. He loves us (John 3:16), not for what we do, but because we are His children.

**Questions:**

What do you say to the backslidden Christian who says, “After all, I am just a human being”? Does being human permit us to sin?



### III. Freedom from human traditions (Colossians 2:16-22)

David Seamands indicates that the two main causes of most emotional problems among Christians are:

1. Not knowing how to understand, receive and live God's unconditional forgiveness and grace.
2. Not knowing how to communicate that love, forgiveness, and unconditional love to other people.

Some believers are constantly trying to win God's approval, falling for the lie of self-realization (fulfillment of one's potential by oneself). Like foolish Galatians, we find it difficult to understand that grace is simple, and as Paul said, we want to earn perfection and righteousness through works (Galatians 3:1-5)

"Salvation by faith seems too easy to many people. They think they need to do something on their part to save themselves. Their religion becomes their self-effort that leads either to discouragement or pride and finally to eternal death. The simple way of Christ is the only way that leads to eternal life".

#### Questions:

How does grace work in our lives?

### IV. Freedom, not debauchery (Colossians 2:23)

Colossians 2:23 says: "Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence." Paul, in his letters, continually emphasized that salvation is an act of grace, given by God to all those who believe in Him for eternal life, as we have been emphasizing throughout this lesson.

Paul also reminds us of some very important life rules. Here are some of them:

- We are now part of the family of God, and all we have to do is to take what the Bible says in Romans 8:2-4. So, we must live in the knowledge that we are a people controlled by the Holy Spirit, free from the dominion of sin, which was something that the law could not do, but which Christ did at the cross. The Lord has dealt with sin so that we no longer live following our evil desires.
- We must show thanks to God for His goodness, by presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God (Romans 12:1-2).
- We must reject all evil (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22).
- Although each one of us is free to "do what we want", we must be clear that not everything we want is always helpful (1 Corinthians 6:12).

The Bible gives us the correct limits for living in true freedom. We get this when filled with the Holy Spirit, we make correct use of our free will. The ability to make correct choices is a gift from God, who has made us in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26).

Meditate on this: How does God treat His children? As beings empowered to make decisions, thanks to Him, we have received the ability to discern from the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

#### Questions:

Paul reminded us of some very important life rules. Review each one and explain the truth for us today: Romans 8:2-4; 12:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22; 1 Corinthians 6:12.

## CONCLUSION

We do not live in holiness to achieve salvation, because we receive salvation through Christ. We live a life of holiness to show God how thankful we are for His grace. We do it not out of fear of losing our acceptance in heaven, but because we are full of thanks that although we deserved to have God against us, He is in our favor.

**Lesson  
47****LIVING AS ONE MADE ALIVE IN CHRIST****Passage to Study:** Colossians 3:1-4**Lesson Aim**

To understand that to be a Christian is to live a new life, raised with Christ, forsaking and dying to former practices and beliefs opposed to the teaching of the Bible.

**Memory Verse**

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God” Colossians 3:1.

100

**INTRODUCTION**

It is amazing how the Bible shows us that our new life in Christ gives us a new viewpoint on human life. We learn that to be a Christian means that we are certain of our new birth, which is both spiritual and eternal because God has changed us into new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17). This change brings new abilities, such as a change of mindset towards evil and sin, being quick to respond to spiritual truths, understanding what the Bible is saying, yearning to worship and serve God, and a deep desire to do His will.

On the other hand, and in clear contrast, we live in the truth of a world that ignores God’s grace and love, and lives in opposition to the commandments of God, without knowing Him personally. This makes unsanctified believers live in a constant battle between the new life and the pressures of the old nature and its appearances. The message of the Scriptures is that God wants us to grow in a victorious life until we reach full spiritual maturity and holiness. Faced with these opposite truths, the apostle Paul addressed the Colossians, trying to establish the differences between these two experiences in such a way that they were clear about the calling to which God had called them.

**I. “Set your hearts on things above” (Colossians 3:1)**

Since we still live in this world, setting our hearts on things above does not mean that we have to live in ‘the clouds’, disconnected from daily responsibilities and jobs. Rather it requires that we think seriously and aspire to do what God wants us to do. Through Christ’s death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, we have been separated from the old life of this world and now belong to a new heavenly life. But how do we search for “the things above”? The secret is to focus on them rather than on things on earth. As believers who have been raised with Christ, we must have our feet on earth, but our minds and desires in heaven. It means that Christ, who is in heaven, must direct the ordinary matters of each day. It also means that we must look at earthly things from the heavenly point of view.

The correct understanding of God’s will requires that our minds be constantly renewed (Romans 12:2). This will result in actions that are important to the here and now. God’s commandments should not be carried out without feelings, to avoid limiting ourselves to earthly things, which will lead us to a cold and vain religion. Therefore, seeking the things that are above do not require us to think only about heaven; but on the contrary, we have to remain firm in Christ, to give flavor like salt, to the world with the standards of the kingdom of God (John 17:14-21).

A. “Since then, you have been raised with Christ...” (v. 1a)

Let us observe that Colossians 3 begins by stating something certain and not just something possible. Our death and resurrection are two acts that happened in the past and are symbolized in

baptism. It is important to note that this passage in Colossians proclaims the same teaching as Romans 6:4-5, where Paul mentioned baptism as a symbol of the believer's death and resurrection in Christ. Paul taught that this new life, a product of the resurrection of Christ, must be turned into a life that shows well in a useful way, with acts of love in the different areas of our life.

- B. Through Christ who is seated at the right hand of God (v. 1c)

To say that Jesus is seated at the 'right hand' of God is a saying where the Bible uses human physical terms to describe a holy, eternal, and spiritual God. We understand through this statement that all the authority and power of Christ comes to our aid to make us victorious in the new life that we have in Him.

#### **Questions:**

Explain in your own words what the "things above" are?

#### **II. We are dead to this world (Colossians 3:2-3)**

In the following verses (Colossians 3:5-9), Paul referred to how the old sinful nature shows itself and its works, defined as the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21.

- A. "On earthly things..." (v. 2)

As believers, we have died to that old nature that enslaved us when we were without Christ, and from which we were freed when we believed in Him. And further on in Colossians 3:5-11, the apostle referred to another characteristic of "the things of the earth" when he stated that all the anti-standards, behavior, and actions that dominated the old life must die. So, we should only worship and serve Christ, and live a life that reveals Him in all parts of our life.

- B. "Your life is now hidden with Christ in God..." (v.3)

Our lives are hidden in Christ and are safe, and nobody can touch them there because they are

protected. Likewise, this also means that outside of Christ, we will only have judgment and condemnation. It is not just a future wish, but also an already accomplished truth. Our service and conduct do not earn our salvation, but they are a result of it. Rest assured! Our salvation is secure, and we must live each day for Christ.

#### **Questions:**

What does it mean that we have died to this world?

#### **III. We will enter into the glory of Christ (Colossians 3:4)**

In our new life as believers, Christ gives us the power to live in victory with His help, and power in the present earthly life, but he also gives us hope for the future: He will come again (Revelation 22:12). In the remaining verses of Colossians 3, Paul explained how Christians should live now to be prepared for the return of Christ.

The apostle implied that, in a way, our new life in Christ is not visible. But this new life will be fully seen when Christ, who is our life, appears at His Second Coming. On the day when we all see Jesus at His second coming, it will also be the day when His sons and daughters will be revealed. This appearance will take place in glory because it will involve being in the full likeness of Christ and receiving a risen and glorious body. That our lives will one day be glorified, must be the hope that governs all our walking on this earth, especially in these disorderly and difficult times. Paul himself stated: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). Also, eternal life must inspire us to live a life of purity of heart and love that blesses others in the preaching of the Good News of salvation and compassionate actions that show forth the love of God, whom we worship and serve.

#### **Questions:**

When will it be known who the true Christians are?

## **CONCLUSION**

As Christians, we must live a new life with Christ, forsaking and dying to the former practices and beliefs that are opposed to the Bible. This is a challenge that must carry until the Lord calls us to live in His presence.

**Lesson  
48****A NEW DRESS CODE****Passage to Study:** Colossians 3:5-15**Lesson Aim**

To learn to “put on” Kingdom standards with the Lord’s help.

**Memory Verse**

“...over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity”  
Colossians 3:14.

102

**INTRODUCTION**

Christianity is more than just declaring that Jesus is our Lord and Savior; it is about changed lives. This is what Paul was writing about in Colossians 3:5-15. Consider the following question: How should we behave now that we are already Christians? Perhaps the first Christians asked themselves this question. In this lesson, we are going to answer this question through three suggestions that the apostle Paul left us in his letter to the Colossians.

**I. Let us take off our old clothes (Colossians 3:5-9)**

Paul knew that exchanging the old nature for the new one that Christ gives involves more than we can imagine. He tells us to “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry” (v. 5). The metaphor used by Paul in the passage is about ‘taking off’ and ‘putting on.’ He relates it to our character, decisions, and nature. In this regard, taking off or putting on was an excellent way for the apostle to say that it is our decision. In other words, it is up to you and me to take off these practices from our lives.

The meaning of the words used to define blasphemy (slandering, insulting, mocking, highly scornful language), show that it is speaking fault-finding words “against God or another person” (Taylor, Grider, and Taylor. Beacon Theological Dictionary. USA: CNP, 1995, p. 98). Therefore, blasphemy is not just about speaking ill of God, but also against other people.

**Questions:**

What are the old clothes that you think you should remove from your life?

**II. Let us put on the new clothes that God gives us (Colossians 3:10-13)**

When we have been set apart for God, we must choose a different “dress code.” Being raised with Christ means that we must love our parents, our children, our family members, and enjoy living in truth. Holiness is, therefore, a way of life that protects us from all those terrible experiences as we consecrate ourselves to God.

The other characteristics of the new dress code are compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and support and forgiveness for one another (vs. 12-13). This has to do with how we act. Thus, the former characteristics give us an identity, and these second ones, the unity between what we are and what we do. Someone who has chosen the right ‘dress code’ will be safer, will be able to show mercy, kindness, etc. Someone holy will be able to do these actions, and someone who has experienced the deep love of God will be able to show it in the same way. This garment we have to put on is to point towards Jesus himself, who has mercy on humanity (Matthew 9:36), who acts with kindness (Titus 3:4), who was humble because He left His divine rights and privileges (Philippians 2:1-10), showed obedience although He was God (Matthew 11:29), and today shows patience as He waits for all humanity to repent (2 Peter 3:9), and forgives us because He died on the cross.

**Questions:**

How does it feel to understand the characteristics that God gives us as bearers of the ‘new clothing’?

### III. Let us put on the new clothing (Colossians 3:14-15)

In the previous point, the description of the new dress was discussed, but how should we put it on? First, to put on these new clothes we must recognize that we have these characteristics, because God already loved us, and rescued us by choosing and sanctifying us (Ephesians 1:3-6). Secondly, we must choose to put on the new clothing, and wear it day by day. The characteristics of the new dress code are:

a). **Mercy:** When we speak of mercy, we normally think of receiving it, and we can confirm that God is merciful (Psalm 86:15). But mercy is not fully experienced until we give it. It helps us restore relationships, just as Jesus restored the relationship with us by His mercy. If you have a relationship where someone has offended you or things are going wrong, showing mercy can help. But this means that you will help the one who hurt, disappointed and failed you, in the same way that God acted in relation to us.

b). **Kindness:** this quality has to do with the way you portray yourself to people. Ask yourself: Am I known as a good or a bad person? A kind person is someone who helps, treats others well, and is attentive. Are we kind to people while driving our car? What impression do we leave on the life of a person we have just met?

c). **Humility:** this quality helps us to understand those around us, to always learn something new from other people. Someone who is humble is always ready to obey, help, and cooperate. The opposite is an arrogant person, who no one wants to be around. If we choose to put on this mindset as a garment, our team, company or family will be greatly helped.

d). **Meekness:** meekness is always in opposition to the fierce jungle animals. For example, a lion is very strong, powerful, but in reality, all that is not

useful to us because it is not tame. In other words, all that strength and ability is wasted, unlike tame beasts of burden, such as a horse, a donkey, a cow, etc. Each of these animals is not as outstanding as the lion, but they are certainly more useful.

Similarly, when we show off our abilities and do not cooperate with the Kingdom in a project or on a personal level, etc., we are acting like a lion. On the spiritual level, we need to join in the work of God, our church, and the ministry wherever we are. We must not be like the lion that only roars and destroys.

e). **Patience:** this is one more quality of the Christian that is associated with maturity. The more mature you are, the more patient you tend to be. Patience can be seen when we appreciate that children do not always understand, that adolescents are learning and defining many sides of their lives, that people addicted to some substance must be helped, and that the people who harm us often do so because they need to be healed. This quality gives us the possibility to see the background of the situations. Being patient means that we are willing to wait and understand when things do not happen immediately or as we had hoped. Patience is a process.

f). **Support:** Paul defined this quality in the following way: “Bearing with each other” (v. 13a). This means supporting or carrying the burdens of others, tolerating others.

g). **Forgiveness:** finally, forgiveness is associated with the bond of love. Therefore, if we love, we forgive; if we forgive, we love. Loving includes all the above qualities. In the decision to love God, we love our neighbor. And when we love our neighbor, we love God.

#### Questions:

How would you ‘put on’ meekness when dealing with people who have offended you?

## CONCLUSION

If we put on the garments of holiness, love, mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, mutual support, and forgiveness day by day, we will be displaying the love of God to each person who deals with us in all our daily activities while here on this earth.



**Lesson  
49****A SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN LIFE****Passage to Study:** Colossians 3:16-17**Lesson Aim**

To understand the importance of the Bible in our spiritual growth, and to examine the important requirements that are given for a successful Christian life.

**Memory Verse**

“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts” Colossians 3:16.

104

**INTRODUCTION**

We can conclude from Colossians 2:1 that Paul possibly never visited the church in Colossae. While he was in Rome, Epaphras may have brought him news from this church. As Epaphras was going back to Colossae with Tychicus and Onesimus, Paul took the opportunity to send written pieces of advice to the Colossians with them (Colossians 4:7-9). To continue a bit with the history of this church, it was possibly formed during Paul’s stay in Ephesus during his third missionary journey, and that Epaphras and Timothy were the evangelists who worked directly in its organization (Acts 19:21-22). However, the apostle never ceased to feel a high sense of responsibility for the spiritual growth of this church. In this letter, Paul shared a set of great pieces of advices (Colossians 3:5-15), which point to lives changed by the power of the gospel (Romans 1:16). The Colossian Christians needed to be committed to a life of plain and useful holiness. The only way, Paul said, was to die to the old self and recognize that in Christ they have been renewed in knowledge after the image of their Creator (Colossians 3:10).

What do we have to do to be successful as Christians? In Colossians 3:16-17, he gave us the following advice that we will study.

**I. “Let the message of Christ dwell among you...” (Colossians 3:16a)**

A. Each Christian must base their beliefs on the Word of God.

The apostle Paul taught that the truth of the Bible must be deeply grounded in our hearts and minds. At first, a new believer will start to read and discover what the Bible says. We learn even more about the Bible through listening to sermons and Bible studies and meditating on passages of the Bible in our “Quiet Times” with God. As we grow little by little, we become able to analyze its instructions and put them into practice.

B. The gospel must affect us “richly”

Head knowledge is not enough. The Holy Spirit inspired the authors of the Bible to write what they

did to guide our actions. We must put the message of the Bible to use in our lives and be obedient followers of Jesus. Jesus said: “A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of” (Luke 6:45). This is about “walking the talk”.

C. “The message of Christ...”

Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God the Father (John 1:1). If we want to be like Him, we need to read and meditate on how He lived His life, as recorded for us by the writers of the four gospels. “My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own;

they belong to the Father who sent me” (John 14:23-24).

### **Questions:**

In your own words and understanding, define what is meant by to “dwell or remain”.

## **II. God’s Word should serve as a guide and encouragement (Colossians 3:16a)**

### **A. Light on our path (Psalm 119:105)**

The Bible will give us light for our pathway through life, showing us where we should go or what we should do, and which ways lead to dead ends or even disaster and destruction. The psalmist wrote it this way: “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11).

### **B. “Teach and admonish one another in all wisdom”**

God as our Father wants us to have victory, success, and happiness. Just as God corrects us because He loves us and wants our best, so we too as believers must make love the force that drives our lives. We too are called to gently encourage others to do what is right because we are called to love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves. (Matthew 22:36-39)

### **Questions:**

- What dangers threaten the life of a believer who is not guided by the Word of God?

## **III. Worship as a sign of a heart where the Word of God dwells (Colossians 3:16b)**

### **A. How songs to the Lord in our spirit show**

Our way of life should be full of praise as we go about our daily tasks. “Psalms, hymns, and songs”

make sense when fed by the Word of God. We must constantly determine if what we are singing is true to the Bible and if our spirits are filled with joy, thanks, and love for the one who gave His life for our salvation.

### **B. Praise with the correct approach**

Paul says that we must worship with the right approach with thankfulness in our hearts. God deserves that we constantly bring ourselves before Him with hearts full of thanks.

### **Questions:**

According to your criteria, what are the evidences of true worship?

## **IV. “... Do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Colossians 3:17)**

We need to carefully analyze what is correct and beneficial for us as followers of the Lord. Colossians 3:17 says: “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” This verse gives a very clear guide to follow. We need to ask ourselves: Can we do this in the name of Jesus? What would Jesus do? Would what we are going to do glorify God? If yes, then it is good. Being thankful to God should be never-ending. We need to understand that everything that God has done in our lives through His Son is beyond measure, powerful, complete, and perfect. It is part of our past, present, and future. God has foreseen everything in Christ for each one of His children. Nothing escapes His perfect will, and nothing is hidden from His total knowledge. Walking closely with Him provides a solution for everything.

### **Questions:**

Explain Colossians 3:17 in your own words.

## **CONCLUSION**

Paul encouraged the Colossians to be deeply grounded in the gospel, to put the Lord’s commandments into practice, encouraging one another, joining joyfully with fellow believers in acts of praise to the Lord, and doing everything, day by day, for the glory of the Lord.

**Lesson  
50****FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS****Passage to Study:** Colossian 3:18-4:1**Lesson Aim**

To learn how God expects us to treat each member of the family.

**Memory Verse**

“Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers” 1 Peter 3:7.

**INTRODUCTION**

The family is God’s creation. It is not just a good idea to divide people up into families. Jesus said: “Haven’t you read...that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’... ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate” (Matthew 19:4-6). Marriage, by definition of the Bible, has its beginning in God. Different scientists (anthropologists, sociologists, and historians) describe the various marriage practices and structures of world cultures, but undergirding all is the fact that God designed the family.

The family is a strong protection of social and moral human relationships. In the Old Testament, it was in the family where instruction about God was to take place. “These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). This is still true today.

In Colossae, families were composed of husbands and wives, children, and household slaves. We will look at what advice Paul gave to each of these groups.

**I. The marriage relationship (Colossians 3:18-19)**

A. “Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord” (v. 18)

It is not very popular to instruct anyone to submit. In this case, we feel that submission means being dominated and controlled by the husband. Does it mean that women are to blindly follow without a say or opinion? One thing is very clear in Scripture, women are not inferior to men, because God created both in His image (Genesis 1:23-24).

Ephesians 5:22-33 complements the passage in Colossians. There we can see that marriage is a relationship that mirrors the love between Christ and His Church. This passage “makes it clear that a man does have responsibility for leadership in his home. The husband needs to love his wife as Christ loved the church. This is the ideal situation. This works because both parties are to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:21).

B. “Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them” (v. 19)

Parallel passages throw more light on this relationship. “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25); and “Husbands, in the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers” (1 Peter 3:7).

Both Colossians 3:19 and Ephesians 5:25 say that the husbands need to love their wives. They need to treat them well, not being harsh with them. This is not a picture of a ‘macho’ husband who wants to rule it over his wife (Ephesians 5:26-28). The verse in Peter’s letter talks about living together as partners and heirs of God’s promises. Couples need to spend more time together to get to know each other, share each other’s struggles and dreams and simply enjoy being family.

**Questions:**

As a class, discuss domestic and gender-based violence, sexual abuse, etc. among other serious family problems.

**II. The parent-child relationship (Colossians 3:20-21)**

The parent-child relationship is very important for harmony in the family.

A. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord (v. 20).

This is a binding command for children. Again in Ephesians 6:2-3, we see that obedience to parents is commanded based on a Bible promise given in the 5th Commandment: “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “so that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land” (see Exodus 20:12). Proverbs 10:1 advises: “A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son brings grief to his mother.” Proverbs 13:1 also counsels: “A wise son heeds his father’s instruction, but a mocker does not respond to rebukes.”

B. “Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged” (v. 20)

Psalm 127:3 tells us that: “children are a heritage from the LORD, the offspring a reward from him.” Children are not our property; they have been lent to us to guide and prepare for life. Therefore, parents need to learn the right way to manage relationships with their children. The parallel passage in Ephesians 6:4 says: “Fathers, do not exasperate your children to anger, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

We need to always ask for God’s direction to raise our children well. Parents, remember that we are not always perfect, but as we draw closer to God, we can improve every day.

**Questions:**

What are God’s orders for parents; and what are the His orders for children? How are children protected by these orders?

**III. The master-slave relationship (Colossians 3:22-25, 4:1)**

Here we need to take a look at the setting of the first century. Both the Roman and Greek cultures owned many slaves. These slaves could have been inherited from father to son, or they could be bought at the slave market. Many times, they had a good relationship with their masters, but this was not always the case. Many suffered terribly.

When Paul carried out his missionary journeys, he would have come across many slaves working in the houses he visited. Many Christian families had slaves some of whom were now their brothers and sisters in Christ.

These verses in Colossians provide some important clues about Christian slaves and their masters. In verses 22-23, Paul encouraged them to do their work whether they were being watched or not “as working for the Lord, not for human masters.” That meant that Christian slaves had another Master. Paul told them that: “It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (v. 25). Slavery was ended many centuries later. In the setting of this epistle, it was very hard for a slave to get his freedom during the years of the Roman Empire.

One interesting person was part of the company bringing Paul’s letter to Colossae – Tychicus was coming with Onesimus (Colossians 4:7-9). Onesimus was a runaway slave that had met Paul in Rome and had been converted. In the letter to Philemon, we read how Paul was sending Onesimus back to Philemon, his owner, not just as a slave but also as a brother in Christ. According to Colossians 4:1, both slave owner and slave belonged to the same Master in Heaven: “Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.”

**Questions:**

- What work habits can be learned from this passage?
- What is modern slavery and how is it practiced in your setting?
- What can we do to support groups that fight against modern slavery and the trafficking of persons?

**CONCLUSION**

Undoubtedly, the Word of God is the manual of life. In it, we can find the rules that help us relate lovingly and wisely with the members of our family. We are also encouraged to do our jobs with excellence, and thus become a living witness that we no longer live to ourselves, but that Christ lives in us.

**Lesson  
51****THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER****Passage to Study:** Colossians 4:2-3**Lesson Aim**

To discover the countless worth of prayer and its usefulness in any circumstance of life.

**Memory Verse**

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful” Colossians 4:2.

108

**INTRODUCTION**

When we take a look at the young first-century church, the book of Acts reports clear examples of the power of united and persevering prayer. These new Christians faced threats, persecution, and imprisonment. A specific case that shows this is when Peter and John, through Jesus, healed the lame man at the temple gate (Acts 3:1-10). This event released deep anger in the religious leaders who chose to threaten the first community of faith.

The interesting thing about this event was the forceful response of the believers who prayed together in one mind. Acts 4:24-32 says that when Peter and John told the brothers and sisters everything that the religious leaders had told them, they all together raised their voices in prayer to God saying: “Sovereign Lord, you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them... After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly” (vs. 24,31). Instead of running away or seeking help from other people, the first community of faith decided to make use of their priceless means, prayer. In the end, the results were visible. With these statements in our minds as true testimonies, let us study the passage from Colossians 4:2-3, which will teach us what prayer should be like, why we should pray and what we should pray for.

**I. “Devote yourselves to prayer” (Colossians 4:2a)**

We can verify that in the Bible we find a wide variety of prayers, especially in the psalms. Prayer can be spoken aloud or silently as a type of communion with God. Another form of prayer is praise. Paul uses the verb, ‘devote’ as a command. It is intended to show that the believer needs to remain in a position of continuous communion with God, whether they have received what they have asked God for or not.

We cannot pray now and then and expect great results. We must persevere in prayer in constant communion with God. In this way, we can be sure that we will obtain the Lord’s wise response. In addition to the instruction to persevere and be constant in prayer, the apostle Paul gave the Colossian church another important characteristic, to be watchful (Colossians 4:2b).

This brings to mind the incident when Jesus was with His disciples in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew

26:36-45). In this passage, we read that Jesus prayed: “‘My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.’...Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. ‘Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?’ he asked Peter. ‘Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.’” (vs. 38, 40-41). In this regard, John Nielson says: “We are not to watch ourselves, which would be depressing; we are not to watch Satan, which would be distracting; we are not to watch our sins, which would be disheartening; but we are to keep our gaze fixed on Christ, ‘looking off unto Jesus’”. We are called to persevere in prayer, and to watch in prayer so as not to fall into temptation.



We must always continue in communion and communication with God.

### Questions:

How would you rate (from 0 to 10) the perseverance of your prayer in these last two months? Why?

## II. Pray with thankfulness (Colossians 4:2c)

Our love for Christ, as we realize what He has done for us, prompts us not only to ask Him for things in prayer but also to be grateful. In prayer, thanksgiving also shows our total dependence on God. Thanking God, even when the prayers have not yet been answered reveals the trust we have in Him. Philippians 4:6 says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” In 1 Thessalonians 5:18, we read: “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” We understand that we need to bring everything to the Lord in prayer, but we do not always know how to thank Him. This is true when we have received what we asked for, or even when we have not yet received answers from the Lord.

The case of the ten lepers is an example of how sometimes we do not know how to acknowledge what the Lord has done for us (Luke 17:11-19). In this Bible event, when the lepers approached our Lord Jesus Christ to ask him to heal them, they had faith in Him. The strange thing is that when they were healed, only one returned later to thank the Lord: “One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan” (Luke 17:15-16). That is to say, he belonged to the group despised by the Jews. So, this Samaritan was the only one of the ten healed lepers who not only asked the Lord for healing but also knew how to thank Him. That he “threw himself at

Jesus’ feet and thanked him” (Luke 17:16, shows that he worshipped God. It is for this reason that we need to take the instruction of the apostle Paul regarding prayer, to always give thanks to God in our prayers.

### Questions:

Why should we thank God, whether we have received a positive response to our request or not? What benefits does this bring to our life?

## III. Adopt the purpose and vision of Heaven (Colossians 4:3)

The apostle Paul said that prayer must have the purpose and vision of heaven. He asked them to: “pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains” (Colossians 4:3). Paul asked the Colossians to pray for him. Also, he requested the same prayer for other leaders who were involved in the work, so that the Lord could open the doors for the gospel of Jesus Christ to be proclaimed.

The phrase “mystery of Christ” has been interpreted in various ways, although I prefer to keep the idea that it is the gospel to the Gentiles because this was the center of the mission of the apostle Paul.

When we know that what we are doing is in the will of God, we can walk with certainty because we know who is supporting us. When it is God’s will for us to carry out a task, we can stand on the promise of Deuteronomy 31:6 that says: “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” We can count on His support as we walk under His wise guidance.

### Questions:

When was the last time you intentionally prayed for the spread of the gospel in the world?

## CONCLUSION

Today, Christians must recover the discipline of prayer. It is an effective means in all circumstances of life. We must give time and energy to prayer, always with thanksgiving, praying for the fulfillment of God’s purposes. When we put this advice into practice, our prayers to God will be meaningful in our daily lives.

**Lesson  
52****CRUCIAL ADVICE****Passage to Study:** Colossians 4:5-6**Lesson Aim**

To learn to live as good Christians in a world that seeks to separate us from the truth.

**Memory Verse**

“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” Colossians 4:6.

110

**INTRODUCTION**

The letter to the Colossians was written by the Apostle Paul to correct some confusion that was occurring in the Colossian church. This church had received the gospel of Jesus Christ. But it was still influenced by other spiritual and religious beliefs and the emerging Gnosticism common in their setting. Responding to the Colossians, the apostle Paul addressed three major themes or issues:

1. He reminded them of God’s saving work through Jesus Christ, stressing that Christ is greater than all things, even over creation: “He is before all things, and in him, all things hold together” (Colossians 1:17).
2. In addition, the apostle reminded them that God has delivered the gospel of salvation to all people, even non-Jews (Colossians 1:26-27).
3. Third, Paul spoke about how they should live out the gospel that they had received by the grace of God in everyday living. In this lesson, we will focus our attention on this third portion to discover what the plain rules to truly live the gospel of Christ are.

**I. “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders” (Colossians 4:5a)**

God provides the real wisdom to help us live as His children. Paul compared knowledge of the mind to wisdom for everyday living. This means that God not only enables us to understand the gospel but also to walk in it. When we read the Scriptures, we find that God enables us to clearly understand how we should behave like Christians in the world in which we live. In His prayer, Jesus taught us that we are in this world; but we are not of this world (John 17:16), and that the church (as His followers) is the salt and light of the world in which we live (Matthew 5:13-16).

Paul wanted the believers in Colossae to proclaim the gospel by all means to all who had not heard and thus allow them to receive the Lord. Previously in the letter, he had advised them not to be influenced by worldly things but rather “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Col. 3:2).

**Questions:**

Where does true wisdom come from?

**II. “Make the most of every opportunity” (Colossians 4:5b)**

Paul encouraged them to take advantage of every opportunity to communicate the message of God. This shows the urgent need for the people around us to hear about the Lord. It also means that we should not be idle or waste time doing things that are not important. Here the apostle advised them to spend their lives wisely. It means that the time spent living as a true Christian must be spent in everything that glorifies God, who paid the price for our salvation. Christians should always do everything to glorify God. This involves removing everything that might distract us from the path of truth. Understanding and making good use of our opportunities is very important for us as Christians. Understanding the times and culture we live in will help us know how we should act.

The Bible talks about “the present age” and “the age to come.” We believe that Jesus launched His Kingdom when He first came. Yet there will be a point in time when He returns that His kingdom will be completely fulfilled. Theologians talk about it as “now” and “not yet.” We are living between two times which are linked to each other; but also are separate.

In the New Testament, there are two Greek words for time: Kairos and Chronos:

1. Kairos means the appointed time in the purpose of God; that is, the time when God acts in His plan for all humankind. God already traces this time from before the foundation of the world, and in this plan, we cannot interfere, but we must only submit to live in it.

2. Chronos measures time in minutes, hours, and years. It is the time in which we live in this world. Unlike the previous one, this one we can mostly manage. It is this sort of time that the apostle Paul taught the Colossians to manage wisely (Colossians 4:5).

Paul taught that time should be used in the things of Christ and not in philosophies and hollow teachings based on the traditions of men, according to the basics of this world. In other words, we cannot live the true gospel if we maintain worldly mindsets.

### Questions:

How can we make good use of time?

### III. “Let your conversation be always full of grace” (Colossians 4:6)

A. Words of grace, seasoned with salt

Our words need to be loaded with the love of the Lord. The Great Commandment encourages us to love the Lord with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39). We need to show compassion and empathy. We need to learn when to ‘hold our tongue’ and when to speak the truth in love. To speak words of grace, we must leave the life of the world and put on the new person, transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, and made in the image of Jesus Christ. When we talk to people who do not know the Lord, we need to pray for wisdom from the Lord to be able to say the right thing at the right time.

B. So that you may know how to answer everyone

As faithful Christians, we must have firm, clear, and wise responses to avoid being a stumbling block to others. We must adhere to the rules of the kingdom of God. As Jesus said: “All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one” (Matthew 5:37). This teaches us that we must be firm in our Christian beliefs, ready to give a firm answer, but with grace particularly to those who are not Christians. Our responses to the world must be grounded in the Word of God, and not in our opinion or according to this world’s philosophies. For Paul, it was extremely important to make clear that we are saved by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, and therefore, He must always have first priority in our lives. We need to live as true children of God.

### Questions:

How should we respond to outsiders? What about fellow believers?

## CONCLUSION

The apostle Paul taught the importance of walking wisely with unbelievers, making good use of the time, and having cordial and pleasant conversations with those who have not yet accepted the gospel as well as with our brothers and sisters in Jesus.



ISBN: 978-0-7977-1555-4  
P O Box 1288  
Florida 1710  
Republic of South Africa

